

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

EDITED BY
MICHAEL HARRINGTON

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Twenty Years After The Cuban Revolution: Impressions of a Visit

By Michael Germinal Rivas

HOW IS CUBA NOW AFTER 20 years of revolution?" is the most frequent question I have been asked since my visits there last November and December. Before trying to answer it here, I must describe the circumstances under which the trips were made.

For many years Cubans who had left the country were told that they had forfeited their Cuban citizenship, and were called "gusanos" (worms) by followers of the Revolution. Some of us who had been active opponents of the regime had been threatened with the firing squad if we ever set foot in Cuba again. Now we were being received as fellow Cubans, members of the "community abroad," and as guests of the Cuban government. How did this come about?

Increasingly, groups of Cubans in academic, government, labor, art, and social service circles in the U.S. have realized that the Castro regime is firmly established, with a very strong military sector and enough popular support so that any chances of its being overthrown are practically nil. While remaining critical of some aspects of the revolutionary process, there has been increased appreciation in those circles, particularly among

(Above) Schoolchildren line up at the entrance to the City of Pioneers Jose Marti (Youth Camp) to welcome the delegation of Cuban exiles.

"Very few people come to the question of Cuba with an open mind, and that includes us socialists, too."

the younger generation, for the undeniable accomplishments of the Revolution, especially in the fields of education and medicine.

Among the groups sharing that perspective of basic support for the Cuban Revolution was the Cuban Christians for Justice and Freedom group to which I belong, which is made up mainly of Protestant Christians interested in social and political issues from a religious standpoint. This group issued a call, back in 1975 to then President Ford and the newly-elected Congress to take a fresh look at Cuba with the goal of lifting the

economic embargo against it and resuming normal diplomatic relations. We said then that the time had come for dialogue rather than confrontation. Other Cuban Left groups have since joined in that call.

On September 6, 1978 President Fidel Castro acknowledged these developments in a press conference in Havana to which even Cuban exile newspaper people were invited. He expressed the views of the Cuban government that not all Cubans living abroad were counterrevolutionaries, and that he was interested in entering a "dialogue" with representatives from the emigré community. The

stated purpose of that dialogue was to discuss several issues of acute concern to all Cubans, such as the release of political prisoners, the start of new, limited emigration of Cubans so that families that were separated when refugee flights from Cuba to the United States were halted several years ago could be reunited, and the granting of permits to visit Cuba to Cubans living abroad.

Preparation for this proposed meeting and dialogue included numerous meetings and conversations with Cuban government officials as well as a trip to

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LETTERS

To the Editor:

Roger Hickey's article, "Fighting Inflation," in the December 1978 NEWSLETTER presents a promising and commendable strategy for coalescing a democratic Left majority. Yet COIN's understanding of inflation seems to resort to the overworn argument of monopoly responsibility.

The truth is more complex and indicates that it is liberal social programs executed within the context of capitalist market relations which trigger "stagflation." That is why liberals and conservatives are both quite discerning, if short of convincing, in denouncing each other's programs.

For inflation to occur, there must be a sufficient monetary demand to support a general increase in the price level. Keynesian intervention policies, adopted as the outcome of the Great Depression, treat the symptoms of capitalist crises—i.e., declining demand. But this demand insufficiency is merely the manifestation of a rate of capital formation which lacks the vibrancy to support full employment. The rate of capital accumulation is functionally determined by the overall profit-

ability of the system. Profits are the precondition for expansion. By its borrowing on the capital markets, the state is given the financial ability to mobilize labor and means of production to provide public goods and services. These government goods and services create expanded incomes which are not matched by *marketed* output. Consequently the rate of growth of income, if not sterilized by increasing taxes, exceeds the rate at which *commodity* production grows. Business then becomes the transmission belt for inflation—whether competitive or monopolistic. Business merely exploits the mechanism of deficit spending.

Stagflation is the result of declining profits and Keynesian policy—of public intervention in the context of market relations.

The thrust of COIN's program apparently is the creation of institutions of democratic planning, of socialization commissions. But Keynesian theory denies the necessity for just such institutions. Practice often runs ahead of theory, yet it is theory that ultimately justifies the program. Let us hope that the socialist movement will provide the theoretical

muscle for COIN's provocative project.

Barry Finger
Jackson Heights, N.Y.

■ ■ ■

To the Editor:

Jim Chapin (December 1978) takes a good analysis too far. Carter, he argues, has become irrelevant to the Left and there is no reason to prefer him to a moderate Republican in 1980. Ten years ago such reasoning led many of us into the "dump Johnson" movement. We succeeded in removing a skilled political leader from the White House because of his Indochina policies. But our "success" was illusory. Having dumped Johnson, we ended up with Nixon and Agnew (two Republican moderates). The war went on, the Left was attacked and shattered, decent programs of the Great Society were dismantled, poverty increased and the Supreme Court was stacked to the Right for a generation to come. If we dump Carter, do we figure to do any better?

Rosemary Hill
San Jose, Calif.

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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Carter Budget: Unraveling the Social Contract

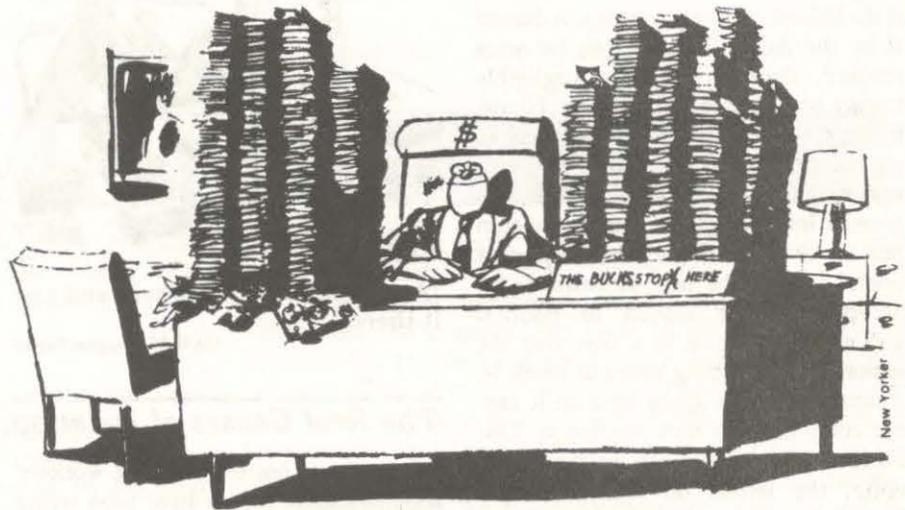
By Michael Harrington

THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION is drifting toward the worst of several worlds. It is promoting a recession which will not significantly reduce inflation. It is carrying out budget cuts that threaten to unravel some of the basic democratic Left achievements of the past generation. It is raising military spending in an irresponsible, ineffective and socially cruel way. And it is ignoring the real sources of inflation.

In the presence of such a strategy on the part of a Democratic President, progressive Democrats and other members of the democratic Left have begun to develop a coherent counter program. Although far from finished, it is at least in process. Still, there is an ominous problem in this area: the Left is becoming more and more dependent on Senator Edward Kennedy. Kennedy, make no mistake about it, is the very best person to challenge Carter in the name of liberal principles. But what if Kennedy, for whatever reason, decides not to make that challenge? To whom would the Left turn as a serious standard bearer?

Before dealing with that tactical question, it is important to fill in some of the analytic details of my opening attack on the Administration. First, there is the strange, and perhaps tragic, fact that the White House is following policies which, in its more reflective moments, it knows will not work. In January of 1978 the Council of Economic Advisors considered whether or not it would be possible to reduce inflation significantly by means of an economic slowdown, i.e., by means of the traditional, and obsolete, wisdom of the "Phillips Curve." The Council answered candidly: it would take six years of "very high" unemployment, and \$600 billion in lost production, to do the job.

A slowdown of that dimension is politically unthinkable in America, even for a Republican Administration and certainly for a Democratic President. But



The Guardian/cpf

"It is not surprising that Wall Street takes such a position, which is in a long, dishonorable and callous tradition. But why is the White House following such a line?"

why, then, Mr. Carter's obsession with holding the budget to the mystic number of a \$30 billion deficit? Why cuts which will surely hurt the poor, and monetary policies which will help bring along a recession? The answer, I suspect, could be shocking: Washington does not know what else to do; so it is stumbling into a downturn. Last May, Barry Bosworth, the sometimes outspoken head of the Council on Wage and Price Stability, put it this way: "A recession is likely because that has always been the government's anti-inflation policy." A recession, we would add, which won't work.

Rich Favor Recession

The corporate rich, as so often happens, are more brutally candid than the politicians. In December, a *Wall Street*

Journal report told how a good portion of the business community is in favor of a downturn. There were, the *Journal* said, "no illusions" that a recession would cure inflation. To do that, the executives held, would take a "balanced federal budget over a period of some years, with only a modest deficit permitted during a recession." The layoffs advocated by business would only temper inflation, the *Journal* said, but that is good enough for capital. One happy result, the article concluded, would be holding back wage increases—but there was a fear that such a policy might boomerang and cause increased worker militancy.

It is not surprising that Wall Street takes such a position, which is in a long, dishonorable and callous tradition. But why is the White House following such a line?

That question becomes compelling when one considers what might be called the "unraveling" of the gains in social and economic justice from the New Deal to the Great Society. Social Security is a case in point. At year's end, when the Administration was simultaneously playing Scrooge and Tiny Tim, leaking horror stories of cuts and happy reports of funds restored, the nation was told that

a number of Social Security benefits would be curtailed. For example, low-wage workers who had been *entitled* to minimum benefits within the system would now be turned over to Supplemental Security Income (SSI) where the payments would be lower and they would be subject to a means test.

The amount of money involved in Fiscal 1980 (which is what the current budget discussions are about) is minimal. Indeed, if every single cut hinted at by the Administration thus far were revoked, there would be a negligible impact on inflation. The White House, it must be remembered, is engaged in symbolic politics which, by its own economic analysis, will not have the supposedly intended effect. But it is a grim portent that the single most important liberal gain of the past 45 years, Social Security, is now subject to political games. Moreover, it is a sign that the nation may be getting ready to break its compact with the aging because it cannot come to grips with stagflation. One could cite other examples of the unraveling: the retreat on national health commitments; the Administration's collapse on natural gas deregulation (an issue on which, in the past, the democratic Left prevailed over *Eisenhower*); Carter's about-face on the capital gains giveaway where he pulled a Jerry Brown by embracing a bad idea he had rightly fought; and so on.

All of these developments are highlighted by the pledge to increase real military spending by 3 percent. Defense Secretary Brown has just admitted that his department is rife with waste. Thus, to commit Washington to increased spending—not effectiveness, but spending—the President is following the worst of bureaucratic traditions. Why does one go over the social budget with a microscope and design the military budget blindfolded? One must note that military spending, which creates income but no goods and services for the public to buy, is the most inflationary single element in the federal budget.

The Administration's priorities, then, mandate cuts which will certainly strike most viciously at the black, the brown, the female and the young *and* authorize wasteful expenditures on products which threaten the very existence of humankind. Meanwhile, Washington scrupulously refrains from dealing with the real causes of inflation.

“In the next period, then, the question of program and of candidate go hand in hand.”



“And take some from here and try it there.”

UAW Washington Report

The Real Causes of Inflation

Inflation is not the result of workers' wage demands, which have been trying to keep up with price rises, not causing them. Neither is it a consequence of increased federal spending, since Washington's percentage of GNP has remained remarkably stable over the last quarter of a century. It comes, rather, from the ability of oligopolies to raise prices during a recession to compensate for declining volume; and from the structural contradictions of our cruel and antiquated health system, our corporate-dominated energy system, a farm policy dominated by agribusiness and the governmental habit of creating inflation in the housing market by raising interest rates in the name of fighting inflation. (Those last "sectoral" points were first developed by Leslie Nulty.)

At the Democratic Party Mid-term Conference this past December, the democratic Left adopted much of this analysis of inflation (indeed, this writer was the spokesperson for the liberal caucus on the issue). Still, that understanding must be deepened. The various examples of corporate power promoting inflation in order to increase private advantage are neither random nor discrete. They are inherent limitations in a welfare state that rests upon late capitalist foundations and in which reforms tend to be co-opted by the very corporate rich who, more often than not, first bitterly

fight them. This is not to make the sectarian suggestion that America must first become socialist before it can fight stagflation. It is to say that radical limitations upon corporate power—e.g., the power of an oligopoly which is a "price maker" rather than a "price taker" to set their own (monopoly) prices—are needed. These would not transform the fundamental basis of the system; but they are a step in that direction.

Program in Search of a President

In the period leading up to 1980, however, it is not enough to get a democratic Left consensus on program. In 1976, the Democratic Party passed a progressive domestic platform which the Democratic President has ignored whenever he pleased. In 1980, one does not, it goes without saying, want to turn the White House over to a Republican who would do enthusiastically and straightforwardly what Carter does shamefacedly. But in 1980 one wants a candidate who will act on a program that will deal with inflation and achieve the full employment that remains the absolute precondition of every decent social program in the land. In the next period, then, the question of program and of candidate go hand in hand.

Teddy Kennedy is the obvious candidate of the democratic Left. That is not because he will satisfy nostalgia and bring back Camelot. It is because he is the outstanding liberal political leader in the United States and has the capacity to win both the nomination and the election. On health and tax policies, he is the acknowledged leader in the Congress. His record on criminal code legislation is more ambiguous, but it hardly makes him a Rightist. All in all, with his limitations and his strengths, he is an extraordinarily appealing candidate. Within days of declaring for the Presidency he would have well-organized movements in fifty states and the District of Columbia.

Who Besides Kennedy?

But what if Kennedy decides not to run? Who is the liberal back-up candidate? I do not raise this point to indulge in political gossip but to focus on a serious issue. I do not see any serious candidate outside of Kennedy (defining "ser-

ious" as meaning capable of winning both the nomination and the election). The Republican Party presidential race now looks like the beginning of the Boston Marathon. The Democrats have Carter, Kennedy and Brown, and when one is talking about needing a candidate who will really follow a progressive program, the latter's mercurial record is hardly encouraging. In part, the dearth of serious Democratic hopefuls on the Left results from the scurrying of so many politicians to the center. The only problem with that centrist position, as President

"In part, the dearth of serious Democratic hopefuls on the Left results from the scurrying of so many politicians to the center."

Carter demonstrates so well, is that it will not solve any of the nation's basic problems and will hurt the most vulnerable people in the society.

The democratic Left, in short, has

more than enough work during the next period. It must develop a program against stagflation, i.e., not simply against inflation but also for full employment. It must translate that program into language which the person on the street, who is now utterly confused, can understand. And it must mount a challenge to Carter's policy, not simply in the form of a counter-program, but in the name of an alternative candidate as well. ■

Michael Harrington is the National Chair of DSOC.

BOOK REVIEW

AMERICAN SOCIALISM AND BLACK AMERICANS: From the Age of Jackson to World War II, by Philip S. Foner. Greenwood Press, 1978, 462 pp., \$22.95.

By Chuck Hopkins

ONE OF THE MOST GLARING FAILURES OF THE LEFT in the United States has been the inability of theorists to develop a meaningful formulation of the race question. This, of course, is an historical problem, having arisen with the emergence of the country's first socialists. The question of the relationship between socialism and Afro-American liberation is given a new immediacy today as we witness the dissolution of the hegemonic New Deal consensus and the efforts to build and consolidate a new one.

Philip Foner's *American Socialism and Black Americans* is an interesting work in that it gives us the opportunity to explore a contemporary problem with some understanding of its treatment in the past. His central theme is that the racism of white socialists prevented them from evolving a policy on the race question that could attract black people to their ranks in large numbers. This argument is woven through the book, beginning with ante bellum communitarian and utopian movements up until the 1939 activities of the Socialist Party on the eve of World War II.

The book has good documentation to support Foner's thesis and there probably would be few defenders of this rather sordid history of racial bigotry on the part of those calling themselves socialists. Still, the reader has to be somewhat disturbed by the manner in which Foner makes his case. While he consistently criticizes his subjects for their almost uniform failure to interact with Afro-Americans on a basis of equality, he does not provide the reader with any suggestion of what might have been the proper path for socialists to follow on this question.

An interesting example of this point is Foner's treatment of socialists in the southern United States. In 1903, the Louisiana Socialist Party developed a program in which, among other things, it called for: collective ownership and control of all sources and machinery of production and distribution; the adopting of the initiative, referendum and recall by the state; equal civil and political rights for men and

women; absolute home rule for all towns and cities; and voting rights for all races.

After making these impressive statements, the group committed the unpardonable error of calling for separate communities for black and white people, with each community exercising control over its own affairs. The establishment press had a field day with this proposal. It ridiculed the socialists and successfully labeled them as racists. A long debate on the issue ensued within the Party, resolved only when the national leadership forced the Louisiana Party to delete the controversial proposal.

Foner's discussion of this debate ignores all of the other proposals and their possible relationship to the one on separate communities. He reduces the entire issue to the question of whether the socialists were ready to stand up and cast their lot for something he calls "universal equality." Nowhere does he explain what he means by this abstract term, nor does he tell the reader whether or not black people in Louisiana in 1903 were rushing to get into white people's communities.

Foner's integrationist sentiments are evident throughout his work. The criteria for his criticisms of socialists on the race question all revolve around issues of integration and "universal equality." Such superficial categorization seriously detracts from any real efforts to come to grips with the difficult problem of identifying areas of unity between the political dynamics of American socialism and those of black liberation. Socialists cannot confront the implications of these two processes by sinking to sloganeering about "universal equality."

Even when he appears to recognize the importance of race in the issues he discusses, Foner explains it as a more or less special form of exploitation which white workers did not have to contend with. He formulates the question as one of "whether the Negroes were a specially exploited section of the working class or just a general division of that class who had no need for special attention and whose problems would be solved . . . with the ushering in of socialism." He, of course, opts for "special attention." In formulating the question in this manner, Foner is overlooking its most fundamental characteristic, which is the political, economic, and cultural domination of black people as a whole.

Foner's rather simplistic approach also limits the treatment of his black subjects. The black journalist T. Thomas

Fortune, who wrote a book in 1884 in which he asserted that the denial of land to black people during Reconstruction was at the root of their powerlessness, is criticized by Foner for not advocating the true "principles of socialism." The reader is given no explanation of the possible relationship between the struggles of black groups like the Colored National Farmers Alliance to acquire and hold land, and the "principles of socialism." This issue has particular significance for today when the question of black land holdings is of such importance in the Afro-American community.

Another interesting treatment of a black subject is that of Hubert H. Harrison, "the father of socialism in Harlem." Harrison was a self-educated expert in African and Afro-American history. In 1909, he joined the New York Socialist Party and became a tireless speaker and organizer for the group. But after eight years of struggling for change within the Party to increase black membership, he became frustrated with the white leadership's racism and resigned.

Harrison then formed his own group, the Afro-American Liberty League, and began recruiting other black socialists to join him. The reader is given a good treatment of the black socialist's critique against his white leaders by Foner for as long as he remained within the Party. But once he left, Foner dismisses him as a disgruntled black "radical" advocating "an amalgam of black nationalism and socialism, in which the former predominated." It would have been a much more fruitful exercise if Foner had at least investigated what Harrison had to say about his new views on nationalism

and socialism. Apparently for Foner, once having left the fold, Harrison no longer had historical relevance as a socialist.

Both the socialist past and Foner's treatment of it point to the need for today's socialists to create some new ways to look at the problems we face. While there is an interconnection between socialism and the black liberation movement, it is at best a backward theory that would project the latter as a mere extension of the former. The fundamental character of the black struggle remains as it always has—a displaced, subjugated people longing for the right of self-definition. The challenge for white socialists is not to fear this truth and for black socialists not to apologize for it.

One way of viewing the failure of American socialism is to focus, as Foner has, upon its racist past. Another way of viewing this failure is to understand Afro-Americans' historical resistance against allowing themselves to be dissipated into "universal" cultural formations, whether they are called "workers," or "minorities," that do not speak to their reality. No human group in the world would voluntarily accept the precarious status as an extension of a class of workers who have again and again demonstrated their supremacist sentiments; nor would any human group voluntarily accept a designation as the minority of a proven antagonistic majority. The humanity of black people demands that they reject such formations also. ■

Chuck Hopkins teaches political science at Mount Holyoke College.

ACORN Aims For National Role in 1980

By Cary Rogers

WHILE 1600 DEMOCRATIC Party delegates gathered in Memphis for what was supposed to be a "love-in" for the Carter administration (see DEMOCRATIC AGENDA story), more than 1,000 delegates of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) met to send a message to the Democratic Party.

This first national ACORN action marked a departure from the organization's state and local focus. ACORN, which started eight years ago in Little Rock, Arkansas, is made up of low and moderate income people organized in community groups in 14 states. These local groups work on neighborhood problems and coalesce on city and state cam-

paigns. The results are victories that members can take pride in, encouraging further political participation by people who have all too often been left out and ignored. The goal is to build democratic organizations that can gain power to bring about social change.

ACORN's Memphis meeting focused on the theme "The People Speak" and included a mass rally at the Convention Center where the Democrats were meeting. Chanting "Jimmy who, Jimmy when, people won't be fooled again," members challenged the Democratic Party and the President to respond to their concerns.

The platform approved by the ACORN convention called for the Democratic Party to adopt "an affirmative action plan to guarantee low and moderate income participation in the next major Party event, the 1980 National Convention."

Delegates were urged to organize and elect delegates to the 1980 convention. The move toward participating in national Democratic politics is a first for ACORN. One of the prime tenets of its organization has been the strategy of appealing to a "majority constituency" by going beyond the issues that concern strictly "poor peoples' groups." It has

organized blacks and whites wherever it has been by appealing to pocketbook economic issues. Thus, its convention platform demands "lifeline" utility rates, free health care, decent housing, jobs and income, fair taxes and laws to preserve family farms and to force banks to invest in local communities.

The effect of ACORN's thrust into national politics, if in any way successful, can only be a heartening turn of events for those of us on the democratic Left. ■

Cary Rogers is a DSOC member from Knoxville, Tennessee and is active in ACORN.

SAMPLE COPY OFFER

Socialist Press/European Review, a monthly digest of extracts from European socialist newspapers, is available by subscription \$10 U.S.) from Foro Buonaparte 24, 20121 Milan, Italy. We have a limited supply of the December 1978 issue, which features an abstract of an article by Michael Harrington that appeared in *Socialist Affairs*. Send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to DEMOCRATIC LEFT, 853 Boadway, Room 617, New York, N.Y. 10003.

DEMOCRATIC AGENDA

THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA HELPED MAKE SURE that the recent Democratic Mid-term Conference in Memphis wasn't a love-in for the Carter Administration's policies, and the national press recognized its accomplishment.

The AGENDA, a DSOC-led coalition of socialists, union members, Party liberals, blacks, feminists and community activists, fought in Memphis for national health insurance *now*, energy industry reform, anti-corporate inflation policies, tax justice and funding for domestic social programs.

In the days leading up to the conference, reporters speculated that THE DEMOCRATIC AGENDA would provide the major interest at what would otherwise be a tightly managed event. Dave Broder wrote in *The Washington Post* that "the Democratic Conference (a group headed by Representative Don Fraser that pushed rules reforms) and the Democratic Agenda pose potential threats to party harmony."

The *Congressional Quarterly*, in a pre-conference run-down, acknowledged that the "one organization most active in sponsoring resolutions was the Democratic Agenda, which promoted a package of eight." And the *Boston Globe* quoted White House press secretary Jody Powell as saying, "The dispute which appears to be on the horizon in Memphis is not between the the President and Sen. Kennedy, but between the Administration and the Democratic Agenda."

Two days before the conference a front page story in the *Washington Star* erroneously reported that a "deal" had been struck "among Kennedy aides, the liberal Democratic Agenda, the White House domestic policy staff under Stuart Eizenstat and the Democratic National Committee" to ask the conference just to reaffirm the party's 1976 platform plank on national health insurance. While untrue (the AGENDA still stood for immediate implementation of that 1976 promise),

the report indicated recognition by the White House that DEMOCRATIC AGENDA support would be necessary to any health insurance resolution.

Press coverage during the conference focused on national health insurance, the delegates' enthusiastic reception of Senator Kennedy and the floor fights on the AGENDA's resolutions. The New York *Daily News* reported that "a coalition headed by Michael Harrington of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee has assembled four resolutions that take direct aim at Carter's austerity program." The *Minneapolis Tribune* quoted Michael Harrington's observation that "the road to victory in 1980 lies in implementing the 1976 platform."

After the tiring battles in which, despite heavy White House pressure, AGENDA resolutions gained almost 40 percent of the delegates' support, several commentators paid tribute to the AGENDA's organizing ability. *The Baron Report*, an insider's political newsletter, said that the AGENDA's success in getting 25 percent of the delegates to sign resolution petitions before the conference opened was "something party pros had predicted would be impossible." *The New Republic* applauded the AGENDA's strategy in expressing "specific, programmatic differences with the course staked out by the Carter administration." An editorial in *The Nation* said that the AGENDA's activities revealed deep discontent in the party and highlighted the fact that "the issues which divide it were revealed to be not merely political but deeply ideological." The socialist newsweekly *In These Times* commented that the DEMOCRATIC AGENDA forces continued "in the face of formidable political threats and bureaucratic obstacles, to forge a left-wing coalition in the Democratic Party."

Two years of hard work paid off in Memphis, and for several days the press acknowledged that there is a democratic Left presence in the United States. ■

Largest Youth Conference Held

More than 160 young people from 35 campuses gathered in New York City December 28 and 29 for the most successful youth conference ever sponsored by DSOC or the Institute for Democratic Socialism. Focus of the conference was on organizing against corporate power. The enthusiastic participation of so many students and young people has sparked plans for a major concentration in youth work and a large Labor Day conference. For more information, write: Mark Levinson, Youth Section Chair, 853 Broadway, Room 617, New York, N.Y. 10003.



Photo by Judith Hempfling

Women's Movement: Alive, Well, Fighting



Photo by Betty Lane

By Nancy Shier

ABOUT ONCE A YEAR, THE ESTABLISHMENT media treat us to an analysis of why the women's movement has failed. Focusing on Phyllis Schlafly, conflict between women and divisions within women's organizations, the stories generally conclude that the movement is dead.

In 1978, the annual post-mortem was especially embarrassing, coming as it did a scant month before some 100,000 women and men marched on Washington, D.C., on July 9th to demand that Congress extend the deadline for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. Some months later, when Majority Leader Robert Byrd refused to place the extension measure on the pre-adornment Senate calendar, an outpouring of 100,000 telegrams from across the country

forced him to change his mind.

We won! On October 6, the U.S. Congress extended the deadline for ERA ratification until June 30, 1982. When the National Organization for Women (NOW) launched the extension drive in October 1977, observers who looked at the composition of the House and Senate committees that would consider the measure and assessed the plight of other progressive legislation (e.g. labor law reform, Humphrey-Hawkins) in Congress predicted that success was impossible. In fact, the extension drive provided the focus for the most sophisticated and significant mobilization of grassroots and national organizational forces in the resurgent struggle for women's equality that began a decade ago.

The extension campaign involved thousands of new women in that strug-

gle, and at the same time solidified previously tenuous ties between the women's movement and other progressive forces, including civil rights and labor organizations. Grassroots strength and activism coupled with the support of national organizations made the impossible a reality. It also proved that the drive for women's equality is long-term and depends on the successful development of organizational forms and resources to meet the challenges ahead.

The women's movement has clearly come of age. Women's organizations are stronger in numbers and resources than they have ever been. NOW has more than 100,000 members—ten years ago, it had only hundreds. Another important long-range development is the increasingly cooperative relationship between women's groups and organized labor. Women's organizations testified and lobbied in 1978 for key labor priorities such as minimum wage legislation, labor law reform and Humphrey-Hawkins. Labor lobbyists were visible and helpful in the ERA extension effort. Although the new alliance is currently confined to the national level, the development of a working relationship at the state and local levels could be critical in the next few years. A United Auto Workers representative in Illinois told a Humphrey-Hawkins rally: "The fight for ERA, labor law reform and Humphrey-Hawkins are not three separate fights. They are one fight against a common corporate/right wing enemy."

Targeted by Right Wing

The women's movement has been the target of a focused right-wing attack for the past several years. The Right's activity has been extraordinarily well-organized and well-funded. The battle is at a stalemate. Although we were unable to win ratification by any additional state legislatures, the success of the extension drive was a serious defeat for the right wing. The Right was more successful, however, in its attempt to restrict abortion rights.

The anti-choice crusade, which began after the Supreme Court's 1973 landmark decision legalizing abortion, has gained momentum, and has more recently been joined by the right wing, anti-ERA forces. As a result, an increasing number of states have enacted restrictive abortion statutes (many of them clearly

unconstitutional), and proposed legislation has been successfully amended in the U.S. Congress to curtail federal spending for abortion services. Three major factors seem to be involved in this trend.

Women's organizations have been forced to devote almost all of their energy and resources to the ERA fight. As a result, grassroots organizing on reproductive freedom has suffered.

Abortion is basically a civil liberties issue, involving as it does questions of separation of church and state, and a woman's right to control her own body. Support for civil liberties in general has been on the decline in recent years.

The major political fights on abortion have been over funding issues (payment for Medicaid abortions, inclusion of abortion coverage in public employee health insurance plans, etc.) — not over constitutional issues. While all polls show increased support for the Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion, in a period of budget cuts and fiscal conservatism the class discrimination that these funding fights reflect are even harder to counteract. After all, class discrimination is not only *not* prohibited in this country, but is the basis of our political system. Groups concerned with the rights of low income and working class women must join with feminist organizations in unified opposition to the right wing assault on *all* women's right to choose.

Victories on Other Fronts

The women's movement has always been involved in many issues in addition to ERA and abortion. Work continued at some levels in most areas in 1978, with some notable progress. Congress passed several pieces of legislation fought for by women's rights activists. The Civil Rights Act was amended specifically to preclude employment discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth and related conditions; CETA legislation provides support for training for displaced homemakers; farm widows were relieved of inheritance tax burdens; a bill was enacted increasing the use of flexi-time in federal agencies. At the state levels, rape and the plight of battered women received increased legislative attention. Last November's elections also increased the number of women holding office at the state legislative level to 10.2% of the total.

“The major political fights on abortion have been over funding issues . . . not over Constitutional issues.”

Overall, the women's movement has changed the lives of millions of people across the country. Nevertheless, massive sex discrimination is still very much a reality. Working women still earn only 59 cents for every dollar earned by men; the number of women and women-headed families in poverty continues to grow; violence against women on the nation's streets and in the nation's homes is still the order of the day; hundreds of laws and government practices discriminate against women in countless ways.

The struggle to change this reality, to turn the tide of institutional sexism, will not be won easily or quickly. The past year has been a crucial test of the women's movement's ability to survive and grow. Winning, however, will require more than just survival, and more than simply numbers. In the shorter term, it will require a strengthened emergency drive for ERA ratification and a renewed national campaign to preserve legal abortion. It will also require long-range planning, the development of massive organizational resources and the nurturing of new allies. America's civil rights, labor and progressive forces should surely be among those allies. Winning will also require a renewed commitment on the part of all of us to the critical goals we hold in common. ■

Nancy Shier is the Executive Director of the Chicago Chapter of the National Organization for Women.

New England DSOC Member Wins Maine State House Seat

By Harlan Baker

THE REPUBLICANS ARE GOING to kick your ass. They know you're a socialist and they don't want you going to Augusta." That was the comment of one of my friends soon after I was drafted to replace an incumbent Democrat in the race for a seat in the Maine State Legislature.

Fortunately, his reservations, although shared by many, were offset by support in the Democratic Party. When some fellow members of the Democratic City Committee from outside my district complained that "a socialist and communist" had been nominated, another member replied, "I don't care what he is, he does his work in the Democratic Party."

The campaign began after Labor Day in my home district, where I had been active in Democratic Party politics and as a community organizer for the past six years. The district is made up mostly of students, the elderly, working class families and activists.

Labor and Democratic Party support were crucial in the campaign. The AFL-

CIO, Maine Teachers Association, Firefighters Local 740 and the Maine State Employees Association gave their endorsements. Party officials campaigned in the district. DSOC members helped in all the tedious nuts and bolts aspects of the campaign, and I went door to door on every street in the district.

The campaign stressed local issues, such as development of Portland's port facilities, hospital cost containment and public employees rights. While local bankers and businessmen backed the Maine Committee for Tax Limitation, which sought to put a limit on government spending, I proposed shifting the emphasis from property taxes to more use of income and corporate taxes.

The issues hit home. When the paper ballots were finally counted at 3 a.m. on November 8, my conservative opponent had gained 435 votes. I polled 903. ■

Harlan Baker served on the DSOC National Board from 1974 to 1976. He was a DSOC organizer in Boston and Chicago and is active in the Maine DSOC.

Jamaica by the Secretary General of our group, DSOCer the Reverend Manuel Viera and this writer. The meetings to discuss the above issues took place in Havana on November 20-21 and December 7-8. As a result, the Cuban government agreed to free, within the next eight months, at least 3,600 of the 4,200 official political prisoners in Cuban jails. Those who want to leave the country will be allowed to do so in the company of their immediate family. This same privilege has been extended to some 14,000 former political prisoners now free in Cuba.

The other agreements included a plan to begin in January the family reunification process as well as the granting of permits for Cubans to travel to Cuba in groups rather than individually, since travel facilities in Cuba still don't lend themselves to large numbers of individuals using those facilities at will. Contrary to suggestions in the American press and in some exile circles, there was no effort to extort a political price for these agreements. Indeed, it was decided not to call for the lifting of the U.S. economic embargo against Cuba, on which most of us agreed, so that it would not be seen as a *quid pro quo*.

Revolution Has Many Faces

Going back to the original question: "How, indeed, is Cuba after 20 years of revolution?" The answer is not an easy one, for today's Cuba is very much a land of contrasts. In fact, my gut reaction is to answer that question with another question: "Which Cuba do you want me to talk about?" There is the Cuba of rationing, power interruptions, water shortages, poor garbage collection, and regimentation: the underdeveloped Cuba struggling to survive in the face of the U.S. economic embargo and documented CIA attacks. But there is also the Cuba of new schools and hospitals going up everywhere, especially in the previously abandoned countryside, the Cuba with one of the largest fishing fleets of the world: the Cuba of people very proud of building a modern, more equitable society in the face of very difficult odds.

Very few people come to the question of Cuba with an open mind, and that includes us socialists, too. Most people prefer focusing on one or the other di-

“... democracy is not a luxury reserved for technologically advanced societies as they seem to believe, but is central to the development of true socialism.”



Michael Rivas, on the way to Cuba.

mensions of Cuban reality, either because they cannot countenance a revolutionary process as a modernizing force in the Third World, or because they must have heroes to worship and shore up their romantic commitments. But to the dismay of unreflecting critics and unreflective sympathizers, Cuba is both these pictures at once. It was impressive that most of the shortcomings of the Cuban revolutionary society were readily admitted to by Cuban government officials, including Castro himself.

After a visit of only ten days in total, my impressions are very much of a preliminary character. As I left the United States for the start of my first visit to Cuba I decided to guard against premature judgments and to try to remain as impartial and objective as possible. That was a very difficult assignment. After 17 years of forced absence, I could not really be a disinterested observer in what regards my own country and people for whom I care very much. Still, I tried, and for those ten days I discussed Cuban society, its accomplishments and problems at length with government officials,

visited with a number of relatives and friends, and talked freely to people in the street. Those are my limited, imperfect, but also very real sources.

At a forum on Cuba organized last year by the New York DSOC local I opened my remarks by stating first my basic support for the Cuban Revolution and its accomplishments, and then went into a detailed analysis of those elements in it with which I disagreed as a democratic socialist. I would like to reverse order here in order to emphasize the other side of the coin.

Local Participation, But Lack of Democracy

As a democratic socialist I must disagree with President Castro and the Communist Party of Cuba, because to me democracy is not a luxury reserved for technologically advanced societies as they seem to believe, but is central to the development of true socialism. The issues of "maximum leader" control, one-party system, lack of intellectual, academic, and press freedoms, government-controlled labor unions, and insufficient regard for individual human rights are very much alive in Cuba. People on the Left generally, and socialists in particular, cannot ignore them, not only for the sake of our own intellectual and political integrity, but also for the sake of the Cuban people, and the Cuban Revolution.

There are enough positive elements in the revolutionary process, though, to call for a careful approach in how to deal with those problems. The new, apparently more open attitude of the government and its willingness to enter into dialogue with Cuban exile progressive circles raises hopes that what may not have been possible in the past may become a new reality in the future. This was perhaps one of the most pervasive feelings I noticed in Cuba. Although times have been hard in the past and in some ways still are, there seems to be in most people a much more hopeful attitude towards the future. Government officials themselves, again including President Castro, show signs of flexibility and pragmatism at least with regards to domestic policies.

Although there is still plenty of regimentation in Cuba today, this seems to be tempered by the very much intact Cu-

ban informality and friendliness (which must be driving the Russians crazy). This, together with the increased flexibility and pragmatism that I mentioned above, makes this Revolution very much a Cuban rather than a Soviet-style one. It is a Marxist-Leninist regime to be sure (and that's where the dictatorship and the so-called democratic centralism come from) but the ethos of the Revolution is definitely very Cuban.

One of the most constructive dimensions of the process in recent years has been the effort towards institutionalization that includes the approval of a new constitution, direct and indirect elections for provincial and national legislative assemblies, and the separation of functions between the state and the Communist Party. These measures are not yet what we would really call democratic, but do orient the Cuban society in the direction of a reliable system of law on which citizens can count, sometimes, to stand against government officials. One of the most immediate results is that Cubans today are people very involved in local organizations in which issues of immediate concern such as rationing, street lighting, garbage collection, police protection, and traffic are openly discussed and often solved. The same seems to be true with workplace grievances. At that level at least, there is more participation in government by ordinary people than there ever was in the past in Cuba, or that there is in most, if not all, other Latin American countries. This has undoubtedly generated increasing support for the government.

New Sense of Freedom

The other significant impression that I received is that, at least in Havana, where I stayed all the time (not from any travel limitation but because of lack of time to visit the rest of the country), there doesn't seem to be much sense of fear or oppression among people, even among those very opposed to the government and its policies. It was from some of them that I learned that the situation has changed drastically for the better in the past five years. From the testimony of large numbers of ex-political prisoners (some of whom I knew personally), to just talking to people in restaurants whose opinions were not complimentary to the Revolution and who yet did not seem to have much concern for who was

“Although times have been hard in the past and in some ways still are, there seems to be in most people a much more hopeful attitude towards the future.”

around to hear them, we saw evidence of that change.

Not everything is rosy, of course. I was surprised not to hear any mention of the Cuban military presence in Africa, either from relatives, friends, or people in the street. It probably shows that that is still a taboo subject. Religious groups with peculiar practices such as Jehovah's

Witnesses and Seventh-Day Adventists still have great difficulties. I have already mentioned those features of Cuban society which would make me a dissenter if I lived there. And yet, I cannot help but have a new sense of hope that the Cuban government is indeed trying to open up the revolutionary society and that the Cuban people, given that opening, may be able to find alternative ways to respond to the needs and values which democratic socialists share. This is obviously little more than a combination of hopes, wishes, and a certain atmosphere breathed in Cuba today. We will be watching, and, where possible, helping, those developments. ■

Michael Rivas is chair of the Hispanic Commission of DSOC.

CAPITAL QUOTES ■

“Carter's White House image makers like to fuzz over the reactionary bent in the President's nature by saying that he is conservative on fiscal matters but liberal on social issues. Translated, this double talk means that while he intends to make the poor, the elderly, the blacks and other unfortunates living in rural and urban poverty in the midst of general affluence absorb the lion's share of the suffering that will flow from his anti-inflation policies, Carter will view their pain with compassion and sensitivity.”

*James Weighart
N.Y. Daily News
November 13, 1978*

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JIMMY HIGGINS REPORTS

'TIS BETTER TO GOUGE THAN TO RECEIVE DEPT.—The Federal Trade Commission has urged Pacific Northwest Bell to refund tolls for hundreds of Seattle-New York phone calls made just before the Christmas holiday. The phone company, it seems, told children through newspaper ads that they could talk to Santa by calling New York. Naturally, many kids took them up on it and placed coast-to-coast calls for a one-minute recording. "Our intent was to let the kids have some fun at Christmas and promote long-distance usage," according to a phone company spokesperson.

LOOK FOR A RESPONSE from the coalition that met last October in Detroit under the leadership of UAW President Doug Fraser. Despite cynical jibes that the liberal-left "coalition of coalitions" couldn't go anywhere, it is getting organized for major action. Two meetings in January discussed the possibility of naming the group the Progressive Alliance and making budget protests and lobbying to end Senate filibusters its top priorities. Besides the backing it gets from a broad section of organized labor, the Progressive Alliance will draw together religious figures, consumer leaders, organizations of blacks, Hispanics and feminists and liberal and radical activists from dozens of groups. If Carter does intend to run for re-election by opposing the "liberal interests," this is precisely the alliance he'll be running against. **THE FEDERAL BUDGET AND CARTER'S ECONOMICS** will be the focus of some big fights in the months ahead. AFL-CIO Research Director Rudy Oswald recently charged that "the Carter pro-

gram restricts labor activity significantly more than the wage controls under Nixon." With oil workers, truck drivers, auto workers, rubber workers and others bargaining in 1979, that will cause a strain. Budget priorities are even worse. The Pentagon is guaranteed a 3 percent increase in *real* income (which may be 10 percent or more in inflated 1979 dollars), but programs to benefit ordinary people will be slashed. The cities are already suffering. While Cleveland grabs the headlines, municipalities as diverse as Newark, N.J. and Anniston, Ala. are facing severe cutbacks and staggering deficits. Even Social Security faces the Carter axe.

OOPS! WERE WE EVER WRONG—Last month this column, relying on an article in the now-defunct *New Times*, speculated that the guru-Governor of California, Jerry Brown, might move left in his effort to challenge Carter in the 1980 primaries. No way! Brown has apparently decided that there are no limits to the era of limits and will gleefully hit Carter from the right. With Carter outdistancing Nixon in efforts to dismantle social welfare institutions, Brown has to move fast and far. So in his inaugural address last month, Brown told the California legislature that he's for a constitutional amendment requiring the federal government to balance the budget. Let us put forth a modest proposal: all the candidates for the Presidency should get down to the crux of the campaign. How about a debate on the proposition that child labor laws are unconscionably inflationary? Only problem is, who would defend keeping 10-year-olds out of sweatshops in the current political climate?

DEMOCRATIC LEFT

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