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The Betrayal of Bosnia

Thomas Harrison

AMID ALL THE RECENT POLEMICS OVER THE USE OF FORCE TO BACK UP THE CLINTON-NATO ultimatum on Bosnia, it was often forgotten that these were disputes over tactics, not policy. Whether the Serbs were bombed or cajoled, the goal was the same: to secure their participation in the partition plan which the U.S., Russia, and the Western European powers want to impose on Bosnia. Under this arrangement, agreed to by the Bosnians and Croats in March, the Serbs will be permitted to keep most of the land they have seized through aggression and "ethnic cleansing." What this means is that about one million refugees, mostly Muslims, who previously lived in lands allotted to the Serbs, will not be allowed to return to their homes. The ethnic cleansers, mass murderers and rapists will not be punished for their crimes; indeed, they will have triumphed.

The "peace plan" provides for the effective dissolution of the Bosnian government's sovereignty. The new Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a Muslim-Croat entity which must operate by consensus, will become a de facto protectorate of the UN, prior to being absorbed into a Greater Croatia. Likewise, the half of Bosnia presently assigned to the Serbs — and the Serbs are likely to end up with quite a bit more than half — will eventually become part of a Greater Serbia.

None of this represents a change in the diplomacy pursued by the great powers since the war began. These powers want the Serbs to stop killing and besieging, but only so that the partition of Bosnia can be finalized. They may or may not be willing to use a little more force to accomplish this. But the point is, their's is not a policy to *save* Bosnia; this can only be done if Bosnia is restored, which means rolling back Serb and Croat conquests. Clinton and the other Western leaders have repeatedly explained that restoration is the farthest thing from their minds. Right after the first NATO bombs fell on Gorazde, Clinton went on TV to assure the Serbs that NATO action should not be construed as intervention on behalf of the Bosnian side — that is, on behalf of those who were trying to defend the inhabitants of Gorazde against the threat of massacre. In fact, contrary to the persistent myth that the U.S. has been more pro-Bosnian than other Western governments, neither Clinton nor Bush has ever said he wanted Bosnian forces to *win* the war.

In addition to getting the Bosnians to accept defeat, Western leaders are anxious to establish NATO's credibility as an arbiter in the conflict.

THOMAS HARRISON is a member of the NEW POLITICS editorial board and associate director of the Campaign for Peace and Democracy.

The Serbs' obstinate refusal to accept the generous terms being offered must be extremely embarrassing, as well as downright irritating, for those who have been appeasing them so assiduously. NATO may feel compelled to administer some more punishment to the Serbs, but if so, it should be borne in mind that this is only because the power and prestige of the U.S. and its allies — not the survival of Bosnia — are thought to be at stake.

THE SO-CALLED SAFE HAVENS IN EASTERN BOSNIA, SUCH AS GORAZDE, WHICH NATO has sworn to protect, are likely to fall into Serbian hands eventually. But even if this part of the peace plan fails, it will probably not be enough to prompt much further action by NATO in Bosnia. However annoyed they may be at Serb defiance, NATO leaders will come to accept, if they haven't already, the assessment of Bernard Trainor, a retired marine general and director of national security programs at Harvard's Kennedy School of Government, who wrote in a *New York Times* op-ed piece (April 27, 1994) that a total Serb victory "is no defeat for the international community. Rather, it is the defeat of the notion that outside powers can pacify a bankrupt state festering with age-old animosities."

Trainor's characterization is fairly crammed with the imperial prejudices that have colored so much of the discourse on Bosnia: the lazy invocation of "age-old animosities" which "fester" among the unclean lesser breeds, the sneering dismissal of a state which cannot defend itself as "bankrupt," and, of course, the blithe assumption that the great powers might need to "pacify" these infantile and unruly people.

Even George Kenney, who resigned in protest from the State Department and has been a critic of the Bush-Clinton policy on Bosnia, is incapable of treating the Bosnian struggle with the most elementary respect. In a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed column (Feb. 6, 1994) he claims that the Bosnian government is no longer "moderate" and inclusive — it is a "Muslim state." Of course, Kenney is not making the preposterous claim that Sarajevo has become the capital of an Islamic state like Iran, but only that its base of support has been reduced to Muslims exclusively. This state is now dominated by "hard-liners"; the hard-line policy is to refuse any partition of Bosnia and to fight on toward complete victory over Serbian and Croatian aggression.

"It was one thing," Kenney says, "for the international community to seek to help one side (the Muslims) that suffered disproportionately from aggression. But our support for the Muslims finally tilted the local balance in their favor." This is bad, evidently. (By "support for the Muslims," incidentally, Kenney seems to mean feeding some of them and thereby giving them the physical strength to keep fighting.) He goes on to say that it was never actually possible for Bosnian forces to restore a multi-ethnic, democratic society; it was always the "international community" *alone* that could have done this, and now it's too late. At this late date, all the international community can do is force all sides to stop

fighting, even though, Kenney admits, this would confirm a profoundly unjust settlement.

Here Kenney converges with Trainor: why encourage the Bosnians when we *know*, in advance, that they must accept a settlement based on Serb and Croat conquests? And they have a point: more bombing to achieve the *same goal* — i.e., the dissolution of Bosnia — would only “prolong the agony.” For both Kenney and more cynical exponents of Western policy like Trainor, it is hard to imagine Bosnians as anything other than troublesome wards of NATO and the UN. Bosnians, apparently, can only win sympathy as victims. As fighters, determined to take back their homes and lands, they’re very unpopular — they’re “hard-liners.” In a recent *New York Times* dispatch by Chuck Sudetic, which bore the title, “As Bosnians Gain Militarily, They Lose Status as Victims” (Jan. 23, 1994), Haris Silajdzic, Bosnia’s prime minister, commented: “As soon as we begin to defend ourselves it’s as if they’re saying, ‘How dare you? You, a helpless victim? A victim over which we can cry, quote principles, have conferences and pass resolutions, and mention in our campaigns’.”

Because of this attitude, neither Clinton nor Bush before him — to the extent that they seriously considered military intervention in Bosnia at all — ever assumed that American troops and planes might be used as supporters of Bosnian forces. “Pin-prick” bombings aside, real military intervention has always been ruled out, and not primarily because of a fear of “quagmires” but because there has been no interest in intervention *on behalf* of Bosnia. The often-used analogies with Vietnam or with the German occupation of Yugoslavia during World War II are quite revealing; if you’re talking about intervention to fight alongside Bosnian forces, who represent the majority of the indigenous civilian population, they make no sense, since U.S. forces in Vietnam and German forces in Yugoslavia were supported by only a relative handful of collaborators and local right-wing elements. On the other hand, the analogies make sense if you’re talking about purely foreign intervention for foreign purposes.

THIS, THEN, IS THE ONLY SORT OF MILITARY INTERVENTION THAT THE U.S. AND THE other Western powers would consider. So far, they seem not to have considered it seriously. But those who call on Clinton, for example, to enforce the NATO ultimatum with more air raids, or demand that the UN send in ground troops to protect civilians, should realize that, to the extent they are successful, they are merely helping to legitimize the military option for carrying out the same policy the great powers are presently pursuing by primarily non-military means.

And this is the wrong policy. Instead of cheering-on NATO bombers, or elaborating fantastic schemes for UN trusteeships, those who feel any solidarity with Bosnia should be fighting for a policy that helps Bosnian forces reconquer the occupied territories, disarm the Serb and Croat militias, expel the Serbian and Croatian armies, bring the refugees home,

and put the war criminals on trial. This would be the only just and democratic solution. And *none* of this would be accomplished by Western intervention, no matter how fiercely NATO planes attack the Serb gunners.

These *have been* the goals of Bosnia's government, but so far it has not had the remotest chance of achieving them because its forces have been crippled by the UN-imposed arms embargo. Clinton has used various excuses for maintaining the embargo; but the Administration's main argument is that since it was decided on by the Security Council, the U.S. cannot unilaterally violate it. As has often been pointed out, however, the arms embargo contravenes Article 51 of the UN Charter, which asserts the right of all member nations to self-defense. Even within the terms of UN legalism, therefore, the embargo could be treated as null and void: imposed initially on Yugoslavia as a whole, it cannot apply to new nations like Bosnia which are now members of the UN.

Last year Christopher Hitchens, in his *Nation* column, quoted an unusually candid remark by British Defense Minister Malcolm Rifkind that the arms embargo could not be lifted "because it would mean we lost control." Britain and the other Western powers have been trying to control the situation from the beginning — first by attempting to prevent the breakup of Yugoslavia, and then by trying to keep the successor states as weak as possible so that there would be a quick Serbian victory with, it was hoped, a minimum of carnage. Last spring, the Clinton Administration made some noises about lifting the embargo and allowing the Bosnians to get some heavy weapons; this was a meaningless gesture, however, since it has always explicitly rejected military reconquest by the Sarajevo government as a solution.

The issue of control ought to be taken more seriously by Bosnia's real supporters too. Those who insist that with sufficient public pressure the American government can be forced to intervene militarily on behalf of human rights and democracy in another country usually cannot cite a single example of such an intervention in the past 50 years. As an example of a "good intervention," many point to recent U.S. policy toward South Africa. But while this was a case in which a powerful movement of solidarity demanding sanctions against the apartheid state did affect American policy, it is well to remember that the call for divestment and other economic and political sanctions did not propose that the U.S. and other nations should substitute themselves for the struggle of the South African people.

It is one thing to try to make U.S. foreign trade and aid policies favor democracy, but military intervention is quite different. The former can encourage people struggling for their rights; the latter inevitably takes power away from them. If Western governments were to lift the arms embargo against Bosnia and abandon the diplomacy of appeasement and partition, it could only increase the ability of Bosnians to determine their own destinies. On the other hand, military intervention could only subordinate Bosnia's struggle for freedom to the interveners' own agendas.

THE PERSISTENT EXPECTATION THAT THE U.S. WILL EVENTUALLY SOMEHOW “COME to the rescue” has been very debilitating for the Bosnians themselves; in the end, it may prove suicidal. It left Bosnian leaders almost totally unprepared for the Serb onslaught two years ago, when they believed Western promises of support, and it has made it easier for them to be maneuvered and double-crossed repeatedly ever since. Every Western threat of armed intervention against the Serbs has cruelly raised Bosnians’ hopes, while the obvious feebleness and insincerity of these threats have merely stiffened the Serbs’ determination to fight on.

Among American progressives — apart from a pro-Serbian Stalinoid wing — there has been a great outpouring of compassion for the sufferings of the Bosnian people. But this has largely refused to translate itself into support for Bosnia’s war of self-defense. Along with the Bush and Clinton Administrations and the mainstream press, progressives have tended to treat the Balkan conflicts as tribal civil wars. For this reason — and not because of some “knee-jerk” anti-interventionism, as pro-interventionists like Christopher Hitchens have claimed — the call for lifting the arms embargo has remained on the fringes of political debate in progressive circles.

If Bosnians have naively looked to Western elites for democratic solidarity, Western progressives have been extremely reluctant to offer such solidarity themselves because they share the reigning assumption that the Bosnians, like all Balkan and perhaps all Eastern European peoples, are basically incompetent. This has promoted the widespread belief that humanitarian salvation can only come through some form of Western neo-colonial protectorate over Bosnia, under whose benevolent auspices instruction will be given these nationalistic primitives in the mysteries of self-government, democracy, and civilized behavior. In short, most progressives are these days all too willing to believe that the U.S. government and other Western states, while not the ideal “moral agents” perhaps, are preferable to the people on the ground.

Even among those who do not take such a condescending attitude to Bosnia, the idea of humanitarian military intervention by the West is proposed as a “practical” alternative to the supposedly more risky and chaotic option of helping Bosnia arm and defend itself. But it is not practical or realistic at all. There is nothing in Western policy so far that provides any basis for believing military intervention would promote Bosnian interests, even accidentally. On the contrary, Western intervention in the form of the arms embargo and the peace talks has been aimed precisely at dissolving Bosnia as an independent state and an integrated society.

What is practical is to build pressure to lift the arms embargo, which should have been done a long time ago. Campaigning for intervention has precluded this effort because it is a *different* political option — one which also happens to be a dead end.

Intervention in Somalia

Stephen R. Shalom

IT IS SOMETIMES SAID THAT ANTI-INTERVENTIONISM IS A KNEE-JERK REACTION ON THE LEFT. There may be some truth to this charge, but how could anyone with any neuro-transmitters firing at all avoid having their knees go into the most violent spasms at the thought that a George Bush or the U. S. government might act out of humanitarian motives? Recall that the George Bush and the U. S. government intervening in Somalia were the same George Bush and the same U. S. government which in 1975 presided over the betrayal of the Kurds, resulting in thousands of deaths; which supported death squads in El Salvador and Contra terrorists in Nicaragua; and which embraced Saddam Hussein and invaded Panama to arrest Noriega whom they had earlier embraced. More significantly, this was the same George Bush and the same U.S. government that provided over \$150 million in arms to the brutal dictatorship of Muhammad Siad Barre in Somalia, continuing the arms deliveries even while Barre was engaged in what human rights groups called a "genocidal" attack on one of Somalia's clans.

I believe in grace, in a secular sort of way, but I don't think that George Bush had a religious conversion in November or December of 1992. Nor do I think the United States made a decisive break with its past at that time. So rational people should be on guard when the likes of George Bush or the U.S. government claim that they are going to send troops somewhere for humanitarian reasons.

A careful examination of the Somalia intervention does not reveal any hidden economic motives: those stories in the Left press about Somali oil are confused on the timing. There were some positive results from oil exploration before the fall of Siad Barre but the U. S. withdrew from Somalia in January 1991, not to return for nearly two years. If it was oil that motivated the intervention, why didn't it prevent the 1991 withdrawal? Nor is there great strategic interest in Somalia as a military base. Though Somalia once hosted an important U.S. naval facility at Berbera, Washington pulled out of it just before the Gulf War and has since gained direct access to so many bases in the Gulf that bases in Somalia have become superfluous.

But there is another important U.S. government interest that the Somali intervention served that had nothing whatever to do with helping starving people. The intervention was a way to legitimize the military budget in the face of strong public pressures to slash military spending and finally deliver the peace dividend.

Protecting the military budget was and remains a goal shared by the Pentagon and the Bush and Clinton administrations. This year, the U.S. will spend more on the military than the combined military expenditures of the rest of the world, and more than Richard Nixon did 20 years ago during the Cold War. Nev-

STEPHEN R. SHALOM *teaches political science at William Paterson College in New Jersey. He is the author of Imperial Alibi (South End Press) and writes on foreign policy for Z Magazine.*

ertheless, Bill Clinton declared in his State of the Union message that "We must not cut defense further." One way to rationalize that gargantuan military budget is to show the American people what a great public service the Pentagon provides, what a humanitarian organization it is. Operation Restore Hope was conceived as one big photo opportunity for the military, from the choice of the units dispatched to Somalia — the ones which had missed the chance to win glory in the war against Iraq — to storming the beaches with no one there other than the entire international press corps — to the ostentatious parades of military convoys carrying what one relief worker called "less than symbolic" amounts of food. Here was a low risk operation that could enhance the image of the military, or so Bush hoped. In his holiday greeting to the U.S. troops in Somalia, George Bush told them that they had "proved the wisdom of America's policy of peace through strength."

FEEDING THE PENTAGON, NOT FEEDING SOMALIS, WAS BUSH'S GOAL. But some will claim — and they are quite right — that just because something is done out of bad motives does not mean that its consequences are necessarily bad. If hundreds of thousands of lives were at stake, who cares what U.S. motives were? But, in fact, the intervention did not save hundreds of thousands of lives and there was good reason to believe from the beginning that it would not do so.

Claims that 80% of food shipments were being looted before the intervention were false; the more effective aid agencies had loss rates far below this figure. The attack on a United Nations food ship in Mogadishu harbor just before Bush announced his decision to send troops turned out to have been the work of one clan faction trying to induce UN intervention. And, most important, the worst of the famine was over by the time U.S. troops arrived.

On October 7, 1993, President Bill Clinton claimed that Operation Restore Hope saved close to one million lives (though in the same speech he asserted that only two-thirds of a million had been at risk of dying). In fact, however, death rates had been falling dramatically before U.S. troops landed in Somalia. According to Rakiya Omaar, the most likely excess death estimates for December would have been in the range of 10,000-15,000; deaths not due to starvation, but to disease caused by the previous malnutrition. Operation Restore Hope drew people to refugee camps where food was distributed but where disease was rampant. The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that in Bardera, for example, the mortality rate doubled in the first month of Restore Hope and quadrupled for children under five. Many of those who died were people who came to the camp weak and near death, but the crowded conditions probably helped spread disease.

As U.S. troops arrived in the famine zone, they found that the worst of the starvation was over. According to the *New York Times*,

it has become clear that because so many of the hungry died before the foreign forces arrived, emergency food is perhaps a less critical issue than was originally outlined. Just as important now, say Western diplomats, aid workers and Somalis, is the need for political reconciliation, to allow Somalia some semblance of normality.

The crucial question, then, is whether political reconciliation was been facilitated or hindered by the massive U.S. military presence.

THE U.S. INTERVENTION DISRUPTED CAREFULLY NEGOTIATED AGREEMENTS THAT PROVIDED local stability. For example, in the two months before the U.S. intervention, Baidoa had been relatively peaceful as a result of understandings worked out between rival clans. However, on the eve of the Marine landing these agreements collapsed and gave way to rampaging militias, causing thousands of people, as well as relief agencies, to flee.

U.S. policy charged headlong into the complex web of Somali politics, bringing to bear its special blend of arrogance and ignorance. Before the U.S. intervention there were signs that Muhammad Farah Aidid's power was waning within his sub-clan. Initially, the U.S. promoted Aidid by treating him as a key leader; then it demonized him, driving even members of his sub-clan who disagreed with him to rally around him, fearing they were, in the words of the Operations Director for the U.S.-led Command, "on the edge of a clan eradication." Now, Aidid has become one of the most powerful political figures in the country; a tragedy, because he is a brutal thug. (I don't agree with those who say that it is inappropriate to refer to Aidid or Ali Mahdi or Omar Jess or Hersi Morgan as warlords. What is inappropriate is to fail to recognize that the United States is not short on warlords of its own.)

An example of these latter warlords in action was the operation to *get* Aidid, which seemed clearly designed to assassinate him. As one aide put it, "We didn't plan to kill him, but the president knew that if something fell on Aidid and killed him, no tears would be shed." To encourage this happy outcome U.S. Cobra helicopters destroyed the stairs in a building where Haber Gedir clan leaders were meeting to cut off any escape and then fired missiles into the complex, killing 75 people. Aidid did escape and he escaped numerous other attempts on his life, but thousands of Somali civilians did not. (It might seem that this is damning the United States, on the one hand for befriending Aidid and, on the other, for demonizing him. That is the case: there is no easy way to be a colonial master.)

Twenty-six relief organizations in Somalia sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, charging that the UN offensives left a moral and legal cloud over the peacekeeping operation. Italy's Catholic bishops called the attack "a vile American raid," and both Italy's defense minister and the president of Eritrea condemned the "Rambo" behavior of the U.S./UN forces. None of these humanitarian objections dissuaded the Clinton Administration from continuing its policies in Somalia, however. It was only when there were a handful of U.S. casualties that Clinton suddenly announced that he was going to withdraw.

Even those of us opposed to the U.S. intervention had reason to have mixed feelings about Clinton's withdrawal announcement. On the one hand, Rambo wasn't helping the Somali people. On the other hand, it seemed that Washington was going to follow one of its two basic policies toward Africans: either dominate them or let them starve. "It's really very simple," said one U.S. citizen quoted in the *New York Times*: "If I have to choose between pictures of starving Somalian babies or dead American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, well, I don't want to see any more dead Americans. Sorry."

THERE HAS ALWAYS BEEN, HOWEVER, ANOTHER ALTERNATIVE TO THE RACIST POLICY OF DOMINATION and the racist policy of neglect. That is a policy of internationalism that calls on the U.S. government, first, to stop doing the things it has been doing to

create crises like the one in Somalia: arming dictators, imposing draconian economic adjustment packages on impoverished nations driving their people into even more desperate conditions. And second, on the positive side, we should demand that the government support policies that involve the local people in solving their own problems, with financial assistance, patient help in mediation and, occasionally, a small UN peacekeeping presence. This is a far cry from sending in 28,000 Marines.

Kevin M. Cahill, an American doctor with 30 years of experience in Somalia, summed it up very well in early 1993. Cahill warned that he had

a physician's profound mistrust of "quick fix" therapy, of the dangers in deceiving ourselves that dramatic displays can ever substitute for the tedious tasks required to truly rehabilitate a gravely wounded nation. Changing a humanitarian effort into a security action may offer a temporary respite from the pain of frustration, but it reflects an approach that, while gratifying the short-term needs of the healer, fails to resolve the problems of the patient. In fact, the vast scope of military action adversely alters the critical relationship between donor and recipient, drains the finite resources available, and imposes a transient mirage of well-being that simply cannot be sustained.

Anyone thinking about the issue of humanitarian intervention would do well to keep these words in mind.

[The above is based on a talk given at a conference on intervention sponsored by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy, April 16, 1994, in New York City. For a foot-noted version, please send \$1 for photocopying and postage to S. Shalom, Dept. of Political Science, William Paterson College, Wayne, NJ 07470.]

A Refugee Policy to Support Haiti's Killers

Mark Dow

UNITED STATES POLICY TOWARD HAITIAN REFUGEES, EVEN WHEN IT IS CRITICIZED, is often portrayed as a difficult dilemma for well-intentioned policymakers: after all, we only want to stem the tide of refugees while we work out a diplomatic solution to restore President Aristide to Haiti. The U.S. promotes this way of thinking; the Clinton Administration urged Aristide to keep quiet about the refugees in exchange for diligent U.S. efforts to restore democracy. But these "efforts" have been a charade. And U.S. immigration policies are an extension of U.S. foreign policy. In the case of Haiti, that means that the forced return of refugees is part-and-parcel of the U.S. government's efforts to suppress real democracy in Haiti. The whole package is wrapped in a tangle of lies and distortions.

The United States began to interdict Haitian boats in 1981, the same year it began a policy of "indefinite detention" for Haitians at the Krome detention center in Miami and elsewhere. The new interdiction agreement was based on an exchange of letters between the governments of Ronald Reagan and Jean-Claude Duvalier. For the appearance of compliance with international law, the U.S. letter said that Haitians who qualified for refugee status would not be returned. But from the very start, the interdiction "screening" procedure for finding those Haitians who might be genuine political refugees was a mere formality. This is clear in the opening statement that used to be made to interdicted Haitians on board the Coast Guard cutters: "The Immigration Officer will also ask you questions concerning any fears you may have [about returning] ... Meanwhile, the ship will be returning to Port-au-Prince, where most of you will be disembarked." And most of them were. From the start of the program in 1981 until a month before Aristide's inauguration almost ten years later, some 23,000 Haitians were picked up. Eight of them were allowed into the U.S. to apply for political asylum.

In the seven months of Aristide's presidency, from February 7 to September 30, 1991, the number of Haitians fleeing their country dropped drastically. That was perhaps the only advantage for the U.S. government of Aristide's popularity in Haiti (he won 67% of the vote). His popularity posed a threat to the U.S., since Aristide wanted to do things such as raising the minimum wage to 50 cents an hour. U.S. corporations

MARK DOW has written several articles on Haiti for NEW POLITICS. His most recent appeared in Volume IV, No. 4, Winter 1994, #16.

were eager to continue exploiting Haitian labor. So the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) worked behind the scenes in Haiti to defeat Aristide's minimum wage proposal. This proposal and others like it led to Aristide's ouster in late 1991. According to the National Labor Committee, "the first thing the U.S. companies did on returning to Haiti [after the coup] was to fire the union members at their plants"; and today, through a loophole it put in the embargo, the U.S. government itself is buying baseballs assembled in Haiti for U.S. companies by women who "are earning as little as 5 cents an hour."¹

HUNDREDS OF HAITIANS WERE KILLED IN THE FIRST DAYS OF THE COUP, AND THOUSANDS have been killed since then. Military and paramilitary repression is widespread, as the Haitian elites aim to destroy every vestige of the kind of democratic organization that was flourishing under President Aristide and that gave Haitians, as poor as they are, enough dignity and hope that they wanted to stay in Haiti. Understandably, thousands of Haitians tried to flee the killing and torture — some toward the United States, others to the Dominican Republic, and still others into hiding within Haiti. Predictably, the U.S. refused to use its influence with the Haitian military — many of whom it has trained, or paid through the C.I.A.² — to restore a President it did not want. The Bush Administration knew it did not have to go that far to keep Haitians out. It was already functioning according to the logic which attorney Michael Ratner would later spell out in a discussion of Bush's successor: "As long as Haitians were appearing at the borders of the United States there was an important domestic political reason for Clinton to make a serious push for democracy in Haiti. It was one way to stop refugees. But there was another way to stop refugees: interdict them and summarily return them to the hands of their oppressors in Haiti."³

In the early aftermath of the coup, the U.S. soon found its interdiction resources stretched thin. As a result, the "screening" interviews, already biased and inadequate, became more perfunctory than ever. Interviews started taking place at a refugee camp set up on the U.S. Naval base at Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, in late 1991. Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) officials in charge of the interviews often knew little about Haiti; some asylum officers did not know who had led the coup, who was heading the illegal government, or what Aristide's common nickname is.⁴ Yet even with the odds so strongly against them, many Haitians were being "screened in" on the sheer strength of their asylum claims. INS officials in Guantánamo began to get a clear message from Washington: fewer Haitians must be screened in. Again Washington was ignoring the entire concept, grounded in international law, of case-by-case evaluation of potential refugees.

How could the Haitians receive fair interviews under these circumstances? They couldn't. So Miami's Haitian Refugee Center filed suit

(*HRC v. Baker*). The government's defense, like its public statements on the issue, was full of lies. To back up one assertion, the United States submitted a declaration of Robert K. Wolthius, identified as Assistant Secretary of Defense. Wolthius "stated in his declaration that he 'has been closely and regularly involved in the formulation and implementation of U.S. policy concerning the Republic of Haiti.'" When deposed by Haitian Refugee Center attorneys, however, Wolthius admitted "that he had only a vague understanding as to what the policy was, [and] was not involved in formulating the policy." Incredibly, Wolthius had actually "assumed that position [of Assistant Secretary of Defense] for one day and one day only — the day he signed the declaration."⁵

A more damaging deception came from Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs Bernard Aronson. In a sworn declaration, "Aronson makes the dramatic claim that he has 'credible reports' which suggest 'that as many as 20,000 more Haitians are massing on one of Haiti's coasts preparing to depart by sea for the United States.' ... In fact, there was, and is, no massing. When deposed on this point Aronson admitted he was not certain and retracted the use of the emotionally laden term 'massing'" He also refused to identify the source of his claim, saying it was " 'classified.' " ⁶ Someone closer to the scene contradicted Aronson: " 'I have no knowledge of a mass like that preparing to leave. I don't know how anybody could know that,' said Commander Larry Mizell, the top U.S. Coast Guard officer in Haiti. Many people in Haiti thought the State Department's estimate might refer to La Gonave Island ... a gathering and departure point for thousands of Haitians since [the coup] ... A visit to La Gonave ... revealed no crowds of people visible ... " ⁷ Unfortunately, in spite of such corrections, the scare tactic's damage had been done (a pattern of loud disinformation and quiet correction that would be repeated with the C.I.A.-generated, personal attacks on Aristide).

IN *HRC v. BAKER*, THE GOVERNMENT ALSO DEFENDED ITSELF by saying that even if the interviews were not perfect under the circumstances, all that international law required was some form of screening to find political refugees, and that the U.S. was doing that. The fact that results were largely predetermined did not seem to matter. In January 1992, too early in the process to know, INS Deputy Commissioner Ricardo Inzunza said that 90% of the Haitian cases from Guantánamo would ultimately be denied (the process was that those "screened-in" would be brought to the U.S., and would then formally apply for political asylum here).⁸ When INS's Chief Asylum Officer, Gregg Beyer, who oversaw the screening decisions, wrote his superiors that "the interviews were 'increasingly inconclusive' and 'also of rapidly decreasing validity' ... Beyer's supervisor relieved him of his ... screening responsibilities."⁹ Under the scrutiny that came with ongoing litigation, the screening process did improve temporarily. But the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the government.

In May 1992, even the dubious justification used in *HRC v. Baker* — that there was refugee screening taking place, regardless of its quality — went out the window when President Bush issued an executive order that fleeing Haitians be picked up and returned with no interviews at all. In other words, now they were not even given a chance to explain why they were leaving. *Candidate* Clinton criticized this policy unambiguously: “I am appalled by the decision of the Bush Administration to pick up fleeing Haitians on the high seas and forcibly return them to Haiti before considering their claim to political asylum.” *President* Clinton has continued the policy, and even tightened it by ordering a Coast Guard and Navy blockade to keep potential refugees on the island.

The Clinton Administration defended Bush’s 1992 order in the Supreme Court and won (*Sale v. Haitian Centers Council*). The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called the decision “a setback to modern international refugee law which has been developing for more than forty years.” In March 1993, the Organization of American States declared the interdiction program a violation of international law. When the exiled Aristide government announced a January 1994 conference in Miami to be entitled “Democracy: The Solution to the Refugee Crisis,” the Clinton Administration did not like the focus. It pressured Aristide, and the conference was instead called “Democracy: The Solution to the Haitian Crisis,” focusing on the Governors Island agreement, signed in July 1993, and according to which Aristide should have already been back in Haiti. Still, the conference did recommend that the Haitian government end the interdiction “agreement.” In April 1994, in the context of increasingly brutal murders of Aristide supporters in Haiti, President Aristide — finally — announced that in six months the interdiction agreement would be abrogated by Haiti; as the legitimate president he can do this, and the last legal “justification” for the interdiction program will be gone. Legalities are not likely to matter then any more than they do now. In the course of repeated warnings to the courts throughout both series of litigation to stay out of foreign policy, the executive branch has acknowledged that its need to return the Haitians is precisely foreign policy: “this exodus ... is threatening our foreign policy interests ...”; and “[t]he course of our foreign policy and immigration enforcement may not be dictated by hastily-crafted judicial intervention.”¹⁰ (This is not to say that the refugee policy is not also a response to perceived domestic political considerations — only that the two cannot be separated. And I say “perceived” because the architects of the anti-refugee policies which seem to respond to the public’s general anti-immigrant hysteria have themselves played a large role in provoking that hysteria in the first place.)

ONCE AGAIN, INSTEAD OF PUTTING PRESSURE ON THE HAITIAN MILITARY TO END repression, the U.S. is likely to renew its lies to the American people

about the refugees in order to justify returning them to potentially deadly circumstances. One lie Clinton has been telling, in the same words Bush used, is that the policy of return is meant to "save lives" by discouraging Haitians from leaving by boat. But the Haitians know what choice they are making when they decide that the dangers in Haiti are greater than the dangers of escaping. When Haitians are returned, the U.S. shows its concern for their lives by handing them directly over to the Haitian military on the docks at Port-au-Prince. Arrests of returning Haitians, while U.S. embassy officials watch, are commonplace by now. In a September 1993 cable to the Secretary of State, the embassy described a typical "interrogation" witnessed by embassy officials on the dock: it "appeared to be a 'fishing expedition' for persons considered troublemakers by the police and probably designed to intimidate the returnees." Since February, the military has not allowed U.S. officials or the U.N. Civilian Mission to visit the detained returnees, some of whom are reportedly taken to Anti-Gang headquarters, the branch of the Haitian police run by Lt. Col. Michel François, widely considered to be at the center of the coup and its subsequent repression.

But the U.S. will continue to claim that returned Haitians are not targeted. This claim, like the more general downplaying of the violence on the island, as human rights groups have pointed out, serves as a wink to the Haitian military, while it "justifies" the policy of forced return. When the U.S. makes this claim, it is worth recalling that in 1992 the UNHCR publicly confirmed it had evidence of certain returnees being persecuted, and that the U.S. government had this information as well; and that the UNHCR was then prohibited from doing its own interviews of Haitians at Guantánamo without a U.S. military presence.¹¹ The U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince does do some monitoring of repatriates (only because it was embarrassed into doing so after Aronson falsely claimed, in February 1992, that such monitoring was taking place, when in fact the embassy staff had been greatly reduced as a result of the violence). A study of embassy records of this monitoring "reveals that its primary purpose is to discredit repatriates' stories."¹²

One leader of monitoring missions has been INS intelligence agent Gunther Wagner. Wagner served in the German Army during World War II, and then went to work for the U.S. Army Security Police; he became a naturalized American citizen, and did counterinsurgency work in Vietnam, and then was an advisor to Somoza's secret police in Nicaragua. In the 1980's he became administrator of the INS's Krome detention center in Miami.¹³ In Haiti, Wagner has been responsible for some 600 repatriate interviews, and "knows next to nothing about Haiti and very little about U.S. refugee law," according to human rights groups. His technique involves checking in with the local military commander, identifying his "team" in a public place, and asking if anyone knows of any returnees in the area. "Wagner discounts the claims of people he inter-

viewed who said they were in hiding: 'If an individual talked to me, in public, and tells me that he cannot go out because he has to be afraid to be arrested, then he would not have been in my presence, he would not have been in the village square or in the neighbor's house to talk to me.'"¹⁴

The distortions in one particular Wagner report were revealed by someone in a position to know. On March 11, 1992, Wagner visited the town of Anse-a-Galets on the Haitian island of La Gonave. A cable from the embassy to the State Department describes Wagner's findings: "The INS team debriefed 67 repatriates, and a number of other persons including the local army commander and resident priest. All agree there have been no killings or violence, but some shooting in the air. La Gonave has been one of the quietest spots in the country after the coup and remains very calm. The priest had a poster of Aristide prominently displayed on his front door. The priest expressed no fear of the military. There were no claims of reprisal or persecution." Thinking he was the priest mentioned, the Reverend Bill Quigley, an American who has worked on La Gonave for thirteen years, wrote a response to Wagner's report; it turns out that the "resident priest" was Quigley's housemate, but the value of Quigley's response is still clear. Reverend Quigley writes that the poster on his front door was of Michael Jordan. He had a poster of Aristide *inside* the house, and believes he could get away with this (displaying or even possessing pictures of Aristide has brought many Haitians beatings or worse) because the house belonged to two Americans, "not because there was a climate of calm on the island." Quigley also writes that "[t]he murder of 3 men in 3 separate incidents [on La Gonave] by the Haitian military is well documented," and that a particular Haitian military officer (whom Quigley names) often "arrested without warrant, had the soldiers beat anyone arrested for whatever reason, [and] held for whatever time he decided." Concerning fear, he explains that to "survive under military rule after your Ambassador had urged you to leave the country ... you don't express this to strangers who come to your house on a visit." Finally, he says that "[t]here were few reprisals of returning boat people on the Island because the military continued to collect the fees as the people departed a second and third time." In other words, the widely-reported military extortion was more profitable in this area than killing.

The reason Quigley's account exists is that he wrote it in support of a Haitian asylum applicant. INS asylum adjudicators typically receive "advisory opinions" on individual applicants' claims from the State Department's Bureau of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs (BHRHA). In a May 1993 opinion, the BHRHA repeated the embassy's report of Wagner's findings almost verbatim. Quigley wrote "to correct and re-focus" the record. But how often can that happen?¹⁵

EACH YEAR, THE STATE DEPARTMENT SUBMITS ITS *COUNTRY REPORTS ON HUMAN Rights Practices* to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. A reader

without other sources might think that the State Department is being fair, just as she might think the embassy monitoring reports are fair. Certainly the section on Haiti in the 1993 *Country Reports* mentions a lot of violence and repression. But a February 3, 1994 letter to the State Department from Ian Martin, former Director of Human Rights for the United Nations Organization of American States International Civilian Mission in Haiti, points to some distortions. Martin was with the United Nations/Organization of American States International Civilian Mission in Haiti during the time reflected in the State Department report. He writes that he "believe[s] that the report tends to understate the death toll. Perhaps more serious however is the way in which it minimizes the extent to which killings can be assumed to have been politically motivated ..." He adds "that the extent and political character ... of disappearances" for a given period are "seriously downplayed." Also, the State Department "seriously understates the failure of the military to respect the terms of reference of the [civilian] Mission over access to detainees ... Most regrettable however is the absence of any reference to what we described in our report as 'persistent threats made against people apparently because of their contacts with the Mission or because the fact that they had been the victims of human rights violations has been made public by the Mission and others.'" The State Department also uses this opportunity to raise the old Aristide-advocates-violence flag again; Martin responds: "I don't know what incident the writer has in mind in stating that a Mission vehicle was stoned by a pro-Aristide mob; neither the Executive Director of the Mission nor I can recall any incident which could be so described. Certainly it is quite wrong to give the impression that the Mission was intimidated in its work at any time by pro-Aristide groups ..."

The U.S. will continue to claim that most Haitians are "economic" refugees, even though they are not even interviewing those fleeing, and even though, in other contexts, U.S. officials cannot help but admit how bad the political repression is. An anonymous U.S. embassy official recently told the *New York Times*, "Every report is modified and diluted until every bite is taken out."¹⁶ In December, when Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights, John Shattuck, called for a review of the policy of return without screening, he was reportedly reprimanded. But the dissenting voices are becoming harder to silence.

The U.S. says that it has "in-country" processing centers so that Haitians can apply for refugee status before they leave Haiti. It will not mention how few Haitians in real danger have access to these centers, or the number of Haitians who have been arrested or disappeared while their applications were pending, or that two of the three centers are within sight of a military headquarters.¹⁷ But several unnamed INS officers recently spoke to the *Miami Herald* about in-country processing, and it is clearly as much a sham as the Guantánamo processing was. One officer

summed up interviewers' attitudes by saying, "No one ever gets in trouble for denying a claim." Another said that the unreasonable demands on applicants "could lead to the result that the only qualified refugees would be dead ones." One INS employee put his doubts in writing for his superiors, and now he is seeking federal protection as a whistle-blower in order to save his job.¹⁸

Meanwhile, all of this refugee processing is supplying U.S. government agencies with detailed information on individual Haitians and on Haiti's popular democratic organizations. Information on screened-out applicants was collected from the INS at Guantánamo by the State Department and by the U.S. embassy in Port-au-Prince. INS even tried to withhold individual Haitian activists' names, but the State Department did not respect this attempt at confidentiality.¹⁹ A March 1992 State Department cable says that the information was for "monitoring" of returnees (again, less than a month earlier, ABC News had reported that "there is no real monitoring system at all"²⁰). Cables from the same period mention that a "master list," "name-retrievable" database, and "regional profiles" are being set up, all for the diligent monitoring of repatriated Haitians' safety. Coast Guard logs with the names and addresses of interdicted Haitians are routinely handed over to the Haitian authorities, who proceed to fingerprint returnees.

There is at least one documented precedent for the U.S. helping a repressive government to target activists which the U.S. is deporting. In the 1980's, the FBI worked with the INS to pass confidential information from Salvadoran asylum applications to the Salvadoran National Guard. The FBI even provided the Salvadoran military with scheduling information on deportations.²¹ Although the U.S. does not *officially* recognize or support the Haitian military regime (as it did the Salvadoran one), it has covertly supported the Haitian regime, and has *de facto* recognized it for some time in order to facilitate the repatriation of Haitian refugees. Gretta Tovar Siebentritt of Americas Watch says she has seen no evidence that U.S. officials share information from the in-country processing (ICP) files with Haitian authorities, but that "there's no way that they can protect that information." Another source told me he knows of people removing papers from the ICP centers without scrutiny. Siebentritt says it is troubling that ICP officials do not even consider the whole issue a problem.²²

According to a September 29, 1993 memorandum from the INS Asylum Division Director, "we frequently receive requests from the FBI and CIA to review the files of asylum applicants." The memo was distributed with a legal opinion from the Justice Department's Office of General Counsel on the question of such disclosure. The legal opinion, according to the memo, "concludes that information contained in the asylum files may be disclosed to FBI and CIA officials when the need to examine such information is in conjunction with a U.S. Government investigation concern-

ing a criminal or civil proceeding." It cannot be disclosed, however, "for the purpose of gathering intelligence unrelated" to such investigations. Needless to say, the FBI and CIA do not depend exclusively on legal channels of information. It would be worthwhile to know precisely what led the Justice Department to issue this opinion right now.

IN HAITI RIGHT NOW, MILITARY-BACKED VIOLENCE IS GETTING WORSE. RAPE, WHICH used to be rare there, has become a political weapon. Other new techniques of repression include burning down entire neighborhoods, and mutilating bodies — sometimes by "facial scalplings" — then leaving the bodies in view as warnings to other Aristide supporters. Meanwhile, in March, the United States was pressing Aristide to accept a plan for reconciliation that failed to include a date for his return. "We are encouraged by the parliamentary proposal because it has broad-based support," said Lawrence Pezzullo, Washington's Special Envoy to Haiti (at the time). Under questioning by a Senate committee, Pezzullo admitted that this plan originated in the State Department, not in the Haitian parliament. USAID, through the Center for Democracy, financed the Washington visits of Haitian politicians who came to "negotiate" the proposal; one of them, Frantz-Robert Mondé, "a former member of the Tontons Macoute, was chosen president of the Haitian Chamber of Deputies, which is now dominated by supporters of the military dictatorship."²³ At least ten officers in that military have received training in the U.S. *since the coup*, according to Pentagon documents which contradict earlier Defense Department denials. The neo-Duvalierist, quasi-political group FRAPH (Front pour l'Avancement et le Progrès d'Haiti), essentially an extension of the army, and responsible for much of the escalating repression, has a presence in practically every section of Haiti now. And there is testimony that Fort Dimanche, the notorious torture center in Port-au-Prince, shut down under Aristide, is now functioning again.²⁴

Supporters of democracy in Haiti are in an impossible position. If they remain in Haiti, they face the threat of brutal military and paramilitary repression. If they flee, they flee into the hands of the U.S. sponsors of that repression, and they must face the threat of an immigration policy here which is a crucial part of the killing in Haiti. By raising our voices against interdiction and the forced return of Haitians, we will send a message to the U.S. government and the Haitian rulers. Ironically, that is the best chance of ending an exodus from Haiti in the long run. In the short run, it is what we must do to save Haitian lives.

April 1994

POSTSCRIPT

A POWERFUL REGIME, IN DEFIANCE OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, has been committing piracy ("illegal violence at sea") and sending all its victims to its semi-independent collaborators, who have a long record of murder and tor-

ture. Now the powerful regime, in an apparent concession to its critics, has announced that it will only send 19 of every 20 victims to the killers.

This is essentially the change in refugee policy announced by the Clinton Administration this week. Near the end of May, according to the announcement, interdicted Haitians will no longer be returned directly to Port-au-Prince. Instead, they will be interviewed ("fairly quickly," says Clinton) on board Navy ships, and perhaps also in third countries, if such arrangements can be made. Those Haitians determined by interviewers to be political refugees will be brought to the United States for asylum, and the others returned to Haiti. This may sound like an improvement over previous policy: to an extent it is if it saves some lives. But even more lives may be at stake in the longer run, since the real goal of the policy shift is probably to diffuse the recently increasing criticism, while minimizing substantive change. Thus, along with the shift in refugee policy, Clinton has announced the replacement of Haiti advisor Pezzulo with William Gray III, president of the United Negro College Fund, and the Black Congressional Caucus — which had been leading the intermittent criticism of Clinton's Haiti policy from within Congress — quickly applauded the choice of Gray whose weakness is reported to be that he knows little about Haiti.

As for the new shipboard asylum screening interviews, deputy National Security advisor, Samuel Berger, is already confident that 19 of every 20 Haitians will be found to be "economic" refugees. I leave aside for now the problematic distinction between "political" and "economic" refugees. How does Berger already know the outcome of the screenings (though administration "estimates" of the approval rate already dropped from 10 percent to 5 percent within two days of the President's announcement)? The estimates are apparently based on current approval rates for in-country screening, a system which even U.S. immigration officials describe as a charade, as detailed above. Now, a version of this charade will take place on board ships, reducing the slim chances of fair interviews even further. Back in 1990, the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights concluded, quite simply, "The conditions under which the interviews [of interdicted Haitians] occur make accurate fact-finding impossible" — and this was before Coast Guard ships were overwhelmed by the large numbers of post-coup refugees. These new interviews, like earlier ones, are clearly intended as "a 'formal' validation of a predetermined result." (*HRC v. Baker*).

But even all this discussion of the new screening process is a diversion. We must simply protect Haitians who are fleeing. Of course this would cost money. It also costs money to maintain the Coast Guard and Naval blockade Clinton put in place; and the refugee camp at Guantanamo costs money; and the interdiction process itself has cost money for over ten years; and it has cost money to support a succession of military dictatorships in Haiti and to train Haitian officers in the U.S. But who has

been asking about these costs?

OF COURSE HAITIANS ARE LIKELY TO SEEK REFUGE in large numbers, since they are being murdered, tortured, raped, and disappeared in large numbers. But when people like Senator Bob Graham of Florida talk about his state being overrun with Haitians, do they also mention the numbers of Cuban immigrants welcomed here on an almost daily basis, who are immediately released from INS custody? The point is not that those people should be turned away, though that may more likely happen than changing the double standard by allowing the Haitians in. The point is that we hear little about the numbers of Cuban rafters because immigration policy is suited to foreign policy objectives. Under the Cuban Adjustment Act of 1966, most Cubans who get here can simply apply for residency after one year.

Similarly, Jews and other religious minorities in the former Soviet Union benefit from special treatment. The in-country refugee processing for them is based on a lower standard of proof of persecution than would normally apply, as a result of special legislation which applies only to them. Their approval rate hovers around 95 percent; the approval rate for Haiti's in-country processing is approximately 5 percent (some put it even lower) — and the State Department is currently manipulating that number upward by narrowing the pool of those allowed to apply in the first place. In fiscal year 1993, that 95 percent approval rate for refugees from the former Soviet Union meant 50,924 people. But that was not portrayed as an immigration crisis. A boat of 400 Haitians, on the other hand, is national news, even while the White House decides what to do with them.

Recent policy shifts do not change the fact that Haitians are victims of political persecution at home, and victims of racism and political powerlessness here.

May 11, 1994

NOTES

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6. Plaintiffs' Application to Stay the Mandates of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit Pending Certiorari at 36-7, *Haitian Refugee Ctr. v. Baker*, 949 F.2d 1109 (11th Cir.), *cert denied*, 112 S. Ct. 1245 (1992).

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8. Cheryl Little, "United States Haitian Policy: A History of Discrimination," *New York Law School Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. X, Spring 1993, Part Two, 315n.

9. Petition for Writ of Certiorari at 10, *Haitian Refugee Ctr. v. Baker*, *cert. denied*, 112 S. Ct. 1245 (1992).

10. *Sale v. Haitian Centers Council*, oral argument before U.S. Supreme Court, March 2, 1993; and U.S. Government's Emergency Motion for Stay Pending Appeal of U.S. District Court's Preliminary Injunction, found in pleadings of Case. No. 91-6060, *Haitian Refugee Center v. Baker*, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit.

11. Little, 303n.

12. Americas Watch and National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, *Half the Story: The Skewed U.S. Monitoring of Repatriated Haitian Refugees*, June 1992, 6.

13. "Who is Gunther Wagner," Washington Office on Haiti, Feb. 1994.

14. *Half the Story*, 6-9.

15. Thanks to attorney Merrill Smith, Church World Service, Miami, for providing the pieces of this account.

16. "A Rising Tide of Political Terror Leaves Hundreds Dead in Haiti," *New York Times*, April 2, 1994.

17. See generally, Americas Watch, National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, and Jesuit Refugee Service/USA, *No Port in a Storm: The Misguided Use of In-Country Refugee Processing in Haiti*, Sept. 1993.

18. "U.S. leaves Haitians no way out," and "INS officer who spoke out is now fighting for his job," *Miami Herald*, April 17, 1994.

19. John Canham-Clyne, "Haiti: Phoenix Rising," *The Progressive*, April 1994.

20. *Nightline*, Feb. 24, 1992.

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The New Right Victory in Italy

Luciana Castellina

THE COMMEMORATION OF APRIL 25TH, IN HONOR OF THE DAY OF LIBERATION FROM fascism in 1945, is an important event in postwar Italy. But in recent years it has become a rather formal occasion, as old partisan loyalties have given way to simple nostalgia. This year, however, the significance of the anniversary shifted from its postwar moorings. April 15th will now be remembered for one of the largest demonstrations in modern Italian history, called in Milan by a broad anti-fascist spectrum — from Communists to left-wing Christian Democrats — in response to the ominous results of the recent election.

The election gave the Rightist Alliance a commanding majority of seats in both the lower and upper houses of the Italian parliament. This alliance is an odd coalition of three extremist parties — the Northern League, which seeks the break-up of the Italian nation-state; the Movimento Sociale Italiano, which currently plays down its deep roots in neo-fascism; and the newly-established Forza Italia, the brain-child of a rich, charismatic media tycoon, Silvio Berlusconi, who flooded his three national television stations with campaign propaganda. (Never in history anywhere in the world has the direct control of the media played such a decisive role. A TV coup d'etat!) The platform of Forza Italia promised administrative reform, market economics, and clean government. It made no reference to the fact that its leader, Berlusconi, had made his fortune through contacts with corrupt postwar governments, rather than through the mechanism of the free market.

Despite the presence of Movimento Sociale Italiano in the tripartite coalition, the Rightist Alliance should not be regarded as a fascist front, at least not for the time being. Not only because history never repeats itself, but also because the alliance lacks the requisite ideological and political unity, as well as a common leadership. While it may not be a fascist front, it is a disturbing and entirely reactionary phenomena, however. As European history has unfortunately taught us, when a deep socio-economic crisis coincides with a crisis of the political system and the delegitimation of the state, reactionary mass movements develop quickly.

THE ELECTION TOOK PLACE IN THE CONTEXT OF THREE KEY DEVELOPMENTS OF THE

LUCIANA CASTELLINA was a founder, in 1969, of Il Manifesto. She is a representative to the European Parliament and a member of the National Executive Committee of the Refounded Communists.

late 1980s and early 1990s. The first is the recent, massive corruption scandal which led to the resignation and indictment (and in quite a few cases, imprisonment) of literally thousands upon thousands of state bureaucrats and politicians, as well as top managers of leading financial and industrial firms. The second is the rapid decomposition of not one, but two parties in the wake of the corruption scandal — the once-hegemonic Christian Democratic party, and the Socialist Party. The third development is the collapse of the Soviet model and the dissolution of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), succeeded by the Party of the Democratic Left (PDS) and the Refounded Communists. All three laid the groundwork for the recomposition of political forces, and for the startling, unanticipated emergence of the alliance of New Right parties. Another important consequence of this upheaval was the redrafting of the electoral system, from proportional representation, to a first-past-the-post arrangement.

A broad coalition of left-wing parties formed a common front in the run-up to the election. This coalition, the Progressives, included both the PDS, and the Refounded Communists, as well as the Greens, and Rete, an organization of left-wing Catholics. For a period of some months, Progressive spokespersons expressed high hopes about the impending election. But as Berlusconi's media circus drove its message into the heads of voters, the Left felt its momentum slipping away. By the day of the election it was clear that the Left had failed to reach significantly beyond its historic regional and sociological enclaves.

The Progressive coalition as a whole achieved 37% of the vote. The two ex-PCI parties alone won 27% — i.e., over one-quarter of all voters, as many as the PCI had before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. What is striking, however, is that the leftist coalition was not able to gain ground in the context of the collapse of the old Christian Democratic-Socialist regime.

In fact, the existing forms of political representation on the center have been replaced by a New Right which is bolder, more reactionary, more anti-welfare state than its pragmatic predecessor. It found considerable support among the marginalized and those sections of the population most damaged by the crisis. The parties of the new Right are not united, but they have agreed on a common program: to strengthen the powers of the executive against the two branches of parliament; to disempower the institutions and mass constituencies of the Left; and to make it easier for business to make profits.

THE RIGHTIST ALLIANCE IS CLEAVED BY DEEP CONTRADICTIONS, OF COURSE. FOR one thing, its members are divided along regional lines. The Movimento Sociale (now renamed the National Alliance) is rooted in the southern tier of the country. Its base is among the rich and poor both of whom depend on various forms of state assistance. The Northern League, at

the opposite end of the country, represents the affluent northern middle-bourgeoisie, which wants to dismantle nearly all forms of public intervention and favors uninhibited free markets. Instead, Berlusconi, the leader of Forza Italia, would like to repackage the policies of the center-right. He speaks with a moderate voice because he is worried that the interests of big capital may be endangered by the right-wing extremist image of the new government.

Berlusconi has taken the lead in trying to reassure business interests that the New Right can govern effectively. One policy on which all three parties can agree is the importance of repressing socially "disruptive" behavior. As a result, there is a tendency toward authoritarian rhetoric on the part of the leaders of the New Right, coupled with a defense of the patriarchal family. This renewed emphasis on law and order and family values is meant to strengthen relations with the clerical, more conservative wing of the Catholic Church.

The repressive tendency of the New Right is worth noting because it underscores the dangers of minimizing the importance of the recent election. Certain voices on the Left are already claiming that the New Right's alliance is inherently unstable, and that the prospects for a leftist victory in the next election are good. But as the examples of Thatcher, Reagan, and De Gaulle all suggest, a pro-business, socially-repressive regime can last for decades. I emphasize this because I believe it would be fatal for the Left to underestimate its defeat and think that an early victory is on the agenda.

In Italy, the Left is certainly stronger than in many other countries, and perhaps a long spell of New Right government can be avoided. But in order to go on the counter-offensive, the Left must take stock and face reality without the aid of rose-tinted glasses.

The rightist victory has its roots in the 1980s, the years of capitalist modernization and restructuring to which the Left remained subordinate and sometimes supportive. It was a period in which the formerly strong unions suffered a sharp decline. In addition, the dissolution of the PCI, the country's largest party as measured in terms of membership (1,500,000), with solid roots in the society, reflected not only the crisis of Communism but the crisis of socialism.

At the same time, issues of contemporary strategy and tactics have to be rethought. The Left should reflect carefully on whether critical mistakes and tactical errors have been made which hinder its development. For example, we have to consider whether the Progressive-PDS strategy of winning over the political center was useful, given that the center was not convinced and that the Left failed to mobilize its own people. This was a particularly serious error at a moment when the electorate wanted a radical change and when those suspected of politics as usual were going to be penalized by the voters. In any event, the center practically disappeared, and even vast sectors of the working class voted for the New

Right, having been caught up in the demagogic pretention of taking part in a "revolution" against the old regime.

THIS EMPHASIS ON WINNING THE CENTER IS A MISTAKE THAT THE LEFT HAS MADE IN many different countries. But it can have particularly dangerous ramifications in the context of a deep social and political crisis. History has taught us that such a crisis can result in either a political transformation (the American New Deal and the French Popular Front) or in fascist adventures.

This is not to argue that by advancing "radical" slogans the Progressives could have triumphed in the electoral arena. The Right won substantial ground, not only on the basis of its manipulation of the mass media, but because the society as a whole has shifted rightward in recent years. People have replaced the old values of the Left — solidarity, equality, and so on — with reactionary ones — racism, selfishness, greed and intolerance. A shift of this kind is hard to counter during a brief election campaign, whatever slogans are used.

It seems clear that many workers — and first of all those who have lost their jobs (a total of more than 3 million in the last few years, mainly concentrated in the South and among the young) — have gained the impression that the Left does not have a credible alternative for governing the country, that it lacks "governmental credibility." To a certain extent, these concerns are justified. The Left has been lazy in the last few decades; it has been unable to critically rethink its own history, or to understand the limitations of traditional Keynesian policies at a time when the economy is no longer characterized by strong dynamic growth and in which unemployment does not decline even when the GNP increases. Also, the unity that finally prevailed came too late and the Progressives remained uninspired.

All of these are lessons for the future. Reconstructing the Left will not be an easy task. In fact, it would be made more difficult by the proposal, being advanced by a strong wing of the PDS, to adopt the model offered by the U.S. Democratic Party. What is required is unity of the Left, but dynamic unity, which will involve rethinking what it means to be Left at this stage of history. We will try, in Italy and in Europe where similar scenarios may materialize. Italy has often anticipated events.

The Liberal Retreat From Race

Stephen Steinberg

1965 WAS A CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN AMERICAN RACE HISTORY. The 1964 Civil Rights Act — passed after a decade of black insurgency — ended segregation in public accommodations and, at least in theory, proscribed discrimination in employment. The last remaining piece of civil rights legislation — the 1965 Voting Rights Act — was wending its way through Congress and, in the wake of Johnson's landslide victory, was assured of eventual passage. In his State of the Union message in January 1965, President Johnson electrified the nation by proclaiming, in his Southern drawl, "We Shall Overcome." As a senator from Texas, Johnson had voted against anti-lynching legislation; now, in the midst of a crisis engineered by a grass-roots protest movement, Johnson embraced the battle cry of that movement as he proposed legislation that would eliminate the last and most important vestige of official segregation.

In retrospect, Johnson's speech represented not the triumph of the civil rights movement, but its last hurrah. Now that its major legislative objectives had been achieved, not only the future of the movement, but also the constancy of liberal support, were thrown into question. By 1965, leaders and commentators, both inside and outside the movement, were asking, "What's next?" However, there was an ominous innuendo when this question came from white liberals. In *Why We Can't Wait*, published in 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr. provides this account of his appearance with Roy Wilkins on "Meet the Press":

There were the usual questions about how much more the Negro wants, but there seemed to be a new undercurrent of implications related to the sturdy new strength of our movement. Without the courtly complexities, we were in effect, being asked if we could be trusted to hold back the surging tides of discontent so that those on the shore would not be made too uncomfortable by the buffeting and onrushing waves. Some of the questions implied that our leadership would be judged in accordance with our capacity to "keep the Negro from going too far." The quotes are mine, but I think the phrase mirrors the thinking of the panelists as well as of many other white Americans (147).

By 1965 — even before Watts exploded — there was a growing aware-

STEPHEN STEINBERG *teaches in the Department of Urban Studies at Queens College and the Ph.D. Program in Sociology at the CUNY Graduate Center. He is the author of The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity and Class in America. This article will be part of a book, On the Threshold of Truth: A Critique of Racial Liberalism since World War II, scheduled for publication by Beacon Press in 1996.*

ness among black leaders that political rights did not go far enough to compensate for past wrongs. Whitney Young, Jr. epitomized this when he wrote that "there is little value in a Negro's obtaining the right to be admitted to hotels and restaurants if he has no cash in his pocket and no job."¹ As Rainwater and Yancey have suggested, "The year 1965 may be known in history as the time when the civil rights movement discovered, in the sense of becoming explicitly aware, that abolishing legal racism would not produce Negro equality."²

If laws alone would not produce equality, then the unavoidable conclusion was that some form of "special effort" — to use Whitney Young's term — was necessary to compensate for the accumulated disadvantages of the past. By 1965 the words "compensation," "reparations," and "preference" had already crept into the political discourse, and white liberals were beginning to display their disquiet with this troublesome turn of events. In *Why We Can't Wait* King observed: "Whenever this issue of compensatory or preferential treatment for the Negro is raised, some of our friends recoil in horror. The Negro should be granted equality, they agree; but he should ask nothing more."³

The demand for "something more" than legal equality precipitated a crisis among white liberals. This was abundantly evident in a 1964 round-table discussion sponsored by *Commentary* on "Liberalism and the Negro." The event took place at Town Hall in New York City before an invited audience, which included many of the leading liberal intellectuals of the period. Norman Podhoretz introduced the discussion:

I think it may be fair to say that American liberals are by now divided into two schools of thought on what is often called the Negro problem... On the one side, we have those liberals whose ultimate perspective on race relations... envisages the gradual absorption of deserving Negroes one by one into white society. ... Over the past two or three years, however, a new school of liberal (or perhaps it should be called radical) thought has been developing which is based on the premise. . . that "the rights and privileges of an individual rest upon the status attained by the group to which he belongs." From this premise certain points follow that are apparently proving repugnant to the traditional liberal mentality.⁴

Behind this elliptical language was the specter of "preference." Traditional liberalism, Podhoretz explained, sought to integrate "deserving Negroes one by one into white society." But a newer school of liberals had emerged that "maintains that the Negro community *as a whole* has been crippled by 300 years of slavery and persecution and that the simple removal of legal and other barriers to the advancement of individual Negroes can therefore only result in what is derisively called tokenism." Finally, Podhoretz laid his cards on the table:

This school of thought insists that radical measures are now needed to overcome the Negro's inherited disabilities. Whitney Young of the National Urban League, for example, has recently spoken of a domestic Marshall

Plan, a crash program which he says need last only ten years, in order to bring the Negro community to a point where it can *begin* to compete on equal terms with the white world. Other Negro leaders have similarly talked about 10 percent quotas in hiring, housing, and so on. Negroes, they say, ought to be represented in all areas of American life according to their proportion in the population, and where they are not so represented, one is entitled to draw an inference of discrimination. The slogan “preferential treatment for Negroes” is the most controversial one that has come up in this discussion (p. 26).

The other white participants in the round-table — Nathan Glazer, Sidney Hook and Gunnar Myrdal — all declared their blanket opposition to any system of racial preference. Glazer touted the success of New York’s Fair Employment Practices Law, implying that racial justice could be achieved within the same liberal framework that worked for other groups. Hook argued that, by lowering standards for Negroes, preference was patronizing to blacks and, in effect, treated them as second-class citizens. Myrdal cautioned that preference amounted to tokenism and that what was needed was a program to lift *all* poor people out of poverty.

James Baldwin stood alone, parrying the arguments thrust at him with his usual eloquence and resolve. To the optimistic view that the nation was making progress (“not enough progress, to be sure, but progress nevertheless”), Baldwin had this to say:

I’m delighted to know there’ve been many fewer lynchings in the year 1963 than there were in the year 1933, but I also have to bear in mind — I have to bear it in mind because my life depends on it — that *there are a great many ways to lynch a man*. The impulse in American society, as far as I can tell from my experience in it, has essentially been to ignore me when it could, and then when it couldn’t, to intimidate me; and when that failed, to make concessions (p. 31, italics added).

As the discussion labored on, it became increasingly obvious that a vast difference in world view separated Baldwin and the others. When Hook gloated over the expansion of ethical principles in American society, Baldwin remarked:

What strikes me here is that you are an American talking about American society, and I am an American talking about American society — both of us very concerned with it — and yet your version of American society is really very difficult for me to recognize. My experience in it has simply not been yours (p. 31).

Speaking from the audience, Kenneth Clark was even more blunt in declaring his disaffection with liberalism:

How do I — a Negro in America who throughout his undergraduate years and the early part of his professional life identified himself with liberalism — how do I now see American liberalism? I must confess bluntly that I now see white American liberalism primarily in terms of the adjective, “white” (p. 39).

Indeed, the day's proceedings seemed only to corroborate Podhoretz's initial observation of "a widening split between the Negro movement and the white liberal community."

Here was an early sign — in the spring of 1964 — of the imminent break-up of the liberal coalition that had functioned as a bulwark of the civil rights movement. One faction would gravitate to the nascent neoconservative movement. Another faction would remain in the liberal camp, committed in principle to both liberal reform and racial justice. This, however, was to prove a difficult balancing act, especially when confronted with an intensifying racial backlash. Even in the best of times, racial issues tended to exacerbate divisions in the liberal coalition on which Democratic electoral victories depended. As the polity swung to the Right, liberals in the Democratic Party came under mounting pressure to downplay or sidestep racial issues.

Thus, the liberal retreat from race was rationalized in terms of realpolitik. The argument ran like this: "America is too racist to support programs targeted specifically for blacks, especially if these involve any form of preference which is anathema to most whites. Highlighting racial issues, therefore, only serves to drive a wedge in the liberal coalition, triggering white flight from the Democratic Party, and is ultimately self-defeating." That this reasoning amounted to a capitulation to the white backlash did not phase the political "realists" since their motives were pure. Indeed, unlike the racial backlash on the Right, the liberal backlash was *not* based on racial animus or retrograde politics. On the contrary, these dyed-in-the-wool liberals were convinced that the best or only way to help blacks was to help "everybody." Eliminate poverty, they said, and blacks, who count disproportionately among the poor, will be the winners. Achieve full employment, and black employment troubles will be resolved. The upshot, however, was that blacks were asked to subordinate their agenda to a larger movement for liberal reform. In practical terms, this meant foregoing the black protest movement and casting their lot with the Democratic Party.

Thus, after 1965 many white liberals who were erstwhile supporters of the civil rights movement placed a kiss of death on race-based politics and race-based public policy. They not only joined the general retreat from race in the society at large, but in fact cited the racial backlash as reason for their own abandonment of race-based politics. In this sense, the liberal retreat from race can be said to represent the left wing of the backlash.

The Howard Address: A Case of "Semantic Infiltration"

THE IDEOLOGICAL CLEAVAGE THAT WOULD SPLIT THE LIBERAL CAMP was foreshadowed in a commencement address that Johnson delivered at Howard

University on June 4, 1965. The speech, written by Richard Goodwin and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, was riddled with contradiction, and for this very reason epitomizes the political limbo that existed in 1965, as well as the emerging lines of ideological and political division within the liberal camp.

The speech, aptly entitled “To Fulfill These Rights,” began with the most radical vision on race that has ever been enunciated by a President of the United States. After reviewing the series of civil rights acts that secured full civil rights for African-Americans, Johnson declared: “But freedom is not enough.” He continued:

You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of the race and then say, ‘you are free to compete with all the others,’ and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. Thus it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. All our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates.

Johnson’s oratory went a critical step further:

This is the next and more profound stage of the battle for civil rights. We seek not just freedom but opportunity — not just legal equity but human ability — *not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and as a result.*

With these last words, Johnson adopted the logic and the language of those arguing for compensatory programs that would redress past wrongs. Equality, not liberty, would be the defining principle of “the next and more profound stage” in the liberation struggle.⁵

So far so good. Johnson’s speech then took an abrupt detour away from politics to sociology, reflecting the unmistakable imprint of Daniel Patrick Moynihan who only a month earlier had completed an internal report focusing on problems of the black family. Johnson said:

... equal opportunity is essential, but not enough. Men and women of all races are born with the same range of abilities. But ability is not just the product of birth. Ability is stretched or stunted by the family you live with, and the neighborhoods you live in, by the school you go to and the poverty or the richness of your surroundings. It is the product of a hundred unseen forces playing upon the infant, the child, and the man.

Compare the language and logic of the passage above with the passage below:

Overt job discrimination is only one of the important hurdles which must be overcome before color can disappear as a determining factor in the lives and fortunes of men... The prevailing view among social scientists holds that there are no significant differences among groups as to the distribution of innate aptitudes or at most very slight differences. On the other hand, differences among individuals are very substantial. The extent to which an individual is able to develop his aptitudes will largely depend upon the cir-

cumstances present in the family within which he grows up and the opportunities which he encounters at school and in the larger community.

This latter passage comes from a 1956 book, *The Negro Potential*, by Eli Ginzberg, who was a leading liberal economist of that period.⁶ My point is not that Johnson's speechwriters were guilty of plagiarism. Rather it is to take note of their Machiavellian genius. With a rhetorical sleight of hand, Goodwin and Moynihan shifted the discourse away from the radical vision of "equal results" that emanated from the black protest movement of the 1960s back to the standard liberal cant of the 1950s which held that the black child is stunted by "circumstances present in the family within which he grows up." The conceptual groundwork was being laid for a drastic policy reversal: the focus would no longer be on white racism, but rather on the deficiencies of blacks themselves.

Having thus planted the seeds of equivocation, the speech then shifted back to a fretful discussion of the "widening gulf" between poor blacks and the rest of the nation, including the black middle class. Johnson cited a litany of statistics on black employment and income. Logically, this might have led to a discussion of policies that would move the nation in the direction of "equal results" in employment and income. However, as the *New York Times* pointedly observed, "Mr. Johnson did not mention such specific remedies as job quotas or preferential hiring, which some civil rights leaders have advocated."⁷ Instead, the speech shifted to more generalities on "the special nature of Negro poverty" and "the breakdown of the Negro family structure." Centuries of oppression, Johnson asserted, had eroded the ability of men to function as providers for their family, and as a result, fewer than half of Negro children currently live out their lives with both parents. Inasmuch as the family "is the cornerstone of our society," the collapse of the family has dire consequences for individuals and communities alike. "So," Johnson concluded, "unless we work to strengthen the family ... all the rest: schools and playgrounds, public assistance and private concern, will never be enough to cut completely the circle of despair and deprivation."

This last comment probably passed over Johnson's audience at Howard as mere political oratory. Only in retrospect can we fully appreciate the dire political implications of suggesting that government programs were futile, "unless we work to strengthen the family." With another rhetorical sleight of hand, Johnson (via Goodwin and Moynihan) shifted the focus from "equal rights" to the black family which, it was said, was perpetuating "the circle of despair and deprivation." The speech conspicuously avoided any policy prescriptions, deferring this to a planned White House Conference under the title, "To Fulfill These Rights." However, the conceptual groundwork was being laid for policies that would change "them," not "us."

Thus, a Presidential speech that began on a progressive note ended up in abysmal political regression. Was this self-contradiction merely the

result of careless or muddled thought? Or did it reflect political calculation? There is reason to think that Johnson's advisors acted with deliberation and foresight. In a *New York Times* story on June 5, the day after the Howard speech, unnamed "White House sources" are quoted to the effect that the Howard address was the first major Presidential civil rights speech conceived independently of the direct pressure of racial crisis. Reading between these lines, it would appear that Johnson's political strategists were seeking to wrest control over the troublesome direction that racial politics were taking. Indeed, the Howard speech is a prime example of what Moynihan calls "semantic infiltration."⁸ This refers to the appropriation of the language of one's political opponents, for the purpose of blurring distinctions and molding it to one's own political position. In this instance Moynihan invoked the language of "equal results," only to redefine and redirect it in a politically safe direction. When semantic infiltration is done "right," it elicits the approbation even of your political opponents who, as in the case of the audience at Howard, may not fully realize that a rhetorical shill game has been played on them.⁹

Moynihan was already on record as opposing public policies targeted specifically for blacks. In a conference sponsored by *Daedalus* and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences only a month earlier, "preference" emerged as a key issue of debate. Below is an excerpt in which Moynihan presents his case against race-specific policies, insisting that they must be embedded in a race neutral framework.¹⁰ The other speakers are Everett C. Hughes, the eminent sociologist from Brandeis, and Jay Saunders Redding, Professor of English at the Hampton Institute in Virginia:

HUGHES: May I ask all these gentlemen a question? Are they or are they not saying that any reduction in the number and proportion of the very poor among the Negro will be accomplished not by addressing ourselves so much to the Negro but by addressing ourselves to the whole state of the economy in our society, to the nature of poverty in general?

MOYNIHAN: I will answer the question by saying that in order to do anything about Negro Americans on the scale that our data would indicate, we have to declare that we are doing it for *everybody*. I think, however, that the problem of the Negro American is now a special one, and is not just an intense case of the problem of all poor people.

REDDING: Why do we have to announce that we are doing this for everyone?

MOYNIHAN: Congressmen vote for everyone more readily than they vote for any one. Because the poverty program is a color-blind program, we can do what we could not have done otherwise. We could not have done it for West Virginia or for Harlem — either one of those opposite extremes — but we can do it in generalized terms — for people.

REDDING: Do you think, then, that the idea of compensatory or preferential treatment for the Negro specifically is a bad idea?

MOYNIHAN: I do not know about "good" or "bad." I would say that in terms

of the working of the system we are trying to influence by our thinking here, it will be done for "everybody," whatever may be in the back of the minds of the people who do it.

Here Moynihan speaks with the dispassionate voice of the political pragmatist, brushing aside questions of "good" or "bad," "right" or "wrong," and guided solely by *realpolitik* — one that accepts white racism as a given, or at best, a political impediment to be circumvented. This leads him to a blanket rejection of policies specifically targeted for blacks. Within this political framework, the politics of "equal results" has no place.

Aside from the question of intent, the significance of the Howard address was to draw a line in the political sands marking the limit on how far the Johnson administration would go in supporting the escalating demands of the protest movement. In throwing his support behind the Voting Rights Act, Johnson had gone further than any of his predecessors in jeopardizing the Solid South (fears that were validated by subsequent events). The rhetoric of "equal results" threatened to antagonize blue-collar workers, Jews, and other elements of the Democratic coalition. The covert message in the Howard Speech was that, as far as the Democratic Party was concerned, the impending Voting Rights Act marked the end of the civil rights revolution ("the end of the beginning," Johnson said disingenuously, quoting Churchill). If blacks were "to fulfill these rights," they would have to get their own house in order. Literally!

Thus behind the equivocal language in Johnson's address was a key policy issue concerning the role of the state in the post-civil-rights era. Would future progress depend on an expansion of anti-racist policies — aimed not only at forms of intentional discrimination but also at the insidious forces of institutionalized racism that have excluded blacks categorically from whole job sectors and other opportunity structures? Or would future progress depend on programs of social uplift that contemplate "the gradual absorption of deserving Negroes one by one into white society?"

These alternative policy options were predicated on vastly different assumptions about the nature and sources of racism. The one located the problem within "white" society and its major institutions, and called for policies to rapidly integrate blacks into jobs, schools, and other institutional sectors where they have historically been excluded. The other assumed that racism was waning, but that blacks generally lacked the requisite education and skills to avail themselves of expanding opportunities. This latter school included both traditional liberals who supported governmental programs which "help blacks to help themselves," and conservatives, including a new genre of black conservatives, who adamantly opposed governmental intervention, insisting that blacks had to summon the personal and group resources to overcome disabilities of race and class.

Thus, what was most flagrantly Machiavellian about Johnson's speech

is that it camouflaged “self-help” behind a rhetorical facade of “equal results.” For the most part the liberal press responded with predictable gullibility. For example, the *New York Times* editorialized:

President Johnson has addressed himself boldly to what is unquestionably the most basic and also the most complicated phase of the civil rights struggle — the need for translating newly reinforced legal rights into genuine equality.¹¹

On the other hand, based on unnamed White House aides, Mary McGrory of the *Washington Star* gave the speech a very different spin: “President Johnson suggested that the time had come for them [Negroes] to come to grips with their own worst problem, ‘the breakdown of Negro family life.’”¹²

From Infiltration to Subversion: The Moynihan Report

THIS POLARITY BETWEEN ANTI-RACISM AND SOCIAL UPLIFT BECAME EVEN MORE sharply defined by the controversy surrounding the publication of the Moynihan report three months after Johnson’s address at Howard University. Officially titled: “The Negro Family: The Case for National Action,” the report presented a mound of statistics showing high rates of divorce, illegitimacy, and female-headed households. Although Moynihan paid lip service to the argument that unemployment and low wages contributed to family breakdown, he was practically obsessed with a single statistic showing that Aid to Dependent Children (AFDC) continued to increase between 1962 and 1964, despite the fact that unemployment was decreasing.¹³ On this meager empirical basis, Moynihan concluded that poverty was “feeding upon itself,” and that the “disintegration of the Negro family” had assumed a dynamic all its own, independently of joblessness and poverty. In yet another leap of faith, he asserted that family breakdown was the source of most of the problems that afflict black America. In Moynihan’s own words:

... at the center of the tangle of pathology is the weakness of the family structure. Once or twice removed, it will be found to be the principal source of most of the aberrant, inadequate, or anti-social behavior that did not establish, but now serves to perpetuate the cycle of poverty and deprivation.¹⁴

Moynihan’s critics accused him of inverting cause and effect, and in doing so, shifting the focus of blame away from societal institutions onto blacks themselves. For example, Christopher Jencks wrote in 1965:

Moynihan’s analysis is in the conservative tradition that guided the drafting of the poverty program (in whose formulation he participated during the winter of 1963-4). The guiding assumption is that social pathology is caused less by basic defects in the social system than by defects in particular individuals and groups which prevent their adjusting to the system. The prescription is therefore to change the deviants, not the system.¹⁵

The regressive implications of Moynihan's report for public policy were also noted by Herbert Gans:

... the findings on family instability and illegitimacy can be used by right-wing and racist groups to support their claim that Negroes are inherently immoral and therefore unworthy of equality. Politicians responding to more respectable white backlash can argue that Negroes must improve themselves before they are entitled to further government aid... . Worse still, the report could be used to justify a reduction of efforts in the elimination of racial discrimination and the War on Poverty... .

Thus, at this critical juncture in race history — when there was political momentum for change and when even the President of the United States gave at least verbal support for “a new phase” that would go beyond political rights to assuring equal results — Moynihan succeeded in deflecting policy debate to a useless dissection of the black family. With his considerable forensic skill as speechwriter for Johnson, Moynihan had brought the nation to the threshold of truth — racial equality as a moral and political imperative — and then, with rhetorical guile, deflected the focus onto the tribulations within black families. By the time that the promised White House Conference, “To Secure These Rights,” actually took place, it degenerated into a debate over the Moynihan Report which by then had become public. Whether by design or not, Moynihan had acted as a political decoy, drawing all the fire to himself while the issue of “equal results” slipped into oblivion.¹⁶

Notwithstanding the efforts of a number of writers, including Moynihan himself, to portray the controversy over the Moynihan report as fruitless and even counterproductive, it proved to be one of the most seminal debates in modern social science. It was a debate that crystallized issues, that exposed the conservative assumptions and racial biases that lurked behind mainstream social science, and that prompted critics of the report to formulate alternative positions that challenged the prevailing wisdom about race in America. The principal counter-position — encapsulated by William Ryan's ingenious term, “blaming the victim” — blew the whistle on the tendency of social science to reduce social phenomena to an individual level of analysis, thereby shifting attention away from the structures of inequality and focusing on the behavioral responses of the individuals affected by these structures. The controversy also stimulated a large body of research — the most notable example is Herbert Gutman's now classic study of *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom*. This study demolished the myth that “slavery destroyed the black family” — a liberal myth that allowed social scientists and policymakers to blame “history” for the problems in the black family, thus avoiding any examination of present-day inequities.¹⁷

Yet leading liberals today contend that Moynihan was the victim of unfair ideological attack. Moynihan set the tone for this construction of

history in an article that he published in *Commentary* (February 1967) under the title: "The President & the Negro: The Moment Lost." Again, Moynihan begins on the threshold of truth:

For the second time in their history, the great task of liberation has been left only half-accomplished. It appears that the nation may be in the process of reproducing the tragic events of the Reconstruction: giving to Negroes the forms of legal equality, but withholding the economic and political resources which are the bases of social equality (p. 31).

Moynihan goes on to argue, as I have here, that 1965 presented a moment of opportunity:

The moment came when, as it were, the nation had the resources, and the leadership, and the will to make a total as against a partial commitment to the cause of Negro equality. It did not do so (p. 32).

Why was the opportunity missed? According to Moynihan, the blame lies not with the forces of racism and reaction, and certainly not with himself, but with "the liberal Left" who opposed his initiative to address problems in the black family). Specifically, opposition emanated:

... from Negro leaders unable to comprehend their opportunity; from civil-rights militants, Negro and white, caught up in a frenzy of arrogance and nihilism; and from white liberals unwilling to expend a jot of prestige to do a difficult but dangerous job that had to be done, and could have been done. But was not (p. 32).

Thus, in Moynihan's recapitulation of events, it was his own political enemies who, in "a frenzy of arrogance and nihilism" had aborted the next stage in the Negro revolution that Moynihan had engineered as an influential advisor to the President.

Moynihan's account is predicated on the assumption that "the civil-rights movement had no program for going beyond the traditional and relatively easy issues of segregation and discrimination" (p. 34). But this is an inaccurate and patently self-serving construction of events. The civil rights movement was evolving precisely such a program, and it involved a sure-fire method for achieving equal results: instituting a system of preference that would rapidly integrate blacks into job markets and other institutions where they had been excluded historically. Moynihan, as we have seen, was adamantly opposed to such an approach, and he did what he could, as speechwriter for Johnson's duplicitous Howard address and as author of the report on the Negro family, to derail any movement in this direction. Yet he portrays himself sanctimoniously as the innocent victim of "the liberal Left," and shifts the blame for "the moment lost" to his critics. He seems to forget that these critics were only reacting to a political position that he had advanced — one that, despite Moynihan's many disclaimers, did shift the focus of policy away from a concerted attack on racist structures to an inconsequential preoc-

cupation with the black family.

In recent years there have been attempts to "rehabilitate" Moynihan, and to portray him as the hapless victim of the ideological excesses of the 60s. For example, in *The Undeserving Poor* — a book that traces the poverty debates since the 1960s — Michael Katz asserts that "because most critics distorted the report, the debate generated more passion than insight." One result of the attack on Moynihan, he adds mournfully, "was to accelerate the burial of the culture of poverty as an acceptable concept in liberal reform."¹⁸ William Julius Wilson goes even further in suggesting that, "the controversy surrounding the Moynihan report had the effect of curtailing serious research on minority problems in the inner city for over a decade." Wilson would have us believe that social scientists fell into a 15-year coma, and when they emerged from ideological torpor, "they were dumbfounded by the magnitude of the changes that had taken place."¹⁹

The Intellectual Reincarnation of Daniel Patrick Moynihan

IT WOULD BE CLOSER TO THE TRUTH TO SAY THAT, AFTER BEING SILENCED BY HIS critics, Daniel Patrick Moynihan was reincarnated 15 years later in the form of William Julius Wilson. In effect, Wilson resurrected theoretical and political positions that Moynihan advanced in the early 1960s.

To begin with, Wilson's 1978 book on *The Declining Significance of Race* struck a number of themes that were at the heart of Moynihan's political analysis in 1965: that blacks had their political rights, thanks to landmark civil rights legislation; that there was "a widening gulf" between the black middle class which was reaping the benefits of an improved climate of tolerance and the black lower class that was as destitute and marginalized as ever; that blacks were arriving in the nation's cities at a time when employment opportunities, especially in the manufacturing sector, were declining; and that future progress would depend less on tearing down racist barriers than on raising the level of education and skills among poor blacks.²⁰ The underlying assumption in both cases was that the civil rights revolution was a watershed that more or less resolved the issue of "race," but that left unaddressed the vexing problems of "class." By "class," however, neither Moynihan or Wilson were advancing a radical theory that challenged structures of inequality, or that envisioned a radical restructuring of major political and economic institutions. All they meant was that lower class blacks needed to acquire the education and skills that are a prerequisite for mobility and that explain the success of the black middle class.

In *The Truly Disadvantaged*, published in 1987, Wilson spelled out the implications of his analysis for politics and public policy. Again, he arrived at a position that Moynihan had argued in 1965: that there was no political constituency for policies targeted specifically for blacks, and, therefore, the only viable political alternative, as Moynihan had asserted

at the 1965 *Daedalus* Conference, was to “declare that we are doing it for everybody.” In the very next sentence, Moynihan added an important caveat: “I think, however, that the problem of the Negro American is now a special one, and is not just an intense case of the problem of all poor people” (p. 288). But, he insisted, blacks could be helped only through color-blind programs that defined poverty — not race — as the basis for social action. Here, alas, was the “hidden agenda” that Wilson proposed 22 years later.

Originally Wilson planned to use “The Hidden Agenda” as the title of *The Truly Disadvantaged*.²¹ Perhaps it occurred to him that his agenda would not remain hidden if it were splashed on the cover of his book! Instead Wilson used this as the title for Chapter 7, in which he contended that, because there is no political constituency for policies targeted for blacks, it becomes necessary to “hide” such programs behind universal programs “to which the more advantaged groups of all races and class backgrounds can positively relate” (p. 155). Ironically, Wilson’s language reveals that he is a poor Social Democrat. It suggests that his first priority is to help the ghetto underclass, and that he opts for “universal programs” only out of political expediency.

The notion of a “hidden agenda” also contradicts Wilson’s claim that racism is of “declining significance.” Indeed, it is because of racism that Wilson feels compelled to “hide” his agenda in the first place. The underlying premise is that America is so racist — so utterly indifferent to the plight of black America, so incapable of even imagining that some kind of indemnification for three centuries of racial oppression would benefit “everybody” — that it becomes necessary to camouflage policies intended for blacks behind policies that offer benefits to the white majority.

At first blush it might appear odd to portray Wilson as a political clone of Moynihan. Wilson, after all, is an ivory-tower scholar and a political outsider who describes himself as a Social Democrat. Moynihan gave up any pretense of political chastity to become a major figure within the Democratic Party. On closer scrutiny, however, Wilson is far from a detached intellectual. In two national elections he has gone on record, via op-ed pieces in the *New York Times* — advocating race-neutral politics in order to enhance Democratic electoral prospects.²² And he has quietly served as President Clinton’s exculpation for the administration’s failure to develop policies to deal with the plight of the nation’s ghettos. For years, now, whenever Clinton has been confronted with this issue, he has defended his do-nothing policy by invoking the name of “the famous African-American sociologist William Julius Wilson,” explaining how profoundly influenced he was by his book, *The Truly Disadvantaged*, and ending with glowing projections about how blacks stand to benefit from his economic policies.²³ It should come as no surprise that Wilson has been mentioned as a possible Cabinet appointee.²⁴

Thus, whatever differences exist between Moynihan and Wilson, the

factor of overriding importance is that both repudiated race-based politics and race-based public policy. Here we come to the delicate but unavoidable issue concerning the role that the race of a social theorist plays in determining what Alvin Gouldner refers to as “the social career of a theory.” Not only was Moynihan white, but he wrote at a time of heightened racial consciousness and mobilization, both inside and outside the university. As a white, he was susceptible to charges of racism and of resorting to stereotypes in his depiction of black families. Even the voluble Moynihan was reduced almost to silence when it came to parrying the charges leveled against him by black scholars and activists.

Wilson, too, has had his critics, but at least he has been immune to accusations of being racist. Furthermore, Wilson appeared on the stage of history at a time when racial militancy was “of declining significance.” The nation, including the academic establishment, had grown weary of racial conflict, and was eager, like the Democratic Party, to “get beyond race.” Wilson was the right person in the right place and the right time, and as if this was not enough, his book, *The Declining Significance of Race*, had the right title — one that satisfied the nation’s yearning to put race behind, to pretend that racism was no longer the problem it had been in times past.

To be sure, Wilson did not cause the retreat from race that has occurred over the past two decades. He did, however, bestow it with an indispensable mark of legitimacy. This is the significance of Wilson’s elevation to national prominence and even to celebrity status. It has meant that the retreat from race could no longer be equated with racism and reaction.

Cornel West: The Left Wing of the Backlash

IF BOOKS COULD BE JUDGED BY THEIR TITLES, ONE WOULD THINK THAT A BOOK entitled *Race Matters* would be the antithesis of a book entitled *The Declining Significance of Race*. But then again, one must be beware of semantic infiltration, and the possibility that titles are subversive of meaning. There is another reason for skepticism. Since this is incontestably a period of retreat from race, one has to wonder why a book that argues that “race matters” would enjoy such a favorable critical reception and appear on the list of best sellers for ten weeks.

Of course, the title has an intentional double meaning. In his preface West recounts his mortification as he tried to hail a taxi in New York City, only to have ten taxis refuse to pick him up. As he and his wife returned to Princeton, “we talked about what *race matters* have meant to the American past and of how much *race matters* in the American present.”²⁵ The first meaning serves as a catchall for the disparate essays that West has compiled in this volume. The second meaning — *race matters* — is more substantive, but still leaves the reader to wallow in ambiguity. In what

sense does race “matter” in the *Weltanschauung* of Cornel West? Is this an ironic comment on whites’ obsessive preoccupation with the happenstance of skin color? Or does it allude to the fateful influence that race has on the lives of African-Americans? Nor is the meaning of “race” clear. Is this an affirmation of race — that is, of black culture and identity? Or does “race” refer to *racism* and the extent that it “matters” in the lives of African-Americans? Or is the ambiguity purposeful, to point up the paradoxical and sometimes contradictory nature of the phenomenon itself?

Suffice it to say that many or all of these elements appear in West’s book: topics range from the crisis in black leadership, to black conservatism, to Black-Jewish relations, to black sexuality. These are all race matters, to be sure, but they are only marginally related to the question that preoccupies us here: the extent that race (read: racism) matters, and the consequences that ensue for politics and public policy. These issues are explored in two of West’s essays which will serve as the basis of the discussion that follows: “Nihilism in Black America” (originally published in *Dissent* in Spring 1991), and “Beyond Affirmative Action: Equality and Identity” (originally published in *The American Prospect* in Spring 1992).

The term “nihilism” invites semantic confusion. Invoked by a professor of philosophy, the term conjures up hoary philosophical debates concerning the nature of existence and the possibility of objective knowledge. But West surely is not claiming that the ghetto is an enactment of some dubious philosophical doctrine. Invoked by a political activist, “nihilism” calls up associations with Russian revolutionaries who believed that the old order must be utterly eradicated to make way for the new. Again, it is doubtful that West, the political activist, is imputing these motives to ghetto youth. Nor does his use of “nihilism” suggest the angst and denial of meaning that are often viewed as endemic to modernity. No doubt West could expound on all of these themes, but in describing the urban ghetto, it would appear that he means only to refer to destructive and self-destructive behavior that is unconstrained by legal or moral norms. But this comes dangerously close to the prevailing view of ghetto youth as driven by aberrant and anti-social tendencies. Does “nihilism” merely provide an intellectual gloss for ordinary assumptions and claims? Is this why West and his book have been so warmly embraced by the political establishment and the nation’s book buyers?

Any such doubts are seemingly dissipated by the book’s opening sentence: “What happened in Los Angeles in April of 1992 was neither a race riot nor a class rebellion. Rather, this monumental upheaval was a multi-racial, trans-class, and largely male display of justified social rage.” With this manifesto, West establishes his credentials as a person of the Left. However, by the end of the same paragraph, we have West saying that “race was the visible catalyst, not the underlying cause” (p. 1). Already, the reader is left to wonder: Does race matter or doesn’t it?

In the next paragraph West assumes the rhetorical stance that per-

vades his book: he is the voice of reason and moderation between liberals and conservatives, each of which is allegedly trapped in rigid orthodoxies that leave us "intellectually debilitated, morally disempowered, and personally depressed" (p. 2). Liberals, West avers, are burdened with a simplistic faith in the ability of government to solve our racial problems. Conservatives, on the other hand, blame the problems on blacks and ignore "public responsibility for the immoral circumstances that haunt our fellow citizens." Both treat blacks as "a problem people." West thus presents himself as mediator between ideological extremes. He is a Leftist who does not resort to a crude economic determinism that denies human freedom and that relieves the poor of moral responsibility for their actions. And he is the philosopher who does not use morality to evade public responsibility for social wrongs.

Thus for West racism and poverty are only part of the problem. Of equal concern is the "pervasive spiritual impoverishment" that afflicts ghetto dwellers. With these false dichotomies, West has set the stage for a morality play involving a contest between material and spiritual forces and between Left and Right. Enter the protagonist: a Man of Vision who sees through the mystifications of both sides, a Great Conciliator who transcends political schism and will point the way to an Eden of racial harmony and social justice.

A compelling tale, to be sure. But the critical issue is this: where does West's otherwise laudatory attempt to bridge the ideological chasm lead him? According to West, "the liberal/conservative discussion conceals the most basic issue now facing black America." The reader waits with bated breath: what is "the most basic issue now facing black America?" West has already conveyed his skepticism with the Left's monistic emphasis on issues of racism and political economy. And he says that he rejects the conservative emphasis on "behavioral impediments" whose message to black America can be boiled down to the maxim: "Straighten up and fly right." The most basic issue now facing black America, according to Cornel West, is "*the nihilistic threat to its very existence*" (p. 12, italics in original). West continues:

This threat is not simply a matter of relative economic deprivation and political powerlessness — though economic well-being and political clout are requisites for meaningful black progress. It is primarily a question of speaking to the profound sense of psychological depression, personal worthlessness, and social despair so widespread in black America (pp. 12-13).

Now, there can be no doubt that "psychological depression, personal worthlessness, and social despair" abound in ghettos across America. So do "battered identities," "spiritual impoverishment," "social deracination," "cultural denudement," and a host of related afflictions that leave West groping for words that convey the gravity and horror of this situation. Certainly, West cannot be faulted for bringing such conditions to light.

This point is worth underscoring because Wilson and others have claimed that discussion of ghetto “pathologies” has been taboo ever since Moynihan was clobbered, as they would have it, for reporting some unpleasant statistics on disorganization in black families. This is a totally unfounded allegation. The only issue, both then and now, concerns the theoretical claims that are advanced concerning the *causes* of these well-known afflictions, together with the related issue of what is to be *done* about them. This was the basis of the attack on Moynihan, and it is on these same issues that West must be judged.

According to West, despite the tribulations going back to slavery, blacks were always endowed with “cultural armor to beat back the demons of hopelessness, meaninglessness, lovelessness” (p. 15). He points out that until the 1970s the rate of suicide was comparatively low among blacks, but today young blacks have one of the highest rates of suicide. Thus for West the question becomes: what has happened to “the cultural structures that once sustained black life in America” and “are no longer able to fend off the nihilistic threat?” His answer focuses on two factors:

1) *The saturation of market forces and market moralities in black life.* By this West means that blacks have succumbed to the materialism and hedonism that pervade American culture, and that “edge out nonmarket values — love, care, service to others — handed down by preceding generations.” If blacks are more susceptible to these corrupting influences than others, it is because the poor have “a limited capacity to ward off self-contempt and self-hatred” (p. 17).

2) *The crisis in black leadership.* Here West bemoans the failure of black leaders to carry on a tradition of leadership that was at once aggressive and inspirational. Part of the reason is that the new middle class has been corrupted by their immersion into mass culture. But another reason that “quality leadership is on the wane” has to do with “the gross deterioration of personal, familial, and communal relations among African-Americans” (p. 36). With families in decline and communities in shambles, the basis for effective leadership is lost.

Thus, West harkens back to the halcyon days when there was “a vital community bonded by its ethical ideals” (p. 37). Unfortunately, oppression does not always produce such felicitous outcomes, and the victims of oppression are not always ennobled by their experience and an inspiration to the rest of us.

West’s error, to repeat, is not that he discusses crime, violence, drugs, and the other notorious ills of ghetto life. Rather the problem is that he presents social breakdown and cultural disintegration as a problem *sui generis*, with an existence and momentum independent of the forces that gave rise to it in the first place. Moynihan, too, had held that centuries of injustice had “brought about deep-seated structural distortions in the life of the Negro American.” But he added a remarkable addendum: “At this point, the present pathology is capable of perpetuating itself without as-

sistance from the white world.”²⁶ Similarly, West traces nihilism to centuries of injustice, but goes on to claim that nihilism is so embedded in the life of the ghetto that it assumes a life all its own. At least this is what West implies when he writes that “culture is as much a structure as the economy or politics” (p. 12). Indeed, the whole point of West’s critique of “liberal structuralism” is that nihilism is not reducible to these factors. It is precisely because nihilism is so deeply embedded that this “cultural structure” must be addressed as a force in its own right.

It takes hairsplitting distinctions, that do not bear close scrutiny, to maintain that West’s view of nihilism is different from the conservative view of ghetto culture as deeply pathological, and as the chief source of the problems that beset African-Americans. Despite his frequent caveats, West has succeeded in shifting the focus of blame onto the black community. The affliction is *theirs* — something we shall call “nihilism.”

It is also theirs to resolve. As with the Moynihan report, the regressive implications of West’s theory become clear when one examines his praxis. West asks the right question: “What is to be done about this nihilistic threat?” But his answer is sadly deficient. He calls for “a politics of conversion” — a frail attempt to use radical vernacular as a cover for ideas that are anything but radical. “Like alcoholism and drug addiction,” West explains, “nihilism is a disease of the soul” (p. 18). How does one cure a disease of the soul? West’s prescription (to paraphrase Jencks) is to change the nihilist, not the system. To quote West again:

Nihilism is not overcome by arguments or analysis; it is tamed by love and care. Any disease of the soul must be conquered by a turning of one’s soul. This turning is done through one’s own affirmation of one’s worth — an affirmation fueled by the concern of others. A love ethic must be at the center of a politics of conversion (p. 19).

Here, alas, is the reason for the acclaim that has been heaped on West. The cure for the nihilism that so frightens white America is not a resumption of the war on poverty. Nor is it a resumption of the movement against racism. West, of course, would endorse both, but he has also been explicit in saying that “liberal structuralism” is not equipped to deal with “the self-destructive and inhumane actions of black people” (p.19). Because he conceives of nihilism as a disease of the soul, he proposes “a love ethic” as its remedy.

One can almost hear the national sign of relief from those who feared that expensive new programs of social reconstruction and a renewed commitment to affirmative action might become necessary to control the disorder emanating from the ghettos of America. Instead we have an inexpensive palliative: a crusade against nihilism to be waged from within the black community. So much the better that this proposal is advanced not by another black conservative whose politics might be suspect, but by a self-proclaimed socialist. Unfortunately, West the philosopher and ac-

tivist, adopts the idiom of the preacher who mounts the pulpit, pounds the lectern, and enjoins his flock to "have the audacity to take the nihilistic threat by the neck and turn back its deadly assaults" (p. 20).

One cannot fault West for trying to bridge the chasm between religion and politics. However, he has not placed himself in the tradition of Martin Luther King, Jr., who invoked religious symbols and appealed to spiritual values in order to mobilize popular support behind a political movement. Nor did King — notwithstanding his devotion to principles associated with Christ and Gandhi — believe that a love ethic could ever serve as an antidote to spiritual breakdown. The only remedy was a political transformation that eliminated the conditions that eat away at the human spirit. West, on the other hand, offers no political framework for his so-called "politics of conversion." Indeed, he explicitly divorces nihilism from political economy, thus implying that moral redemption is to be achieved through some mysterious process involving "a turning of one's soul" (p. 19).

West cannot escape the retrograde implications of his position with disclaimers that "unlike conservative behaviorists, the politics of conversion situates these actions within inhuman circumstances" (p. 20). He ignores his own admonition that "to call on black people to be agents makes sense only if we also examine the dynamics of this victimization against which their agency will, in part, be exercised" (p. 14). And while he is guided by "a vision of moral regeneration and political insurgency for the purpose of fundamental social change for all who suffer from socially induced misery" (p. 46), this is a utopian fantasy, not a political reality. The *practical* implication of West's position is to substitute a vapid and utterly inconsequential notion of a "politics of conversion" for a genuine political solution — one that would call upon the power and resources of the national government for what is at bottom a national problem and a national disgrace.

Not only does West shift the focus of analysis and of blame away from the structures of racial oppression, but in his chapter entitled "Beyond Affirmative Action" he undercuts the single policy that has gone a decisive step beyond equal rights in the direction of equal results. West is *not* opposed to affirmative action, but he engages in a tortuous reasoning that subverts the whole logic behind affirmative action. Thus, he begins by declaring that, in principle, he favors a class-based affirmative action (as does William Julius Wilson)²⁷. On the other hand, he knows that such a policy is politically unrealistic. He also knows that if affirmative action in its present form were abolished, then "racial and sexual discrimination would return with a vengeance" (p. 64). But the whole purpose of affirmative action is to combat racial and sexual discrimination! Even if a class-based affirmative action could be enacted, few of the benefits would filter down to African-Americans who are not only most in need, but have a unique claim for compensatory treatment. Nor would lower class whites

who become lawyers and doctors on the basis of affirmative action provide the black community with the professional talent that it sorely needs.

Stated simply, affirmative action is meant to counteract the evils of *caste*, not of class. It is predicated on a realization that blacks have been victims of a system of oppression that goes far beyond the disabilities associated with class disadvantage, and therefore warrant a special remedy. West's equivocation with respect to race-based affirmative action is the clearest indication of how *little* race matters in his theoretical framework and in his agenda for change.

Reminiscent of Moynihan and Wilson, West's approach for helping blacks is to help "everybody." Like them, he provides a respectable liberal cover for evading the issue of race, and still worse, backing off race-targeted policies like affirmative action, all in the name of getting "beyond race." West prides himself on steering "a course between the Scylla of environmental determinism and the Charybdis of a blaming-the-victims perspective" (p. 57). Unfortunately, he ends up in a political neverland where, as DuBois once said in his critique of historiography, "nobody seems to have done wrong and everybody was right."²⁸ And nothing changes.

A COMMON REFRAIN FROM THE RIGHT IS THAT ADVOCATES OF AFFIRMATIVE ACTION are guilty of the very thing that they say they are against — namely, treating blacks as a separate class. As with much of race-think, this is upside-down and inside-out. The truth is that it is the *refusal* to see race — the willful color-blindness of the liberal camp — that acquiesces to the racial status quo, and does so by consigning blacks to a twilight zone where they are politically invisible. In this way elements of the Left unwittingly join the Right in evading any reckoning with America's greatest crime — slavery — and its legacy in the present. Like racism itself, this is not a new problem. Writing in 1945, Richard Wright scored the Left as well as the Right for its denial of racism, and implicitly, of blacks themselves. It is worth quoting at length:

The political Left often gyrates and squirms to make the Negro problem fit rigidly into a class-war frame of reference, when the roots of that problem lie in American culture as a whole; it tries to anchor the Negro problem to a patriotism of global time and space, which robs the problem of its reality and urgency, of its concreteness and tragedy. The political Right, reacting traditionally, tries to smother the Negro problem as a whole and insists upon regarding Negroes as individuals and making individual deals with individual Negroes, ignoring the inevitable race consciousness which three hundred years of Jim Crow living has burned into the Negro's heart. Both the political Left and the political Right try to change the Negro problem into something that they can control, thereby denying the humanity of the Negro, excluding his unique and historic position in American life.²⁹

The liberal retreat from race is full of political paradox. When forced to confront the issue, the liberal will argue that in a racist society, race-

based politics are not viable precisely because blacks are an isolated and despised minority. Again, the reasoning is upside-down and inside-out. It is precisely because blacks were an isolated and despised minority that they were forced to seek redress outside of the framework of electoral politics. The civil rights movement was triumphant — in part because it tapped the lode of revolutionary potential within the black community, and in part it galvanized the support of political allies outside the black community, including white liberals. Furthermore, this movement not only achieved its immediate objectives, but it was the major catalyst for progressive change in the 20th century. As Aldon Morris writes at the conclusion of *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement*:

... the civil rights movement served as a training ground for many of the activists who later organized movements within their own communities. Indeed, the modern women's movement, student movement, farm workers' movement, and others of the period were triggered by the unprecedented scale of nontraditional politics in the civil rights movement.³⁰

Liberals need not worry that support of the black liberation struggle is patronizing. For the irony of history may be that it is "they" who are liberating "us."

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NOTES

1. Whitney M. Young, Jr., *To Be Equal* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1963), p. 54. This was to become a common refrain among civil rights leaders. In 1964 Bayard Rustin wrote: "What is the value of winning access to public accommodations for those who lack money to use them?" "From Protest to Politics: The Future of the Civil Rights Movement," *Commentary* 39 (February 1964), p. 25. In 1968 Martin Luther King, Jr. also wrote: "What good is it to be allowed to eat in a restaurant if you can't afford a hamburger?" "Showdown for Non-Violence," *Look* (April 16, 1968), p.24.

2. Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1967), p.11.

3. Martin Luther King, Jr., *Why We Can't Wait* (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), p. 147. Also see Whitney M. Young, Jr., and Kyle Haselden, "Should There Be 'Compensation' for Negroes?" *New York Times Magazine* (October 6, 1963), pp.43 ff.

4. "Liberalism and the Negro: A Round-Table Discussion," *Commentary* (March 1964), p. 25.

5. Johnson's Howard University address is reprinted in Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, *op. cit.*, pp. 125-132. The speech was drafted by Richard N. Goodwin and Daniel P. Moynihan, though it would appear that Moynihan was the chief architect, judging from a paper that he delivered at a *Daedalus* conference only a month earlier. Entitled "Employment, Income, and the Negro Family," Moynihan began by noting that the civil rights revolution was entering "a new phase," representing a shift from issues of liberty to issues of equality. He also predicted that this shift would result in an attenuation of liberal support. Finally, after a series of theoretical gyrations, he focused on the problems in the black family which, he held, were preventing lower-class blacks from taking advantage of expanding opportunities. *Daedalus*, Vol. 94 (Fall 1965), pp. 745-770.

6. Eli Ginzberg, *The Negro Potential* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956), p. 7.

7. *New York Times*, June 5, 1965, p. 1.

8. Moynihan ascribes the term to the world of diplomacy, and has used it in his political sparring over the years. See the *Wall St. Journal's* Notable and Quotable column (4/18/85); the *Buffalo News* (7/4/93); and *Firing Line* (1/15/94).

9. In a subsequent article Moynihan makes a point of "the stunning ovation" that Johnson received at the conclusion of his speech, as if this validated Johnson's intentions. "The President & the Negro: The Moment Lost," *Commentary* (February 1967), p. 34.

10. The conference transcript is published in a two-volume series of *Daedalus* in Fall 1965 and Winter 1966. The quoted excerpt is in Volume 2, pp. 288-89.

11. *New York Times* (June 6, 1965), Review of the Week, p. 10.

12. Quoted in Rainwater and Yancey, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

13. Rainwater and Yancey, *op. cit.*, p. 59. It should have been obvious that the burgeoning welfare roles was an artifact of the migration of young blacks to cities in the North and West, together with the liberalization of eligibility as a response to rising black protest.

14. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," in Lee Rainwater and William L. Yancey, *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, *op. cit.*, p. 76.

15. Rainwater and Yancey, *op. cit.*, p. 443. Italics added.

16. As Rainwater and Yancey write: "The controversy was, then, a kind of lucky break for the administration since it served to distract from and conceal the fact that the Administration was not really ready to assume the independent role it had reached for at Howard University." *The Moynihan Report and the Politics of Controversy*, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

17. At the very outset of his study, Gutman writes: "This volume. . . was stimulated by the bitter public and academic controversy surrounding Daniel P. Moynihan's *The Negro Family in America: The Case for National Action* (1965)." Herbert G. Gutman, *The Black Family in Slavery and Freedom, 1750-1925* (New York: Pantheon, 1976) p. xvii. Of course, the controversy also stimulated a plethora of studies in all of the social sciences on race, poverty and the family.

18. Michael B. Katz, *The Undeserving Poor* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), p. 24.

19. William Julius Wilson, *The Truly Disadvantaged* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), p. 4.

20. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, "Employment, Income, and the Ordeal of the Negro Family," *Daedalus* (Fall 1965), especially pp. 753-54.

21. This statement is based on the fact that in a chapter on "The Urban Underclass," published three years before *The Truly Disadvantaged*, a footnote indicated that "this chapter is based on a larger study, *The Hidden Agenda: Race, Social Dislocations, and Public Policy in America*, to be published by the University of Chicago Press." See "The Urban Underclass" in Leslie Dunbar, ed., *Minority Report: What Has Happened to Blacks, Hispanics, American Indians, & Other Minorities in the Eighties* (New York: Pantheon, 1984), p. 75.

22. *New York Times* (March 24, 1990), p. 1:31, and (March 17, 1992), p. A25.

23. This reference to Wilson was made in a speech to black ministers in Memphis on November 13, 1993, and cited in a profile on Wilson in *People* magazine (January 17, 1974), p. 81.

24. Gretchen Reynolds, "The Rising Significance of Race," *Chicago* (December 1992), p. 81.

25. Cornel West, *Race Matters* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993), p. xi.

26. "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action," in Rainwater & Yancey, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

27. Wilson's position is reported in Steven A. Holmes, "Mulling the Idea of Affirmative Action for Poor Whites," *New York Times* (August 18, 1991), Section 4, p. 3.

28. W.E.B. DuBois, "The Propaganda of History," *Black Reconstruction* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1935), p. 714.

29. Introduction to *Black Metropolis* by St. Clair Drake and Horace R. Cayton (New York: Harper & Row, 1945), p. xxix.

30. Aldon Morris, *The Origins of the Civil Rights Movement* (New York: The Free Press, 1984), p. 288.

Of Permanent Crisis and Other Demons: **A New Social Pact in Colombia?**

Michael Forman

THIS YEAR, COLOMBIANS WILL WITNESS THE FIRST COMPLETE TRANSFER OF POWER SINCE THE enactment of their new constitution. During the 1980s most of them had come to agree that the country had reached an impasse. The "political crisis" had become permanent. Depending on one's position, the crisis was composed of venality, corruption, violence, insurgency, drug trafficking, blatant disregard for human rights and rampant illegality. With the assassination of leading presidential candidate Luis Carlos Galán, in mid-1989, even the long-ruling political class had to admit that the time for "national reconciliation" had arrived. Elections were held to name a broadly representative constitutional assembly with instructions to replace the much amended document in force since 1886. The outcome has been touted as a new social pact.

The Constitution of 1991 was the product of a remarkable gathering of social forces. Represented were the traditional parties, business organizations, land-owners, unions, the new "civic movements" (women, peasants and environmentalists), "indigenous communities," and "black communities." Most important, the guerrilla¹ was present, or rather those groups which had struck a peace accord, partly in exchange for the convening of such a gathering, figured prominently. Antonio Navarro Wolff, head of Democratic Alliance/M-19 (AD/M-19), was one of the three presiding officers. Some say he was the main author of the new document. Many other former guerrilla members were elected as delegates. All told, the proceedings of the Constituent Assembly were conducted in an atmosphere of openness rarely seen before in this country of political chieftains and backroom deals. The result, for the most part, was also exceptional.

In keeping with the previous constitution, the new document puts forth a centralized republic (though this time chief executives at all levels are subject to direct election), with a strong president, a bicameral legislature and a separate judiciary. Along the same lines, the new constitution prohibits the death penalty and the extradition of native born Colombians. Also, the 1991 document contains a number of new and progressive features. Articles 42 to 77 establish "social and economic rights," such as privacy, divorce and equal rights for women (including protection against domestic violence, and state support for pregnant women and single mothers). These social rights also include free public education, health care, quality housing, the right to form unions and to strike, and provisions for environmental protection. Also, the new constitution makes a variety of special commitments to "black communities" and native peoples. The latter, amounting to between 2 and 5% of the population, now have a right to territorial and cultural autonomy, to self-government and special legislative rep-

MICHAEL FORMAN, who is Colombian on his mother's side, grew up in Bogotá. He is a doctoral candidate at Rutgers University.

resentation: two Senate seats are reserved for indigenous people, an undetermined number of seats in the Chamber of Representatives may be set aside for minorities. In order to facilitate the formation of small parties, the other 100 senators are elected by a system of proportional representation. Furthermore, each province is entitled to two Chamber members plus one for each 250,000 inhabitants (currently 163 members).

The new constitution should inspire hope. Yet, constitutionalism is nothing unusual in Colombia. Elections and legal rotation of office holders are the historical norm. While political violence is the leitmotif of Colombian history and the country has been almost continuously under a state of siege since 1947, it has only had four years of experience (1953-58) with military rule. This is a fact many observers of the homeland of magical realism refer to when portraying it as a democracy. Assertions that Colombia has "remained faithful to the formulas of constitutional government" are quite common.² But that is not the problem; constitutional formulas are just that, words on paper, texts to be read.

Colombia's self-styled *clase dirigente* (ruling class) is at the center of a regime of oligarchical rotation in place since independence. Despite some social mobility, a small number of families with property and connections has managed to maintain control despite economic changes, social challenges, and internecine conflict. Four of the country's most recent nine presidents have been the children or first cousins of previous presidents. At least two of the 1994 contenders for the Liberal presidential nomination, Carlos Lleras and David Turbay, were the sons of presidents (neither won). The only serious Conservative "precandidate," Andrés Pastrana was also the son of a president. While Colombia's ruling class is by no means completely closed, a careful look at the family trees of these and other politicians would reveal even more distant ties stretching back in some cases into the early 19th century. The two traditional parties, Liberals and Conservatives (now Social Conservatives), have competed since the 1830s to control a rather weak state by electoral means or by the force of arms. There have been civil wars in the 19th century, factional strife which at mid-20th century left 200,000 dead, and, now, a "dirty war." In the land of the Buendías, where colonels fight 32 civil wars to wait for mail that never comes, where tanks drive into courtrooms, where yellow butterflies pack solidly into houses and U.S. marines build schools, elections say little about texts which conceal much.

This is not to say that the new constitution is unimportant, or that the elections of 1994 do not matter. Quite the contrary, the Constitution of 1991 is a remarkable document, and the electoral contests of 1994 are important for the exercise of political power in Colombia. There is no doubt that the 1991 rules are fairer than the ones they replaced, that the 1994 political season will unfold, roughly, within the rules, or that those who triumph will succeed the incumbents with little, if any, incident. The problem is that the Constituent Assembly set out to resolve a crisis when it was facing a chronic condition. Colombia is caught in a trap. The problem is structural, the product of the country's history and its specific integration into the periphery of international capitalism.

UNLIKE OTHER LATIN AMERICAN COUNTRIES, COLOMBIA DID NOT BORROW HEAVILY IN THE 1970s, so the 1980s were not a lost decade. Between 1980 and 1991, export earnings increased by 75%. Both the economy as a whole and manufacturing's share of total product grew at moderate, though not impressive, rates. Given the

decline in the population growth rate, GDP per capita actually grew by a modest 17% during the 1980s. Furthermore, whereas in 1980 coffee accounted for 60% of export earnings, by 1991 its share was down to 18%. In part, this decline was due to the drop in international prices; more important, however, the structure of Colombia's exports underwent a significant transformation reflecting the even broader changes in the national economy. During this period, the country became an oil exporter, with petroleum's share of export earnings nearly matching coffee's by 1991. Were it not for the growing importance of coal, bananas, and especially cut-flowers, women's garments, and book publishing, oil might simply shift Colombia from one mono-export to another; if present trends toward economic diversification continue, even last year's discovery of the Cusiana oil deposits (the largest since Alaska's North Slope) will not have this effect.³

Despite this relative prosperity, Colombia, like most other Latin American countries, engaged in a neoliberal project during the second half of the 1980s. In fact, there is considerable indication that the theme of *apertura* (opening), accompanying the rhetoric of national reconciliation had a great deal more to do with markets than with democracy. So much substantive economic liberalization has accompanied the formal political opening that *apertura* has taken on a purely economic meaning in the Colombian press. The neoliberal project, particularly under César Gaviria (1990-94), has aimed at privatizing Colombia's relatively small public sector, as well as consolidating a new openness to foreign investment and trade. Since 1991, the state has sold off some of its principal port facilities, banks, industrial concerns and even some public utilities. In good measure, these moves are the product of international pressures from organizations like the IMF, and the Inter-American Development Bank, as well as the U.S. government. Yet, it is also true that Gaviria and his key aides come from the new technocratic sector of the Liberal Party. These are people who have taken degrees in major U. S. institutions and accepted the hegemonic ideology of neoliberalism. Unfortunately, other than as a mechanism for revenue raising and reducing the current fiscal deficit, the *apertura* has yielded few positive results.

Of course, the very wealthy have profited enormously. Nonetheless, Colombia's foreign indebtedness has grown since the mid 1980s, foreign profit-taking has exceeded investment, and the proportion of the population engaged in the secondary economy (i.e., barter, car window washing, street vending, etc.) has grown. Colombia's long suffering popular classes have paid the price. For them, the social rights enacted into the Constitution remain unenforceable. Although there is evidence that wage inequalities are declining (partly because of the appearance of a middle sector), fully 40% of the population, by official accounts, exists below the poverty line. Militant labor organization is a very risky activity. Labor laws go unenforced and government benefits are rarely offered. And, given the prevalence of large-scale tax evasion, were these benefits available, there would probably be no funds to pay for them.

As import duties and quotas have tumbled, important industrial sectors have become highly vulnerable to foreign competition. This explains the minimal growth in industrial employment and output during the 1990s. Even some of the country's best established industrial bourgeoisie has found itself on the losing end. The textile industry, for example, remains Colombia's largest manufacturing sector, but it is in serious trouble. According to a study cited in *Semana*, the

largest firms have been experiencing losses despite laying off workers and reducing the range of products. They are simply not competitive in an international market. According to the same study, Colombia's whole textile sector is collapsing under the burden of deficient infrastructure, plant and equipment, low demand, highly concentrated production and "adverse labor laws."⁴

BUT THESE WERE NOT THE ONLY IMPORTANT SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS OF THE LAST decade. Particularly from a foreign point of view, the most visible economic and social transformation to occur after 1977 was the rise of a giant narcotics trade. It is difficult to gauge the size of this new industry, but most indications are that it is substantially out of proportion to the economy as a whole. Anecdotally, friends tell me that at times the black market dollar has traded *below* the official exchange rate, reflecting an oversupply which cannot be accounted for. More generally, Bruce Bagley cites U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) figures to similar effect. The DEA estimates that cocaine exporters in the 1980s repatriated between \$2 billion and \$4 billion per annum and that the industry employed in the neighborhood of 100,000 people. For purposes of comparison, recorded exports of goods and services only amounted to \$9.3 billion in 1991 and the whole manufacturing sector employs fewer than three million people.⁵

The narcotics sector is special not only because of its size and legal status, but also because of its specific economic characteristics. Colombia is not an important producer of coca. Nor does it produce the chemicals employed in its conversion into various forms of cocaine (this may be changing, a reflection of the industry's capacity to finance backward linkages). Colombia is an importer of both the primary and intermediate goods, and an exporter and distributor of the finished product. In effect, then, cocaine is Colombia's largest manufactured export. Those who control the trade argue, quite credibly, that they are classic entrepreneurs. They saw a ready market, raised the necessary capital, brought it together with the required labor power, then appropriated the surplus in the form of profits, super profits.

In fact, there are indications that the *narcos* would like nothing better than to fit in with the traditional bourgeoisie and landed elites. To this effect, drug entrepreneurs have begun to invest in a variety of business areas, most particularly real estate. In a recent interview with the news weekly *Semana*, Cali's mayor estimated that approximately 15% of all construction activity in that city was drug-related. The magazine's interviews suggested that *narco* participation was even more significant because construction offered unusually good opportunities for money laundering, while also presenting an opportunity to move into a respectable field of activity.⁶ In fact, and for some time now, drug entrepreneurs have sought "deals" which would allow their families to retain some of their assets in exchange for commitments to repatriate assets and not to engage in further narcotics trade.

Colombians of all political perspectives, from Gabriel García Márquez to the current attorney general, Gustavo de Greiff, would welcome some form of legalization, or at least bargaining, to end the trafficking and the concomitant illegality and violence. Colombia has suffered a great deal from the U.S.-inspired "war on drugs." During the 1980s, under pressure from the Reagan and then the Bush Administration, Colombian governments pursued this policy with varying degrees of intensity. Particularly during the Barco Administration (1986-90) drug-

related violence reached stratospheric levels as the government caved in to arrogant U.S. demands for extradition. Government ministers were intimidated, and the profession of judge became the most hazardous job in the country. Human rights at the hands of the state also suffered. Following the assassination of Galán, the government conducted massive sweeps leading to over 10,000 arrests, yet only 535 indictments ensued.⁷ The war has continued during the Gaviria, years yielding a continuing toll of killings, contributing to the ongoing "crisis," and making little difference in the availability of drugs in U.S. cities — or of people willing to trade in them in Colombia.

Whether or not de Greiff's latest move toward normalcy through plea bargaining survives the pressure from the Clinton Justice Department, it is quite clear that the narcotics industry has changed the country in significant ways. When all is said and done, it is likely that through this industry Colombia has experienced its largest ever wave of social mobility. Particularly in Medellín, drug entrepreneurs tend to come from the popular classes, that is from petty bourgeois and working class backgrounds. Of greater social impact than the relatively small number of "drug lords" are the organizations they engender. These offer the only employment available to the large number of young people who every year enter a labor market which has remained relatively stagnant despite economic growth. On the dark side, these young people often end up as *sicarios*, the gun-toting, motor-scooter-riding hit men and women of the *narcos*. More often, however, the drug mobs provide the same kinds of employment as other business organizations: drivers, loaders, packers, clerical workers, bookkeepers, chemists, etc.

In marked contrast to U.S. propaganda, the *narcos'* relation to the various insurgency groups has been exceedingly hostile. Certainly, there is evidence of some dealings with the guerrilla. Mostly this has been a commercial relationship, involving the purchase of arms by the latter. It is also true that at least one group, the by now venerable Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), controls some coca and marijuana producing territory. Nonetheless, if the narcotics entrepreneurs have been involved in non-drug related politics, it has been in support of the far Right. As *narco* money was converted into real estate in the 1980s, producing what Jorge Orlando Melo has termed an "agrarian counterreform," the ties between the drug mob, the traditional landed elite, and the military multiplied.⁸

Narcotics-based capital, particularly in the Middle Magdalena region, has been put to use in converting latifundios into full fledged capitalist concerns, and in consolidating peasant-owned minifundios. Peasant colonizers have long attempted to resist the encroachment of traditional landed elites (*gamonales*) who, with the assistance of corrupt local politicians, manipulate records and titling procedures to appropriate newly improved land. Peasants in the region have been organized for some time and have sought, through various means, the implementation of Colombia's chronically unenforced land reform laws. Guerrilla groups, particularly FARC, the National Liberation Army (ELN) and, elsewhere in Colombia, the indigenous-based Quintin Lame Front have long been involved in these land struggles. Furthermore, to varying degrees, these groups seem to finance their operations by extracting contributions from local landowners and through kidnappings. (Abductions for money, and not only of the very rich, are epidemic in Colombia.) Given these conditions, it is not surprising that as *narcos*

became *gamonales*, violence against peasant activists, left wing party leaders, and suspected or actual guerrillas skyrocketed. When it did, it was by all accounts with the acquiescence, if not the complicity, of the military and under the cover of semi-legal paramilitary organizations. In effect, the *narcos* became a key element in Colombia's dirty war.⁹

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORTS MAKE FOR CHILLING READING. IN ITS MOST RECENT publication on Colombia, the organization reports evidence of more than 20,000 killings for political reasons since 1986. Although many are the result of guerrilla initiated violence and *narco* anti-government brutality, most must be blamed on the security forces and private military organizations which have become a fixture — everyone, from *narcos* to foreign oil companies, has one. Many of these killings were extrajudicial executions carried out by “paramilitaries” and members of the armed forces. The victims have been leftist party activists, candidates, office holders, union organizers, judges and lawyers attempting to investigate human rights violations, journalists and simple bystanders. To these clearly political murders may be added the murder of suspected criminals, homeless children, prostitutes, mentally disturbed people, and homosexuals at the hands of groups with names such as “Kan Kil,” “Los Magníficos” and “La Mano Negra” (the Black Hand). Few of these killings have received official attention. When they have, as Amnesty's 1992 *Dossier* documents, the participation of members of the security apparatus has been prominent. (One such investigation, in 1991, yielded a ring which included 13 police agents and two officers, all of whom were fired without any further consequences.)

It may very well be, as *El Tiempo* (12/15/93) stresses using Americas Watch evidence, that “the guerrilla is responsible for the increase in violence [since 1992], in part by refusing to negotiate in good faith.” Yet, the fact remains that it is the military in cooperation with some of Colombia's most unsavory characters which is responsible for most of the killings, torture and disappearances, and a great deal of the bad faith. Recent testimony by two non-commissioned officers who dared tell the story is quite suggestive. According to their deposition before the Attorney General's office, the Navy's intelligence unit, created in 1991 to infiltrate “the guerrilla groups which were sowing terror in the Middle Magdalena,” has become a death squad with the full participation of its commanding officer. Further, these two NCOs claim Naval intelligence regularly engages sicarios to do the dirty work: killing the leaders of an oil workers' union, representatives of human rights groups, peasants, sympathizers of progressive movements and “even shoemakers.” Their claims also implicate members of the military and *sicarios* in the 1989 massacre of a judicial commission, a crime that had been officially attributed to a guerrilla organization. Their accusations have caused quite a stir, but so far little action. The problem with independent judiciaries is that they lack the means of enforcement.¹⁰

Events such as these have made the process of “national reconciliation” even more difficult. Following on the heels of the regularized, and ultimately ineffective, repression of the Turbay years (1978-82), the Betancur administration (1982-86) moved into office after winning a closely contested campaign against a divided Liberal Party. The main issue had been whether to negotiate with the guerrilla. (A moot point in view of the 30-year anti-insurgency campaign which the military was still unable to win.) In effect, a country exhausted by violence

had given Betancur a mandate to conclude peace, or so he claimed. For the main guerrilla organizations, chronically unable to operate in the urban centers or even to transcend their own divisions (at least five guerrilla groups were active at the time), the process of dialogue also provided a way out of a military and political impasse. In 1984, first the flamboyant M-19, then a segment of the loosely Communist FARC concluded agreements that turned them into political parties. Very quickly, however, the membership of the legal faction of FARC, the Patriotic Union (UP), was decimated by right-wing violence; so was the M-19. The latter, in 1985, repudiated the agreement in an ill-conceived "revolutionary publicity coup," the takeover of the offices of the Supreme Court. The military's response was an armored assault upon Bogota's Palace of Justice, leading to the deaths of an undisclosed number of people (including most of the top members of the judiciary), and a campaign of terror against all dissidence.¹¹ Another truce would have to wait until the final months of the Barco (1986-90) government when M-19 became a legal party, AD/M-19, as did the main force of the Popular Liberation Army (now dubbed Hope, Peace, and Liberty — EPL), and the Quintin Lame Front. In various capacities, these groups were a crucial element in the framing of the 1991 Constitution.

Despite these agreements and the new constitution, Colombia's efforts to negotiate with its insurgency have met only with mixed success. The *clase dirigente* remains divided, with the Right and much of the military command taking an intransigent position. Especially the latter (much of whose high command is a product of the School of the Americas), but also important elements of the business elite, continue to hang on to a stark version of U.S. containment doctrine which holds that all dissidence is Communist, all Communism is foreign and, consequently, an enemy which must be fought to the death. Within this paradigm, drug rings are a second order problem, sometimes even a potential ally, while advocacy of a political settlement comes perilously close to treason, making even the position of a president who wants this a difficult one. By the same token, guerrilla groups find it dangerous to put down their arms. From their perspective, the willingness of the civilian authorities to live up to their agreements is not something to rely upon. And even assuming this willingness, the civilian authorities' ability to protect demobilized groups is questionable given the attitudes of the military and significant portions of the ruling elite. As with José Arcadio Segundo's Macondo, Colombia is a place where "nothing has happened, nor is anything happening nor will it happen."

ECONOMIC GROWTH MIXED WITH STAGNATION AND VIOLENCE. NEOLIBERALISM AND VIOLENCE. Drugs and violence. Guerrillas and violence. A raging dirty war. The demons seem bent on wreaking havoc in the Land of El Dorado. So many sad memories that refuse to go away while remaining unacknowledged . . .

In the weeks immediately preceding the first round of the series of elections which would confirm Colombia's new democracy, a host of old demons reappeared. The news carried reports of privatized companies, such as Colombia's only major shipyard, failing leaving thousands unemployed. There was also every indication that the dirty war continued, as did the war on drugs. On the latter front, of course, the reports seemed positive: a high profile drug lord was killed by government forces. Of course, no one asked why he was "regrettably" killed rather than arrested.

This disregard for law and national dialogue was also apparent in the efforts by Colombia's newspaper of record to undermine the credibility of an important progressive figure. During the very week of the congressional election, *El Tiempo* upstaged the proceedings by publishing a series of reports, unsubstantiated as it turned out, that Nel Beltrán, the courageous Bishop of Sincelejo, had been seen in Havana at a "guerrilla summit." Beltrán is a well known advocate of government-guerrilla dialogue, of human rights and social responsibility. He has frequently mediated in high level negotiations between the government and the armed Left. He has also made it a habit to remind the state of its commitments to human rights and to the poor. In fact, Beltrán was in Miami and there was no more solid evidence of a summit than a phone call from "an unidentified Colombian citizen," and a photograph of FARC's Mexico City spokesperson addressing a meeting of Latin American unionists. In any case, Beltrán's transgression, if any, would have been talking to members of the Guerrilla Coordinating Committee. Good will was not about the land.

However, there was some good news in the weeks preceding the first electoral contest. It involved the assertion of the judiciary against the President on the presence of U. S. military units on Colombia's Pacific Coast. Earlier in the year, it had become known that U.S. troops were in the region. The official explanation from both the Colombian and the U. S. governments was that these were not Marines but crews of Army Engineers building a school in a long neglected area. Images of GIs laying cinder blocks appeared in the media. It is not evident what these foreign troops were doing on Colombian territory (most likely, they were engineers engaged in building or improving a highly restricted nearby naval base), but what was clear to the Council of State was that President Gaviria had exceeded his powers by inviting them without the consent of the legislature. The GIs departed leaving behind an unfinished schoolhouse and who knows what else.

Then the electoral process began. On March 15, 1994 newspapers published sample ballots. The actual size senatorial sample ballot took up a whole page. It showed the names and photographs of the heads of the 251 candidate lists. The majority of the lists were Liberal, reflecting both that party's divisions and the strategic choices inherent in the new system of proportional representation. There were also Conservative lists, AD/M-19 lists, indigenous community lists, Green lists, Christian lists and others. All this was repeated for the Chamber of Representatives, although the division into provinces made the choices less overwhelming. All told, 5,333 candidates grouped into 879 lists ran for the 265 seats in the Senate and the Chamber. The choices available suggested that the goal of facilitating the presence of small parties had been met.

The final results, however, proved otherwise. AD/M-19 practically disappeared from the scene, losing all of its nine senatorial seats. The Liberals solidified their control of the legislature and the Conservatives gained substantial ground. In effect, but for the presence of a few very small groups and movements (mostly affiliated with the major parties), it seemed as if the closed bipartisanship of old had returned. As they say, *los mismos con las mismas* — the same with the same. Equally disturbing, perhaps, was the dismally low turnout (about 30%) which, despite the claims of the establishment press, was the lowest for a comparable election since 1945. *El Tiempo* and other sources blamed guerrilla activity and "apathy," though the former claim is weak, given the low population

of the areas where guerrilla groups are active, and the latter explanation is vacuous. The only good news was the evidence of the declining fortunes of the "great chieftains," or party bosses. But for this, it was clear that the *clase dirigente* remained in control.¹²

DESPITE THE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES THE COUNTRY HAS UNDERGONE OVER THE LAST DECADE or so, much remains the same. The new constitution has done little to resolve the "permanent crisis." Even the best laws require an appropriate base and good will. The drug wars go on, though it is far from clear whether the real war is not against dissidence, legal and otherwise. The trap of illegality continues to grip the country. But there are some positive signs. Human rights violations are high on the national agenda, and they will not go away. Colombia has finally recognized that it has ethnic minorities and has taken measures to give them a hearing. Colombia's women have finally acquired full juridical rights. In short, the country has made an explicit commitment to the notion that human well-being is a collective project. Formal recognition of human needs is something that no progressive position should ever deride. And this the Constitution of 1991 does very well. Finally, and in many ways most important, courageous people (judges, labor leaders, clergy, activists, even soldiers) continue the struggle.

NOTES

1.Colombians refer to guerrilla groups, whether singularly or plurally, as the guerrilla, a term which suggests a single entity, a being, a demon.

2.David Bushnell, *The Making of Modern Colombia* (Berkeley, 1993), p.284.

3.Figures based on ECLAC, *Statistical Yearbook for Latin America and the Caribbean* (Santiago, Chile, 1993), tables 1, 37, 57, 76, 111, 243.

4.#620 (March 22, 1994): 52.

5.Bruce Bagley, "Narcotráfico: Colombia Asediada," in F. Leal and L. Zamosc, eds., *Al Filo del Caos* (Bogota, 1990) p. 445. The estimate of non-repatriated narcotics profits is ten times higher. Figures on exports and manufacturing calculated from ECLAC, *Statistical Yearbook*, tables 103 and 243, and U.N. *Development Programme, Human Development Report* (New York, 1992) table 16.

6.*Semana* #604 (November 30, 1993), pp. 38-45.

7.Figures from Bagley, "Narcotráfico," p. 450.

8. "Los Paramilitares y su Impacto sobre la Política," in Leal and Zamosc, eds., *Al Filo del Caos*, p. 492.

9.Compare Bagley, op. cit., pp. 455-7, to Melo, pp. 488-92, to Jenny Pearce, *Colombia* (London, 1990), pp. 239-50.

10.For an account of this testimony see *Semana* #610 (January 11, 1994) which also claims that violence in the region is due to "the paramilitarism which has committed assassinations...and the unionism which has raised its menacing proselytizing banner..." p. 24

11. For a detailed discussion see Ana Carrigan's *The Palace of Justice: A Colombian Tragedy* (New York, 1993).

12.*El Tiempo*, (March 16, 1994). For historical turnouts see Gary Hoskin, "Los Partidos Tradicionales," in *Al Filo del Caos*, p. 158.

Mexico Heads for the Millennium

Phillip Smith

FOR PRESIDENT CARLOS SALINAS DE GORTARI, 1994 WAS SUPPOSED TO MARK THE triumphant finale of his presidency. He had largely overcome the stigma of his fraud-stained victory over Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in 1988. He had shepherded in electoral reforms that were as pretty on paper as they were meaningless in practice. He had managed to co-opt his rightist opposition's economic program and to sow dissension among Cárdenas' followers on his left. He had continued and deepened the free market reforms — "modernization," he always called it — begun by his predecessor, Miguel de la Madrid, transferring control of huge economic sectors from his party's "dinosaurs" to a new class of largely foreign-trained technocrats and entrepreneurs. And, despite some bumps in the road, he had successfully negotiated an economic and political rapprochement with the ever-looming giant to the North.

The implementation of NAFTA was to be the crowning jewel of his transformation of the Mexican economy into a model of neoliberalism, and his hand-picked successor, the loyal, competent, and charming Luís Donaldo Colosio, appeared poised to ride a tattered but still formidable PRI (Institutional Revolutionary Party) political machine to easy victory. In short, as 1993 drew to an end, President Salinas had every reason to believe that his *sexenio* (six-year term) would be viewed as a success, and that his policies would continue.

The Season of the Gun

THE NEW YEAR HAS PROVEN TO BE A RUDE AWAKENING FOR SALINAS AND A TERRIBLE shock to the power structure. When indigenous peasants in the poor and remote state of Chiapas rose up under the banner of Mexican revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata, they shook Salinas's brave new Mexico to its foundations. Not only did the Zapatista rebels grab the nation's attention with their dramatic seizure of San Cristóbal de las Casas and a dozen other Chiapas towns, they also displayed uncanny media savvy and tactical abilities as they made their propaganda points and then melted back into the hills and forests.

Especially because of the charisma and clearly articulated political vision of their primary spokesman, Subcommandante Marcos, the

PHILLIP SMITH is co-editor of the *Covert Action Quarterly* and writes on Latin American affairs and drug policy. His article "Grappling with Shining Path" appeared in *NEW POLITICS*, Volume III, No. 4, #12.

Zapatistas have managed to stay on the front pages for months. Finding room to maneuver in the regime's unwillingness to pay the political price of unleashing the full force of its repressive power, the Zapatistas have held long, well-publicized negotiations with Salinas' hand-picked point-man, former Mexico City Mayor and disappointed presidential aspirant, Manuel Camacho Solís.

Through skillful manipulation of the media and of the government's desire for a quick, painless resolution of the rebellion, the Zapatistas have managed to win promises to address their demands, both those related to specific questions of social justice in Chiapas and those calling for national political reforms. The March special session of the Mexican congress to enact new electoral reforms is a product of the Zapatista rebellion. It would not have happened without the embarrassment caused by the uprising, despite continuing demands from the political opposition. Nonetheless, the Zapatistas remain skeptical and have so far refused to lay down their weapons.

And then, in late March, Luís Colosio, the official candidate and, in effect, heir to the throne, was gunned down in Tijuana. The simple fact of his assassination was traumatic enough; there had not been a political murder at this level since the assassination of Obregon in 1928. Low-level political violence is not unusual; according to the Cardenista opposition, 253 of its militants have been killed since the 1988 elections, and the murder, torture, and arrest of leaders in indigenous and peasant struggles is far from rare. But the killing of the president-to-be was not only a severe shock to the national conscience, but also catapulted Salinas and the PRI into a new crisis.

More destabilizing than Colosio's death itself is the increasing evidence that it was a conspiracy. Seven people, some of them with links to the Baja California state PRI, some of them former policemen, have so far been charged with complicity, but the specific political interests behind the shooting have not been identified. In the current atmosphere of feverish speculation, there is no shortage of theories, some more Machiavellian than others: It was the state PRI in Baja, whose members shouted death threats at then party head Colosio after he allowed the National Action Party (PAN) to take the statehouse in 1989; it was the powerful Tijuana drug mafia (or its Sinaloa competitors), who wanted to send a signal to overeager prosecutors; it was a Zapatista commando unit, taking the rebellion to the other end of the country; it was the old guard within the national PRI, which hoped to force Salinas to choose a replacement more amenable to their out-of-fashion interests; it was "dark and obscure" forces within one or another of the intelligence agencies, who killed Colosio, a provocation to justify a generalized repression prior to the elections.

The motive behind the act may never be clarified. What is as important as who did it is the fact that such an atmosphere of mistrust and

cynicism reigns. No official explanation is likely to be believed, no matter how plausible. The corrosive effect of the Colosio assassination on the political system's credibility is remarkable; it could become the Mexican equivalent of the Kennedy assassination.

Dimensions of the Crisis

THE COMBINED WEIGHT OF THE ZAPATISTA REBELLION AND THE FALL-OUT FROM THE assassination of Colosio has created a widespread sense of uncertainty. These two eruptions of political violence have plunged Mexico into a crisis of political legitimacy, one rooted in profound underlying social and economic inequalities enforced by an authoritarian pseudo-democratic party-state.

Many of the demands made at gunpoint in San Cristóbal, especially those addressing the lack of democracy, resonate far beyond the highlands of Chiapas. The Zapatistas' political demands echo those of all opposition parties, the various social movements, and even reformist sectors of the PRI itself. The clamor for democracy is by no means limited to the Zapatistas; they merely articulated that desire in a way that could not be ignored.

Pressure for political reform has been building since the 1988 presidential elections, when the PRI machine quite probably stole victory from Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, who had built an impressive if unwieldy, center-left opposition movement. With his victory tainted by loud charges of fraud, President Carlos Salinas de Gortari was widely viewed as illegitimate. His and the PRI's efforts to clean up their image, most notably through electoral reforms in 1990 and this spring, have been undercut by the party's continuing chronic resort to fraud.

And now, the pressure to democratize has been intensified by the murder of Colosio, especially by the traditional but blatantly undemocratic method of naming his successor. In the exercise of his "metaconstitutional" powers, the sitting president alone decides who will succeed him as the next PRI presidential candidate — in normal times, who will be the next president. A formal mechanism for nomination exists and extensive informal consultations with important party leaders take place, but in the end, the sitting president alone exercises the prerogative.

As Salinas weighed the options for Colosio's replacement, fissures and tensions within the PRI emerged. Top PRI politicians lobbied for an experienced political operator, while the neoliberal faction backed candidates who would continue Salinas's economic project. When Salinas chose Colosio campaign manager Ernesto Zedillo, the latter faction prevailed. Zedillo, an orthodox neoliberal and architect of "modernization," had never held elective office and shows no talent for politics, but nonetheless received the *dedazo* (the presidential fingerpoint).

Interne squabbles over the succession reflect real divisions and diverging interests within the party. In the most general sense, there is a split between the “modernizers” and the *politicos*. The former — young, educated abroad, cosmopolitan, and concentrated in the economics and planning ministries — are disparagingly, but aptly, called Mexican yuppies, technocrats, and *perfumados* (“perfumed ones,” referring to their elegant dress and coiffure). They are the engineers and, along with well-connected entrepreneurs, the primary beneficiaries of Salinas’s economic reforms. The *politicos*, on the other hand, represent the old PRI, the PRI of the mass organizations; the local, state, and regional party machines; the state enterprises; the militants in electoral fights. In the invective of the technocrats, they are the “dinosaurs.”

The most important issue separating the factions is who will benefit from the restructuring. The massive sell-off of state enterprises has transferred both wealth and power from the old-line party loyalists to the “new class” of technocrats and their business allies. The down-sizing of state enterprises and the accompanying layoffs also reduced the political power of party union leaders.

But there are other fault lines in the party, too. Besides regional differences, there is dissent on the question of democratization. The Democracy 2000 current within the party, is adamantly reformist. Its rhetoric of democracy, separation of state and party, and social and economic reforms could be mistaken for that of the Zapatistas or Cardenistas. The leader of the official union movement, Fidel Velázquez, on the other hand, epitomizes the hard-line dinosaurs. The ninetysomething bureaucrat (his nickname is “The Mummy”) has ruled official labor for half a century, stifling union democracy and pledging fealty to whoever holds the presidency. His response to the Zapatistas was exemplary: They should be “exterminated.”

In this year of uncertainty, the PRI’s political schisms will inevitably widen as the party grapples with its future. The PRI has never been monolithic — in a one-party state there must be plenty of room under the tent — and the pressure of the crisis is certain to exacerbate differences, possibly sabotaging Zedillo’s candidacy.

The Crisis of the 1980s and Beyond

THE POLITICAL CRISIS, HOWEVER, OVERLAYS AND IS BUT ONE RESULT of the profound social crisis facing Mexico. After a period of rapid economic growth fueled by oil revenues and foreign loans in the 1970s, Mexico, like the rest of Latin America, entered into what is commonly called “the lost decade.” Under the pressure of horrendous foreign debt service payments, the drying-up of new investment as Mexicans and foreigners put their money elsewhere, and the loss of jobs due to increasing imports, the governments of first Miguel de la Madrid and then Salinas turned away from

the traditional Mexican political economy based on nationalism, protectionism, and the internal market.

De la Madrid initiated a process of neoliberal reforms, including a massive privatization program — the number of government-owned enterprises declined from more than 1100 in 1982 to less than 300 by 1991.¹ Other structural reforms included the opening of the national economy to unfettered foreign trade and investment, the shrinkage of government payrolls, and, in general, the all-too-familiar “austerity programs.” Salinas, who had served as Secretary for Budget and Planning under de la Madrid, continued his boss’s economic policies, deepening and extending them, and probably making them irreversible for the foreseeable future.

The social and economic pain associated with the radical shift in the economic model was felt unevenly. Mexico is a large country, riven by cleavages of class, race, and region; and the impact of Salinas’s reforms varies accordingly. The North of Mexico, especially, but not only the border zones, has profited from the opening of the economy. There are now an estimated 500,000 Mexicans doing assembly work in the “maquiladora belt” stretching along the border from Tijuana to Matamoros. After the massive devaluation of the peso in 1982 and the subsequent sharp drop in labor costs for employers, employment skyrocketed. Since 1982, maquiladora employment has quadrupled.²

Industrial production in non-border northern cities has increased dramatically. U.S. auto makers, eager to escape high labor costs in the U.S., have pioneered high-tech manufacturing in northern Mexico. Ford uses high-skill, low-wage Mexican workers to produce a thousand engines a day at its state-of-the-art plant in Chihuahua City, while its Hermosillo production plant is capable of producing 130,000 cars per year using robot-assisted manufacturing and Japanese-style “lean” production techniques. General Motors, meanwhile, has become the single largest private employer in Mexico, with nearly 60,000 employees at its Mexican production plants and maquiladoras.

Marginal Mexico

THINGS ARE DIFFERENT IN THE SOUTH. THE MEXICAN SOUTH AND CENTER, outside of Mexico City, more resembles the popular image of Mexico. To the extent that the south and center is more dependent on agriculture, it has suffered during the last decade. Northern agriculture tends to be much more technologically advanced, capital intensive, export oriented and profitable than in the south. The international agribusiness of Sonora or Sinaloa is a world removed from the poor *ejidos* (communally owned indigenous lands) or small, subsistence peasant plots of Veracruz, Oaxaca, or Chiapas.

Small producers in these areas typically produce for the domestic market and concentrate on traditional crops such as corn and beans. They

lack access to credit and technology available to large, modern producers, a state of affairs that has grown worse in the 1980s and 1990s. During the 1980s, government investment in rural areas decreased dramatically, the cost of inputs such as fertilizers and electricity increased, and the exchange value of corn declined by more than half.

In addition to the largely impoverished *ejiditarios* and peasant farmers, there are several million landless rural laborers, an estimated 80% of whom are poor and 40% of whom live in extreme poverty. As a result of the agricultural crisis of the 1980s, some 300,000 peasants and laborers migrate to urban areas every year, leading economist David Barkin to argue that, "The destruction of the peasantry, which still counts for one-quarter of the labor supply, appears to be one objective of the policy of fixing low prices and importing substantial quantities of food."³

"Modernization" has had a strikingly different impact in different regions of the country. Wealth and opportunity are increasingly concentrated in the largest cities and the north. Mexico City, Guadalajara, and Monterrey alone account for nearly two-thirds of the Mexican consumer goods market, while much of the rest is concentrated along the northern border. The southern and central states, on the other hand, and especially their rural areas, are slipping further and further behind.

In light of the differential regional impact of "modernization," the NAFTA agreements take on a different aspect. Given the already huge cross-border trade and investment, NAFTA can be seen, not as signalling a new era in U.S.-Mexican relations, but as merely ratifying the neoliberal status quo. The NAFTA agreements codify and enshrine the already existing capitalist relations between the two countries. With NAFTA, the economic and social trends toward a Mexico increasingly divided by region and class will not change, but intensify.

This is not to say that NAFTA represents the only possible future. What it does represent is Mexican leaders' deliberate decision to tie the Mexican economy to imperatives of the capitalism "red of tooth and claw" practiced in the United States. Salinas and his U.S.-trained *perfumados* could possibly have opted for the social-democratic capitalism of Western Europe or the Japanese model corporate state, but they instead chose the unfettered free markets pushed on them first by the ideologues of Reaganism and then by Tory Bill Clinton. The social distance between the Mexican elite and the Mexican in the street could not be more clear.

Race and Class in Mexico

WITH NEARLY 15 MILLION PEOPLE IDENTIFIED AS INDIANS, MEXICO'S INDIGENOUS population is the largest in the Americas, and only in Guatemala and Peru do Indians make up a higher proportion of the population. But unlike Peru and Guatemala, Mexico underwent a social revolution that ostensibly acknowledged and welcomed the role of pre-Colombian civilizations in creat-

ing the nation. It was in revolutionary Mexico that the phrase "the cosmic race," referring to the mixture of the European and Indian races, was coined.

In the decades immediately following the Mexican Revolution, efforts were made to integrate Indians into the nation. The constitutional enshrinement of the *ejidos*, and land reform in general, are in large part the result of pressures from Indian peasants, and Mexican textbooks glorify figures like Cuauhtémoc, the Aztec prince who led the resistance to the Spaniards, and Benito Juárez, the Oaxaca Indian who won the presidency more than a century ago. But it is easier to praise safely dead historical figures than it is to fairly resolve knotty contemporary problems of racial justice.

While Mexico formally clasps its indigenous heritage to the national bosom, racism and bigotry toward the Indian populations are commonplace. Whether in the snotty superiority of urban intellectuals — whose descriptions of supposed Indian habits and practices bear an uncanny resemblance to those of bigots closer to home — or in the more tangible abuse and maltreatment of Indians by ranchers and officials in places like Chiapas, Indians continue to suffer the consequences of the Conquest.

Until the Maya-based Zapatista rebellion exploded this year, the state of Indian Mexico was not high on the agenda. In the 1980s, the budget for the National Indigenous Peoples' Institute, the government agency dealing with Indians, declined by more than half. This decline in spending for Indian needs coincided with the crisis in agriculture, thus exacerbating worsening conditions for Indian peasants and landless laborers. Indians, who began with the worst land and the least access to capital, suffered disproportionately the effects of economic restructuring. Of special concern to Indian farmers was the steady decline in corn prices and supports, not only because corn is a staple food but also because corn is central to Indian religion and culture.

Although the majority of Indians live in Chiapas and Oaxaca, substantial populations can be found in the Yucatan, the Huasteca (in the states of Veracruz and San Luís Potosí), Guerrero and Michoacan, and even in Chihuahua and Sonora in the northwest. In addition, the government's social welfare agency estimates that more than one million Indians have fled rural destitution to take their chances in the slums of Mexico City, where they are among the poorest residents.

While the crisis of Mexico's original peoples has festered for decades, if not centuries, the accelerating decline in indigenous living standards and opportunities has now given rise to a new Indian uprising. The state will have to turn its attention to the Indians now or face the threat of renewed caste wars.

Class War in Mexico

ALTHOUGH REGIONAL AND RACIAL VARIATIONS ARE STRIKING, they pale in com-

parison to differences based on class. The neoliberal reforms benefit the wealthiest and most powerful class fractions, while the burden of economic adjustment fell disproportionately on the middle and working class and the unemployed. The privatization of state enterprises, for example, was a windfall for wealthy Mexican and foreign investors. The way in which the sales were structured — not by shares but by entire enterprises — made it impossible for any but the wealthy to partake. And it appeared that connections counted as much as wealth in determining who was able to buy up state enterprises at fire sale prices.

While the number of billionaires climbed dramatically,⁴ so did the numbers of poor Mexicans. Between 1981 and 1987, the number of poor climbed from 32 million to 41 million, while those living in abject poverty increased from 13.7 million to 17.3 million.⁵

In short, the imposition of neoliberalism on Mexico has resulted in an accelerated concentration of wealth, the devastation of social spending, the gutting of real wages through inflation, the loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs in small manufacturing firms and former state enterprises, and the immiseration of more millions of Mexicans. Mexico is increasingly a two-tier society; its favored sons and daughters enjoy all the amenities of First World elites, while its battered middle class struggles to maintain its precarious position, and the poor and working class struggle to survive. In a telling rejoinder to Salinas's promise that NAFTA and neoliberalism would make Mexico a First World nation, pro-Zapatista demonstrators at the *zócalo* in Mexico City this spring jeeringly chanted, "First World, First World, Ha!"

Popular Movements

MEXICANS HAVE NOT SAT IDLY BY AS THEIR PROSPECTS AND QUALITY OF LIFE decline. Since the 1970s, but especially in the last decade, new social movements have entered the political scene. The earthquake that struck Mexico City in 1985 unleashed social as well as geological forces. While government rescue and clean-up efforts faltered, spontaneous popular cooperation took on a life of its own, and with the impetus provided by that tragedy, a flurry of self-organization followed. Now, a decade later, these grassroots movements are becoming important players on the local, state, and even national levels.

Generally having no affiliation or only tenuous links with the political parties, the new social movements focus on local or community issues — housing, land, pollution, transportation and tuition fee hikes, etc. — ignored or left unresolved by the state. They also typically transcend or forsake class, instead framing their demands in terms of *the people*. They nonetheless constitute a "social left;" their demands for redistributive justice and effective control over their destinies are the very stuff of leftism.

These urban movements, especially active in Mexico City, have par-

allels in the countryside. Peasant communities have united in pursuit of land, infrastructure improvements, and more favorable economic policies. In the process, they have created and deepened democratic internal structures and popular participation. The Zapatista rebels are almost certainly the spawn of these basically defensive groups.

There are other, related, grassroots movements that overlap and intersect one another in an increasingly complex organizational tapestry. Christian base communities (CEBs) sponsored by progressive Catholic churchmen like Archbishop Ruiz of Chiapas, now number in the thousands despite the Pope's condemnation. CEBs have been active in labor and peasant struggles, antifraud campaigns, and human rights efforts, and largely supported Cárdenas in 1988.

Autonomous labor movements, such as the Authentic Workers' Front (FAT), as well as movements of street vendors and other informal sector workers, are also part of the grassroots phenomenon. So are the fledgling feminist, gay rights, and environmental movements.

These movements, in all their variety, reflect the inability or unwillingness of the PRI to advance the interests of their members. The PRI's unresponsiveness has created the political space for the growth of civil society. In this election year, the question becomes whether or to what degree the grassroots movements will mobilize for the electoral struggle. They did so in 1988, but saw little come of their efforts. Since then, the grassroots movements have slowly drifted from the Cardenista orbit, turning back to their parochial concerns. These movements can put added pressure on the PRI if they can be convinced that it is in their interest to do so.

Never Underestimate the PRI

SO NOW, IN THE EARLY MONTHS OF 1994, THE RULING PARTY AND ITS ALLIES FACE A challenge unlike any before: Armed rebellion in the back hills, assassination at the highest levels, dissension within the PRI, growing grassroots movements, and the narrowing of its traditional options to maintain itself in power. Nonetheless, reports of the party's demise are greatly exaggerated.

The PRI remains the premier political force in Mexico. It is worth repeating that the party has never lost a presidential election, and it is only since Salinas came to power that it has allowed the opposition, and only the rightist opposition at that, to win a handful of state governorships. Since its inception in 1929, the party has labored to forge a working consensus among the disparate sectors that comprise it, and for decades it largely succeeded.

For nearly 70 years, the PRI brought relative stability to Mexico. That accomplishment is all the more impressive when one recalls that, with the exception of the decades-long dictatorship known as the Porfiriato,

Mexico's prior history was largely one of civil war. In terms of its political practice and relationship to the Mexican state, the PRI could perhaps best be described as a cross between Mayor Daley's Chicago political machine and the Soviet Communist Party. The party boasts a nationwide apparatus extending downward from its central committee to neighborhood and block leaders, as well as including officialist labor, peasant, and "popular" organizations. The highest values are loyalty and the ability to deliver the goods, whether they be votes or crowds for the politicians or material benefits for the party masses. In short, the PRI is an authoritarian political patronage machine.

While the PRI machine is guilty of brutality or bullying, the party has historically sought to co-opt or incorporate its foes; in essence, to buy them off. When faced with states and municipalities in the hands of the political opposition, the PRI uses the powers of the purse to strangle local administrations, thus demonstrating the benefits of staying with the state-party.

The PRI does not shy away from physical repression, but repression is only one part of a package of measures against political or social dissent and is, in general, used only as a last resort. In times of perceived crisis, however, the PRI is fully capable of killing whoever it needs to retain power, as it has demonstrated with the Cristeros in the 1920s, the students in 1968, and the minuscule guerrillas *focos* in the 1970s. The ferocity of the Mexican army's initial response to the Zapatistas demonstrates that the resort to massive violent repression continues to be an option.

The Electoral Opposition

THE PRI'S MOST SERIOUS OPPONENT IN THE AUGUST ELECTIONS IS ONCE AGAIN Cuauhtemoc Cárdenas and the mass movement *cum* political party that supports him, the PRD (The Party of the Democratic Revolution). Cárdenas, the son of the last great revolutionary president, Lázaro Cárdenas, led the Democratic Current out of the PRI in 1988, in protest of the party's lack of internal and electoral democracy and in favor of a more social-democratic response to economic hardships.

The Cardenistas have so far scored three important successes, although, significantly, none has resulted in electoral victory. First, the bolting of the Democratic Current from the PRI effectively shattered the elite consensus that all problems could be solved within the party, thus making parties outside the PRI a real alternative. Second, the strength of the Cardenista challenge to Salinas's victory in 1988 left the PRI's legitimacy in tatters. The PRI may have managed to steal the election, but in terms of its credibility among the populace, it was a pyrrhic victory. Third, in the process, the Cardenistas managed to pull together the disparate strands of the Mexican Left. Prior to the establishment of the

Cardenista FDN (National Democratic Front), which later evolved into the PRD, the Mexican Left was split between the PRI and the non-PRI Lefts (to say nothing of sectarian divisions in the non-PRI Left). The small leftist parties and the "social Left" of the mass movements joined forces with the Democratic Current for the 1988 election, and in the years since then have merged into a single, mildly leftist party. Thus, for the first time in half a century, the Mexican Left finds itself more or less united and in a position to challenge the PRI's eternal dominance.

Despite its successes, Cardenismo is plagued with problems. Cardenismo's attempt to create a united Mexican Left has in some respects fallen victim to its very diversity. As Adolfo Gilly, a leading PRD theoretician has noted, four distinct lefts can be found within the party: Cardenismo proper, which is rooted in the democratic populist legacy of Cárdenas *pere*; state nationalism, the ideology of the Priistas who have become redundant with neoliberalism; independent socialism, whose roots go back to the 1920s and which revived in the wake of 1968; and Mexican communism.⁶

Sharp divisions exist between the former Priistas and the Socialist and Communist Left. The fact that current party head Porfirio Muñoz Ledo, not only came out of the PRI but had served as head of the PRI in the mid-1970s and had overseen earlier frauds, sticks in the throats of non-PRI leftists. In addition, ideological infighting has a negative effect on party discipline and its public reputation. Finally, as Cárdenas attempts to balance competing interests within the PRD, he is correctly accused of holding a multiplicity of positions on any given issue. What stand he takes appears to depend more on his audience of the day than a firm and principled platform.

Yet another set of problems revolve around the PRD's status as an electoral movement that cannot win elections; or more precisely, one that has not been allowed to exercise the power granted to it by the popular will. By choosing to organize the broad front of 1988 into an electoral vehicle, the party has in effect foreclosed its non-electoral options, concentrating all its efforts and resources on the largely unsuccessful effort to combat PRI fraud. The PRD was clearly cheated in statewide elections in Guerrero, Michoacan, and the state of Mexico in 1989 and 1990, but was unable to reverse the results despite mass mobilizations, city hall occupations, and lethal street fights with PRI militants.

This inability to claim its just rewards makes its difficult to attract potential supporters. Hope and militancy give way to cynicism and apathy. In addition, government and PRI portrayals of the PRD as a violent opposition, loudly trumpeted by the servile mass media, have frightened off potential PRD supporters. The charge that the PRD is violence-prone is especially galling to party loyalists, who have seen many of their militants killed or jailed by the regime.

The party also stands to lose votes as Mexico climbs out of the severe

recession of the late 1980s. In 1988, Cárdenas did best among young, urban, middle and working class voters and rural workers who had benefitted from agrarian reforms. As the economy revives, some Cárdenas voters will switch back to the PRI.

All of these problems have contributed to the waning of the Cardenista surge in 1988. In fact, 1988 was the high-water mark for Cardenismo; since then, the party has been unable to recapture the momentum of that year (perhaps in part because Cárdenas has not stood for election since then). Even now, with the PRI in disarray and the Zapatistas crystallizing mass discontent, Cárdenas has only 20-25% of the voters, according to the most recent polls.

Rebellion in Chiapas

THE ZAPATISTA REBELLION IN CHIAPAS IS ONLY THE MOST DRAMATIC EXPRESSION OF peasant and indigenous discontent. Similar outbreaks could occur in regions with roughly analogous conditions, such as Oaxaca; parts of Guerrero, Veracruz, and Tabasco; and the Huasteca in the North. But while Chiapas shares similarities with other parts of rural and indigenous Mexico, it also has specific characteristics that add up to a recipe for revolt.

Although Mexico saw attempts at armed struggle in the aftermath of the massacre of students at Tlatelolco in 1968 — most notably Lucio Cabañas's and Genaro Vásquez's guerrillas in Guerrero — the Zapatistas are the first successful mass-based guerrilla movement to emerge in more than 60 years. It is firmly rooted in the land struggles of the Chiapas highlands indigenous communities and the poor peasants pushed toward the agricultural frontier at the fringes of the Lacandón rain forest.

Chiapas is in the hands of an elite of coffee growers, cattle ranchers, and lumber barons in league with local and regional PRI *caciques* (political bosses). This politico-economic elite controls the state, from the governor down through local *caciques* and including the state judicial police and acquiescent local army commanders. The elite has traditionally used the resources at its command to expand cattle grazing, logging and coffee production onto lands belonging to either *ejidos* or individual indigenous smallholders.

The Zapatista rebellion grew from Indian struggles to reclaim lands stolen from them — sometimes by trickery, often at gunpoint — over the past 25 years. It is also rooted in the increasing misery of the predominantly indigenous peasantry (some peasants have immigrated from other parts of Mexico, bringing their organizational experience with them). In the last decade, structural adjustments and free trade policies have only worsened conditions in Chiapas.

For the last 20 years, peasants formed local groups around demands for land and justice. As state and national authorities ignored or repressed

the community-based peasant groups, the process of organization deepened and broadened. Community-based groups banded together to form regional "unions," and employed petitions, protest demonstrations, and land invasions as their primary tactics. In the face of continuing repression, both official at the hands of the *judiciales* and army, and unofficially at the hands of ranchers' hired guns, the *guardias blancas* (white guards), as well as official unresponsiveness to legitimate demands for justice, armed struggle began to appear as a necessary step. On New Years' Day, 1994, after years of organization building, consciousness raising, and military training, the Maya rebels of Chiapas marched into national consciousness.

The Zapatistas, most of whom are *ejiditarios*, small peasants, or rural laborers from the Lacandón agricultural frontier, clearly and strikingly articulated the desperate situation that drove them to declare war on the state in their initial declaration on January 1:

We have nothing to lose, absolutely nothing, no decent roof over our heads, no land, no work, poor health, no food, no education, no right to freely and democratically choose our leaders, no independence from foreign interests, and no justice for ourselves or our children. But we say enough is enough! We are the descendants of those who truly built this nation, we are the millions of dispossessed, and we call upon all of our brethren to join our crusade, the only option to avoid dying of starvation.

They presented the national and local governments with a series of demands for land reform, social justice, improvement in living standards, democratic governance, and national political reform. In a smart tactical move, the Zapatistas placed their concrete, particular local demands in the framework of national political reforms, allowing the rebellion to resonate among the downtrodden and the sensitive all across the country.

As of this writing, negotiations between the government and the rebels are stalemated. Government negotiator Manuel Camacho Solís, aware of the constraints facing the government, basically attempted to buy a peace settlement with promises to address the Zapatistas' local demands, while leaving the demands for national political reform untouched. The Zapatistas have made clear their dissatisfaction with and distrust of the government's proposed settlement. Through their communiqués, the Zapatistas continue to lambast the regime, scoffing at its promises, demanding national political reforms, and refusing to lay down their weapons. Meanwhile, the Mexican army continues to surround the rebel zones, which include vast, remote tracts of the state and as much as one third of the state's population.

While combat has ceased for the time being, social conflict in Chiapas is on the rise. Peasants in different parts of the state, heartened by the rebellion, have seized tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land formerly in the hands of medium and small landowners. Cattle ranchers, lumber companies, and the local political establishment have begun a

counterrevolution to undo the gains already made by the insurgents and to prevent any further territorial expansion.

Their “civic organizations” have begun a campaign of threats and intimidation, targeting not only unruly peasants but also the Church. Archbishop Samuel Ruiz — “Subcommandante Sammy,” as his foes sneeringly refer to him, blaming his “preferential option for the poor” for riling up the Indians — has received death threats, and local authorities have ordered the closing of at least five Catholic churches in the state until Ruiz leaves. Angry mobs have also threatened Catholic nuns who operate a hospital near the conflict zone. In addition, there are recent and continuing reports of arrests, beatings, and the murder of at least one peasant organization leader in Chiapas at the time of this writing.

The ongoing social conflict in Chiapas points to a serious contradiction facing the regime: In order to co-opt the rebellion, which is its apparent strategy, the government will have to move against the interests of large landholders and local political elites — its very base in the state. While the national government is willing to sacrifice a few local interests for its own good, the ranchers and *caciques* of Chiapas will not go down without a fight. Prior to the rebellion, Chiapas was the scene of 30% of all land conflicts; now it appears that the struggle for land and power in Chiapas will only intensify.

The Current Conjunction

FOR MOST MEXICANS, CHIAPAS IS REMOTE, THE INDIAN REBELS ARE QUIANT and exotic, and their struggles with cattlemen and highland *caciques* revolve mainly around local issues. But subjectively, the impact of the Zapatistas is profound. The uprising has excited tremendous interest, support and sympathy. Pro-Zapatista demonstrations have taken place across the country, and on at least two occasions, rallies in their support in Mexico City have brought tens of thousands of people to the *zócalo*. The Zapatistas’ trademark *pasamontañas* (ski-masks), formerly available all over Mexico City, have all been sold as this is written. Zapatista “uprising” condoms have even appeared on the market, much to the consternation of the rebels, who sternly lectured the merchant class on trafficking in the blood of Maya martyrs.⁷

Much of the excitement is centered on Subcommandante Marcos, who has become an overnight pop culture hero, especially to an intelligentsia and literary establishment enamored of the glamorous rebel who speaks their language. While the Mexico City intellectuals may soon tire of their latest obsession, they have, in the meantime, served to legitimate not only Marcos the man, but the cause for which he is the chief spokesman.

For countless other Mexicans, however, the Zapatistas have stirred something deeper: A sense of identification, a sense of pride and hope, a sense of revenge against a system that ignores and marginalizes them at

best. In Michoacan, fired sugar workers send their collective leadership off to Chiapas to join up with the rebels; in the *colonias populares* of Mexico City, poor residents punctuate their demands with banners bearing the likeness of Marcos; in the farmlands of central Mexico, workers block highways and close banks while shouting approval of the Zapatistas; in remote Indian villages, land seizures inspired by the rebellion occur almost daily. More ominously, in Mexico City, car bombs detonated by self-described Zapatista commandos explode in January, while in Veracruz and Puebla, electrical transmission towers are knocked down; and in Tuxtla Gutiérrez in April, unknown assailants attack an army checkpoint, killing a sergeant.

It is clear that *something* has happened to the national psyche, and the implications for the regime are ominous. While anti-government violence remains sporadic and isolated, with no apparent guiding hand, the Zapatista rebellion has pushed long-deferred questions of social justice and meaningful democracy to the forefront. It has significantly narrowed the PRI's maneuvering space while heightening contradictions within the party. It has also ensured that the PRI's behavior will be subject to close national and international scrutiny. Perhaps most worrying to the regime, the Zapatistas may have taught the Mexican people a dangerous lesson in how to get things done: Pick up the gun.

Possibilities

FOR THE NEXT FEW MONTHS, THE AUGUST PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS WILL BE THE focus of attention. Precisely because the political landscape has been profoundly altered by the Zapatista rebellion and the Colosio assassination, the elections assume even greater importance. Three short-term scenarios present themselves. In the least explosive scenario, the PRI wins the presidency with more or less free and fair elections, or with a level of fraud too small to provoke serious resistance. In the second scenario, the PRI wins but resorts to massive fraud to do so. In the third scenario, the PRI holds clean elections and subsequently loses the presidency.

Much depends on whether the PRI fractions unite around Zedillo and unleash the full power of the party electoral machine. Given the PRI's overwhelming superiority in all aspects of electioneering — from local organization to campaign finance to a compliant mass media to its stable of experts schooled in the techniques of modern politics — if the party unites and if there are no more great surprises before August, Zedillo can probably win a more or less fair election. So far, the Cardenistas have not shown that they are the threat they were in 1988, and the Mexican public seems too apathetic to cause a great surge for the left. If Zedillo wins in this manner, the best that can be expected in the short term is a “kinder, gentler” PRI that will gradually open up the political system.

The prospects for a Cárdenas victory, even with totally transparent

elections, is dim, for reasons mentioned above. In addition, the PRI can be counted on to point out the destabilizing effects of Cárdenas presidency, such as an expected withdrawal of foreign investment and the prospect of continuing political turmoil during the transition from the party-state to a multiparty state.

Finally, the PRI could win the elections through resort to massive, blatant fraud, as it has done in numerous state and local elections under Salinas, including the hotly disputed state elections in Morelos just this March. If the PRI cannot break its old habits, and Zedillo takes power on the basis of a clear fraud, the country faces the prospect of intense political instability, even widespread outbreaks of violence. For the PRI and the Mexican state to attempt a massive fraud now is a direct challenge to a people awakened in January — and probably unnecessary.

NOTES

1. See Telesforo Nava, ed., *Reestructuración y crisis del movimiento obrero* (Mexico: Casa del Sol, 1991), p. 37.

2. Philip Russell, *Mexico Under Salinas* (Austin: Center for Mexican Studies, 1994), p. 203.

3. David Barkin, *Economic Crisis Management in Rural Mexico ... or How to Starve the Campesinos*, paper presented to the XVI Conference of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, DC, 1991, p. 8, cited in Russell, p. 191.

4. *Forbes*, July 23, 1990, p. 188; and July 5, 1993, pp. 76-77.

5. Solidarity, *El combate de la pobreza* (Mexico City: El Nacional, 1990), pp. 20-22.

6. Adolfo Gilly, "El perfil del PRD: cuestión abierta," *Nexos*, May 1991; cited in Jorge Castaneda, *Utopia Unarmed* (New York: Knopf, 1993), p. 157.

7. John Ross, "Marcos Mania: The Mythicization of Mexico's Zapatistas," *Bay Area Guardian*, March 16, 1994, p. 21.

Authoritarianism in Croatia And Prospects for Change

Ines Sabalić

BY 1991, THE YEAR BEFORE THE WAR BROKE OUT, THE ATMOSPHERE IN ZAGREB was already reminiscent of the Weimar Republic, marked by the paraphernalia of both decadence and wild freedom. We celebrated the last carefree New Year's Eve in Zagreb's main square with the best champagne available, which we drank from crystal glasses, not plastic ones. Amid Milosevic's anti-bureaucratic revolution in Serbia and Montenegro, and terror in Kosovo, Zagreb lived in splendid isolation — elegance and culture mixed with freedom of the press, and the freedom to express different political views. Everything seemed possible. Somehow, we mistook that last year of Communism for the first year of freedom. Now, it seems to me, it was but a moribund euphoria caused by a fading regime which, out of weakness, and before vanishing forever, offered everything we used to long for. (As in Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* — when Rutger Hauer, a replicant, a non-human, saved the life of Harrison Ford, the human sent to destroy him because, in the end, he preferred any life, even his enemy's, to destruction.)

A friend of mine was enthusiastic and skeptical at the same time. "Come on, let's join the Liberal party. Who knows whether we will ever get another chance," she said. With the blessing of the decadently democratic Croatian Communists, the Croatian Social Liberal Party was the first of many parties to be founded. Of course, we did not know how long this benevolence would last. The Liberals were then the showcase of Croatia — all the bearded intelligentsia, all the liberal professors of sociology, artists, feminists, even anarchists, managers, all sorts of professionals — in other words, the urbanite crowd interested in Croatia as a modern, yet decisively Mitteleuropean, country. One not associated with petty, provincial and clerical Austro-Hungarian snobbery, but with an exciting heritage of mixed nations and cultures, as described in Kundera's or Konrad's essays. After so many failed attempts at achieving independence (the worst of which was the one during the Second World War), and unfortunate choices, there was a general feeling that this time Croatia

INES SABALIĆ has written about the crisis and war in the former Yugoslavia for various Croatian, Slovenian, Kosovo-Albanian and Hungarian journals. Before the war, she was a film critic and wrote essays on the arts and popular culture.

was heading toward something worthwhile. The words which were previously only distant, abstract notions, like freedom, democracy, independence, now seemed close and attainable.

We were tired of Communism with a human face, as Yugoslavia was sometimes described, and I am still bored when I have to explain what a joke this human face was. We were scared of Milosevic's rallies in the provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo, scared of western diplomats' fascination with Milosevic, whom they saw as the energizing force in the Yugoslav federation, scared of the ongoing cultural revolution in Serbia, scared, scared, but in our minds prepared for something better, and we wanted out.

Croatia was therefore supposed to be everything Yugoslavia was not — a modern, free European state, implying a romantic conception of Europe and the West, based on the influx of popular culture and high moral standards, obtained through an educational system inspired by the masterpieces of European heritage. A strange mixture. It also implied it would be non-Balkan, because Balkans were widely perceived as wild, unreliable, poor, bad-mannered, bloodthirsty and primitive. Like the old Roman god Janus, Croatia has two faces — a European and a Balkan one. In a mirror, we see ourselves as Europeans, while the West dismisses us as a Balkan tribe, which adds to the general confusion.

All the political parties formed then had Croatia in their names which, in itself, was not necessarily an early symptom of nationalism. People I used to meet liked to put it this way: in these new circumstances, I can say that I am, among other things, a Croat, but that in no way means that my freedom begins and ends with that statement, or that freedom depends solely on being a Croat.

Much to our surprise, the Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ), which we, the chattering Zagreb classes, looked upon with snobbish disregard, believing it to be a populist, unrealistic and nationalist force — won the elections. But we also believed that the outcome of the first free elections must be respected. Croatia was still a part of Yugoslavia then, and Milosevic implied that the outcome of the Croatian elections was a *causus belli*. For the electorate, which opted for the HDZ and its leader Franjo Tudjman, the war launched on Croatia was proof that they had made the right choice, because of all the candidates, he was the only one who openly said that Croatia should be independent. The syllogism by which Tudjman was able to insure the firm, even hardheaded, support of voters went like this: Croatia should be free, and because Milosevic did not want an independent Croatia, he started the war. An attack on Tudjman was therefore also an attack on Croatia. Of course, this was too simple an answer but, with a little help from party propaganda, it worked.

THE PEOPLE WHO VOTED FOR TUDJMAN ALSO SAW IN HIM AND HIS PARTY A reincarnation of the Croatian Peasant Party which, back in the 1920s and 1930s,

was a non-violent, peace-seeking, and compromise-seeking force in search of a solution for the Croatian question in the first Yugoslavia. I think that the mentality of Croatia can be understood as part of the Central European mentality. There is a glittering, captivating, skeptical, artistic stratum, the charm of Central Europe, champagne on the eve of catastrophe. There is also a cruel stratum. Amid the tunes of the waltz, Vienna gave birth to Hitler, who created an Ustashe state in Croatia during World War II. There is also a Central European stream among the peasant and suburban population, generally non-violent, conservative, church-going, boring and simple, hardworking and cautious — due to the fact that it was they who bore the worst consequences of the political changes, including all the wars, past and present. Their political needs are not very sophisticated, I'm afraid, and could be best described as a wish to be left alone to lead their boring, simple, conservative lives. During the previous decades and even centuries, Croatia was like a mantra, like a promised land where the fulfillment of this goal would automatically be achieved.

So, after the first free elections, the intoxication caused by the experience of freedom, and by the experience of an independent Croatia persisted. Being a subject of a newly formed, yet long awaited state, is a special kind of feeling. A new state is like a new love affair, you can die for it and you want everybody to recognize your love. So, when the war started, the war effort became a lifestyle. The romantic picture of Croatia fighting against all odds — of which the battle for Vukovar was such a strong symbol — stirred everyone, even the most sophisticated. Rare were the voices raised against certain moves by the Zagreb authorities; they were seen as nitpicking. All political parties in Croatia endorsed the war effort, former Communists included. But, as in a good drama, the gun seen in the first act, must be fired by the last. The early symptoms of an emerging authoritarian regime developed, meanwhile, into a full-blown and serious disease. Most people recognized it, but were too busy defending the country, surviving and finding shelter, to be bothered.

The opposition and some independent intellectuals did react to obvious breaches of democratic standards, to which the ruling party always found time for a furious response, claiming that the country was at war and that a certain order of priorities had to be respected. As for the dirty side of the war, people told themselves that was the way it had to be, that all wars are dirty. And so people gradually gave up parts of their dream. Democratic Croatia it was not, but it was, at least, Croatia.

On the front lines, incompetent HDZ party officials even took over military affairs, with tragic consequences. War profiteers flourished. At least, people must have seen that! The dirt became all too visible with the Croatian involvement in the Bosnian war, for which Tudjman never had popular support. On the contrary, his disregard and disrespect for public opinion was never more evident. Exhausted by events in their own country, many Croats realized, only after foreign media coverage of Croatian

war crimes in Bosnia, that Zagreb, having lost part of its territories, was now engaged in the dismemberment of Bosnia. Moreover, that at the same time innocent fools were waging a desperate battle for Vukovar, Tudjman and Milosevic were negotiating an unholy deal on Bosnia. Indeed, I cannot recall another example when a leader of a country under aggression, a country which is the weaker side in the conflict, and is losing the war, to boot, ventures into carving up a third country in formal collaboration with the very enemy which almost destroyed it.

THIS WAS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE OPPOSITION TO VOICE HARSH CRITICISM AND make alternative proposals. But by then, people were too distracted, overcome by a sense of powerlessness. Even before the Bosnian war, the HDZ controlled the largest part of the media, and in the past year it concluded the process. In both Houses of Parliament it had an absolute majority, a voting machine that blocked every proposal by the opposition. Croatia is a classic example of the inertia of the model which found fruitful soil in Mitteleuropa. Under these new circumstances, people continued to behave as they did under the old regime. Both the old and the new regimes are equally hypocritical, the style of governing very similar, well-suited to the fact that the people in East and Central Europe are unfamiliar with democracy. So, the same mind-set is in power again, looking for enemies within, who are, lest we forget, more dangerous than external ones. Tudjman is glorified in the same manner as Tito once was, and political opponents are dismissed with the same vocabulary. The only difference is that nobody is in jail. Instead of prison, there is a new institution — the wall of shame, the public pillorying of those who question official policy.

The opposition did criticize the policy in Bosnia. But with no real power in Parliament, these criticisms were restricted to sporadic interviews in the state-controlled media which used them to prove the existence of freedom of the press. By questioning Zagreb's policy in Bosnia, all opposition parties could count on potential voters' support, because that reflected the prevailing public mood. But the opposition failed to publicly discuss, or even pay attention to, the equally important problem of the Serbian minority in Croatia, which is indeed the crucial one.

All the major opposition parties, including the Social Liberals, the largest and most influential, advocate respecting the human and civil rights of the Serbian minority in Croatia, but this is not to be confused with their ideas about the Serb-controlled region of Krajina which, due to the circumstances when the war began, is widely regarded as an occupied territory. No party in Croatia has a detailed, realistic program for the integration of the Serbian minority in Krajina into Croatia's legal system or, if they do, it has not yet been made public. It seems, however, that the political settlement brokered by the international community will result in autonomy for Krajina, which in fact will mean a kind of federation between the Serb-controlled territory and the rest of Croatia.

And this, in turn, will make it very difficult for non-Serbian displaced persons from Krajina to return to their homes, since it is highly unlikely they will feel secure there. That outcome, given the position when the war started, will be seen as a defeat by the supporters of both the ruling party and the opposition.

I believe that Tudjman's self-destructive policy of trying to make a deal with Milosevic over Bosnia was partly due to his hope that Belgrade would, in turn, renounce Krajina. By criticizing Tudjman's Bosnian policy, the Social-Liberals also criticized détente with Belgrade. More than once they said that if all other means of implementing Croatia's legal system on its entire territory, and securing conditions for the return of refugees failed — they were not opposed to regaining Krajina militarily. However, Liberals never forgot to emphasize their adherence to the rule of law, seeing themselves as part of the European liberal tradition, and therefore ready to respect its standards and demands. So, even though they may also suffer from the disease that affects every aspiring young democracy, they would, at least, respect the Constitution, freedom of the press, and the institution of the Parliament. That is, if they ever come into office, which does not seem probable in the near future.

MEANWHILE, THE RULING PARTY MONOPOLIZES EVERY ASPECT OF POLITICAL LIFE IN the country. Democratic institutions exist primarily as décor: freedom of the press is proclaimed but does not really exist. Parliament exists, but decision-making does not. The opposition fails to react when it should, it dissents from the government only on unimportant matters, and that is why, despite everything that has happened (e.g., Bosnia), Croats dutifully vote for Tudjman. The opposition's ineffectiveness fortifies prejudices that already exist, and falsely lends credence to the perception of Croatia as a backward nation, naturally inclined to authoritarianism.

Actually, however, there are very important differences between the opposition and the ruling party, but they never emerge as programs because of the lack of democratic institutions through which they could be developed and realized. Moreover, because of the ruling party's powerful voting machine, the opposition's objections are ridiculed both in the Parliament and in the state-controlled media. Political opponents are presented as obstructors of the ruling party and the President, both doing the all-important job of saving the threatened but precious statehood of Croatia. And, indeed, with a Parliament which has not become a serious institution, the opposition is treated as a joke, as well.

Once again, we see the inertia of the model. Under Communism, "opposition" was a dirty word, another name for irresponsible, dangerous, un-cooperative, socially inadequate people. This came in handy to the HDZ government. By neglecting the ways through which democracy functions, it never gave those who think differently an opportunity to be seen as politically serious: by stifling the development of democratic institu-

tions that the people yearned for, the HDZ discouraged an already confused and exhausted electoral body from voting for the opposition.

The double bind is that by speaking in Parliament, the opposition participates in the ruling party's game. By fighting for its ideas and seeking the path of democracy, by developing itself, as well as the institution of Parliament, by fighting for freedom of speech, the opposition enables the ruling party to adorn itself with a benevolent facade.

Exacerbating the problem is that the decision-making process in Parliament is not even left to the ruling party but only to a faction within it, and to the various committees around the President, not even recognized by the Constitution which are, therefore, extra-legal bodies. These bodies, removed from popular control are the decisive centers of political power.

Indicative of the infinitesimal role of the Parliament is that it was not a parliamentary crisis but an inner party struggle that caused the speakers of both houses, Josip Manolic and Stipe Mesic, until recently close associates of President Tudjman, to resign and form their own party, the Croatian Independent Democrats. Although they were believed to be leaders of an HDZ left wing, they now claim their new party will be based on the principles they shared with Tudjman when the HDZ was formed. It is unlikely that the Croatian Independent Democrats will gain sufficient numbers and influence to affect the HDZ majority in Parliament. Nevertheless, their strength, added to the existing opposition, will pose a threat to Tudjman's authority, although he downgraded the Manolic/Mesic departure as a tempest in a teacup. But then, our President can only perceive of himself as the undisputed and absolute ruler, in his own eyes an enlightened one, an opinion not generally shared by the people.

I believe that although Manolic and Mesic were thought of as left-wingers in the HDZ, the Croatian Independent Democrats, actually a rump HDZ, will move to the right. In any case, their formal departure will damage the HDZ's carefully contrived image as a party which offers a place for every Croat.

In addition, there are a significant number in the party's technocrat faction, largely male professionals less interested in ideology than efficiency, who may desert. Up to now, the HDZ was the only party that could make things happen. As it becomes increasingly apparent that for the Tudjman leadership, ideology counts more than efficiency, and their influence inevitably wanes, the technocrats may well shift their allegiance to other political formations.

Given this ferment, we may be witnessing the beginning of an irreversible process of change and new political openings.

The Follies of John Major

Kent Worcester

IN THE WAKE OF THE 1992 GENERAL ELECTION, THE CONSENSUS AMONG MAINSTREAM commentators seemed to be that Britain was finally "on the mend." Following a decade of New Right policies, some dared hope that the "virtues" of the Thatcher experiment — weakened trade unions, fiscal responsibility, a forceful international profile, export-led growth, and so on — could be reconciled with the tamer features of the postwar settlement. These included an emphasis on consultation and deliberation in the policy-making process, a return to cabinet government, an effort to combat mass unemployment, and a recognition of the value of the National Health Service. Thankfully, the two major parties were finally led by stolid men of the center-right: the Tory banker John Major, and the Scots solicitor John Smith, who became Labor leader following Neil Kinnock's post-election resignation. The head of the Liberal Democrats, Paddy Ashdown, was also eager to be part of the new, pro-market, pro-Europe consensus of sensible moderation.

The notion of a return to normalcy was predicated on a shared conception among political elites about the legacy of Thatcherism. For the Conservatives, Thatcher had put Britain back on the map. By speaking her mind, by rallying the faithful, and by lasting so long despite so many odds, she had carried forward the agenda of market individualism. Against the advice of many, she had tackled the presumed adversaries of democracy, such as the trade unions and Labor-led local governments. Yet many Conservatives also believed that her achievements were marred by an excessively sectarian style. Both her refusal to scrap the highly unpopular poll tax, and her blanket hostility toward the Europe Community (EC), cost her dearly inside the party. With Major's ascension to party leadership, it was hoped that the party could establish a proper balance between market ideology and pragmatic, old-fashioned (but not "one nation") conservatism.

By the mid-1980s, many Labor and Liberal Democratic politicians (and others, such as journalists, civil servants, and a sizable minority of trade union officials) would readily admit, at least in private, that the Conservatives had indeed done the nation a service. By trimming the state's fiscal appetite, and by reasserting strong leadership on the world stage, Thatcher had accomplished something that Labor had been un-

Kent Worcester is an editor of New Politics. His article, "British Labor's Unexpected Defeat" appeared in #13 (Summer 1992).

able or unwilling to achieve. This was the task of taking on the unions and the Left, thereby “unblocking” the policy-making process. For many right-leaning party loyalists, like John Smith, the real tragedy of Thatcherism was that the Labor politicians of the 1960s and 1970s — Harold Wilson, Denis Healey, James Callaghan, and others — were themselves unable to conduct a proper house-cleaning of the unions and the Labor Party. If Wilson and company had concentrated more on promoting commerce and enterprise, and less on placating the party faithful and the Trades Union Congress, Thatcherism might not have been necessary, or at least so virulent. (Or so the argument went.)

Other segments of the Left also came to admire Thatcher — her drive, dynamism, stamina, and commitment to pursuing a hegemonic project. The now-defunct monthly journal of the former Communist Party, *Marxism Today*, seemed utterly infatuated by the purposiveness of Thatcher and her circle. The most promising of the rising, center-left Labor leadership — such as Tony Blair, Bryan Gould, and Margaret Hodge — all in their different ways sought to appropriate or emulate the language of Thatcherism, paying homage to the naturalness of the civil order and the market economy. One of the durable legacies of this period has in fact been the ideological transformation (or retreat) of much of the Left in the direction of markets and individualism. This is with the exception of the far-left proper: anarchists, Socialist Workers, Class Warriors, Militants, the “hard left” of the Labor Party, and various kinds of green utopians. By the 1992 election, however, Labor had ousted or alienated a good portion of its radical fringe (although much of the far left had always avoided the Labor Party).

In the past two years, however, the prospects for a synthesis between the “best” of Thatcherism and postwar social democracy have eroded completely. It will certainly never come about in Major’s political lifetime. The government has lost whatever momentum it had coming out of the election. While party elites may continue to hope that normalcy can be restored, the credibility of parliament and the party system has not been this low for an exceptionally long time. John Major has become a figure of ridicule — a position that the polarizing Iron Lady never achieved. And Major’s party is deeply divided on many key issues, from Europe and taxation, to social issues such as gay rights and the death penalty. It is little wonder that Norman Lamont, the former Chancellor of the Exchequer (which is the functional equivalent of the Secretary of the Treasury, except more important), has complained that while the government is in office, it is no longer in power.

Meanwhile, Labor’s leadership, anxious not to offend suburban voters, or the capricious gods of the world economy, has pursued a “wait-and-see” strategy. Their hope is that the Tories will continue to deconstruct of their own accord. Although the government has lost the confidence of the masses, Labor’s passivity may cost them the next election. This would

give the Conservatives a full two decades of uninterrupted executive power. Even as the public chafes under Conservative mismanagement, there is the real danger that, as the next century approaches, non-constitutional Britain will continue to move in the direction of a one-party state.

TO A SMALL DEGREE, THE CONSERVATIVES HAVE BEEN THE VICTIM OF POLITICAL misfortune. Major's tenure has coincided with a series of moral panics which have eroded the public's faith in key civic institutions. For example, the abduction and murder of a two-year old child by two ten-year-olds in Liverpool offered a particularly grisly example of social breakdown, raising the specter that society can no longer protect its most vulnerable members. Perhaps more damaging from the standpoint of elite politics has been the decline of the Royal Family. The Queen famously declared 1993 as an "annus horribilis." This was the year that Diana broke with the family; that the Duchess of Wales was discovered to have purchased soft drugs from a Palace Guardsman; and that Charles's marital infidelities raised constitutional questions about his fitness as monarch. Although Americans tend to discount the significance of the Royals, the Queen and her family relations have performed a critical role in unifying the different nations of the United Kingdom and in legitimizing the British state throughout the postwar period.

Most of Major's wounds have been self-inflicted, however. The most spectacular of these was "Black Wednesday," the currency mayhem which led to Britain's withdrawal from EC's Exchange Rate Mechanism in September 1992. Although it temporarily resulted in lower interest rates, Black Wednesday highlighted the structural weaknesses of the British economy. The government compounded the crisis by first insisting that it would never withdraw from the Exchange Rate Mechanism, and then by spending millions of pounds in a period of a few hours in a futile attempt to stabilize the national currency. The government's image was also tarnished as senior ministers vainly attempted to reassure the public that the "green shoots of recovery" were in sight even as the economy entered a protracted recession.

The government has been on the defensive on other fronts as well. One source of embarrassment has been "Iraqgate," the government's top-secret complicity in Saddam Hussein's military buildup during the 1980s. Another was the coal fiasco of late 1992, when Michael Heseltine announced the closure of 31 mining pits without consulting relevant ministers and without formulating a coherent energy policy. Heseltine's announcement generated enormous public protests, and reportedly made the hard-left mineworker's leader, Arthur Scargill, more popular than the Prime Minister. (Although the government was forced into a tactical retreat, a modified program of pit closures is still in effect.)

At the same time, the government expended enormous parliamentary energies throughout 1993 on outmaneuvering backbench critics of

the controversial Maastricht Treaty, which commits the 12 nations of the European Community to economic and political union by 1999. Far from being congratulated for outwitting its adversaries, the spectacle of "trench warfare" over Maastricht was widely seen as a time-wasting distraction for a government that should have been concentrating on domestic issues.

Perhaps the most debilitating blow has come as a result of the doomed campaign around the slogan "back to basics," which was first raised by the Conservatives at their annual conference last year. Groping for a policy agenda that would enable his government to regain the political offensive, Major settled on the theme of reasserting "traditional" family values in opposition to the "permissiveness" of the 1960s. But the policy backfired. As a correspondent for the *Guardian* newspaper noted, "ever since he announced his party's back to basics policy, a thick whiff of personal scandal has descended on his government with one revelation after another that must have left Mr. Major as shocked, bewildered and helpless as anyone." Because the government's rhetoric had placed so much emphasis on individual rectitude and responsibility, these otherwise inconsequential mini-scandals have made it look weak and hypocritical. In all, nine Tory legislators have been tainted by scandal in recent months. Four politicians resigned government posts in the months of January and February alone. Recent revelations include:

- the admission by the minister of the environment that he had fathered not one but two children out of wedlock, one in the late 1960s and the other in the early 1990s;
- the accusation that a married Conservative member of parliament had a long history of sharing hotel rooms with men, coupled with his insistence that his only interest was in saving money;
- the disclosure that a parliamentary private secretary had engaged in illegal speculation in the housing market;
- the suicide of the wife of a Conservative leader in the House of Lords, brought on by his philandering;
- the bizarre death of the Conservative MP Stephen Milligan by self-strangulation in pursuit of sexual pleasure.

There have also been serious allegations of financial misconduct and gerrymandering on the part of the Westminster City Council, the flagship of Tory local government.

The cumulative impact of these scandals has been mixed. On the one hand, they have diminished the government's ability to secure broad public support for its policies. A tough-sounding crime bill was more or less derailed in the House of Lords in the midst of the backlash against the "back to basics" campaign. The government's ability to project a strong image on the world stage has been compromised. Its policy of propitiating the Serbs in Bosnia has been the target of increasingly sharp attacks

from various quarters. Few government ministers can now project the air of competence and self-confidence that has been the mainstay of Conservative rule.

On the other hand, these scandals have been typically framed in a manner that bolsters anti-gay prejudice and reifies conventional family structures. In leading the charge against personal impropriety among political figures, the tabloids have given credence to the very notion of a need to return to "basics." Having sought to divert attention from the economy, the Tories have been startled to find themselves held to the same "lofty" standards that they hoped to apply to the general public.

Perhaps the most significant impact has been on the government's standing in the opinion polls, however. Partly as a result of all of the clamor in the media, the Major government has become the most unpopular administration on record. In the last couple of months, polls have suggested that fewer than one in five voters approve of John Major's leadership or of government policies. Despite recent signs of economic recovery, the Major government looks and acts like a lame duck. It is little wonder that a columnist for the *Financial Times* noted that "since their fourth general election victory last April, they have governed only in the sense that the Marx Brothers once ran an opera house."

A recent aggregate analysis of opinion surveys published in the magazine *British Public Opinion* showed Labor far out in front compared to both the Tories and the Liberal Democrats. Since the 1992 election, Labor has consistently polled over 40% support, while the Tories have hovered around 32-35%, and the Liberal Democrats have brought up the rear at 20-23%. An opinion poll published in the *Independent* on April 3rd, 1994, placed Labor at 50%, the Conservatives at 26%, and the Liberal Democrats at 20%. In some parts of the country the Conservatives are running in third or even fourth place — the latter being true in parts of Scotland, where the Scottish Nationalists continue to represent a major challenge to the other parties, particularly Labor. Upcoming parliamentary by-elections and local government elections in May threaten a strong Labor showing. The elections for the EC's European Parliament, to be held in June, are also likely to represent another electoral blow for the ruling party. Voters will have plenty of opportunities to vent their feelings about the crisis of Tory leadership.

If these elections produce the expected tide of Labor and Liberal Democratic victories, Major's political future could be in jeopardy. He certainly must be aware that a number of ambitious party leaders are waiting in the wings should he be forced to resign. Two names in particular keep cropping up: Michael Heseltine, the flamboyant Minister for Industry who played a critical role in dethroning Thatcher in late 1990; and Kenneth Clarke, the Chancellor of the Exchequer who remains one of Major's few allies in the cabinet. These men may be secretly counting on the fact that their party has a history of ejecting leaders who threaten the elec-

toral viability of the organization. But polls suggest that disaffection with the government goes much further than the issue of individual personalities. The act of replacing Major would likely come across as a cynical political maneuver, rather than as an expression of substantive programmatic change.

The roots of Major's difficulties lie deeper than personal scandals and political miscalculation. The government is in an inherently difficult position as a result of rocky economic news, the party's deep divisions over European integration, and the ambiguous inheritance of Thatcherism. It also seems as if the country's political elite has run out of ideas and energy. Before examining the Labor alternative, it is worth exploring Major's complicated relationship to the recent past. Lacking an alternative vision of Tory politics, Major has been unable to convincingly adopt the mode of hard-line "conviction politics" bequeathed to him by his predecessor and one-time mentor.

ALTHOUGH JOHN MAJOR WAS BILLED AS "HIS OWN MAN," HIS POLICIES HAVE EXHIBITED considerable continuity with Thatcher's. This is particularly evident in the area of education policy (where the Conservatives have imposed new standardized tests and a national curriculum); in moves to privatize the railways, the coal industry, and the postal service; and in the attempt to reform the National Health Service by turning hospitals into corporate bodies and by providing patients with more choice in primary health providers. The government has also continued the policy of using "quangos" — secretive, non-elected, quasi-public bodies that make key decisions in a number of areas, particularly those affecting health, education and training, employment, regions, and cities — as a mechanism for skirting around parliamentary oversight. At present, nearly 1,400 quangos control over 50 billion pounds in annual public expenditure — approximately one-fifth of the total budget. The areas where the government has charted a new course are rather modest. Until the "back to basics" campaign was launched, Major's chief innovation was the so-called "Citizen's Charter," which was billed as a new philosophy stressing the revamping of social services and a new level of accountability to the ordinary taxpayer. The government also made a cautious foray into providing greater public access to state information, as a token concession to the movement for citizens' rights, Charter 88. There have also been signs that the government has adopted a less aggressive stance toward trade unionism and will at least talk to union leaders. At one point, Major's secretary of state for employment, Gillian Shepard, was quoted in the *Financial Times* as saying that "there was a war in the 1980s [against the unions] but that is now over." There is less of a sense that the government is engaged in a single-minded vendetta against its political enemies.

In response to these signals, the chiefs of the Trades Union Congress (TUC) have made a special plea for greater involvement in the formula-

tion of public policy, to "come in from the cold" after the frosty 1980s. John Monks, the new TUC general secretary, has been applauded by the business press for his statements calling for greater union-employer cooperation in the effort to introduce new technologies in the workplace and to compete in world markets. The unions have put training at the top of their agenda, hoping to convince both employers and the government that they can play a responsible role in generating economic growth. But although the Major government has recently talked about restoring apprenticeships and taking other initiatives in the area of training, they have failed to commit the necessary resources or to overhaul the quangos that concentrate power in the hands of regionally-based groups of appointed cronies and networkers drawn largely from the business community.

There are only a couple of areas where Major and his government has patently violated Thatcherite precepts. The decision to bring Michael Heseltine back into the cabinet rankled the true believers. A more substantial departure is the government's pro-Europe tilt, which has consistently aroused the wrath of the party's vocal band of Euro-skeptics (a group which overlaps with the immediate circle of hard-core Thatcherites). Yet the tilt toward Europe is now being played down, so that the party can attract the support of anti-EC voters in the upcoming local and European elections. Major's policy on Bosnia has also rather visibly incurred criticisms from Thatcher, who has been a staunch advocate of bombing Serbian artillery positions around Sarejevo.

Overall, the continuities are more striking than the discontinuities. Noises made during the election about Major's love of humanity, and his desire for a classless society, quickly gave way after the election to the familiar refrain of sound money and strict law-and-order. Trained as an accountant and public servant, Major lacks any clear political principle of his own, aside from an inarticulate attachment to commerce, decency, and a sense of public order. As Stuart Hall has noted in the pages of the *New Statesman and Society*, "because there is no authentic language of Majorism, as there was an authentic language of Thatcherism, when in difficulties in mobilizing political support, Major is driven back to the old themes of the Thatcherite project, in order to fill the void." Hence the campaign for a return to "basics," the renewed emphasis on privatization (at any cost), and calls for a "tough" approach to social problems "caused" by marginal social groups such as hippies, gypsies, juvenile delinquents, and single parents.

Partly as a result of trends in the world economy, Thatcher's economic record was somewhat more impressive than Major's has been. Thatcher's supporters point to such gains as increased levels of manufacturing productivity, lower inflation, and higher profits for many privately-owned companies. They also note growth in the incomes of the employed, increased home and stock ownership, an overall expansion of self-em-

ployment and small business activity, and a dramatic cut in the basic rate of income tax. The liabilities of the Thatcher years are equally impressive, however. These include persistent mass unemployment (averaging at around 10% of the labor force throughout the 1980s); chronic underinvestment in education, job training, and social infrastructure; a sharp rise in violent crime; and a deterioration of public services, particularly in urban areas. Nor did the state get any smaller, although the priorities and dimensions of the state apparatus shifted somewhat. The proportion of public spending on the military, the police, on unemployment insurance, and on public relations all went up in the 1980s, at the same time that spending on transportation, housing, urban areas, and regional development all declined. Income tax fell, but indirect taxes (such as value-added tax) rose, so that the overall burden of taxation shifted from the wealthier to the less fortunate sectors of society.

Major's record includes many of the same failings but few of the successes. He seems to have inherited all of the structural disequilibria, and none of the dynamism, of the Thatcherite economy. His tenure in office has witnessed a severe recession; an increase in imports unmatched by export growth; a sharp decline in manufacturing output (30% of capacity in some sectors); an anemic retail sector; and a sharp rise in bankruptcies and home repossessions. A recent *Financial Times* article found lagging investment in such sectors as transport, information technology, advertising, food and drink, hotels and travel, leisure, and property. An earlier survey published in the *Economist* warned of inflationary tendencies in the economy, and noted the failures of the training and education system, and of the housing market. The reporter for the *Economist* did find signs of hope, however — in the dynamism of cities such as Glasgow, Manchester, and Leeds, where Labor-led administrations have formed public-private partnerships with little or no assistance from central government.

By pursuing a watery version of the Thatcherite agenda, Major has alienated the more liberal wing of the party without picking up support from the right. Divisions within the party over Europe have also proven fairly intractable, and Major's wishy-washy performance in this area has managed to annoy both the Euro-triumphalists and the Euro-skeptics. His position in the world at large is even more tenuous than his position inside the Conservative party, however. Recent indications of a partial economic revival — lower mortgage payments and a rise in part-time service employment having put spare change in many peoples' pockets — have done nothing to help restore Major's credibility or approval ratings. Barren of ideas or substance, Major returns to the themes of the past. But in this case the past is a poor guide to action. The many contradictions of Thatcherism — between its freedom-maximizing rhetoric and its authoritarian practices; between its pro-market ambitions and its statist inclinations; between romanticizing the past and wanting to break with tradition — serve as active constraints on any forward-looking policy.

The sheer sense of paralysis that infects the regime is overwhelming.

Major has one card left in the game, however. Like all Conservatives, he remains fixed on one idea: winning elections. Staying in power may not mean everything, but it means a great deal. (As the detective says in the film *Manhunter*, "he has a taste for it.") At this point, pulling off another general election victory would require luck, patience, vicious campaign tactics, and a willingness to throw money around. Even Conservatives who are currently downcast about the party's prospects believe that further good news on the economic front, combined with hard-ball tactics and a divided opposition, could put Major back in office. The well-documented tendency of prosperous southerners to return to the Tory fold could do the party a real service on election day, especially if large numbers of the unemployed and the low-waged fail (as expected) to cast their ballots. The implications of a fifth consecutive Conservative electoral victory are obvious. Power would concentrate into fewer and fewer hands. And the era of the (disrespected) one-party state would be that much closer.

WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE CONSERVATIVES, VIRTUALLY EVERY POLITICAL PARTY in the country — from the Scottish and Welsh nationalists, to the greens, to the Liberal Democrats — have at least a couple of decent slogans and policies. The largest of these "minor" parties (or the smallest of the major parties), the Liberal Democrats, has moved to the right in recent years, however. The Liberal Democrats were formed as a result of a merger between the Liberals and one wing of the Social Democratic Party, which split off from Labor in the early 1980s. The party favors the German-style social market economy, and is generally quite tolerant on social issues. Its leadership has sought to distance the party from both the Tories and Labor, arguing that they share responsibility for the country's poor economic performance in the postwar and post-cold war eras. Paddy Ashdown has sought, with some success, to move the party beyond its community-activist roots and to adopt a pro-NATO, pro-military stance.

The most interesting of the outsider parties, the greens, is also the most disorganized. Like other green parties, it attracts younger activists, often from the new social movements. The party is also riven by internal factionalism. British greens have not resolved the question of where they stand in relation to contemporary debates over markets, democracy, socialism, and green politics. The party is divided, as well, over issues of strategy, and whether to work in coalition with other political parties and movements. The nationalist parties are also divided along political and strategic lines. All in all, the massed forces of the opposition are a surprisingly diverse group, which is one of the reasons why an anti-Conservative coalition has so far failed to materialize.

Labor is still the linchpin of the opposition. Its ties to the trade unions still represent a tremendous source of resources, personnel, and a stabi-

lizing sense of purpose. Unwilling to share power with its smaller rivals, Labor has concentrated its energies on redefining itself as a capable alternative to the Tories, rather than as a small-time deal-maker. Given its strong showing in the polls, the party is not looking to trade away concessions to the Liberal Dems. As others bicker, Labor pursues a steady-as-she-goes approach. Its leadership waits, and prepares, for the next election. The cabinet is stacked with center-right figures, such as Margaret Beckett, one-time Bennite and current vice-leader of the party, and the shadow minister for the treasury, Gordon Brown. The chief hallmark of their carefully-crafted policies is that they are designed to give as little ammunition to the other side as possible. The lesson that the center-right has drawn from recent history is that Labor will be penalized at the ballot box if it cannot project an aura of competence, cautiousness, and common sense.

John Smith was described in the *Financial Times* as an "advocate of active government." Like Clinton, he often speaks in favor of targeted state intervention to assist the economy. At the same time, like Clinton, he is reluctant to raise the money (or cut military programs) to finance investment in education and infrastructure. Smith is wary of making specific promises about what Labor could accomplish in office. For example, he has consciously avoided any talk of restoring full employment, or rolling back the tide of privatization. At the same time, however, and unlike Clinton, Smith has close ties to union leaders, and is sympathetic to the interests of the labor bureaucracy. Although he is very much a product of the modern Labor Party, there is nothing particularly radical, or controversial, about the policies of John Smith. "The task of politics is to improve our society," he told one interviewer. "A strong economy and a fair society is my slogan...Government must do the things that without government intervention will not happen."

As a supporter of NATO and a strong defense posture, and as a church-going social democrat who holds deep reservations about abortion rights, Smith is clearly on the right of the party. But measured in terms of the party's current line of demarkation — which is to say, between "traditionalists" and "modernizers" — Smith comes out somewhere near the middle. For the time being, the traditionalist/modernizer debate cuts across familiar left-right dichotomies. Whereas the traditionalists tend to be critical of the European Community, pro-union, and pro-party organization, the modernizers are keen on Europe, slick advertising, and the post-industrial parts of the economy. The traditionalists believe that the party has spent enough time on issues of presentation, and that the key task is recapturing the hearts and minds of traditional Labor voters. The modernizers, on the other hand, want to overhaul the party's apparatus and program, to shed its socialist baggage and move in the direction of U.S.-style liberalism. Smith has irked both sides of this debate by placing a higher value on party unity than programmatic clarity. He accepts the

traditionalist premise of "one big movement," but is sympathetic to the supply-side biases of the modernizers. As a result of his enigmatic leadership, the party comes across as dignified, but somnolent.

Labor continues to offer the only real hope for progress at the electoral level. But like its dreaded rival, the Conservative Party, Labor has become deeply afraid of the unfamiliar. Locked in an empty parliamentary ritual, the two major parties of British politics share both lethargy and a repertoire of survival skills in common. Neither party wants to "rock the boat"; neither is likely to instigate major reforms. And neither party is at this point likely to be receptive to the emergence of new social forces. As the title of the Kundera novel suggests, "life is elsewhere."

Is the Irish Republican Movement at a Dead End?

Sandy Boyer

THE IRISH REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT'S CAMPAIGN AGAINST BRITISH RULE IN IRELAND may be headed for a dead end. It is confronted with a "peace proposal," a collaborative effort of the British and Irish governments known as the Downing Street Declaration, which it will have grave difficulty either accepting or rejecting.

This is important because the republican movement — the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and Sinn Fein, the political party that supports it — is practically all the Left there is in Ireland. The IRA and Sinn Fein have totally dominated the anti-imperialist struggle for over 20 years. In the South, they are a relatively isolated, but still substantial organization beyond the dreams of even the most successful sect. In the North, especially, there are thousands of people who are not members of Sinn Fein but, nevertheless, consider themselves republicans and identify with the republican movement.

The Downing Street Declaration calls for admitting Sinn Fein to "talks about talks" in return for a permanent end to the IRA's military campaign. The British government has made it clear that a surrender of IRA weapons would be at the top of their agenda for these preliminary discussions. If after six months it is clear that the IRA has permanently abandoned its armed campaign, Sinn Fein would be permitted to participate in an all party conference on the future of the North.

But both governments have agreed that regardless of what talks may take place, any settlement would have to be ratified by separate votes in both parts of Ireland. Since Northern Ireland was jerryrigged to have a Protestant majority which favors maintaining the union with Britain, a British withdrawal is effectively ruled out in advance. Nevertheless, the British, Irish and international media have united to proclaim this the last best chance for a peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland. The British, Irish and U.S. governments have adopted a carrot and stick approach to getting Sinn Fein to sign on the dotted line. The Irish government's specific role has been to offer inducements. They have dropped the long-standing prohibition against Sinn Fein appearances on radio and television. Their behind-the-scenes support was undoubtedly critical to securing Sinn Fein's leader, Gerry Adams, an American visa.

As a further incentive they have offered to allow Sinn Fein to take part in a conference on the future of Northern Ireland together with all the major Irish political parties. But since only the British government can make decisions about Northern Ireland, such a conference would be purely a verbal exercise.

Meanwhile, Sir Patrick Mayhew, the British cabinet minister who administers Northern Ireland, has begun talking about the fallout should the republi-

SANDY BOYER has been active on Irish issues since 1972.

cans refuse the agreement. He has indicated that the British government would move toward convening an elected assembly for Northern Ireland. The conservative Protestant Unionists have been encouraged to see this as a step toward restoring the sectarian administration that ruled Northern Ireland before the British instituted direct rule in 1972. This time, however, it would have to include some sort of power sharing dimension — strong enough for moderate nationalists to grudgingly accept but not so strong that Unionists would reject it out of hand.

THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT HAS BEEN PLACED IN AN APPARENTLY UNTENABLE SITUATION. Should they reject this proposal they will be labeled the obstacles to peace by the international establishment, probably even losing at least some support in the Nationalist community in the North. In the short term, at least, it would become extremely difficult to even gain a hearing in the South or in the British and U.S. media. In this environment the British and Irish governments would be free to dramatically increase the level of repression against republicans, up to and possibly including, internment.

But accepting the proposal would be even more disastrous. The IRA is being asked to give up its armed struggle to win Sinn Fein a seat at a conference. But its goal — a British withdrawal from Ireland — is ruled out in advance. Agreeing to these terms would, at the very least, cause deep and lasting demoralization among the movement's supporters.

As this is being written Sinn Fein has avoided either accepting or rejecting the proposal. Instead it has pressed for clarification while denying that this amounts to seeking negotiations. How long this stance can be maintained is anyone's guess.

This dilemma has its roots in Sinn Fein's slow shift to the right which began years ago. First, talk of socialism and divisive social issues were severely downgraded in order to win votes. Then Sinn Fein retreated from its clear goal of British withdrawal within the lifetime of one British government.

Sinn Fein's turn toward an electoral strategy followed in the wake of the 1981 hunger strike. Initial successes raised intoxicating hopes that it would be able to overtake the constitutional nationalist Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP) in the contest for the Northern Catholic vote. Since Sinn Fein was running to win seats and maximize its mandate, there was pressure to tone down anything that would interfere with reaching out to SDLP voters.

Sinn Fein's then General Secretary, now Chairman, Tom Hartley, said in 1988, "The SDLP have now emerged as our class enemy. As a result we have found it more difficult to bring broader sections of the Nationalist population into struggle. We are now thrust into a full scale confrontation with the SDLP which restricts our development into wider areas of the Nationalist community." (quoted in James Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion*, Hutchinson Radius, London 1989, p. 185)

Gerry Adams in his book, *The Politics of Irish Freedom*, deplored the fact that Sinn Fein's electoral successes had unnecessarily highlighted some of their class differences with the SDLP leadership: "It might have been better at this phase of the independence struggle," he wrote, "if there could have been some kind of general unity in which both parties would agree to disagree on social and economic issues and maximize pressure on points of agreement."

Getting out the vote also became a substitute for mobilizing people for street level campaigns. With very few exceptions, the only demonstrations called by the republican movement have been to mark the anniversary of such events as the imposition of internment without trial. Important campaigns around such issues as employment discrimination have been organized outside Sinn Fein, although they appeal almost exclusively to republican supporters.

IN RECENT YEARS THIS POLITICAL DILUTION HAS BEEN EXTENDED TO SINN FEIN'S core nationalist program. Its position centers on declaration of intent by the British government to withdraw. Sinn Fein leaders have indicated that this withdrawal process could take up to 30 years. Even after 30 years, "if Unionists could not be persuaded to the benefits of joining a united Ireland other constitutional arrangements would have to be found." (*A Citizen's Inquiry, The Opsahl Report on Northern Ireland*, Liliput Press, Dublin 1993)

While the 30 years and promise of "other arrangements" are not official Sinn Fein policy, this and similar statements have led to speculation that Sinn Fein might be preparing to settle for some form of dual sovereignty under which the British and Irish governments would share authority in Northern Ireland. Gerry Adams has already stated publicly that dual sovereignty might be acceptable as a first step toward a united Ireland. If one goes to a conference table with this as an opening gambit, the outcome can only be even more unfavorable.

Dual sovereignty would amount to substituting two reactionary governments for one. Perhaps, more important, it would abandon the basic Sinn Fein policy that its minimum goal is a new and democratic Ireland free from the ingrained Catholic constitution and the laws of the present Irish government.

This process has brought Sinn Fein markedly closer to the constitutional nationalism of the SDLP. The two parties have had two series of talks. The first, in 1988, involved an exchange of position papers which were later published. The two parties agreed that their aim was self-determination for the Irish people as a whole. Two principle areas of disagreement were outlined. The first was the SDLP's assertion that the British government is now neutral in Ireland and that therefore the only stumbling block to Irish unity is persuading the Unionists. The other was the IRA's armed struggle.

Gerry Adams and SDLP leader John Hume had a series of closed door meetings in 1993 and worked out common principles for a peace process which were communicated to the Irish and British governments. They have not, unfortunately, been made public, leaving the Irish people and even the members of Sinn Fein in the dark. But press leaks indicate that central to the Hume/Adams Agreement is a demand that the British government agree, in advance, to abide by the results of an all-Ireland political conference. The Unionists would reportedly retain a veto over any new constitutional arrangements but not over the convening of the conference, itself.

While the Irish government claims that there is no difference between the Hume/Adams Agreement and the Downing Street Declaration, Sinn Fein vehemently disagrees. It cites the need for the British government to actively pressure the Unionists to agree to a new constitutional arrangement and the Unionist veto embodied in the formula of two separate votes, North and South.

Sinn Fein's public posture, as opposed to the party press, revolves almost entirely around the peace process. Peace, of course, is tremendously important.

No one wants to see more people die in this conflict. But by itself peace is not a political program. After all, it can usually be purchased whenever an oppressed people agree to abandon all resistance to its oppression.

ALL THIS HAS LEFT THE REPUBLICAN MOVEMENT WITHOUT ANY CLEAR WAY FORWARD except to press for renewed negotiations. That was the obvious purpose behind the "bombings" of Heathrow airport, using devices designed to get headlines without exploding. This consigns the republican movement's rank and file activity to nothing beyond planting an occasional bomb if in the IRA, or plodding through yet another electoral campaign if in Sinn Fein. More fundamentally, there is no sign that any negotiations held in the immediate future would lead to a British withdrawal from Ireland. At most, they might yield a dual sovereignty arrangement. Even that, which republicans could at least claim as a first step to a united Ireland, seems unlikely at present.

The drift to the right is the product of a long-term stagnation in republican fortunes dating back to the late 1980s. The early electoral successes in the North did not result in Sinn Fein overtaking the SDLP. Instead the Sinn Fein vote has remained frozen at between a quarter and a third of the Nationalist vote. In a symbolically important race, Gerry Adams lost his West Belfast seat in the British parliament because Protestant voters switched to the SDLP in order to oust him.

The military campaign is also deadlocked. The British army cannot defeat the IRA on the ground nor can the IRA drive the British out. Successes like the bombing of the London financial center tend to be canceled out by disastrous, even if unintentional, killing of civilians.

Hopes that Sinn Fein could become a successful political party in the south of Ireland have similarly gone ruinously awry. Despite having elected members to city and county councils, it has been unable to elect a single candidate to the Irish parliament. Public reaction to such incidents as the Eniskillen bombing where people were killed while gathering for a Remembrance Day Parade, compounds Sinn Fein's isolation and creates barriers against a successful transition to a genuine mass party.

Sinn Fein in the South acts primarily as a support group for the northern struggle rather than as an active participant in the political life of the state. Even when it confronts issues such as unemployment or plant closings, there is a lingering sense that "Sinn Fein will support you so that you will support us." Inevitably that attitude receives unfavorable notice.

IF THE MOVEMENT WHICH BEGAN IN 1968 IS TO AVOID A DEAD END, A NEW POLITICAL strategy is needed, although not even the best strategy is a magic wand that will solve all problems. What is urgently called for is the institution of a painstaking process of rebuilding political confidence and mobilizing mass participation.

The movement must insist that British withdrawal remains an incontrovertible goal which can only be realized through resolute opposition to both governments in Ireland. Thus British withdrawal cannot mean extending the rule of the present Irish government to the Six Counties of Northern Ireland.

Both parts of Ireland are mired in massive permanent unemployment. What government economic strategies there have been consist only of ruinously expensive subsidies to multi-national corporations and, in the South, international

borrowing. This has reached the point where the Irish government has been forced to slash public spending and recklessly engage in wholesale hospital closings just to pay the interest on the debt. That is why the long term aim must be a 32-county socialist republic, the only realistic vehicle for addressing the underlying problems of Irish working people both North and South.

The socialist goal doesn't rule out welcoming any partial move, such as British withdrawal. Nor, more importantly, does it preclude campaigning for it. It would indeed be absurd at this point to get bogged down in sectarian debates as to whether the national revolution has to precede the socialist revolution or vice versa.

In the North it is also vitally necessary to address the future of the armed struggle and the political attitude toward the Protestant working class.

In the last few months there have been a number of public discussions in Ireland, North and South, on the future of the armed struggle in the context of the Downing Street Declaration. In the South, a number of people argued for a unilateral IRA cease fire while opposing the Downing Street Declaration. Northern republicans have said that the armed struggle is their only effective veto against British "solutions" which would return to some modified form of Unionist domination.

There needs to be continued political discussion and debate to reach some consensus, at least among republicans, on a strategy for suspending or modifying the armed struggle. What might be discussed are a cease fire in Ireland but not in England or a re-definition of "legitimate targets," confining them, for example, to security forces on duty.

Talking about the Protestant working class may seem remote given the lack of dialogue between the two communities today. But the Protestant working class will have a critical role to play especially in the event of an agreement for British withdrawal when they will ultimately be forced to reassess their position.

Any opening toward Protestants can only be based on politics already in place among Nationalists. No one wants to force Protestants or anyone else into the existing southern state. The goal of a socialist Ireland and activity around working class issues can provide a starting point for future dialogue.

These principles are a starting point for political revival but do not constitute a complete political program or strategy. Even the best principles will be sterile unless they are linked to mass action around both national issues and the struggle for social and economic redress. To successfully wage such a campaign is obviously conditional on the movement's appreciating that it is at least as valuable as electoral intervention.

In the North there is a small but successful campaign against employment discrimination. It functions entirely in a republican milieu but is by no means central to republican political strategy. The same could be said about local movements to open border roads closed by the British army.

In the South the situation is far more difficult. Sinn Féin must extend its purview beyond purely nationalist issues, e.g., extradition, and systematically commit its members to long-term work in other social and political arenas. Many Sinn Féin members belong to unions but, currently, there is little effort to translate this into a consistent political framework except episodically around what are seen as "Northern Issues." Long term constructive work should be carried on not only in the unions, but in such organizations as the Irish unemployed union.

That would not only help immensely to advance these struggles but would also offer Sinn Fein exceptional opportunities to cultivate deep roots in all aspects of social and political life.

At best this will be a long process. But there are some grounds for hope. British public opinion increasingly favors withdrawal from Ireland. For the first time there are Protestant groups, however small and isolated, advocating a united Ireland. In the South there should be some openings for working class politics in a society with permanent 20% unemployment and a protracted attack on living standards. But unless a rebuilding process begins soon, whatever opportunities there are may be lost for the foreseeable future.

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Orthodoxy and the Hebron Massacre: **The Israeli Settler Mentality**

Michael Cholden-Brown

The Orthodox community has too long bred and tolerated the kind of extremism which leads to unjustified violence. (Jewish Week, March 4, 1994)

Rabbi Moshe Gorelick, Pres.
Rabbinical Council of America

WAS BARUCH GOLDSTEIN, THE ASSASSIN AT THE CAVE OF THE PATRIARCHS IN Hebron, an atypical West Bank settler, a religious man driven too far by the murder of a friend? Or were his actions entirely explicable and expected, based as they were on the continuing violence committed by the settlers. In fact, Goldstein's violent actions differ only in degree from the normal ethic of the West Bank Orthodox, given the long-expressed disdain by the settler movement for all that is not Jewish. This is a new, armed modernist orthodoxy, one that learned everything — and nothing — from the Holocaust.

Writing in the English language weekly, *The Forward*, March 4, 1994 Binyamin Jolkovsky, of Yeshiva Torah V'Daas, put forward an older, traditionalist Jewish view of what Goldstein was and did. He quotes approvingly a student at Beth Medresh Gehova of Lakewood (the pinnacle of the traditionalist yeshiva world) saying,

Life is life, no matter whose life it is, even those you consider your ideological enemies. Halachically [by religious law], this Goldstein was a murderer, without any ifs, ands or buts about it. Just as it becomes a *mitzvah* [good deed/religious necessity] to abort a fetus that is endangering a woman's life, so too the Arabs were correct in stopping this poor excuse for a human. His actions have put Jews everywhere in jeopardy.

When others say that Goldstein was crazy, Jolkovsky went on to write, "Even the insane think. Goldstein's thoughts did not occur to him instantaneously. They were the outgrowth of deformed seeds of hatred that gave fruit to sickly actions."

Even some in the modern Orthodox community now contend that Goldstein was regrettably no pariah. Rabbi Louis Bernstein, vice president

MICHAEL CHOLDEN-BROWN was an editor of the *Berkeley Jewish Socialist Critique*. During the 1980s he was a member of the National Council of the *New Jewish Agenda*.

of the Orthodox Rabbinical Council of America, agrees with Rabbi Gorelick that their movement too often confuses fanaticism with piety. "We tolerate this business. We tolerate all forms of extremism in the Orthodox community...We allow extremism in all forms to breed and we give them credit because they're doing the 'right thing' and their intentions are good."

What these leaders know is something that the Jewish Left has understood for a generation. Goldstein was a product of the increasing fanatical, narrowing secular politics of modern Orthodoxy. He was trained to be among the cream of the American Orthodox movement, and his politics and madness were tolerated, even encouraged by the Yeshivas of America and Israel. His devotion to the reactionary Meir Kahane did not put him outside the acceptable limits so far as American Jewry is concerned — and only somewhat outside those limits among Israelis.

Try as they will, this one cannot be blamed on the "Others," — the Arabs, the Hasidim, or the traditionalist Ultra-Orthodox. This was the act of a modern man, someone who could be sitting next to you at work, the one with the knit yarmulke.

It has become easy for the Jewish leadership — such as it is — to differentiate itself from those strange Ultra-Orthodox with their black hats and *sheitels* (wigs) who populate the more traditionalist yeshivas, represented by the Agudath Israel. There was supposed to be nothing strange about the modernist Union of Orthodox Congregations or the Religious Zionists of America. They were now mainstream.¹

Even Gorelick and Bernstein have been attacked by the Orthodox mainline for suggesting that their organizations and shuls have been complicit and acquiescent for years in the growth of this tough-Jew philosophy. Those in the Orthodox community who now criticize the wholesale support for the settlers and back the Government's peace initiatives do so gingerly for fear that their religious as well as political beliefs will be challenged.

But the openness of thought that may have been developing one or two decades ago among the modern Orthodox is gone. Bernstein and Gorelick represent a minority among the more senior practitioners. The face of the younger generation, seen in their hopes and prejudices, is the face of Goldstein.

Faith and Politics

SINCE THE EARLY 1970s, THOSE JEWS "WHO HAVE RETURNED TO THE FAITH" (*Baalei Tshuvim*) have been seduced into believing, not unlike their born-again-Christian counterparts, that deep religious faith requires right-wing po-

¹So mainstream in fact that when Thomas Dine, the longtime director of AIPAC (the conservative Israeli lobby), intimated that the Orthodox were not like "us," he was forced to resign.

litical stands. What used to be called "Revisionism" or "Revisionist Zionism," referring to the reactionary views of Vladimir Jabotinsky, is now the common coin of much modern Jewish orthodoxy.

Granted, Goldstein's actions are not the norm among the American Orthodox. But his politics were the action arm of positions openly embraced by the established, "enlightened" Orthodox. When five Orthodox shuls on New York's Upper West Side advertised an "Evening of Solidarity with the Jews of Judea and Samaria," early this year, they were doing more than just disagreeing with the peace accord. This was active organizing against what Orthodox leading light, Avi Weiss, calls "making Judea and Samaria judenrein."

For Weiss to describe the Israeli government's proposal to return control of parts of the West Bank to the Palestinians as Hitlerite is far more than "controversial" or the mere repudiation of the myth of a hegemonic Jewish community with a single voice on Israel. (The Jewish Left was regularly attacked for "breaking ranks" by disagreeing with Israeli policy. Today, even *Commentary* and other neo-conservatives air their differences with Israel publicly which is fair enough despite their benighted views.) But when the Orthodox portray the settlers as beleaguered victims and use religious authority to vilify the government, the repugnant theory motivating Goldstein's practice is clearly visible.

Goldstein entered, armed, into the Cave of the Patriarchs. Not unusual for the settlers. The shooting by a settler of unarmed Palestinians. Not unusual. The shooting of Arabs within a holy site by a Jewish Israeli. Ditto. It was only the scale of the killing that was unusual, momentous, yet predictable. Zvi Katzover, chairman of the Kiriat Arba local council, said months earlier on Israeli television that he would not be surprised if some settler could not contain himself and cut down dozens of Palestinians.

For years, Kiriat Arba and Hebron settlers have shot at Arabs. In 1988, Moshe Levinger left his car and killed an Arab merchant, raking the street with automatic gun fire because he felt "threatened." He was arrested, but later released. Levinger is the same man who, after the 1967 war, led his family and others into the middle of Hebron to reestablish a Jewish "presence" in that city notorious for the Arab massacre of Jews in 1929. The Israeli army and government asked him to leave, but he returned and nothing further was done. Other settlers have followed the Levinger model, creating a *Volksstand* on the West Bank similar to the one right-wing Afrikaners are attempting to create in South Africa. Currently tens of thousands of Hebron Arabs live under martial law to protect 450 Jewish settlers.

From Goldstein and Kahane to Avi Weiss

TRAINED AT BROOKLYN'S YESHIVA OF FLATBUSH, YESHIVA COLLEGE and its Albert Einstein School of Medicine, Goldstein was an organizer and enthusiast

of the Jewish Defense League (JDL) and personal assistant to Kahane for much of his post-high school time. The Einstein trained physician was hardly the ethical physician claimed by his neighbors. While Maimonides could be the physician to the Sultan, Goldstein refused to treat wounded Arabs and quoted Torah to justify that, too. His associates cannot think of a time when he ever treated an Arab. During the Lebanon war, the chief army physician told Goldstein to treat wounded Hezbollah prisoners. Goldstein refused, and when the army called Meir Kahane to try to get him to change Goldstein's mind, Kahane refused, saying that to treat an Arab was against Torah.

Gush Emunim (the Block of the Faithful), which came out of the Yeshiva of Rav Kook, the first Chief Rabbi of Israel, lead the religious settlement of the West Bank. It is these former National Religious Party (NRP) regulars who confront the government, take land and claim it for the God of Abraham. It was Zevulun Hammer, Education Minister of the NRP who admitted Kahane into the Religious Zionists of America. Kahane regularly spoke on the Yeshiva College campus and did significant fundraising at meetings in Orthodox shuls throughout the United States. His venues were not those of the Ultra-Orthodox of the Agudas Yisroel and Shas, whose conditions for participating in any government are largely concerned with public displays of "immorality" and questions of Shabbos (the Sabbath) and Kashrus (keeping Kosher). Except for the Lubavitchers, (the most secular oriented of the Hasidim), the ultra-Orthodox shun secular politics. Their Zionism is always begrudging, and barely territorial. Kahane's was vital and irredentist.

Meir Kahane, this representative of American Orthodoxy, was trained at the Mirrer Yeshiva in Brooklyn. A right-wing ideologue on American social issues and foreign policy who founded the Jewish Defense League in large measure to threaten Black Power advocates in the 1960s. Kahane received his religious training at a Yeshiva that stressed Torah over Talmud, fundamental biblical text over scholarly commentary.

Kahane's Yeshiva of Mir was known for its reading of Torah, analogous to a Christian Bible College's fundamentalist reading of scripture. For Kahane, the exact meaning of text was that which was written, and not that of Talmudic commentary, which is taught. Kahane would quote the text of specific land dimensions in Israel without comment by the Talmudic commentary or by the commentators read by Orthodox the world over.

If there is anything "traditional" about Judaism, and any question "closed," it is the idea that Judaism is not purely "bible" directed, as written at Sinai, but is informed by the "oral traditions" of *torah she be'al peah*, taught at Sinai. Talmudic disputation and the study of different rabbinic interpreters is therefore central to Judaism. So it was assumed that, without Talmud, there was no Judaism. Without it you had the Karaites, who were banished from the community in the early centuries

for heresy. This literal reading of the first five books of the bible is now common to the new Orthodox.

Staunchly traditional Orthodox circles never accepted Kahane whose slogan, "Never Again," they rejected. Rabbi Yitzhok Brandriss of the Adudath Israel of America points out that in 1975, his movement

rejected "Never Again" as a philosophy of "slug it out" and as ignoring the complexity of diplomatic relations and ignoring the possibility of loss of life in the pursuit of extreme politics. In addition, most hazardous of all, it completely loses sight of the decisive role of God's providence in the destiny of Jewry. The "let our right be proven with our might" approach is simplistically applied to every and all situations, even guiding the young people in making life and death decisions on the basis of elemental gut reactions. "Never Again" is very un-Orthodox theology. (*Jewish Week*, March 18, 1994)

To traditionalists, Kahaneism was outside the pale of their thought, and Kahane was barred from speaking in their yeshivas. Rabbi Brandriss makes the illuminating point that, "Ironically, many 'Orthodox' who are liberal on issues of religious practice have far stronger leanings toward militancy than those who have been called "ultra-traditional," for whom a policy of violence is anathema."

This idea that right wing in one area is not right wing in all political areas is confusing but true. The "Orthodox" Avi Weiss, rabbi of Hebrew Institute of Riverdale, has been highly visible during the past two decades on issues of Soviet Jewry, Reagan's visit to Bitburg and the Carmelite nunnery at Auschwitz. Called by some the "Al Sharpton of the Jews," he is a "left-wing" rabbi on issues of women's minyans and on ritual within the Orthodox world. At the same time, he is a virulent supporter of Jonathan Pollard and argues against disarming the settlers.

Little Change After More Than 15 Years

IN 1978, ON A TOUR OF ISRAEL SPONSORED BY THE Jewish Student Press Service (JSPS), I went as a representative of the *Jewish Radical*, one of the oldest JSPS papers, to meet with settlers in Sinai, Yamit, and the West Bank settlement of Ofra. What I learned on that trip, what subsequently happened in Sinai and Yamit, and the perspective among the settlers of Ofra, is instructive.

In Sinai, where Israel returned the land to Egypt, settlers were removed with less trouble than many forecast. The settler representative we met was an American-born woman who turned out to be the older sister of a high school classmate. A daughter of two Los Angeles judges from a very assimilated family, the classmate was now a Maoist coal mine organizer in Appalachia, and the younger brother was a burgeoning filmmaker who later gained significant notoriety. Their sister was a lost and dysfunctional searcher who demanded to live in disputed territory.

In Yamit, a resort on the Miami model, the big attraction was a luxu-

rious fish restaurant on the sea. To get there we went past Gaza Arab houses that Israel was demolishing and the hate of occupation was intense. The restaurant was run by a "refugee" from Miami Beach. She bragged, "I didn't leave Miami to live in Egypt." Despite opposition from some Jewish Settlers in bunkers, Yamit was also successfully given back. One couple of these Yamit "faithful" asked to join the settlers in Hebron immediately after the massacre.

At Ofra, the representative of the settlement was an Israeli-born Orthodox woman who claimed that she and her family wanted so much to live on the land of the forefathers that they were willing to remain in Ofra even if it became part of a Palestinian state. That is hardly the attitude of the settler groups today, who want a Judea and Samaria as a land free of non-Jews. At that time, most of us had a hard time believing this woman meant that she would remain, but in face of the current settler attitudes, I can believe her willingness to live religiously on the Palestinian side of a two-state solution. That would be the return to what has been for centuries the religious dream — for a return to Zion, next year in Jerusalem — without demanding political or territorial control. What is to be done? Can we expect the Orthodox to be chastened by the horror of a religious settler entering a holy place and mowing down people at prayer? Will those Israeli parties that stop just short of Kach terrorism — such as Moledet — which only seek to transport all Arabs from Israel and the West Bank, reconsider the monstrosity of their views? Can we expect any real action against the Kach activists beyond organizational moves against them, or any systematic campaigns to root out racist thought? Sometimes it takes a Nazi to make the other rightist parties appear moderate. Likely, all that will be accomplished by banning Kach will be to move Israeli politics to the right.

For years, the extreme Right has fielded bands of terrorists against Arabs, while the Israeli military says it cannot conceive of Jewish terror. Jewish terrorists have tried to bomb American peace movements, killed the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee's Alex Odeh, and strafed a West Bank Islamic college with machine gun fire several years ago. They planted bombs in buses full of Arabs, and used explosives to murder and maim West Bank Arab mayors. In 1982, Alan Goodman, an American *oleh* (immigrant to Israel) went to the Dome of the Rock and tried to liberate it by killing one person and wounding four others. He might not have carried as much ammunition as Goldstein but it was a difference of opportunity not intent. In 1990, Ami Popper drove by Arabs workers waiting by the roadside and machine gunned seven of them to death. Riots followed each of these events, leading to Army killings of many others. Unlisted here are the specifics of other military killings as well as the shooting at the Temple Mount in 1990, which killed 17 near the Western Wall.

For any clear analysis of political actions, or human actions with a

distinct political meaning, it is absolutely necessary to use the correct terms, and have a clear view of the context of that activity. To brand this act as "crazy" or merely the act of the Ultra Orthodox, and to commiserate with the main line community about this deviation, is to forget something about how it arose and where it still flourishes. Whereas some used to joke that the Left, in supporting a two-state or even bi-national solution to the Arab/Israeli conflict stood close to the Satmar and Naturei Karta of Mea Shearim, that is not so foolish a position, or such bad company to be in. The Haredi (traditionalist Orthodox) including their party, Agudas, has never been that comfortable with the necessity for a territorial and political-control solution to the worldwide needs of Jews.

Dangers of Mixing Politics and Religion

TOO MUCH OF THE LEFT, JEWISH AND OTHERWISE, HAS BEEN SEDUCED BY THE "liberationist" elements in organized religion. From uncritically proclaiming the virtues of Liberation Theology to accepting the conceit that Zionism is "the national liberation movement of the Jewish people," much of the Left failed to understand the internal consistencies of religious movements when they turn political. Without an understanding of the internal tensions in religious movements and how their world views are shaped, cogent and acceptable political analysis is impossible.

A good example was when Khomeini's mullahs swept to power in Iran. In the Left's rush to judgment, there was inadequate consideration of the fundamentalist aspect of the anti-Shah movement, which overwhelmed its healthier elements. The Left either ignored the threat posed by the clerics or actively embraced them.

What does this mean for the Middle East and the Israeli/Palestinian peace movements? It means understanding that there remains a deep layer of reaction in the modern Orthodox movement quite distinct from the peculiarities of traditionalists in America and Israel. These religious elements should be considered a more destructive force than even the Likud. We all knew that Shamir was a terrorist; few considered the danger from the settlers to be so wide and deep.

DISARMING OR EVICTING THE SETTLERS FROM THE WEST BANK will not be sufficient. Because they have been given time to organize and become well armed, the struggle is significantly more difficult than it was 10 or 20 years ago.

Attention must be focused on the dynamics of political/religious zealotry. Just as we repudiate the terrorism of Hamas and the attacks by Algerian Moslem fundamentalists, so must we uncompromisingly repudiate the terrorism of the Israeli settlers.

Inside the New World Order: Drawing the Battle Lines

Dan Gallin

EXPECTATIONS OF PROSPERITY, PEACE AND FREEDOM FOLLOWING THE COLLAPSE OF Communism have given way to unprecedented levels of permanent unemployment and, in many countries, deep poverty for which no one seems to have any cure; a multitude of incredibly barbaric wars in Europe, Africa and Asia which have destroyed the lives of millions and the continued threat of nuclear conflict. The New World Order has turned into a nightmare for all but a small elite. We are witnessing the catastrophic failure of really existing capitalism as a world system at the end of the 20th century.

What to do? Parties of the Left have demoralized their members by failing to defend them against the policies of their enemies or, worse, adopting them as their own; they have run out of steam, out of fire, out of ideas. It sometimes seems they have run out of a future.

But this is not the first time in history that wrenching change has thrown societies into seemingly uncontrollable turmoil. It is not the first time that the values of justice and solidarity, of equal rights for all, of cooperation and mutual responsibility, are held in contempt by those in power who dictate fashions, not the first time that the people have seemed powerless.

Let us start by trying to understand what is happening to us, then think about what needs to be done, what can be done and how to do it.

The Global Economy

A GOOD PLACE TO START IS THE ECONOMY. IN A RECENT ISSUE, *BUSINESS WEEK* asked: "What's Wrong?" and echoed the general perplexity: these should be "the best of times," brought about by the end of the Cold War and the spread of "free market" economies. Instead, we have a deep recession in the advanced industrialized countries and "everywhere you look, fear is pitting those profiting from the global economy against those losing their jobs to overseas rivals."

Indeed. And *Business Week* itself gives the answer: "A new, brutally competitive world economic order is emerging with the demise of the Cold War. ... The fundamental force behind this new order is the integration

DAN GALLIN is General Secretary of the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations (IUF) in Geneva.

into the global economy of the new capitalist nations and much of the developing world," representing some 3,000 million people.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) are the driving force of this integration. There are now approximately 37,000 TNCs, with more than 170,000 subsidiaries outside their country of origin; because of non-equity arrangements like licensing and franchising (typical for the hotel and fast-food industry, among others) their true influence extends even further than these figures would indicate. According to a recent report by the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), sales generated by TNCs outside their country of origin totalled \$5.5 trillion (million million) in 1992, thereby exceeding the total value of world exports (\$4 trillion). TNCs now control one-third of the world's private sector productive assets. The stock of foreign investment world-wide totals \$2 trillion. The biggest group of owners are the TNCs based in the U.S. with \$474 billion; those based in Britain come second with \$259 billion, followed closely by the Japanese TNCs with \$251 billion.

Growth in foreign investment will continue in the foreseeable future, the report predicts and goes on to say that "international production has become a central structural characteristic of the world economy," partly as a result of the revolution in communications and transport systems which allows companies to integrate more fully with their subsidiaries abroad. Privatization is helping the trend, and TNCs have been particularly active in taking advantage of the selling off of public assets in Latin America and in Eastern and Central Europe. The strategies of TNCs are fostering world-wide economic integration, the report says. Companies are locating central functions in whichever country is most cost-effective. Such activities, the report points out, cause integration between national economies even in the absence of formal agreements, such as the European single market. Asian economies have been more closely integrated by the production strategies of Japanese companies, while U.S. companies were establishing links with Mexican companies even before the NAFTA negotiations. "The traditional division between integration at the corporate and country levels begins to break down," the report says. "TNCs ... encroach on areas over which sovereignty and responsibilities have traditionally been reserved for national governments."

In 1990, according to the U.S. Department of Commerce, U.S. companies employed 2 million people in Western Europe (up 4% from the previous year), 1.5 million in Asia (up 2%) and 1.3 million in Latin America (up 2%). Japanese companies are building more plants overseas even as unemployment increases at home. For example, Nissan's \$800 million expansion of its Mexican plant is intended to produce not only for the Mexican market but also for export to Japan, Canada and the rest of Latin America. French transnationals employ approximately two million workers outside of France.

The Global Labor Market

WE ALL NOW LIVE IN A BORDERLESS GLOBAL ECONOMY MADE POSSIBLE BY NEW communication and transport technologies. This global economy has created a global labor market where European, North American, Japanese or Australian labor is in direct competition with the labor force of countries where labor costs are kept 10 to 20 times lower, with *both* rising unemployment and falling wage levels in the old industrialized countries.

A British economic consultant, Douglas McWilliams, predicts that in the global labor market a combination of population growth and spreading literacy will expand the world's labor force from 600 million, at present, to about 4,000 million in 25 years, with real hourly labor costs in Europe declining by over 1% per year over the same period.

As early as the 1970s and 1980s, a massive transfer of production started taking place to take advantage of cheaper labor costs in the poorer countries and of the newly industrializing countries, particularly the Asian "tigers." As a result, entire industrial sectors virtually disappeared from northwestern Europe and North America: basic steel, shipbuilding, textiles, footwear, electronics. Today's relocations of production affect not only traditional industries in search of cheap labor, but sophisticated manufacturing and service operations, as well.

Airlines like Swissair and Lufthansa have moved all their accounting to India and KLM is considering a similar move. A software programming center in Bangalore services some 30 transnational corporations, including Microsoft, Digital, Fujitsu, Bull, Olivetti, Oracle, IBM, Motorola, Texas Instruments, 3M, Hewlett-Packard and Siemens at half the price the same work would cost in the U.S. or in Western Europe.

Between April and September 1993, Indian exports in electronic services increased by over 20%, for software over 30%. The projection is that in the next three or four years such exports will triple to reach \$1,500 million, of which half will be for software alone.

Infosys, an Indian software company which works for General Electric, among others, does "some of the best work in the world" according to the president of Siemens' U.S. subsidiary. The managing director of Texas Instruments in India, quoted by *Fortune* magazine, says that "as designs and software get more complex, the cost advantage of India becomes greater. We have only scratched the surface of what could happen here." Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has sold INR1, \$800 million worth of electronic services worldwide in the past business year; it opened a subsidiary in Germany two years ago which services a major bank and the German subsidiary of Hewlett-Packard among others, and has established a joint venture with IBM which will further expand its business.

Since the mid-1980s, TCS has been leasing out teams of computer specialists by the week or by the month to software laboratories or computer firms in industrialized countries. This "body-shopping" is the up-

market end of the new international slave trade; the down-market end is the leasing by the Chinese or the Burmese governments of entire crews for construction projects or for the merchant marine of foreign countries for monthly wages which are a fraction of international minimum standards, not all of which is paid to the worker but withheld by the government.

Siemens Information Systems Ltd. (SISL), which was established in July 1992 after three years' preparation, now employs 250 software specialists in Delhi, Bombay and Bangalore. In 1993 and 1994, Siemens is planning to permanently lay off 5,100 employees — 3,900 in Germany alone — in its loss-making computer business in the industrialized world. Indian wages for the same jobs amount to less than \$7,000 per year. There are virtually no social costs; working hours are generally 48 per week. In Jamaica, 3,500 people work at office parks connected to the U.S. by satellite dishes, processing airline reservations, tickets, calls to toll-free numbers, data entries, credit card applications, etc.

The lesser developed fringe countries of Europe are also targets for relocation. Ireland has a telecommunication-based service sector servicing U.S. computer programming for insurance companies such as Metropolitan Life, which employs 150 workers in County Cork to examine medical claims from all over the world. Operating costs in Ireland are 30-35% cheaper than in the U.S., the Irish Development Authority provides generous tax and other incentives and "there appears to be a strong work ethic intensified by a serious shortage of jobs in Ireland."

The former Communist states are playing the same role as Third World countries with a high-tech capability: *Business Week* quotes the case of Polish programmers in Gdansk working for a U.S. communications equipment maker at "a fraction of the pay for a comparable U.S. worker" and Siemens reports that it is receiving offers for Russian computer specialists at \$5 per day.

To understand these figures in their context it must be kept in mind that the Russian official minimum wage today stands at \$7 per month which represents 20% of the income needed for "physiological survival," according to a recent report of the International Labor Office (ILO). In the Ukraine, the minimum wage is even lower than in Russia; in Bulgaria, it represents about 60% of the subsistence level, in Albania 24%, in Romania less than 50%, in Estonia 61%, in Hungary 64% and in Poland 70%.

The minimum wage has also fallen drastically in relation to average wages, which have themselves been falling rapidly. In 1993, wages in Russia grew by 12%, but after falls of 45%, 38% and 60% in the preceding three years. Hungary had the lowest drop, with wages stable in 1990, falling 6% in 1991 and 3% in each of the succeeding two years. Percy Barnevik, of ABB, quoted in *Fortune*, foresees "a massive move from the Western world. We [ABB] already have 25,000 employees in former Com-

munist countries. They will do the job that was done in Western Europe before." More jobs will also shift to Asia: ABB, which employed only 100 workers in Thailand in 1980, has 2,000 there now and plans on 7,000 at the end of the century. Barnevik forecasts a drastic and permanent drop in employment: "Western European and American employment will just shrink and shrink in an orderly way. Like farming at the turn of the century."

Transfers of production are not the full story. Less well-known is the internationalization of services believed to be inherently domestic: several countries in Europe have household garbage collected by a U.S.-based transnational, the streets of London suburbs are being cleaned by a French transnational and a Danish transnational is a leading building cleaning and maintenance company in Europe and in North America. In general, this subcontracting of public services to private transnationals has involved job losses. The important point, however, is not only that production is being massively transferred, but that it is being transferred not only in manufacturing but also in services, including high-tech services, and that the resulting job losses in industrialized countries do not imply any great gains in employment in the countries where companies relocate and expand. The migration of jobs is not at all a straightforward one-for-one proposition, with one job gained in the new country for every job lost in an industrialized country.

Paul Samuelson, lecturing in Italy in 1992, observed: "As billions of people who live in East Asia and Latin America qualify for good, modern jobs, the half-billion Europeans and North Americans who used to tower over the rest of the world will find their upward progress in living standards encountering tough resistance." The impression conveyed here of a quid-pro-quo is misleading. The operative word is "qualify": Many are called but few are chosen.

The Whole World Is Losing Jobs

THE GLOBAL ECONOMY IS A GREAT LEVELLER — BUT IT LEVELS DOWNWARDS. As jobs are draining away from the industrialized world — over two million jobs in the last five years — Western levels of employment are not being exported to the new host countries, along with the jobs. *Fortune* writes that "when work does move to less developed lands, it's by no means automatic that the shift will bring Western levels of employment and prosperity to new host countries." In other words, there is *no* positive counterpart in the Third World, or in the former Communist countries, to compensate on a global level for the job losses in industrialized countries through relocation of production. The main reason is that "new technology and the continuing drive for higher productivity push companies to build in undeveloped countries plants and offices that require only a fraction of the manpower that used to be needed in factories back home." A

consultant quoted by *Fortune* notes: "Some of the most Japanese-looking American plants are going up in Brazil." New factories abroad, even in low-wage countries, tend to be far more labor-efficient than their counterparts in the company's home country.

Secondly, new factories built abroad by American, European or Japanese companies tend to subcontract (or "outsource") far more than their predecessors did in their home countries 10 or 15 years ago and, although sub-contracted jobs are jobs, they are cheap, unprotected jobs that contribute to the world-wide deterioration of wages and conditions. The modern company is no longer structured like the classical pyramid, with management at the top, middle management and administration below and production workers at the bottom; rather, we are dealing with a flexible cluster of activities organized in a moveable pattern around a small core. That core is itself a small pyramid, although great care is often taken to disguise the underlying authoritarian relationships. It consists of headquarters management and staff and perhaps a highly specialized and skilled core labor force; all labor intensive operations are subcontracted, domestically or internationally. The corporation thus stands at the center of an interdependent network of firms of subcontractors, who in turn have their subcontractors, etc., with wages and conditions getting worse as one moves from the center to the periphery of the network.

Production and sales organizers command production facilities in different locations and countries and subcontract all or a large part of their needs. They decide what to produce, where, how, and by whom, and from where to supply which market. They sell a combination of elements, such as brand loyalty, superior organization, design and marketing, their hold over the distribution network, access to a protected market, and quality control.

Thus, the Italian clothing firm, Benetton, owns only a small part of its production and sales facilities. The shoe-producer Nike "thinks of itself not as a manufacturer but as a research, development and marketing corporation." In fact, a number of large companies now sell their name only, and leave actual manufacturing to others. Such firms include General Motors, General Electric, Kodak, Caterpillar, Bull, Olivetti and Siemens, for significant parts of their production. This, incidentally, also illustrates the absurdity of campaigns seeking to save domestic jobs by urging consumers to "buy American" or "buy European," since only a part, often a small part, of the product originates from domestic production.

Subcontracting applies to any kind of work, not just to manufacturing. We have already seen the case of companies subcontracting their accounting and other operations to low-wage countries. *Fortune* quotes the case of "typing mills" in the Philippines that will type text and numbers in a computer for 50 cents per 10,000 characters, and even they are competing with outfits in China that will do the same work for 20 cents. It therefore becomes clear that the new transnational economic order

does not bring those benefits to the so-called developing countries which are most commonly mentioned by its apologists, most notably Milton Friedman, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), whose "structural adjustment programs" have been the building blocks of the New World Order.

"Structural adjustment" is the name given to a set of so-called free-market policies imposed on countries by the World Bank and the IMF as a condition for receiving financial assistance. They typically include: currency devaluation, trade liberalization, cuts in social spending, privatization of public enterprises, holding down wages, business deregulation, restrictions on credit and higher interest rates. Structural adjustment programs are designed to attract foreign investments by eliminating trade and investment regulations, boost foreign-exchange earnings by promoting exports, and reduce government deficits through cuts in spending. These measures are supposed to put countries on a path to sustainable growth.

While they may well serve the purpose of attracting foreign investment, we have seen that such investment cannot serve the stated purpose, which is the gradual and general raising of living standards through progressive and sustainable development of undeveloped economies. Massive transnational investment may bring prosperity and full employment to small city states like Singapore or Hong Kong, but even in these cases legitimate questions arise on environmental, social and cultural grounds. It certainly does no such thing for the large countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America which are predominantly agricultural, and where progressive and sustainable development requires a solution to the land question and a serious attack on rural poverty before anything else. What relocations of production and services and investments by transnational corporations do is to create high-tech islands in a sea of poverty, and free trade zones which are in fact free-fire zones for transnational capital, as far as social conditions and labor rights are concerned.

The Race to the Bottom

THERE IS A GEOGRAPHICAL VERSION OF THE TRICKLE-DOWN THEORY ACCORDING TO which "the way that poor countries have a chance to pull themselves up by their bootstraps is precisely by exploiting competitive advantages like cheap labor that look unfair to their rich competitors." It does not work like that in the real world: in the first place, because, as we have seen above, what is being transferred from rich to poor countries is production, not jobs or incomes. In the second place, while the trickle-down effect may have a chance in societies where democratic mechanisms, such as strong and active trade unions, ensure a redistribution of wealth, in low-wage countries the power elites see to it that labor costs stay low and

they split the loot with the foreign investors. The people of these countries never even get to reach their bootstraps: only the power elite gets more powerful and richer. This is where repression plays an economic role. Gangster states like Haiti and Burma may be extreme examples but the principle functions just as well in "democraturas" like Mexico, Egypt, Malaysia or Thailand, where more or less free trade unions are allowed to exist as long as they stay weak and where the outer trappings of democracy serve to conceal the iron fist.

In the race downhill to the lowest common international denominator, in which countries underbid each other and workers are forced to underbid each other, the usual argument is that a given economic sector must remain "competitive" to survive. But open-ended "competitiveness" is a no-win proposition: there is no finish line in the race to the bottom. As Jesse Jackson has said, you cannot compete with slave labor. "Competitiveness" does not in any way solve the employment problem, either from the point of view of quality or of quantity, nor is it intended to. On the contrary, globally the underbidding based on "competitiveness" leads to stagnation. As Jeremy Brecher wrote in "Global Village or Global Pilgrage?" (*The Nation*, 12/6/93): "As each work force, community or country seeks to become more competitive by reducing its wages and its social and environmental overheads, the result is a general downward spiral in incomes and social and material infrastructures. Lower wages and reduced public spending means less buying power, leading to stagnation, recession and unemployment. This dynamic is aggravated by the accumulation of debt; national economies in poor countries and even in the United States become geared to debt repayment at the expense of consumption, investment and development. The downward fall is reflected in the slowing of global GNP growth from almost 5% per year in the period 1948-1973 to only half that in the period 1974-1989 and to a mere crawl since then."

To understand the political and social implications of "competitiveness" and of the massive relocation of production to low labor cost countries — both undeveloped or former Communist — it is important not to lose sight of the economic role of repression.

The Economic Role of Repression

IN A CELEBRATED AND INFAMOUS AD IN A TRADE PAPER OF THE U.S. GARMENT INDUSTRY, the wages of a garment worker in El Salvador were advertised as follows: "Rosa Martinez produces apparel for U.S. markets on her sewing machine in El Salvador. *You* can hire her for 57 cents an hour." In later versions of the same advertisement, Rosa's wage had dropped to 33 cents an hour. There is a reason for this wage level: the country has had a civil war for decades, with over 40,000 deaths. As in Guatemala, it was a war of the ruling class, backed by U.S. interests, against their own people,

where the labor movement was destroyed several times over, through physical extermination, terror and intimidation, together with the parties likely to defend the people's interest against those of the elite. It was a war for the purpose of depriving the people of the means of defending themselves.

The newly developing industrial parks in Indonesia, 12 miles across the Strait of Malacca from Singapore, employ workers from Java and Sumatra at a third the cost of comparable labor in Singapore. They live under a military dictatorship that has had to murder over half a million people in 1965, by the lowest count, two million by the highest, to seize power and to crush the labor movement.

China, the largest and cheapest labor market opening up to transnational capital in the world today, is the product of a terrorist police state which has exterminated an estimated 150 million of its own citizens by starvation and repression. Vietnam, another totalitarian police state with state-run trade unions, is the latest candidate for Asian "tiger."

Russia has a working class that is only now emerging from seven decades in which the state killed 40 million people, again, at a low count, to wipe out every vestige of a civil society with its autonomous institutions. And the other former Communist countries of Eastern and Central Europe, with 40 years of Communist rule behind them, are economically, socially and psychologically destroyed societies, where the social fabric has all but disintegrated and even such basic notions as the public interest, or the common good, have been discredited by their association with official rhetoric under the Stalinist regimes. These are societies that have been engulfed by the ideologies of free enterprise, sometimes espoused by the very same people who would maintain the political structures of the old police states, more often by adventurers and opportunists, fusing into a new capitalist ruling class, just as ruthless but far more corrupt than that of the beginnings of the industrial age, united in their hatred of workers and of any form of an independent labor movement, in their distrust of democracy and in their subservience to transnational capital.

Brazil, another favorite country for transnational investment, is a society overwhelmed by its own poverty because of decades of military dictatorship, where the army and the police made sure that unions remained docile and opponents were either jailed or murdered.

Economic blackmail continues: when electronic workers in Malaysia tried to organize a national union two years ago, Texas Instruments and others threatened to pull out of the country if the government allowed it and unions are now accused of "acting against the national interest," an accusation that is not to be taken lightly in a country with an authoritarian and egotistic Prime Minister armed with an arsenal of repressive internal security legislation. Enterprise-level unions are the only legal

form of organization in Chile, Guatemala and Thailand. In Colombia, formally a parliamentary democracy, the national center, CUT, reported last year that nearly 800 trade union leaders and activists had been murdered since the foundation of the organization in 1987.

"Trade unionists in the Americas have continued to be subjected to a far-reaching twin offensive against their most basic rights," the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) observed in its 1993 "Annual Survey of Violations of Trade Union Rights." "The first element of the attack is the tragically familiar use of violent extra-legal repression which has persisted, and even intensified, in countries which have undergone the political transition from military dictatorship to formal democracy. ... The second element of the attack on trade union rights is constituted by the wave of restrictive legislation which has been introduced across the continent." It does not take specialized knowledge in economics, elaborate theories of Asian exceptionalism or speculation on the economic effect of world religions to understand why capitalism in its most rapacious and destructive forms is sweeping the planet, virtually unopposed: what we are dealing with here are the effects of decades of repression, armed violence and fear.

Before the globalization of the world economy, when national and regional economies were still protected by trade barriers, when political borders still meant something in economic terms and when international communications were slower and more costly, a slaughter of tens of thousands in El Salvador or of hundreds of thousands in Indonesia may have been regarded as a horrendous crime by some, perhaps even by many, in the far-away industrial democracies, but it did not affect their societies. Today, 30 years later, with the world economy as one, and Indonesian workers working as if side by side with European or American workers, the stench of death lingering from a massacre there 30 years ago, means unemployment, sweatshops and poverty in Europe and the U.S. today.

Rosa Martinez earning 33 cents per hour in El Salvador, perhaps less at the time of writing, because those who fought for higher wages were killed, over and over again, is working next to American garment workers. Even 10 years ago American academics like S. Sassen-Koobin in an essay in *Women, Men and the International Division of Labor* (State University of New York, 1983) noted: "There is growing awareness in the industry that wages in New York City are increasingly competitive with those in the garment industry in southeast Asia ... the availability of immigrant labor in New York City makes location of factories here increasingly profitable." Here the hand of the dead indeed reaches out to seize the living.

The American and international labor leaders who were boasting in 1964 of having contributed to the overthrow of the Goulart government in Brazil by getting their tame Brazilian unions to cooperate with the military in the putsch — another famous victory in the war against "Com-

munism" — knew at the time that they were participating in a criminal act. What they did not realize is that they were also contributing to undermining the job security of their constituency, the American workers, 30 years later.

None of the people who now live in poor countries chose to be poor: they were forced into poverty by repression. Their only chance of breaking this vicious circle of poverty and terror is by securing democratic institutions which open up the space for unions to breathe and struggle and to get some power for workers and for ordinary people. In this fight, their best, and often their only, ally has been organized labor in the industrialized countries. But of course in these countries, its traditional heartland, the labor movement is also under attack. This is what the cry for deregulation, for flexibility in the labor market, is all about. A director of Courtaulds PLC, the British chemical company, says that industry needs "major cuts in costs and living standards ... the realization that we must work harder for less money is not there yet." In order to achieve this, the power of unions in North America and Western Europe must be broken.

Global Union Busting

IN RESPONSE TO IMPENDING UNION MERGERS IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IN BRITAIN, Rupert Murdoch's *Times*, as early as March 1992, railed against "great combinations of labor" and spelled out the conservative definition of the "successful unions of tomorrow": "They will be essentially staff associations, based in the individual workplace. They will be unideological except in understanding that their members' prosperity is linked to that of their employers. They will uphold individual contracts and workers' legal rights. ... Worker organizations have a role in updating management." That is where the New Right wants labor to be: in divided and powerless enterprise-based "staff associations" permitted only to handle individual grievances and to promote the employer's prosperity.

It is difficult to imagine that such a program can be imposed across the board in the industrial democracies without abolishing democracy. But democracy can no longer be taken for granted, even in its traditional bastions. What is new in the attack on trade unionism in the industrialized countries is that it is also a break with the policies of social consensus, sometimes also called neo-corporatism, that characterized the social relations of the leading industrial democracies in the post-war period. Capitalist business in the industrialized countries is now breaking free of the moral constraints imposed on it by the defeat of fascism at the end of World War II. The passage of time and the right-wing control of most media in Europe, North America and Japan is gradually freeing business from the opprobrium of having financed and supported fascism in Europe and extremist nationalism in Japan. It is also blurring the memory that trade unionists and socialists led the democratic resistance and paid

the highest price to secure the future of global democracy while the leading elite of the business world, with very few exceptions, were enthusiastic supporters of the fascist war machine, collaborated in the extermination of the Jews and other ethnic and political victims of fascism and made a fortune out of the blood of millions. Whatever else Nazism in Germany, fascism in Italy and in other European countries, military dictatorship in Japan, might have been, they were the most ambitious and temporarily successful union-busting exercise in modern history. The current attack on the trade union movement is an attempted counter-revolution against the democratic revolution carried out by the Resistance movement in Europe, against the New Deal in the United States, with all its cultural, philosophical and political dimensions and against post-war democratization in Japan.

The counter-revolutionary character of the rise of the New Right accounts for some of its most bizarre aspects: the undertone of revenge, the mix of arrogance and scurrility, of provocation and nervousness. This was apparent in the tone of the last Republican administration in the U.S. and in the pronouncements of leading Thatcherites, but also in the former Communist countries where reactionary and fascist groups have made a strong come-back. Prime Minister Vaclav Klaus of the Czech Republic says that one of his country's big problems is the political "infiltration" from Western European trade unions and social-democrats; Istvan Czurka, the leader of the right-wing split from the MDF, the Hungarian government party says that crime and cultural decline in Hungary have "genetic origins" and that the country is a victim of a world-wide Jewish-liberal conspiracy. In Romania, former prominent Stalinist propagandists and Securitate agents are now leading extremist nationalist parties and publishing fascist newspapers. Milosevic in Serbia and Tudjman in Croatia are holding on to power through the same poisonous mix of Stalinism and fascism and it was on this same platform, of course, that Zhirinovskiy, the KGB's candidate in the last Russian elections, successfully conducted his campaign.

The threat to democracy is now universal, and touches all regions and politico-economic zones. That is one of the reasons why the issue of democratic rights has such fundamental importance. The ability of workers everywhere to organize world-wide, North and South, East and West, to establish effective international links and to support each other, depends on it. That mutual support is one basic building block of what we mean by global solidarity. That has to be our answer to transnational capital operating in a global labor market.

It is in the common fight for human and democratic rights, that the labor movement in all parts of the world, in the traditional industrialized countries of the "North," the underdeveloped countries of the "South" and the former Communist countries, has the strongest imaginable common interest. Those who are trying to tell Asian workers, for example, that

the struggle for human rights is a protectionist ploy of Western trade unions to save Western jobs are cynical liars. As Asian workers, and others, well know, one cannot trade dignity for prosperity and anyone who tries will lose both.

ICFTU general secretary Enzo Friso has pointed out that if it were true that the exercise of democratic rights was a hindrance to economic development the most repressive countries should also be the richest, whereas the opposite is true: "The folly and corruption that has disfigured the whole history of development is the direct consequence of the way that unrepresentative rulers have ignored or repressed their citizens."

At stake are not just labor rights. But their affirmation is an integral part of, and a precondition, for a development consistent with the interests of society in general from an ecological, social or cultural point of view.

The Human Rights Imperative

IN A REMARKABLE 1992 REPORT ENTITLED "INDIVISIBLE HUMAN RIGHTS — THE Relationship of Political and Civil Rights to Survival, Subsistence and Poverty," the New York-based Human Rights Watch demonstrates that "subsistence, indeed survival, often depends on the existence of political and civil rights, especially those related to democratic accountability." Contrary to the claims of certain governments, particularly in Asia, that social and economic rights (basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter) must first be met before the luxury of political freedoms can be granted, the report demonstrates the link between democratic rights on the one hand, and freedom from famine, environmental destruction and enforced poverty on the other. These democratic rights include freedom of expression, association and assembly, free and competitive elections, and freedom of movement and residence. The key issue is democratic accountability, that is, the ability of the people to discuss and review the policies of the executive authority and establish checks on that authority if its policies are not deemed by the people to be in the public interest.

The rulers of countries which deny their people's basic democratic rights are in fact hindering, not promoting, their development. They are selling their people's labor and their countries' resources for the short-term gain of a small and often corrupt ruling class and, if justice were served, they would be tried for high treason.

Let us now look for a moment at the consequences for the so-called industrial democracies of denying democratic rights in Third World and former Communist countries. The industrial democracies are few. They are, broadly speaking, the industrialized countries of the OECD: Western Europe, North America, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. In the post-war world, they represented the prosperous, democratic and open

societies which formed the power structure underpinning the world order that had emerged after the defeat of fascism in Europe and Asia. While they tended to keep their democracy to themselves (after all, it was the U.S., the U.K. and France which most aggressively fought popular and progressive movements, propped up conservative rulers and protected transnational investments all over the Third World) their societies nevertheless allowed the political space for democratic forces to develop which, at different times, had a significant impact at the international and world level. These include the labor movement, the environmental movement, and the women's movement, among others. They are rooted in democratic opinion and protected by democratic institutions. They are, organizationally, financially and politically, the principal support of an emerging world-wide civil society and the principal, if not the only, allies of all peoples fighting for their liberation and their own democratic rights.

Democracy and prosperity in the industrial societies were the principal gains of the victory over fascism. Both are now under threat in a stagnant global economy with a global labor market where the living standards of a vast majority of the world's population are held at the lowest possible level by the dictatorship of the gun, the torture chamber and the killing fields.

Democracy Undefended

AS WE LOOK AT THE WORLD-WIDE THREAT TO DEMOCRACY, WE MUST KEEP UPPERMOST in our minds the unreliability of leading democratic governments, so far as the defense of democracy is concerned. Recent history demonstrates clearly that the governments of the United States, whether Republican or Democrat, of the European Union and Japan are not interested in democracy. They are interested in stability. Citizens concerned with the future of democracy can make no worse mistake than to expect relief from democratic governments. If there was any desirable by-product of the Gulf War, other than upholding international law and the dubious achievement of having returned Kuwait to the sovereignty of its ruler, it would have been the overthrow of Saddam Hussein's tyranny. That result was deliberately avoided, and the regime remains free to torture and murder democratic opponents in Bagdad, Kurds in the North and Shiites in the South. The abject betrayal of democratic and pluralist Bosnia-Herzegovina is the result of a deliberate decision by Western governments not to oppose Serbian and Croatian fascism. Western policy toward Eastern and Central Europe has been to support the World Bank's and the IMF's "structural adjustment" policies which have undermined the economic and social foundations of democracy while delivering the former Communist countries defenseless to transnational capital. Nor is the strange listlessness of the German state, and of other European governments, in dealing with the criminal activities of well-organized fascist

gangs, an encouragement to democrats at home and abroad.

Japan, the regional superpower, has signaled to the Thai military, a source of corruption in all of Southeast Asia, and to the Burmese military, which runs one of the most viciously repressive regimes existing today, that they have nothing to fear. Its reprimands to the SLORC of Burma have all the punch of Thatcher, in her day, protesting violations of human rights in South Africa. The Australian Labor government, craving acceptance in Asia, is courting the Indonesian dictatorship and making it known that the defense of human rights is no longer one of its priorities.

The inaction of democratic governments in the defense of democracy world-wide has led to a new world crisis: the sudden and enormous growth of the world refugee population. In November 1993, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees reported that in 1992 world refugee numbers increased by 10,000 a day. Overall refugee numbers have risen from 2.5 million in 1970 to nearly 44 million today. More than 19 million have been forced abroad and a further 24 million have been driven from their homes and are "internally displaced" refugees, the victims of "ethnic cleansing" and other forms of persecution. Never before have there been so many people in search of protection and asylum. According to the report, the main causes are "violent conflict and the chaotic breakdown of civil order." It says further that "making sure that human rights are respected where people live, so that they do not have to flee to find protection, is a matter of the greatest urgency." You might think that this common sense conclusion would be a priority concern of democratic governments. You would be wrong. The priority concern of democratic governments is to strengthen police measures to keep the growing refugee population out of their countries.

The European Union has generated a new body, which was supposed to be secret and which is not accountable to elected officials at any level. It is called the K4 Committee and it is composed of national security officials with broad powers to coordinate the fight against international crime such as drug-trafficking and money laundering, but also against illegal immigration and asylum. At the head of its list of concerns is reportedly illegal immigration: "the process of erecting still higher barriers against refugees from Bosnia and elsewhere are already well advanced." Plans to co-ordinate policies on the forcible expulsions of unwanted immigrants and a new high-tech fingerprint system for asylum-seekers are also under way." We now have to ask ourselves how long democratic institutions, even in the small part of the world where they are today taken for granted, can survive given massive permanent unemployment and steadily worsening living and working conditions, along with the pressure of immigration. Millions of refugees are knocking at the doors of the prosperous democracies because their countries are engulfed in war and terror, and are being kept out by the military and the police.

Even some employers are getting worried. An increasing number of

top managers of European companies are concerned about social breakdown caused by the business decisions of corporations. A manager for Allied Signal Europe NV was recently quoted as asking: "Can society sustain 20% unemployment? Where will it lead? Who's looking at this?" Schmidheiny, one of Switzerland's corporate leaders, has become internationally active in protecting the environment. Long before anyone else, Antoine Riboud, CEO of the French food transnational BSN, advocated a social consensus based on the recognition of trade unions, and he has stated publicly that the unions he wants to deal with should be strong and independent. We may yet find allies even among some companies, those few with a more thoughtful and responsible management than the rest.

Democracy cannot survive if transnational capital succeeds in imposing its economic solutions at the world level, and succeeds in imposing the social standards of, say, China, Indonesia, Russia, Brazil or El Salvador on the workers of Western Europe and North America. The way democracy in Europe or in America can be undermined, weakened and ultimately destroyed can take many forms, but we can be sure of one consequence: unchecked world domination by transnational capital means the end of many things, in particular the end of the labor movement for a long time, perhaps for a century, as a significant force for progressive change in the world — even as a potential for building such a force.

The Irrelevance of Nation States

WHAT ARE THE OPTIONS AVAILABLE TO US? THE TRADITIONAL REMEDY, SEEKING TO achieve political power in the national context and pass protective legislation, has become largely outdated and ineffective, although it should, of course, be used for as long as possible for what it is worth.

The globalization of the world economy is rapidly restricting the space where decisions on economic and social policy taken at national level make any difference. Nation states and national legislation are becoming increasingly irrelevant because domestic economies are conditioned more and more by external forces over which national economic, political and social actors have no control.

This point was made with extraordinary clarity by Richard Gardner, appointed U.S. ambassador to Spain in November 1993, who said that having consulted the 33 American firms doing business in that country, he had to let the Spanish public know that American investors were losing interest in Spain because of high labor costs, the "rigidities of the labor market" and deficient infrastructures. This statement comes at a time when the Spanish government is preparing for a show-down with the unions over precisely these issues: control over job security and conditions of employment.

The growing irrelevance of nation states helps to explain why gov-

ernments in different countries, coming from opposite ends of the political spectrum and elected on entirely different programs, end up following more or less similar policies. Walter Wriston, former chairman of Citicorp, described how "200,000 monitors in trading rooms all over the world" now conduct "a kind of global plebiscite on the monetary and fiscal policies of the governments issuing currency. ... There is no way for a nation to opt out." Wriston recalls the election of "ardent socialist" Francois Mitterrand as French president in 1981. "The market took one look at his policies and within six months the capital flight forced him to reverse course."

Trading blocs and geographical zones of economic cooperation will no doubt multiply and become stronger, but they merely relegate the same problem to a regional level. At best, it may become easier to secure social clauses in trade agreements to enforce minimum social standards as a condition of access to a trading bloc, although the failure to secure such clauses in the recently-concluded re-negotiation of the GATT agreement offers little encouragement for this expectation.

What, then, is there to do? It is not too difficult to devise sensible Keynesian alternatives to the catastrophic course presently followed by the leading governments, the Bretton Woods institutions and the other decision- and policy-makers of the "international community." Beyond these, there is the gigantic task of reinventing a society organized around the priority of meeting human needs at a time when a significant and increasing part of humanity is denied a material reward for productive and creative work and where the notion of work, therefore, has to be separated from the notion of income, and the notion of income from the notion of wages or salaries. The immediate difficulty we are facing, however, is that we are not in an argument about who has the better ideas. We are in an argument about power. The question is therefore one of organization. Organizing is what the labor movement used to be best at doing, but not in its present state of disorientation and confusion. In order to organize effectively, the labor movement must learn to think globally.

Global Organizing

ORGANIZING HAS TO START FROM NEW PREMISES. TRADE UNIONS IN THE INDUSTRIAL democracies are on the defensive; in some countries their numbers have been decimated, their margin for negotiations has narrowed to very little. In many countries employers have gone from the acceptance of social consensus to a policy of confrontation. In the former Communist countries, both successor organizations of old unions and the alternative organizations arising from the political opposition are disarmed by hostile, authoritarian governments, demoralized members and massive unemployment. In the Third World, unions are unable to stem the pauperization

of their countries and generally do not have the support of sympathetic governments as in the past. In such desperate straits, many organizations turn inward, in the mistaken belief that concentrating on domestic issues will help solve the immediate problems of their members. In the new world situation, the opposite is true: There can no longer be any effective trade union policy, even at the national level, that is not global in concept and international in organization. Not surprisingly, the small, weak and beleaguered unions in Third World countries have understood this best, since economic dependency, and therefore interdependency, has been a fact of life in their society throughout their experience. It is in the traditionally strongest union movements that provincialism and complacency are most entrenched, even at this late stage. The experience of repeated defeats is not necessarily the mother of invention.

A global approach has to involve the membership to a far greater extent than has been customary. A transnational corporation needs to be seen as a whole for those who work in it and bargain with it. Within the European Union, draft legislation instituting regional works councils is a step in this direction, but it also carries the danger of fostering the notion that a European organization is an end in itself, and of strengthening nationalist propaganda casting the workers of other regions as competitors and enemies. A trade union approach must deal with the company as a world-wide structure, and must have the objective of organizing the company wherever it operates. New forms of company organization require new forms of union organization, crossing traditional jurisdictional lines and forming coalitions of unions adapted to the specific nature of the company and of the problems it poses. International collective bargaining, including coalition bargaining of international, national and local trade union structures where appropriate, must become a priority of unions dealing with TNCs.

Restructuring at the national level is a crying need in many countries to pool scarce resources and develop specialist services, non-existent at the present time, capable of comprehending company and government policies, to develop counter-strategies and to turn them into organizing drives. How can the AFL-CIO afford some 90 unions when the overall organizational density has sunk to below 16%? How can the French trade union movement afford five national centers with an organizational density below 12%? New Zealand, with a population of 3 million, had over 300 unions when the conservative government took power. They learned the hard way. Important union mergers have taken place, and are still under way, in Australia, Britain and Japan. Let them hurry. There is nothing wrong with mergers, and largeness in itself is no threat to democracy. There are numerous bureaucratic and ossified small unions: smallness is no guarantee of democracy, but in general a guarantee of impotence.

In a global perspective, union strength must not be undermined by

sectarian considerations. Union strength must be preserved where it exists and the value of a union movement must be judged on the basis of its ability to defend its members' interests regardless of past politics. It is wrong, for example, to acquiesce in the seizure by the state of union assets in the former Communist countries on the grounds that they are goods stolen from the workers when the state controlled the unions. If these assets can play a role today in strengthening the union side against the now really existing reactionary capitalist states, by all means let them remain in union hands.

The successor organizations of the former Communist unions should be supported wherever they have reformed enough to form a line of resistance against the "structural adjustment programs" which prepare the ground for neo-Stalinism and fascism. It is foolish to seek to isolate representative trade union organizations with a proven ability to defend their members, on the grounds that they are, wholly or partly, tainted by a Communist past.

Union education programs need to focus on the implications of the New World Order to enable the membership to comprehend what has been happening to them and what is likely to happen next, and to prepare them for the effort of world-wide organizing. How many unions have education programs and, of those that do, how many deal with the New World Order, which is the reality their members face every day? As a rule, there is no discussion of international issues at the membership level.

Many more resources need to be put into international union activities if the movement is to become effective globally. At present, a small number of unions, even national trade union centers, in industrialized countries have international departments and, where they exist, they are understaffed, typically with two or three people. In many countries, international relations is something the president or another official does on the side, in addition to many other duties. Budgets for international activities are, for the most, part ridiculously low, and clearly show that, in the minds of most union executives, international activities are an unimportant sideshow.

More important, the nature of international activities is misunderstood and misinterpreted. Back in the economic and social halcyon days of the 1950s and 1960s many unions, especially in the industrially developed countries, had sufficient industrial and financial strength to largely take care of their own interests and had no need for international support. For many, international activity was recreational and diplomatic, at best charitable and declarative. Verbal denunciations of colonialist and (sometimes) imperialist injustice, together with financial contributions which might appear generous but in fact often amounted to less than donations to domestic charities, seemed to cover the ground as far as international activities were concerned. With this came a patronizing at-

titude to international trade union organizations and a certain amount of complacency in looking at society and the world.

Very few unions relate international programs to the problems of their members at the point of production and when they do, it is more a fire fighting exercise, typically in response to a threatened plant closure, rather than a systematic, long-term and pro-active program of educating the membership to the world-wide connections of company policies to government policies.

The memory of past abuses lingers on — unions allowing their so-called international programs to be used as fronts for the intelligence operations of governments or as pretexts for junkets by top officials who rarely reported back what they were doing abroad. In the best of cases, honest officials of goodwill regarded an international program as a kind of charity, and would help weak unions abroad in the same spirit as contributing to the Red Cross. But those who look on international trade union action as charity, miss the fundamental point of trade unionism: solidarity, in contrast with charity, is a reciprocal relationship. Charity is top-down, solidarity is based on the acceptance of mutual responsibility. Shrinking budgets of both governments and unions, and to a lesser extent rising membership awareness, have put a stop to most of the political hi-jinx and manipulations. What remains, is that most union leaderships, as well as union members, have a very superficial, if any, understanding of the world they live in.

Organizing must be done in its political context with political means, centered on the defense of human rights, the core issue around which not only workers but all other victims of the New World Order can be organized and coalitions built that have political depth and staying power. This requires the defense of human rights as a categorical imperative. To be credible, there can be no selective defense of human rights, even if consistency inconveniences some trade union centers with a tradition of submitting to authoritarian governments or deferring to the principle of “non-intervention in the internal affairs of countries.”

The International Labor Movement

DOESN'T THIS MEAN RE-INVENTING THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIALIST MOVEMENT? If the Socialist International (SI) were the kind of organization its name implies, unions would not have to take charge of the political dimension of labor action quite to the same extent that is being suggested here. The Socialist International, however, is nothing of the sort. It is a forum for leaders of mostly European socialist parties to meet and exchange views which are in general friendly to labor when their parties are in opposition and hostile to labor when their parties are in government. It is the small parties that need, and demand, an international organization capable of action; their demands are unheeded.

The large parties prefer an organization that cannot interfere with their own priorities. They make sure that it stays weak at the center, and that its policies never reach beyond the minimum common denominator they can agree on. Since their main concerns are national, that common denominator remains low. As a result, the Socialist International is utterly unable to produce an independent interpretation of the present world, much less to deal with it. Just as the defense of democracy cannot be left to democratic governments, the political dimension of labor action cannot be left to the SI.

A global approach to labor organizing and labor action implies a profound reorganization of the existing international labor movement, composed in essence of the ICFTU, which is the federation of territorial organizations such as national centers, and the International Trade Secretariats (ITSs), which are 15 or so federations of unions covering specific industries or economic sectors.

The ICFTU is at a delicate stage of its development and faces a political paradox. On the one hand, it is at the apex of its history. Its competitors are much diminished: the Communist World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) has lost most of the government support it relied on, as well as most of its affiliates, and its infrastructure and political network is in disarray. The Christian World Confederation of Labor (WCL) is little more than a Catholic Action propaganda group, dependent on only one strong and representative organization, the Belgian Confederation of Christian Trade Unions. A number of former WFTU affiliates and independents, which used to maintain equidistance, have now joined the ICFTU, which numbers an all time high of some 150 affiliates, in over 100 countries with a membership of approximately 110 million.

For practical purposes, the ICFTU today is the representative labor international, the only one that matters. Yet, on the other hand, it is a directionless giant. Those who regarded its primary function as fighting the Cold War are now disoriented. The obvious alternative does not occur to them: that now is the time to pick up where the serious labor internationals of the past left off. An international organization of labor formed for the purpose of conducting labor's struggle for its own and society's emancipation is beyond the imagining of those who are largely ignorant of past experience, contemptuous of history and theory, and afraid of struggle.

The ICFTU Executive Board is composed of officials of national trade union centers who are preoccupied with national issues and think in national terms. They have a vested interest in believing that there are national solutions for their members' problems and are caught in structural constraints which obstruct a global vision. This is one of the reasons why a number of national trade union centers which, through their access to public development funds, have supported international trade union activity in the past, are now starting to give direct aid to unions in former

Communist or in developing countries by-passing international trade union organizations. Such bilateral assistance creates chaos, increases the danger of corruption and weakens international trade unionism at the time it most needs strengthening, but it plays well for the home audience.

ICFTU activities which should be the cutting edge of international labor action (defense of human rights, organizational and political support to unions in former Communist countries and in the Third World, action on TNCs in cooperation with the ITSs) are underfunded and undervalued. The institution lives far too much in a bureaucratic and abstract world where form takes precedence over substance and preoccupations with turf, jurisdiction and status overshadow the original purpose of the exercise.

The ITSs have different problems. Edo Fimmen, the secretary of the International Federation of Trade Unions (the "Amsterdam International") for a brief period after the First World War, then general secretary of the International Transport Workers' Federation for most of the 1920s and 1930s, understood and tried to solve most problems 70 years ago that we are still trying to solve today. He regarded the ITSs as the most appropriate form of trade union organization to conduct international labor struggles. In a prophetic book, *Labor's Alternative — The United States of Europe or Europe Limited*, he predicted that "just as the development of capitalism has always determined the organizational form of its opponents, has given rise first of all to local and subsequently to national trade unions, so capitalism will become, if not the originator, at least the furtherer of the international organization of the industrial workers."

Fimmen was under no illusions on the capacity of the ITSs of his time to rise to their historical task: "We are still far short of this point," he wrote. "Several years are likely to elapse before the ITSs (which are still in the very earliest stage of their activity, and most of which are as yet devoid of substantial importance) will have won, practically as well as theoretically, the leadership in industrial struggles."

Seventy years later, after a second world war and the subsequent Cold War set the labor movement back for decades, many ITSs are still "devoid of substantial importance" in terms of their capability of successfully conducting international labor struggles. His conclusion, however, remains inescapable: "Still, however weak and imperfect in respect of organization the ITSs may be, however little international, nonetheless the development of capitalism will compel them to take up the task that is incumbent on them unless the proletariat is to lapse internationally into a condition of more hopeless dependence and enslavement than that of the working class in its national subdivisions today."

At this stage, the ITSs need to strengthen their capability for effective intervention at any time, anywhere in the world when trade union rights are threatened, but they must also be capable of sustained action

over the long term. In short they must acquire the means of exercising power in defense of the public interest in such a way that they cannot be ignored by governments or transnational corporations, however large and powerful. This cannot be achieved without a concentration of available resources, and that in turn means a series of mergers to create a smaller number of larger and more effective organizations. These are slow processes because they have to be democratic, involving collective decisions by loosely federated organizations where differing political cultures, organizational and financial structures and personalities have to be meshed. But they are inevitable if the ITSs are to carry out their historical terms of reference. It is not difficult to see that in terms of the resources needed for effective organization, servicing and action, no ITS with less than 10 million members will be viable by the end of the century and that an effective defense of workers' interests requires not the present 15 ITSs but seven at the most, each with the critical mass enabling it to organize in depth and to successfully sustain long-term and costly struggles. The closest possible linkage is needed between the ITSs and the ICFTU, because alliances will constantly be needed between ITSs, national centers and regional organizations to tackle specific issues.

Today more than ever it is necessary to reform the ICFTU as a joint organization of ITSs and national centers, with a dual (territorial and industrial) structure, to facilitate joint action between a number of partners in changing coalitions, to adapt to specific problems in a rapidly shifting international environment, and to introduce an international dimension in the strategic thinking of the world labor movement beyond international labor statesmanship and diplomacy.

There is an obvious objection which is rooted in post-war international labor history. When the WFTU was formed as a united world-wide international federation including the state-controlled labor organizations of the USSR and its new satellites, as well as the social-democratic unions of Europe and the American CIO, a struggle for control immediately developed between the Soviet bloc and its Communist-led allies on the one hand and the social-democratic unions on the other, which eventually led to a split and to the formation of the ICFTU, with the WFTU remaining under Communist control. One of the contentious issues was the status of the ITSs, which the Communists wanted to incorporate into the structure of the WFTU as departments, whereas the social-democratic trade unionists, who were in control of the ITSs, insisted on their independence.

The following years amply demonstrated the superiority of the ITSs over their Communist counterparts, the Trade Union Internationals (TUIs) that the WFTU had set up within its structure after the split. The independence of the ITSs — including from the ICFTU — gave them a high degree of flexibility and mobility, together with a higher degree of professionalism and militancy than any other international labor organization.

The question therefore arises whether these advantages would not now be lost if the ITSs became part of the ICFTU structure.

This is unlikely because the ITSs of today and tomorrow are very different organizations from those of the post-war period or from the ones of Fimmen's time. Today's ITSs, and even more so tomorrow's, if the anticipated merger process materializes, will be substantially more influential than many national centers. In a common international structure, they would not find it difficult to play their own role as equals. It is these equal relationships that would ensure the health and stability of the organization.

Rebuilding the Movement

WHAT OTHER BUILDING BLOCS OF SOLIDARITY ARE AVAILABLE? THE VAST EDIFICE OF the pre-1930s social-democratic labor movement in Europe lies in ruins, and these ruins are impressive still as witness to past greatness, much like the lost cities of vanished civilizations. But there is evidence of life in these ruins and many mansions are still inhabited. The labor movement in all its vastness still has immense resources at its disposal. Their effective use is a question of understanding the priorities.

In this respect, relations with the social-democratic and labor parties are best left to the trade union movement in the different countries. The current state of relations varies considerably from country to country, ranging from the traditional relations of close cooperation to open hostility. At issue is the ability of the parties purporting to represent labor's interests to develop a credible alternative to the neo-conservative New Right rather than merely succumbing to it ideologically and politically. At the international level, the trade union movement would no doubt welcome an opportunity of cooperating with the Socialist International in a mutually supportive relationship. In practical terms, those who have tried have not succeeded, for the reasons described earlier.

But the organizations of the labor movement also include a vast array of social and cultural organizations: women's and youth organizations, educational associations and schools, hiking and touring clubs, sports clubs, travel agencies, consumers cooperatives, banks and housing cooperatives. The sense of belonging together to a single movement, of representing an alternative society and a counter-culture, is now much weaker than even after the last war, but there is enough of it left to pick up some of the pieces.

Two instances come to mind: the workers' aid organizations and the workers' educational associations. Both have their own international federations. Workers' aid organizations were originally founded for the purpose of taking care of the victims of the class war: in the 1920s and 1930s literally so. In the 1950s and 1960s when conventional wisdom in the labor movement had it that the class war was over, that most of labor's

goals had been attained and that further progress required as seamless as possible an integration in the existing social order, workers' aid organizations became de-politicized, as well, and like everyone else concerned with welfare, on relieving the victims of natural disasters: floods, earthquakes, famine. From the 1970s and the rise of the politics of guilt, many started giving priority to development projects: bore-holes for water in the desert, planting seedlings on sand-dunes.

Today, when labor is fighting with its back to the wall, questions have to be asked regarding priorities: do the contributions of workers' aid organizations to disaster relief bring a positive benefit to the labor movement as a whole, even though they are a drop in the bucket compared to government or private charity contributions? If the objective was to earn brownie points with the bourgeoisie, has anyone ever thanked us? Have our contributions resulted in a measurable increase in influence? For that matter, what have the contributions of American unions to the various community chests, hospitals and other charitable causes done to strengthen the labor movement in the United States? And how much of a difference would the same amounts of money have made had they been spent in paying the salaries of organizers, improving the quality of labor publications, paying strike relief? Why doesn't labor help labor? No one else will.

The same goes for workers' education. In the complacent 1950s it was alright to assume that general adult education could be a legitimate goal for a workers' education association. Today, the educational needs of the labor movement as a movement are immense. The whole political culture of the labor movement has to be passed on to millions of people who have been cut off from it for several generations. What is now being done in trade union study circles, summer schools, party schools and foundations merely scratches the surface. At the international level, the International Federation of Workers' Education Associations is the only organization of the labor movement that combines trade unions at various level of activity, party institutions, think tanks and workers' education associations. It is uniquely well placed to become the laboratory where the labor movement develops its new ideological instruments, provided that this is perceived as its principal priority.

We can no longer afford the luxury of labor movement institutions relieving symptoms rather than treating the causes of social diseases. Treating symptoms is the proper province of the state and, of course, there we have one of the major battle lines in our war with the New Right. Humanitarian donors abound when it comes to relieving the victims of social disasters but only labor is capable of dealing with the root causes of social disasters and preventing their recurrence. Global solidarity — both geographical and qualitative — is the concept that meets the present needs of the movement.

Finally, the international labor movement must take the lead in build-

ing new international coalitions with civic and social action groups, which have grown both in numbers and in strength since the 1970s. Over ten years ago, in an article in *The New International Review* (Vol. 3, No.1, 1980), this writer suggested that coalition building had to be an essential element in an international labor strategy: "the building of broad popular coalitions, with the trade union movement at their center, but bringing together many civic groups, issue-oriented movements and other popular groups that perceive, each in its own way, the social threat that corporate power represents and whose areas of concern overlap, in different degrees, with that of the labor movement." Today, lower communications and travel costs have allowed the development of more cross-border action and information. More than ever, the basis exists for the emergence of a global civil society in which the labor movement can and should play a leading role.

Louis C. Fraina/Lewis Corey and The Crisis of the Middle Class

Paul Buhle

THE NAME OF LOUIS FRAINA (OR AS HE CALLED HIMSELF LATER, LEWIS COREY) IS virtually unknown today. A vignette from Warren Beatty's *Reds* featured Paul Sorvino as Fraina, the youthful ideologue, at the 1919 founding convention of the Communist Party. But the significance of the radical immigrant orator was almost certainly lost on most of the film's audience. Who would have guessed that the same Fraina had been only a few years earlier an editor of *Modern Dance* magazine, a Marxist champion of jazz dancing, or a leading writer for the cerebral bohemian *New Review*, celebrating free-verse poetry? Who would connect him with another forgotten figure, Lewis Corey, a famed radical economist of the 1930s and liberal critic of the 1940s? For a select group of readers (mostly scholars of American radicalism), Theodore Draper's *Roots of American Communism* had briefly brought Fraina/Corey back to a smaller but respectable prominence, from which he faded once again. But Draper's Fraina/Corey, seen as youthful victim of false hopes for revolutionary change and a sadder but wiser Cold War ideologue, did little to revivify the complexity or the promise of the 1910s and 1930s, or the inwardness of the protagonist among them.¹

The real Lewis Corey was born Luigi Carlo Fraina, in Galdo (Salerno), Italy, in 1892. Brought to the U.S. at an early age, he grew up in the slum section of Manhattan known as Hell's Kitchen. An undersized and often sickly "Louis" Fraina went to work selling newspapers at age six, later assisted his mother in a tobacco factory and still later worked as a boot black. In slightly more favorable conditions, the brilliant boy — an autodidact novel-reader and valedictorian of his grade school class — could have risen swiftly upward through formal education. But life cheated him. His formal schooling ended when his father died and he was forced to become the primary breadwinner of the family.

Fraina turned personal misfortune into radical idealism and was soon

Paul Buhle's latest anthology *The American Radical* (co-edited with Mari Jo Buhle and Harvey Kaye) was published in Spring 1994 by Routledge. His biography, *A Dreamer's Paradise Lost: Louis Fraina/Lewis Corey*, will be published by Humanities Press. This essay appears, in another version, as the introduction to a new edition of Lewis Corey's *Crisis of the Middle Class* to be published by Columbia University Press in the Fall of 1994.

seeking intellectual outlets. He began contributing in 1909 to the *Truth Seeker*, dreaming aloud in that free-thought weekly of a better world, free of prejudice and superstitions. The same year, he became a socialist.

It was one of those rare, optimistic moments for the American Left. For nearly a decade the Socialist Party, under its beloved leader Eugene V. Debs, had worked to educate ordinary Americans not to fear socialist doctrine. Branches of the party published dozens of newspapers in many languages, gained a foothold in factory towns and the many large cities outside the Old South, and cultivated a large rural following in the Southwest. It elected hundreds of local officials to office. But according to its critics — and Fraina was quickly one of them — the party had made too many concessions to the presumed sources of membership, compromising Marxian doctrines and methods of organization with middle class tastes and (Protestant) religious inclinations. A true proletarian organization could do better. The “new immigrant” workers from Southern and Eastern Europe, engaged in widespread strikes from 1909 onward, seemed to him the key constituency in every way, if only the proper political-industrial vessel could be found for their mobilization.

Fraina converted to the small and sectarian Socialist Labor Party, staying until 1912. Rising through its thin ranks as a street-corner agitator, he joined the minuscule staff of the party's newspaper, *The Daily People*, working almost literally at the right hand of the charismatic party leader, Daniel DeLeon. In that capacity, Fraina became heir to a very particular left tradition. DeLeon, an outstanding socialist figure during the 1890s but now badly reduced and in his final years of life, had palpably failed to build a political organization. But he had developed a remarkable quasi-anthropological view of modern society. According to DeLeon, all the history of socialism to date had been mere prologue. Where modern industry had organized society around itself — above all in the United States — the political form of the state had been outmoded and the effort to capture it a fruitless task. The modern working class was uniquely constituted to supersede the state's present function through a government of freely-constituted governing councils. The ordinary masses, taught to understand their own power, were being prepared by life (with the help of a socialist educational body) to liberate all society, all art, indeed all creative impulses, from their historical integument.²

Fraina abandoned the SLP by 1913, but he retained for a lifetime certain key elements of his experience. He moved on — meanwhile to a variety of pursuits, at once elaborating a vision of a freer future order and an increasingly precise view of the society at hand. As a staff member of the *New Review* magazine, arguably the first left-wing publication specifically for American intellectuals, Fraina rubbed shoulders with Columbia University intellectuals and Greenwich Village bohemians, anthropologists, psychologists and cultural critics, from Robert Lowie to W.E.B. DuBois. As a managing editor and contributor to *Modern Dance*

magazine, he found himself exploring the social role of jazz and popular arts, enraptured with performances of the "Divine Isadora" Duncan and enraged by the high-brow critics' indifference to the most creative elements in vernacular American culture.³

His remarkable volume, *Revolutionary Socialism* (1918), explicated the more sociological element of this broad perspective. Capitalism, Fraina argued, was passing through its laissez-faire, competitive period into a newer epoch of regulated capitalism and expansive empire. In the "progressive" or regulatory politics of Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson he found the "clear and consistent formulation of the requirements of the new era of controlled industry and collectivist Capitalism." Centralization of the executive apparatus and the national government at large and coordination of all forces including labor and capital had rendered the old socialism of Debs's party utterly obsolete.

FRAINA ACUTELY SAW THAT, CONTRARY TO WIDELY-HELD EXPECTATIONS, CAPITALISM was not about to collapse from its own anarchic tendencies. The middle classes, rather than disappearing, had divided into the fading small proprietor section and the rising army of white collar employees. Like the skilled working class, this last sector had far more to lose than its chains. It looked upon itself, increasingly, as part of America's economic empire which overpowered (and steadily replaced) European-style colonialism and recycled a considerable portion of the profits on the home front.

The self-trained thinker Fraina, painfully aware of the elite backgrounds and personal connections which brought young men to the *New Republic* and the other liberal opinion magazines, was especially critical of the intellectuals' muted criticisms of the system. Socially, the cultural climate had grown more emancipating for the individual and especially the new middle class. But politically, it rewarded the loyalty of those who supported the U.S. entry into World War I.

Fraina saw his subjects clearly, anticipating in many respects the objections that Lewis Mumford, Waldo Frank, Randolph Bourne and a bevy of other thinkers would soon levy against the defects of a business-oriented liberalism.⁴ He considered the issues of democracy more deeply than they did in important areas, for he concretely posed the questions of mass participation in the present and future order. He had very early glimpsed the promissful emergence, what he called a "new racial type," a multi-cultural figure of the Americas, free of Europe's historical constraints and prepared by experience for a truly democratic transformation of society.⁵ His writings on subjects ranging from free verse and graphic Futurism to the social possibilities of dance often hint at a fuller development of this idea, with the intersection of popular culture and modernism as the key juncture. These contributions remain stunning for their precocious premonitions. But Fraina, the immigrant boy, was above all committed to socialist revolution — and in 1917, Russia called.

Here lay the chief tragedy of Fraina's life. For the vigorous young journalist, critic and activist as for millions around the world, the initial reports from Russia presented a vision of proletarian revolution fulfilled. After all, veteran radicals observed, the Soviets ("workers councils" in Russian) had the look and sound of the Industrial Workers of the World. John Reed, Fraina's sometime associate and sometime political rival, said so with special elegance in the reportorial *Ten Days that Shook the World*.

Fraina gave himself to this moment in history, heart and soul. Decades later, after the most severe disillusionment, he still had not shaken the incubus which directed him away from his own unique analytical approach to economics, politics and culture. Even as Communism's fierce opponent, he remained locked into the narrowed logic of the intellectual debate between liberalism and Stalinism.

Fraina thus edited *Proletarian Revolution in Russia*, the first collection of documents to appear in English about the Bolshevik Revolution. He also edited, during 1917 from Boston, the first newspaper in the English-speaking world which could claim to be the voice of the Bolsheviks (not only in ideas but personally, by way of the paper's sponsors, Latvian exiles close to Lenin). He lectured and wrote furiously, attracting wide interest within Left circles. He also went to jail heroically, if briefly, for avowed draft resistance. When the Socialist Party membership voted for a new slate of executive officers in 1919, Fraina (who had only recently rejoined the organization) finished at the top of the list. He seemed, more than ever, to have a brilliant future before him.

But this was an altogether misleading picture of reality. Fraina's supporters, the immigrants from Eastern Europe who streamed into the Socialist party, looked mainly toward world revolution and especially the events in their various homelands. Neither he nor they had much appreciation for the complexity of developments on the domestic front, where both anti-war sentiment and labor activity surged forward. In the glare of the Russian events and the light of growing government repression, this looked not so much like a large-scale social upheaval with its own unique creative logic as the merest premonition of European-style uprisings soon to follow.⁶

Disoriented, Fraina stumbled badly. He fell captive to enthusiasts who compulsively created an imitation Russian Bolshevik party, indifferent to the political costs along the way. He looked superficially impressive as one of the most Americanized figures and precocious intellects among the leaders of the Communist Party in 1919. But his chosen movement, torn by its own internal wrangling as much as by the unprecedented wave of political repression from federal and state authorities, collapsed as the ranks of radicals shrank within two years from more than a hundred thousand activists to a few thousand mostly at each others' throats. While Communist publications spent their energy in polemical internecine warfare (and government agents swept in to close newspapers and wreck

offices, preparing government cases for imprisonment and deportation), the demoralized radical ranks let slip their chance to consolidate their wide influence among the restless workers, farmers, African-Americans, European ethnic groups and others.⁷

Bad quickly went to worse amid the climate of sectarian excitements. Fraina was accused, by an admitted former government agent, of being a police spy! In this thoroughly bizarre circumstance where Fraina found himself, in turn, defended by another federal agent, his usefulness had all but vanished. One last hope remained in the Mecca of revolution: Moscow. A trip to the Soviet Union to see things for himself and to clear his name brought him moments of unforgettable intensity. Lenin, in a personal interview with Fraina, agreed to collaborate on a Russian edition of DeLeon's essays. Fraina boldly addressed the Comintern still operating at fever pitch of world-revolutionary expectations. Bedeviled by controversies at home, and increasingly aware that his positions could not be sustained, he lost badly. Intuitively, Fraina anticipated the degeneration of internationalism that the consolidation of Stalin's grip would make final in a few years.

Shunted aside by Comintern leaders, Fraina was sent on a fool's errand to Mexico. Ordered to guide a non-existent Communist movement there into a fantasized revolutionary climax, he marked time and badly missed a Russian wife he had left behind in Moscow. He joined her in New York, crossing the border under an assumed name and abandoning his career as a professional revolutionary. He worked as a copy editor for the *New York Times* and elsewhere under the name of "Joseph Skala," and eagerly embraced something he had hardly known previously: a private life. With the birth of a beloved daughter, he had become a family man.

HERE, A CRUCIAL PHASE FOR HIS NEW LIFE AND FOR LATER WORKS BEGAN IN several different ways. As he recalled in unpublished memoirs, he looked at American life anew through his wife's eyes and his own. What he saw was not by any means an ideal society, but a society with great democratic energies. It blindly denied itself, however, the potentialities it might achieve with foresight and planning. The writer "Lewis Corey" (as he called himself, using initials from his name), emerged as if from nowhere in 1926 to expose the shallowness of capitalism's "New Era," and to suggest better alternatives.

In the pages of the *New Republic* most prominently, and in smaller venues like the Amalgamated Clothing Workers' weekly paper, *The Advance*, the self-taught economist Corey carefully used statistics to show that prosperity was based on speculation, its fruits barely reaching the poor. "The ideology and practice of individual acquisition, accumulation and concentration are now ascendent," he warned, adding sarcastically, "Let us produce and accumulate: there are no social problems! But there is an awakening coming."⁸ Better than any professional economist, he

had predicted the causes of the coming Depression, anticipating by several years the famous volume by Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*.⁹

Lewis Corey had placed himself, one would think, perfectly for the economic crash and the rise of social movements to follow. Indeed, while he made a meager living as a writer and lesser editor at the *Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences* between 1931 and 1934, his reputation grew sufficiently for him to go on the road as a modestly successful public lecturer. The *Modern Monthly*, outstanding independent voice of radical intellectuals, enthroned him during these years as a leading political contributor. An intelligent historical study, *The House of Morgan* (1930), received good notices as a fair-minded interpretation of monopoly's rise in post-Civil War America.

But Corey had several almost overwhelming frustrations. His magnum opus, *The Decline of American Capitalism* (1934), was greeted as "Radicalism's Complete Handbook" or the volume which demonstrated the adaptability of Marxian ideas to U.S. conditions.¹⁰ Noted labor economist John R. Commons further described its author as the "first Marxian economist to reduce the Marxian theory to quantitative terms."¹¹ He had managed only to get a small commercial house to publish the volume, and readers found the book at any rate too overwhelming in length, too turgid in prose, to swallow whole. Most also found its thematic finality, predicting absolute capitalist breakdown, far too pessimistic a few years later, when the New Deal and the fear of fascism made "bourgeois democracy" look much better than before.

Corey also inevitably failed in his efforts to reconcile with the Communist Party. Expecting to re-enter at a leadership level, he made himself the outstanding figure in the League of Professional Groups for Foster and Ford, the Communist presidential slate in 1932. Seeking to create an independent-minded milieu of intellectuals, Corey ran into the sectarian roadblock which stymied so many others. Communist leaders often tolerated a limited degree of organizational latitude during other historical eras. But during this early 1930s moment of renewed revolutionary expectation (reminiscent, ironically, of Daniel DeLeon's approach decades earlier), they deeply feared potential competition and practically demonized any suspected free agent. Unlike a group of younger intellectuals who navigated through Trotskyism into the prestigious circles of the New York Intellectuals, Corey had no interest in lesser political entities and no potent alliances. Despite his accomplishments, he found himself surprisingly alone. Yet all these experiences, good and bad, had been perhaps necessary for the unique effort to create his one best-selling volume, *Crisis of the Middle Class*.

Hailing *Crisis* at its 1935 appearance, Columbia University economic historian Louis Hacker described the "Addresses to the Middle Class" as both a foremost intellectual accomplishment and an important political

challenge. Corey, now “undoubtedly the most important Marxist writer in the United States today,” had the independence to “pursue his thought wherever it may lead him” and the skill to jettison Marxist “official seminar terminology” for a lucid style so that masses of ordinary Americans could understand his work. Alan Angoff wrote similarly, in the *Boston Evening Transcript*, that the book proved Corey to be the “best informed and most thoroughly communistic of all current American economists.” Playwright Clifford Odets, then at the height of his precocious renown, was quoted as saying the book seemed to be a “statistical version” of his *Paradise Lost*. The release of *Crisis of the Middle Class* actually made the front page of the *New York Post*, and the book briefly reached the best-seller list. A bright future evidently awaited the author.¹² Few readers guessed that Lewis Corey had been Fraina; still fewer of his new army of admirers suspected that Corey’s days as a celebrated author were finished.

UNBOUND TO ANY CHILIASTIC REVOLUTIONARY IDEOLOGY, PURSUING HIS OWN INTELLECTUAL leads, he interested himself increasingly in what European socialists had traditionally called “American Exceptionalism.” Existing Marxian models, he concluded, could not really explain the particular trajectory of U.S. society. Although Corey clearly refrained from jettisoning claims to Marxist methodology, he sought to produce an original analysis with the proletariat no longer at the center of the picture.

His perspective was less strictly original, in some respects, than he might have believed. As he moved from economics to history and especially U.S. history, Corey assimilated the “Progressive” historiography which had been predominant since the 1910s. Highlighted by the writings of Charles Beard, it had framed the American saga in terms of “interests,” less like permanent class formations and more like competing and often geographically-based strata such as merchants and farmers. In Beard’s model, egalitarian-minded settlers had continuously resisted the imposition of European-style rule by monopolists based in Eastern cities. Toward the end of the 19th century — coinciding with the end of the frontier — the emerging banking and industrial capitalists had quashed the last major agrarian threat. But the middle (and to a lesser degree, the lower) classes, shocked by the growing inequalities, waste and corruption of society, began the long road back to modern liberalism. For Beard’s intellectual history counterpart, V.L. Parrington, the sparks of liberation had similarly passed from Jeffersonians to Concord litterateurs and Abolitionists to the literary realists and finally, the radical intelligentsia — all of them based fundamentally in the middle class.¹³

In *Crisis of the Middle Class*, Corey sought to sharpen the class analysis of this perspective without falling back into the vulgarizations of garden variety American Marxism. The middle class, its general situation continually shifting with the stage through which society was passing,

had revealed internal fissures from the beginning of capitalist hegemony. Those in the lower stratum became petty-bourgeois radicals, continually waging war against monopoly, for the right of everyone to be small property owners. As such, they constituted the driving force of the bourgeois revolution (i.e., the Revolutionary War). But as an intermediate force they could not hold power. Taking up the most iconoclastic view of the Progressive historians, Corey insisted that the Constitutional Convention of 1787 had been a sort of self-legalized *coup d'état* to consolidate the influence of large property owners. Thus the ideals of equality and democracy, just as elsewhere in the Western world, were realized only in part, and threatened with further degradation by newer requirements of capitalism.

Developing his argument historically, Corey continued one particular thread from *Decline of American Capitalism*. As the inevitable economic crisis of capitalism had in his earlier book been dramatically delayed by the existence of the frontier, so here the various ill effects of monopoly had been postponed and even reversed, for several generations, by a frontier-based middle class whose rise made the "struggle for democratic rights irresistible." (p.115). The delay of U.S. entry into global imperialism that Corey had earlier seen as a byproduct of the frontier experience became here something very different. The vitality of frontier democracy made the related delay in the rise of working class awareness considerably less important than the activities and consciousness of "the people," a far more general category. Democracy, strengthened by the frontier experience, stood against Empire.

Yet class had not disappeared, only taken on new dimensions. The consolidation of industrial capitalism inevitably eroded the old, small property-owning bourgeoisie and created the "new" middle class of propertyless white-collar workers, as in Fraina's *Revolutionary Socialism*. The failure of Populism and then Progressivism — which Corey styled the "final expression of middle class revolt" (p.135) posed the current dilemma. Further resistance against monopolism required alliance with the working class, which had previously played little role in Corey's narration. Once on the stage, it occupied a curiously sudden and crucial if also largely inert role. The contradictions of fully-developed monopoly capitalism in the 1910s had prompted the upper ends of the middle class toward their social betters for regulation of the system and, if necessary, repression of the restless workers. The lower element looked more toward its "natural" ally, the rapidly increasing mass of factory operatives.

Corey made a noticeable argument for optimism, while decisively reframing Fraina's insights about this very worker. As individualism and freedom of enterprise became outmoded ideals, collectivism had grown organically within daily life. If ordinary people already engaged in productively socialized (if privately owned) production and distribution, the alteration necessary lay more and more obviously within the particulars

of social relations.

BUT THIS WAS A TROUBLED THESIS. THE PRE-REVOLUTIONARY FREEDOM OF IDEAS and mass behavior that he thought he had glimpsed in *Modern Dance* magazine had slipped away, as they did to most observers keen to the cultural conservatism of the 1930s.¹⁴ Borrowing from a favorite source of the 1930s, William Ogburn's thesis of a "cultural lag" in social consciousness, Corey insisted that cultural changes impending *could* liberate people to enjoy qualitatively different lives — but only after resolution of the economic-political crisis allowed them the opportunity to do so. He also tempered yesterday's optimism with warnings. A democratic socialism did not come from economic equations alone. If the Left failed to appeal to the new middle class as it had failed in the past, this class might well turn toward fascism. The outcome depended substantially upon the historical bearer of socialism in Europe and elsewhere, the working class. But it depended — one would gather from the emphases of Corey's argument — even more upon the general reassertion of Enlightenment ideals, the challenge to society to move forward and not backward. Although Corey did not quite say so, this challenge would best be understood by the middle class intellectual such as himself.

Crisis of the Middle Class is fascinating for its conglomeration of intentions, its vaguely articulated or (as a later generation would say) "under-theorized" attempt to combine Marxist and traditional liberal goals with historical materialism and Beardian notions of American progress. Another self-trained economist, William Blake, shrewdly suggested that Corey would have done better to have reorganized facts and arguments, combining the book with *Decline of American Capitalism*, for "in that changed setting his two books could become extremely valuable for the American scene."¹⁵

That possibility would probably never have occurred to Corey, racing from one class subject (and more subtly, one socialist politics) to another within a few years. *Decline* had, after all, been written to prepare readers for capitalism's ultimate decline and for a revolution transformation; *Crisis* suggested a less-than-final crisis in the system, with a protracted "war of positions" until the issues could be resolved. Similarly, he had pursued to their logical conclusions the least Marxian strains of his economic analysis in *The Decline*. Rather, the crisis of capitalism was — just as the orthodox liberal economists believed — a crisis of abundance, from an excess of profits which could not be invested profitably. Corey's argument now differed from theirs mainly in the prediction of outcome.¹⁶

Finally, Corey had practically abandoned Fraina's vision of a revolution which replaced the political state with a non-coercive, administrative apparatus. As a Fraina-like theorist would complain in a few years about Communist thinkers, Corey had substituted critiques of *property ownership* for critiques of the *process of production*, and thereby shifted

the situation of the working class from the subject to the object.¹⁷ This view of socialism as the fulfillment of an old and even bourgeois dream was not, in fact, very far from Communist leader Earl Browder's description of socialism as the "Americanism of the Twentieth Century." Corey had joined a broad intellectual current which shared many of the predilections of the Communists' Popular Front without adopting its credulity toward the Soviet Union or its faith in domestic Communist leadership.

Coming in 1935, as fears of fascism spread like wildfire, *The Crisis* struck just the right note for most reviewers. One might say, indeed, that the book's weaknesses were strengths in the eyes of readers. Themselves quietly abandoning chiliastic views of revolution (and along with them most of the Marxian pretensions), middle class radical intellectuals grasped Corey as an ideal link between the ideals of the Left and the legacy of American liberalism.

Amidst the enthusiastic responses to the book, a few critics offered more cautious or ironic observations. The *New York Times*' John Chamberlain, reviewing *Crisis* with the counterpart volume, *Insurgent America*, by the radical but anti-socialist Alfred Bingham, reflected that for the last few years Bingham had been "running away from the communists, [while] the Left theoreticians like Mr Corey have been running towards Mr Bingham."¹⁸ If revolution was off the agenda, moral appeal to the middle classes was on.

Although many of the book's particulars have been proven wrong, its general thesis nevertheless remains provocative. The fate of a troubled democracy is tied to a middle class both hugely variegated and deeply conflicted. The middle stratum as a group admires or envies those formations above even as it sees the damage wrought by the continuing concentrations of wealth and influence; it fears those multitudes below even as it perceives the demoralization of society at large through the spread of poverty, hopelessness and violence. Acutely aware of vapid materialism yet craving security, it drifts to apathy and pessimism, escape into a personal life. Despite the wide range of sociological and historical literature touching on the middle class, none has focused upon the basic dilemmas more clearly or eloquently than this volume.¹⁹

FOR JUST A MOMENT, IT SEEMED THE COMMUNISTS THEMSELVES HAD BEEN CONVERTED BY COREY. Shocked by Roosevelt's growing appeal among the ethnic working class and impelled toward liberalism by the Comintern's declaration of a Popular Front against Fascism, they greeted *Crisis of the Middle Class* warmly. The *New Masses* called it "a book you should get at once and one you should persuade all of your middle class acquaintances to read."²⁰ In a marvelous stroke of irony, *Crisis* was given away free in a special offer with *New Masses* subscriptions, while Communist bookstores now offered copies of *Crisis* for sale with a pamphlet attacking *Decline of American Capitalism* added as a combination bonus and advanced anti-

dote for that book's errors.

But this moment of amity proved as false as the rest. Inviting Corey to serve as a guest editor of a special "Middle Class" number of the *New Masses*, the editors pulled the rug out from under him in the process of production, making him a nominal "chairman" of the editorial committee for what was a disappointingly narrow issue.²¹

This incident along with world events precipitated a final disillusionment with Communism. Corey, Louis Hacker, self-taught historian Bertram D. Wolfe, art historian Meyer Schapiro and others set out to create an independent Marxist theoretical journal, the *Marxist Quarterly*. After several provocative issues, it foundered in 1936-37 upon the rocks of the Moscow Trials, with its pro-Russian financial angel removing his subsidy. Corey's own Marxism had virtually expired already, and he grappled to find a place for himself. Working a few months at the Works Projects Administration in Washington, he signed on as Educational Director of Local 22, International Ladies Garment Workers Union in New York, a particular bastion of anti-Communist union leadership. Growing increasingly restless during several years there, he pursued other possibilities and by 1940 published in the *Nation* a three-part manifesto, "Marxism Reconsidered."²²

He now proclaimed views immanent but unarticulated in *Crisis*. Marxian doctrine had disguised the vital importance of appealing to all functional groups, blue and white collar workers, technicians and farmers alike. Capitalism could be peacefully transformed if only Americans learned "to use the democratic state, overcome its class nature and limitations, democratize it still further with greater popular controls, and increase its constructive services."²³ Max Shachtman commented that if Corey promised to put teeth into the doctrine of "gradualism," in reality "Mr. Corey's teeth, and those of most middle-class radicals, are chattering with fright in the growing totalitarian darkness."²⁴

This comment was uncharitable, but not entirely unfair. At first polemically opposed to U.S. entry into the Second World War, Corey (like many other intellectuals) swung around to an extreme pro-interventionist view and into alliance with others who shared his perspectives. Joining theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, union leader A. Philip Randolph and others, Corey established the Union of Democratic Action (UDA) in 1940. By now a veteran author of manifestoes and organizer of intellectuals, he played a key role in this fledgling organization until it faded a few years later. He also prepared a volume of essays, *The Unfinished Task: Economic Reconstruction of Democracy* (1942), summing up his thoughts since *Crisis*.

The lack of reception for this book showed how far the political climate had shifted in seven years. Intent upon the war itself and losing focus on the once-numerous proposals to construct a post-capitalist economy, intellectuals met *The Unfinished Task* with indifference. Corey

had apparently been the first to coin the phrase “mixed economy.” But it was an idea never credited to him, perhaps because he had meant a “socialist” mixed economy with the cooperative sector firmly in control, a vision that centrist-drifting liberals steadily abandoned. As in the case of Corey’s role in the UDA, he also seems to have been denied credit by virtue of his unsavory “red” past which had by this time become fairly common knowledge. Histories of the Americans for Democratic Action, the UDA’s influential liberal successor, simply discarded him from memory.²⁵

Corey, who had always lacked a stable occupation, found a home at Antioch College, teaching there until 1949. A sometimes controversial campus figure, he was also a dynamic lecturer, especially when recalling the joy and naivete of the 1910s radicalism that he had experienced in a far more hopeful moment of the century. Although suffering a stroke in 1943 and warned against overexertion, he threw himself back into the political fray in 1946-47. Appealing for a people’s party to the left of the Democrats (but rigidly excluding the Communists), he led the creation of the National Educational Committee for a New Party. Its honorary chairman, John Dewey, had during the 30s headed a similar third-party effort that Corey then regarded as too moderate. By now, with the resurgent economy and the rise of the Cold War, the same idea had become too radical by far. In 1948, only former vice-president Henry Wallace — along with a handful of conservative Republicans — opposed Harry Truman’s combining military build-up and economic expansion in a plan that sounded curiously like the state capitalism that young Fraina had lambasted.

Corey spent the last years of his life in extreme turmoil. Writing *Meat and Man* (1950), an exuberant history of the industry and its workers, led Corey to leave Antioch for the familiar post of union educational director at the Amalgamated Butcher Workmen in Chicago. This time, however, he seemed almost immediately unhappy at work he considered routine and limiting. He poured his energies into journalism, mainly in the *New Leader*, articulating harsh views which seemed increasingly the mirror-image opposite of Louis Fraina’s perspectives on capitalism and empire. He outlined never-to-be realized book projects, such as a dictionary of American labor biography. Most remarkably, he also devised a book-length manuscript for a popular history of Frances Wright, the 19th century woman’s rights activist and utopian socialist long considered the historic avant-gardist who most greatly resembled those gentle bohemians of the 1910s.²⁶

Then McCarthyism’s axe fell. This ardent anti-Communist with more than a decade’s polemics to demonstrate his loyalties faced a battery of government officials more persuaded by testimony against his pre-1923 activities. Never officially naturalized (he had decided against filing because of his 1917 arrest and conviction as a conscientious objector), he

seemed destined for deportation to Italy. Against this prospect he furiously gathered evidence. He also suffered a mild heart attack, premonition of a second stroke to follow. On Christmas Day, 1952, he received an announcement of an impending deportation order; the following month, the butchers' union released him, adding greatly to his stress. On September 15, 1953, working at his desk, he lapsed into a coma, and died the next day. Two days posthumously, a Certificate of Lawful Entry arrived along with a notice from a publisher of a proposed contract for yet another book he wanted to write, "Toward an Understanding of America."

A CENTRAL CATEGORY IN YOUNG LOUIS FRAINA'S OEUVRE AND A LARGE MISSING element in *Crisis of the Middle Class* helps explain the obscurity into which the book and the life behind it have fallen. The group of intellectuals who, at the end of Corey's life, set the pace for the changing framework of the era to come were not far from Corey's political inclinations. Mostly former Socialists and Communists, noted liberal figures like Daniel Bell, David Riesman, and Richard Hofstadter now paid homage to the "capitalist revolution" which presumably outmoded the old socialist anticipation of class warfare and protected the West against the ideological appeals of Communism. But these critics had, unlike Corey, a distaff and ironic view of American capitalism's cultural consequences; they were also by nature observers, not actors, upon the scene they viewed as if from a distance.²⁷

In the arguments of the time, the view of a dominant culture, of the inner human being and of psychological factors more powerful than economics or history, soon took over large spheres of discussion, putting aside once-familiar arguments about the equations of economics and class in particular. The heavily economic-minded Corey was, of course, the psychic descendent of the Louis Fraina who had delivered perceptive essays on "Socialism and Psychology" in 1913. The same Fraina had foreseen the rise of modernism, observed it closely in the behavior of ordinary jazz dancers, glimpsed the approach of changing gender roles and even the racial dynamics of a changing, more democratized society. A different and still radical Corey might have been perfectly placed to reflect upon the cultural experience of the century and fresh developments like Bebop, as counterparts to the rising civil rights movement.

Why did *Crisis of the Middle Class*, and Corey's general pronouncements afterward, fail so badly in these various regards? This was due not only to his political shifts, but also to an unreflective economism all too common to liberal and radical thought during the depressed 1930s and afterward. Attempts to break through that economism took place mainly in practice, such as the role of individual Marxists in theater, films, music and so forth. On the theoretical front, a tired Marxism continued and Modernists (like the *Partisan Review* crowd) who fled the political field simply turned economism on its head, into aestheticism.²⁸

But one could also find deeper reasons for his abandonment of the central racial questions about the nation's past and prospects, and the related questions of empire that Fraina analyzed so precociously. An age whose scholars paid little heed to W.E.B. DuBois's monumental *Black Reconstruction* (appearing the same year as *Crisis of the Middle Class*) offered precious little encouragement along these lines. Fraina would surely have done better, but existing Marxian orthodoxy offered little assistance. Perhaps the Beardian view of the frontier as the source of American democracy, offering a shift away from mechanical class theory, proved too strong for a counter critique. Or perhaps, as in Corey of the 1940s and early 1950s, the very notion of an American empire based on race values and economic-military power resonated with too many unwanted implications, past and future alike.²⁹

Most likely, and not so different from the various cultural issues, Corey had simply lost Fraina's confidence in the infinite subjectivity of the lower class subject. He had ceased to expect change from the bottom-up, even if he never ceased to hope that populations guided by sensitive leadership would find their way toward greater social participation. The ideologues of Communism and modern liberalism had agreed, after all, about the impossibility of direct democracy by the masses, in the old model of the Industrial Workers of the World or Daniel DeLeon. All this happened long before Corey had declared Marxism wrong-headed, and communism a disaster.

Crisis of the Middle Class and the life of its author deserve, nevertheless, to be re-evaluated in the light of what they tell us about the damage wrought by the century's disappointments. The missing and forgotten elements once so obvious to Fraina help predict the flare of rebellious political-cultural energy at the end of the 1960s. The suddenness with which this mass bohemian renaissance melted away again, leaving a trail of memories like the 1910s, recalled once more the significance of a utopia dreamed but unrealized. Lewis Corey, without a trace of environmental awareness, predicted in the final paragraph of his most popular book that "a world is dying," but offered the hope that another world might yet be born out of struggle. If no one would now call the Communist perspective the "New Enlightenment," as Corey mistakenly did, enlightenment of another kind still surely awaits the searcher. As Fraina might have remarked, the need is more urgent than ever.

NOTES

1. Theodore Draper, *Roots of American Communism* (New York: Viking, 1957). Fraina-Corey reappears in many sections.

2. Daniel DeLeon's *Preamble to the I.W.W.* (New York: New York Labor News, 1906), reprinted frequently afterward as by the S.L.P. as *The Socialist Reconstruction of Society*, offers the clearest expression of this view. Unfortunately, none of the biographical literature on DeLeon has been equal to the task of interpreting his intellectual influence across

large sections of the Left. *A Dreamer's Paradise Lost* offers large suggestions.

3. Regretfully, once more, no historical study has adequately captured the significance of the very important *New Review*. *Modern Dance* magazine has virtually vanished from examination, even to specialists in that field. My gratitude goes to Lee Baxandall for his studies of Fraina, before mine, and his attention to *Modern Dance*.

4. For a recent study of this milieu, see Casey M. Blake, *Beloved Community: The Cultural Criticism of Randolph Bourne, Van Wyck Brooks, Waldo Frank & Lewis Mumford* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1990).

5. Louis C. Fraina, "Literary Gleanings: The Chasm," *Daily People*, (Apr. 9, 1911).

6. I seek to reformulate this political situation in my volume, *Marxism in the United States: Remapping the American Left* (London: Verso Publishers, 1991 edition).

7. While no adequate account yet exists of this situation in all its complexity, see relevant entries in the *Encyclopedia of the American Left* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1990), edited by Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas.

8. Lewis Corey, "How Is Income Distributed?" *New Republic*, XL (May 5, 1927), p.323.

9. This point was made by Theodore Draper, *Roots of American Communism*, p.298.

10. Louis Hacker, on flyleaf of *Decline of American Capitalism* (New York: Covici Friede, 1934); George Soule, "Why Capitalism Is Declining," *New Republic*, XXX (Sept.19, 1934), p.164.

11. John R. Commons, "Communism and Collective Democracy," *American Economic Review*, XXV (June, 1935), p.215.

12. Louis Hacker, "Addresses to the Middle Class," *Nation*, CXXI (Nov. 27, 1935), pp.625-26. Alan Angoff, "The Past, Present and Future of the Middle Class," *Boston Evening Transcript*, (Nov.30, 1935); John Chamberlain, "Books of the Times," *New York Times*, (Dec.11, 1935); "Corey Says Middle Class has Disappeared," *New York Post*, (Nov.11, 1935).

13. See the intellectual assessment of Beard's work and influence in Howard Beale, ed., *Charles Beard: An Appraisal* (Louisville: University of Kentucky, 1954); and Bernard C. Borning, *The Political and Social Thought of Charles A. Beard* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1962). A standard comment on Parrington is contained in the survey, Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), pp.298-303.

14. See for instance Warren Susman, "The Culture of the Thirties," in *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1983), pp.150-83.

15. William Blake, *An American Looks at Karl Marx* (New York: Cordon Company, 1939), p.677.

16. Blake makes this point in *ibid.*, p.205.

17. C.L.R. James (in collaboration with Grace Lee and Raya Dunayevskaya), *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (Chicago: Kerr Company, 1986 edition from 1950 original), pp.34-35. See also my Introduction to this edition of *State Capitalism and World Revolution*, and the further parallels offered between Fraina/Corey and James in *A Dreamer's Paradise Lost*, Chapter 6.

18. John Chamberlain, "Books of the Times."

19. See Barbara Ehrenreich, *Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class* (New York: Pantheon, 1989), and Loren Baritz, *The Good Life: The Meaning of Success for the American Middle Class* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1989).

20. David Ramsey, "The Dilemma of the Middle Classes," *New Masses*, XV (Dec.1, 1935), pp.41-42.

21. Nevertheless, Corey had contributed a thoughtful essay, "Minds of the Middle Classes," *New Masses*, XVI (Apr.7, 1936). Other contributors included Mike Gold, Granville Hicks, Joseph Freeman and Anna Rochester, but no independent intellectuals except Herbert Agar and union leader Pat Gorman.

22. I am especially grateful for a 1982 interview with the late Charles S. Zimmerman, retired President of Local 22, for a glimpse of Corey's mentality at this point. I neglect here

Corey's prominence as a writer and speaker for the "Lovestone" group of "Right Communists," expelled from the Communist Party in 1929 but resolute in their control of Local 22, and intellectually vibrant in their weekly newspaper, *Worker's Age*. For my account of Corey's writings for that paper, and the group's high estimation of his work, see *A Dreamer's Paradise Lost*, Ch. Six.

23. Lewis Corey, "Marxism Reconsidered, III," *Nation*, CX (Mar. 2, 1940), p. 307. See Feb. 17 and Feb. 24 issues for the first two parts.

24. Max Shachtman, "The Marxists Reply to Corey," *ibid.*, (Mar. 9, 1940), pp. 331-32.

25. See for instance the "official" history, Clifton Brock, *The Americans for Democratic Action: Its Role in National Politics* (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1962); and the best recent history, Steve Gillen, *Politics and Vision: The ADA and American Liberalism, 1947-1985* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).

26. Corey's insistence, in his unpublished manuscript on Frances Wright, of the ignored importance of women's history remarkably foreshadowed by two decades the rise of the field in U.S. history. The unpublished manuscript, now outdated by several biographies of Wright, is in the Corey Papers, Columbia University.

27. See, for instance, Alan Wald, *The New York Intellectuals: The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1950s to the 1980s* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).

28. Apart from Wald's admirable work, see for instance my remarks in *C.L.R. James: The Artist as Revolutionary* (London, 1988), and such particular studies as Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in the Wizard of Oz, Yip Harburg Lyricist* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1993).

29. The mainstream historiography of much later decades, accepting the implications full-scale, viewed the settlement of the west as a racially-charged engagement subverting the prospects of democracy at large. But this kind of perspective, implicit though scarcely developed in DuBois, was impossible for even the most determinedly radical observers of the 1930s. See David Noble, *The End of American History: Democracy, Capitalism, and the Metaphor of Two Worlds in Anglo-American Historical Writing, 1880-1980* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1989) for some interesting observations. See also Paul Buhle and Edward Rice-Maximin, *William Appleman Williams and the Challenge of Empire* (New York: Routledge, 1995), for further reflections on radical historiography, race and empire.

The Sect That Time Forgot

Scott McLemee

THE OLDEST MARXIST ORGANIZATION IN THE UNITED STATES, the Socialist Labor Party, makes one brief appearance in modern American literature — at a crucial moment in the narrative of a personal and political seduction. It occurs in Mary McCarthy's short story "Portrait of the Intellectual as a Yale Man." The scene is set in the office of a magazine, *The Liberal*, which one sees, through the thin veil of fiction, to be an amalgamation of *The New Republic* and *The Nation* into a sort of generic "progressive" journal of the 1930s. Its staff and its pages are filled with *Marxisant* types of the period. Most prominent and well-liked among the magazine's writers is Jim Barnett, the title character (who, *à clef*, is Dwight Macdonald, among others), an editor with a somewhat fluid sense of how radicalism and "realistic" liberalism can mix. He meets "the girl," Miss Sargent (either Mary McCarthy or someone exactly like her), who is enemy of "progress" enough to have defended Trotsky during a staff discussion. And when an affair between them begins, its course is no less political than erotic.

Barnett comes across a memo from Miss Sargent, concerning her article for the magazine's special election supplement. (The year seems to be 1936.) "She would vote, she wrote, for the Socialist-Labor candidate, whose name she could not remember — would someone in the office please find out for her?" A page or two earlier, their liaison had (seemingly) been ended. But at this moment in the story, the Socialist Labor Party becomes, for an instant, the emblem of Barnett's almost delirious passion:

Then suddenly a large sense of chivalry displaced his annoyance: he was determined to protect her from the consequences of her frivolity. He could announce that he was supporting the Socialist-Labor candidate himself, write an article on that tiny, fierce, incorruptible sect. Something might be done about De Leon and the American socialist movement. But almost immediately he realized that the idea was too outlandish; he could not bring himself to cut so fantastic a figure.

Here, the story offers a glimpse, not quite of the SLP itself, but of its refraction through the minds of intellectuals who, having tasted the Communist movement and done a turn in the anti-Stalinist Left, later made places for themselves in American cultural life. That category would also

SCOTT McLEEMEE is the co-editor with Paul LeBlanc of *C.L.R. James and Revolutionary Marxism* (Humanities Press, 1994). His articles have appeared in *The Village Voice*, *In These Times*, *NEW POLITICS* and *Against the Current*.

include Dwight Macdonald (the real one, not McCarthy's version) who also mentions the Socialist Labor Party when recollecting the militant 30s. In *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, while describing the varieties of anti-capitalist politics and the war of words among their proponents, Macdonald identifies the SLP as

followers — or, as we called them, “epigones,” another fighting word — of Daniel De Leon, a turn-of-the-century theoretician whom Lenin had called the only American to have made a contribution to Marxist theory, an accolade about equal to a K.C.B.; the De Leonites were so pure they opposed trade unions as “reformist sops to the toiling masses”; one never ran into them or read their press; they were not intellectuals but real lower-middle-class workers, like the Jehovah's Witnesses, and like the Witnesses they continue stubbornly to exist, putting out primitive-Marxist tracts whose typography and diction are so antiquated as to raise a suspicion they have been using up an overstock from De Leon's time; they run a presidential campaign every four years, an activity which, not being intellectuals, they conduct with remarkable energy and method — in 1952 they got more votes than the much better-known Socialist Party ...

Here, in the space of one long parenthetical remark, Macdonald supplies as much information as even the most experienced sect-watcher was likely to know about the SLP. Somehow it remained a ghostly presence within the Left: marginal, diminutive, and practically invisible — but not quite.

That is still true today, some decades after McCarthy's and Macdonald's accounts. The SLP is forgotten, but not gone. Walking in Philadelphia not long ago, I came across a newspaper box which carried *The People*, the Socialist Labor paper. It is the longest-running socialist publication in the world, founded and edited by Daniel De Leon himself, nearly a hundred years ago. And in a way, he still runs the paper: century-old articles by De Leon are reprinted, his pamphlets advertised for sale, his ideas applied (or at any rate grafted onto) analyses of contemporary problems. A copy of *The People* is the outpost of a late 19th century political mentality in the midst of the New World Order. To read any given issue is, for all practical purposes, to read all of them. I had once subscribed and knew this, but of course bought a copy anyway — as a gesture of good will for whoever still takes the trouble to keep a socialist newspaper available on the street.

Aside from the news-boxes, *The People* is also advertised regularly in the backs of magazines like *Harper's* and *The Utne Reader*. And in the classified ads of liberal journals, one occasionally finds notices placed by organizations which are offshoots and splinters from the SLP. At 16, I wrote off to one of them, the League for Socialist Reconstruction. The magazine they sent was probably the first Marxist journal to enter Wills Point, Texas (population 2,500) in a very long time. Chances are good that quite a few people make their first contact with socialism through the De Leon variety.

THE IDEOLOGY OF "DE LEONISM" MIGHT BE DESCRIBED as a very pure (indeed, almost fundamentalist) kind of Marxism. Capitalism is in irreversible decline. It produces its own grave-diggers, the industrial proletariat, which must, by historical necessity and through its own forces alone, create socialism. Reformism of all sorts is anathema — worse than useless, it merely prolongs the death agonies of capitalism, and so it must be fought tooth and nail. Union leaders and bureaucrats are (in De Leon's stinging phrase) "the labor lieutenants of capital," although strikes are important and ought to be supported. Simply put, there is no solution but socialist revolution, and it is the duty of the Marxist-De Leonists (as they call themselves) to make this point at every opportunity, until the day of reckoning comes.

It is here, in the conception of the proletarian revolution and its aftermath, that Marxist doctrine becomes very specifically De Leonist. For the SLP, the ballot box is not merely window-dressing for the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, but an important and permanent development in human evolution. Like Marx himself in certain moments, the De Leonist expects the revolutionary party eventually to take power by election (after heated social struggles which will reveal capitalism as doomed). Lest this seem a concession to parliamentary reformism, the SLP makes clear that its electoral triumph would mean the end of the bourgeois state. The SLP will dissolve the government — and dissolve itself. It will have accomplished its historic mission. Under socialism, workers will elect delegates from their workplace to national industrial unions which will then, in turn, select representatives for the Socialist Industrial Union Congress, the highest body of the new society.

This has all been spelled out very clearly by the De Leonists, with remarkable patience and persistence, in their publications and electoral campaigns. In all its particulars and even in its phraseology, SLP policy was presented in the founding documents produced by De Leon from 1890-1914. One cannot imagine a group less susceptible to the whims of fashion. And no organization could be more explicit about what it wants, or how it expects to get it.

But if SLP doctrine itself is simple (not to say unproblematic) enough, one finds an altogether different situation with respect to the history of the movement De Leon founded. DeLeon's major writings remain in print, of course; and in 1970, the party made a large portion of its archives available on microfilm. But no professional historian has sifted through this material, to winnow out from it an account of the SLP's activity across the past century.

"Aside from a few recent biographies of Daniel De Leon ... historical references to the party are usually written only as background for histories of other movements," as Frank Girard and Ben Perry put it in the preface to their study of the DeLeonist movement, "and often the SLP and De Leon serve as villains in histories written from a partisan view-

point.”¹ Their complaint is valid, if itself frankly partisan. Very few historians have treated the party’s history after about 1904-1905, when it was eclipsed by the Socialist Party and the Industrial Workers of the World. The only sustained accounts of the SLP following De Leon’s death in 1914 come from a handful of the party’s own official (highly tendentious) publications. Girard and Perry have stepped in to fill in some gaps in the record. Their “short history” is a work of amateur scholarship — with “amateur” here meant in the strictest and the best sense, for it is indeed a labor of devotion.

AMBITIOUS IN ITS SCOPE, *The Socialist Labor Party 1876-1991* is no less striking for its length. Twelve decades of SLP history are treated in about 80 pages, plus appendices. Naturally, this makes for extreme condensation and specificity of focus. The authors have tried not simply to record the entire history of the Socialist Labor Party but to treat each period as being of equal importance and interest. This degree of even-handedness is unusual, even a little peculiar. For the decisive epoch of the SLP, the defining period of its history, was 1890-1914, when De Leon was its leader. Official histories so closely identify the SLP with De Leon that they say practically nothing about the organization before his arrival.

They begin with the SLP’s immediate predecessor, the Workingmen’s Party of the United States (WPUS), created in 1876 out of a fragment of the old International Workingmen’s Association plus various Lassalleian groups. Born amidst the depression of the 1870s, and just in time for the great railroad strike, the WPUS played an important role in the “St. Louis Commune” of 1877: “For five days the headquarters of the WPUS replaced City Hall as the center of government. From it an ‘Executive Committee’ set up by the party issued permits to move and distribute food and other necessities.” Once this near-revolutionary moment passed, the organization soon faced questions of strategy — electoralism versus trade-unionism — as well as the problems of distinguishing itself, in the public eye, from the terrorism-inclined anarchists.

At a convention in late 1877, the party changed its name to the Socialistic Labor Party and adopted a policy of limited participation in elections. By 1881, the syndicalist wing of the party split. And so, as Girard and Perry note, former SLPers would soon leave a mark in the history of the international labor movement: “all but one of the Haymarket defendants had been SLP members.”

Various alliances, splits, and fusions in the early period of the SLP

¹Frank Girard and Ben Perry, *The Socialist Labor Party 1876-1991: A Short History* (Livra Books, 1991). A second, revised printing appeared in 1993. Ben Perry has also recently launched an occasional journal of DeLeonist history, called *Bulletin of the Social Labor Movement*, named after an early SLP publication. Both the history and the journal are available from Livra Books, 422 W. Upsal St., Philadelphia, PA 19119.

are sketched quickly in the opening chapter, to underscore the party's deep ambivalence over how to choose between political campaigns and union activities. Membership seems to have grown and shrunk to extremes during the 1880s. In one case the strain finally became too much:

Phillip Van Patten, national secretary of the party since its foundation as the WPUS, became discouraged and, apparently because he lacked any face-saving way out of office, simply disappeared on April 27, 1883, leaving a suicide note. Some time later it was learned that he had changed his name and accepted federal employment. Eventually he became a merchant in Hot Springs, Arkansas.

Only near the end of their discussion do the authors acknowledge an important — arguably, a decisive — factor in the SLP's early history: that it was, from its beginning, a predominately immigrant organization, largely German.

This fact did not go unnoticed by Marx and Engels, whose comments on their American associates were often highly critical. They regarded the language barrier as a serious disadvantage, and considered Marxists in the U.S. as almost temperamentally sectarian. (Consider, for instance, this stern lecture by Engels in 1886, from a letter to an American: "The masses must have time and opportunity to develop, and they can only have the opportunity when they have their own movement — no matter in what form, so far as it is only *their own* movement — in which they are driven further by their own mistakes and learn wisdom from hurting themselves.") By and large, Girard and Perry ignore the party's high immigrant composition, whether (*à la* Marx and Engels) as something limiting its appeal, or as a factor linking it closely with developments in Europe. Their focus, rather, is on the strategic problems it faced in the 1870s and '80s — problems which would be resolved, at least at the level of theory, after Daniel De Leon joined in 1890.

IT WOULD BE NO EXAGGERATION AT ALL TO CALL THE FEELING for Daniel De Leon within the SLP, throughout the century following his arrival, almost worshipful. Girard and Perry do not discuss his personality very much; nor, for all their admiration of him, do they succumb to the SLP's own hagiography. And in a way this is a problem. The reader who does already know much about him will be left puzzled by the devotion.

De Leon was, by any measure, a man of considerable education and talent, who turned his back on a successful career as a law professor at Columbia University to embrace the socialist movement. To the SLP he brought great energy and ability; his commitment was absolute, and it obliged him at times to lead a fairly ascetic existence, which he bore without complaint. The sacrifice of his comfortable existence as a professor to embrace the cause of Marxism must have had an enormous emotional impact on the immigrant workers whose party he joined in 1890. He

remade himself in the image of their movement; and they, in turn, transformed the party into a monument to his example.²

Beyond the evident impact of his moral example, De Leon's quick rise to leadership within the SLP was due to his intellectual and literary contribution to the movement. He translated numerous books and pamphlets by Marx, Engels, and Kautsky, as well as fiction by Eugene Sue and a play of Lasalle's. He lectured and debated on Marxism, and seems to have taken particular delight in the forensic evisceration of college professors. He founded and edited *The Daily People* (later *The Weekly People*, a heartbreaking change). And most of all, with unbelievable facility and energy, De Leon wrote scores of pamphlets and book-length polemics, as well as thousands of newspaper articles and editorials. Through DeLeon's contributions as translator, writer, and editor, the movement soon had a substantial English-language literature.

But, much more important, De Leon's ideas seemed to reconcile the tensions between electoralism and unionism, and it absorbed what was appealing about anarcho-syndicalism without encouraging terrorism. My thumbnail sketch of "De Leonism," given earlier, merely extracts the gist of his ideas, in their ultimate form as an almost catechistic doctrine. As a reading of his most important theoretical works reveals, De Leon fashioned a powerful articulation of Marxist theory, on a par with the efforts of Plekhanov, Kautsky, and Pannekoek — who, much more than anyone in the American scene at the time, were his peers.

THE SLP'S COURSE OVER THE DECADES following DeLeon's death have gone practically unrecorded; even the SLP has seldom discussed this portion of its history. The year 1917 proved fateful. The party greeted the Russian revolutions with guarded but sincere enthusiasm — which, as it happened, the Bolsheviks reciprocated. In the summer of 1918, John Reed told an audience in Chicago: "Lenin thinks very highly of DeLeon and has learned much from De Leon's writings, especially as to the final disappearance of the political state. Lenin is going to have De Leon's writ-

² *Daniel De Leon, the Man and his Work* (National Executive Committee of the SLP, 1919) gathers recollections of and tributes to De Leon by his comrades. It is both an example of SLP hagiography and, in places, a very moving tribute; the party keeps it in print. Carl Reeve's *The Life and Times of Daniel De Leon* (Humanities Press, 1972) is a competent if numbingly pedestrian biography which focuses on his work after entering socialist politics. Much more interesting is L. Glen Seretan, *Daniel De Leon: The Odyssey of an American Marxist* (Harvard University Press, 1979), a political and intellectual biography with one distracting problem. Seretan believes that De Leon was preoccupied not just by his Jewish background but by the legend of the Wandering Jew — a proposition for which he offers no evidence except the supposition that De Leon was "certainly familiar" with the legend via the novel *Le juif errant* by Eugénie Sue, whose work De Leon loved and translated. When he is not riding this hobby horse, however, Seretan's biography is fascinating.

ings translated into Russian.” The First Congress of the Communist International included the SLP in the list of parties to be invited to join the regroupment of revolutionary Marxists. The SLP ultimately decided against affiliation — losing a portion of its membership to the early American Communist movement. This brief but crucial period constitutes about as much of the post-DeLeon SLP’s record as one can read about in most historiography on the American left.

So it is here that Girard and Perry’s *The Socialist Labor Party 1876-1991* really comes into its own. The post-DeLeon epoch occupies 67 percent of the period they have decided to chronicle, and it fills about 57 percent of their book. It is an important and altogether singular contribution. But I am afraid it makes for somewhat melancholy reading.

The most salient fact about this period is the domination of the party by the new editor of *The Weekly People*, Arnold Petersen, for 55 years following DeLeon’s death. Assuming DeLeon’s position within the organization, Petersen saw his mission as being one of preserving the founder’s work in its purity — as indeed he did, by his own lights, whatever the cost in administrative authoritarianism. Under his regime, DeLeonist theory was codified into an immutable doctrine, which he interpreted with virtually papal authority. Ironically, the SLP, which had long been unusually hostile and suspicious toward the role of the Vatican in politics, now practiced routine excommunications. During the Moscow Trials, the party press exhibited sympathy for Stalin’s efforts to keep troublemakers in line. Only with the Hitler-Stalin pact did the SLP decide the regime no longer merited any support.

For the most part, Girard and Perry treat this period in a very matter-of-fact way. About Petersen’s reign, they seem ambivalent, as if they have not quite decided whether his despotism was benevolent or not.³ Their account of SLP life describes the pamphlets, the presidential campaigns, the response to developments in the outside world, and the occasional formation of breakaway tendencies. According to the SLP’s own account, it has never undergone a split; however, it has occasionally been necessary to purge the organization of “disruptive elements,” who have sometimes gone on to form their own groups.

Through official resolutions, if not by any outward show of activity, the SLP opposed both World Wars and the “police actions” in Korea and

³ For an account of the internal life of the Petersen-era SLP, see Nathan Dershowitz, “The Socialist Labor Party,” in the Summer 1948 issue Dwight Macdonald’s magazine *Politics*. Dershowitz calls the SLP “a machine to make Daniel DeLeon a paying proposition,” with a bank account of \$150,000 and an annual income of some \$200,000 dollars. Dershowitz describes an internal regime which carefully monitored the membership for “disruptor-reptiles” and routinely went through purges. This account has been substantiated by the reports of other dissidents. The more one learns of Arnold Petersen, the more grateful one is that history kept the levers of state power out of his hands.

Vietnam. The McCarthy era took its toll on the party: "Leaflet distributors and nomination distributors were harrassed and arrested, and many members were hounded by employers and others for their beliefs. ... [S]uccessful outdoor meetings had become a thing of the past, and in some locales it became difficult to hire halls for meetings." Then came the civil rights movement and the social upsurges of the 1960s. By then, the strictly propagandistic, abstentionist quality of the SLP's activity was irreversible. "Through its press the SLP strongly supported the cause of civil rights for Blacks," the authors write. "However, it declined to participate in such activities as anti-segregation sit-ins and freedom bus rides. It felt these were diversions from the socialist movement, which alone could solve the problems of racism and poverty. Its appeal to minorities was wholly unsuccessful." (One might well reply: what appeal?) Arnold Petersen recoiled from the "senseless, emotional, and anarchistic" quality of the 60s. Party members certainly felt drawn toward participation, but official policy seemed intended to preserve the SLP from contamination:

Not only were party members prevented from participating in demonstrations; restrictions even were placed on leafletting on such occasions. The official guidelines stated that members could distribute leaflets (and sell literature) at demonstrations but only in such a way that no one could confuse them with the actual participants. Furthermore, the leaflets used were stock items that condemned war and racism but lacked immediate relevance to particular issues inspiring the demonstrations, and they seemed old-fashioned and jargonistic to most participants.

Circulation of an unauthorized leaflet was "conduct unbecoming to an SLP member," and as such grounds for expulsion.

Following Petersen's death, the party underwent a crisis of sorts — agonized by the sense that, in the 60s, they had lost an important opportunity. The membership was aging. For a period, the SLP began to rethink its past and to question its policies. But in recent years, as Girard and Perry note, the leadership has "rehabilitated Petersen to the extent of republishing some of his articles on party history." To all appearances, the SLP remains static in program, faithful to the letter of DeLeon's thought. Going through the routines of party life, issuing the newspaper (now reduced to a biweekly), it awaits the moment when it can usher in the socialist industrial republic — and at last dissolve itself.

WHEN MARY MCCARTHY'S LOVERS THINK OF THE SLP, each tries to summon up a kind of grudging respect for it. Insofar as one associates the party with Daniel DeLeon, that has never been too difficult. The fact that Lenin wrote to Bukharin about DeLeon — urging that *Two Pages from Roman History* be published as soon as possible and offering to write an introduction — added a certain luster to the American's name. (One hopes it

also persuaded a few people to locate and read *Two Pages*, as well; it is a classic of socialist pamphlet literature.) But the SLP itself is another matter. Within the broad Left, it has been synonymous for decades with hopeless sectarianism.⁴

Girard and Perry's capsule history of the SLP supplies a much more sympathetic account of the party. They are critical, at times, both of the party itself and the previous accounts of its history. It is evident that they know a great deal more than they have given themselves room to discuss; and remarks in the preface indicate that this volume is part of an ongoing project of research into the SLP's heritage.

And they have the field to themselves, given the almost total indifference of the academic historiography of the American left — which is now focused on the absorbing task of proving that the Communist Party USA largely acted and developed its policies independently of outside influence. If Girard and Perry tend sometimes to downplay the authoritarian internal culture of the SLP, they are, at least, in distinguished company.

⁴ Again, Mary McCarthy's story is suggestive. Not long after he daydreams about writing an editorial supporting the SLP, Jim Barnett — *The Liberal's* golden boy of middle-class radicalism — realizes that he is not much different from other political pamphleteers. "When it came to him at last that he was not exceptional but irrelevant, when he was, so to speak, *ruled out* as immaterial, having no bearing, incompetent in the legal sense, the shock was terrific."

How the Right Manages and the Left Avoids New York's Fiscal Crisis

Michael Hirsch

THROUGHOUT THE 1980s, URBAN MAYORS ROUTINELY OPPOSED CONSERVATIVE WASHINGTON policies. Now the trend is changing, with Reaganomics roosting in city halls throughout the nation.

Only two years ago, 300,000 marched on Washington to "Save Our Cities" and fund urban programs. Fronted by then mayors Ray Flynn of Boston and David Dinkins of New York, marchers supported federal aid to rebuild city infrastructures, rehire laid-off workers, and meet education, housing, and health needs.

Today, Flynn is Ambassador to the Vatican. Dinkins lost his reelection bid late last year to a former Reagan Justice department prosecutor. And the urban recovery bill marchers sought, even with a Democratic Administration in Washington, is dead. Towns as diverse as New York, Philadelphia, Indianapolis, and Los Angeles are seeing their top officials war on municipal unions and welfare recipients while selling off city services. Even the threat of privatizing city jobs is often enough to get city unions to roll over.

Because urban coffers are demonstrably low, downsizing government and auctioning city functions are peddled as long-needed adaptations to the real world of shrinking public dollars. Some, like Philadelphia's Mayor Ed Rendell, say the issue isn't privatization but "public-private competition," or giving tax payers better service for their dollars. The dividing line he sees "is between those who are willing to deal realistically with the problems of cities, and those who aren't." (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 14, 1991.)

During Philadelphia's 1991 mayoral contest, Rendell campaign manager and now major domo David L. Cohen told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* his candidate preferred keeping services in-house, but with severely reduced labor costs. (*Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 29, 1991.) After the election, Rendell kept some of that promise by claiming that, after severance and attrition, only 125 municipal employees lost their jobs.

THERE IS NO SMOKING GUN LINKING "NEW DEMOCRAT" RENDELL TO THE IDEOLOGICAL RIGHT. But the smoke curls around New York's new mayor, Rudolph Giuliani. Busy hiving off the city hospitals, privatizing vital services, and brow-beating opponents and the press, he is often characterized as an arrogant micromanager, the perfect product of parochial education and law enforcement. Or just plain mean. A former Dinkins appointee called the city budget "a living nightmare, unworthy of any decent human being," and said the mayor "has shown us he can be meaner, more insensitive than even his own supporters expected. Big guns have replaced big hearts."¹

One who thinks the mayor's problem is not (or not just) a sermonizing disposition and a flawed personality is Jimmy Breslin, the dean of New York newspa-

MICHAEL HIRSCH is a member of the New Politics editorial board.

per writers. Writes Breslin:

Those who are supposed to run the city are fanatic about making the city attractive for business. Their notion of solving every difficulty and danger is to cut business taxes and build [office complexes] immediately and everywhere....And ransack the schools if you must to save money and show business that we mean it. (Jimmy Breslin, "How to Beat a Meglomania," *New York Newsday*, April 10, 1994.)

Pure anthropological thick description, Breslin rightly scores Giuliani as ideologically driven. Not just a bully, this is a man with a mission.

As economist Bob Fitch said in describing that mission, "Reagan talked pain but delivered \$4 trillion in expansionary credit. Giuliani is delivering the pain." (Fitch to author, April 9, 1994.)

Given the mayor's paper trail, no one should be surprised.² Candidate Giuliani claimed that the loss of 15% of all city jobs — nearly 400,000 private sector positions gone — was due to his predecessor's raising city taxes. He pledged to "relieve employers of oppressive burdens that lead to the loss of jobs...reach out to the city's businesses and industries and support their growth...(and) actively support the federal and state legislative agenda of New York's employers."

In his first budget plan, the mayor declared that "city government is too large... . Government needs to get out of the way and allow the recovery to take place." Increased spending that exceeded the inflation rate and tax increases mean that "our government dominates the local economy."

Giuliani moved to close the city's \$2.3 billion budget gap (out of a total budget of more than \$30 billion) by threatening to slash 15,000 of the city's 214,000 employees, the bulk of whom are African-American and Latino breadwinners and the bedrock of neighborhoods plagued by crime and homelessness. Pledging not to cut police or firefighters, overwhelmingly white departments made up of solid Giuliani supporters, his cuts and vows to sell-off the city hospitals that serve the poor endanger everyone without a uniform.

Attacks on unions and the indigent in the name of the common good is, well,

¹ NYS NAACP head Hazel Dukes, quoted in "Ousted OTB Chief Puts Up Her Dukes," *New York Post*, April 22, 1994, p. 14. Dukes' alleged incompetence in running the state's legal Off-Track Betting parlors, what Giuliani campaign literature called "the only bookie operation in the state to lose money," may color her personalizing the issue, but it is a common reading of Giuliani.

² One who disagrees is *Daily News* columnist Jim Sleeper, who writes in the May 9, 1994 *New Republic*, that Giuliani is actually "a hybrid we'll see more of in the 1990's — a mayor who subordinates partisanship to 'reinventing municipal government and reviving urban investment.'" Sleeper believes such mayors will "stake their careers on improving public safety and public schools." Forget the fact that Giuliani's closest advisors support gutting the public schools through the misnamed school choice, Sleeper is letting his animus for the rhetorical excesses of the Left and "the tortuous racial etiquette of Dinkins's 'gorgeous mosaic,'" cloud his judgement. Still, Sleeper should be taken seriously. What other Giuliani supporter would say, as he told me, that the problem with privatization buffs is "their refusal to acknowledge the free market's ability to debase communities and their tendency to oppose unionization efforts. It's privatization that gave us asbestos and p.c.b.s," said Sleeper. "And unionism is the best corrective to racial separatism and civic fragmentation." Perhaps when Sleeper breaks with Giuliani, as he surely will, he'll write about it in *New Politics*.

commonplace. So when unions called for job security for members, who earn on average \$25,000 annually — ridiculously low wages for expensive New York — they were pilloried as “special interests” opposed to modernizing city government. Spine-challenged union leaders did not fight back, and the charges stuck. And the fact that 3,500 of the threatened city workers are employed by the city’s welfare department, which experienced an 84% increase in client applications since 1989, means that the more than one in four New Yorkers on welfare are a target of opportunity for the new mayor. Union chiefs have since accepted severance buyouts for 7,600 jobs.³

Not that city insolvency is invented or can be ignored. New York has seen a real decline in its eminence as a corporate and industrial center, with a proportionate shrinking of its tax base. Only 28 of the Fortune 500 corporations are now headquartered in New York City, down from 178 in 1956, and its manufacturing sector — long a source of high-paying entry-level blue collar jobs — lost 750,000 jobs since 1965. Upwards of a third of its more than 7.4 million people are poor. With the American economy weak and the New York metropolitan region still in recession, no one is offering leadership to stem the long slide. No one on the Left, that is.

The Right is in with both feet. Once the 1993 mayoral race began, Giuliani, bereft of any real justification for challenging Dinkins (beyond being the “white guy” in the race, quipped columnist Gail Collins) went looking for help. He got it from the privateers around the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, a right-wing think tank made up of renegade ex-lefties, anti-Dinkins Democrats and disciples of Milton Friedman, who served as Giuliani’s campaign braintrust. Several hold high administration posts, and the mayor’s ideological trim comes at least in part from them.

Their successes are instructive. Shortly before the November election, its \$250,000 a year president, William Hammett,⁴ said that “Politics may well run for long stretches of time on fluff, diversion and campaign tactics, but ultimately it comes down to the content of ideas, and the side that’s done its homework always wins in the long run.” Hammett said presciently, “It’s just as much a war of the ‘scribblers’ as it is of the warring political factions.” (Hammett memo to “Associates and Colleagues,” October 1, 1993.) The group’s tough views on homeless policy, school-choice, tort reform, immigration, and opposition to rent regulation are crafted to be influential, and its outreach to journalists is noticeably effective.

³ Stanley Hill, AFSCME District Council 37 executive director, who represents the majority of city workers, wrote in his union’s *Public Employee Press* (April 8, 1994) that the pact “is an important first for us and the city...It lays the groundwork for cooperation between the Giuliani administration and the municipal unions in dealing with the city’s continuing budget problems.” Too bad he wasn’t influenced by it.

Ironically, PEP is actually quite a good paper. Its series on privatization, which ran throughout much of last year and was reprinted as a 31-page pamphlet, does an effective job of refuting much of the privatizing nonsense, while graphically showing the valuable work Council members do.

⁴ Hammett’s claim to infamy may come from giving an institutional home and funding to the then-potless welfare basher Charles Murray, who had the space and time to write *Losing Ground* in 1984 and went on to become the darling of the ideological right.

Village Voice political reporter Michael Tomasky said the Institute “deserves a lot of credit for steadily working at being a real presence. The Left in New York has no such repository of research and knowledge and strategies to compare. It’s all scattered. There’s no think tank that systematizes and prioritizes and advances an agenda.”⁵ In a frozen intellectual climate, theirs seem like the only warm bodies in town.

Even if the Institute’s successes come from retreading and peddling classical economics that only “articulate[s] the anxieties of a more or less restricted and privileged section of the population,”⁶ their successes are marked. Ideologues in pragmatists’ clothing, they are fighting a war that the Left is losing. The war is barely even engaged.

Few answer the gurus of privatization, and fewer answer them well. The local press has been slow to pick up on the spotty public record of privatization schemes in other cities, where cost overruns, bad service, compromised health and safety conditions, defaulting and bankrupt contractors, skimpy maintenance, and corruption scandals are endemic to many industries servicing cities. Contracts often are not competitively bid or go to low bidders based outside city centers. This is a story waiting to be written.

No prominent voices say that the effects of the collapse of New York’s Wall Street in the late 80s, the artificially rapid erosion of manufacturing and the parasitism of the finance, insurance and real-estate (FIRE) sectors can be offset by aggressive public action. Bob Fitch’s excellent *The Assassination of New York*, (Verso 1993) detailing the planned and conscious role the FIRE sector played in the not-so-inevitable deindustrialization of New York, is a Cassandra Call that is not yet impacting on policy or political discourse.⁷

Why the thundering silence? One reason is that for four years the Left cozied up to the Dinkins Administration and now finds itself demoralized and demobilized. Dinkins, the city’s first African-American mayor, is a grandfatherly figure and longtime Democratic Party time-server who fell between two stools — neither servile enough for the corporate sector nor interested in or capable of organizing against it. True, the Giuliani victory margin was razor thin, giving no mandate for privatization. But neither is there a forceful ideological center to counter the incessant drumming from sources like the *Wall Street Journal* or the Manhattan Institute’s stable of op-ed scriveners.

So when a toothless City Council bill is introduced that would, admits even *Crain’s New York Business*, only “provide a moral commitment — but not a dollar commitment,” (Douglas Feiden, April 18, 1994. p. 44) to retraining municipal workers whose jobs go up the privatized chimney, it is hotly opposed by Giuliani

⁵ Tomasky to author, September 30, 1993. Compare the presentation of arguments in their slick and on-point *City Journal* to traditional Left fare, or even to *New Politics*. Yes, the Institute has a \$5 million plus operating budget and, yes, the “ruling class” likes them, but other right-of-center groups with greater access to corporate largesse haven’t so expertly tailored their ideas to concrete policies. We can learn from them.

⁶ Radhika Desai’s comment about a similar British group in “Second-Hand Dealers in Ideas: Think-Tanks and Thatcherite Hegemony,” *New Left Review* #203, January/February 1994.

⁷ This is almost literally true. Only the Communications Workers are taking Fitch’s call for a focus on job generation seriously.

as an encroachment on mayoral authority. Despite the huge, ritualized union bankrolling of council incumbents, the watered-down legislation, Intro. 120A, may not survive a mayoral veto.

Apart from the city's far-flung Democratic Party clubs, whose white members outside Manhattan abandoned the former mayor, much of liberal grassroots electoral support traditionally comes from the political apparatus around the left-leaning hospital workers union, Local 1199, which overwhelmingly represents private-sector hospital employees. Its president, Dennis Rivera, is gifted, intelligent, and hard-working. Featured on the cover of *The New York Times Magazine*, the subject of a *New Yorker* puff piece by the late A.H. Raskin, and touted as Labor's fresh new face, he spends much of his time as vice chair of the state Democratic Party and seems immobilized by his party commitments. Silent on President Clinton's poor urban record and opposed to health care reform ("not at the expense of health care workers' jobs," he vows), Rivera has yet to say word one on privatization, possibly because 1199 stands to gain from recruiting newly privatized employees as members. The rest of his time is squandered disorganizing the organized. As head of an independent union, he is not bound by the AFL-CIO's no-raid pact, so raiding he will go.⁸

An ill-starred electoral effort called the New Party died *in utero* in New York soon after merging with the Local 1199-dominated Majority Coalition, which was never more than a Dinkins election creature, though the party's abortion could just as easily be blamed on the splendid mix of stupidity and arrogance coming from the party's organizing naifs as on Rivera himself. Certainly forming a social democratic alternative to Giuliani and the Democrats is dicey, but these people put the gun to their own heads.

Among the far-Left, a recent "Rally to Push Rudy Back" attracted less than 1,000, and its call to let the city go bankrupt should be warmly received in business circles.

The distribution of white and minority votes in 1993 was a virtual replay of the previous mayoral race. Given this lopsided white vote for Giuliani, many activists conclude that Dinkins' defeat was racial. But painting the urban crisis as essentially racial tends to overlook the fact that when Giuliani baits the poor (and many whites applaud ignorantly) the white unemployed, sick and elderly suffer as well. Bully-boy posturing and city going-out-of-business sales won't solve America's urban crisis, but neither will cobbling together another anti-incumbent coalition that hasn't a clue about what to do about the crisis.

⁸ With a reputation for incorruptibility largely deserved (organizers up to top officers are among the most poorly-paid and hardest-worked in the labor movement), there is still a rule-or-ruin quality to much of what they do and how they work with others. And while every union has members who complain about the quality of servicing, the 1199 staff representative's title is "organizer," whose chief responsibility is (surprise) organizing, and not necessarily in unorganized shops. The package of cradle-to-grave services they sell potential members (summer camp, housing, childcare, education programs — all good things in themselves) comes wrapped in a paternalistic, cult-like 'socialism-in-one-dual-union' bundle. Not that there's anything better around. There's a good deal worse. But all of the wizardry of their PR genius Moe Foner cannot make up for the fact that this hard-driving union has a world view that doesn't extend much beyond its 43rd Street headquarters.

Spielberg's Holocaust: **The Politics of *Schindler's List***

Jeffrey K. Olick

WITH SEVEN ACADEMY AWARDS AND A PRESS BUZZ SECOND ONLY TO THE TONYA HARDING case, *Schindler's List* is clearly the movie of the year. And so, perhaps, it should be. It is a well-crafted and moving story, complete with absolute evil, tragic victims, and a hero whose final heroic modesty contrasts heart-wrenchingly with his earlier haughty opportunism. As a heavy yet inspiring entertainment, it is, in my opinion, a justified — if ultimately ordinary — success.

But now New Jersey Governor Christine Todd Whitman has put an official stamp on a general trend to see *Schindler's List* as momentous, both historically and morally. She has proposed showing the movie to all New Jersey college students, apparently as part of a response to a Nation of Islam representative's anti-Semitic statements at a New Jersey state college.¹ Surely, critical dialogue with a Hollywood blockbuster might normally seem over-zealous. But because *Schindler's List* has gained this explicit political dimension, it must be judged more carefully than otherwise. As political morality, both Schindler's story and Spielberg's interpretation in my opinion fall short of what we need.

BASED ON THE HISTORICAL NOVEL BY THOMAS KENNEALLY, *SCHINDLER'S LIST* TELLS THE story of Oskar Schindler, an opportunistic (and fairly sleazy) German businessman. Schindler hopes to make great profit by employing Jewish slave laborers who, he says, are cheaper than Poles, whom one would have to pay a minimal wage. Through the course of events, Schindler becomes quite attached to the 1200 workers he has selected with the coerced help of a Jewish accountant and member of the *Judenrat* (the Jewish governing council in the Ghetto) Itzak Stern. Indeed, he has increasingly, knowingly allowed Stern to provide refuge to many who, because of age or other unsuitability, surely would have been the first to go. In the process of repeatedly saving this group from sure death, Schindler emerges as a hero, frequently risking his own neck for his charges. Eventually, he buys their lives from the psychopathic camp commandant Amon Goeth with the vast wealth he has accumulated. By the end, he actively resists the war effort by turning out defective armaments, and proclaims religious freedom for his workers. When he finally takes flight to save himself, his workers express their gratitude in a dramatic scene by presenting Schindler with a gold ring forged of an old man's dental work. The ring is inscribed with the Talmudic aphorism that to save one life is to save the entire world.

In what is surely a back-handed compliment, critics have praised *Schindler's List* for departing from Hollywood techniques (of which Spielberg is the undisputed

JEFFREY OLICK is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Columbia University, and is completing a book titled *The Sins of the Fathers: The Third Reich and West German Legitimacy, 1949-89*.

master). This is purportedly the first serious Hollywood approach to the Holocaust as a subject, and thus a departure from the industry's normally up-beat, trivial, or melodramatic fare. And, Spielberg has supposedly avoided the hackneyed gestures and glamorizing narrative of standard "serious" Hollywood products.

But while the Holocaust may seem a bit grim for a big-budget mass-audience offering, the Holocaust vision of *Schindler's List* provides seemingly perfect material for Hollywood conventions. There is clear good and evil, life and death struggle, epoch proportion, and a well-bounded biographical subject. The film's form is clearly more Herman Wouk than Primo Levi; the very tonal music by John Williams is more lamenting than horror-struck, more *Star Wars* than *Night and Fog*. If ever there were a truly atonal moment, it was the surely the Holocaust. By way of contrast to Itzhak Perlman's sweet violin solos, imagine something along the lines of Krzysztof Penderecki's *Threnody for the Victims of Hiroshima* or, alternatively, Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*.

Spielberg's choice of black and white has also been praised as bold and original. But this too, in my opinion, serves to enhance the kitschy qualities. Technicolor may indeed have betrayed the essential grayness of the subject-matter, but an arty black and white is a rather stylish maneuver. The apparently stark patina is really quite sentimental, evoking an age and historicity as well as mood. One of the many profound contradictions of this subject is that flowers bloom even in the place of death. While the sky may have filled with the ashes of humanity, the heavens did not darken. Such a contrast might have been poignant. Black and white is as clear as any mass-market film cue.

For all the film's supposed originality, I experienced repeated déjà vu during many scenes. Surely arrival at the sinister Auschwitz gates is a recognizable sight to anyone at all familiar with late twentieth-century iconography. And could very many people have missed similar portrayals of Nazi villains in multifarious World War II movies? Spielberg's Nazis are hardly different than our old movie stereotypes. One especially egregious moment is the ubiquitous erotic scene in the commandant's basement. There stands the attractive young Jewish woman selected for special duties as the commandant's personal maid. Undoubtedly, she is to be stripped and humiliated for the male viewer's irrepressible voyeuristic pleasure. We have seen this drama many times before, and surely its pornographic associations in this late day outstrip its historical value.

The overwhelming Hollywood moment, though, is the film's perversely happy ending. The Schindler Jews survive and go on to bear attractive generations. Though he acknowledges the countless people he could not save, Schindler's heroism is sufficient to save the flock about whom he, and we, have come to care. This may have been Schindler's historical reality, but it is a rather exceptional one. Most people were not saved; neither their own resistance nor the help of the few special courageous individuals like Schindler could really impact on what happened. In this perverse way, *Schindler's List* gives lie to the realities of Auschwitz as it meets Hollywood's narrative conventions and its audience's expectations. And this is why the film is good entertainment. The real existential shock appropriate to the subject, however, is mitigated by this inspirational storytelling.

WHILE THIS STORY MAY MAKE FOR GOOD MOVIE DRAMA, HOW USEFUL ARE ITS LESSONS FOR real life? The story of an ordinary man roused by circumstances to heroic behavior can illuminate the travails of the individual human soul. But Schindler's

story doesn't do well on this score. What do we learn from Schindler's character? He starts out as a ruthless opportunist with no apparent moral center. And he does not appear to have any innate repulsion to the horrors around him. Partly, it seems to be only the gradual accretion of stomach-turning degradations that pushes him over the top. But this story is not especially perspicuous (though it is dramatic), nor does it teach us very much that we can use to understand our own ambivalent natures. One wants, one expects, him to have been outraged sooner, and when he finally is, we have little real idea of what has changed in him.

Elsewhere, it appears that Schindler's efforts were more a matter of personal attachments to *his* Jews rather than a fight of principle. I was reminded of SS leader Heinrich Himmler's secret speech to a group of Nazi officers: the real problem with implementing the "Final Solution," Himmler purportedly said, was that too many people had their own Jews who they thought should be exempted from the policy which they in general supported. Schindler worked to protect many who otherwise certainly would have been killed, but he seems to have been motivated by personal attachments rather than moral principle. This is not to denigrate his acts; but the ideological moment seems to require more principled rejection.

This kind of story is unilluminating in another, more important way: focusing on an individual's transformation from ordinary (or worse) to good or heroic can explain much about the human character (here it doesn't); but focusing at the same time on how ordinary people become bad can highlight social and political dimensions, dimensions that are important if we are looking for broader lessons from the movie. If *Schindler's List* is to serve as a warning, then we need to get a better sense of the origins and operation of organized violence. This includes the perspectives of perpetrators and bystanders, as well as those of more dramatic victims, heroes, and monsters.

SPIELBERG'S INTERPRETATION OF NAZISM IS SIMPLISTIC AND DEMONIZING. *SCHINDLER'S LIST* portrays virtually everyone involved in the system as a psychopath. The clearly deranged Commandant Goeth takes the hinge-maker out to shoot him. When the gun jams, he and his assistants engage in a rather dispassionate discussion of firearms. How peculiar, they seem to say. None of the three looks especially disturbed. When Goeth orders the woman engineer shot, his henchman hesitate only momentarily. When Goeth takes potshots at prisoners walking by his balcony, his lover pulls a pillow over her head and objects to being woken by the noise. When a commander plays a piano while his men sweep out the Ghetto, his lieutenants stop by to debate whether it is Bach or Mozart. What has made these ordinary people so callous? What has happened to their humanity? *Schindler's List* provides few clues, explaining away this most complex social and political moment as abnormal psychology.

There is no sense of the self-degradation of the more ordinary Germans who participated, no indication of the psychic and social traumas they inflicted on themselves. When Hannah Arendt wrote of the "banality of evil" 30 years ago, she was referring to the bureaucrats, and not to those who actually did the killing face-to-face. A purely psychopathic reading of Nazis passes up a good opportunity to show how such a system affects ordinary people, and that it degrades the masters as much as the slaves.

So it seems as if, in these regards, *Schindler's List* shies away from a more political interpretation. But politics are nevertheless there, and with important

implications. *Schindler's List* is an exclusively Jewish apprehension of the Holocaust.² There is little indication that anyone besides Jews was persecuted. And the movie displays a Zionism that is at best naive and at worst disingenuous: Ben Kingsley's leader of the Schindler Jews asks the Soviet soldier who has just pronounced them free where they should go. The soldier says not to go east because Jews are hated there. Then he says don't go west either, because they are hated there too. As the Jews melodramatically march side by side over a hill (now the real Schindler Jews assembled by Spielberg at Schindler's grave in Israel), an Israeli patriotic song plays significantly in the background.

This use of the Holocaust to legitimate Israel is, in my view, problematic, and at best ill-placed. The complexities of contemporary politics make such a bald assertion a willful repression of pressing moral issues. Moreover, Zionism was much older than the Holocaust. And as Tom Segev has demonstrated so poignantly in his book, *The Seventh Million*, Israeli pioneers by no means unequivocally welcomed European survivors, whom they saw as weak and lacking genuine Zionist commitment. And finally, Israel was truly not the only option for survivors.

The United States and other countries are not without their failures. And as a Jew, I support and am grateful for the State of Israel, though I am not always happy with the directions of its policies. But as an American, I know what kind of life has been possible here. Spielberg's success itself — manifested in his ability to address his compatriots as an American — proves that there were other options.

MY PROBLEM WITH *SCHINDLER'S LIST* — AS POLITICS, HISTORY, AND MORALITY RATHER THAN as entertainment — is that it lacks certain broader lessons that would make it special. In focusing on a conventional yet unexplained hero without insights into the perpetrators, and in its narrowly Jewish perspective, the movie substitutes bathos and melodrama for explanation and learning. For me, the important lessons of the Holocaust need to be more political than psychological, and more universal than parochially Jewish. Using *Schindler's List* as a sort of equal-time compensation or even perceived antidote for black anti-Semitism doesn't get us much beyond the parochial perspectives that perpetuate divisions. Are these the universal lessons that can unite us?

Is this asking too much? Probably. But one can't help wondering why Spielberg — with all his resources — chose this of all stories. With all its faults, it is perhaps better than nothing in a time when opinion polls document an astonishing ignorance in the United States about the "Final Solution." My quarrel is not with the film as entertainment. But with all the media and political attention, with the attempt to use this entertainment as a moral and political lesson for our nation's youth (and adults, for that matter), and with the apparent Jewish sanctioning of Spielberg's account, I fear that we have over-valORIZED and misused an ultimately limited film.

NOTES

¹Other governors as well as local leaders have also proposed showing the film in public schools. Washington's Governor Mike Lowry, for instance, has joined Spielberg in a tour of state schools with the film.

²This is no less the case — though more perverse — because the film's hero is German and its Jews passive and undeveloped as characters.

On E. P. Thompson and William Blake

Jackie DiSalvo

AN ENGLISH FRIEND TOLD ME HOW E.P. THOMPSON, SPEAKING ON BBC ABOUT THE WAR IN the former Yugoslavia, had choked up, weeping, in mid-sentence. When he had been there in 1947, Yugoslavia, and not the Berlin Wall, was the border between East and West. It had signified a frontier of hope where he and Dorothy, his wife-to-be, had gone as young communist volunteers, to build, not just a railroad, but socialism. Now almost half a century later, he was seized, as he often was in his last years, by memories that "seem to open up inside one — with a more palpable emotional force than the vague present."

So it was that this great guardian of our collective memory, of the persistent struggle for a just society, that would finally belong to its common builders, was now mourning its dismemberment over the public airwaves.

In 1968 when the Left's aspirations seemed resurrected once more, Thompson was lecturing on Blake at Columbia University in the midst of what he describes as "some sort of a campus revolution against the Moral Law." He helped inspire a revival of interest in that heroic poet of revolutionary optimism. Soon Blakean slogans like "All Power to the Imagination," and "The Panthers ["tygers"] of Wrath are Wiser than the Horses of Instruction" would be scrawled on walls from Madison, Wisconsin to the Left Bank.

More than two decades later, Thompson returned to the poet who had spent a lifetime pondering the ebb and flow of revolution and the political seductions of both victory and what historian-comrade and Milton scholar, Christopher Hill titled *The Experience of Defeat*. Thompson would devote his last days to finally finishing *Witness to the Beast: William Blake and the Moral Law*,* published weeks before his death in August 1993. Thus, Blake's radical antinomian (against the law) prescription for "keeping the faith," through times of political stalemate and little hope, comes to us as Thompson's last will and testament against political silence and acquiescence.

Thompson was part of a generation of Left intellectuals who had resisted Cold War marginalization by painstakingly reconstructing the genealogy of a resistance reaching back even before the industrial revolution to a Renaissance era in which bourgeois culture was itself an embattled newcomer. Together they inspired a vast demolition crew to set about dismantling history as propaganda of the victors, told from the viewpoint of the dominant classes, and proving the inevitability of the status quo. With the recovery of lost voices of radical opposition and plebeian resistance, of Cromwellian republicans, Leveller democrats

**Witness to the Beast: Blake and the Moral Law* (NY: New Press, 1993), 272 pp. \$30.00.

JACKIE DISALVO is associate professor of English at Baruch College and the City University of New York's Graduate Center. She is the author of *War of Titans: Blake's Critique of Milton and the Politics of Religion* (U. of Pittsburgh Press: 1984)

and Digger communists of the English revolution and native Jacobin allies of the French, history would be exposed as a series of class struggles whose outcome in present society could never be declared final.

The 1960s uprisings seemed to vindicate revisionist history and swamp Cold War culture in a flood of dangerous enthusiasm reminiscent of nothing so much as the revolutionary romanticism of William Blake. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* begins with Blake's own summation of its story of the repression that engulfed the democratic agendas of plebeian rebels: "In the year 1798 ... the Beast and the Whore Rule Without Control." The masterwork concludes with an allusion to his elegy for the creative potential of working class "myriads of eternity" being suppressed in capitalism's "dark Satanic mills":

... that they might file
And polish brass & iron hour after hour laborious workmanship
Kept ignorant of the use that they might spend the days of wisdom
In sorrowful drudgery to earn a scanty pittance of bread. . .

Recognizing that Blake had forced a whole new range of social experience into the literary canon, Thompson wrote that:

Against the background of London Dissent, with its fringe of Deists and earnest mystics, William Blake seems no longer the cranky untutored genius that he must seem to those who know only the genteel culture of the time. On the contrary, he is the original yet authentic voice of a long, popular tradition.

Blake's celebration of solidarity and of a utopian consciousness and creativity offered Thompson an alternative to all he found stifling in the bureaucratic Russian Communism he rejected when he left the British Communist Party after the 1956 Hungarian occupation. In his "Open Letter to Kolakowski" (1973), he wrote:

if I had to devise my own pantheon I would without hesitation place within it the Christian antinomian William Blake, and I would place him right beside Marx.

Blake's myth of humanity's collective and historical self-creation is probably the closest parallel to Thompson's insistence that it is in the "making" of the working class through its own activity that we find not only the truth of its history but the core of its socialist hope. In defense of this "agency" he would wage his polemics, for over three decades, against both Right and Left.

This perspective demanded that Blake's own consciousness be situated within a concrete dialogue with other voices of a radical culture, and Thompson kept wondering precisely where it had taken place. Neither the Godwinian circle of Joseph Priestly, Mary Wollenstoncraft and the radical publisher, Joseph Johnson, nor the wider Enlightenment culture of Paineite Jacobins could fully explain the artist's more plebeian and more mystical discourse.

Blake's language had more affinity with the religious radicalism of the heterodox sects of Hill's 17th-century, *World Turned Upside Down*. For, as Hill's recent *The English Bible and the Seventeenth Century Revolution* shows, Biblical and theological discourse was continuously given a political and even revolutionary inflection during the Puritan revolution not only by mainstream Parliamentary forces, but a more radical wing of Seekers, Ranters, Quakers, Familists, Fifth Monarchists, etc.

Here millenarians battled against Anti-Christ — the Beast of Monarchy and Whore of State Religion — executing Charles I to clear the throne for King Jesus and enter an egalitarian New Jerusalem, seen by Digger Gerrard Winstanley as a return to a primitive communist Eden. Antinomians, professing a God within, believed themselves set free by their faith in Jesus, the “great Leveller,” to scorn moral and civil law. And, libertine Ranters like Abiezer Coppe were often wont to do so to the scandal of respectable Puritans.

THIS, AND NOT ELITE PLATONIC MYSTICISM, THOMPSON INSISTS, IS BLAKE’S TRADITION. FORCED underground after the Restoration, it resurfaces in the London of the 1790s within a welter of Moravians, Baptists, irregular Methodists, Philadelphians, Behemenists, Rosicrucians, Masons, Swedenborgians and Muggletonians.

From that “Counter-Enlightenment,” Thompson argues, Blake inherited the rhetoric of the Everlasting Gospel and New Jerusalem, refusal of worship based on self-abasement, a repudiation of a church prostituted to the state, and a rejection of the Moral Law which propped up both. From Muggletonians who sang hymns set to tavern tunes in services held in pubs, Blake may have gotten the inspiration for his irreverent *Songs of Innocence and Experience*, as well as his symbols of a “satanic reason,” and “seed of the serpent,” planted in Eve’s womb to breed a ruling class of destroyers. Their bourgeois “Reason” elevated human social arrangements and their resultant psychologies to “natural law” and a Moral Law used to harass the lower classes and justify their oppression.

From the antinomian assertion of “free grace” — “our faith against their reason,” translating “faith” as inspiration and imagination, Blake took his “central stance.” Thompson anticipates “a snort from the Marxist-structuralist corner” about his celebrating the subversiveness of that “odd-looking doctrine of justification by faith.” However, having seen anti-imperialist movements led by Muslim nationalists and Catholic liberation theologians, we should appreciate how class struggle takes place as much within religion as against it. And critiques of Universal Reason, including Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, or feminist criticism of the idol of a masculinist bourgeois rationalism, should make us more sympathetic to religious discourses that might otherwise seem merely mystifying and irrational.

Thompson defines the politics of this antinomian position as anti-hegemonic, for “in most societies we can observe ... a dominant discourse, which imposes ... a limited horizon of moral norms and practical possibilities beyond which all must be blasphemous, seditious, insane or apocalyptic fantasy.”

Antinomian views characterized humble tradesmen and artisans, like the Blake family, fiercely proud of their independence from polite culture. Its scorn of deference fueled his “in your face” hostility toward “Hirelings in the Camp, the Court, & the University,” the Church, the Law, the Royal Academy, the classics, and frequently “assumes the tones of class war” against the elitism and authority of “Satan’s Kingdom.” “The Prince of darkness,” he wrote, “is a Gentleman & not a Man; he is a Lord Chancellor.”

Thompson’s main argument — that Blake’s radicalism derives from a unique conjuncture of such religious heterodoxy with Jacobin republicanism and Enlightenment secularism — is essentially right. His empathetic focus on what Blake and his radical culture stood for is a refreshing corrective to merely academic source hunting or cynical deconstruction.

LET ME ACKNOWLEDGE HERE THAT EDWARD THOMPSON'S INFLUENCE ON ME HAS BEEN ENORMOUS. In the 1960's as an alienated working class student, trying to salvage an identity battered by the American denial of class, I passionately devoured his history. It helped make me a Marxist and a Blake scholar, and I was thrilled to meet him and Dorothy at Rutgers in 1978 and attend his classes on Blake. I have always had enormous respect for the great genius of his profoundly Blakean historical imagination, expressing so much empathy for his plebeian subjects with as much "passionate, sardonic eloquence" as he credits Blake himself.

I always wanted to emulate his activist scholarship, his fidelity to his socialist traditions and their utopian potential, his commitment to working-class students in adult education at Leeds University, his sacrifice of academic honors to political activism, his unpretentious and generous spirit of comradeship. Still, too much is lost when he insists that, "The closer you get to 1650, the closer you get to Blake." The French Revolution unleashes class forces absent from the English that transform Blake's perspective. It is simply too reductive to limit his vision to that of "tradesmen and artisans." What he was witnessing all around him was the beastly Creation and Fall of such artisans into an industrial proletariat. His London included the indirect heirs of communist Diggers as well as libertine Ranters, including the overtly socialist and revolutionary ("physical" vs just "moral force") strains of Thomas Spence who once belonged to a radical association in Blake's own neighborhood.

There is more, therefore, to Blake's politics than lower middle class anti-hegemonism. In the long mythological narratives, like *The Four Zoas* and *Jerusalem*, one can find a more working-class, socialist vision. There leftist Blake critics like myself, Tony Rosso, Chris Hobson and others have seen not only a negative and critical *Witness to the Beast* but an active, revolutionary call for an "Awakening of Albion [England, collective humanity]" in a "Strife of Blood" to overthrow it and enter the socialist abundance of the "Great Harvest & Vintage of the Nations."

Blake's myth depicts the overthrow of a primitive communist Albion through "the Workmaster," Urizen's enslavement of "Luvah" (love, mass solidarity) and expropriation of Urthona (the earth-owner):

Awake! awake O sleeper of the land of shadows, wake! expand! I am in you and you in me, mutual in love divine:

Fibres of love from man to man thro Albion's pleasant land. .

But the perturbed Man turns away down the valleys dark;

Saying we are not One, we are Many ...

My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself!

Humanity shall be no more: but war & pryncedom & victory!

Luvah's rebirth as the devilish, insurrectionary Orc and reunion with Los, the fallen prophet of that loss, leads to an apocalyptic overthrow of oppressors and return to an Eden based on "The Arts and All Things Common":

The thrones of Kings are shaken they have lost their robes & crowns

The poor smite their oppressors they awake up to the harvest

Trembling before the multitudes of slaves now set at liberty.

Thompson also slights the spiritual significance of Blake's central myth. It depicts private ownership and its alienation of labor and fragmentation of community as "a Fall and a dispersal of the godhead" of a collective human spirit,

usurped by Nobodaddy, the mystifying orthodox deity. Equating "spirit" with "energy," Blake essentially proclaims "Mysticism the Highest Stage of Communism."

Thompson admits he has little to add on the overtly political themes or contexts of Blake's works. Those who have waited 20 years to hear him interpret Blake's larger corpus within the rich fabric of *The Making of the English Working Class* and his own substantial political insights will be somewhat disappointed. Constrained by fleeting time, by his focus on the early poems, and by his determination to link Blake empirically to a contemporary subculture, he perhaps did not intend to eliminate Blake's more revolutionary dimensions. But, his Gramscian anti-hegemonism, with its simultaneous refusal of and adaptation to defeat, seems to me to define both the strength and the limits of both Thompson's politics and his Blake.

HAVING CONCLUDED THAT SOCIALIST REVOLUTION WAS NO LONGER ON THE HISTORICAL AGENDA and that, given the Soviet experience, it was just as well, Thompson himself retreated to a kind of Jacobin radical democracy and the negative critique of — and struggle against — repression and militarism, socialist or capitalist. There he made his heroic stand, but further back or forward he could not or would not go.

With prospects for abolishing class society now indefinitely in abeyance, we are forced politically to maintain a defensive posture on virtually the same line. No one knew better than Blake how hard it is for consciousness to surpass its immediate historical possibilities ("And Los became what he beheld").

With his time now appearing far more hopeful than our own, we certainly could use the fortitude and "great refusal" of the unaccommodating antinomian faith that Thompson's Blake bequeaths us. Like 18th-century Dissenters we too must keep a radical faith for more promising times. But Blake can help sustain a more revolutionary vision. As Milton did for the English, Blake the French Revolution, and Thompson for the democratic strivings of English Jacobins, my Blake obliges us to save from oblivion as well the potential of the Russian Revolution, so, as in the hymn he bequeathed to Britain's Labor Party:

I shall not cease from Mental Fight
Nor shall my Sword sleep in our hands
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green & pleasant land.

Book Reviews

Legal Remedies for Racial Oppression

RACE IN AMERICA: THE STRUGGLE FOR EQUALITY edited by Herbert Hill and James E. Jones, Jr. Madison, University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, 465 pp. Cloth \$45.00, Paper \$17.95.

Reviewed by David Roediger

IN CRAFTING ITS DECLARATION OF PRINCIPLES FOR THE CONSTITUTIONAL TALKS IN SOUTH Africa, the African National Congress (ANC) held that:

Provision will be made for discrimination to be eliminated in substance as well as in form. At all levels of government the state will be empowered to pursue policies of affirmative action ... in order to redress social, economic and education imbalances ... with special regard to the maldistribution of land and the need for housing.

As ANC constitutional expert Albie Sachs observed:

Without a constitutionally structured programme of deep and extensive affirmative action, a Bill of Rights in South Africa is meaningless. In the historical conditions of South Africa, affirmative action is not merely the corrector of certain perceived structural injustices. It becomes the major instrument in the transitional period after a democratic government has been installed, for converting a racist oppressive society into a democratic and just one.

Whether Sachs is right that constitutional guarantees can ensure that affirmative action will fundamentally reshape South African society in an orderly way" is a wide and open question.¹ What is certain is that ANC views, though echoing in places the language of U.S. law, so far surpass in optimism even the most sanguine dreams of American advocates of a largely constitutional path to racial justice as to be scarcely comparable.

Race in America: The Struggle for Equality is a superb guide to understanding why constitutional remedies for racial oppression in the U.S. have come to be

DAVID ROEDIGER *teaches history at the University of Missouri. His recent books include Wages of Whiteness and Towards the Abolition of Whiteness, both from Verso.*

discussed in chastened and circumscribed terms. Most of its 16 essays were written for a 1989 University of Wisconsin-Madison conference soberly celebrating the 35th anniversary of the *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* school desegregation decision and the 25th anniversary of the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The volume is edited by the labor scholar, former Labor Secretary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and *New Politics* sponsor, Herbert Hill, and by the distinguished professor, labor arbitrator and former Associate Solicitor of the U.S. Department of Labor, James E. Jones, Jr. Although roughly half of the collection's individual essays are by lawyers, judges or professors of law, the best metaphors for its content come from medicine: *Race in America* offers an extremely apt and full diagnosis of what one of the contributors calls the "rise and fall" of optimism regarding constitutional assaults on racism and more partial and problematic prescriptions regarding how progress might be made on the legal-constitutional front.

As befits a book growing out of a conference on *Brown* and on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the focus is not on race relations in a broad social (nor even electorally political) sense, but rather on the evolution of civil rights law and especially of litigation regarding race. Even the several fine contributions by sociologists and social policy experts tend to treat subjects such as the impact of desegregation of schools in a framework highly cognizant of not only the impact of past, but also the prospect of future, litigation. Although the prose is generally lively, the content of many of the essays is in some ways reminiscent of a legal brief. At its best, such legal argumentation is forceful and focussed, but it will not be to the taste of all readers. Evidence often tends to come from the courts' decisions, or in quantified examinations of indices of inequality — such as those provided in Reynolds Farley's enormously useful "The Common Destiny of Blacks and Whites" — or in impressionistic snippets, including the recurring allusion to Colin Powell's career as an indicator of the rise of what Farley calls "black power" (p. 229, also p. 168 and p. 418) since 1964. What gives force, indeed poignancy, to the collection is the attempt, often by participants in the legal movement, to end discrimination in the 50s and 60s, and to make sense of the achievements and limits of that movement. The essays treat the *Brown* decision more than the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and tend to regard the 1954 desegregation case with great reverence. On one level, this involves a careful paying of tribute to the giants whose persistence, strategy and arguments undermined and routed the "separate but equal" doctrine legitimizing educational Jim Crow. The evocation of the late Thurgood Marshall's role will be familiar to many readers, but Nathaniel R. Jones' homage to Charles Hamilton Houston introduces a less well-known, but undeniably central, figure in the courtroom dramas of desegregation.

THE VERY AWE IN WHICH CONTRIBUTORS RIGHTLY HOLD THE PROCESS AND THE PEOPLE SETTING the groundwork for the *Brown* decision, obscures real differences among them about the meaning of that decision. In characterizing *Brown* as "without doubt the most momentous decision of the century," (p.99) Nathaniel R. Jones stresses its broad impact as "the locomotive of the train onto which aggrieved groups and individuals have hitched their claims" (p.99). But Julius L. Chambers suggests that the logic of the decision was much narrower and that "the Court was hewing to its traditional role of making decisions on the basis of the

facts and circumstances before it (p.186)." James S. Liebman characterizes the decision itself as "harboring" a "number of possible antidiscrimination principles" and as important insofar as it set a broad framework for decades of zigzagging interpretations (p.112). Kenneth Clark's fascinating essay of reminiscence finds significance in *Brown's* ability to produce "an optimistic outlook tantamount to euphoria" (p.17).

Disagreements over the meaning of *Brown* reflect and influence diverging views concerning what went wrong with its implementation and what is to be done. Clark, despite an aside criticizing black nationalism as a media-enhanced Trojan horse in the freedom movement, is almost unreservedly pessimistic regarding desegregation. Seeing his own life as a "series of glorious defeats," he is "forced to face the likely possibility that the United States will never rid itself of racism." *Brown*-inspired euphoria was simply "naïve," as the subsequent course of a society in which "segregated schools not only continued, but in some cases actually increased as white parents moved to the suburbs" (p.18) showed. Robert L. Carter similarly "sense[s] that the climate is bleaker than I can ever recall" (p.83) and that "federal courts may no longer be the forum in which one can be assured of receiving racial justice" (p.94). He adds that "*Brown* has failed in its primary purpose," but nevertheless concludes that the decision "will always stand at the highest pinnacle of American judicial expression" (p.93). Chambers' wrestling with the issue of promise and decline is still more wrenching and ambivalent. He generously and repeatedly praises as "visionary" (p.185) W.E.B. DuBois' many-sided critique of the tendency to regard *Brown* as a panacea, but after holding that "Derrick Bell and others have argued, quite persuasively, that *Brown* and related decisions have only served the interests of the white majority" (p.185), Chambers nonetheless argues that on the central issues of improving educational opportunities available to black students and contributing broadly to "... social and economic progress" (p.186) the strategy of litigation embodied in *Brown* was unproblematically correct.

In arguing for both gloom and for full homage to the *Brown* decision, the authors are not naïve. With certain brief exceptions, they resist seeing the 1954 opinion as being "betrayed" by later traducers, acknowledging instead political and economic change over time and ambiguities in the original decision. Some emphasize the symbolic power of the decision while others follow Gary Orfield's logic in his "School Desegregation After Two Generations," which details the extent to which educational desegregation has succeeded for students of all races, when carefully implemented, especially in the South and in plans which cross city-suburb boundaries.

Even so, this serious case for an integrationist, court-based strategy has substantial faults. At times, it is apparently based on a reflexive assimilationism which, despite a nuanced tradition of black nationalism stretching from Henry Highland Garnet to DuBois to Sterling Stuckey, sees all such nationalism as narrow and backward (p.198). Moreover, to maintain that desegregation works, if given a fair chance, can beg the tough question of how the preconditions for such a fair chance can be achieved, both in political terms and given demographic tendencies toward white flight. (Despite a forceful debunking of media and white commonsensical myths about affirmative action by James E. Jones, Jr., the collection includes still less on political strategies to implement that reform than it does on desegregating schools.) When concrete strategies designed, as Liebman

puts it, "to implement *Brown* anew" (p.112) are outlined, they are typically quite legalistic, as in John C. Brittain's interesting account of recent Connecticut initiatives. Moreover, they are often exceedingly troubling in their linkage of redress to reactionary and neoliberal educational assessment plans — plans driven and measured by results on racially biased standardized tests — and to a national/corporate interest in productivity.

PERHAPS FOR THESE REASONS, I FOUND THE MOST HOPEFUL AND VITAL SECTIONS OF *RACE IN America* to be those which will strike some as the least practical. The historical contributions are especially strong. Aldon Morris' "Centuries of Black Protest" sets *Brown* within the context of long, glorious and international freedom struggles. Morris demonstrates that African-American self-activity in fashioning "free spaces" has historically posed and sharpened the question of "Which side is the federal government on?" far more than federal action has nurtured freedom movements. Ronald Takaki's inventive and persuasive "A Tale of Two Decades: Race and Class in the 1880s and 1980s" mounts a series of apposite comparisons and broaches the question of non-black minority races more fully than any other of the essays. He brilliantly situates the myth of the Asian-American success amidst the increase in black poverty, "the decline of the white middle class" and the consequent casting about by anxious opinion-makers for "a 'success' model" (p.408).

Herbert Hill's "Black Workers, Organized Labor and Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act" chronicles struggles of which Hill, as NAACP labor secretary, was very much a part. Readers of *New Politics* will be familiar with Hill's indictments of the historic record of racism by organized labor, but this essay may be his most arresting elaboration on the theme.² The emphasis lies not merely on the misdeeds of the labor movement but on the drama of the NAACP's attempts to implement a difficult "two-pronged" (p.264) strategy which kept the AFL-CIO lined up behind civil rights legislation even as it campaigned against racism in individual unions, including unions such as the United Auto Workers which led labor initiatives for the Civil Rights Act. Hill's probing analysis serves him well in understanding why Title VII, "given life only after extensive compromise" and embodying "contradictory and conflicting provisions," (p.305) gave rise to so much debate and litigation over interpretation, especially where seniority systems were concerned.

Stanford Lyman's study of the history of sociological thought on race brings to bear the freshness and iconoclasm characteristic of Lyman's work, particularly in treating the ideas of Talcott Parsons and of Robert Park.

The least easily summarized and in many ways the most provocative of the essays come early and late and represent the recent rise of critical race theory and other critical approaches among American legal scholars. Derrick Bell's "Remembrances of Racism Past" features a striking insight on virtually every page. Bell underscores the weight of socio-political context in litigation when he shrewdly reminds us that "A.W. Tourgee and C.F. Phillips, who brought the litigation that became *Plessy v. Ferguson*, were also good lawyers," (p.76) but could not succeed in the 1890s as the *Brown* attorneys could in the 1950s. He suggests that the U.S. has a "white problem" and that "until whites get smart, blacks can't be free" (p.81). Most important, he identifies a key pattern, one brilliantly elucidated in a recent *Harvard Law Review* article by Cheryl Harris, in recent anti-affirmative

action court decisions when he notes that courts are recognizing and leaving intact an expected "property right in whiteness" which "always defeats the entitlements of blacks" (p.80).³

Patricia J. Williams' "Fetal Fictions: An Exploration of Property Archetypes in Racial and Gendered Contexts" brings *Race in America* to a suggestive, subtle and marvelous close. Williams bases much of her profundity around family history and daily life. She reflects on matters which literally have given her headaches, from mechanized chicken farms to housing discrimination, and which have given her inspiration to study property, ownership and law, fitting topics for the great-great granddaughter of a Bolivar, Tennessee slave who was "the property of a wealthy white lawyer who fathered and owned her children" (pp.426-27). Many searching, unexpected connections are made as Williams surveys a legal system and a culture which has learned to live with misery and brutality in no small part through experiences with slavery and racial oppression. When a federal court decided *UAW v. Johnson Controls* in 1989 that women of childbearing age, but not other workers, should be protected from jobs involving exposure to lead poisoning, it effectively ruled, according to Williams, that "only fetuses and potential fetuses were protected" — by the removal of the women from their jobs—and "actual, living employees" (p.430) deserved no such protection. In reaching this conclusion, Williams notes, the judges relied strongly on the Supreme Court's reasoning in *Wards Cove Packing Company v. Antonio* (1989) which "imposed very high burdens of proof on plaintiffs in suits contesting employers' assertions of business necessity" (p.430) in suits turning on racial discrimination. "Business necessity" in the *Johnson Controls* case then became transmuted into the necessity to avoid lawsuits on behalf of possible children of lead poisoned mothers. "Business interests" in the *Wards Cove* and *Johnson Controls* cases trump not only racial justice and gender equity but the safety of all workers, male and female, in a manner which makes a mockery of any attempt to study class oppression apart from racial oppression and women's oppression. For that reason, and a host of others suggested by this fine but sometimes sobering collection, we will want to watch closely the unfolding example of South African attempts to join the issues of racial justice, affirmative action and social transformation, looking not so much for lessons as for challenges and inspirations.

NOTES

1. The first quote is from the African National Congress Constitutional Commission, *Discussion Document: Constitutional Principles and Structures for a Democratic South Africa* (University of the Western Cape, 1991). Sachs' comments come in his "Towards a Bill of Rights for a Democratic South Africa," *Journal of African Law* 35 (1991). p.21 and p.29, both as quoted in Cheryl I. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," *Harvard Law Review*, 106:8 (June 1993), 1790 n. 334 and 1789 n. 333.

2. Hill, "Race, Ethnicity and Organized Labor: The Opposition to Affirmative Action," *New Politics*, Volume I, No.2, Winter 1987, (New Series), pp.31-82.

3. Harris, "Whiteness as Property," 1710-1791; see also, for a sense of the important antiracist work appearing in law reviews, e.g., Neil Gotanda, "A Critique of Our Constitution is Color-Blind," *Stanford Law Review*, p.44 (November 1991), pp.1-68, and Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Race, Reform, and Retrenchment: Transformation and Legitimation in Antidiscrimination Law," *Harvard Law Review*, p.101 (1988), 1331-1387.

History of Racial Oppression

FACES AT THE BOTTOM OF THE WELL: THE PERMANENCE OF RACISM by Derrick Bell. New York, Basic Books, 1992. Cloth \$20.00, Paper \$10.00.

Reviewed by Reginald Wilson

W. E. B. DuBois wrote in 1907 that the principal problem of the 20th century would be the color line. He was correct. Derrick Bell undoubtedly believes it will be the problem of the 21st century, continuing into the foreseeable future, as well. That is the predominant thesis of *Faces at the Bottom of the Well: the Permanence of Racism* and the reason for its notoriety. In an interview in the *New York Times*, he argued that "America is a racist country and always will be," but rather than finding this a cause for gloom, he insists that, "It reaffirms that it is not [blacks'] fault ... It is an affirmation of themselves and not a basis for despair." Even though he does not, therefore, hold out hope for success in fighting that deep-seated racism, he says, "there is satisfaction in the struggle itself."

Faces at the Bottom of the Well is a powerful recital of the history of racial oppression through a series of fables, usually involving the fictional character, Geneva Crenshaw, first introduced in Derrick Bell's previous book, *And We Are Not Saved: The Elusive Quest for Racial Justice*. Ms. Crenshaw, a lawyer, serves as the voice of hard-edged reality and the foil in the philosophical dialogues with Professor Bell. For example, in one fable, Ms. Crenshaw proposes the Racial Preference Licensing Act, a new federal law allowing white business owners to discriminate openly (rather than covertly as they do now) against blacks by paying a 3% tax into an "equality fund" that would be used to support education and business opportunities for blacks. The discussion around the Racial Preference Licensing Act is used to make the point that, "it is time to bring hard-headed realism rather than well-intentioned idealism to bear on our long-standing racial problems."

Other provocative fables are used to make additional telling points, the most striking of which is the tale of "The Space Traders." Creatures from another planet agree to solve all of America's economic and social problems, at one cost: the entire black population must be carried off to an unknown destiny in outer space. The story is used to comment on good and evil behavior of blacks and whites; its inevitable conclusion — yes, the whites agree to sacrifice the blacks — is nevertheless stunning. Professor Bell concludes that, "in the melding of millions of individuals into a nation — some within it *must* be sacrificed, killed or kept in misery so that the rest who share the guilt for this monstrous wrong can bring out of their guilt those qualities of forbearance and tolerance essential for group survival and growth." Thus, the inevitability, indeed, the necessity of racism in society.

"A truly integrated society that is brought into being by the enforcement of laws barring discriminatory conduct, history and — one would hope — common

REGINALD WILSON is Senior Scholar at the American Council on Education. He has written widely on race and education.

sense tells us that dream is never coming true," says Geneva Crenshaw. Bell goes even further. "We must first recognize and acknowledge...that our actions are not likely to lead to transcendent change and may indeed...be of more help to the system we despise." For example, in response to student protests, Harvard hires one or two black token professors, the protest dies down and little is changed.

Yet, despite the provocative fables and striking history lessons, the book ultimately disappoints. Professor Bell examines race relations from a static perspective and, therefore, despite his acute sense of history, cannot see progress. In a *New York Times* interview, Bell says, "Despite all the changes over the years, blacks are worse off and more subjugated than at any time since slavery." This is demonstrably untrue and lends a bleaker than necessary hue to our present prospects. It is this judgment that underlies Bell's view that racism is permanent and unchanging.

Professor Bell leaves the reader with scant hope for redress against a racism so embedded in and reinforced by its social context that, paradoxically, actions directed against it serve to reinforce it in mutated form. Yet blacks are counseled not to succumb to despair but to take "satisfaction in the struggle itself." How can a struggle which invariably strengthens the forces of oppression or, at best, results in a pyrrhic victory, remain a viable source of motivation? This is not to suggest that the forces of racism are easily overcome; they are deeply rooted in American society — but that strategies for fighting them are many and varied once they are viewed from other political and social perspectives.

A HINT OF EXPLANATION IS MENTIONED BY BELL BUT, CHARACTERISTICALLY, HE DOES NOT follow up to explore the consequences. He observes that, "throughout history politicians have used blacks as scapegoats for failed economic or political policies." And then goes on to note: "when whites perceive that it will be profitable, or at least cost-free to serve, hire, admit or otherwise deal with blacks on a non-discriminatory basis, they do so." It seems evident that whites are not monolithically racist and can respond positively so long as there is no racially polarizing battle over the limited resources for which capitalism is responsible. This is an opening to what could have been a very enlightening discussion, which Bell does not pursue. Moreover, it could have led to a wider discussion in an even broader framework by examining how racism plays itself out in a world-wide context.

In that regard, Bell quotes Frantz Fanon favorably as saying, "I as a man of color do not have the right to hope that in the white man there will be a crystallization of guilt toward the past of my race." Quite the contrary, there is a growing movement made up of white people willing to wallow in guilt permanently. Many call themselves "anti-racist racists" and spend much of their time in retreat from politics working self-therapeutically against their own racism. As Bertram Gross shrewdly observed, "anger, outrage, confessions of overwhelming guilt may be good therapy; they can also become a barrier to effective action." What is required is whites, committed to work on institutional and societal racism, to transcend self-flagellation for sustained *political* commitment.

Fanon is cited again, to reinforce Bell's conclusion, to the effect that he "did not believe that modern structures, deeply poisoned with racism, could be overthrown. And yet he urged resistance." But Fanon also recognized deeply insurgent counterimpulses stating that, "no attempt must be made to encase man, for

it is his destiny to be set free," and implemented this vision by struggling on the side of Algeria in its war with France, from which it eventually won its freedom. Fanon believed that, in concert with others, he could change seemingly immutable circumstances.

Bell believes that "liberal democracy and racism in the United States are historically, even inherently, reinforcing ... the apparent anomaly is an actual symbiosis ... the permanence of this 'symbiosis' ensures that civil rights gains will be temporary and setbacks inevitable." In a closely argued analytical chapter on legal history, Bell persuasively shows that this is true. But his analysis is limited by confining it to the United States and to the present. Such limitation does not lend itself to showing how American law was influenced by world events and historical entanglements around the globe. For example, the rapid desegregation of American society does not make much sense simply in the context of United States, but makes enormous sense in the context of decolonization in the Third World accompanied by simultaneous liberation struggles. Racism, in the final analysis, is the social justification of unequal power and oppression, and the world-wide struggle of blacks and other people of color profoundly affects its maintenance and perpetuation in this country.

Despite his brilliant analysis of present day racism sustained by law and society, Derrick Bell's limited vision leaves him with no answer save futile struggle which may only worsen the black condition. This is not to say that confronting the burden of racism is not an awesome task or that there are guarantees that it will be overcome. But the duty of intellectuals is to seek strategies, to place the struggle in the context of the world liberation movements and to provide guidance to those who continue to struggle. On that score, Professor Bell falls short. He gives succor to those who want to keep things just as they are.

A Blend of Caution and Optimism

MOMENTS OF DECISION: POLITICAL HISTORY AND THE CRISES OF RADICALISM by Stephen Eric Bronner. New York, Routledge, 1992. 164 pp. Cloth \$55.00, Paper \$16.95.

Reviewed by Frank Cunningham

THE MOMENTS OF DECISION ADDRESSED IN THIS WELL-WRITTEN AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING book are key junctures in 20th century Europe and North America when the course of events was not unfolding as theorists and activists on the Left would have preferred and when difficult and momentous decisions by them were required.

The moments Stephen Bronner addresses are: the failed effort to secure international socialist solidarity in the period before the First World War; the triumph of National Socialism in Germany; the challenges facing the French Popular Front at the end of the 1930s; the success of the Cold War; promises and shortcomings of the New Left; and current attempts to rethink socialism after the 1989 Communist collapses. Written in the lucid and accessible style of his earlier books (*Rosa Luxemburg* and *Socialism Unbound*), the capsule histories offered by Bronner make for informative reading. A large variety of sophisticated scholarship is condensed to give one a good picture of these crucial periods, without detracting from their problematic and complex natures. Indeed it is a main function of the work to highlight the perplexing conundrums each "moment" presented to progressive actors caught up in them.

Bronner's intent, however, is not merely historical. He wishes by these historical sketches to illustrate certain principles that inform a methodology recommended for thinkers and activists confronted with contemporary decisive moments. The core principle is that such actors are simultaneously bound within "a network of [political, economic and institutional] constraints not of their own making" (p.4) and also confronted with options among which choice is possible. Now this principle may seem commonplace, articulated as it was at least since the time of Marx (who famously noted in his analysis of a decisive "moment," the *18 Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, that people make their own history, though they do not make it as they please), but it is one thing to announce such a perspective and another to employ it. As the historical sketches of *Moments* well illustrate, left activity all too easily locks itself into fatalistic resignation or equally futile attempts to fly in the face of constraining fact.

European socialists prior to World War I, for example, certainly did lack the means to achieve a socialist revolution or even to present their various governments with a serious threat, but their decision to align themselves in "civil truces" with these governments was not the only alternative to attempting a Europe-

FRANK CUNNINGHAM teaches political philosophy at the University of Toronto. His most recent book is *The Real World of Democracy Revisited: and Other Essays on Democracy and Socialism* (Humanities Press, 1994).

wide revolution, and it made subsequent international cooperation all the more difficult without abating the ill effects of the war. Neither in this case, nor in that of socialists in pre-Hitler Germany facing weak democratic traditions and strong atavistic classes, of post-war European socialists confronting the success of the Marshall Plan and Soviet-dominated Communist Party politics, or of the other problematic situations he addresses, does Bronner stipulate precisely what course of action ought to have been taken. However, I do not take this to be the intent of the book, which is, rather, to indicate how, in the present as in the past, decisions are always possible, albeit always bound by real constraints.

Of the six moments, I found that of Léon Blum's Socialist Party during the short lived Popular Front in France especially provocative. Bronner notes the lamentable concessions Blum made to French capitalists and his reluctance to give unequivocal support to the Republican cause in the Spanish Civil War — decisions that Bronner thinks need not have been made. At the same time the situation the Socialist-led Popular Front found itself in is typical of any democratic socialist party that wins popular support to govern, but lacks such support for the more radical core of its socialist values. To pursue such values against popular sentiment violates democracy; not to pursue them betrays the values and plays into anti-socialist hands.

WHILE BRONNER HAS OBVIOUSLY THOUGHT THROUGH THE MOMENTS HE ADDRESSES in accord with this guiding principle, it should not be surprising that he is most tentative with respect to the last moment, the one contemporary socialists now confront. This is couched by Bronner in an excellent critique of Francis Fukuyama's "End of History" thesis. Bronner's approach to the question of how pro-active socialist decisions might now be made highlights a critique of postmodernist rejection of the Enlightenment. Despite the temptation of many contemporary theorists to stand up and be counted on this question, I confess to finding the practice infelicitous. In fact, Bronner agrees with the central postmodernist anti-Enlightenment view relevant to political activity, namely its rejection of historical necessity (p.140). It is also out of keeping with his generally nonsectarian approach to political theory to perpetuate the battle of the pro- and anti-Enlightenment "schools," each of which no doubt contains both wheat and chaff.

Many on the Left today express pessimism about the possibility of effective political action in the face of the disrepute into which socialism has fallen, the resurgence of neoliberalism, and the aggression of global capitalist marketization. The virtue of *Moments of Decision* is, at the very least, to remind such people that this is not the first time that it was hard to make progressive political decisions. Beyond this, Bronner's exercise offers a lot of both positive and negative examples, and it encourages a salubrious blend of caution and optimism in approaching momentous decisions of the present.

A Revolutionary Analysis of Soviet Tyranny

WORLD REVOLUTION 1917-1936: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE COMMUNIST INTERNATIONAL, by C.L.R. James. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1993, 429 pp., \$19.95 PB. Originally published in 1937.

Reviewed by Kent Worcester

"A MASTERPIECE — OF POLITICAL DEMENTIA," WAS HOW ONE REVIEWER, A MEMBER OF THE Communist Party of Great Britain, described James's vigorous polemic when it was first published in 1937. Those who considered themselves loyal to the Soviet Union were likely to have been shocked and appalled by this outlandish work. *World Revolution* was written at a time when the vast preponderance of radicals and progressives were emotionally and politically dedicated to the survival and maintenance of the Soviet regime. In a private letter to Leon Trotsky, its author expressed the hope that his forthcoming book would help change matters. "We shall have a good basis for putting across our line," he wrote. "The Communist Party is terribly frightened by the prospect [of publication] for they, more than anyone else, know all that is to be said about their criminal policy during the last few years."

The historical context that informed the publication of this book is worth emphasizing. The international depression had simultaneously undermined the legitimacy of market capitalism and enhanced the reputation of Soviet-style planning. The consolidation of Stalinism, characterized by severe domestic repression coupled with a foreign policy of *realpolitik*, engendered uncritical support from tens of thousands of activists in Europe, North America, and elsewhere. Only a fledgling Left Opposition labored to uphold the banner of Marxism-Leninism. James's book was intended to enhance the position of the beleaguered Oppositionists by providing a comprehensive critique of the Stalinist betrayal of international communism.

World Revolution thus had a critical role to play in the propaganda work of the Opposition, not only in Britain but across Trotskyism's scattered domain. (For this reason its original publisher later referred to the book as "the bible of Trotskyism.") Calling attention to "crimes" and "blunders" committed by the leadership of the international Communist movement in the context of revolutionary crises in Germany, China, and Spain, its central thesis was that with the rise of Stalinism the Soviets placed a greater value on their own national security than on workers' self-activity. Yet James held out the chance that the regime's radical élan could be restored, by reviving Soviet democracy and overthrowing the bureaucracy. In the absence of such a "political revolution," however, the Soviet Union would stray further from the socialist path and would come to function as an essentially counter-revolutionary force in world affairs.

THE BOOK IS ALMOST CERTAINLY THE MOST "ORTHODOX" TEXT THAT JAMES EVER PRODUCED. "How much the book owes to Trotsky, the text can only partially show," he wrote.

KENT WORCESTER is a member of the New Politics editorial board.

The author staunchly defends Trotsky's characterization of the Soviet Union as a "degenerated workers' state." (Within a few years he had moved toward a "state capitalist" position; by 1951 James had broken all ties with Trotskyism.) With Trotsky, the book called for building a new international to defend the gains of October and forge new revolutionary movements in the industrial countries. The last chapter, "A Fourth International is the Only Hope," viewed such a development as essential for both the cause of socialism and the defense of the Soviet Union. "The USSR," James flatly predicted, "cannot survive without a revolutionary international." As he wrote a few pages on: "If the Third International loses its last stronghold, in France, and Fascism conquers in that country, then unless the workers of the world can create another international...the Workers' State of Soviet Russia is doomed."

Following Trotsky, James argued that the coming war in Europe would create new openings for revolutionary intervention at the same time that it tested the stability and endurance of the Stalinist system. Something of the flavor of this cataclysmic but ultimately hopeful assessment of the global political situation was expressed in the opening chapter ("Marxism"):

We may well see, especially after the universal ruin and destruction of the coming war, a revolutionary movement which, beginning in one of the great European cities, in the course of a few short months, will sweep the imperialist bourgeoisie out of power, not only in every country in Europe, but in India, China, Egypt and South Africa. With an organized International revolutionary socialism could face the future without dismay. The task of rebuilding such an international has been begun. It is a race with time.

Despite its apparent orthodoxy, Trotsky found fault with *World Revolution*, arguing that the book's account of Stalinism was "formalistic" in that it emphasized exogenous factors — such as the failure of working-class revolution to spread throughout western Europe, and the economic and military pressures placed on the regime by the liberal democracies — rather than recognizing the endogenous factors at work, such as Stalin's relationship to the bureaucracy, and the physical and political exhaustion of the proletarian vanguard during and after the Civil War. While both men agreed that the Soviet experiment had been irreparably damaged by forces operating in the external environment, Trotsky appeared far more inclined than James to link the rise of Stalinism to the nation's underdeveloped or "backward" character.

Whatever their disagreements — and in a new introduction, the British author Al Richardson makes a strong case for these being far more substantial than most readers may realize — *World Revolution* neatly encapsulated the classical Trotskyist position on international affairs. For this reason, it occupies an uneasy position within the Jamesian corpus. James never quite renounced the book, but he may have felt that it was effectively superseded by *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950), and *Notes on Dialectics* (1948), two works that laid the basis for an independent, post-Trotskyist Marxism. Sixteen years after the publication of *World Revolution* — i.e., long after he had abandoned the book's underlying perspective — its brazen rhetoric was used against him during deportation proceedings by the U.S. authorities. Today it stands as testimony to the epic nature of the battle against Soviet tyranny and western complacency.

The Exorcist

PAST IMPERFECT: FRENCH INTELLECTUALS, 1944-1956, by Tony Judt. (Berkeley, New York, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1992). 358 pp., \$30.

Reviewed by Mark Kesselman

JUDT'S AMBITIOUS VOLUME HAS THREE AIMS. First, he seeks to pinpoint the moral failings and monumental misjudgments of France's Left intellectuals during the somber period stretching from the end of the Second World War to the watershed year of 1956. (At that point, Khrushchev's denunciation of Stalin's crimes definitively dispelled any remaining illusions for all but the most willfully blind.) Second, he documents the similarity between the rash political engagement of Left intellectuals in the 1944-1956 period, and earlier and later currents in French political culture. And third, he seeks to explain the reasons for the distinctive position of intellectuals within France and to derive more general political and theoretical lessons from his case study of French intellectuals' imbalanced political engagement in the postwar period.

Past Imperfect analyzes the myopia of the two most influential groups of French intellectuals in the postwar years, the existentialists around Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir and Left Catholics around Emmanuel Mounier and Jean-Marie Domenach. In chapter after chapter, he relentlessly chronicles the shocking manner in which leading intellectuals associated with these currents denied or defended the crimes of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, and Central and Eastern Europe.

As Judt recognizes, countless works have appeared which "turn the [critical] spotlight on French intellectuals and their erstwhile flirtation with Marxism." (p. 3) However, he claims, *Past Imperfect* is distinctive. By contrast to previous accounts, his is not a self-serving memoir (he did not participate in the events that he analyzes). Unlike many other analyses, he does not explain the shortcomings of intellectuals solely by reference to the domestic and international conjuncture of the period, that is, the Cold War. Rather, he aims to situate his case study in the wider context of postwar Europe "and the deeper roots of French intellectual style and practices in the war, in the troubled decade of the thirties, and in the structures of French public and cultural life since the Enlightenment."¹ He also identifies parallels between the characteristic stance of postwar intellectuals and subsequent currents (structuralism and post-structuralism) in French intellectual life.

Contrary to his stated intention, however, *Past Imperfect* is little more than a savage indictment of Left intellectuals in the postwar period. Judt's approach often appears uncomfortably close to reflecting what he criticizes as "the politically motivated desire to uncover the sins of the fathers." (p. 4) There is not a

Mark Kesselman teaches political science at Columbia University and co-author of *European Politics in Transition* (second edition), published by D.C. Heath, 1992.

passage in the book with something positive to say about postwar intellectuals. The tone is reminiscent of Cold War (and post-Cold War) liberalism.

France's intellectuals should not be excused for their moral failings. But Judt might appreciate more fully the complex dilemmas they confronted. For example, in light of his fine discussion of the many reasons why intellectuals in the prewar period were disgusted with the moral decay of the Third Republic, their reluctance to defend the regime in the late 1930s becomes more understandable, as does the fact that many equivocated when Marshall Pétain destroyed the Third Republic and assumed power. But, as Judt observes, given the absence at that time of "ideological and linguistic means with which to construct a morally defensible polity," (p. 25) it was difficult to conceive of a viable alternative.

Although the ugly character of the Vichy regime quickly became apparent, Judt asserts that intellectuals' response strengthened a tendency "already characteristic of the later Third Republic and now shaped into a moral language by the struggle against Vichy. [T]hey [intellectuals] divided all experience, all choices — indeed, all humanity — into binary categories: good or evil, positive or negative, comrades or enemies." (p. 35) Moreover, this stance had deep roots in the past and persisted into the postwar period: "A natural and normal practice in time of war, this angry Manichaeism continued to mark France long after the resolution of the conflict with Germany" (p. 35).

Judt traces these attitudes to deep-rooted currents in French political culture, dating from the Great Revolution. Further, the myths of Resistance and Liberation-myths in light of the scanty number of authentic *Résistants* compared to the large number of those claiming combattant status — nourished Manichaean tendencies in the postwar period. Although France was clearly no longer in a position to play a leading geopolitical role on the world stage, by some terrible alchemy the Soviet Union was transformed into the natural heir to the modernizing, rationalizing, liberating French Revolution. So was forged the (very) imperfect past of French intellectuals.

THE FRENCH COMMUNIST PARTY (PCF) APPROPRIATED the revolutionary mantle with a vengeance, both because of the party's heroic role in the Resistance and because many leading intellectuals sought to exculpate themselves for their war-time compromises by supporting the PCF. Although, among France's leading postwar intellectuals, only Louis Aragon actually joined the PCF, the party enjoyed broad support among intellectuals. Unfortunately, the PCF's workerism and anti-intellectualism — which contrasts with the orientation of the Italian Communist Party, the other leading Communist Party of Western Europe — permitted such noxious features as a homoerotic rhetoric idealizing ostensibly masculine virtues (violence, virility, and comradeship); noisy opposition to treason and collaboration — now extended to all domestic class enemies and the United States; and the necessity to struggle and above all *resist*.²

There are several difficulties with Judt's description of French intellectual discourse. He displays a strong tendency toward the very Manichaeism he condemns. In postwar France, the two principal groups of Left intellectuals he examines can do no right; Raymond Aron and a select group of liberal intellectuals can do no wrong. He mentions in passing, but devotes no attention to the fact that the typical orientation he criticizes was not confined to Left intellectuals but

"was as true for Catholics and the Right as it was for Republicans and the Socialist Left" (p. 55).

Since Tocqueville's *The Old Régime and the Intellectuals*, many observers have charged that French intellectuals are irresponsible and occupy an unduly powerful role in French public life. By reciting their misdeeds during the Cold War, Judt issues a general warning about the dangers of virtually any political engagement (save perhaps in defense of human rights). But this is a non sequitur, and he fails to consider the other side of the coin: the costs of abstention. Moreover, Judt bolsters his case by one-sided condemnation, ad hominem attacks, and psychological reductionism. For example, he charges that an important reason for intellectuals' radical stance in the postwar period was their moderation during the war: "Like Sartre and his friends, Mounier and his colleagues had experienced History and did not wish to be left behind again. This desire to be in the front line at whatever cost to their spiritual comfort amounted on more than one occasion to an almost groveling approach in the face of history and the violence that attended its advance." (p. 86) Another example: "The frailty of their [the existentialist] position, a sense that the membrane separating the authenticity of existentialism from the bad faith of Fascists was far too thin, was part of what drove postwar intellectuals into ever more radical postures, a sort of epistemological overkill. This accounts for their inability to commit themselves to compromise... ." (p. 85)

Judt's dismissal of the intellectual and artistic achievements of postwar Left intellectuals further imbalances his account. Granted that he is clear about his aim: *Past Imperfect* "is not a history of French intellectuals; it is, rather, an essay on intellectual irresponsibility, a study of the moral condition of the intelligentsia in postwar France." (p. 11) The book reports intellectuals' statements and silences about political developments in the Soviet Union, East and Central Europe and, to a lesser extent, the United States. But he apparently considers the intellectuals' cultural production of little value in any event. For example, "As a rule, philosophers found Sartre slippery; playwrights thought him didactic. But each supposed him to be a genius at the other activity" (p. 80, fn 8). One would never know from the book that the works of Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, and others who appear in the docket of *Past Imperfect* continue to elicit serious and respectful scholarly attention.³

JUDT'S TREATMENT OF INTELLECTUALS' ANTI-AMERICANISM is consistent with his general political agenda. He interprets the prevalence of anti-American attitudes as a product of humiliation at France's defeat in 1940, liberation by the United States in 1945, and nostalgia for France's lost position as intellectual/ cultural leader and world power. But he does not analyze American actions of the period, notably, that the United States exploited its commanding position after the Second World War to intervene in internal French affairs in order to dictate French policy and shape a compliant Europe.⁴ Judt's passionate indignation about the Prague coup is evident, and he devotes meticulous attention to French intellectuals' failure to react appropriately. However, the numerous coups carried out under American tutelage throughout the world during this period are nowhere mentioned.⁵ Judt does, however, recognize the importance of American actions in shaping the character of their engagement after the war: "The overwhelming majority of writers, artists, teachers, and journalists were not for Stalin: they were against

Truman. They were not for labor camps, they were against colonialism. They were not for show trials in Prague, they were against torture in Tunisia.” (p. 178)

When French intellectuals did protest state repression, that is, French colonial repression in the 1950s, he suggests that the reason it engaged their attention was because it “had the advantage of directing interest away from communism at a convenient moment... Part of the appeal of the colonial question was that it posed seemingly straightforward moral choices, in contrast to the complex, opaque ones associated with communism.” (p. 283) In particular, Algeria was “an ideal exit [for intellectuals] from the Communist imbroglio... Involvement in the heated discussion over France’s North African policy served at once as a retreat to national concerns and a bridge to a renewed internationalism, distinctive and satisfying.” (p. 284) Apparently, damned if you do (opposing human rights violation by the French), and damned if you don’t (ignoring human rights violations by the Soviets).

In sum, Judt conveys the impression of continuing to fight Cold War battles long after the war’s end. Save for a brief critique of subsequent intellectuals, including structuralists, post-structuralists, the “new philosophers,” and post-modernists, *Past Imperfect* reads as if it were written 30 years ago.⁶

Perhaps to strengthen the case for the misdeeds of French Left intellectuals, Judt overstates their influence. They were not hegemonic even in the arts. Consider most films of the period. The radio networks (this was the pre-television era) were a propaganda arm of the government. The educational system was firmly controlled by a republican current often opposed to the far Left. Moreover, Judt simply ignores French-style McCarthyism during this (and later) periods. As in the United States, those on the far Left had little chance of pursuing a career in the French bureaucracy. Indeed, most sectors of French society and politics were hostile to the Left. Thus, if the Cold War divided France in two, the two parts were highly unequal — and the Left was by far the smaller.

Furthermore, Judt fails to recognize currents within the Left critical of the Soviet Union. Although the book’s jacket claims that he analyzes “the intellectual community as a whole,” he accords little attention to those intellectuals “who sought somehow to maintain a radical position compatible with opposition to communism.” (p. 118) He grants that they represent “important signposts in the history of late Marxism and in the private conflicts they reflect, but their impact too should not be exaggerated.” (p. 119) Indeed, he deems their situation “a limbo.” (p. 118) The result is to convey the misleading impression that Left intellectuals formed a monolithic pro-Soviet apologetic front. By underplaying the importance of Left critics of Stalinism, *Past Imperfect* contributes to the Manichaeism that it criticizes and conveys the impression that Left political engagement is inherently suspect.

JUDT’S IMBALANCED ACCOUNT SERVES A LARGER PURPOSE. At a more general level, he relies on his case study to challenge the possibility and desirability of virtually all engagement on behalf of radical change. He asserts, “... A *refusal* (his italics) to occupy the post of the (engaged) intellectual may be the most positive of the steps modern thinkers can take... ” (p. 318) Not surprisingly, he joins the chorus of those skeptical of progressive change: “Who, now, takes seriously the promise of Marxism, the assurances of even modest utopian futures?” (p. 294) In one of the few references to contemporary political events, the May Movement of 1968

and the Left's electoral victory in 1981 are found guilty by association: "The myth of revolution, the moral leverage of 1917, were alive and well and living in Paris not only in 1956 and 1968, but also in 1981." (p. 294)

Presumably, Judt and others who reject political engagement on behalf of radical change may rejoice that the epoch of utopian hopes has ended. Following the failure of the Socialist government elected in 1981, most French intellectuals have abandoned political engagement in favor of cultural criticism. Free at last of their pernicious influence, France (and the world) should be the better. And yet, somehow, that doesn't appear to be the case.

NOTES

¹This is quoted from the dust jacket of the book.

²Many have noted the importance of this rhetorical style. See, for example, the work of Bertrand Badie on the language used by the CGT (the union allied to the PCF).

³He suggests that the explanation is that foreign scholars are unduly impressed by French intellectuals.

⁴One of the most recent and moderate accounts of the period, Melvyn P. Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration and the Cold War* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), p. xi, notes that the United States sought at this time to incorporate Western Europe "into a U.S.-managed alliance." Judt also ignores extensive American military intervention elsewhere in the postwar period. More broadly, one might point out that leading American intellectuals (who displayed Manichaeanism of a different kind) were complicitous during this period in American aggression abroad and political purges at home. Although less violent than the political crimes occurring in the Soviet bloc, McCarthyism produced shattered lives and twisted visions of a different sort. See Michael Paul Rogin, *The Intellectuals and McCarthy: The Radical Specter* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1967).

⁵Judt might counter this objection by suggesting that one should weigh the difference between the scale of repression practiced by the two camps. Although the balance sheet of misery favors the United States, one should add both that (on a global level) the ledger produces less inequality than Judt supposes and, in any case, it is objectionable to use such accounting methods to exonerate the United States.

⁶Judt has some scathing comments (pp. 290, 299) about Barthe, Derrida, Foucault, and Lacan (as well as about American scholars who take them seriously).

Discussion

The Storming of the White House: A Response to the Jacobsons

Kit Adam Wainer

SEBASTIAN JOB'S EYEWITNESS REPORT ON BORIS YELTSIN'S OCTOBER PUTSCH ("RUSSIA'S White House Won and Lost," *NEW POLITICS*, No. 16) is a thought-provoking account. Job records how the actions of both the presidential and parliamentary blocs during the October 1993 street fighting in Moscow illustrate subtle differences within the Russian elite. Job's insightful observations capture the complex essence of post-Communist politics. Julius and Phyllis Jacobson's critique, however, misses precisely that complexity.

The parliamentary leadership of Ruslan Khasbulatov and Alexander Rutskoi opposed themselves to the presidential dictatorship of Boris Yeltsin in October 1993. In the process, Job observed, they rallied to their side "the Stalinists and anti-Semites, nationalists and monarchists, and the others, the merely impoverished and humiliated." For different reasons, and reflecting different interests, a handful of Russians stood up to Yeltsin's tanks while the majority remained politically inactive.

Job makes the interesting assessment that had the resistance been able to break the presidential coup, greater space might have opened for the development of a democratic socialist left.

This is why the breaking of the blockade [around the White House] by civilians was such a victory. It greatly weakened Yeltsin, but did not give all the power to the parliament. It returned the status quo ante, with the addition of a humiliation to Yeltsin that would have put a brake both on authoritarianism and on the neo-liberal economic policy. Most importantly, it could not have been equated with a victory of fascists and Stalinists, even though fascists and Stalinists would have effectively helped to bring it about.

Job holds no illusions about the parliamentary opposition or in the unsavory assortment of protestors which gathered in the streets in its defense. He even asserts that a complete victory for the Khasbulatov-Rutskoi forces would have established a parliamentary dictatorship. Such an outcome, he believes, would have been worse than the presidential victory which actually ensued. Nonetheless, Job is convinced that a short-term defeat for Yeltsin would have been the best of the possible outcomes.

In response to Job, the Jacobsons insist that, given the make up of the anti-Yeltsin protestors, a defeat for Yeltsin would not have been a lesser evil. "In our opinion, [Rutskoi's and Khasbulatov's] cause was no more just than Yeltsin's ... Their victory would hardly have advanced the cause of democracy and freedom."

The Jacobsons also ask, "Isn't it at least as likely that, had [Rutskoi and

KIT ADAM WAINER is a New York City high school teacher and a member of the socialist organization Solidarity.

Khasbulatov] humbled Yeltsin ... these 'parliamentarians' with the support of their militant reactionary followers would have been so emboldened as to pose an expanding threat to democracy?"

Finally, the Jacobsons conclude,

once the Russian people failed to intervene en masse as a democratic force in opposition to Yeltsin's authoritarianism it was ... better that they went about their routine daily tasks rather than risking their lives in support of either Yeltsin's troops or [Rutskoi and Khasbulatov's] militants with their core of Stalinists, ultra-nationalists and anti-Semitic partisans.

The Jacobsons are undoubtedly correct in eschewing illusions in any wing of the Russian elite. Recently, in the pages of *Against the Current* ("A Bureaucracy that Can't Die," ATC #47), I argued that the forces which rule Russia today are still, in their main, made up of former-Communist bureaucrats. The Russian bureaucracy, while divided into antagonistic factions, is generally united in its support for some version of neo-liberal economics backed up by an authoritarian state. Fortunately, no wing has yet succeeded in enforcing such a policy. Quite the contrary, each attempt to implement austerity — whether through monetary reform or privatization — seems to provoke outrage among those functionaries who support capitalist transformation but are unwilling to relinquish the privileges they enjoyed under the bureaucratic system. Consequently, the bureaucratic elite is rife with divisions which pit against each other factions which welcome capitalist transition but want only their enemies to make the sacrifices such systemic changes inevitably entail.

The Jacobsons, therefore, are justified in asserting that neither the Yeltsin forces nor their parliamentary opponents had interests that were in any way compatible with "socialism from below." However, it is incorrect to conclude that the outcome of that inner-bureaucratic squabble could have had little impact on the ability of the masses to develop a third option, democratic socialism. Job correctly insists that a partial victory for the anti-Yeltsin forces would have been a step forward for democracy. Had Yeltsin's coup attempt been challenged more effectively, the Left might have had a greater opportunity to challenge the growing threat to democracy.

YELTSIN'S INABILITY TO ASSERT DICTATORIAL CONTROL SINCE OCTOBER, IS ALSO A WELCOME development, despite the fact that his weakness has opened space for Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's Democratic Liberal Party. As long as no wing of the Russian leadership is able to impose repressive and neo-liberal solutions to Russia's political and economic problems, the Left has time to develop its third option. That is the strength of Job's argument.

Thus, at specific moments, the Left may be compelled to bloc with its enemies in defense of democracy. If Yeltsin attempts to widen the ban on political parties, the Left may find itself at mass rallies alongside Communists and Democratic Liberals. Should Zhirinovskiy threaten Russia with a fascist coup, socialists may have no choice but to bloc with neo-liberals to stop him. After all, who among us did not hope for the defeat of the August 1991 coup plotters? How absurd it would have been to remain neutral on the grounds that Yeltsin was no democrat! At a time when the Left is minuscule, careful judgments of specific conjunctures is especially necessary.

The bureaucracy is likely to convulse, often violently, settle matters temporarily, and then descend again into internal conflict. While nearly all wings represent merely different shades of a fully grey spectrum, it is a mistake to judge at all times each individual bureaucrat or bureaucratic sector based on a characterization of the bureaucracy as a whole. In October 1993, a partial victory of the parliamentary leadership would have also been a partial victory for the Left because it would have stemmed the tide of repression. Granted, within days, Khasbulatov and Rutskoi might have launched an even more serious assault on democracy. At such a point even a loose front with them would have been unthinkable. However, that point never came. What actually occurred was Yeltsin's triumph which resulted in hundreds of arrests and beatings of leading oppositionists. That was the danger which had to be fought, regardless of who else was also fighting Yeltsin.

Yeltsin's putsch was an attempt to create a presidential dictatorship. Fortunately, thus far, the president's efforts have not produced the results he desired. Rutskoi and Khasbulatov are out of power but the new political scene appears to be even more unwieldy. Nonetheless, Yeltsin has, on many occasions, tried to silence all opposition. Undoubtedly, he will try again. And the forces of the third road will be stuck in a similar predicament: in order to resist the dictator, they may have to ally with factions whose ambitions are also dictatorial. Such are the dilemmas of post-Communist politics and they cannot be wished away.



Phyllis & Julius Jacobson Respond:

OUR DISAGREEMENT WITH SEBASTIAN JOB DID NOT BLIND US TO the value of his marvelously evocative and provocative account of "Russia's White House Won and Lost." But for all its subtleties there was no pretense of a grandiose attempt to "capture the complex essence of post-Communist politics." Therefore, we cannot be properly charged, as Kit Wainer does, with "missing precisely that complexity" of an historical and social "essence" that was never even offered.

In our earlier brief discussion of Job's eyewitness account we questioned his paradox that where "democratic space" is concerned "even reactionary protest can help to keep it open." We asked rhetorically for historical examples where such "reactionary protest" actually created "democratic space." Job has not, as yet, responded to this query. He might. But Wainer had the opportunity to illustrate its validity and he has not taken advantage of it. Instead, he repeats and enlarges the paradox, writing that "at specific moments the Left may be compelled to *bloc* with its enemies in defense of democracy." (Emphasis added)

Wainer gives this notion a breathtakingly extreme twist when he concludes his discussion with the depressing news that the democratic "forces of the third road" might find that "in order to resist a dictator, they may have to ally with factions whose ambitions are also dictatorial. Such are the dilemmas of post-Communist politics and they cannot be wished away." What Wainer calls a dilemma of post-Communist politics is actually a paradox. The real dilemma is Wainer's: how to resolve the contradictions of democratic and dictatorial forces in blocs and alliances to defend democracy.

What of the fascistic Vladimir Zhirinovskiy who heads the perversely named Democratic Liberal Party which was Russia's largest vote-getter, winning the

electoral support of millions of Russian workers being pauperized by Yeltsin's "economic reforms?" If this ultra-Right movement with an enormous popular base took to the streets in protest against Yeltsin's cruel economic policies, which might well lead to a repressive response from the bureaucrats in power, we would have every right to assume on the basis of Wainer's discussion that he would urge socialists to seek a tactical alliance with this particularly noxious neo-fascist movement.

We have no quarrel with the idea of tactical alliances with non-socialists — even anti-socialists — to fight reaction. But it is an abstract principle made operative only by the specific circumstances of a particular conflict in which the victory of one side means a victory for democracy. Only sectarians are satisfied to "bloc" and "ally" with abstractions. But there was nothing abstract about those who took to the streets in militant protest against Yeltsin's brutal dissolution of Parliament that quickly escalated into a military confrontation initiated by the demonstrators' leaders, Alexander Rutskoi and Ruslan Khasbulatov (R & K).

The number of demonstrators was accurately estimated by Wainer as being "a handful." The masses remained on the sidelines. No less important, and what Wainer does not properly take note of, was the generally reactionary political flavor of the protest movement and its leadership which included fascists, monarchists, bitterly xenophobic "nationalists," Stalinist fundamentalists and anti-Semites. Even if the social composition of the demonstrators was overwhelmingly proletarian and their rage generated by legitimate grievances against Yeltsin's shock therapy, that would not change the decisive reality that the leadership and groups involved in what was presumably a struggle to defend parliamentary democracy were socially retrograde and there was not the slightest reason to believe that the victory of the forces led by R & K, at any point, would have furthered the cause of democracy.

If we are correct about the predominantly reactionary politics of that handful who falsely presented themselves as devotees of parliamentary democracy, what does it mean concretely to speak of making alliances with forces led by such stalwarts as R & K or old line Stalinist dinosaurs such as Victor Anpilov? What are the organizational forms and the political common denominator of this bloc of democratic and dictatorial forces? And since it takes two to bloc what happens if our would-be reactionary and dictatorial allies say "no" to Wainer's solicitations for a joint struggle to defend democracy?

WHAT WE FOUND UNCONVINCING IN JOB'S PARADOX is that his critical support of the anti-Yeltsin demonstrators stopped at the point that their leaders provoked an armed struggle. In fact, according to Job, had the armed assault on the White House succeeded things would have been worse for the Russian people than the actual aftermath of Yeltsin's military triumph. Wainer shares that view. He is only in favor of what he several times refers to as a "partial victory" of the anti-Yeltsin forces, that is during its non-military phase. It is difficult to understand why a military victory of dictatorial forces "in defense of" parliamentary democracy could leave Russia in worse condition than a military victory of a dictatorially oriented and desperate Boris Yeltsin who had just dissolved the parliament. Why give critical support to R & K during the peaceful phase and repudiate them when they take up arms (whether or not it was tactically advisable)?

The notion of supporting only a "partial victory" reveals Wainer's narrow,

schematic and inconsistent approach. For it was the very seamlessness of the shift from legal protest to military confrontation initiated by the R & K forces that tells us infinitely more than Wainer does about the "essence" of the movement from the beginning of its resistance to Yeltsin's cabal.

Wainer has the analytical advantage over Job of reviewing the events with hindsight. Job, after all, was susceptible to the drama and pressures of the moment. Nevertheless, Wainer fails to recognize that there was no partial victory because there could be none under the circumstances. It was in the very nature of the personalities and the social character of the factions involved, carried away by their own rhetoric, their reactionary ambitions and their stupidity that left them incapable of settling for a partial victory, even if that were possible.

Finally we want to quietly voice our objections to such portentous admonitions as that "... it is a mistake to judge at all times each individual bureaucrat or bureaucratic sector based on a characterization of the bureaucracy as a whole" as if somehow or other because we did not advise Russian socialists to support either side in the struggle between R & K and Yeltsin we are simpletons who do not understand that there are gradations, even sharp distinctions and conflicts within the chaotic upper echelons of the political, economic and military strata of Russian society. But the recognition that there are gradations and divisions, that some bureaucrats are worse than others, does not imply that socialists should seek "to bloc" or "to ally" with one faction of scoundrels with dictatorial ambitions seeking to crush and substitute itself for another faction of villains in power.

Harry Chester 1917-1994

My friend of many years, Harry Chester, died in January. He was of the older generation of European socialists who partook of the Left's struggle against fascism and Nazism. He was among those few who, while suffering bitter political defeat, never wavered in their belief that in socialism alone inhered the promise of a humane future, and that only the working masses could bring it about.

A militant in the Austrian workers' movement in Vienna in the 1920s and 1930s, Harry suffered imprisonment for lengthy periods when that movement was suppressed by the proto-fascist Dollfus regime in 1934. Released shortly before Hitler marched into Austria in March 1938, Harry and his wife Alice fled to Paris. At the outbreak of World War II, the French interned him for many months. Both he and Alice eventually succeeded, with the aid of Joseph Buttinger and the International Rescue Committee, to escape by way of Marseilles — "with the last boat," as it were.

Harry worked for three decades as an economic researcher for the United Auto Workers in Detroit. Often deeply critical of the American labor movement and its policies, he saw no alternative to it as a vehicle to uphold the dignity of workers and to improve their livelihood. Although he devoted many long hours to his job, and made lasting contributions in that capacity, he was not totally comfortable in it; he was never a "labor intellectual." He had come from a great movement, whose political aim and social vision had transcended the bounds of the reform policies and politics which characterized progressive American unions like the UAW. He was unable to make his peace with this orientation.

Harry was among the UAW (and AFL-CIO) economists who helped in developing international trade union councils that would equalize the wages and benefits on the international level, so as to foreclose this area of production costs to damaging competition. He was a fervent internationalist: he argued for free trade and opposed protectionism, because he wanted to see the industrialization of Third World countries hastened as a means to improved living conditions. His abiding concern, expressed in letters and conversations, was to encourage the self-activism and creativity of workers, the reduction of the weight and discretion of managerial hierarchies, the participation of workers in production decisions, and the closing of the gap between mental and physical labor perpetuated by management.

As he grew older, Harry often voiced his deep regret that he was unable to advance the struggle for democratic socialism, and that so early in his life the arena for that struggle had closed for him.

Harry belonged to a group that was informally linked to Joseph Buttinger's Revolutionary Socialists in Austria. Buttinger has written of people like Harry: "No doubt, the old certainties have revealed themselves as errors, the old signposts in which they trusted derived from an inadequate and outdated geography. Nonetheless, they regret no part of their faith in their past socialist life: their faith did not just lead to error, it imparted the strength to persevere in their socialist conviction against the hostile spirit of their time." That strength, that conviction, defined Harry's being. I have always felt honored to be counted his friend.

HORST BRAND