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The Mean Season

Barry Finger

THE 1994 ELECTIONS BURIED THE DEMOCRATS IN A MALTHUSIAN REACTION that covered the nation like an inexorable flow of lava. How could this have befallen those supposedly hard-nosed New Democrats of Bill Clinton, that alliance of investment bankers, bloodless technocrats and neo-liberals who just yesterday emerged triumphant in their promise to restore faith in activist government while stealing the Republicans' thunder?

According to philistine mainstream punditry, Clinton, elected as a "new" Democrat, once in office reverted to liberal form by governing as a "McGovernik leftist." That is, the "left" betrayed "normal" people, as they invariably must, by pursuing "Stalinist measures" in an ill-advised effort to overhaul the nation's health delivery system, by maintaining affirmative action programs that threaten hard-pressed working-class white males and by championing marginal countercultural issues such as the imposition of gays in the military in arrogant defiance of mainstream sensibilities. Clinton, in other words, charted an agenda completely alien and socially incomprehensible to the ordinary tax payer. The repudiation of this liberal elitism is seen as touching off a plebeian firestorm which successfully reconnected the people to their government through the corpulent, swaggering intermediary of Newt Gingrich, Republican Commissar of Cultural Correctness, and his smirking minions.

That is the accepted flimflammy which passes for political analysis, the credibility of which is enhanced, like cheap gossip, solely through repetition. It is given added currency by the Clintons' own post-election contrition which included a nodding approval in the direction of school prayer, as well as the expression of vexed reservation toward "abortion-on-demand" — just like plain folk. In truth, Clinton claimed the presidency through his promise to address and ameliorate the widening social and economic inequalities built up under the preceding 12 years of Republican indulgence toward the obscenely rich. His victory rode the crest against the Roaring 20s redux in which those who prospered did so by manipulating fictitious capital through leveraged buyouts and junk bonds and, in so doing, massacred jobs through corporate consolidation when not exporting them to the low wage Third World. Wall Street jobbers generated a level of hostility against themselves that not even the paid propagandistic fantasies of George Gilder, Jude Wanniski or Arthur Laffer could rectify, supply-side charts or pompous pseudo-scholarly dis-

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quisitions on capitalism's spirit-ennobling creative destruction notwithstanding. They were seen, and not inaccurately, as the sinister serial killers of the American dream. For the unpleasant fact remained that real after-tax earnings of ordinary American workers had been falling dramatically for decades and that millions of people were working longer hours and taking on multiple jobs in order to sustain previously attained living conditions.

THE ACCUSATION THAT CLINTON IS A WOBBLER, A MAN WITHOUT A CORE, ultimately succumbing to Democratic "special interests" — that is, racial minorities, labor unions and gays — is so patently absurd as to be surrealistic. The truly consistent thread that runs through the Clinton Administration — and it is the only one — is its corporate fealty. Working-class tax relief in the form of a peace dividend was never a consideration. Neither was the conversion of defense industries, a measure absolutely indispensable if the nation's working-class base is to be preserved. The only tangible piece of progressivity was a negligible tax increase levied against the superrich, significant mostly as a transparently symbolic nod to egalitarianism, combined with an earned income tax rebate for the working poor. Otherwise Clinton abandoned his modest stimulus package in midstream, failed to outlaw the permanent replacement of striking workers, accepted a humiliating compromise on gays in military service, sacrificed Lani Guinier to the Republican wolfpack, further weighted the Supreme Court with pro-market economic conservatives and managed to so disorient and terrify the public with his Rube Goldberg health care reform contraption as to effectively remove health care reform of any kind from the American agenda for the foreseeable future.

The only issues the Democrats proved passionate about were NAFTA, GATT, deficit reduction, a repressive and racist omnibus crime bill — advertised as an installment on Martin Luther King's dream, no less — and welfare "reform," an item that they themselves brought to the top of the national agenda. Rather than calm the climate of social anxiety, the Democrats cynically pitched their appeals to it and mobilized their influence behind it while intensifying the very forces of international competition which sustain and drive it forward. Banished from the political landscape entirely was any pretense at uprooting poverty, the very benchmark of the 1960s' civil rights-tinged Great Society liberalism, long regarded — at least rhetorically — as indispensable in quelling the violence and self-destruction induced by the poisonous vapors of mass demoralization and despair. No longer was it the system which needed to be reformed but, on the contrary, it was the most powerless and isolated victims of the system themselves who needed to be socially rehabilitated through "tough-love" discipline. This was the *innovative* response of Democratic newthink, Democratic Leadership Council style, to the "Southern strategy"— so modestly understated — of post-1968 Republicanism, predicated on the contemptuous premise that the white working class, insofar as it thinks politically, blames its misfortunes on blacks and therefore can, on that basis, be pried away from the Democratic Party.

CAPITALISM IS IN A PERIOD OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL RETRENCHMENT and the political forces that oversee the system cannot but reflect this dynamic. This requires not only the downsizing of the labor force at all levels and its subjugation to an in-

creased pace and intensity of work, but also calls for a parallel reduction in overhead, including the social overhead represented by the welfare state. In opposition to the Republican juggernaut, the Democrats offered the promise of an orderly retreat of "equalized" sacrifice, painstakingly conditioning labor and blacks to this new reality of permanently diminished expectations. That they could attempt this maneuver, while still claiming to represent the "little guy," would be inexplicable were it not for the deep cynicism with which government in general is regarded.

What proved nevertheless to be the Clintonites undoing was precisely their self-deceptively slick choice of competing on Republican terrain, heralding their opposition to welfare as if it were a form of social idealism while flagellating its recipients as constituting — in Moynihan's terms — an emerging and distinct social species. But in playing the "race card" against cardsharks, they were simply out of their depth. That is not to deny that the Democrats put up a valiant fight, vowing as they did to outdo the Republicans in social reaction not only by arresting and murdering more criminals, but in out-demagoging the opposition on the subject of welfare mothers and in threatening to surpass their opponents in cracking down on illegal immigration by militarizing the southern borders. Rather than risk jeopardizing Republican prospects to this challenge, Gingrich and company merely upped the ante one notch. They offered the electorate a "welfare dividend" as an offset to the diminished paycheck, thereby drawing a line that the Democrats finally could not cross without repudiating the entire post-Depression legacy of activist government which they themselves pioneered in response to the massive labor and civil-rights struggles that convulsed the system. In a desperate gambit, voters took the Republican bait and opted, in effect, to cash in their insurance policy by dismantling the welfare state.

The White House has now been put on notice by the Republicans that there will be no compromise. If true, fiscal and monetary institutions, now used primarily in any case to buttress the bond market, will be legislatively retired as countercyclical tools with the onset of a balanced budget amendment. Full employment, with its attendant tight labor markets and rising wage rates, will be similarly exiled to the museum of vestigial social artifacts, otherwise known as the memory hole. Illegitimate children and teenage mothers will be the special targets of state vengeance; the orphanage and the gutter joining the jailhouse as frontline institutions of the reformed state. Private schools, individual retirement accounts, self-employment, medical savings accounts and private charities will be increasingly touted, in opposition to collective solutions, as the remedies of choice as America — the nation of individuals — readies itself to go back to the future.

Of course the intellectual underpinnings of this reactionary tidal wave were spawned and nurtured in the conservative think-tanks and institutions which function as the intellectual clearing houses for the corporate elite. Ordinarily the questions as to how government monies are to be raised and to what ends are among the most telling of political issues. But these have been swept aside by a new approach of anti-Enlightenment elitism merged with modern pseudo-scientific eugenics. This approach contends that race-based social inequities are inherently intractable due to genetic differences and that the dynamic of the welfare state, stripped of its grandiose pretenses, consists in nothing other than bureaucratic self-perpetuation. Liberals may dispute the arguments, which are

after all vulgar rehashes of social Darwinism garnished with an intimidating thicket of statistical jargon. But what continues to lend these arguments significance is not their “scientific” virtues, but the persistence of their social appeal to successive generations of conservative-moving intellectuals who continue to discover them anew and dignify them with a fresh veneer of academic respectability.

For behind this appeal is the indisputable and equally disquieting truth, which liberals are powerless to refute, of the failure of existing government compensatory programs to reverse and eliminate the problems of poverty they were designed to redress. Even at their most successful, such programs — with the glaring and unduplicated exception of Social Security — have rarely made more than a temporary dent in the problem. Successes are measured in increments or more modestly by the degree to which the line can be held. Liberal intellectuals are thus faced with a difficult dilemma when they consider moving from theory to program. They can conclude that there is something fundamental to the social structure of American life which renders it deeply resistant to correction by means of reform and piecemeal adjustment, in which case they are driven to relinquish their commitment to the system. Or they can find some justification for their continued adherence to a system which perpetuates poverty and racial injustice by subordinating their political values to the quest of isolating and identifying some purported characteristic of the victims of society, whether it is intelligence or family structure, which justifies their continued victimization. This accounts, in large part, for the intellectual volatility undermining the liberal sensibility in recent decades and explains why the rate of intellectual defection from liberalism to the right has mounted to a virtual stampede.

The Democratic Party is bereft of ideas and motivation, which befits a party increasingly bereft of its electoral base. The left cannot rejoice in the conditions of the Democrats’ continued decline and can only look on with horror as the Republican Party assumes its new-found role as pawnbrokers to the welfare state. But neither must we entertain any illusions about the Democratic Party. In this climate of political polarization, given its corporate ties, the Democratic Party has become not a barrier against reaction, but a principle contributing factor to it.

WELCOME ON BOARD

New Politics is very pleased to welcome three new members to our Editorial Board — Elaine Bernard, Director of the Harvard Trade Union Program; Scott McLemee, writer who has appeared in *New Politics*, *N.Y. Times Book Review*, *In These Times* and Reginald Wilson, Senior Scholar at the American Council on Education.

The Politics of Vengeance

Kent Worcester

THE 1994 MIDTERM ELECTION WAS A SOLID CONFIRMATION of the political shift to the right in the United States, underscoring the forward march of the Republican Party's activist hard-liners. Dominated by a resentful, vigilante-type attitude about the problems facing the country, the political demagoguery centered on "big government," "welfare dependency," "harsh punishment for criminals," and "preserving family values." With few exceptions, incumbents and challengers alike sought to outbid one another as meaner, tougher, and less tolerant of cultural difference. Whether in the guise of immigration, welfare, or crime — race was a major issue. Most ominous is the fact that this movement toward the politics of vengeance is likely to gather steam in the coming months, creating an even larger constituency for conservative ideas and initiatives. The election signals the so-called "Republican realignment" promised or foreshadowed by the presidential elections of 1968 and 1980. The Republicans now control both houses of Congress and are in a position to set the national legislative agenda. The once-Democratic "solid South" is quickly becoming a Republican bastion. Republicans have achieved parity in state legislatures, and now occupy the governor's mansion in seven of the eight most populous states, including New York, California, and Texas. Traditional Democratic machines are almost everywhere in a state of advanced decay, while hard-line conservative groups are filling the void via talk radio, cable tv, and aggressive door-to-door campaigning. Furthermore, roughly 400 of the 600 candidates affiliated with the religious right won races at the state and local level. These candidacies reflect and reinforce the growing power of the Christian right inside the Republican Party, but they remain only one element within a broader ideological coalition.

EVEN IF — BY SOME WEIRD ALCHEMY — Bill Clinton, who was effectively sidelined during the campaign, somehow manages to be reelected in 1996, Republicans are likely to gain still more seats at the state and national levels in upcoming elections. The basic Republican message is simple and, for many people, quite seductive: lower taxes; less regulation; longer jail sentences; and no special dispensations for blacks, gays, and the big cities. The death penalty also separates conservatives from non-conservatives, and brings angry voters into the Republican fold. At the local and national level, the party is better organized, better funded, and better focused than it has been in years. As the example of the Senate race in Virginia showed, even candidates who are borderline psychotics can expect to receive full and sustained backing from the national Republican

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Party. (Unfortunately for the conservative movement, Oliver North stumbled after one too many gaffes, despite his impressive ability to mobilize a large cohort of right-wing activists.)

Yet, the midterm election was not about which platform contained the most refined set of proposals, or even which party controls Congress or state governments. Fundamentally, it was about ideology, statecraft and race. Particularly at the national level, the election offered a tremendous boost not so much to the Republican Party as a whole but to the party's right-wing, which prides itself on its tough-minded principles, and on its program of "transformation," rather than on its loyalty to any given political structure or regime. It gives further impetus to the conservative agenda, which is centered around a world view at once promilitary, "pro-family," and anti-government; it seeks to undermine the social basis of the left and thereby annihilate or "transcend" liberalism, to use a phrase coined by conservative theorist William Kristol.

THE AIM OF THE RIGHT is to establish the conditions for a long-term conservative ascendancy rivaling that of the New Deal. Replacing the New Deal with a "new paradigm" requires fostering a political climate that favors patriotic rhetoric and market-based solutions, and disfavors all manner of dissent and critical discussion. Newt Gingrich's preoccupation with "normal" Americans, and his jibe that liberals were somehow responsible for the murder of two small boys by their mother in Union, South Carolina, captures the "take no prisoners" quality of contemporary conservative rhetoric.

The hope of Gingrich and others is to use the government as a propaganda instrument in a war against subaltern groups and the left. He said as much just after the election when he attacked "Great Society, counterculture, McGovernick" values for spawning a "culture of poverty and a culture of violence." For Gingrich, the fight against the counterculture is an ideological battle, one that will require decades to take root. Said Gingrich: "We have to say to the counterculture: 'Nice try. You failed. You're wrong.' And we have to simply, calmly, methodically reassert American civilization."

From this perspective, conservatives seem more interested in creating a *confrontational* than a circumscribed or "minimal" state, one that can actively advance the struggle for political hegemony and moral restoration. Whatever influence libertarian ideas used to enjoy inside the party has eroded in favor of a kind of moral authoritarianism that seeks to use the coercive apparatus of the state to enforce certain idealized norms of adult (and youth) behavior. Despite claims to the contrary, they do not really believe that those who govern least govern best. Rather, they seek to reorient and retool the state, to make it more responsive to their interests and constituencies, more war-like and less welfare-minded, "lean and mean" and, therefore, unresponsive to any notion of a larger public good.

The conservative movement is not without its contradictions, of course. Already there are tensions brewing between wild-eyed House Republicans, for example, and more "stately" Republicans in the Senate, just as there will be rifts between Republicans at the state and federal levels. The Republican coalition, which ranges from religious activists and Southern conservatives to Reagan Democrats and affluent suburbanites, is inherently unstable, especially on social issues. But the ability of conservative leaders to forge a rhetoric and program that

can mobilize core constituencies (and depress turnout among the Democratic base) should not be underestimated. Indeed, far from being a freak electoral mishap, or merely a referendum on an unpopular president, the 1994 midterm election represents the culmination of a long-term conservative strategy for achieving state power. It seems unlikely — but not inconceivable — that the right will allow its forward momentum to be reversed by petty doctrinal squabbles or personality conflicts.

The conservative advance is significantly aided by the ideological and programmatic vacuity of the Democratic Party, whose leaders aspire merely to temper or modulate the Republican agenda. Political debate inside the party is dominated by demands from New Democrats that the party swing further to the right in a game of “catch-up” with the Republicans. The party’s demoralized and fragmented liberal faction has little of any substance to say in response to these arguments. At the same time, both wings of the party are eager to distance themselves from the hapless Clinton White House. Clinton has made it clear that he fundamentally accepts many of the proposals contained in the Republican “Contract with America,” and that he will be looking for opportunities for cooperation, in hopes that this will make him look stronger and more “presidential.” Yet the strategy of placating the conservatives will most likely serve to further undermine his presidency, and set the stage for further Democratic setbacks in 1996 and 1998. Calls to replace Clinton are certain to grow in the next period. But his strongest potential challenger — Vice President Al Gore — has abandoned his friends in the environmental movement and absurdly insists on describing his boss as one of the finest presidents in U.S. history.

THE PARALYSIS AND RIGHTWARD DRIFT OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY offers the potential of creating a space for independent political activity. Efforts to create progressive, third or fourth party alternatives at the state and national levels should be encouraged and applauded. For the time being, however, third party politics remains dominated by the politics of the “militant center,” i.e., Perot supporters and other disaffected, formerly apolitical people looking for a savior to emerge from outside the system. At this point, Gingrich and Dole are more likely than Clinton to give these voters what they want, although some kind of independent mobilization of the “populist center” remains a distinct possibility. Genuinely alternative politics exists only at the margins, although in the sphere of popular culture, oppositional currents are sufficiently distracting to rile and offend the conservatives. But in the context of formal politics, the right sets the tone and everyone else is marching in step or is on the defensive.

Many progressives will conclude that Clinton must be defended from attack and that Democrats must be elected at any cost. This is a hopeless strategy for confronting the ideological right. What is most striking about the midterm elections is the way an ailing Democratic presidency paved the way for a revanchist onslaught. The task for leftists is not to circle wagons around the White House, or to formulate electoral strategy for the Democratic leadership, but to offer alternative perspectives for humanizing, democratizing, and “greening” our civic and social institutions. The ideological challenge posed by the right deserves an equally forceful response from the left. The conservative movement has seized the moment; we of the left must clearly delineate our own views, our own ideas, and our own agenda.

December 20, 1994

Occupying & Obscuring Haiti

Mark Dow

Poor Haitians cannot understand all this.

—*New York Times*¹

Banm yon ti limye, mèt,
Banm yon ti limye pou m we sa k ap pase . . .
(Give me a little light, boss,
Give me a little light so I can see what's happening)

—*Manno Charlemagne*

MANY PEOPLE ARE ASKING WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SIMPLE QUESTION: Why is the United States in Haiti? The answers may be clearer if we divide the question in two: Why did the U.S. intervene in Haiti in September 1994? And what is the goal of the U.S. occupation?

On the question of intervention, we should first remember that the U.S. has never really stopped intervening in Haiti. In this century, we occupied Haiti from 1915 to 1934, and set up a military designed to repress its own citizens — a military which we support to this day. U.S. dollars, of course, have gone to both Duvalier regimes and to the military dictatorships that followed them. The U.S. funded opposition to Jean-Bertrand Aristide's candidacy in 1990, and funded opposition to his policies after he was elected. The goals of the current involvement in Haiti are part of this pattern.

Still, the stage of intervention that began on September 19, 1994 is obviously on a larger and more overt scale. Why? The answer looks like a political one: that Clinton simply backed himself into a corner. His problem began with the refugee issue. During his campaign, Clinton said he would give Haitian refugees the chance to apply for political asylum, which is their legal right. As President, he continued Bush's policy of returning fleeing Haitians directly to the authorities in Haiti. Then, with both political pressure and media coverage of the atrocities in Haiti increasing, Clinton stopped returning the Haitians. But he continued to violate international law by refusing to screen for political refugees. Instead, the plan was to detain them indefinitely at the Guantanamo Naval Base. Meanwhile, Clinton kept speaking about restoring Aristide. It seems he finally decided that his credibility was at stake.

MARK DOW, a Miami-based writer and poet, has written numerous articles for *New Politics on Haiti*. His last appeared in Volume V, No 1.

So while Clinton's own rhetoric brought him dilemmas different from Bush's, the goals of the two administrations are not so different. The U.S. not only worked against Aristide before he was elected and while he was in office, but also during "negotiations" to restore him. He was pressured overtly and covertly to open his government to supporters of the military coup that overthrew him in September 1991. While the CIA funded the neo-Duvalierist paramilitary organization called FRAPH, which was executing and mutilating Aristide supporters in Haiti, Washington told Aristide that since FRAPH was the dominant power in Haiti, the way for him to survive politically was to move to the right.² That happened while Lawrence Pezzullo was Washington's special adviser on Haiti, and while Haitian refugees were still being called economic refugees. When Clinton replaced Pezzullo with William Gray in May, 1994, the administration took a new line: suddenly the Haitians were, in fact, fleeing political repression. The point of this change was not a just refugee policy, but a justification for possible U.S. military action — an action which would show how closely the U.S. was working with FRAPH.

If the U.S. decided to restore Aristide to office for domestic political reasons, in spite of its opposition to him, then it makes sense that it would also use the opportunity to consolidate its opposition to him — or, more precisely, opposition to the movement that brought him to power. In its public statements, Washington hardly bothers to disguise the fact that it is working toward the next elections in Haiti. Parliamentary elections may take place in January 1995; new presidential elections are scheduled for December 1995. Haitian law forbids a president from running for consecutive terms, so Aristide's presidency ends in February 1996, when a new president should be inaugurated. Not coincidentally, U.S. troops are scheduled to remain in Haiti (under a UN flag) until February 1996. Meanwhile, U.S. military personnel in Haiti are being told at briefings that the terrorist group FRAPH is a legitimate political party; and U.S. military personnel repeated this through bullhorns to pro-democracy, anti-occupation demonstrators as they broke up their march in the town of Grand Goave in late October, reports journalist Amy Goodman.

The goal of the occupation, then, is apparently to continue the repression of democracy without leaving mutilated bodies on public display. In low-intensity conflict, buying off the opposition is also part of the strategy. That is why the goal of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (U.S. AID) Human Rights Fund in Haiti is not so much to improve human rights there as to use the issue of human rights to improve U.S. government credibility among pro-democracy organizations — that is, those that have survived the last three years of U.S.-sponsored repression — while continuing to work with Duvalierist sectors as well. This is spelled out clearly in U.S.AID documents.³ Current U.S. policy in Haiti, as summarized by Allan Nairn, is to preserve the repressive, terrorist structure and to impose radical economic readjustments which the

World Bank admits will hurt the poor. Nothing in the World Bank/IMF economic package, to which Aristide agreed before his return, is aimed at land reform or grassroots development, notes anthropologist Josh Dewind. In fact, little of the plan has anything to do with Haitians outside Port-au-Prince, i.e. the majority of the population. Assembly factories will be able to re-open quickly, and Haitians will again be able to provide cheap labor for U.S. companies.

Meanwhile, the killings continue, mostly in the rural areas. Again, this is not a failure of the U.S. occupation, but an element of it. Aristide was returned only after endless speeches to his supporters about “reconciliation” — that is, no violence and no vengeance against those who have killed with impunity for three years. U.S.-sponsored radio broadcasts and billboards in Haiti now advertise “reconciliation.” But this reconciliation means not only no violent revenge, but continued impunity. The idea of accountability for the atrocities against Aristide supporters is essentially absent from the U.S. agenda. Disarmament — which Aristide said was essential for justice — is going “slowly.” Why? Because, as Allan Nairn explains, U.S. policy is to preserve the armed sectors (the pro-democracy sectors are unarmed); local U.S. military commanders openly acknowledge this, telling the Haitian paramilitary members that they can keep their guns as long as they don’t parade them around.

There was much well-intentioned disagreement over the question of U.S. military intervention in Haiti. It should be clear now what U.S. intentions are — not that they ever changed. Yet, there is still much confusion. It is worth taking a detailed look at recent mainstream media coverage of Haiti to see how even these confusions are quickly brushed aside by the more familiar blind faith in U.S. benevolence, and by well-worn prejudices about Haiti and Haitians.

Visible Contradictions

“‘I THINK WE’RE WORKING WITH THE WRONG SIDE HERE,’ said 19-year-old Thomas Hasdorff, a private with the 10th Mountain Division.”⁴ These words of one of the U.S. citizens sent to occupy Haiti encapsulate the contradictions between the rhetoric and reality of U.S. policy in Haiti. They also represent a potential opening for change that is one result of the visibility of those contradictions.

In the first days of Operation Uphold Democracy, collaboration between the U.S. and Haitian militaries was suddenly out in the open. It had been possible for the media to ignore things like the training of Haitian officers in the U.S. since the 1991 coup.⁵ But on September 19, “Lieut. Gen. Henry H. Shelton, commander of the military force ... went straight from the [Port-au-Prince] airport to military headquarters downtown, where he conferred with Lieut. Gen. Raoul Cedras.” The generals proceeded to have a “cordial” meeting in which Shelton “said he intended to ‘clear the rules with General Cedras’ on such crucial questions as where American troops should be deployed and how Haitian paramilitary forces should be disarmed.” People such as Private Hasdorff, who simply

kept their eyes open, could see that something was wrong. Lt. Robert Booze of the 10th Mountain Division told reporters, "A few days ago, we were ready for war against the ... [Haitian] police and the military ... Right now we're in a sort of limbo as to whether we're allied with the police or not ..." The gap between official policy and individuals' sense of right and wrong was apparent in actions as well as words. While the Pentagon continued to insist that the "rules of engagement" had not been settled, a U.S. patrol linked arms and stood between Haitian military and pro-Aristide demonstrators, and a lone U.S. soldier waved off a truck of Haitian police near another pro-Aristide group.⁶

"The only institution in Haiti that works is the military," an unnamed Pentagon officer said in explaining U.S. cooperation with the killers we had claimed to oppose.⁷ This refrain had been used before to justify plans to retrain or "professionalize" the Haitian military, instead of dissolving it, as President Aristide had suggested. Of course, the training and professionalizing had never really stopped — at the School of the Americas in Ft. Benning, and elsewhere. But something else was left out of the anonymous justification. There *had* been other working institutions in Haiti — the very ones upon which democracy had been based — but they have been largely wiped out by the U.S.-backed Haitian military over the last three years. The "abundance of peasant associations, grassroots development projects, trade unions, student organizations, church groups and independent radio stations" which blossomed since the fall of Duvalier in 1986, writes Americas Watch, "were as much the target of the army's repression as was the elected Aristide government."⁸

In contrast to the straightforward expressions of puzzlement by soldiers whose orders required them to stand by while Haitians were beaten (and, in at least one reported case, killed), journalists wrote astonishing sentences. "After two days of bloodshed in which armed paramilitary groups attacked demonstrators here, the United States finds its mission to install democracy in Haiti jeopardized by its reluctance to begin disarming the paramilitary gunmen known as *attachés*," writes the *Times's* Larry Rohter.⁹ This sentence is so "objectively" removed that it takes an extra effort just to realize that the "armed paramilitary groups" doing the attacking in the first clause are the same "paramilitary gunmen" which the U.S. refuses to disarm. This is the first sign that Rohter is organizing information in a way that obscures something at its center, something which simply does not make sense to him. In fact, it is so far from making sense to him, that he can only acknowledge a contradiction at a sort of vague, strategic level. It is the "mission to install democracy," of course, which is the trapdoor at the center. Note how responsibility for the mission's possible failure is diffused by the passive voice (the U.S. "finds it ... jeopardized"). "Its" mission is jeopardized by "its" reluctance; what this really means is that the U.S.'s own actions contradict its (stated) mission. But to put it that way is to question the sincerity of the "mission to install democracy." The sentence is so cumbersome precisely because even asking that question is not a possibility, though more than enough groundwork for it has been laid.

The point of this close reading is that in recent coverage of Haiti, the lines of what Chomsky (without whom I would not know how to read the newspaper) calls permissible debate have become practically visible. After all, Cedras's role as a CIA informant was reported by the *Times* itself ¹⁰ — one might think that information would resurface in the current context, even if it did not lead to more

fundamental questions about U.S. policy. It is time to stop being surprised that information which doesn't fit the theory, even when acknowledged, is then dropped. Allan Nairn's recent articles in *The Nation* make this more than clear. Among other points, Nairn reports the following. A Maj. Louis Kernisan thinks Aristide made a mistake in abolishing the infamous section chiefs, who preside over repression in the Haitian countryside. They were "an uncomfortable but working legal arrangement," he says; this is the man behind the U.S. plan to retrain Haiti's new police force. Kernisan also acknowledges that the U.S. is "going to end up dealing with the same folks as before, the five families that run the country, the military and the bourgeoisie ... It's not going to be the slum guy from Cité Soleil." Another U.S. official revealed that U.S. intelligence "encouraged" Emmanuel Constant to set up what became FRAPH, the brutal paramilitary front; Constant said that Gen. Patrick Collins, his "handler," pushed him "to organize a front 'that could balance the Aristide movement' and do 'intelligence' work against it." Constant also revealed that Collins and the CIA station chief in Haiti were inside the military headquarters during the 1991 coup — but that they were always there. Finally, the current CIA station chief met with Constant the day before his October 4 press conference, for which U.S. troops provided security.¹¹ Some of this news was impossible for the mainstream press to ignore, but what was picked up was quickly dropped, and of course none of it changed the working assumptions about Operation Uphold Democracy.

Those Haitian Conspiracy Theories

Once some analysis is labeled "a conspiracy theory" it can be relegated to the domain of flat-earth enthusiasts and other cranks, and the actual system of power, decision-making, and global planning is safely protected from scrutiny.

—Noam Chomsky ¹²

IN THE MONTHS LEADING UP TO THE OCCUPATION, many people had mixed feelings about U.S. military action in Haiti. In June, a group of refugees here in Miami signed a statement about intervention: "We believe that the American State Department, especially under Clinton, knows all the people who are committing crimes in Haiti, and they can go get them. In addition, we know that the American government has participated in the violations against democracy in Haiti. We support an intervention, but with much precaution, because the American government knows which people to get." For all the mixed feelings, though, the author of this statement (who had been held in the HIV camp at Guantanamo) registered a clear reaction when former President Carter returned from his negotiations in Port-au-Prince and American troops went in. This is an occupation, the author told me, apparently surprised. What seemed to make him especially distrustful was that Carter was involved.

For North Americans, Jimmy Carter may be Mr. Human Rights. But many Haitians remember Carter for his role in Haiti during the 1990 elections. "Carter was behind a letter he and former U.N. representative Andrew Young presented to Jean-Bertrand Aristide on Dec. 15, 1990, on the eve of the presidential elections," according to the Haitian Information Bureau. "The letter said that Aristide accepted Marc L. Bazin — the candidate that the U.S. favored and funded — as president, despite the fact that nobody had even voted. Young reportedly said

that they wanted the letter as a guarantee because the U.S. feared Aristide would not cede if Bazin won. (By this time, it was clear that Aristide would win.) Aristide refused to sign and the event has always been interpreted as yet one more pressure from the U.S. to influence local politics and undermine Aristide."¹³ This other view of Carter was perhaps my first exposure to what is often dismissed as Haitian conspiracy theory. I was pretty skeptical myself — I heard it from someone I didn't really know, in the hallway of Miami's Haitian Refugee Center, and Carter was off somewhere building houses for poor people. Later I found out that the man in the hall had been a member of the Provisional Electoral Council (for the 1987 presidential elections, which were halted by a military massacre of voters). That doesn't guarantee his authority, but what authority did I have for my other "beliefs" about the ex-president? In October, as Nairn's reporting was causing a brief stir in the mainstream press, I met a Haitian man who had been in the coastal town of Port-de-Paix since the coup. He told me that Haitians already knew of the U.S.-FRAPH connection, because when FRAPH emerged in late 1993, its leaders were driving around in new, U.S.-made jeeps. This, too, would be mere conspiracy thinking if it weren't for the recent revelations.

Paul Farmer suggests that if we actually listen to these Haitian "conspiracy theories," and study history, we might learn something. A motivating force in both of Farmer's books is to give voice to Haitians' own views of their lives. In *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the Geography of Blame* (California, 1992), he looks at some of these AIDS-related theories as "a sort of Haitian reply to North American discrimination." He then documents how they "contain considerable amounts of truth when examined not as isolated anecdotes, but as lessons drawn from the last five hundred years of Caribbean history." (p.247) The *Miami Herald's* Don Bohning can cavalierly state, "Haiti is the victim of its own internal turmoil and history."¹⁴ In *The Uses Of Haiti* (Common Courage Press, 1994), Farmer tries to dispel this myth of Haiti's "isolation," a myth which makes possible the widespread claim that only Haiti is to blame for Haiti's problems:

Rarely, in fact, have two countries been as closely linked as the United States and Haiti. Haitians are, by and large, fully aware of this historical fact. But citizens of the United States are, by and large, oblivious to these links — ignorant, even, of the two-decade U.S. military occupation of Haiti earlier in this century.

This disparity of awareness has led Haitians to adopt a moral and analytic explanatory framework that differs substantially from that of Americans. U.S. journalists and even certain scholarly investigators, manifestly uninformed about the history of U.S.-Haitian relations, have mistaken this awareness as a Haitian tendency to paranoia. (pp.46-67)

In the months before the new occupation, a couple of perfect illustrations of Farmer's argument appeared. On August 10, 1994, *The New York Times* ran another front page story by Larry Rohter, "Invasion That Never Comes Has Many Haitians Skeptical." Many Haitians do "welcome the prospect of military intervention," we are told; fair enough, considering how desperate they are to survive the current repression. But according to Rohter, the reason they support intervention is because they see it "as deliverance from privation and uncertainty"; "it is the only certain way to end the wild swings of emotion they have endured" since the coup, he writes. On top of this misguided "analysis" — since, if Rohter did observe swings of emotion, they may have had something to do with three years of false U.S. promises to pressure the Haitian military — he more predict-

ably reinforces the lie that all Haitians are economic refugees. He dwells on the "privation," and opens with a description of an economy "in a shambles with half the work force said to be unemployed, [a] lack of gasoline and electricity," — and, returning to the bizarre, that (as a result of the economy) there is "nothing to do." Now there is little doubt that the sanctions have caused suffering. *But Rohter's article does not make a single reference to the political killings then occurring daily in Haiti.* Rohter also makes no mention of anti-intervention statements issued by popular organizations in Haiti (though I don't mean to say these represented a majority). Instead, he gives us this patronizing analysis: "Acceptance of intervention is probably most widespread among the poor, who are accustomed to having their fates decided by others."

In his lead sentence, Rohter reminds readers that "economic sanctions are at last fully in place." His own paper reported 19 days later that UN observers still had not arrived "to monitor the enforcement of sanctions along the porous border with the Dominican Republic"; and two days after that, that "an estimated 40,000 to 50,000 gallons of gasoline [are smuggled] across the border daily."¹⁵ By ignoring observations of how sanctions were applied in such a way that the military control of the black market economy solidified, Rohter is able to see the ridiculous Haitian paranoia for what it is: "Viewing American policy, some people here detect evidence of a sinister conspiracy. Last month, for instance, five left-wing groups that support Father Aristide issued statements accusing the United States of seeking the failure of economic sanctions in order to weaken Haiti and prepare the way for an American takeover. 'Don't be fooled,' warned the Haitian Clerical Conference, one of the groups. 'This intervention will be against the people of Haiti, since it arises from the same logic as the coup d'etat.'"

In fact, the July 1994 document from which Rohter is presumably quoting states clearly: "We should not believe that absolutely everything which is happening was anticipated to the last detail and that this is a matter of rigorously applying a monstrous preestablished plan." And the Conference Haitienne des Religieux, labeled simply "five left-wing groups" by Rohter, is described differently by more sympathetic (and precise) writers as "an association which groups together the 1,400 priests, nuns and brothers in Catholic orders working in Haiti."¹⁶

Again, Rohter simply avoids evidence showing that sanctions were never really intended to crush the military and elites. It should be common knowledge by now that back in February 1992, for example, the Bush Administration exempted U.S. assembly factories in Haiti from the Organization of American States-sponsored embargo, responding to "complaints from American companies that relied on Haiti as a source of cheap labor." Attempts to justify this move with professed concern for Haitian workers ring hollow, since this "unilateral move was opposed by President Aristide, by [UN Special Envoy] Dante Caputo and by Haiti's unions," according to the National Labor Committee Education Fund in Support of Worker and Human Rights in Central America. The National Labor Committee also reported in February 1994, that "[n]ew Commerce Department figures show 1993 U.S. imports from Haiti up almost 50 percent over 1992"; and, in April, that the Clinton Administration itself "is purchasing baseballs and softballs assembled in Haiti by U.S. companies," one of which pays its workers as little as five cents an hour. These are only highlights; one might think they would have a place in an analysis of the U.S. goals with regard to economic sanctions. The *Miami Herald* managed to discover such long-available evidence once

the sanctions had been lifted — but their special “Miami Herald inquiry” [sic] led to no questions about U.S. intentions in Haiti. After all, President Clinton himself said last year, “I want to lift the embargo very badly. I want to do more than lift the embargo; I want to help rebuild the economy of Haiti. That would be good for America. They could be good partners for us.” Earlier, President Bush’s Treasury Secretary reportedly told the director of the Office of Foreign Assets Control, which is responsible for enforcing economic sanctions, “to go slow” on intervening against Texaco, which was “pump[ing] gasoline from 26 tanker ships and pay[ing] the Haitian military junta millions of dollars after the U.S. embargo took effect.”¹⁷ Business is business: after the U.S. convinced Cedras to leave Haiti, special adviser William Gray said at a White House briefing that the U.S.’s renting three Cedras houses is “not objectionable. They’re at fair market rent.” (10/14/94)

Details about the U.S. economic policy toward Haiti are similarly ignored in a sarcastic story by Tim Johnson in the *Miami Herald*, “Conspiracy theories abound in Haiti.” (8/18/94) Johnson quotes a Haitian lawyer “with close ties to military rulers” who believes the U.S. has “other interests besides democracy in Haiti’ ... Perhaps it is a desire to turn Haiti ‘into a big factory,’ she said, or greed by investors eager to dominate the country.” To Johnson this is “farfetched.” But to some Haitian union members who worked in U.S. assembly factories, Aristide’s proposal to raise the minimum wage was one of the main reasons for his ouster. And before the coup, USAID worked with Haiti’s private sector to oppose Aristide’s proposal; it set up a front group for this, since it wouldn’t look right for the U.S. to do so. The goal was to duplicate the stable “investment climate” which prevailed under the murderous dictatorship of General Henri Namphy in 1987. And when U.S. companies returned to Haiti after the coup, the first thing they did was to fire union members at their plants, according to the National Labor Committee. Amy Wilentz has written that U.S. goals in Haiti are “a restructured and dependent agriculture that exports to U.S. markets and is open to American exploitation, and ... a displaced rural population that not only can be employed in off-shore U.S. industries in the towns, but is more susceptible to Army control.” (*The Rainy Season*, p. 282) But Johnson’s more sophisticated reply to the Haitian lawyer’s crazy ideas is that “U.S. diplomats flatly deny such assertions, saying those who make them are misreading Clinton’s resolve to see democracy — and exiled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide — restored.”

Johnson’s article also says that for Haitians “no proof is needed” for the theory that “the Pentagon craves a deep-water harbor, Mole St. Nicolas, in the far northwest of Haiti.” Even if there were no proof, a look at a map might make an honest person wonder: Mole St. Nicolas is just 60 miles across the Windward Passage from the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. But there is proof. In *The United States Occupation of Haiti, 1915-1934* (Rutgers, 1971), Hans Schmidt describes the continual pressure on Haiti by the U.S. to gain control of Mole St. Nicolas in the second half of the 19th century; pressure was increased on the eve of the occupation itself, when “[President] Wilson approved a plan by which the U.S. would procure the Mole and a strip of land 20 miles long and 10 miles wide extending into the interior, with Haitian residents being given the option of either selling their land to the United States or becoming American citizens if they wished to remain.” (p. 56) As recently as 1985, the Reagan State Department was reportedly offering Jean-Claude Duvalier \$780 million for the Mole.¹⁸

The Murky, Violent, Patois-Speaking Masses

WHILE THE MEDIA OBSCURES THE TRUTH WITH ITS ARROGANT LANGUAGE, it also goes out of its way to demean the language of the Haitian people. Haitians speak Haitian Creole, often called simply “Creole,” though as anthropologist Robert Lawless points out, their language would more accurately be called “Haitian.” Farmer uses both “Haitian” and “Creole” in *AIDS and Accusation*; when I was in Port-au-Prince last year, a Haitian woman asked me in her language if I spoke “Haitian.” The mix which produced the Haitian language may be comparatively recent, but English is not exactly “pure.” This is important because demeaning a people’s language is an element in dehumanizing the speakers. Prejudices about the Haitians’ language — that it is not a “real” language in its own right — are part of the fabric of scarcely-concealed prejudices that characterize writing on Haiti. In fact, the prejudices are often not concealed at all; rather, they go unnoticed because they are so ingrained in our culture. Lawless provides an extensive catalog of examples, showing the consistency of these biases from 16th century travel writing (on Africa) to contemporary journalism on Haiti, most of which “has been simply an elaboration of the denigrating folk model of evil and darkness, the negative of the clean, white modern western world.” The topics in his table of contents include: boat people, AIDS, dark Africa/black Haiti, cannibals and zombies, sex and rhythm, indolent natives, voodoo, and “a people without a language.”¹⁹

Recent coverage has provided some striking examples of the way these categories combine to form a basis for political “analysis.” In the *Miami Herald*: “Haiti’s economy is a ruin, its psyche a mess and its future a dark riddle”; and this headline: “World’s oldest black nation ‘ruthlessly self-destructive’” (we see the isolation theme again, too). The “progressive” press is not immune: the *Village Voice* called a story “Voodoo Politics” (10/19/93), complete with drawings of skeletons, though the article had nothing to do with skeletons or the Haitian religion. And there are the insidious references to language: “French or whatever,” as a *Ft. Worth Star-Telegram* columnist puts it. The *New York Times* refers to language to remind readers what aliens Aristide and the Haitians who elected him are: “The slight, left-wing Roman Catholic cleric with the Creole accent and exotic metaphors ... an unpredictable, emotional leader with poor English, vague mannerisms and an odd circle of activists, spiritualists and political leftists”; “the impoverished black masses mobilized by Father Aristide, who speak Creole, an African-tinged patois, and live in miserable shantytowns.” The latter example also reinforces that the poverty is as integral a part of who these people are as their language is; and is the majority of the electorate in the United States called “the masses?”²⁰

The *Times* also gives us this: “Haitian Patois: ‘Where ‘justice’ can mean ‘revenge.’” (10/16/94) This is a crucial example because it brings together the substandard language bias with the well-orchestrated disinformation campaign about Aristide’s human rights record. Equating the killers with their victims has roots in the stereotypical portrayal of Haiti as a society where violence is indigenously. In a more immediate context, it is the direct extension of falsely balancing Aristide’s human rights record with the post-coup military’s record — a balancing act based on lies, and making possible the charade of negotiations since the coup, the pressure on Aristide by our government to include more coup sup-

porters in his government, and, not least of all, the opposition to invasion on the basis that Aristide is no different than those killers. "Backers of President Aristide, followers of General Cedras and the former Tontons Macoute *retain their homicidal tendencies, to say nothing of their weapons,*" writes R.W. Apple (my emphasis).²¹ Aside from what I can only see as racism, there is the simple lie here that both sides are armed.

The false equation which began weeks after the coup thus found new form in the warnings early in the occupation about the dangers of "Haitian-on-Haitian" violence — dangers to the occupiers and their mission, that is. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Shalikashvili's own language gets pretty murky as he raises the specter of the dark enemy: he said he is "very much concerned about getting our military men and women caught up in this Haitian-on-Haitian violence, that murky sort of a threat out there that's always there."²² The problem in Haiti, in other words, is not that the (U.S.-trained and funded) military has tortured and killed thousands of unarmed supporters of Aristide and democracy. The problem is that Haitians kill each other. That is why "justice" can mean "revenge." (Of course, even court-administered "justice" in the U.S. is often nothing but revenge, but that's not what this code is about.) Forget that there is no functioning justice system in Haiti which ordinary people can count on; forget that Aristide's justice minister, Guy Malary, who was to preside over the separation of the army and the police, was gunned down on October 14, 1993, by paramilitary troops set up at the suggestion (and possibly with the funding) of the CIA. After all, Secretary of State Warren Christopher assured us as recently as September 18, answering a question after the Carter deal about amnesty for the coup leaders, "there's a sound legal structure" in Haiti.

In the days between the (non)invasion and Aristide's return, the media were so primed for a necklacing incident by Aristide supporters that any collective expression of anger or relief was seen as "vengeance." Thus, after a gunfight between Marines and Haitian security forces in Cap-Haitien, a *New York Times* headline screamed, "Haitian Crowds Loot Police Buildings." (9/26/94) Eric Schmitt goes on to rant about "the looting and pillaging of the police headquarters," and, in the next paragraph, "[t]he plundering and the pillaging in this city of 65,000 [which] marked the most serious outbreak of violence since the United States military" came in. It is not the armed battle between Haitian and American soldiers, but the mob action — from which no deaths or even injuries are reported — which marks the worst outbreak of violence. Suspected paramilitary attaches were captured by civilians and turned over to U.S. military forces, who then handed them over to the Haitian military. Cap-Haitien residents who "pillaged" weapons from the abandoned police and military barracks, says a photo caption in the next day's *Times*, "turned [them] in" to U.S. forces; but if they turned the weapons in, they weren't pillaging. The caption does not say what the U.S. would do with the weapons.

Schmitt's hysteria is almost funny when he interprets the most wonderful, spontaneous expression of joy by Cap-Haitien residents as a dangerous result of the new "vacuum of authority": "At the main military barracks, Haitians took everything they could get their hands on, even tubas and trombones. They played the instruments in the streets as crowds gathered outside. Marine officers said the disorder was largely a result of the lack of control of the Haitian commanders ..." Note once again how quickly the ground is laid for the rationalization that

some military is better than none at all — never mind that Aristide himself has urged much more drastic cuts in the Haitian military than his American sponsors will agree to. Gen. Shelton, commander of the U.S. forces, U.S. Ambassador William Swing, and Haitian Gen. Cedras quickly flew into town “to discuss ... [the] shootings and the growing tensions.”

Reconciliation and Occupation

WHEN ARISTIDE WAS INAUGURATED ON FEBRUARY 7, 1991, a peasant woman put the red and blue presidential sash on him. On October 15, 1994, when he returned to Haiti after three years in exile, Aristide put on the sash aboard the U.S. Air Force plane that brought him back.

It was difficult not to see Aristide's return as defeat, though survival. His speech from behind layers of cloudy, bullet-proof shields was like the video testimony of a hostage: under duress, he assured his loved ones that he is alive, but the theater hardly bothers to disguise who is in control. If this seems melodramatic, I can only say that it is what I felt watching Aristide's October 15 speech from the National Palace on CNN. And on television, only the applause of the dignitaries on stage was audible — it wasn't clear how the “masses” were reacting. Hopefully they would be insulated from any reaction at all, since, as *The New York Times* pointed out weeks later, “When the poor and hungry of this country see his face and hear his voice, they go a little wild.” If only they could understand, as the “business class” does, that he can “excite crowds but not provide a plan to help them.” (One might wonder, then, why the business classes felt a need to get rid of him. But even as their attack on Aristide is repeated, their role in deposing him is revised, all in consecutive paragraphs. The wealthy Fritz Mevs, owner of the Haitian American Sugar Company, who, according to other sources, was a key coup supporter, “now so aggressively supports the President that he printed 30,000 color photographs of him to distribute around Port-au-Prince.” No reason to suspect the motives of someone who allegedly made money smuggling cement during the embargo, of course, but let's keep an eye on that “once-defiant populist” Aristide.)²³ If there was a bright spot in Aristide's speech, it was when the voice-over interpreter stumbled and fell silent, unable to keep up with the changes between French, Spanish, English, and exotic Creole.

Back in August, Manno Charlemagne gave me his assessment of resistance in Haiti at the time. Haiti's best-known singer/activist for many years, Charlemagne was arrested twice in the aftermath of the 1991 coup. “The Lavalas movement is destroying resistance,” he said. “Every time you say Aristide will be back tomorrow, you stop the movement... . If you make people sit and wait, you make them weak.” A member of the United Nations Civilian Mission in Haiti gave a similar assessment: “There could have been some popular response to the coup, but they were told by their leaders ... ‘don't do anything, because the UN is going to help us and restore democracy.’ This has had a very negative effect on the popular movements in Haiti. They've been entirely passive since the coup, because they've been told ‘there's no need for you to do anything; there's going to be a solution from the outside.’ That is probably the most worrying aspect of the UN involvement in Haiti.”²⁴ I cannot say whether this assessment is accurate; certainly some believe that the presence of the Civilian Mission helped lessen atrocities.

But the UN's own analysis of its Civilian Mission had predicted in early 1993 that short-term success might actually create a new kind of danger:

We predict the rapid emergence of serious problems for the Mission if many months elapse before a legitimate government enjoying public confidence returns to power. If the Mission is indeed initially successful in raising the confidence of the population, it will lead rapidly to increasingly assertive attempts to exercise freedom of expression. The overwhelming preponderance of freely expressed political, popular and journalistic activity can be expected to challenge the *de facto* authorities and the human rights record of the military and to demand the early return of President Aristide. On the other hand, we found little indication that the military and *de facto* authorities are prepared to tolerate such activity in practice.²⁵

With this analysis in mind, it is at least conceivable that the benefits of the UN presence were intentionally sabotaged, given what we know about U.S. contact with the Haitian military. Martin writes that at this "key moment," "U.S. officials, who had been in direct discussion with the military, concluded that the army needed further reassurance of its future." What form did this reassurance to the Haitian military take? "[A] mostly American military component was added to the negotiators' proposals" for an "international police presence during the transition and for a period after Aristide's return.... The [Haitian] generals trusted the framework of bilateral U.S. aid. They mistrusted the UN and the proposal for the Canadians and French, both more committed supporters of Aristide than the United States, to take the lead in the police contingent." Over a year later, U.S. forces would make up over 15,000 of the approximately 20,000-member occupying, multinational force; in the second phase, U.S. troops will reportedly be half of the 6000-person total.

Chester Arthur, the UN monitor quoted above, also expressed concern about the cooperation between UN police and the Haitian police, and that UN-collected information on human rights abuses was shared with the perpetrators. Again, this is back in 1993, over a year before the reports of the CIA's connections to FRAPH, and the more obvious cooperation between U.S. and Haitian militaries during the occupation. "There's no hard evidence," says Arthur, "but it's pretty likely that the civilian mission had quite a few, if not CIA people, people who were very sympathetic and who had very good relations with people who worked at the [U.S.] embassy.... It comes down to this phrase about the 'professionalisation of the Haitian army' which was the intent of the UN deployment.... it sounds like making the army into a much more clean and efficient machine in order to carry out its work; to adopt U.S. methods of counter-insurgency and keeping control of unruly elements in society. It would become a professionalized army ... [r]ather than the Haitian army, which is dirty and leaves too many clues, too many bodies, and doesn't look good in the papers."

Note how different the "news" can be just across our borders. A *Montreal Gazette* columnist reported at some length on the views of pro-Aristide Haitian legislator Samuel Madistin. Madistin says that the United States was pressuring the Aristide government to make sure that Washington monopolized the recruiting and training of Haiti's new police force. In fact, "the U.S. government body that has trained police forces elsewhere in Latin America" announced its unilateral decision to begin recruitment for a new police school to be set up in Haiti in mid-December, according to Madistin, and "Aristide's government was never consulted, or even informed." Moreover:

One source close to Aristide said U.S. forces have failed so badly in removing brutal officers from the Haitian army that several known human-rights abusers were among the small contingent of soldiers at the presidential palace who were allowed by U.S. troops to guard Aristide when he returned from exile on Saturday.

...Now, Madistin said he fears Washington is trying to set up a new “indigenous occupation army” to serve U.S. interests here — one that would replace the old discredited institution it has been shamed into dislodging from power and partially dismantling.²⁶

“Every time you say Aristide will be back tomorrow, you stop the movement.” In some ways, the actual return of Aristide seemed like the dire fulfillment of Charlemagne’s logic. It seemed like an ending. Over and over, in the days leading up to his return, Aristide urged “reconciliation” (and discouraged “violence” and “vengeance”), and Clinton nodded his approval. One need not have any romantic illusions about what is called popular justice to balk at this hostage-president’s repeated warnings to the *victims* of violence against using violence, while the question of amnesty for the killers remains vague, and the suggestion of accountability practically non-existent. Aristide even spoke, as he had at the White House the day before, of the “new world order.” Meanwhile, Haitians were able to show their appreciation to the cameras with American flags distributed (according to CNN) by U.S. Army Psychological Operations units. And correspondent Christiane Amanpour welcomed Aristide back to the civilized world, saying that although his followers consider him almost mystical, he has come to appear “almost European” in his dealings with Washington.

“There Will Be Positive Change”

IT WAS DIFFICULT TO TAKE THE HAITIANS’ CELEBRATIONS at face value with the murkiness of CNN and *New York Times* commentary laid over them. But a few days after Aristide’s return, I had a chance to watch a friend’s videotape of celebrations in the streets of Port-au-Prince. My friend said that people would dance for hours, then lie down and sleep, then get up and just start dancing again where they stood. When I visited Haiti in October 1993, I took a cassette from a Haitian friend in Miami, a musician, to his family in the Carrefour Feuille section of Port-au-Prince. The musician had told me repeatedly to warn his family not to play the cassette loudly or when others were around. It included a song about Bwa Kayman, where the 1791 slave uprising that led to Haitian independence began. In October 1994, our friend’s video showed the musician’s family and neighbors openly singing his song in the alleys of their neighborhood. The refrain is “*dechouke, dechouke!*” — the word for *uprooting* the old regime.

We should not have illusions about U.S. intentions in Haiti; but we also should not ignore the very real relief which so many victims feel. On October 15, Aristide spoke repeatedly of the newfound “security” — that is, being able to walk the streets without fear — because for the last three years people have been denied this basic freedom. As a peasant organizer hiding in the capital had put it, “To go out in the street, you live like it’s your last day.”²⁷ The U.S. and Haitian militaries can allow people to sing about *dechoukaj*, because the forces are in place to prevent any real uprooting. U.S. Major Louis Kernisan, the one who designed the plan to retrain Haiti’s police, has this to say about the possibility of “popular uprising”: “This is only the kind of shit they’ve been able to get away

with when there is nobody watching... . They tried that before and it brought them two years of embargo and their little guy in golden exile in the States” (Nairn). This is especially frightening when you stop to realize that what Kernisan refers to as a popular uprising is the internationally-monitored 1990 election that brought Aristide to office.

But it is too easy to keep returning to pessimism. Singing about *dechoukaj* may only be singing — but it is a freedom that was denied for a long time. Maybe it can serve as an opening, there and here. We should look to those breathing the sighs of relief (as well as to those still being victimized) for direction on how to help them now, in the face of what we know about our own government. And we should work on an information *dechoukaj* at home — answering the questions that people would not have even been asking before the occupation, about the U.S.’s real role in Haiti. This will be especially important as new elections approach. When Manno Charlemagne was talking about the U.S. role in the coup against Aristide, and simultaneously looking forward to changes that will come with the next elections, I asked him if he thought there was any room for positive change. “Positive change?” he said. “We survived Duvalier; there will be positive change... . We have to begin again to work like we did for the twenty-nine years of Duvalier... . [People] have to know, Aristide *was* their man, there can be others, there can be, there will be someone else, some other person, clean person, to help guide the movement. There will be.”

Notes

1. Rick Bragg, “Behind the Ouster of Aristide: Haiti’s Tiny Elite,” *New York Times* (NYT), 8/28/94. Here’s the context: “But as the elite wait in their mansions, General Cedras and other high-ranking military army and police officials are becoming more powerful, amassing their own fortunes. Two members of the elite, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the growing powers of the military, which they once controlled, frightened them. Poor Haitians cannot understand all this.”

2. This and other details in this section are based on remarks by journalist Allan Nairn and others at a conference on Haiti sponsored by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy, Hunter College, N.Y., 11/5/94.

3. US AID/Haiti, “Human Rights Fund,” (Port-au-Prince: May 20, 1994). For more information, see Washington Office on Haiti, “Fundwatch Report” (Sept. 1994), and “Democracy Intervention in Haiti” (March 1994).

4. Rick Bragg, “G.I.’s Voice Disgust at Orders Not to Interfere With Beatings,” NYT, 9/22/94.

5. Human Rights Watch/Americas and National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, *Terror Prevails in Haiti: Human Rights Violations and Failed Diplomacy* (New York, April 1994), 36.

6. Larry Rohter, “2000 U.S. Troops Land Without Opposition And Take Over Haiti’s Ports and Airfields,” NYT, 9/20/94; Susan Benesch and Yves Colon, “Pent-up anger spills forth: Police citizens in violent clashes,” *Miami Herald* (MH), 9/21/94.

7. John H. Cushman, “Haitian Police Crush Rally As American Troops Watch,” NYT, 9/21/94.

8. Americas Watch and National Coalition for Haitian Refugees, *Silencing a People: The Destruction of Civil Society in Haiti* (N.Y., Feb. 1993), 4.

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10. Tim Weiner, “CIA Formed Haitian Unit Later Tied to Narcotics Trade,” NYT, 11/

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11. Nairn, "Occupation Haiti: The Eagle is Landing," 10/3/94; "Our Man in FRAPH: Behind Haiti's Paramilitaries," 10/24/94; "He's Our S.O.B.," 10/31/94.

12. "Foreign Policy and the Intelligentsia," in *Towards a New Cold War* (N.Y.: Pantheon, 1982), 94.

13. *Haiti Info*, 9/23/94.

14. "Haiti action unlike others by U.S. forces," *MH*, 9/25/94.

15. Eric Schmitt, "U.S. Delays Decision on Invading Haiti as It Faces Cuba Crisis," *NYT* 8/29/94; Schmitt, "U.S. Gets Caribbean Backing For Possible Invasion of Haiti," 8/31/94.

16. *Haiti Info*, 9/10/94.

17. Lee Hockstader, "For Haiti's Rulers, a Key Signal," *Washington Post*, 2/5/92; National Labor Committee (NLC), Press Release 2/22/94; NLC, "America's Pasttime Has Become Haiti's Torment," April 1994; Sydney P. Freedberg and Rachel L. Swarns, "How U.S. botched embargo: Haiti sanctions poorly enforced," *MH*, 10/23/94; "President won't rule out tax rise," *MH*, 2/11/93; John Solomon, "Bush officials didn't stop Texaco from shipping oil to Haiti, aide says," Associated Press, 10/2/94.

18. James Ferguson, *Papa Doc: Haiti and the Duvaliers* (Cambridge, MA: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 74-5.

19. *Haiti's Bad Press* (Rochester, VT: Schenkman Books, 1992).

20. Peter Slevin and Susan Benesch, "Troops bring Haiti a ration of hope," *MH*, 9/25/94; Peter Slevin, *MH*, 10/16/94; Pat Truly, "Invade Haiti? Just hold on a minute," *MH*, 5/31/94; Maureen Dowd, "The Mouse That Roared Squeaks Back," *NYT*, 9/22/94; John Kifner, "From Fear to Joy In Haiti's Streets," *NYT*, 9/25/94.

21. "The G.I.'s Are in Haiti: Now for the Hard Part," *NYT*, 9/20/94.

22. Michael R. Gordon, "The Decision Not to be the Police Backfires," *NYT*, 10/1/94.

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Clinton's Folly — The Health Care Debacle

John P. Canham-Clyne

BY MIDNIGHT ON ELECTION NIGHT, A CONVENTIONAL WISDOM about the meaning of the Republican sweep had already congealed in Washington. President Clinton, it seemed, had betrayed his moderate "New Democrat" promise by coming to Washington and "governing from the left." Pundit after pundit nodded sagely and assured viewers that somewhere in the first few months of his term, Clinton had veered to the left. According to the ultimate Washington insider, Cokie Roberts of ABC News and NPR, the message of the midterm elections for President Clinton was clear: "MOVE RIGHT!"

Bill Clinton was elected President after following a campaign strategy designed to position the Democratic Party at the "center" of American politics. The Democratic Leadership Council (DLC), of which Clinton is past President, had argued for more than a decade that the Democratic road to the White House lay through recapturing racist blue collar voters and competing with Republicans for the favor of capital. The DLC strategy is largely sleight of hand: maintain a commitment to activist government but champion neoliberal "re-engineering" to make it more efficient; eschew overt racism, but play the crime and death penalty cards with Nixonian enthusiasm; decry the influence of "special interests," but define the term to mean traditional liberal/left constituencies, not the major corporations and wealthy individuals who fund political campaigns.

The strategy depends on a crucial, crude calculation: that progressive constituencies whose primary electoral outlet has been the Democratic Party — labor, environmentalists, peace and justice activists, women and racial minorities — have nowhere else to go, and will gladly take the crumbs left to them by limited access to a Democratic administration. Meanwhile, a DLC candidate such as Bill Clinton could match Republican political machismo by attacking welfare, executing mentally retarded criminal defendants and promising to maintain the defense budget, then trump them with promises to use government to reinvigorate the American job base.

And it worked! Bill Clinton swept into office with an electoral landslide!!

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Or did it? Clinton captured just 43% of the popular vote, with the opposition split between an unpopular Republican incumbent and an independent billionaire who ran on a platform of fiscal austerity.

The left wing of the Democratic Party, symbolized by the 1988 Jackson campaign and to some degree by Jerry Brown's 1992 effort, has argued in contrast to the DLC strategy that the road to majority status runs through energizing alienated constituencies with a broadly inclusive agenda. In this view, rather than succumb to racism and the few tepid reforms to which business will acquiesce, the Democratic Party should articulate the common interests of working class and middle class Americans of all races in the face of globalizing capital. By democratizing American politics, the party might hope to entice the millions of people who had dropped out of the system back to the polls.

To put such an agenda forward, however, means abandoning the comfort of corporate cash for campaign warchests. For this reason, Brown made radical campaign finance overhaul the centerpiece of his campaign, tying substantive issues into bipartisan dependence on money from the true special interests. He was demolished by Clinton's overwhelming financial advantage and a media which refused to take this "one-note Johnny" seriously.

With the country mired in recession, and exhausted with 12 years of stagnating or declining living standards, the 1992 general election became a struggle by three consummate political insiders to don the mantle of outsiderdom. Clinton successfully presented himself as the candidate of "change." The centerpiece of the campaign was a proposal to stimulate job creation by investing several tens of billions of dollars in public works to refurbish the country's crumbling infrastructure.

Upon taking office, Clinton was faced with a fundamental choice in how to govern. He could build on the outsider rhetoric of the campaign and mobilize grassroots support for genuine change, or play Washington politics. Little in his history suggested the former, and it is difficult to find in the record any confirmation of the current conventional wisdom. Indeed, Clinton has governed as he campaigned, with DLC legerdemain. In public, he espouses occasional populist rhetoric, but his legislative energies are generally directed at initiatives which benefit big business or play to cultural conservatism. The stimulus package evaporated almost immediately, and Clinton's lone early legislative success was an all-out press to pass George Bush's NAFTA over the objections of what passes for a left in the United States — labor, consumer, environmental and human rights organizations.

Having run as the agent of "change," Clinton plunged into the morass of Washington money politics, milking corporate donors for millions of dollars in "soft" money for the Democratic Party. When the opportunity presented itself to open a substantive debate on the forms of American democracy, Clinton didn't even fight to get Lani Guinier a *hearing*, let alone go to the mat for her confirmation as Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights. The lone legislative success of Clinton's second year, a draconian crime bill, continued in the same vein.

NO ISSUE BETTER ILLUSTRATES THE FOLLY OF THE DLC APPROACH to politics, or the absurdity of the notion that Clinton has governed from the left than health care. The surprise election of Harris Wofford to replace Sen. John Heinz of Pennsylvania in 1991 touched off one of the nation's periodic debates over national health

insurance. Wofford capitalized on the insecurity engendered in working class and middle class Americans by the slow implosion of the health care system, and the Democrats picked up the issue in the 1992 legislative session and subsequent campaign.

The situation which causes that insecurity is well known, but bears repeating. According to census data, 37 million Americans lacked health insurance in 1991, and the figure grew by two million in the next two years. Millions more Americans have watched their benefits erode and deductibles and copayments increase. Many of those who have maintained their benefits have done so at the expense of increased wages and decreased personal freedom, as more and more employers push their employees into tightly managed care programs which severely restrict choice of providers, and workers lose the ability to change jobs for fear of losing health insurance.

Medicare covers less and less of the medical needs of the elderly each year. The average senior pays \$2350 out of pocket each year in medical expenses not covered by the generous entitlement which, we are constantly told, is busting the federal budget. Indeed, according to Harvard Medical School researchers David Himmelstein and Steffie Woolhandler, Medicare now covers roughly the same percentage of seniors' medical costs as did private insurance in the 1960s, circumstances which prompted Congress to create Medicare in the first place.

Profit-seeking private insurance companies engage in a wide range of risk-selecting activities which exacerbate this widespread insecurity. Whether it is excluding pre-existing conditions from coverage or refusing to insure at all people with a high risk of illness, these practices keep millions of Americans locked into their jobs for fear of losing coverage.

The cruelties of the current system would be tolerable if they were a result of inadequate funding in a poor country. But the U.S. spends 40% more money per capita on health care than any other industrialized nation in the world. Canada, Sweden, Australia, France, Britain and Germany all manage to extend basic coverage to all of their citizens at far lower levels of spending.

As Clinton was capturing the nomination and mounting the general election campaign, three major Democratic proposals for comprehensive health care reform were put forward in Congress, none coming close to garnering a majority. The Democratic leadership preferred a version of "pay or play," or employer mandate, requiring every employer either to provide health insurance benefits or else pay taxes into a fund to cover the uninsured. Rep. Marty Russo (D-IL) introduced a single payer plan, modeled on Canada's health care system, which would have abolished most private health insurance and channeled most health care cost through a single government insurance program. Finally, Rep. Jim Cooper and the Conservative Democratic Caucus put forward the "Managed Competition Act," which would have facilitated the creation of large purchasing cooperatives, who would buy federally regulated insurance plans from private companies for their members.

House Republicans supported the tepid reforms proposed by the Bush Administration, the centerpiece of which was a cap on malpractice damage awards. Bush accepted the wildly inflated claims of the American Medical Association that the primary cost problems in American medicine are the result of large malpractice damage awards and high malpractice insurance premiums, which drive doctors to "defensive medicine," prescribing unnecessary diagnostic tests and treat-

ments to ward off the possibility of future lawsuits.

Throughout 1992, as they had for several years, polls revealed substantial majorities in favor of government intervention to achieve universal coverage and a willingness to shoulder a heavier tax burden to achieve the goal.

Upon taking office, President Clinton appointed Hillary Rodham Clinton to take charge of health care reform. The First Lady set up a Task Force to examine all the options and produce a plan within a hundred days. Through weeks of elaborate consultation with industry groups, doctors, patients, business executives and labor unions, the President's famed policy wonks worked round the clock to come up with a solution.

UNFORTUNATELY, LONG BEFORE THE FIRST EAGER RHODES SCHOLAR bit into his first midnight pizza, Clinton had made the most important decision in the process. Instead of emulating successful government-run insurance schemes in places like Canada and Australia, Clinton insisted on a "uniquely American solution" which would keep giant insurance companies in control of American health care.

On the campaign trail, Clinton had pledged fealty to the principles of managed competition. This oxymoronically titled idea was originally crafted by economist Alain Enthoven, who managed Robert McNamara's Office of Systems Analysis when the best and the brightest were winning the Vietnam War. It was honed by a "consensus group" of medical industry leaders who convened at the Jackson Hole, Wyoming home of Dr. Paul Ellwood, a physician and real estate developer who was Richard Nixon's health policy advisor. Managed competition envisions a controlled market in which the competition holds down costs, and well-informed consumers shop for insurance like cars. Businesses combine into large purchasing cooperatives to buy insurance for their employees, giving them the same market power as large employers.

Nothing in Enthoven's original work suggested that the plan would do more than make currently available private insurance a little cheaper. In an attempt to achieve universal coverage, the White House Task Force grafted managed competition onto an employer mandate, a federal law requiring employers to finance coverage for their employees. Given the price competition in the proposed system, the Administration anticipated that their plan would accelerate the movement of workers into corporate run HMOs or other managed care networks as private businesses attempted to control costs.

On its own terms, the Clinton version of managed competition was a magnificent creature whose habitat was entirely circumscribed by the Washington Beltway. Substantively, the plan was something of a Frankenstein's monster, with theories and institutions drawn from a variety of sources. Politically, however, it appeared perfectly calculated to divide or neutralize all of the major Washington constituencies which would be expected to oppose a government-mandated expansion of health care benefits.

The emerging health care debate had already split the insurance industry, as the handful of large insurers with multi-state HMO businesses looked to gobble up their smaller brethren. The expansion of managed care had similarly split physicians, with primary care physicians achieving greater status in HMOs, which force members to go through a medical "gatekeeper," usually a primary care physician, to get to a specialist.

Clinton hoped to attract business, especially manufacturing concerns to the

plan. In his speech to Congress introducing the plan, Clinton decried the cost-shifting within the current system. Employers who don't provide coverage piggy-back on those who do. When an uninsured person gets really sick or suffers an injury, he or she generally will get charity care at a local emergency room. The unpaid portion of the bill is absorbed by the hospital and passed on to other consumers, particularly those with insurance. Thus, care for uninsured workers helps drive up costs for companies who do insure their employees. The Clinton bill, by leveling the playing field, sought to entice companies which do insure on board as a balance to opposition from those businesses for which providing insurance would be a new cost of business.

There were two major problems with the proposal: the plan had no core political constituency; and the mechanism set forward had no realistic hope whatsoever of achieving its goals of cost control, universal coverage and quality care.

THE DISTINGUISHING FEATURE OF THE U.S. HEALTH CARE SYSTEM is its bureaucratic complexity. In Canada, every resident is issued a health insurance card from the provincial government, and permitted to visit any doctor or hospital he or she pleases. Hospitals do not need to track every individual aspirin tablet, syringe and sponge to determine who must pay for it. Thus, in Canadian hospitals administration consumes between 9 and 11% of spending, compared to 24.7% in U.S. hospitals.

The most marked difference between the two systems is insurance overhead, a difference which runs directly counter to American ideological fantasies about the efficiency of private business and the inefficiency of government programs. Canada's single-payer system spends an average of 1.2% of total health care costs on insurance overhead. The comparable figure in the U.S. is 5.8%, a difference of 34.2 billion in 1993 U.S. health care dollars. The primary culprit is the private insurance industry, which spends more than 12 cents of every premium dollar on overhead. Medicare, by contrast, spends only three and a half cents on bureaucracy, still three times more than Canada.

Any reform which attempts to achieve universal coverage without attacking this bloat head-on must include tens of billions of dollars in additional health care spending. Despite some lip service to standardizing forms and setting up a nationwide patient database, the Clinton proposal left the core bureaucracy largely untouched, and added a thick layer of government regulators on top.

Canada's frugality relative to the U.S., along with the attractive features of the system — free choice of doctors, no charge at the point of service, good health outcomes — attracted a substantial grassroots movement to single payer during the 1980's. In 1986, a group of progressive physicians formed Physicians for a National Health Program, drafted a proposed single-payer system for the U.S., and published versions of it in the *New England Journal of Medicine* and the *Journal of the American Medical Association*. They soon attracted 3,000 physicians to the cause. At the same time, labor unions began to renew a call for national health insurance, and by the time of the election, the national leadership of unions comprising a majority of members of the AFL-CIO had endorsed single-payer. Consumer groups like Citizen Action and Public Citizen joined the call, and by the time the Task Force began drafting the Clinton plan, a nationwide movement mailed more than a million postcards to the White House calling for single-payer.

They passed in front of blind eyes. The Clintons refused to consider a genuine anti-corporate, anti-Washington crusade. Single-payer was assumed to be "politically nonviable." In an incident which has now become legend in the single-payer movement, single-payer advocates were brought in to make their case to Hillary Rodham Clinton. After they pointed out how only single-payer of all the reform options offered true universal coverage, real cost control mechanisms and free choice of doctor, Rodham Clinton conceded the theoretical superiority of the model. However, she wanted to know how the insurance industry could be beaten. David Himmelstein recalls suggesting that Presidential leadership backed by consistent poll majorities in favor of government financed universal coverage and the grassroots groups arrayed before her offered a good start. "Tell me something interesting, David," was her dismissive reply.

The Clintons calculated that, as in the election, the left had nowhere to go and would rally to anything called "universal coverage," no matter how flawed. But the substantive weaknesses of the White House proposal gutted its political effectiveness. For example, the administration was terrified of the ire of senior citizens, and proposed to leave Medicare intact for many years. Medicare recipients currently have the right to visit any physician they choose, and many seniors have longstanding relationships with their doctors.

Under the Clinton plan, seniors would have received benefits for prescription drugs, which now make up a large portion of Medicare recipient's out-of-pocket expenditures. The Clinton proposal required each regional Alliance to offer at least one plan with a traditional fee-for-service structure, which would allow seniors to maintain their relationships with their personal physicians. However, because the administration believes that managed care saves money, it would have allowed the fee-for-service plans to impose deductibles and copayments totalling \$2,500 per family. Thus, if the administration wished to bring seniors into the national system, it would require them to sacrifice their choice of physician for an improved financial package, or continue to maintain their current financial burden. The choice isn't the kind of clear improvement necessary to persuade people to give up their basic coverage. Thus, the Administration was forced to fudge Medicare and forego the support of senior citizens.

The primary single-payer bill, drafted by Sen. Paul Wellstone (D-MN) and Reps. John Conyers (D-MI) and Jim McDermott (D-WA), offered the elderly a clear, convincing improvement in benefits. Drugs and all services would be covered without copayments and deductibles. The bill contained long term care coverage, which the administration barely touched for cost reasons. Had Clinton opted for single-payer, he would have had a political opportunity to galvanize support among seniors, who, when aroused, become one of the most potent political forces in the country.

THROUGHOUT 1994, THE ELABORATE CALCULATIONS OF THE WHITE HOUSE POLICY wonks steadily unraveled in the face of industry pressure and under the weight of their own inadequacy. When the Clinton bill was finally introduced in the fall of 1993, Rep. Fortney "Pete" Stark (D-CA), Chairman of the House Ways and Means Health Subcommittee, declared its central feature, the new Health Alliances "dead on arrival." Stark introduced his own proposal to require employers to pay for coverage or kick in a tax to fund a huge expansion of Medicare to extend minimal coverage to the uninsured. The Congressional Budget Office analyzed all the

alternatives and concluded that only the Wellstone-McDermott-Conyers bill would cover everyone and significantly reduce the rate of growth in health care spending.

The Business Roundtable, the Chamber of Commerce and the National Association of Manufacturers all demurred in early February of 1994. The Alliance for Managed Competition, made up of the largest insurers, continued to pour huge amounts of cash into congressional campaign coffers. Their support for the Clinton plan was halfhearted, particularly when one of the primary alternatives was Rep. Cooper's "pure" managed competition, offering insurer control of the market without any serious regulation or government mandates. By the end of spring, three bills — single payer, the President's plan, and the Ways and Means Medicare Part "C" proposal — had been reported to the House floor. In the Senate, the Labor and Human Resources Committee reported a version of the Clinton bill, but all eyes soon shifted to the Senate Finance Committee, chaired by New York Democrat Daniel Patrick Moynihan.

Moynihan and the Finance Committee wrangled through June, and finally emerged with a "compromise" that football fans would recognize as a punt. The Moynihan bill would have enacted rudimentary market reforms and subsidies for low-income individuals and small businesses, in the hope that 95% of the country would be covered by the year 2002, in which case "universal coverage" would be declared. Failing 95%, a commission would recommend further reform. The House leadership struggled to craft some sort of real universal coverage, but the game was up. On August 2, Senate Majority Leader George Mitchell, Democrat of Maine, proposed a version of the Moynihan bill, aiming for 95% coverage by the year 2000, and President Clinton surrendered, declaring that the Mitchell bill met his requirements. With the Senate consensus now openly opposing universal coverage, the entire process fell apart, and Congress adjourned for Labor Day with no hope of passing any bill.

Throughout the process, the National Federation of Independent Businesses and the Health Insurance Association of America stayed on the offensive. The airwaves filled with complaints from small business owners that the Clinton monstrosity, or any employer mandate at all, would cause a wave of business failures. The small and medium sized insurers sponsored a series of stinging ads attacking the (very real) bureaucratic complexity of the Clinton plan and raising the bugaboo of rationing. The White House mounted a public relations counter-offensive, attempting to play on public revulsion against insurance industry profiteering, but to little avail.

Single-payer supporters, who might otherwise have formed the core of a nationwide anti-insurance industry crusade, worked with little enthusiasm for the broadest possible benefit package, and to ensure that states would be able to opt out of any reform and use federal money to form a single-payer system. Labor formally endorsed the Clinton plan, but was less than energetic in pushing for it.

During July, the White House launched what was supposed to be the triumphal political climax to its health care initiative, a nationwide "grassroots" bus caravan to Washington. Unfortunately, by the time the buses rolled the Clinton bill was dead, and the White House hadn't endorsed any alternative, so nobody knew exactly what they were riding for. Having slighted the one plan with a genuine grassroots constituency, the Administration's grand climax became a pathetic denouement: crowds of angry conservatives often outnumbered supporters

along the way. The evening news offered some of the most awkward video since the closing scene of "The Blue Angel."

The sad irony in the debacle is that the White House was tagged with the "socialized medicine" label they desperately struggled to avoid. Conservative talk show hosts, industry commercials and Republican lawmakers scared the hell out of the American people by fulminating against a "government takeover of one-seventh of the economy," in Rush Limbaugh's words. Instead of returning fire, and pointing out that the health care industry has become one-seventh of the economy precisely because market incentives have spurred disastrous inflation, the White House defensively insisted that they weren't socializing health insurance. Hillary Rodham Clinton bashed health care "profiteers" in a few speeches, but her epithets were hollow, and the White House couldn't rally support behind a hypocritical banner.

SINGLE PAYER, DERIDED BY WASHINGTON EXPERTS AND LARGELY IGNORED by the major media, continued to pick up support during the debate. The American College of Surgeons, disturbed by the ongoing consolidation of the insurance market, declared itself for single-payer in February 1994. Later that spring, a group of grassroots organizations in California placed a single-payer initiative on the November ballot, collecting more than a million signatures in less than 100 days. During the general election campaign, statewide chapters of national organizations which opposed single-payer — in particular, the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) — joined the fight for the initiative. Sadly, however, the climate of fear and mistrust of any government health care initiative generated by the opposition to the Clinton plan helped send the pro-single-payer forces, who were badly outspent by the insurance industry, down to resounding defeat.

That same generalized sense of discontent and fear dominated the rest of the campaign season. Populist sentiment is generally inchoate, a discontented energy awaiting a galvanizing target or effective channeling by political leadership. Americans are aware that their economic and social circumstances have deteriorated, and haven't the faintest idea how to fix them. Fear and apprehension make fertile ground for the populist messages favored by the right: hostility to "big government," anti-immigrant fervor, puritanical "family values" politics, draconian anti-crime measures.

But the same circumstances also offer an opening to the left, if the populist themes can be seized. Whereas conservative politicians rant against a liberal cultural elite, the real elite in the U.S. is united in support of an economic and free trade agenda which will tend to drive down American wages and erode environmental, health and safety standards. On health care, an anti-corporate message, unused by the Clintons, awaits courageous politicians.

Leaving the populist message in the hands of people like Newt Gingrich will have disastrous consequences. If the Democrats fail to seize that agenda, the party may well disintegrate, or be taken over by people who will. If the left is to have any electoral success, whether as an insurgent force among Democrats, or through the efforts of the Green Party, New Party or any other third (or fourth or fifth party), it must take an anti-elite message and focus it on the ravages of globalized capital.

Is New York City Still a Labor Town?

Robert Fitch

WHEN THE ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL AID ATTORNEYS' STRIKE reached City Hall last month, Rudy Giuliani must have thought he'd hit the public relations trifecta. First, his adversaries were lawyers. Not even lawyers like lawyers. Second, they were lawyers who defended criminals. A notch still lower in public esteem. Finally, they weren't a lot of them. Less than a thousand.

So what's surprising is not that Giuliani is picking his teeth today with the attorneys' bones. It's rather that the rest of New York City's municipal labor movement — once seen as the most militant and powerful in America — mostly looked on while the Mayor gnawed away on the carcasses of their fellow trade unionists. When the Association's President Michael Letwin called a support rally of all the trade union chiefs in the city, only Arthur Cheliotis, President of Communications Workers of America Local 1180, dared show up to offer solidarity. Where was everyone else?

Stanley Hill, head of American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees' (AFSCME) DC 37 representing 130,000 city workers, first suggested that the striking lawyers simply go back to work. Then he offered to play Jimmy Carter and mediate the dispute. Who did Hill think Letwin was — Kim Il Sung? Dennis Rivera, President of Local 1199 Hospital and Health Care Workers, actually represented 650 clerical support workers who walked out with the lawyers. Profiled in *The New Yorker* and the *New York Times Magazine*, as the conscience of organized labor, Rivera, who has a big up-coming home care workers' contract to negotiate with Giuliani, didn't even issue a statement of support. Other labor bigs explained they couldn't appear because they hadn't been consulted sufficiently in advance. None would risk losing brownie points with an all-powerful Mayor in a doomed cause.

Somehow the present generation of municipal labor leaders fails to grasp that the Mayor looms so large because they have shrunk to insignificance. It's hard to believe, but 20 years ago, New York municipal labor leaders were almost mythical for their militancy. In "Sleeper," pro-

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duced just before the 1975 fiscal crisis, Woody Allen comes back to life in the 21st century, to discover that New York City had been wiped out by a nuclear explosion. The reason? UFT President Al Shanker got hold of the atom bomb.

Today, however, municipal labor leaders pose little threat to the city's security. Indeed, they seem quietly devoted to a campaign of unilateral disarmament. Public sector union density — the share of municipal workers who are union members — is still relatively high. But unlike elsewhere in the U.S., membership is falling. And the union premium has largely disappeared. In the rest of the U.S., unionized public sector workers earn more than their private sector counterparts for comparable work. But not in New York City. Even labor economists associated with the privately-funded real estate watchdog organization, the Citizen Budget Commission (CBC), concede that between private and public sector workers in New York City, there's hardly any difference any more. The city's uniformed workers do about as well; teachers do better; lower wage city workers do better; but middle-level workers do worse.¹

NATURALLY, GIVEN THE STEADY DECLINE IN EFFECTIVENESS OF MUNICIPAL LABOR, its leaders get upset when past traditions are invoked. "It is really irksome, this nostalgia in the media, for the labor titans of the past," says UFT President Sandra Feldman. To hear some people talk, she insists, you would think that today's labor leaders would actually *oppose* the Giuliani administration "winning concessions for all workers, as in some mythic past."²

But the good-old-days of labor solidarity, according to Feldman, actually hurt teachers. Pattern bargaining meant high-paid teachers had to sacrifice pay gains so that low-paid clericals could get theirs. Now, because of the heritage of pattern bargaining, she argues, New York City teachers — whose salaries top out at only \$60,000 — make less than teachers in the suburbs.³ What's needed now, says Feldman, is not solidarity with low-paid workers, but more concentration on what's good for professional teachers and the practical methods that are needed to deliver these goods. "Since 1987, we haven't participated in coalitions with unions because our main interest lies in improving the quality of education." In order for this struggle to be successful, she points out, it has to be carried out in modulated tones. Not by shouting, but "quietly behind closed doors." Here, as during the fiscal crisis, labor leaders can meet with bankers, and leading businessmen and work out "many new solutions."⁴

Nor does Feldman see what all the shouting is about over Rudolph Giuliani's budget plans. "I don't see Mayor Giuliani's effort to wrestle down bureaucracy and bloated government as an attack on unions." Observed Feldman, "he sounds sincere to me." Feldman sounded sincere too, a few months later, when she addressed hundreds of "paraprofessionals" — teaching assistant members of the UFT whom Giuliani laid off. "We want you to know," she said, bidding them farewell, "that the para program is our baby and you are as important to us as you are to the kids of this city."⁵

Feldman's position — that labor suffers from its past penchant for supporting the underdog and that everyone should undergo austerity but her members — comes as no shock given her record and her tacit support for Giuliani in the

1993 Mayoral election. More surprising, though, is the willingness to side publicly with the Mayor displayed by Jan Pierce, head of the Communication Workers of America's northeast regional office. Many have regarded Pierce as the highest ranking leftist on the local labor scene. In the 80s he supported Jesse Jackson and the P-9 insurgency, now he supports Giuliani's struggle against "bureaucracy." From his high-ceilinged suite of offices, just off Wall Street, Pierce publicly urged unions to join with Giuliani in a campaign to "identify waste and redundancy."⁶

A Hill of Beans

IN ASSESSING THE POSTURE OF NEW YORK CITY'S LABOR LEADERS in the present fiscal crisis, it would seem necessary to draw a distinction between those like Pierce and Feldman who support the Mayor and those who oppose him. In practice though, opposition can be so lame and counter-productive that any clear distinction disappears. The effective collapse of DC 37's campaign against privatization illustrates the difficulty.

To halt the growing share of the city's budget that's contracted out to the private sector — over \$6 billion in 1994 — Stanley Hill devised a political strategy that ignored labor's potential strengths and relied entirely on its ability to pump cash into the coffers of the corrupt and conservative Democratic Party machine.⁷ Hill's strategy was not to rely on mobilizing the members, or uniting them with service recipients. He planned instead to build on his long-time practice of writing a check to every city council Democrat in every election campaign.⁸

Appealing squarely to the institutional self-interest of Queens machine Democrat Peter Vallone, the City Council Speaker, Hill supported an anti-privatization bill so nebulous that even Vallone, a proponent of privatization could hardly disapprove. The final bill Hill endorsed doesn't stop privatization at all. In contrast to model legislation enacted in Massachusetts for example, it doesn't provide for re-training workers who lose their jobs. Or compensating them if they are displaced by contracting out. Privatization doesn't even have to pass a cost criterion: it may cost *more* than doing the work in-house.⁹ The DC 37 sponsored bill just calls for a *hearing* on privatization. Naturally, the Council likes to hold hearings. Hearings make that absurd institution seem like a legislature. But whether the Council holds a hearing or not, any proposal by the Mayor to privatize city work automatically becomes law within 30 days. This was the bill DC 37 fought to have passed over two mayoral vetoes — one by labor's chief ally, David Dinkins the other by Giuliani. Finally the Council overrode Giuliani's veto, and Hill could announce that labor had won a famous victory over privatization.

Failing to gain any real concessions in the Council, Hill turned to Albany. Governor Cuomo, the reasoning went, has leverage over Giuliani, because he controls state aid to New York. Cuomo, Hill told his members, will come to our aid. In fact, when Cuomo turned to Giuliani in order to get his support against gubernatorial opponent, Pataki, it was Giuliani who was able to get the governor's help. According to Queens Republican leader Fran Werner, it was no coincidence that the day after Giuliani announced for Cuomo, municipal labor announced they were giving Giuliani the \$200 million in the givebacks he'd been demanding.¹⁰

So now after having struck out with New York's three top Democrats —

Dinkins, Vallone and Cuomo — labor is reduced to queuing up in front of Giuliani's door, jostling each other for places. Each seeks to sign contracts that will shift the burden of austerity to other unions. First in line are leaders of the strongest white unions, Feldman's UFT, the Police and Firefighters. They're calling for unity behind the Mayor. Somewhere in the background, can be heard the voice of Local 424 Hospital Workers chief, Jim Butler. He says you can't cut hospital workers. Hospitals aren't like parks, he explains. If you cut them you endanger human lives, not mere trees and bushes. (Obvious inference: cut park workers, not us.)

Then there's Stanley Hill crying that his members have been shoved aside, and insisting that all workers — white and black — bear an equal burden of sacrifice. But whatever slogans they may be shouting, everyone really means the same thing, "Don't cut me, don't cut thee. Cut the guy behind the tree."

Hill's calls for "equal sacrifice" actually echo those originally made by the Citizen's Budget Commission (CBC) whose directors include developers Mort Zuckerman, Thomas Tisch, and Larry Silverstein, Steve Spinola, head of the Real Estate Board of New York; plus execs from Goldman Sachs, Smith Barney, AT&T, Merrill Lynch and Con Ed. The old union fighter CBC President Ray Horton, must be astonished to find himself being quoted by the leader of the city's largest union who is reduced to a campaign for multi-cultural misery.

Meanwhile Professor Horton's employers, the real estate rich, don't just go unscathed in the Mayor's austerity schemes. With labor's active support, they've been the beneficiaries of Giuliani's successful plan to *lower* their taxes — eliminating, for example, the city's 5% hotel tax. This tax cut goes straight to the bottom line of hotel owners like the Trumps and the Helmsleys.

What's surprising though, is not that Leona should be proven right once again, ("Only the little people pay taxes," she observed before her incarceration for tax fraud.) but that the campaign to enrich the hotel magnates had the full-throated support of New York's organized labor movement.¹¹ Demonstrations to save the hotel owners from city taxes led by Local 100 of the Hotel and Restaurant Workers boss Vito Pita weren't very large. But they surpassed those to save the jobs of city workers in energy and numbers.¹²

AND MORE JOB CUTS ARE COMING. In the 1993 campaign, Giuliani promised his backers he would cut 5% of the municipal work force each year — severing about 45,000 from the work force. He seems now well along the way to redeeming his pledge — even exceeding the pace with 18,000 cuts in his first year in office. Indeed, Giuliani has little choice — with his revenue plan in disarray, a Wall Street slump, a loss of 30,000 private payroll jobs in the last four months, a projected \$2.5 billion city deficit on top of a \$4 billion state deficit¹³ and a new Republican Congressional leadership pledged to medicaid reductions.

Could privatization and savage budget cuts push municipal unions into the extinction pattern displayed by New York's private sector unions? Since the 60s, de-industrialization has shrunk the city's largest manufacturing industry, garment, from 270,000 to 70,000 workers. The city's number two industry, printing and publishing is down from 130,000 to 74,000. And construction has declined from nearly 150,000 to 90,000.¹⁴ Still, at 35%, New York City has the highest union density of any city in America. "If the labor movement can't turn itself around here," observed Greg Tarpinian of the Labor Research Associates, "we're

in deep shit.”¹⁵

Thus what happens to New York's municipal labor unions truly matters because they represent what's left of labor in its principal American stronghold. It's true that the stronghold has always been shot full of holes. Organized crime families have historically held hegemony in painters, plumbers, carpenters, mason tenders, laborers, iron workers, longshore, cement and concrete workers, trucking and food processing locals.¹⁶ A recent FBI operation in the garment center showed how easy it was to get International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) leaders to cooperate for cash in a bogus scheme to permit sub-minimum wage work.¹⁷ As John Bloom of the Workers' Defense League points out, unlike the over one million private sector clerical workers the city has in finance, insurance and real estate (FIRE), corporate headquarters and services are almost completely unorganized. And the color line has still not been effectively breached in the construction unions.¹⁸ Still, New York City has probably been the only city in America with a trade union movement that measured up to European standards in size, density and combativeness.

Perhaps because New York was more strongly exposed to the more militant workers who immigrated here and dominated the local labor culture — the Germans who brought over social democracy; the Irish who invented the boycott and the picket line; the Eastern European Jews who permeated the needle trades with 20th century socialist ideas and universalist values — New York City's labor movement led the American labor movement. It was here that Samuel Gompers organized the cigar workers. It was from here that A. Philip Randolph led the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was based here. George Meany became head of AFL-CIO because he represented the city's powerful construction unions. “Clear it with Sidney,” (Hillman, head of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union [ACTWU]) was the reigning slogan of domestic policy advisors in the Roosevelt White House.

Who in today's White House though, would say, “clear it with Sheinkman?” ACTWU, under serious financial strain, is in merger talks with ILGWU — which itself has slipped to a third of its membership. And the ILGWU, which owns 13 office buildings and a bank, appears to operate the union as a kind of loss leader. The city's once powerful construction unions acknowledge that they are on the brink of being broken as they have in cities from Los Angeles to Miami.¹⁹ Left-led District 65 UAW actually filed under Chapter 13 for court protection from its creditors — the first bankruptcy of a union in American history. Its leaders, once famous for their progressive stances, have been indicted for stealing union assets.²⁰ So increasingly, what's left of labor in New York is now municipal labor. And municipal labor is reduced to preaching what it is forced to practice: conciliation and compromise.

In Gotham, however, charming the boss with a show of moderation has rarely worked. As the *Daily News* strike illustrated, New York is a tough town. For one shining moment, in 1991, the members of the Allied Printing Trades were able to give the paper's owner, the Chicago-based Tribune Company, a lesson in local labor relations. The Tribune's managers thought what worked in Chicago would work here: you provoke a strike; call in trained “replacement workers”; and the strikers eventually all go away. But in New York, after “the Battle of Wounded Knee,” union truck drivers stopped the delivery of the paper. They beat the Tribune in the streets. And they took their cause to New York neighborhoods, where

well-organized boycotts choked off advertising. By the time the Tribune settled, ad rates had sunk from \$8,500 to \$1,500 a page.²¹ The company had to sell out and creep back to Chicago. The *Daily News* workers knew that if you don't stand up here, you will surely go down.

NEARLY 30 YEARS AGO, NEW YORK'S MUNICIPAL LABOR LEADERS understood this simple axiom of city life. In 1965, backed with gobs of cash from the real estate and financial rich, Republican John Lindsay promised if elected, he'd slim the budget and tame the unions. Within ten days, labor hit him with rolling strikes: a transit strike, a welfare strike, a teachers strike.

Lindsay tried tough stuff back. He jailed the transit workers' leader, the old Communist and IRA fighter, Mike Quill who had a heart attack and died.²² Public opinion shifted. And Lindsay soon gave up. He even joined the Democrats, where his entry was smoothed by his new allies, the municipal trade unionists.

Why don't today's municipal unions give Giuliani the Lindsay treatment? They have a quarter million members. State and federal workers in New York total more than 100,000. They face cut-backs too. Why not unite them all with the millions of New Yorkers suffering from service cut-backs in a monster movement against austerity? Tax the rich, bring back manufacturing, hire workers to rebuild the city's falling bridges and decaying neighborhoods. Polls show consistently that the public prefers taxes to lay-offs by 48 to 32% — even when they don't know who the taxes would fall on. Why not a campaign to tax the rich?

“An Injury to One is an Injury to One.”

NO WAY. LABOR'S BIG CHIEFS ARE DEAD AGAINST PLAYING THE POPULIST CARD. “The New York City labor movement will never endorse a campaign to tax the rich,” thundered Barry Feinstein, municipal labor's chief spokesman, before he stepped down last year as head of Teamsters Local 237 for misusing \$500,000 of members' money.²³

Nor will labor chiefs work together. Sandra Feldman is only the most voluble on the need for individual unions to go it alone. Transit Workers Union leader Sonny Hall followed a different drummer, too. Last year, he pulled his transit workers out of the Municipal Labor Committee. But Hall, who has since stepped down, was only reflecting the new institutional reality. Since 1988, the individual unions no longer bargain jointly. The motto of New York's municipal labor seems to be “an injury to one is an injury to one.”

In the early 1960s, before unions got effective recognition from the city, key sections of municipal labor — the social workers, teachers — were more like projections of the 60s social movements into the world of labor than the Weberian bureaucracies of today. Professional workers who insisted on enlarging the scope of bargaining — putting welfare rights, dignity of the client on the table — prevailed over those who sought to restrict the union's agenda to the terms and conditions of work. The reason very practical people today like Hill, and the DC 37 officials can spend the winters in Bermuda is because impractical workers picketed in the snow, endured arrest, and united white professionals and black clericals with welfare clients.²⁴

As Meier explains in his invaluable *City Unions*, the city's collective bar-

gaining strategy “managed discontent” by seeing to it that the least militant, least socially conscious union leaders would be rewarded with recognition. By the mid-70s, municipal unions had evolved according to a kind of reverse Darwinism — the survival of the least fit — the most passive, bureaucratic, and corruptible leaders had climbed their way to the top.

So it was entirely appropriate that by the time of the fiscal crisis, a figure like Victor Gotbaum had emerged at the head of New York’s municipal unions. And that he would use his leverage to support the replacement within the Beame Administration of the Democratic Party leaders inclined to resist the banks; that he not only helped orchestrate the 60,000 cuts the banks demanded but that he also turned over \$3 billion of union pension assets to keep their financial plan viable. A few strikes were called to allow the workers to “vent.” Harsh words were exchanged for the benefit of the membership. But Gotbaum never wavered in his belief that only by following Felix Rohatyn could he maintain control over the single trade union dimension which had to be preserved at all costs: the check-off.

Beyond the Politics of Shared Suffering

TRANSIT WORKERS REMINISCE ABOUT MIKE QUILL’S MARTYRDOM; Detroit autoworkers still talk about Walter Reuther and the Battle of the Bridge; but DC 37’s staff celebrates Gotbaum’s ability to network with Felix Rohatyn and the New York City FIRE elite. “DC 37’s unity and strength,” says a recent account, “enabled Gotbaum to break into the innermost circle of power where the real decisions were made. There he explained the pain of layoffs to men who had never known hardship, fought to minimize the agony of the workforce and finally helped hammer out solutions in which all sectors shared in the suffering.”²⁵

Thus, with his invocation of “shared suffering” — from which the FIRE elite is of course completely exempted — Hill stands directly in the tradition of Gotbaum. And it’s a noble tradition, say its defenders. After all, things would have been worse, during the fiscal crisis, had Gotbaum not thrust his way into the circles of power. True, they admit, we lost 60,000 workers. But without Victor, the final total would have been 160,000! Moreover, he kept collective bargaining alive. So it could be revived after the fiscal crisis.

What did Gotbaum really save? Not collective bargaining, which as Shanker pointed out, had effectively expired under the sway of the city’s fiscal monitors. What was really preserved was the check-off. And a system of official favoritism in which leaders who socialized with top financiers — Gotbaum summered on Long Island with Rohatyn, and his son got a job at Rohatyn’s Lazard Freres — won flauntible concessions at the expense of those who didn’t.

The Lesson, drawn almost universally by the upwardly mobile, was that personal survival as a labor leader demanded that you get inside the room where the deals were cut. To get past the door, you had to accept the political terms and conditions offered by the business elites. You had to avoid populist fiscal proposals that antagonized the leaders of NYC’s FIRE sector from whom all benefits ultimately flow. You had to take care not to propose broader agendas that impinged on their prerogatives to set the city’s economic agenda. You had to take as a given, the sectionalist structure of collective bargaining in which each union sees the other as an obstacle to getting what it wants.

Obedience to these narrow protocols may once again preserve “collective bargaining” in New York so that it overlaps the pension horizon of the present leaders. But no more. It can’t stop the shrinkage of the membership, the rise in job insecurity, or the fall in living and work standards of those who remain on the job. Much less can labor leaders who accept such restrictions help transform municipal unionism into what it could be.

Everyone agrees that municipal unionism can’t avoid politics — the workers’ boss after all is the city’s Mayor. And he comes up for election every four years. But there has got to be a redefinition of the kind of politics labor promotes. Essentially what’s happened since the fiscal crisis of the 70s, is an institutional retrogression to the crumb-snatching days before municipal unions attained recognition, when “good deals were available to the powerful and politically connected” and for the rest it was “collective begging.”

We’ve seen where the present politics lead. What about a new politics? Evidently, what’s required are new, more collective forms of leadership, term limits, direct election of all officers, and stricter accountability of the leadership to the members. But a new politics can’t emerge outside a new labor culture.

The annual DC 37 conventions in Bermuda and the expense account meals at Bouley are only the most superficial expressions of a lifestyle devoted to the same narrow ends as the business elites the labor leaders face across the negotiating table. The Hills and Feldmans of this world define their jobs in terms of lifting the earnings of UFT Inc. or AFSCME Ltd. To raise earnings, they compete with each other like Pizza Hut and Taco Bell for market share. But unlike the fast food industry, their market — urban services — is shrinking fast. Naturally, of course, labor leaders can’t deliver.

But even if they could, their members aren’t coupon clippers who can stay home to receive their checks. Suppose Feldman could raise teachers’ top salaries well beyond the present ceiling of \$60,000. Who wants to be a teacher in the kind of city New York has become? Who wants to cower behind metal detectors and phalanxes of security guards in de-industrialized communities devastated by budget cuts? What kind of vocation can teachers feel when they know the probability of their male students going to jail is far higher than their chance of going to college?

Municipal labor has to transcend not just business unionism, but its narrow concept of solidarity. Just attacking the “labor bureaucrats” ignores how leaders act in defense of values they share with many members. When under attack, sheep cower together, permitting predators to pick off the most vulnerable and exposed members. Just so, dues-paying “provisionals” are thrown over the side by those whose job title guarantees them civil service protection. You would think workers could find a more effective defense against urban predators than the instinctive ones prevalent among herd animals.

If nothing else, Giuliani’s all-out attack on the city gives municipal labor a chance to redefine and expand its practice of solidarity. Few are likely to march behind the banner of “Don’t Cut Me.” But millions of New Yorkers could be won to a movement that offered a populist alternative to endless austerity; one that provided an economic alternative to de-industrialization and decline; that offered a communitarian alternative to the right’s culture of hostility and indifference. By becoming the natural leader and organizer of such a movement, municipal labor could finally redeem the bright promise that was present at its creation.

NOTES

1. Charles Brecher, Raymond Horton with Robert A. Cropf and Dean Michael Mead, *Power Failure*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.256.

2. *New York Times*, March 19, 1994, p.23.

3. *Ibid*.

4. *Ibid*.

5. *New York Teacher*, October 3, 1994, p.2.

6. See *New York Times*, February 21, 1994. A1.

7. The predecessors of the three chief Democratic county leaders — the Bronx, Brooklyn and Queens — each either committed suicide or went to jail. And their predecessors each went to jail too. See Jack Newfield and Wayne Barrett, *City For Sale*. New York: Harper & Row, 1988.

8. Dr. Mark Levinson, DC 37 economist, personal conversation.

9. *Public Employee Press*, May 6, 1994.

10. *Our Town*, November 10, 1994.

11. There was no case at all for tax relief for the hotel industry. Despite publicists' claims, hotel tax rates in New York weren't high in relation to room rates. Many other cities were higher. And the real problem, as the *Wall Street Journal* showed, was the speculative greed and managerial stupidity of local developers. Over-stimulated by the city's program of 23 year real estate tax relief, developers built too many hotels. And they forgot cost control. The Four Seasons cost so much, management would have to have charged \$1,000 a night to break even. Room rates soared at the recession's pit. Naturally the developers blamed their inevitable losses on the city's 5% hotel tax. They orchestrated a campaign for elimination, "cut the hotel taxes." The unions, led by Hotel and Restaurant Workers Local 100 chief, Vito Pita, picked up their demented little chant and echoed it throughout the Central Labor Council.

12. You could argue that most workers are not actually laid off. Most get buy-outs. But the city's job market is terrible. Of those who have taken buy-outs nearly 90% are still unemployed after six months. (see *The Chief*, "Most With Buyouts Still Without Jobs," November 15, 1994 p.1) And many of those who take the buy-outs are told by supervisors that if they don't take the deal, they'll be laid off. (See Manuel Perez-Rivas, "Weight on the Workers," *New York Times*, November 13, 1994, p. A23.)

13. *New York Times*, November 11, 1994, p.1.

14. Unpublished figures, State Department of Labor.

15. Interview, November 10, 1994.

16. For an account of organized crime in the construction unions see Organized Crime Task Force, *Corruption and Racketeering in the New York City Construction Industry*, Ithaca, New York: ILR Press, New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations, 1990.

17. Jonathan Auerbach, "Local ILGWU Boss Axed Due to Bribery Charges," *N.Y. Post*, April 6, 1994.

18. New York City Commission on Human Rights. Building Barriers, December 1993

19. See *Wall Street Journal*, November 18, 1993 p.1. Whereas in the 1970's construction union density was in the 70% range, today it hovers at about 20%.

20. Ken Crowe, "Ex-UAW Vice President Indicted in Bribery Case," *Newsday*, November 8, 1994.

21. Kenneth M. Jennings, *Labor Relations at the New York Daily News*. Westport Connecticut: Praeger, 1993.

22. Mark H. Maier, *City Unions*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987, pp.40-41.

23. *New York Times*, April 19, 1993, B3.

24. See Maier, p.57-76. Eventually, the militant, democratic SSEU, was forced into a merger with DC 37's Local 371, another classic example of the survival of the unfittest.

25. *Public Employee Press*, July 15, 1994, p.17.

***The Canadian Experience:* Labor, the NDP and The Social Movements**

Elaine Bernard

FOUNDED IN 1961, THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY UNITED A SMALL, predominantly Western, farm-labor-socialist party, the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), with the recently united labor central, the Canadian Labor Congress (CLC), to form a new party. The CCF had emerged in Western Canada in 1933 in response to the social and economic crisis of the Great Depression. The CCF registered its first major electoral success by winning the provincial election in Saskatchewan in 1944 during the wartime labor radicalization. As the government of this small province, the CCF initiated many innovative public policies, introducing the prototype of Canada's universal provincial health insurance system, establishing collective bargaining rights (including the right to strike) for public employees, mandating joint occupational health and safety committees in most worksites in the province, as well as initiatives in public ownership and regulation of some of the province's largest industries.

While many of the programs and policies first developed by the Saskatchewan CCF government were copied by other provinces, and even the federal government, the CCF was not able to win power in any other province, nor was it able to capture a significant number of seats in the federal Parliament. Outside of Western Canada, the CCF remained a minor party, polling a mere 10 percent of the popular vote in federal elections. While the CCF had some organized labor support, the issue of labor political action was a contentious matter within the Canadian labor movement.

Since the 1930s, the Canadian labor movement had been split into two federations, with craft unions in the Trades and Labor Congress (TLC) and industrial and nationalist unions in the Canadian Congress of Labor (CCL). An analogous situation, of course, existed in the United States but a significant difference was the Canadian movements' commitment to independent labor political action by the industrial and nationalists union federation, the Canadian Congress of Labor. The Trades and La-

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bor Congress held the U.S. labor position of "non-partisanship," (that is no affiliation or special relationship with any political party). The Canadian Congress of Labor, on the other hand, endorsed the Cooperative Commonwealth Federation as "the political arm of labor in Canada" because it saw the need for a labor-based political party and thought that the CCF was the appropriate vehicle. In the discussions leading up to the fusion of the two labor federations in 1956, political action and support for the CCF remained a contentious issue dividing the two labor bodies. Indeed, the final agreement forged in 1956 postponed the thorny issue of political affiliation. Two years later, at the next labor convention, a resolution was passed which called for "a broadly-based people's political movement, which embraces the CCF, the labor movement, farm organizations, professional people and other liberally-minded persons." This resolution further instructed the CLC Executive Council to enter into discussions with other groups "to formulate a constitution and a program for such a political instrument."

Labor Helps to Launch a New Party

IN THE WAKE OF THE 1958 TORY ELECTION SWEEP, the CLC and CCF formed a joint political committee, the National Committee for a New Party, to encourage widespread participation in the construction of a new party. "New Party Clubs" sprang up around the country to encourage activists to meet and discuss the idea of a new, labor-based, political party. While both labor and the CCF leadership wanted the new party to be labor-based, there was concern from the grassroots "New Party Clubs," CCF constituencies and even activists within the labor movement itself that the well-organized and disciplined union movement would totally dominate the New Party. Organized labor, they feared, would move the New Party away from its "movement" roots and into narrow electoral and reformist politics. Moreover, they feared that labor would be a conservative force within the party, diluting the CCF's prairie socialism, populism, and radicalism.

In response to these concerns, a structure was developed to assure a balanced representation between constituency members (members of the party resident in a single electoral district) and affiliate organizations (union locals which formally affiliate their membership to the party). The party adopted a constitution which avoided bloc voting and bloc representation on leadership bodies (such as executives or councils). At the convention, each delegate or representative would have one vote. However, a formula was devised for delegate allocation to conventions which gave more weight to local constituency associations. Since individual trade unionists could be active in the party through their community-based constituency association and through their union affiliation, the "weighted" representation for affiliate organizations was viewed as a way

of dealing with the problem of union activists being overrepresented.

The founders of the new party hoped that the NDP would quickly grow beyond its predecessor's prairie roots and minor-party status. And, indeed, some impressive gains were made throughout the 1970s and early 1980s in provincial elections in Western Canada, including the formation of governments in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, British Columbia, and the Yukon. With approximately 90% of Canada's workers covered by provincial labor laws and regulations, election of provincial NDP governments in the West in the 1970s and 1980s resulted in significant workplace and labor law reform. While organized labor occasionally became embroiled in conflicts with NDP provincial governments, especially when the labor-supported governments failed to move quickly on trade union matters, labor has generally been a stalwart party supporter in the West.

The Waffle Movement: The Struggle for an Activist Party

A SUBJECT OF CONSIDERABLE INTERNAL DEBATE AND INTERACTION between the labor movement and the NDP was the issue of economic development and Canadian independence. In 1961, at the time of the founding of the NDP, a majority of affiliates to the CLC were international unions. These unions tended to associate their members' jobs with the success of economic continentalism, which linked Canada's economic prosperity to its ties to the U.S. economy. In the late 1960s, this continentalist approach was challenged by the Canadian nationalist movement, leading to one of the most intensive periods of political debate in the NDP's history. It also generated the nationalist Waffle group inside the party. A product of the youth radicalization of the 1960s, with roots in both the New Left and the nationalism of the Old Left in Canada, the Waffle began as a collection of left academics seeking to push the party to adopt a more radical program of social transformation. With its founding document, the Waffle Manifesto "For an Independent and Socialist Canada," the group sought to involve the party and the labor movement in a discussion about the need for Canadian economic sovereignty.

For the Waffle, any discussions of socialism in Canada had to be linked to an understanding of Canada's political economy and in particular the dependency of the Canadian economy on the United States. The Waffle recognized that independence from U.S. corporate domination must go hand in hand with any move toward democratic socialism in Canada. The group's name came from the fact that it "waffled" on the role of the trade union movement in this struggle — and in particular on the issue of whether to call for Canadian workers to break with international unions and build autonomous Canadian unions. In an attempt to avoid alienating the powerful international unions within the party, the Waffle Manifesto simply called for greater democracy in the labor movement and for workers' control in the workplace. But the NDP leadership quickly recognized that the Waffle's nationalism was a major challenge to the current direction and leadership of both the party and the labor movement.

Beyond the questions of organized labor and the economy, the Waffle forced discussion in the party on a number of issues previously ignored by the NDP including gender equality, the rights of indigenous peoples and Quebecois. In

particular, the Waffle demanded that the NDP recognize Quebec's right, as an oppressed nation within Canada, to self-determination. It argued that the NDP had never won a single seat in Quebec and has never been able to build a base in the province because Quebec's labor movement and political activists alike viewed the NDP as an "English Canadian" federalist party, opposed to Quebec's national aspirations. Much of the Quebec labor movement did not endorse or affiliate with the NDP. This is still true today.

Aside from the policy differences, the Waffle promoted a very different image of the party, one that sought to break from the narrow parliamentary mold. It mobilized party activists to join anti-war demonstrations, in support of militant labor disputes, pro-choice rallies, and even published press releases and political statements in its own name. These latter actions, carried out in the name of the NDP/Waffle, constituted the "technicality" used by the party leadership to condemn the Waffle as disloyal and "a party within a party" and demand that it disband — essentially expelling it from the party. A whole generation of militant activists and left intellectuals quit the NDP with the Waffle expulsion in 1972. The rancor the incident generated continued and among other things, poisoned relations between the NDP and intellectuals and radicals for years afterwards.

Beyond the Waffle: Ongoing Tensions in the NDP

The Waffle experience underlines the problem that the NDP has in defining its relationship to popular movements. At its best, the NDP is a broad political coalition that provides a permanent structure for labor and other progressive groups, such as the women's movement, environmentalists, anti-poverty groups, students, gays and lesbians and the peace movement, to work together and to formulate a comprehensive political program beyond individual, single issue demands. A strength of these popular movements is that they are autonomous — that is, while party members are often supporters and activists in these movements, the movements nevertheless have their own base and organization outside of the party. They can invigorate party activists, and they help them remember that, as important as winning elections is, change comes through organizing a mass constituency for change — both before and after elections.

But not everyone inside the party views the popular movements and their influence on the party as a strength. The NDP leadership — and Caucus in particular — also fears the social movements. It fears that they will push the party too far, too fast — giving it the image of being "captured by special interests" and too radical or too far left. A related charge, which arose in the last few federal elections, is that these movements draw activists into single issue and protest campaigns that do not translate into voter support for the NDP at election time and drains activist energy and resources.

The Action Canada Network (ACN), a non-partisan organization of labor, women, community and church groups, opposed to the free trade agreement, is a case in point. The ACN has been extremely successful in educating people on the threat of the New Right and in building an opposition to the Tory business agenda of free trade, privatization and deregulation. Over the last five years, a majority of Canadians has consistently been opposed to Free Trade (both in the form of the Canada/U.S. Free Trade Agreement of 1989 and the NAFTA). But opposition to the Tories and free trade has not translated into support for the NDP — and it

has fed rumblings inside the party that the ACN and social movement mobilization have become substitutes for partisan political action with the aim of winning government.

Beyond the tensions between social movements and the party, another source of ongoing tension is the issue of accountability of the elected members of Parliament and provincial legislatures to the party rank and file. That is, when the party wins, how do labor and other activists assure that "their" government implements the party's program and remains accountable to the party's membership? Of course, all political systems have problems of accountability of elected officials, but the character of the "accountability problem" within the NDP has come to the fore with three NDP provincial governments in power at this point.

Disagreements between those holding elected office and the grassroots tend to be a permanent feature of most social-democratic parties throughout the world, with the breach widening during periods of government and easing during periods of opposition. Organizationally, some of these tensions can be eased by building structures to promote meaningful consultation, collaboration and ongoing accountability of elected members. But at the root of the problem are profound political differences about the party's mission and how social change is to be achieved. At one extreme, generally favored by those holding elected office, the party is viewed as an electoral machine that is organized to contest and win elections and gain power to implement positive social change. At the other extreme, many activists see the party as part of a wider social movement that uses elections, as well as extra-parliamentary activity, to educate, organize, and mobilize people to bring about change for themselves.

For much of the history of the party, members interested in promoting a more activist approach or in making significant changes in the party's program and platform have formed into groupings and caucuses such as the Left Caucus in Ontario, the Socialist Caucus in British Columbia, or, more recently, the Green Caucus, which seeks to promote environmentalist ideas within the party. While these groups have promoted important political discussions both within and outside of the party, the party leadership has tended to view them as disruptive and divisive, rather than as signs of a healthy and democratic political organization.

Today's Crisis in the NDP

WHILE THE DRAMATIC FALL IN THE PARTY'S SUPPORT IN THE 1993 federal election brought the crisis inside of the NDP to public attention, trouble has been brewing for many years. After the 1988 federal election campaign, for example, two senior labor leaders publicly criticized the party leadership for its failure to make opposition to the Canada/U.S. Free Trade Agreement a major focus of the election campaign. These public criticisms and many private accountability sessions led the CLC and the party to set up a special task force to evaluate the relationship between the two organizations. But with a change of leader in the federal party and with a number of provincial elections on the horizon, these badly-needed discussions were cut short and resulted in simply a reaffirmation of support for the party by labor and a pledge to increase labor participation in leadership bodies in the party.

Within a few years of the 1988 federal election campaign, the NDP won three provincial elections: Saskatchewan, Ontario and British Columbia. Brian

Mulroney's Tory federal government sank in the polls and remained at record low levels of public approval. Mulroney lead a new round of constitutional reform aimed at winning Quebec's inclusion into the Canadian constitutional, but this proved a dismal failure, with a majority of Canadians in every region in the country rejecting the package. With little consultation of party leadership bodies, the NDP provincial governments and the federal NDP opted to support Mulroney's constitutional reform package, while the newly-formed rightist populist Reform Party rejected it. In the Western provinces, the NDP's traditional stronghold, Reform positioned itself as the anti-establishment party, painting the NDP as an old-line, status quo party in favor of big government and welfare and a captive of radical special interest groups.

But more significant than the populist challenge from the right at a federal level, were the problems that developed between the NDP provincial governments and their base — including labor and the popular movements. While there are problems in both British Columbia and Saskatchewan, deep dissatisfaction with the Ontario government of Premier Bob Rae threatens to split the labor movement in the province and possibly nationally.

After forming the first ever NDP government in Ontario with a surprise electoral victory in the summer of 1990, the inexperienced government stumbled from scandal to scandal in its first few years in power. The business community, alarmed by the NDP's victory in Canada's industrial heartland, mobilized in opposition to most of the government's initiatives. In particular, vicious campaigns were waged against the provincial budget and labor law reform. Under the pressure of the assault by the business community and the province's growing financial problems, the government backed down and abandoned many of its promises, including the introduction of a universal, no-fault public auto insurance system. While the government assisted many unionized, large private-sector employers, including Algoma Steel, Spruce Falls, DeHavilland and Chrysler, the business community never eased its attack on the NDP government.

In the spring of 1993, as the recession hit Ontario hard with high unemployment and a large provincial deficit, the Rae government introduced an austerity program of reduced government service and cuts in the public sector. Termed "the most anti-worker intrusion into free collective bargaining in Canadian history" by the Ontario Federation of Labor, the Social Contract Act cancelled all public sector contracts and forced \$2 billion in concessions onto union members. The 900,000 public sector workers in the province were handed a three-year wage freeze, and an additional twelve days of "unpaid leave" each year.

While organized labor in Ontario condemned the anti-worker legislation, many private sector unions felt that public sector cuts and savings were financially necessary because of the large provincial government debt — and that, on balance, the NDP provincial government has been a tremendous aid to unions in the province. Needless to say, public sector workers, and their allies in the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) felt that the Rae government's extreme violation of collective bargaining rights through draconian "social contract" legislation could no longer receive labor support. At the November 1993 convention of the Ontario Federation of Labor (OFL), a resolution passed condemning the Rae government and calling on the OFL not to support the NDP in the next provincial election unless the "social contract" legislation was repealed. This resolution passed, however, over the objection of private sector union delegates who took the ex-

traordinary action of walking out of the convention.

This is not the first time that organized labor has been angered by an NDP provincial government's actions, nor is it the first time that labor has questioned its affiliation with the party. But this clash is more acute because of the extreme anger with the Rae government, the dismal showing of the NDP in the last federal election, and the growing skepticism and pessimism inside of labor and in the popular movement about the possibility of government (any government) being able to stem the tide of corporate power.

In place of affiliation to the NDP, some in the labor movement are suggesting that Canadian labor might return to U.S. labor's strategy of non-affiliation (the official position of the U.S. labor movement is that there is no formal relationship with the Democratic party) and a policy of "rewarding your friends, and punishing your enemies" (the current strategy of a group of building trades unions outside of the CLC and affiliated to the Canadian Federation of Labor). Alternatively, the OFL adopted a convention resolution calling for coalition work and participation in "broad-based coalitions to ensure all governments are responsive to our agenda." Finally, there has even been the suggestion that labor try to form a new labor party in Canada.

To take these arguments in reverse order, it's rather difficult to imagine that Canadian labor will launch a "new labor party" when it appears not to have yet fully come to grips with what the problems are with the one it has. If labor and the NDP decided that a major realignment and restructuring is needed, it should be preceded by an even more thorough debate and discussion of the variety that were launched in 1958 with the new party discussions. But an important difference between then and now, is that when the new party discussions began labor was in the process of reuniting — after a 20-year split between the trades and industrial unions — whereas today Canadian labor seems increasingly divided and under attack.

While participation in broad-based coalitions is important, this can not be a substitution for a political party. Labor should not view itself politically as simply a lobby group, or as a "special interest," seeking concessions or a hearing from government. Rather, labor needs a strategy for government — one that would meet the needs of all working people. The Gompertist approach to political action (syndicalist in its essence) condemns labor to always being on the outside — and Canadian labor has had too much experience with what positive labor-based government can do at the provincial level, to abandon the political arena for long. But what is so important about political parties, and why is it valuable for labor to have a party of its own?

What Do Parties Do?

BEYOND WINNING AND LOSING ELECTIONS, ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS that political parties do is help to set the political agenda. They define what problems are to be considered a legitimate political issue, how politics are conducted and what relations and conflicts may be resolved through the political process. Participation in the NDP has in the past assisted the labor movement in shaping its concerns and making them part of the national agenda. From health care, to workers' rights in the workplace, to a role for public as well as private enterprise, labor political action through the NDP has moved the political spectrum in Canada

to the left.

Labor political action through participation in a party has also helped to transform unions in Canada. Unions have had to broaden their concerns beyond their own ranks and include the interests and needs of the majority of working people in Canada, including the unorganized. Through years of political action and involvement, there is a labor movement in Canada beyond the more narrow ranks of trade union membership. While Canadian unions are far from perfect, and are often leery of, and occasionally even hostile to, the new social movements, movement activists and trade unionists learned to work together through the NDP, building the trust and experience necessary to work in coalition — sometimes, even beyond the NDP parliamentary and electoral concerns. Politics is, after all, about discussion and sharing and debating ideas. The party has served as a vehicle for progressive organizations to work together politically, to influence each other, to enhance dialogue, and at the same time to provide the pressure and cohesion necessary to keep these disparate groups together. While this creates a constant tension within the NDP, rooted in the very different organizational practices and beliefs of groups and individuals affiliated with it, this tension is for the most part healthy — though rare is the leadership, either in the labor movement or the party, that can appreciate this fact.

Finally, participation in a labor-based political party has forced labor to face the issue of government — not exclusively as a lobbyist, or interest group — but as an organization that seeks to win political power for working people and make our whole society more just and equitable.

Conclusion

FOR ORGANIZED LABOR, WINNING ELECTIONS AND HAVING THE NDP form a government (whether provincially or federally) has not been the main reason for support of the tactic of labor having its own party. After all, for most of its history, in most provinces, when measured by the sole criterion of being able to “win” elections, the party has been a failure. Rather, supporters measure the party in terms of its overall effectiveness in forging a strategy for working people and developing an alternative progressive agenda to the neo-liberal program of free trade, privatization and deregulation. But even viewed from this perspective, the NDP throughout its history is still somewhat contradictory. In short, the NDP has been both an aid and a barrier to the politics of social transformation.

Today the battlelines between labor and capital are more sharply drawn than at any time since the NDP was founded. A decade of privatization, deregulation and free trade, along with corporate tax giveaways and the resulting large deficits, have all reduced the redistributive power of government. The NDP needs bold policies to address this crisis — not simply “kinder cuts.” The NDP must move beyond opposition to the current market-driven restructuring and begin to reassert the social values that should influence economic decision-making. It must champion economic democracy and popular planning. And it will require the party to move beyond parliamentarism and to support, build, and work with the popular movements — both when the party is in government and when it is the opposition. Progressive change today requires mobilization in support of change — and the NDP needs the social movements and their ability to mobilize people in support of progressive social change as a counter to business. It is no

longer in the hands of social-democratic governments to deliver on reform. Rather, they must help to strengthen the social movements that create the climate and momentum for change. As long as the party views the social movements as competition or as “special interests” that are trying to push the party too far too fast — it will find itself fighting its friends and falling victim to dissension. Rather, the party needs to see itself as a disciplined coalition of these progressive movements, and actively seek, in government to strengthen their influence.

Increasingly today, labor needs a political strategy. There is nothing that can be won at the bargaining table that cannot be taken away through legislation or regulation. In the long run, for labor to survive and grow, it needs to reach beyond its own ranks, the trade union movement, and work in coalition and partnership with other community and progressive organizations. And to do this in a sustained manner, it must develop its own vision and program for society. That requires political action — something difficult to imagine outside of the context of a political party.

Dwight Macdonald and The Anti-Stalinist Left

S.A. Longstaff

IN 1926, AFTER WRITING SEVERAL WELL-RESEARCHED ARTICLES on the philistinism of Yale's undergraduate curriculum for the *Yale Daily News*, Dwight Macdonald found himself called on the carpet by the dean. He wasn't being impertinent, he cared deeply about the reputation of the college and its teachers, he explained apropos of another attack he was about to issue against the boosterish William Lyon Phelps of the English department. Did the Yale authorities mean to suppress his right to free speech? Not at all, came the reply. Macdonald could publish his insolent remarks on Professor Phelps and leave Yale immediately, or not publish and continue on as an undergraduate. Being told to suppress his ideas (or publish them elsewhere) was a situation that Macdonald was to find himself in repeatedly over the course of his career: as a staff writer on *Fortune* during the 30s, as an editor at *Partisan Review* and a journalistic gadfly in the Trotskyist movement in the 40s, and, most notably, during and after a brief stint as an ornament of Cultural Freedom on *Encounter* in the 50s.

All his life, as Michael Wreszin reminds us in this sympathetic and (for the most part) admirable biography* — the first full-scale treatment of its subject — “Dwight” rarely hesitated to bite the hand that fed him, to criticize, all quite publicly and heedlessly, his employers, his colleagues, his admirers, and even, or rather especially, himself when he felt the occasion warranted it. Which explains the humiliation he felt over the Phelps incident. For years thereafter, this youthful and quite understandable knuckling under to the Yale authorities — it came, incidently, during a period of family turmoil owing to his father's untimely death — remained for Macdonald a moment of bad faith, a time when he had severely compromised his principles.

There would be other compromises. But for one who immersed himself in so many campaigns and controversies, from the 1937 Moscow Trials to the Columbia student rebellion and the Ocean Hill-Brownsville

*Michael Wreszin, *A Rebel in Defense of Tradition: The Life and Politics of Dwight Macdonald*, New York: Basic Books, 1994, 590pp. \$30.00 HB.

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teachers strike of the late 60s, Macdonald's instinctive openness and candor were remarkable — especially in the New York milieu of radical sects and little magazines. To William Phillips and Philip Rahv, his fellow editors on *Partisan Review*, and to Sidney Hook, Diana Trilling and others around the magazine, it was precisely Macdonald's "innocence" — his penchant (as they saw it) for putting the dictates of his conscience before the foreseeable consequences of his political acts — that was the problem. His erstwhile PR and Trotskyist colleagues were also inclined to jeer at his "delusions of theory," as Irving Howe once put it, apropos of Macdonald's efforts to ground his opposition to the *realpolitik* of the Anglo-American war effort in a highly personalized anarcho-pacifism. But to others — Hannah Arendt, Daniel Bell, Alfred Kazin, Norman Mailer — the erratic theorizing and the ethical absolutism were of secondary importance. What made Macdonald and his magazine *Politics* indispensable during its brief five-year run (1944-1949) was the moral and personal immediacy of its coverage of the war and its aftermath — that, plus its undogmatic receptiveness to so many fresh voices and viewpoints on the left at a time when events seemed to outrun everyone's ideological categories.

EARLIER, WHILE STILL AN EDITOR ON *Partisan Review*, Macdonald had fought a losing battle to keep the magazine open to his anti-war views. Phillips and Rahv had changed their minds about the war, and they also feared bringing the FBI down on their heads — hence their unwillingness to let Macdonald have his say, despite a prior agreement to that effect. By the time *Politics* materialized as a monthly in February 1944, Macdonald was himself besieged by doubts, at any rate concerning his "Third Camp" position that the war would generate mass-based resistance movements. Yet he was still bent on registering his horror of the war, especially of the ghastly scale of rationalized destruction apparent on all sides. *Politics* — in addition to monitoring developments in art and popular culture as they were affected by the patriotic mood — had plenty to say about the more sordid and hypocritical aspects of the wartime state: the Jim Crowism of the U.S. Army, for instance, and the State Department's unwillingness to do anything substantial by way of facilitating the rescue of European Jewry. Stimulated by a slogan, a speech, a headline, a patch of patriotic sentimentality in the Stalinist or "lib-lab" press, Macdonald was at his best in the short, sardonic dissections of the war news and the post-war "peace" arrangements that he contributed to every issue of the magazine. The predominant theme of *Politics* was *depersonalization* — how individuals lost their humaneness through routinized killing and being killed. To this end, he scrutinized U.S. Army training manuals for their formulas for undermining soldiers' normal human sympathies. Aided by an informant in the Office of War Information, he caught the essence of modern mass warfare in two short takes on the battlefield antics and speeches of General George S. Patton. "Americans love to fight," Patton's troops were told on the eve of D-Day. "All real Americans love the sting and clash of battle... Americans despise a coward... We don't want yellow cowards in this army. They should be killed off like flies... We got to save the fucking for the fighting men..." [etc.

etc.].” In such violent and empty rhetoric, Macdonald suggested (after evoking Washington and Trotsky and the set speeches they gave to their troops on similar occasions), the nature of the current war reveals itself, adding with typical perspicacity that the callousness was hardly confined to the Pattons and “Bull” Halseys; nor to an increasingly Pattonized U.S. Army, but to “most of us.”

A month ago [he wrote some weeks before Hiroshima] the papers reported that over one million Japanese men, women, and children had perished in the fires set by a single B-29 raid on Tokyo. One million. I saw no expression of horror or indignation in any American newspaper or magazine of sizable circulation. We have grown calloused to massacre, and the concept of guilt has spread to include whole populations. Our hearts are hardened, our nerves steady, our imaginations under control as we read the morning paper.

Wreszin contends, accurately I think, that Macdonald, like some others on the anti-Stalinist left, was late in confronting the sheer enormity of the Nazi atrocities. “Dwight’s approach to the issue of Germany and the plight of the Jewish and other victims of Nazism,” he writes, “was to view it through his anti-Stalinist lenses.” In the summer of 1944, however, Macdonald had the prescience to publish an abridgment of Bruno Bettelheim’s “Behaviour in Extreme Situations,” from the *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. Its impact, especially on the ways that the death camps and Nazism generally were understood, was absolutely chilling.

It wasn’t the sadism of the SS guards that evoked fear and horror; it was Bettelheim’s clinical account of their success in breaking the will of so many of their victims, in turning them into compliant accomplices of their own destruction. Whatever we subsequently heard “about confessions, brainwashing, and the like,” Daniel Bell suggested some years later, in *The End of Ideology*, it “hardly matched the awesome revelation of those first disclosures.” Another article that resonated widely on the left was Simone Weil’s “The Iliad or the Poem of Force,” a discourse on the intoxicating and enslaving effects of coercive power on those who wielded it, which had been written during the Nazi occupation of France and appeared in *Politics* in November 1945 (in a translation by Mary McCarthy). To Macdonald, Weil was “a saint of individualist action,” someone who lived the life she professed, and her ideas were a fitting counterweight to the Marxism and “scientific socialism” that he was in the process of abandoning. Hence the pleasure he found in the impact of her piece. It encouraged him in his own personal migration toward anarcho-pacifism, which he brought to full statement in a lengthy two-part essay, “The Root is Man,” published in 1946; and it likewise confirmed his inclination to provide a special platform in *Politics* to Victor Serge, Nicola Chiaromonte, Albert Camus, and other Europeans, all of them (like Bettelheim and Weil) witnesses and victims of totalitarianism.

REGARDING THE AMERICAN CONTRIBUTORS, THE EARLY *POLITICS* FEATURED a *marxisant* Daniel Bell projecting a nightmarish future for American labor, harnessed to the imperialist drives of a monopolistic-corporate state. It published C. Wright Mills on the “powerless intellectuals,” and economist Walter J. Oakes on “the permanent war economy,” contributions which foreshadowed *The Power Elite*, the military-industrial complex and other staples of New Left analysis. An even more prolific contributor was Paul Goodman, whose use of his own libertarian impulses and strands of Freudian theory as a prism for deciphering revolutionary

or repressive possibilities had a surprising appeal for Macdonald — surprising, at any rate, given Goodman's impenetrable prose.

Wreszin records Macdonald's editorial sensitivity to the moral tremors of the age in convincing detail. He credits *Politics* for publishing commentary (written by the editor and others) on American women "as an oppressed and exploited subject caste." Even more advanced was an essay on "The Homosexual in Society," by poet and Beat associate Robert Duncan, which appeared in August, 1944. Duncan's argument, a manifesto of sorts for gay liberation, "fit neatly into one of Dwight's most important themes: his hatred of nationalisms, chauvinisms, separate identities." In a curious lapse, Wreszin attributes the semi-regular column that Irving Howe contributed on periodicals — under the pseudonym of Theodore Dryden, "ferret breeder from Staten Island" — to Macdonald himself. (It was Howe's prickly Marxist rectitude which necessitated anonymity; he didn't want to be too closely associated with an anarchist publication.) Another minor lacuna has to do with Macdonald's encouragement of young writers during this period, which isn't evoked in a satisfactory way. In fact, Dwight's unusual approachability and trust, together with his "deadly eye for dead prose," as Howe once put it, seem to have had a tonic effect on the style of almost every regular contributor (Goodman perhaps excepted). Unlike, say, Elliot Cohen of *Commentary* — another formative influence on the New York intellectuals — Macdonald never thought of dictating the substance of the material that appeared in his magazine, but he did push his contributors to make their own feelings and values explicit in their work.

Wreszin does convey what a joyful and effective teacher Macdonald was in the late 60s and the 70s, when — blocked and demoralized as a writer — he landed visiting professorships at a number of campuses around the country. But one can only guess from this account at the more significant impact he had in the 40s — certainly on the young Trotskyist radicals and the European refugees who were the mainstays of *Politics*. Otherwise Wreszin provides informative sketches of the most significant figures — Bell, Mills, Goodman, Chiaromonte, Niccolo Tucci, Lewis Coser (Louis Clair) — whom Macdonald drew into his orbit, and is illuminating, too, on the sometimes fragile basis of their collaboration. He also pays a welcome tribute to Nancy Macdonald, Dwight's first wife, and a partner in so many of his projects and crusades during the 30s and 40s, who served as "business manager" of *Politics*.

Nancy Macdonald's deep, abiding humanism and her tireless efforts on behalf of the politically dispossessed are vividly rendered in this account. (When I interviewed her in the late 70s, I was surprised to discover that she was still attending to the relief of Spanish War and other political refugees through an agency that she had founded almost 40 years previously.) Notwithstanding an Edith Wharton-ish New York background (Brearley, Vassar, etc.), which was significantly more privileged than Dwight's own, she was more attuned than he to the radical currents of the day when they first met in 1934. It was Nancy, Wreszin tells us, who took the lead in their leftward pilgrimage, which saw them both flirt briefly with Stalinism before immersing themselves in a cosmopolitan, if highly factionalized, Trotskyist milieu. (Both of them were natural ascetics and Bohemians, uncomfortable with their high incomes while Dwight remained on *Fortune*.) And it was she who spearheaded the political work — lobbying the State Department on behalf of political refugees, organizing bundles of food and

clothing for destitute families in Europe, etc. — that was carried on around *Partisan Review* and subsequently *Politics*, and which was so important in Dwight's case in warding off a sense of political futility. If, editorially, *Politics* was clearly "Dwight's baby," as Wreszin suggests, tending to the community of likeminded radicals that gathered around it was largely Nancy's; and when their marriage began unraveling in the late 40s, both the magazine and the community were among the casualties.

IT WAS IN PART NANCY MACDONALD'S MODEST PRIVATE INCOME that kept *Politics* going, but by the fall of 1947 (when the magazine failed to materialize on schedule) rising costs had put the whole enterprise in jeopardy. "This has been a one-man magazine," Macdonald apologized to his readers in a letter, "and the man of late has been feeling stale, tired, disheartened, and — if you like — demoralized." World politics, he noted, had become blacker and bleaker than ever. He also felt hemmed in by a growing sense of his own ignorance; he needed "more time to investigate and reflect before sounding off in print." Another disheartening factor — though he didn't make a point of it to his readers — was the dispersal of contributors, beckoned by mainstream opportunities of various kinds. (The loss of Daniel Bell's interest in the magazine after he went off to the University of Chicago in 1946 was a particular blow.)

Macdonald's personal-cum-political dilemma took on added poignancy amidst the Berlin crisis in 1948. Should the Western powers surrender their sectors of the city, ringed as they now were by Russian troops? Macdonald couldn't bring himself to advocate such a capitulation — hence the necessity of once again abandoning a political creed, pacifism, that violated his deepest intuitions, a withdrawal that seemed to leave him politically stranded. Wreszin doesn't assign priority to the various factors — political, ideological, and communal, as well as marital and financial — that account for *Politics*' fitful existence after mid-1947 and its demise in 1949; but he does keep suggesting — quite misleadingly, I believe — that, owing to Macdonald's inveterate anti-Stalinism, he supplied little of the kind of criticism of American domestic and foreign policy that was needed at the time. Particularly irresponsible, in Wreszin's view, is the "deliberate hatchet job" he did on Henry Wallace, the Progressive party presidential candidate, which appeared in two long installments in *Politics* in 1947 and was reissued in book form the following year. He also faults Macdonald for his involvement in the short-lived Europe-America Groups (EAG) in 1947-49 — an anticipation, says Wreszin, of the CIA's covert operations in Western Europe. He reports that by 1949 Dwight had "moved closer" to Sidney Hook at a time when Hook, so it is revealed, was treating with CIA Director Walter Bedell Smith. He sees in Dwight's unrelenting attacks on fellow travellers and Soviet sentimentalists during the 40s an anticipation of the notorious excuse for McCarthy that Irving Kristol offered in 1952. And on the basis of a provocative speech that Macdonald made at the Rand School in 1949, he declares Macdonald was "now solidly in the camp of the Americans for Democratic Action" and intimates that he was ripe for recruitment into the liberal wing of the CIA.

Wreszin's is a shaded and nuanced account. He certainly doesn't vilify his subject. He allows that Macdonald opposed every form of repression against Communists and wrote and spoke out against McCarthy on frequent occasions. Dwight, he tells us, never succumbed to any national enclosure of mind despite a

softening of his attitudes toward America's established institutions. Yet he still tends to view Macdonald's engagement with the Cold War and McCarthyism chiefly in a rueful and cautionary light, to see it as somehow representative of the betrayals and derelictions of the "non-Communist left." That this tends to assimilate Dwight's anti-Stalinism with the secretive and illiberal doings of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom (ACCF) and what Wreszin chooses to call "the liberal impulse of the Central Intelligence Agency" seems to me especially disagreeable. All the more reason then for a close look at some of his evidence.

• **The Wallace "Hatchet Job":** Wreszin argues that Wallace's bid for the presidency represents a lost opportunity for "an open-ended debate" about the Truman Doctrine and other aspects of American foreign policy, "despite Wallace's naiveté about the Soviet Union." Dwight's "red-baiting' dismissal" of Wallace, he adds, partook of the single-minded anti-Communism that he had until recently been quick to condemn. This ignores the crux of Macdonald's assault, which was that Wallace was essentially a stooge, a creation of the Party, and as such "an instrument of Russian Foreign Policy." Wallace may have raised questions about, say, the Truman Doctrine (so had Macdonald); but in light of the Party members and hard-line fellow travellers who controlled his campaign, he was hardly in a position to be "open-ended" about anything relating to the Soviet Union or the Cold War. As Wallace protégé and *New Republic* editor, Michael Straight, wrote many years later: "The Progressive party did not 'happen to win the support' of the Communist party [as Wallace maintained]; it was created by the Communist party. The question was not, who will support the Progressive party? It was, who will control it?" Macdonald's book was a powerful and accurate left-wing indictment of Wallace written in the fine, biting literary style for which he was justly famous and sometimes feared.

• **The Europe-America Groups:** Was this noble failure of a movement — launched in 1947 by Macdonald, Mary McCarthy, and Nicola Chiaromonte, and by Albert Camus in Europe; and satirized by McCarthy in *The Oasis* — was this shoestring "brotherhood" some kind of forerunner of the Congress for Cultural Freedom? The EAG's chief concern was to provide material help (including books, magazines, etc.) to European intellectuals. It also sought to promote more sustained contacts with those who were disaffected from both the Soviet empire and the emerging NATO alliance — or as the EAG manifesto put it: "from the great power blocks that divide the world." All told a few thousand dollars were raised (which Chiaromonte duly distributed in Europe), a few bulletins were issued, a debate on the Wallace candidacy was held. Finally the EAG disbanded in the spring of 1949, after efforts to raise funds and generate interest proved unavailing.

The EAG did for a time include some Cold War hardliners, such as Hook and the editors of *Partisan Review*, whose principal aim seems to have been to capture the organization for their own purposes. And perhaps their efforts were even sanctioned and assisted by the CIA, as Wreszin intimates, though I doubt it. It is more to the point that the takeover bid of this faction failed, leaving the organizers free to pursue a more independent line. Later, in the 50s, Chiaromonte and, to a much lesser extent, Macdonald and McCarthy were drawn into the Congress for Cultural Freedom's orbit, in effect becoming the "tools" that Wreszin mentions. Yet the real significance of EAG does not lie there, it seems to me; but

in the implications of its dispiriting end, which came, incidentally, at roughly the same time as the demise of *Politics* and of Cyril Connolly and Stephen Spender's *Horizon* in England. That such open and above board centers of intellectual self-sufficiency couldn't survive in the postwar atmosphere was an ominous sign. It certainly made it easier for the CIA to move in.

What Macdonald, McCarthy and, for that matter, Chiaromonte and Spender were all up against by this time were money problems — the necessity of supporting themselves and increasingly needy dependents by free-lance writing or some other kind of intellectual work. Wreszin writes sympathetically about the sudden pressures on his subject to become “a money writer,” which was exacerbated by, but didn't commence with, the ending of his marriage, and which led him into a less than fully satisfying arrangement writing for William Shawn's *New Yorker*. But in his concern to show just how boxed-in Dwight was by his allegedly excessive anti-Stalinism, Wreszin understates the impact of changing markets for literary and political commentary. Macdonald, I venture to say, would have been happy to return to the political wars if he could have made a decent living out of it. Indeed, he talked repeatedly of reviving *Politics*, and in 1951 he actually broached the idea of a magazine oriented to a Europe-America Cold War dialogue. Lacking an “angel,” a sponsor, or a partner even better off than Nancy Macdonald, he wasn't likely to proceed very far with this idea. But imagine just how difficult he might have made things for the CIA's intellectual consortium had he been able to pull it off?

• **The Congress for Cultural Freedom:** Later, Macdonald made things difficult indeed for the Congress when an offer to replace Irving Kristol on *Encounter* was withdrawn at the last minute and he was fobbed off with a one-year post as “roving correspondent” for the CCF's European magazines. Given the lack of reliable accounts of the Congress, it isn't entirely Wreszin's fault that the pages he devotes to it and especially to its refractory New York outpost, the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, are so limited. All the same, he ought to have been a little more wary of Peter Coleman's officially sanctioned history (*The Liberal Conspiracy*), and also of relying uncritically on the word of interested parties, like Daniel Bell, where matters are still in dispute.

The trouble begins with a portentous depiction of Dwight moving closer to Sidney Hook in the late 40s. In fact, their limited collaborations — as, for instance, in the EAG and at the Waldorf Peace Conference in 1949 — did little more than deepen the mutual distrust that these two very different anti-Stalinists had felt for each other since the 30s. The clinching fact, in any case, is Macdonald's absence from the ranks of the approximately 200 individuals who were invited to join the American Committee for Cultural Freedom in the first year or so of its existence, in 1950-51. Either he wasn't invited by Hook, who dominated the Committee throughout most of its life, or he refused. The point is that for one reason or another he didn't belong in what Wreszin calls “a bastion of cold war activity” and also “the most active organization of what was loosely called the non-Communist left.”

Sometime later, in late 1951 or early 1952, Macdonald did come barging in to the ACCF. Not, one gathers, because it was any kind of bastion; but rather at the behest of fellow *New Yorker* writer, Richard Rovere, an increasingly disaffected member of the ACCF executive, who didn't understand why Chairman Hook and the people around him seemed so unconcerned about McCarthyism. Wreszin

mentions the key role played by Macdonald in a losing battle, waged together with Rovere and a few others, to pass a statement of purpose which specifically singled out McCarthy and his methods for condemnation. But his sketchy account misconstrues what was at stake. Hook was against having the American Committee focus on Senator McCarran, Representative Dondero, and other Congressional witch-hunters; and, backed by lieutenants Bell and Kristol, he was especially opposed to naming McCarthy at this time. Hook was concerned about alienating pro-McCarthy members of the Committee (James Burnham, Max Eastman, Ralph deToledano) and there was also the matter of a \$2,500 monthly subsidy from the CIA that he was in the process of negotiating with the recently established Farfield Foundation around the same time as the Macdonald-Rovere initiative on McCarthyism was coming to a head. (Farfield had been established in January 1952, for the purpose of passing CIA money to the Congress.)

Later, it was Hook who saved the Congress from the potentially disastrous mistake of putting Macdonald in charge of its flagship magazine in 1955. Macdonald, who had resigned from the ACCF a year earlier, had only the sketchiest acquaintance with *Encounter* and the work of the Congress. He was also desperate to get away from the *New Yorker*. Hence his eagerness to come to London. And, in fact, he was all but hired when, alerted by an angry Hook, Michael Josselson discovered for himself what a loose cannon the former editor of *Politics* was likely to be. Since organizational reliability was the *sine qua non* of the qualifications needed for an important job in the Congress, it is hardly surprising that Macdonald was denied the editorship.

But Josselson was burned anyway. Wreszin's narrative makes clear that it wasn't Macdonald's lack of a sufficiently durable anti-Communism that accounts for the turmoil he generated before, during, and after the compensatory year he was granted on the Congress payroll. Nor was it even his less-than-Kristol-like enthusiasm for things American. It was simply because Macdonald was who he was: a congenital naysayer and no team player who, essentially by accident, had landed in a context where reliability was all. Wreszin will have none of this. "The issue of independence was meaningless," he writes, echoing Bell, Kristol, Hook, Melvin Lasky and other Congress defenders,

since those who participated [in CIA-funded projects] were anti-Stalinist liberals and radicals, who were glad to support American policy, especially one that was aiding liberal to leftist organizations in Europe. This would have been true of Dwight in the late forties and early fifties.

This implies that Macdonald would have been less troublesome had he been hired a few years earlier. It's a pity that Wreszin — who repeatedly shakes his head over Dwight's blindness to the "official" auspices of the Congress — doesn't just once lift his eyes from this failing to ponder the larger implications of his subject's entanglement with the CIA. In any case, what Macdonald's "case" as a non-Communist leftist indicates, it seems to me, is just how important the independence/reliability question was in the Congress' recruitment practices. (Not of course in connection with those who merely wrote on occasion for the consortium's magazines or spoke at its illustrious conferences.) It was certainly Macdonald's independence — or stubborn innocence — that brought Josselson, Kristol, and Spender all down on him with a vengeance when he spilled the beans about "America America!," a very Macdonaldish piece about his impressions on return-

ing to America after his year in Europe that was vetoed by Josselson over the heads of the editors in 1958. What this episode also suggests is just how central selling America had become to the Congress, in Western Europe at any rate, where, outside of France and Italy, the appeals of Communism had dwindled into political insignificance.

IN HIS PASSAGES ON THE ACCF AND THE CONGRESS, Wreszin symbolically joins hands with various Congress defenders. The latter are inclined to cite Macdonald's brief stint as a Congress insider as evidence of just how pure and incorruptible such insiders typically were; Wreszin, for his part, points to the same reality as evidence of just how impure and corruptible the non-Communist left typically was. Both parties overlook how aberrant, not to say, profoundly revealing, Macdonald's relations with the Congress were.

But I don't want to let my concern with this section in the book overshadow my appreciation for the work as a whole. Wreszin is particularly good in bringing the shadowy substance of Macdonald's early years to life. (Here he generously acknowledges the largely unpublished work of Robert Cummings and other Macdonald scholars.) He describes his subject's struggle to overcome the "dandyish pretensions" and upper-class WASP bigotries that were solidified during his elite education in the 20s — a struggle that, successful as it was, still left residues of insensitivity and resentment in Macdonald's relations with Jewish colleagues and friends. All this, including Dwight's part in the 1949 furor over the Bollingen Prize for Poetry awarded to Ezra Pound and his sometimes nasty blow-ups with Phillips and Rahv, is covered with admirable poise and delicacy.

Beginning in the late 50s, Macdonald came to enjoy a kind of celebrity as a cultural critic. He also returned to the political wars. Wreszin gives Macdonald full credit for his magnanimity toward the young radicals of the 60s that was all too rare among his old left associates. Dwight's instinctive libertarianism and anti-statism, and his equally strong distrust of the academy, gave him an instant passport to the young. He was invited to speak at the founding convention of the SDS in 1960, and likewise took an interest in the War Resisters League, a pacifist organization to which he had belonged in the 40s. In the summer of 1963, at a time when few people even knew about the war in Vietnam, he was by far the oldest member of a scraggly SDS and War Resisters League picket line, protesting a visit of Madame Ngo Dinh Nhu to New York. "It is remarkable," says Wreszin, "how in tune Dwight's thinking was with the thoughts of the early leaders of SDS, Tom Hayden and Robert Haber. 'The Root is Man' became a seminal document in New Left circles, frequently reprinted by young radicals in search of a usable past."

Typically, Macdonald withheld his support from Castro. He didn't like the Communist influences in the Castro regime, and he was alarmed by Castro's free-handed use of the death penalty to put down dissent. But the Bay of Pigs left him outraged by Kennedy's hubris. By 1967, he declared that Communism was no longer an important issue for him; he was much more concerned about the darker side of America's technical productivity, which had become "a sinister extension of the American way of life." With David McReynolds, David Dellinger, and Noam Chomsky, he publicized the notion of "from politics to resistance," urging nonviolent civil disobedience and defiance of the draft. Sadly, as Macdonald threw himself into various campaigns (e.g., fund-raising for the Black Panthers;

attacking Michael Harrington and the United Federation of Teachers in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville dispute), he was finding it harder and harder to write. Much in demand in the mainstream media, and happy with the platform for freewheeling political commentary that he had at *Esquire*, he let one writing commitment after another go by the board.

By the early 70s, with the radical mood dissipating, Macdonald found himself intellectually stymied. Teaching was now a financial necessity, and he embraced the kind of visiting professorships that came his way with all the energy he could muster. (Dwight didn't just teach; he invariably involved himself in campus politics.) But teaching could not substitute for writing. In a chapter entitled "Dwight's Last Tapes," Wreszin provides a melancholy depiction of Macdonald in his 70s drinking too much and endlessly annotating past letters and notes. It was all in preparation for a memoir that it was increasingly obvious would never be written.

It is tragic, Wreszin suggests, that so few people took advantage of Macdonald's generosity and accessibility during this period. (One who did, James Atlas, author of an estimable biography of Delmore Schwartz, was helped immeasurably by Dwight who cared deeply about his old friend, Delmore, and also discerned an extraordinary writer in Atlas.) Wreszin's tone in these last pages (and indeed throughout the book) is decent and evenhanded. He probes sensitively into the self-lacerating anguish that marked Dwight's assessment of himself as a writer, and which contributed so much to his writer's block; and he also finds things to celebrate amidst the stasis and gloom of Dwight's unproductive final decade. Wreszin writes with the authority of an ample sympathy for his subject, and with a fine understanding of the many issues that Macdonald wrestled with in a lifetime of controversy. Wreszin doesn't refer to his biography as "a life and times," but he gets the times right in most instances; and he has done so in precise and accessible prose. Whether Macdonald will continue to command interest when the next radical era finally arrives is difficult to say. That depends in large part on the survival of the kind of the socially mixed, human-scale political and intellectual communities in which he thrived. But it will be a long time, I expect, before this *life* is superseded.

Feminism Against Fundamentalism

Lidia Falcon

THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON POPULATION GROWTH convened in Cairo in September 1994 resolved for the first time in the history of these conferences (Bucharest in 1974 and Mexico in 1984) that women should be taken into account when formulating the politics of population. This can undoubtedly be attributed to the pressure on governments and societies by feminist movements over the past few decades. Of course, one could sarcastically describe this outcome as a victory for elementary common sense. But every gain made by women and every act of justice on the part of men, are the result of a long battle against the hostility that men have historically harbored against women.

The Cairo conference approved another resolution no less important than the first: the category of human rights "also" applies to women. One might infer from this action that up until now, women were not considered human. We must define them as such and insist upon this in the face of countries whose legislation scarcely recognizes women as the subjects of social or political rights, and where women are treated worse than animals. Countries where women can inherit only half of the goods stipulated to their male counterparts, where they cannot request a divorce, where they are never granted child custody, and where, in the ultimate horror, the male members of the family can kill them for any reason without ever being brought to justice.

As we all know, these are countries governed by Islamic law where millions of women are compelled to live imprisoned in their own homes, subjected to polygamy, sexual mutilation, torture — disgraceful and inhuman treatment. But it is only now that the United Nations — which in 1948 approved the Declaration of Human Rights ratified by the majority of member states — has passed some sort of declaration of condemnation against governments, parliaments, and states which allow and encourage slavery, torture, and the killing of women.

We must make it very clear that this behavior is not taking place in small isolated communities. Neither is it defended solely by Islamic fundamentalist groups nor practiced only in Iran, governed by a theocracy, or under military dictatorships like Iraq. In Saudi Arabia, women are treated as worthless objects. After declaring his daughter defiled, a father has the right to strangle her in front of the family as an exemplary punishment. In the United Arab Emirates, adulterers are publicly stoned to death. In supposedly democratic Egypt, polygamy was legalized and clitoridectomies are performed on thousands of young girls every year. From Mauritania to Bangladesh, 80 million infant girls are sexually mutilated annually. But the United Nations has never made any declaration of

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condemnation against these countries.

The international community subjected South Africa to an economic embargo for its notorious policy of apartheid. But it is unthinkable that similar action would be taken against Islamic countries which treat women no better or worse than whites treated blacks in South Africa. Because of its racist laws, South Africa was banned by the International Olympic Committee from participating in its games but the same sanctions are not applied to countries which bar women from taking part in sports or send exclusively male delegations to the Olympics. Military regimes are routinely criticized for repression of their citizenry but the Spanish government does not apply the same treatment to Morocco and King Hassan II who is welcomed as a friend and a governing democrat. This double standard also holds true for Algeria, Mauritania, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait which are all considered democratic countries.

In the words of the famous 19th century Spanish lawyer and penal theorist, Conception Arenal, men can commit a thousand despicable acts but if they are perpetrated against women, they will continue to be considered gentlemen.

The danger posed by Islamic fundamentalism has only recently become the object of public denunciations, especially after extremist groups in Algeria, Egypt, and Tunisia began targeting writers, journalists and professors. From the moment that civil war between men breaks out, Islamic fundamentalism is transformed into a problem with open bloodletting and state bankruptcy. While the dead were only women, no mention was made of it. Despite equality before the law and provisions barring discrimination against women written into the constitutions of democratic countries, the fate of women is a matter of no consequence for its governments.

THE CASE OF IRAN PROVIDES AN EXAMPLE of how men subscribing to a progressive ideology are capable of giving their approval to a revolutionary movement although it is obvious that the regime will uphold the most reactionary projects with respect to women. In the initial period of the revolution, it was extremely surprising to see that among journalists, politicians, theorists, trade unionists, and other individuals concerned for the welfare of ordinary people, there should be such enthusiasm throughout Europe for the prospect of Iran being transformed into an Islamic fundamentalist country. Of course, all people of good will should have been opposed to the despotic dictatorship of the Shah. But the defenders of the regime of the "Ayatollah" Khomeini felt much more enthusiasm for the rupture that this portended for relations with the United States, and Western forms and manners, than for the assurance that the new regime respected human rights, much less those of women.

When women made clear our rejection of a system which was governed by the "black book" of its leader who, like Hitler, was not shy about publicizing genocidal ideas in which his hatred for women was manifest, they were the recipients of the kind of criticism outlined above from sectors of the male left. In the end, the concerns of women are always perceived as particularistic questions pertaining only to a "minority" while those affecting men, even a small number like conscientious objectors, must be of general interest. It is certainly true that nothing now remains of the original enthusiasm demonstrated by intellectuals and politicians, but their rejection was motivated more by the anti-Westernism of the Iranian regime than by any compassion toward its women. The abduction of

American hostages among which there were no fatalities, aroused criticism and provoked the hostility of democratic countries to a degree which was never afforded to the thousands of female victims of polygamy, child marriage, clitoridectomy, prison, and the killings by which any disobedience is punished.

In Saudi Arabia, women are not able to drive cars without being arrested, insulted, or having their husbands fired from their jobs. But an entire war, producing thousands of victims, was waged to protect "this" democracy and "this" freedom. From the outset of this loathsome Gulf war, the problems which affect the countries of this area have been the object of hundreds of analyses and debates. But the problems under discussion concern the economy, political organization, development, or employment — for men. The lives of women throughout the entire region scarcely merit mention in international forums and supra-national organizations.

A new polemic has begun to muddy the debate on Islam and fundamentalism even further. The political leaders and intellectuals of the Muslim countries have repeatedly levelled the charge of ethnocentrism, an accusation which has been accepted by anthropologists and defenders of Western human rights. According to this rationale, those who defend the abolition of atrocities against women are motivated by the "racism" of assessing unique cultures by Western values. This question is deemed most important for Islamic societies and we are charged with a failure to recognize that other people have a culture different from that of Europe or America. In other words, Spanish feminists or their European or American counterparts fail to comprehend the beauty or necessity of sexually mutilating children.

At the end of the 20th century, the time has arrived to concede the need for, and the righteousness of, supra-cultural and supra-national norms which establish the most elementary rights of human beings, including women. This is precisely what has been obtained with the Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations and subsequently with the Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Child, norms which have received the approval of a vast number of nations and which capped a phase of horror and genocide which the world had experienced immediately before. These norms which guarantee the right to life, physical integrity, and the freedom and disposition of one's own person, provide the basis and the authority for demanding that women be treated as individuals subject to the law in all the countries of the world.

Women and men of good will must be organized and mobilized to demand that governments, along with political parties and groups demonstrate respect for women, irrespective of the religion, region, or culture of the country in question. Public opinion, trade union organizations, the media, and feminist groups and parties must all be made aware of the need to adopt, as a prime objective, the defense of women subjected to the tortures of Islamic fundamentalism. We cannot be considered feminists or even democrats if we allow millions of women around the world to live like the slaves of antiquity. We also believe that all women will become victims if fundamentalism advances and pushes forward like a sea of hot lava driven by the eruptions of volcanos generated by poverty, the economic crisis, and the unequal and unjust distribution of wealth caused by the capitalist system dominating the entire world today. This widespread desperation is exacerbated by the machismo which so many men use to compensate for their own insignificance and suffering.

There also exists a Christian and Catholic fundamentalism. Papal bulls have brought about serious setbacks in the gains won by women during this century in Poland and Ireland. The American right has incited an extremely sexist popular mood. Abortion clinics have been attacked and doctors have been assassinated. This can only be the beginning of the rightist and sexist offensive organized by American conservatives. In Europe, the Thatcher era has initiated a type of persecution of immigrants and the poor in which women are the principal victims. The countries of Eastern Europe have seen women disappear from their parliaments and factories. Social welfare programs for the most disadvantaged have been abandoned. The result is an increase in the feminization of poverty with its train of illnesses, deaths in childbirth, infant mortality, and prostitution.

We are fighting now against all these horrors which are striking very close to home and may tomorrow claim us as their victims. Taslima Nasrin will not be the only object of persecution by these fundamentalist lunatics. In all countries, feminist writers will be forced to lie low along with mothers, spouses, young people, and children. Then we will have nobody to defend us. As we said in issue 17 of *Power and Freedom*, the journal of the Spanish Feminist Party devoted to the question of "Woman and Islam," we must struggle together to find the path to free ourselves from the "merciful and humane" law of Allah. We can only achieve this end through the solidarity of all feminists. Let's make it happen.

Madrid, November 1994

Translated from the Spanish by Patrick Flaherty.

After the Elections

Germany Remains Divided

Hanna Behrend

THE GERMAN GENERAL ELECTIONS ON OCTOBER 16, 1994 WERE the last event in a marathon year of elections to many local and federal state parliaments, as well as to the European parliament. Superficially, these elections seem to have brought little change: Helmut Kohl will, at least for the moment, continue as German Chancellor, his Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the fraternal Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), and his coalition partners of the liberal Free Democratic Party (FDP) having jointly achieved a majority. Below the surface of continuity, however, it is evident that the safe and stable position of the dominant political class is being challenged. The call for political change emanated from East Germany but the results reveal reverberations in the West, as well.

The Chancellor's "triumph" is rooted in ten seats which his coalition won in excess of the combined votes of the Social Democratic Party, Alliance 90/the Greens, and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) (which, although it failed by a small margin to overcome the five percent hurdle, got 30 seats in the Bundestag by virtue of four direct mandates won in East Berlin). In terms of the actual number of voters, 22,631,801 wanted a change of government as against 22,774,483 who did not, i.e. just over 140,000 votes allow Herr Kohl to remain in power, a rather precarious majority even if one ignores the more than 20% of the electorate that did not vote, a total of 12.65 million, probably not fans of the conservative coalition, either.

Of the 79.1% of the electorate that did go to the polls 41.5% voted for Herr Kohl's CDU or the Bavarian CSU compared to 36.4% whose choice was the Social Democrats. The figures reveal that CDU popularity declined. Every one of the Federal states, West and East, returned fewer CDU (or CSU in Bavaria) deputies than they had in 1990. In Bavaria the CSU lost its absolute majority, reflecting voter disapproval of the scandals in which leading CSU officers had been involved. The SPD was unable to cash in on the CDU/CSU losses. Its gains in the West were modest; in the Saarland it lost the absolute majority. Even in the East, out-

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standing SPD gains were made only in Brandenburg.

The wealthy or comfortably off, the thriving businessmen, top managers, senior civil servants, successful physicians and lawyers, or master craftsmen in secure employment, the recipients of ample pensions with considerable savings were more likely to vote for the CDU/CSU than the SPD whose support was to be found among university professors and other academics, artists and writers, and rank and file trade union members. Generally speaking, however, there was little difference in the social composition of those who voted for one of the two major parties; both enjoying the support of a cross section of the population.

Political considerations determined the individual voter's party preference. CDU/CSU voters were in favor of the status quo: the media-inspired fear that the SPD might succumb to left-wing pressure and pursue a policy jeopardizing their privileges or diminishing their unearned income or savings inspired people who felt they had something to lose to vote conservative. In addition to their middle-of-the-road sympathizers, the CDU/CSU succeeded in winning over sections of former right-wing and even right-wing extremist voters, particularly the latter, by discrediting the leadership of the right-wing extremist Republikaner party. A considerable number of CDU/CSU voters had been persuaded that German industry had to expand to increase its competitiveness because otherwise their standard of living would be impaired; therefore the "welfare state" would have to be "transformed," i.e. dismantled "since it could no longer be financed." Other voters had been convinced that the CDU demands for harsher laws and more police were the only way to cope with growing criminal delinquency; more rigid immigration legislation would rid the country of foreigners who were their competitors in the rat race for jobs and cheap housing; tighter anti-abortion and "pro-family" laws seemed to them the best method to counteract the drop in the German birthrate and revive conservative morality.

SPD voters, on the other hand, were confident that a victorious SPD would pursue a policy which would alleviate mass unemployment and halt Germany's further disintegration into a society two thirds needy and one third well off. They, too, were banking on an economic policy of expansion and greater competitiveness rather than on basic reforms. (Gainful employment and the ecology are, as yet, radical ideas, the concerns of left-wing intellectuals.) They were also afraid of the growing violence and right-wing extremism but, convinced that the conservative economic policy was eventually going to engender social unrest, they favored a social reformist policy as the safer option.

HOWEVER VAGUE THE HOPES AND FEARS OF THE ELECTORATE may have been, the industrial and banking tycoons and their political spokespersons had very clear ideas of what policies they expected the new government to pursue and they certainly did not let the grass grow under their feet before articulating them. Encouraged by the election results, Herr Murmann, President of the Employers' Federation,

published a paper, euphemistically called "Transformation," thereby triggering a concerted campaign to get rid of the last vestiges of the social network (West) German industry had been forced into accepting during the period of two German states. Murmann called for trade union acceptance of wages below the wage agreement rates, for new cuts in social security and pensions. (CDU economic expert, Friedhelm Ost, suggested solving the ensuing problems by people taking out additional private pension insurance.) He suggested that patients forthwith pay for medical consultations, that medical benefits under social insurance be reduced, that sickness pay be withheld during the first three days of absence and sickness benefits whittled down from 100% to 80% of wages.

These suggestions, which SPD social expert Dressler called a "catalogue of horrors," were rejected by DGB (German Trade Union Federation) Vice-President Frau Engelen-Kefer and other prominent trade unionists, by the AOK, the primary insurance for the gainfully employed, by the major churches, and even by the odd CDU or CSU spokesperson. However, when the Rev. Eppelmann, former East German dissident and present chairman of the CDU's social committees, rejected the government's plan to reduce the period of entitlement to unemployment benefits, he was sharply reprimanded by his parliamentary party for sticking his neck out and he promptly toed the line.

President of German Industry and Trade (DIHT) Stihl, always a pioneer of social "transformation" to benefit the well-off, called for "more free market in Germany" meaning reduced taxes for enterprises and on unearned incomes, and lower rates for the compulsory employers' contributions to their employees' social insurance. "The present social system can no longer be financed," he proclaimed. He was applauded by the Federal Association of the Self-Employed whose spokesperson also called upon the government to make a clear statement about its economic policy which, they hoped, would correct the errors of the past and stop adding billions of Deutschmark to the national debt.

The President of the Federal Association of German Industry (BDI) Tyl Necker admonished the trade unions not to deviate from the policy of modest wage demands which they had happily adopted and "which had contributed to the present improvement of the economic situation."

The new round of discussions between the employer federations, the CDU and the unions began even before the election results were in and revealed that the present trade union leadership was prepared to compromise if not capitulate: Chairman of the Metal Workers Union, Klaus Zwickel, confirmed the union's intention to allow "flexible agreements" on the six percent wage rise they proposed and which the employers had rejected as "illusory." CDU expert on social problems Louven called for a new trade union wage policy, claiming that labor costs heavily influenced employment.

The landlords' association followed suit, supporting Frau Schwaetzer's plans for the repeal of rent ceilings, tenants' protective legislation, and for an end to state subsidized housing in favor of "more private initiatives." Although this was sharply repudiated by the tenants' associations, past experience indicates that to reverse this housing policy would require strong political pressure on parliament.

As was to be expected, Herr Murmann was seconded by FDP Minister of the Economy Rexroth. Undaunted by his party's spectacular loss of popularity in the

post-unification era, which nearly halved its first all-German election result of 11% in 1990, he clearly plans to continue his ruthless neoliberal and antisocial policy. His party friend, Minister of Housing Frau Irmgard Schwaetzer, who announced her anti-tenant bias almost immediately after the elections was not nominated for a Minister's post again and has decided to leave politics.

The liberal political image of the FDP, formerly supported by people who did not want unbridled conservative rule, no longer exists. Liberal spokespersons have clearly lost their influence. One of the old guard of post-war liberalism, Frau Hildegard Hamm-Brucher, ran for President in the last presidential election early in 1994, but was withdrawn at the final ballot by her own party to make way for the conservative candidate, Roman Herzog, the present German President. Frau Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger, who bravely resisted conservative pressure to introduce more repressive legislation, is one of the very few old-style liberal survivors. Although the present FDP policy is practically indistinguishable from that of the CDU/CSU, there are some "liberals" who want to move even further to the right. Immediately after the general election, a group of five FDP VIPs circulated a petition urging a policy similar to that of the Austrian right-wing extremist Haider. One of the signatories was the former Public Prosecutor General, whom Frau Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger had dismissed because of his responsibility for a still unresolved incident in which a terrorist was killed when arrested by a special anti-terrorism unit. The FDP leadership repudiated this new move to the right, but there is every likelihood that its policy will not differ very considerably from the one proposed by the right wing.

No doubt, the excessive character of these demands is meant to pave the way for the eventual acceptance of slightly less provocative ones. Whether, and to what extent, the present government will be able to implement this backlash policy will largely depend on the political line taken by the SPD. If it does not cave in to the demands of the conservative lobby of industry — banking, real estate owners and other propertied sections — there would be a chance of staving off vested interests' concerted onslaught on the welfare state, their drive to expand Germany's industrial potential at the expense of the underprivileged, and to re-establish its political and military influence. The SPD leadership would have to stop trying to flatter the CDU into offering them a junior partnership in a Great Coalition and pursue a consistent policy of opposition which might well prematurely terminate the present government's term of office.

At its 1989 National Congress — before German unification — the SPD had adopted a program calling for "democracy and socialism, political self-determination and participation in structuring the world of labor with a view to transforming class society." It also stressed its determination to uphold the constitutional right to political asylum for the persecuted. In less than half a decade, its leftward move, which corresponded to the pre-unification decline of the conservatives, has been reversed. The SPD abandoned the Bischofferode miners, and agreed to curtail the right to political asylum. The most consistent feature of the policy pursued by the SPD leadership is its hostility to the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), although growing sections of the party membership, particularly in the East, would like to see left-wing cooperation against the policy of dismantling the welfare state. But the present SPD leadership, particularly its chairman, Rudolf Scharping, is most unlikely to pursue a course of genuine opposition. Profoundly perturbed by the political development in the East, in gen-

eral, and within the party, in particular, Herr Scharping and his chiefly West German following in the SPD do not want to avail themselves of the proffered support of either Alliance 90/the Greens or the nation's outcast party, the PDS. Notwithstanding official denials, they would much prefer a Grand Coalition under Helmut Kohl.

Evidence of this was Scharping's embarrassment at the establishment of a minority government coalition of SPD and Alliance 90/the Greens in Saxony-Anhalt with the tacit support of the PDS, following the federal state elections in June 1994 which were lost by the CDU. His repeated assurances that no such "Magdeburg" (the capital of Saxony-Anhalt) model would be acceptable, whatever the general election results, made abundantly clear that an anti-conservative coalition would not be an option for this candidate for the chancellorship. In the State elections in Mecklenburg-West Pomerania on October 16, 1994, the SPD polled 28.8% which, together with the PDS vote of 23.6%, would have defeated the CDU which polled 38.5%. Thereupon, SPD chairman Ringsdorff of Mecklenburg-West Pomerania entered into talks with PDS parliamentarians who, incidentally, nearly bent over backward to accommodate the SPD. Scharping lost no time vetoing any cooperation with the PDS, whereupon Herr Ringsdorff began to negotiate a "Grand Coalition" with the CDU. He was, nevertheless, reprimanded by chief Scharping for continuing his contacts with the PDS, as was Reinhart Höppner, the SPD premier of the minority government of Saxony-Anhalt, for the same "crime." In Mecklenburg-West Pomerania, the Great Coalition is well on its way, against the wishes of quite a strong faction among East German SPD members and of the broad electorate.

Without increased pressure on their leadership by grass roots SPD members in the West, there will be, at best, only formal resistance to the government policy of eroding the living standards of lower income groups to enable the employers to reorganize industry along post-Fordist lines at minimal expense to themselves. Unfortunately workers in East and West Germany are not cooperating in resisting these efforts. Rather, as the Bischofferode potassium miners' conflict in 1993 showed, and as the present dispute between the workers at the renowned West German Zeiss optical works at Oberkochen and those at the East German branch at Jena, reunited after unification, again reveals, they can be manipulated and divided.*

East Germans who voted for the SPD wanted an end to East German discrimination. Even if they voted for the SPD because they did not have much confidence in Alliance 90/the Greens or because they did not trust the PDS, they (like 61% of the East German electorate) wanted that party to be represented in the Bundestag as a thorn in the side of the SPD.

The average polling results in all East German Länder (states) and East Berlin reveal, however, that it was clearly the West Germans who reelected Kohl

*When the Zeiss management announced its intention of slashing 3,000 of the 15,900 jobs available in their East and West German works, the West German branch shop steward called the workers at his branch to protest against being expected to suffer for the sake of funds transferred to the East German branch. However, the reconstruction of the East German plant in Jena, which has already led to the loss of thousands of jobs, is being paid for by the Treuhand out of former GDR assets, and does not cost the enterprise or the West German branch at Oberkochen a penny.

if only by a small margin. the vote distribution in what was formerly the GDR was: CDU 29.2%; SPD 32.7%; FDP 3.2%; Alliance 90/Greens 1.98%; PDS 26.8%. Had the whole of Germany voted as the East did, a change of government and a subsequent change of policy could not have been avoided.

WHY DID THE WEST GERMAN VOTE TIP THE BALANCE in favor of a victory for Kohl? In the West, the red-baiting, i.e. the conservative argument that voting for the SPD would pave the way for a left-wing, PDS-dominated "people's front," an argument which totally failed in the East, was far more successful. There are good reasons for this considerable difference in the political climate between East and West. While 1990 brought far-reaching changes affecting every East German, unification made no noticeable difference in the lifestyles of most West Germans. For those West Germans who did not expand their business to East Germany, get a job there, or attend one of the East German universities, the East Germans remained strangers. Their acquaintance with their new co-nationals was, therefore, largely based on what the media told them.

With the abatement of the Cold War in the 1970s, the West German media had been rather sympathetic to the people in the GDR and even tolerant of the political establishment. During the Wende months of 1989/90 they gushed over the velvet revolution and courted members of the GDR opposition, many of whom they later saw fit to abuse. After unification, the media image of the brothers and sisters in the East changed radically. Gradually, the East Germans were demonized, first only by the yellow press, but later by practically the entire media including quite a number of television features. GDR history was reduced to the misdeeds of the state security (Stasi) apparatus and its army of paid and unpaid private eyes keeping everyone under constant surveillance. But even ordinary East Germans were victims of slander: GDR doctors had allegedly drowned immature newborn babies in buckets; GDR sports triumphs had supposedly been entirely indebted to the drugs fed to athletes, even children, by sports officers and physicians; according to "reliable reports," social workers and welfare departments had robbed thousands of dissident parents of their children by forcing their adoption. And, of course, practically everyone had been a Stasi spy. In often lengthy court procedures, such indictments, as a rule, proved mere slander and the individuals involved were rehabilitated but, of course, the damage to their reputation was irremediable.

East Germans were also viewed as a whining lot of incompetents; it was said that under the paternalistic GDR system they had never learned to fend for themselves and act independently; they had no individuality, and could neither express nor present themselves properly. Moreover, did not these people, who were forever demanding and obtaining financial support from the West, bite the hand that fed them by refusing to become democrats as evidenced by their massive vote for the old SED's successor party?

Only a fraction of the West German public realizes that unification gains of major West German firms amounted to 300 billion DM, i.e. to a 22% increase in profits in 1990/91, and that most of the money the West German taxpayer is obliged to spend on "Reconstruction Aid for the East" continues to provide profits for these West German enterprises. These profits generally return to the West where the firms in question pay their taxes, or are still more profitably invested in cheap labor countries in Eastern Europe. They do not benefit the East. Total

investment in East Germany amounts to no more than one-quarter of the funds made available by the taxpayers (25.3 % of 108 billion DM in 1992). From 1991 to 1994, no more than 448 billion DM were invested in the East compared with 2,420 DM in the West, or 28,500 DM per inhabitant in the East as against 37,300 DM in the West.

The high rates of increase in gross production (gross home product West 2,741 billion DM; East 211 billion DM) result chiefly from non-productive (service) sections; only 19% of the total increase in gross production of 6.3% registered for 1993 was actually achieved in industrial production as against 28% in West Germany. 2.75 million jobs have been lost in East Germany since unification; by mid-1994, the number of those employed in industry per 1000 inhabitants amounted to 54 as against 120 in the West, which puts East Germany even behind Greece with 70 industrial workers for every 1000 inhabitants. Very few people realize that the national debt of the prosperous Federal Republic of Germany before unification in 1990 amounted to more than one billion Deutschmark and that the East German taxpayer shared with the West German the repayment of interest rates accumulated before unification. Repayment of interest per inhabitant decreased after unification from 1,024 DM in 1990 to 963 DM in 1991. Even the prestigious Western media ignore these facts as they propagate the image of East Germans as ingrates. Small wonder, then, that the polling results reveal such a chasm between East and West Germany.

WHEREAS IN THE WEST, FOUR YEARS OF SPD RULE IN THE SAARLAND and of the CSU in Bavaria lost both parties their absolute majority, four years of SPD predominance in Brandenburg or CDU rule in Saxony, on the contrary, increased the popularity of the leading personalities. Brandenburg's Prime Minister, Manfred Stolpe, (SPD), seconded by his equally popular Minister of Social Affairs, the Frau Regine Hildebrandt (SPD), and Saxony's Kurt Biedenkopf contributed considerably to the positive election results of their parties at both the state and the general elections. The media alleged that East German political "infantilism" and "lack of appreciation for democracy" was responsible for this phenomenon; the East Germans were still in need of "father figures." But the two premiers really cashed in on what the people in both states felt was their "pro-East Germany" attitudes: Stolpe's popularity increased with the viciousness of the campaign carried out by Brandenburg's Alliance 90 party which accused him of having been in the pay of the Stasi.* This policy, incidentally, split that party and caused its disappearance from Brandenburg's parliament. Kurt Biedenkopf, Saxony's Premier, profited from his widely publicized image as an opponent of Helmut Kohl which he nursed by stopping the Chancellor from canvassing for the CDU in that state. These positive election results for the SPD reflect the East Germans' newly acquired discrimination about, rather than blind approval of, the two political parties.

While the SPD uncompromisingly defended Brandenburg's Premier against the ruthless attacks by Brandenburg's ex-dissidents, it continued its policy of attacking the PDS for allegedly being, unrepentantly, the party of Stalinist and

*Stolpe was a leading church lawyer in the GDR whose intervention to protect people persecuted by GDR authorities naturally involved him in negotiations with all branches of the GDR state apparatus.

Stasi misrule. The electorate generally disapproved of this application of double standards. In the mayoral elections in Potsdam, Brandenburg's capital, the SPD candidate was an ex-college teacher of Marxist political economy who had joined the SPD after the Wende. His opponent, a former middle ranking civil servant running for the Potsdam mayoralty on behalf of the PDS, was publicly accused of having cooperated with the Stasi. Thereupon, the PDS candidate published his Stasi file which proved that he had not been guilty of any crime or misbehavior. He won 43.5% of the vote against the SPD candidate's 30%. Since he failed to win the necessary absolute majority, the ballot was repeated. The local SPD rallied an anti-PDS alliance and finally triumphed over the contender by 54.93 to 45.07%.

In all the 1994 elections, baiting the PDS tended to unite all the other parties, but more often one of the major opponents utilized the anti-"red socks" campaign to incriminate the other, accusing it of clandestine cooperation with the arch-enemy. The CDU publicly called PDS members fascists tarred with a red brush, no different from right-wing extremist political organizations; the CSU called for the authorities to put the PDS under constant surveillance for the protection of the Constitution. The SPD leadership banned all official contacts with the PDS on the ground that it was not a democratic party. Leading PDS politicians were subjected to vicious slander campaigns. A number of former dissidents repeatedly attacked the PDS parliamentary party chairman, Gregor Gysi, a lawyer who had defended many of them in the GDR, alleging that he had betrayed them to the Stasi, although he had won a number of court cases which established that these attacks were untrue.

SPD Chairman Scharping tried to convince people that voting for the PDS would merely help elect Kohl; he then appealed to his conservative opponent to support SPD candidates in constituencies where they were running against PDS candidates likely to be successful. The Chancellor, however, refused.

More than 150 right-wing intellectuals, among them prominent former dissidents, signed a public statement against the PDS and deplored the alleged replacement of the German Constitution by an "anti-fascist and democratic constitution."

Former dissident writer Stefan Heym, 81 years old and a refugee from Nazi oppression, who had lived for many years in the United States and served in the U.S. army in the Second World War, was one of the non-party candidates running for election in East Berlin on a PDS ticket. He was insulted in the media, particularly by Alliance 90/the Greens spokespeople. No campaign was too stupid or too vicious to be launched in a desperate attempt to stop the East Germans from voting for the PDS — in vain in the case of Stefan Heym who won by direct mandate and became the Bundestag's President by seniority.

IN THE WEST, THE NEW ALLIANCE 90/THE GREENS PARTY, which arose from the recent merger of the former civil rights movements in the GDR with the Greens East and West, is dominated by the West German Greens. It was able to revive the pre-unification popularity of the Greens party and thus became an option preferred by those West German voters who wanted a radical change of policy. The PDS vote in the West was negligible though it increased everywhere there, too.

Quite different in the East where the PDS is the chief opposition party while Alliance 90/the Greens is still largely defined by former GDR dissidents who

give priority to "reappraising the past," which means baiting the PDS and anyone they consider to have been "close to the state" in GDR times. This aspect of its policy is widely discussed in the media while its often progressive proposals on present-day problems go unnoticed. The exclusively reductionist image of the GDR and its citizens gradually lost it the sympathy it had enjoyed in 1990. Alliance 90/the Greens disappeared in four of the five East German state parliaments and incurred serious losses almost everywhere in the East in the general elections.

The CDU losses in all but one of the East German federal states were clearly due to that party's leading role in the devastation of East Germany but also to the many political scandals in which the leading CDU politicians were involved. In Saxony-Anhalt, two succeeding premiers had to resign; one, for spreading false reports about his closest political friends having been in the pay of the Stasi, the other, for illegally lining his pockets. One Thuringian Prime Minister had to retire at the request of his own party friends for incompetence, and the first Mecklenburg-West Pomeranian Premier also left in disgrace. Though CDU votes exceeded those of the SPD in four of the five Länder, Kohl's party ranks second to the joint SPD-PDS results everywhere in the East, except Saxony. There, too, even popular CDU premier Kurt Biedenkopf lost votes and beat the combined left wing by merely 48% against 41%.

The FDP lost its 1990 bonus in the East* through its unabashedly anti-social policy and open admission of being the party of the well-off.

The most noteworthy aspect of the elections was the PDS vote in the East, ranging from 16.7% in Saxony to 37.7% in two of East Berlin's constituencies, thus exceeding by far the Alliance 90/the Greens party's polling results in the West. This reveals the determination of approximately 20% of the East German voters to support what they consider a real option for a change of policy and not, as is alleged, their nostalgia for the defunct "real socialist" state. These trends, i.e. the policy of the SPD which was not likely to win them an absolute majority, the decline of the FDP both in East and West Germany, the public support regained in the West by the West German Greens, and the increased acceptance of the PDS by the East German electorate, were evident in the 1994 federal states, local, and European parliamentary elections.

With the exception of its 10.7% loss in Brandenburg, the CDU held its own in the five East German Länder, which indicates that it also continues to enjoy a considerable following in the East.

IN THE EAST, THE EUPHORIA OF THE 1990 UNIFICATION ELECTION faded long ago. Even many of those who voted for the CDU then tended to be embarrassed about voting for a party which, in violation of its promises, was responsible for expropriating the bulk of the GDR nationalized (and a good deal of former cooperative) property. Nationalized industry, housing property, and farm lands were turned over to West German industry, trade, banking and the heirs of the big landlords expropriated in 1945. This policy rid the West of potential industrial competition. The West German bidders got this property for a song, often turning it into speculative real estate which was responsible for the loss of more than half the jobs available in 1989. Even before unification, the major part of retail trade and catering was taken over by West German firms, which refused to carry East German products, thereby ruining many East German farmers.

After unification, the East Germans were subjected to West German legislation (more reactionary than the GDR laws on abortion, divorce, family, and labor), exposed to West German inflationary prices, particularly for rents, fares, gas and electricity, children's wear, kindergarten fees and school meals, while their incomes increasingly lagged behind the West's wages and salaries from 60% to about 80%. The last GDR government, a CDU-SPD coalition, elected in March 1990, agreed to the principle of restitution (of property to former, generally West German, owners) before compensation as part of the Unification Treaty. As a result of that provision countless East Germans were evicted or threatened with eviction from their homes. Under the CDU/CSU/FDP All-German government elected after unification in 1990, the pensions of tens of thousands of teachers, university professors, medical practitioners, lawyers, civil servants and personnel of the GDR armed forces were cut, often to the level of social security, to punish them for their closeness to the unjust state. The "reconstruction" of ex-GDR universities and schools ended the reforms initiated by indigenous staffs after the *Wende*, reinstating a conservative education system, with second-rate West German professors often given the chairs of the East Germans, particularly those of renowned reformers.

This "Anschluss"-type unification antagonized a people who had been only too willing in 1990 to cooperate with the West Germans and merge into the Federal Republic. This year's Social Report submitted by the Sociological Research Center of Berlin-Brandenburg reflected changes in the mood and values of the East German population. While the East Germans certainly do not want a return to the repressive GDR police state, they have grown considerably in critical discernment about the system, both the past and present. People in the East no longer believe that the deindustrialization policy was an inevitable result of the disastrous GDR economic policy.

Employment, affordable rents, personal safety and social security now rank highest in their hierarchy of values, whereas good income, housing, the environment, leisure time pursuits have lost the priority they had at the time of the 1989 changes. They no longer consider unemployment, rising rents, cuts in social benefits, the consequence of the incompetence of the GDR system but evaluate them as part of the new social system, gauging their gains and losses without much bias.

While about half the interviewees express general satisfaction with their lives, the fact that the birth rate went down by more than half (from 200,000 in 1989 to 74,000 in 1994) shows lack of confidence in the future. Besides, 44% of those reported as content are nevertheless dissatisfied with their economic situation and with income/price relations, with the development of democracy (27%), the environmental situation (28%) and social security (24%). Naturally, those in full-time jobs, or whose businesses thrive, tend to be more satisfied with the changes than those out of work or working under job creation schemes or in temporary, insecure employment, or those threatened with the loss of their homes. Gains are freedom to travel (59%) personal freedom (52%), improved lifestyles (44%), environmental conditions (31%), whereas losses relate to personal safety

*This bonus was due to then Foreign Minister Genscher, a native of Halle in Saxony-Anhalt, whose intervention on behalf of GDR squatters in West German embassies in 1989 eventually led to allowing them to emigrate to West Germany.

(71%), social security (61%), bureaucratic handicaps (56%), culture (43%), working conditions (41%), solidarity at work places and among neighbors (54%). Additional grievances are the slow pace of adapting their wages, housing standards, ecological conditions and personal safety to West German standards. 37% of the interviewees said that their relationship with West Germans has become more distanced than before 1989. The number of people willing to get involved in politics, in furthering democratic conditions, went down sharply.

WHY DID ABOUT ONE-FIFTH OF THE EAST GERMAN ELECTORATE VOTE for the PDS? The PDS, whose predecessor's dictatorial rule over the East Germans was swept away only five years ago, was raised to the rank of third strongest party in the East Germany.

The PDS emerged at the last SED party congress in December 1989. Grass roots reform-minded members had forced the SED political bureau under Egon Krenz to resign and, at that extraordinary party congress, elected the opposition lawyer Gregor Gysi to chair the party, which adopted the name of Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). This initiated a tortuous and, as yet unfinished, reform process. Independent platforms and workshops were introduced, endless debates on an evaluation of the past and on a new political course ensued. Membership (the SED had 2.3 million card carrying members) dwindled to less than 300,000 in 1990. Some of the 2 million who left the party joined the CDU or FDP. While most former SED members completely withdrew from politics, a substantial number remained active outside party politics but within the orbit of left-wing activities. Held responsible for all the crimes and shortcomings of the former regime by the media, the other parties, and the general public, the PDS struck the rock bottom of unpopularity in the 1990 general elections. From then on, its development into a party radically changed from its Stalinist predecessor progressed, though not without setbacks. Its apparatus was reduced from 44,000 to less than 150 paid staff.

Although there are, among the membership of the PDS, unrepentant Stalinists and people who long nostalgically for the GDR, its most prominent leaders, the parliamentary party chairman Gregor Gysi and the party chairman Lothar Bisky, a former film maker and college professor, are uncompromising anti-Stalinists. Its parliamentary representatives include East and West Germans, party members and non-members, former GDR dissidents, atheists and Christians, and a considerable number of very able young feminists. Its policy is geared to bringing about a socially just, but not necessarily socialist society and to averting the global threats to mankind. According to its new Basic Program of 1993, the PDS is a pluralistic association of people, some of whom reject capitalist society on principle while others believe that the system can be gradually improved. Its strategy is to overcome political rule in the interest of the big capitalists and ensure the continued democratization of society. Its object is to maintain and protect the humanitarian and democratic traditions of the socialist movement. By consistently opposing the steamrolling of former GDR industry and cooperative agriculture and the discrimination against East Germans in all fields of public life, the PDS gradually began to be accepted in East Germany as the only party truly independent of the West German establishment. Its successes in East Germany, and (very slowly) waning unpopularity in the West clearly show that there is room for a party to the left of the Social Democrats, particu-

larly in view of the right-wing trends evident in the development of all political parties in Germany.

THE 1994 ANNUS MIRABILIS OF GERMAN ELECTIONS REVEALED that half the German electorate feel uneasy about the present situation and want a change of policy. Only an insignificant fraction voted for the extreme right wing, a very positive sign, although it should not be overestimated in view of the coverage the conservatives are giving right-wing ideas and activities. While the Liberals have given up their former role of modifying the conservatism of CDU/CSU governments, in favor of outdoing these parties in an even more anti-social economic drive, Alliance 90/the Greens in the West and the PDS in the East are clearly opposition parties. Their voters, no doubt, want them to pioneer and implement genuine reforms. They also want them to play the role of ombudsmen pressing the SPD to keep its election promises of stopping the further dismantling of the welfare state and coping with mass unemployment. The future will reveal whether the efforts made by the two minor opposition groups plus the pressure by the Social Democratic left wing will keep the SPD leadership from bowing to conservative pressure.

In any case, the 1994 general elections have set the stage in Germany for an inevitable battle between two options. If the present political trend continues it will turn Germany into a land for the prosperous only, in which the less fortunate, first in the East but increasingly in the West, are threatened with the loss of their jobs, their homes, their personal safety, and with a further shrinking of the social network. The country will then continue to be governed by those who are determined to pursue economic and political expansion at all costs, and to extend their political and military power. The alternative calls for a rapprochement of the ordinary people in East and West Germany to put an end to the discrimination against the East Germans and establish cooperation among those East and West whose social and political interests are basically the same — to bring about the democratic implementation of German unification. If the combined opposition proves strong and wise enough to join forces and promote such a development, it would have a fair chance of defeating the present political class, of finding new answers to present domestic problems and of contributing to the solution of global problems.

Comeback of the Communists

Paul Hockenos

AT THE TIME THAT COMMUNISM WAS COLLAPSING ACROSS EASTERN EUROPE, the prediction that the Communist parties would be democratically returned to power only a few years later required a fantastic stretch of the imagination. But five years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the old state parties, now renamed socialist parties, have made remarkable comebacks in almost every former East bloc country. In some, such as Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria, Belarus and Ukraine, they are back in office. In the Czech Republic, East Germany and Slovenia, they are prominent opposition forces. In other cases, such as Serbia or Romania, versions of the Communist parties remained in power.

The return of the post-Communists so soon after the emotional rejection of the regimes they proctored raises a host of questions. Are the East Europeans really giving socialism a second chance? After short flings with liberal and nationalist governments, are they finished with the adventures of free market capitalism and ethnic jingoism? Is the new trend an expression of nostalgia for the quieter days of dictatorship and full employment? Or are the ex-Communists really New Left socialists, pioneers of a Third Way in regions more hospitable to the left than Western Europe?

The reform Communist parties are so varied that there are no easy answers. In Hungary, the ruling Hungarian Socialist Party (HSP), formerly the Hungarian Socialist Workers Party, pursues an economic program more liberal than that of its right-wing predecessor. The new Belarusian and Ukrainian leaderships want to renew closer links with Moscow. In Serbia, Russia and elsewhere, the heirs of the Marxist-Leninist vanguard endorse nationalisms almost as fierce as those of the far right, with whom they periodically ally themselves.

The diversity of the post-Communist parties has more to do with each of their particular legacies, and the exigencies of their circumstances in the aftermath of Communism's fall, than with deliberate ideological convictions. The ruling parties in Soviet Eastern Europe and the Balkans were always much more heterogeneous than the West acknowledged. In Romania, Ceausescu's "national Communism" relied upon a bombastic national chauvinism that one would never have heard in East Germany or Czechoslovakia. The state parties in Hungary and Poland tolerated liberal-minded and left-wing reformers since the late 60s, the likes of whom would surely have been, or were, purged in other countries.

The state parties were also never monolithic within themselves. All of them encompassed different proportions of three general strains: Stalinists who identified with the ideals of the Marxist-Leninist tradition and the Russian Revolu-

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tion; a national populist faction that fused nationalist and plebeian influences with Communist rhetoric; and, lastly, unideological opportunists. The nature of the post-Communist parties today depends, in large part, on which faction, or combination of factions, emerged as dominant when the ancien regimes went under. In Serbia, where the Communist party had whipped nationalist fervor to a pitch over Kosovo, the stage was clearly set for Slobodan Milosevic's renamed Serbian Socialist Party to maintain its grip on power. In East Germany, the dethroned Socialist Unity Party (SED), renamed the Party for Democratic Socialism (PDS), had nothing to lose by reclaiming Marx and Rosa Luxemburg. Some of the opportunists jumped ship as soon as positions opened for them in the private sector, while others founded independent nationalist parties. Many former Communists saw their fates so closely tied to that of the parties that they had no alternative but to wait out the flush of resentment and ill will. Today, without the standard party line, the post-Communist parties encompass even broader, often unwieldy, spectrums of opinion. Under the same banner sit old-school Stalinists, professional but compromised technocrats, national socialists and young left-wing idealists.

The reform socialist parties are certainly no longer identical to their orthodox predecessors. With few exceptions, the Old Guards — the Honeckers, the Zhivkovs and their top circles — immediately stepped down, were expelled or, in Romania, executed. In most cases the new leaderships sincerely renounce the principles that underpinned the dictatorships: single party rule, media censorship, state-run unions, police terror, etc. The hammers and sickles are gone, the party organizations dissolved, and most state property returned. In word, at least, all of the new offspring profess a commitment to political pluralism, multiparty democracy and the rule of law.

Nevertheless, their leaders and members elected not to dissolve the parties completely and begin anew, or to join the upstart liberal, green or social democratic parties. All insist they are "left." Yet, as the Italian political scientist, Norberto Bobbio, argues, "right" and "left" are relative labels, meaningful only in relationship to one another and within the given political spectrum. It is concepts like liberalism, Communism and fascism that have definite political content. While Hungary's HSP liberals as well as Russia's national Bolsheviks speak in the name of "socialism," "social democracy" or "social market economics," their categories are amorphous and undefined, devoid of historical precedent and theoretical substance. The born again socialist parties wasted little time settling upon a new political orientation. "We don't have time for ideology," Hungary's new Prime Minister, Gyula Horn, liked to say during the spring election campaign. Parties like Horn's became "social democratic" overnight in countries in which ten years ago social democracy was a political heresy on a par with Titoism and Trotskyism.

OPPORTUNISM MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE HAS GUIDED THESE PARTIES' TRANSFORMATIONS. In opposition, they effectively portray themselves as the principled voice of protest against the most painful, unpopular consequences of the market reforms. Although their demands for the maintenance of jobs, pensions, child care, industrial subsidies and so forth are legitimate, without concrete programs to back them up they smack of empty, apolitical populism, not all so different from the demagoguery of the nationalist right, or the tirades of their predecessors against

Western capitalism. Like the right, when they come to power, their promises dissipate and, as in Poland or Hungary, they adopt a little changed version of their predecessors' economic course.

Even if some of the post-Communist parties have convincingly established themselves as democratic parties, the vestiges of their forerunners' conservative, authoritarian *weltanschauung* continue to resurface in their actions and rhetoric. While some factions within these parties have tried to incorporate some of the ideas of the Western left, or non-Communist socialist traditions in their own countries, the lion's share of ex-Communists are terribly ill at ease with concepts as foreign as grassroots democracy, civil society, gay rights or multiculturalism. They publicly endorse the formal rules of liberal democracy without really grasping the essence of liberal or social-democratic values. The result is that when they come to power, they adhere, usually, to democratic procedure without fostering, or often purposely suppressing, the processes that make a society democratic, such as press freedom, constructive public discourse or the inclusion of independent interest groups in public policy matters.

To this day, Hungary's Mr. Horn, a liberal reformer as sincere as any in Central Europe, will not publicly apologize for his role as a member of the elite Hungarian paramilitary police squads that helped the Soviets quash the Hungarian uprising in 1956. Horn also refuses to accept the offer of the daughter of Imre Nagy, the murdered Prime Minister of the 1956 revolution, to observe a minute of silence with her at her father's grave. Not surprisingly, he would rather speak about his career as a foreign diplomat, as the man who, as Foreign Minister for the last Communist government in 1989, opened the Iron Curtain for fleeing East Germans.

The democratic deficits of the post-Communist parties are simultaneously a source of their remarkable popularity. In the reform Communist parties, the people whose careers were bound to the discredited regimes find a justification for their life's work, as well as absolution for unethical actions. They can say that what they were working for, socialism, was something basically good. It was a benevolent ideal that hardliners took down a wrong path, against their will. By calling upon the tradition of the "left" or "socialism," they purposely draw a line of continuity from the past, their past, to the present. The fact that German Chancellor Helmut Kohl rolls out the red carpet for Gyula Horn (in marked contrast to the way Kohl's party treats Gregor Gysi of the PDS) relieves the average person of the task of reflecting critically on his or her actions under the dictatorships. The success of these parties and new labels like "social democratic" and "EuroCommunist," regardless of their content, perform the critical role of legitimizing their existence, their intentions and the histories of their members.

OF COURSE, THE MAIN REASON FOR THE REFORM PARTIES' recent resurgence has been their ability to turn to their advantage the discontent and frustration, anger and disorientation, that the economic and political transitions have produced. The people of the former East bloc initially embraced the market economy with entirely unrealistic hopes and expectations. But, with the exception of East Germany, the material standard of living for most Eastern Europeans has dropped. Privatization, denationalization and opportunities for free enterprise have created a small but highly visible nouveau riche, as well as another larger strata that has benefitted economically from the changes. But for the average person

life is harder. The post-Communists have effectively turned their parties into camps for the have-nots.

Yet, it is not simply the unemployed and the poor who cast their votes for the post-Communist parties. The changes of the past five years have created deep feelings of insecurity in the average burgher. Even people who are better off now are anxious about the future in a way that they had never been before. The reform Communist parties symbolize the days of certainty and security, when the state looked after the individual from the crib to the grave. The need for this kind of security is fully understandable. It is also a desire of populations in Western Europe. But in both Western and Eastern Europe, these feelings have simultaneously given rise to a disillusionment with democracy and a readiness to sacrifice democratic freedom for a more authoritarian society that guarantees law and order, social and individual security. Although the reform Communists and the right exploit this disenchantment with democracy, it is the democratic forces in Eastern Europe that bear the responsibility for linking democracy and the free market so closely. In doing so, they made it easy work for right and left populists to discredit democracy as something inextricably connected with unemployment, poverty and suffering.

Many progressives in the West hail the return of the ex-Communist parties as evidence that Central and Eastern Europe are not as numb as it first appeared to the possibility of a leftist project. And indeed, the initial euphoria over market capitalism has worn off quickly. The Eastern Europeans have not uncritically taken over the assumptions of natural rates of unemployment, consumer culture, or societies based on profit and divided by gross inequalities of wealth. But if they don't see capitalism as the end of history, they don't have a democratic socialist vision to replace it, and do the reform socialist parties.

If democratic socialism is to have a chance in the countries of the former East bloc, its impetus must come from outside of the reform Communist parties, which, regardless of their intentions, are incapable of extricating themselves from the political culture of their past. The process must begin at the grassroots level, drawing together like-minded left-wing groups as did the Union of Labor (UP) in Poland. The UP includes former Solidarity activists, former Communist party members, progressive intellectuals and organizers from Poland's pro-choice campaign. It received a surprising seven percent of the vote in the last election and, from its position in the opposition, is the only party that consistently and constructively criticizes the pro-privatization policies of the ruling "socialist" coalition, as well as the political incursions of the Catholic Church.

A left-wing alternative is possible in the ruins of post-Communist Eastern Europe only if there is a political culture to support it. In some countries, like Poland, the vague contours of such a political culture exist, and are enriched and solidified by parties like UP and movements such as the abortion referendum campaign. Elsewhere, it will be an even longer and more arduous task, hindered, not expedited, by the heirs to the Communist parties.

Persistent Memories of the German Revolution **The Jewish Activists of 1919**

Stephen Eric Bronner

1919 IS AN EXTRAORDINARY DATE IN GERMAN HISTORY. It abruptly brought the democratic revolution of 1918 to a close and opened the door for the 1933 Nazi seizure of power. 1919 is cloaked in myths of personal martyrdom and political betrayal. Too often forgotten, however, is the paranoia which gripped Germany in that year. Inspired both by the bitter reality of defeat on the battlefield and the radical specter of bolshevism, it produced a subtle shift in the common understanding of anti-Semitism and the fears motivating the anti-Semite. Indeed, 1919 was the year in which the preoccupation of the right-wing press with the "Jewification" (*Verjudung*) of German society essentially made way for the vision of a "Jewish-bolshevik conspiracy" (*Traverso*, pg. 48).

The *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, previously forged in Russia, had already made its appearance in Europe during the Dreyfus Affair about 20 years earlier. Anti-Semites also continued to bemoan the alleged dominance of Jews in certain professions, including banking, and reference was still made to Adolf Bartels, the noted 19th century philologist, and his list of 800 Jewish writers who were supposedly displacing German writers from their culture (*Pachter*, p. 262). But the war and subsequent revolutions transformed older concerns. The Jews were now considered not merely profiteers, the worst sort of capitalists, but also traitors working against the national interests of Germany and conspiring with the international Communist revolution. Indeed, their interests were identified with those of the new "Jew republic" of Weimar.

Was not this new order the result of defeat on the battlefield, was it not dominated by money-lenders, led by socialists, and willing to accept the provisions of the humiliating Treaty of Versailles? Was the new state not forged in the November Revolution of 1918? The November Revolution of 1918 had begun with the abdication of the Kaiser and the returning troops disgruntled and without hope for the future, whose plight was so well described by Erich Maria Remarque in novels like *The Road Back* and *Three Comrades*. The fall of the monarchy produced a power vacuum which was filled by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) under the leadership of the pro-war "majority" faction led by Friedrich Ebert, Philipp Scheidemann, and Gustav Noske.

The SPD's rise to power was accompanied by strikes and mass disturbances;

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the uprising initiated by a group of sailors in Kiel was the first. The aristocracy and bourgeoisie feared for their status and their property. The military and bureaucracy felt betrayed by the defeat while peasants and the petty-bourgeoisie embraced what soon became the legend of the "stab in the back" perpetrated by Jews and Communists on the homefront. The situation was perilous and the possibilities of civil war real.

Social democracy had always held forth the promise of a republic. But it was now in a terrible position (*Rosenberg*, pp. 5ff.). The SPD could either compromise with the anti-democratic and reactionary classes of the Wilhelmine Monarchy and introduce a "republic without republicans" or risk civil war and possible invasion at the hands of the victorious allies by taking a more radical course. This would involve purging the military and state bureaucracy, liquidating the estates of the reactionary aristocracy in the East, and dealing with an insistent minority of the proletariat seeking a genuinely "socialist" republic based on the spontaneously erupting "workers' councils" (*Räte*) or "soviets," if not the more authoritarian tenets of bolshevik theory. The Social Democrats chose the less dangerous option and turned on those wishing to chart a more radical course.

None of this meant much to the far right. Its ideological attachment to xenophobia, militarism, authoritarianism, and anti-Semitism created the philosophical context in which Jews could appear as the root of the problem. They promoted the view that Jews' inbred lack of principle and national roots made it possible for them to dominate the liberal bourgeoisie, social democracy and international communism as well. The Jews were thus capitalists and "reds" at the same time. Inextricably connected with the forces supposedly dominating the Weimar Republic, or what the Nazis termed the "system," this seemingly explained why the "Jew republic" should have crushed the uprisings in which any number of Jewish revolutionaries played a highly visible role.

ROSA LUXEMBURG WAS CLEARLY THE PREDOMINANT FIGURE AMONG THEM. Born in 1871 in the city of Zamosc, Poland, to a middle class Jewish family, Luxemburg became a revolutionary while still in high school. Hunted by the police, she fled to Zurich before engaging in a marriage of convenience in order to enter Germany and work with the jewel in the crown of international social democracy.

Various writers have emphasized the effect of being a Jew or a woman on the identity of Rosa Luxemburg (*Arendt*, pp. 36ff; *Dunayevskaya*, pp. 79ff). She undoubtedly always hated bigotry of any sort and insisted on equality. Her thought grudgingly allowed for "national cultural autonomy" (*The National Question*, 251ff, 303ff.), and she saw social democracy as the natural home for the oppressed. But the argument originally made in her dissertation, *The Industrial Development of Poland* (1894), with its critique of the nationalism embraced by leaders of Polish social democracy like the future dictator Josef Pilsudski, extends by implication to any form of particularism. Luxemburg would consistently oppose any ideology capable of compromising proletarian unity, the struggle against imperialism, and what she considered the internationalist assumptions of Marxism.

Her principles were well known, but these early writings were not. Luxemburg's ascent in the world of international social democracy began with a contribution to what became known as "the revisionist debate" of 1898. Initiated by Eduard Bernstein with a set of articles, reworked into a book entitled *The Preconditions of Socialism*, orthodox Marxism was charged with ignoring the

manner in which capitalism had stabilized, and the fact that the “inevitable” proletarian revolution anticipated by Marx was no longer on the agenda. Thus, emphasizing that “the movement is everything and the goal is nothing,” Bernstein called upon social democracy to surrender its “revolutionary phraseology” and foster a policy of compromise with non-proletarian classes to insure economic reforms so that socialism might gradually “evolve.”

Luxemburg's *Social Reform or Revolution* (1899) was the finest contribution to the debate made by any critic of “revisionism,” which included the most famous theoreticians of orthodox Marxism like Karl Kautsky and Georgii Plekhanov. In this pamphlet, she noted that crisis was endemic to capitalism and expressed her fears about how an unrestricted politics of class compromise might justify any choice by the party leadership, and shift power to the trade unions. She also argued that reform could never transform the production process or eliminate the prospect of imperialism and political crisis. Without a political revolution, she argued, reforms granted under one set of conditions could also be retracted under another. A simple emphasis on economic reforms would thus result only in a “labor of Sisyphus.” Indeed, without an articulated socialist “goal,” she believed that the SPD would increasingly succumb to capitalist values and so surrender its sense of political purpose.

Just as Luxemburg rejected the idea of a democratic mass party run by bureaucratic reformists, and basically her *Organizational Questions of Social Democracy* criticized the idea of a “vanguard” party based on blind obedience and dominated by revolutionary intellectuals. Lenin and Bernstein were, for her, flip sides of the same coin insofar as both sought to erect an “absolute dividing wall” between the leadership and the base. If socialism is to transform workers from “dead machines” into the “free and independent directors” of society as a whole, she argued, then they must have the chance to learn and exercise their knowledge. Consequently, the Russian Revolution of 1905 inspired what is arguably her finest theoretical work, *Mass Strike, Party, and Trade Unions* (1906).

This pamphlet placed a new emphasis on the innovative talents of the masses in organizing society. It spoke about connecting economic with political concerns. It also articulated her organizational dialectic between party and base, which would gradually build the “self-administrative” capacities of workers by helping them develop new democratic institutions and then, at a different stage of the struggle, still newer ones.

Rosa Luxemburg retained this radical democratic vision during World War I, which she spent in a tiny prison cell. There, she wrote responses to her critics, translated *The History of My Contemporary* of her beloved Korlenko, and — under the pseudonym Junius — produced the great anti-war pamphlet, *The Crisis in the German Social Democracy* (1916), which mercilessly assaulted the SPD for its willingness to support the Kaiser's war, its obsession with votes, its cowardice in the face of public opinion, and its betrayal of working class interests.

Also written in jail were her beautiful letters to friends and lovers which portrayed her diverse interests, her courage, and her deep sense of humanity. A small volume of the more personal letters was published by Sonja Liebknecht — the wife of Luxemburg's fellow socialist martyr Karl Liebknecht — in 1922 and another followed a year later edited by Luise Kautsky. Interestingly enough, they served a political purpose. Their publication was meant to foster sympathy for the woman who was now castigated both by social democracy and a Communist

movement undergoing “bolshevization” and attempting to rid itself of what its former leader, Ruth Fischer, called “the syphilitic Luxemburg bacillus.”

There was good reason why this increasingly authoritarian movement should have turned on the first president of the German Communist Party. In jail, while in ill-health and with little information other than newspapers, Rosa Luxemburg wrote what was surely her most prophetic and intellectually daring work. *The Russian Revolution* (1918) exposed the compromises which would ultimately undermine the Soviet experiment. Opposed to Lenin's agrarian policy, continuing to reject the use of slogans implying the “right of national self-determination,” her analysis is best known for demanding the extension of both formal and substantive democracy as well as the justly famous words:

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of one party — however numerous they may be — is no freedom at all. Freedom is always and exclusively freedom for the one who thinks differently... Its effectiveness vanishes when “freedom” becomes a special privilege.

Her lawyer, Paul Levi, with whom she was intimate toward the end of her life, convinced Luxemburg not to publish the piece for fear of aiding the reaction. She reluctantly agreed, possibly because she may not have had the strength to refuse. Alfred Doblin described her in his lengthy novel, *Karl and Rosa*, as suffering a nervous breakdown in prison. Following her release in 1918, her hair had turned white and she had become even more frail and thin. Nevertheless, she extended her support to the Spartacus group — which would serve as the nucleus for the German Communist Party (KPD) — and publicly advocated the creation of “soviets” (or “workers' councils”).

Despite their almost legendary stature, however, the Spartacists never received the support of a proletarian majority — and Rosa Luxemburg knew it. She warned against prematurely sparking the revolution in Germany and, after initially opposing the idea of a National Assembly, ultimately called for participating in the elections of the nascent Weimar Republic. But she was outvoted. The Spartacist Revolt broke out in 1919 and Rosa Luxemburg decided to remain in contact with the masses. Article after article in the bourgeois press called for her death and even the socialist *Vorwärts* printed the ditty:

*Hundreds of proletarian corpses all in
a row — proletarians!
Karl, Rosa, Radek and company!
All in a row — proletarians!*

Luxemburg alone might have been able to counteract — if ever so briefly — the power of Lenin and the Bolsheviks on the international Left (*Borkenau*, p. 148ff). She also warned that a “military dictatorship” would soon supplant the Weimar Republic. But the forces of order got their wish. Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht were brutally murdered at the hands of proto-Nazi thugs employed by the socialist government of Ebert and Noske and while the fraudulent investigation into their deaths caused a sensation, the murderers of Liebknecht and “bloody Rosa, the Jewish sau” served little jail-time and all became heroes in the Third Reich.

Grimly, for a short time, Leo Jogiches took over the reins of Spartacus. Luxemburg had fallen in love with him during her time in Zurich and, though their affair was now over, he never lost his affection and admiration for her. Jogiches,

who was born in 1867, always supported her position in crucial moments and, while their relationship was difficult, Luxemburg relied upon his political advice to the very end.

Leo Jogiches was a great and honorable revolutionary who had spent years underground and in jail. Neither a theorist nor a writer, he was a man of action who thrived during times of upheaval and used his family's considerable fortune to help finance the labor movement in Poland, Russia, and Germany. He participated in virtually every revolutionary uprising during the early years of the century, opposed World War I, and was instrumental in founding the Spartacus group. He begged Luxemburg and Liebknecht to leave the country when it was clear that the defeat was certain but they rejected his advice.

Ironically, however, Jogiches himself stayed in Berlin. With what must have been a rare smile, he supposedly said: "Somebody has to stay, at least to write all our epitaphs." The death of Rosa Luxemburg left Jogiches a broken man. Obsessed with bringing the murderers to justice, and preserving her papers, his own life lost all meaning in 1919. By all accounts, Leo Jogiches almost purposely left himself open to capture. While under arrest, he was shot in cold blood.

PAUL LEVI ASSUMED THE LEADERSHIP OF THE KPD after the death of Luxemburg and Jogiches. Born on March 11, 1883, he studied jurisprudence at the University of Berlin and the University of Grenoble and, after receiving his degree, quickly became one of the leading lawyers in the SPD; indeed, it was Levi who defended Rosa Luxemburg in her famous trial for engaging in anti-militarist activity in the months preceding World War I. Opposed to the conflict from the very first, by 1916, Levi had entered the executive committee of the Spartacus group and represented Lenin's call to transform the conflict between states into a "class war" at the Zimmerwald Conference in 1917.

Levi pressed the investigation into Luxemburg's death following the defeat of the Spartacus Revolt. He also came into conflict with the Bolshevik leadership in Moscow which supported Bela Kun, the famous Hungarian Communist, in maintaining an "offensive" strategy of armed uprising. Levi argued instead for a "defensive" strategy. He believed that the cadres had been devastated, the masses exhausted by the defeats of 1919 and that it was now necessary to begin the task of rebuilding by entering the unions, attracting new members, concentrating on ideological work, and refusing to engage in romantic ultra-leftism.

The debate came to a head over the failed March Action of 1921, an uprising called by Moscow against the pleadings of Levi. In a complicated give and take, Levi demanded that the Moscow leadership take responsibility for the inevitable disaster. Lenin himself was skeptical about the revolutionary attempt. But, when Levi levelled his criticisms publicly, the Russian leader showed no hesitancy in purging him from the Comintern in 1921 for breach of discipline even while integrating the policy proposals of his victim into *Left-wing Communism: An Infantile Disorder*. In the aftermath of this controversy during 1922 Levi, Luxemburg's disciple, released her pamphlet, *The Russian Revolution*, for publication.

Levi ultimately rejoined the SPD and tried to remain active but he was an outcast without power or influence. The Social Democrats had little use for him — or for memories of Luxemburg either. He died in 1930 in what might have been an attempt at suicide.

AN ORGANIZED ANTI-COMMUNIST WITCH-HUNT HAD ACCOMPANIED THE BIRTH of the Weimar Republic. Bavaria, which sought to preserve its independence and remained relatively free from the influence of the Ebert and Noske government in Berlin, witnessed uprisings like so many other cities in Germany. The reformist politician, Kurt Eisner — a Kantian pacifist and longtime socialist parliamentarian, a newspaper editor as well as a writer of socialist lyrics and fairy tales — wound up leading a demonstration of 200,000 people and then, in the aftermath of the monarch's flight from Germany, heading a minority government which introduced numerous progressive reforms.

Eisner was the first of the “five literati” who would dominate the Munich events of 1918-19. His assassination while on the way to hand in his resignation, coupled with the emergence of a short-lived Hungarian Soviet, generated the desire for a Bavarian Soviet. It was believed by many on the international left that a soviet in Bavaria would induce the Austrians to form one of their own (*Carsten*, p. 219). Thus, the summary declaration of a Bavarian Soviet on April 7, 1919 made a certain degree of political sense even if the material conditions for its success were lacking.

The Bavarian “soviet” was initially ruled by independent socialists like Ernst Toller along with a sprinkling of anarchists like Gustav Landauer and Erich Mühsam, in coalition with representatives of the SPD. But the independents were organizationally weak and the majority socialists were increasingly disgraced by the actions of their comrades in Berlin. And so, this regime found itself supplanted by a Communist government whose most visible leader was Eugen Levine. Communist rule, however, lasted only two weeks. It was displaced by a new “dictatorship of the natives” led by Toller and his friends, which lasted only a few days before capitulating to the forces of right-wing reaction.

The Bavarian Soviet never had a chance. Its base in the working class was countered by the capitalist class, the petty bourgeoisie, and the peasantry. The new soviet was also a perfect target for the “philistines.” Munich was, after all, a center of the expressionist avant-garde before World War I. Perhaps for this reason, especially at the beginning, the Bavarian “soviet” was strongly influenced by representatives of the literati including, among others, Lion Feuchtwanger and Oskar Maria Graf. And these intellectuals did not make the best politicians. The Bavarian Soviet never produced leaders on a par with Luxemburg, Liebknecht, or Levi. Its foreign minister, in fact, was a certifiable lunatic by the name of Franz Lipp who, in all seriousness, decided to declare war on the Pope. Nevertheless, for better or worse, the Bavarian Soviet was unique in attempting to fuse cultural with political liberation.

ITS GUIDING SPIRIT WAS UNDOUBTEDLY GUSTAV LANDAUER who withdrew from active participation when the Communists took power. He was a pacifist and an anarchist noted for his nobility and commitment. Born in 1870 in Karlsruhe, Landauer entered politics very young. “I was an anarchist,” he liked to say, “before I became a socialist.” And that was true enough. Landauer joined the social-democratic movement and edited a journal called *The Socialist* around 1900 but, from the start, he had little use for the reformism of the SPD and quickly became a leading figure of an ultra-left faction, known as “the young ones,” which was summarily expelled in 1894.

Proudhon and Kropotkin would always play a far greater role in Landauer's

thinking than Marx. His anarchist vision was directed less toward the institutions of the economy and the state than the human condition. He became interested in the "life reform" movement and, by 1902, his work had already influenced those concerned with founding the journal, *New Community*, to which any number of major Jewish intellectuals like Martin Buber would contribute. Indeed, also around this time Landauer formed what would become a lasting friendship with Erich Mühsam.

Landauer was more than a political figure or a bohemian. He was also a noted historian of literature, who wrote an extraordinary study of Shakespeare, and a novelist whose works like *Macht und Machte* brought him wide acclaim. His world was unbounded and that was also true of his wife — Hedwig Lachmann — who translated Oscar Wilde and Rabindranath Tagore. Landauer spoke of himself as a German and a Jew in essays like *Der werdende Mensch* (1913). But he deemed the whole of his personality more than the sum of its parts just as humanity was, for him, more than the various nationalities and ethnic communities comprising it. A presumption of human goodness and a striving for a utopian condition of harmony, a respect for the individual and the community, informed his ethics. These beliefs also played a role in his somewhat less notable political writings like *A Call to Socialism*, where economic equality along with a new direct form of proletarian democracy would eliminate violence.

Marta Feuchtwanger — the wife of the great realist writer Lion Feuchtwanger — recounts a shocking story about Landauer's death. Arrested following the collapse of the Bavarian Soviet, he started talking about the goodness of humanity to the soldiers escorting him to prison. Suddenly, they grew tired of walking and his talk and summarily beat him to death (*Nur eine Frau*, p.133). Baron von Gagern, the officer responsible, was never punished or even brought to trial, which speaks volumes about the judiciary in the Weimar Republic, and provides a deep insight into Landauer.

He always considered himself an educator and spoke to the best in people. His concern was less about institutions than the manner in which people treated one another. His aim was to provide the working class with a new consciousness and a new democratic worldview. And, as Minister of Education in the Bavarian Soviet, Landauer attempted to introduce a set of radical reforms ranging from allowing any 18-year-old to become a full-time student at the University of Munich, to setting up a "students' soviet" and abolishing examinations. His general perspective, in fact, becomes abundantly clear from his striking claim: "Every Bavarian child at the age of ten is going to know Walt Whitman by heart. That is the cornerstone of my educational program."

RIMBAUD HAD CALLED UPON HIS GENERATION TO "CHANGE LIFE." Erich Mühsam heartily agreed. And why not? Mühsam was for Germany, according to another famous anarchist, what Rimbaud was for France (*Souchy*, pg. 10). Born in 1878, the son of a Jewish pharmacist in Berlin, he was expelled from high school for socialist agitation. An "outsider" from the beginning, Mühsam naturally gravitated to the anarchist circles of Berlin and Munich. Max Nordau described him as an inveterate sponger during these early years (pp. 16ff). But in 1904, *The Desert*, his first collection of poems was published and, soon, Mühsam began making his name as the author of cabaret songs, anecdotes, and sketches. He riddled social democracy with sarcasm in poems like *Die Revoluzzer*, and important journals like *Die*

Weltbühne and *Simplicissimus* began publishing his work.

"Let us make room for freedom" was a line in one of his poems. And that was what Mühsam sought to do when, in 1911, he became the editor of *Kain*, which he described as a "magazine for humanity." It was, of course, nothing of the sort. Based in Munich, this journal was sophisticated and avant-garde, and Mühsam, like his Viennese friend and counterpart, Karl Kraus, the editor of *The Torch*, wrote every line, advocating pacifism, sexual liberation, and an apocalyptic notion of revolution. He defended his friends and castigated the status quo. When World War I broke out, he published a collection entitled *Deserts, Craters, and Clouds* in which he made the plea: "drink, soldiers, drink"

In keeping with his pacifist convictions, Mühsam refused either to serve in the army or register as a conscientious objector and, for this, he was jailed. Following his release, he opposed the National Assembly and sought to found an Association of International Revolutionaries in Munich, which came to little. Its program was somewhat unclear and organizational questions bored Mühsam. Never particularly concerned with the class struggle, like Landauer, he spoke to the "exploited" and even attempted to proselytize among the lumpen-proletariat. Mühsam's vision of socialism, like Landauer's and Toller's, was essentially aesthetic and visionary.

After the fall of the Bavarian Soviet, Mühsam was condemned to 15 years at hard labor, a sentence that was later commuted to five years. He continued his anarchist activities after his release but grew more sober. His new journal, *Fanal*, no longer criticized social democracy, but the Nazis as the main enemy. Mühsam spoke out against the abuses of the Weimar judicial system and supported organizations like *Red Aid* which raised money for political prisoners and sought their liberation. He wrote a play, *Reason of State*, about Sacco and Vanzetti and an account of the Bavarian Soviet entitled *From Eisner to Levine: A Reckoning* in which his humanistic values and hopes for the Bavarian Soviet become clear and he details the arrogance and stubbornness of the Communists. Nevertheless, even here, Mühsam could not adequately deal with the shortcomings of his own political voluntarism or the institutional and social reasons for the failure of the Bavarian experiment.

Few were hated with the same degree of passion by the nationalist right which continued to vilify Mühsam during the years of the Weimar Republic. This anarchist Jew somehow stuck in the craw of the far right. Henry Pachter even suggested that Hitler probably remembered the young bohemian playing chess in the famous Cafe Megalomania in Munich after the war, and making fun of the future chancellor's drawings (p. 252). But the philistines ultimately had their revenge. Following the Nazi seizure of power, Mühsam was immediately captured and transported to Oranienburg, where he died in 1934, after being slowly and systematically beaten to death.

Mühsam was one of the best-loved figures of the Bavarian Soviet and there are reports about workers and soldiers shouting his name and even carrying him on their shoulders. He never showed favoritism toward any party and acted responsibly as a leading politician of the Bavarian Soviet. Mühsam sought unity, proved willing to compromise with the Communists, and even appeared as their spokesperson on one or two occasions without surrendering his principles or his various utopian ideas for reform. Because he knew who he was, his "identity" was never a problem for him. Thus, Mühsam could write:

I am a Jew and will remain a Jew so long as I live. I never denied my Judaism and never even walked out of the religious community (because I would still remain a Jew and I am completely indifferent under which rubric I am entered in the state's register). I consider it neither an advantage nor a disadvantage to be a Jew; it simply belongs to my being like my red beard, my weight, or my inclinations (*Briefe* 2:422-3).

IT WASN'T MUCH DIFFERENT FOR ERNST TOLLER. The most famous and perhaps prototypical leader of the Bavarian Soviet was born in Posen in 1893 and his autobiography — *I Was A German* — speaks eloquently of anti-Semitism in Germany. But still he joined the military in a mood of “emotional delirium” to fight in World War I. On his release in 1916, in the wake of a nervous breakdown, he soon became a staunch pacifist and ultimately a socialist. After studying at the universities of Munich and Heidelberg, where he came to know Max Weber and various other distinguished academics, Toller wrote his autobiographical play, *Transformation* (1917). Dream sequences, abstract figures, and various other expressionist techniques are employed in this work whose main character experiences any number of “transformations,” each of which liberates him from a prior ideological prejudice, until finally he finds “redemption” (*Erlosung*) in a utopian vision of “revolution.” Based on a fundamental “faith in humanity,” concerned less with workers than with an image of the oppressed, this “revolution” would necessarily prove non-violent and bring about a change in the very “essence” of “man” beyond all externalities.

Toller — like Eisner — was a member of the Independent Social Democratic Party (USPD), which had split from the SPD in 1916 over the latter's pro-war policy. The USPD, small and poorly organized in Munich, had aligned itself with the councilist movement. Toller quickly became a leading figure in the Bavarian Soviet. His remarkable oratorical abilities didn't hurt; indeed, it was said that “he carried the people by the force of his own convictions... . They wanted a mission in life; Toller supplied them with one.” (cited in *Flood*, p. 4)

The creation of the Bavarian Soviet was accompanied by planting freedom trees, singing Jacobin songs, and a great deal of libertarian rhetoric. In fact, the contemporary German writer, Tankred Dorst, has argued that Toller identified the events of 1919 with the expressionist apocalypse his works depicted. Whether that is true or not remains an open question. But it is true that Toller knew nothing about economics and not much more about institutions. His grasp of political priorities was also somewhat suspect. In the aftermath of the allied blockade, while Bavaria was experiencing a food shortage, Toller's first speech to the soviet concerned the new forms of architecture, painting and drama by which humanity might express itself more fully. Administrative services collapsed and the organization of revolutionary soldiers was a shambles; indeed, with a mixture of affection and sarcasm, Max Weber once remarked: “God in his fury has turned Toller into a politician.”

But, in fact, Toller remains a great symbol for socialist libertarians. Brave and humane, he fought courageously with the defenders of the Bavarian Soviet against the reactionary forces and saved many hostages from the revenge sought by various Communist leaders like Rudolf Engelhofer. With the downfall of the Bavarian Soviet, Toller was captured and spent five years in prison. There, he wrote his beautiful collection of poems entitled *The Swallow's Book*, which brought him great popularity. He attempted to unify respect for the individual with soli-

clarity in works like *Man and the Masses* (1924) and *Broken-Brow*, which concerns an impotent war invalid abandoned by society.

The pathos in Toller's work increased along with his despondency. And yet, following his release, he joined *The German League for Human Rights* and participated in various pacifist organizations. Even while writing for prestigious journals like *Die Weltbühne*, which published his prison writings, and using an innovative expressionist style, he always considered himself a "people's poet" (*Volksdichter*). Like Mühsam, he was another who bravely castigated the criminal justice system for its right-wing bias and *Hooray! We're Alive* remains one of the most trenchant criticisms of the materialistic and chauvinistic underside of the Weimar Republic. Along with Mühsam, Toller was also one of the very few intellectuals who immediately realized the danger posed by the Nazis and what differentiated them from other "bourgeois" and even "reactionary" parties.

He fled Germany when they came to power, going from Switzerland to France, to England and, finally, to the United States. But he hated exile. He never made it in Hollywood and, feeling his powers diminishing, he despaired as Hitler won victory after victory. Toller, the pacifist and humanitarian, committed suicide in New York in 1939. He never saw the end of the regime he so despised.

BUT, IF TOLLER DIED TOO EARLY, HIS COMMUNIST COMPETITOR FOR POWER in the Bavarian Soviet — Eugen Levine — died just in time. He would certainly have perished even more cruelly under Stalin. Levine was not quite the saint Rosa Levine-Meyer portrayed in her biography. But he incarnated the best of the bolshevik spirit. He was unyielding and dogmatic, but an honest intellectual and totally committed to the most radical utopian ideals of international revolution.

Born on May 10, 1883 in St. Petersburg into a wealthy Jewish family, he was brought up in Germany where, as a youth, he actually fought a duel against someone who had made an anti-Semitic remark. (*Levine-Meyer*, pp. 6ff) He returned to Russia in 1904 where he gained revolutionary experience and participated in the 1905 Revolution before being arrested. Levine was apparently severely beaten and, after bribery secured his release, he moved back to Germany. There he worked as a propagandist for the SPD and naturally gravitated to the circle around Rosa Luxemburg before ultimately finding his way into Spartacus.

Soon, Levine found himself in disagreement with her. Enthralled by the Russian Revolution of 1917, in contrast to Luxemburg, he took an ultra-left stance. He was critical of the alliance between Spartacus and the USPD. But, even more important, he vigorously opposed participating in the National Assembly and ultimately embraced Lenin's new Communist International. Believing the masses would follow an inspired vanguard, in keeping with the bolshevik example of 1917, he and his close comrade Max Levien were instrumental in causing the defeat of the more moderate proposals of Luxemburg and the leadership of Spartacus, thereby exacerbating the ill-prepared revolutionary events in Berlin.

Nevertheless, Levine acquitted himself valiantly during the uprising. The police hunted for him and at the urging of Paul Levi, the new leader of the German Communist Party (KPD), Levine was sent to Munich to put the small, disorganized party cell in order. Levine's first article warned workers not to engage in any "precipitous" actions and he opposed forming a Bavarian soviet. When the soviet was proclaimed anyway, he was appalled by its circus-like character, and was successful in calling upon the KPD to remain in opposition. He feared work-

ing with representatives of the SPD and recognized, perhaps more fully than any other of its prominent figures, the lack of support — especially among the peasants — for the Soviet.

Why should Levine have called upon the Communists to reverse their position? He knew the Soviet was doomed. Perhaps his new stance derived from a desire to take power and use the occasion to make propaganda and identify the Communists with the soviet. His policy surely did not find its source in Moscow; indeed, no bolshevik emissaries were active in Munich. Most likely, following Rosa Luxemburg, Levine had decided to preserve the soviet ideal and “stay with the masses” in the face of the reaction.

Interestingly enough, Levine was no less utopian than his opponents. His Communists may have introduced censorship, but they also sought to revamp the schools, and proclaimed the famous *Frauenkirche* a “revolutionary temple.” All this was a desperate attempt to mimic what has been described as the “heroic period” of War Communism in the Soviet Union. Communist workers, however, soon turned against Levine’s disastrous policy and his heritage is tainted by the useless shooting of hostages and arbitrary confiscations carried out by members of his own party. Yet, Levine remained true to his beliefs. He participated in the street-fighting and his defiant death before a firing squad testified to his nobility of character. Indeed, with a dying cry of “Long Live the World Revolution,” the tragic-comedy of the Bavarian Soviet came to a close along with the most radical hopes of 1919.

JUDAISM NEVER FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN THE WRITINGS OR THE POLITICS of these activists. All were cosmopolitans and, essentially, assimilationists. But, in keeping with the Old Testament, they considered themselves prophets of justice, equality, and democracy without much sense of the institutions necessary to sustain these values. Each condemned the decadence of the status quo and identified with those whom Ernst Bloch, in biblical language, liked to call “the lowly and the insulted.” Each prized the moment of action and sought to provide the masses with a new sense of their own possibilities. Each also exhibited exceptional bravery and remained true to his or her convictions. Each, after his or her fashion, incorporated the idealism and romanticism with which to challenge an alienation whose source is the story of Adam and Eve. Each sought to realize utopia.

For all that, however, these Jewish revolutionaries spanned the spectrum of radicalism and seemingly little united them. Mühsam and Toller were leading figures of the expressionist avant-garde. But the first was an anarchist and the second a left-wing socialist. The same was true for Eisner and Landauer even if both were influenced by Kant. Levine was a Bolshevik. As for Luxemburg, Jogiches, and Levi, they had little use for moralism and less for bohemians.

Judaism is not much help in explaining their particular form of revolutionary commitment. Viewing the matter this way, however, is perhaps overly academic. The anti-Semites certainly didn’t feel that way. Judaism has a certain importance when considering the uprisings of 1919, but less with respect to its impact on the revolutionaries themselves than on the activists of the counter-revolution who could now point to the visibility of these Jews and promote the idea of a Jewish-bolshevik conspiracy intent on destroying Germany and the Aryan race.

Anti-Semitism doesn’t disappear simply because Jews don’t define them-

selves as such. 1919 is a case in point. The Enlightenment values embraced by these Jewish revolutionaries, in fact, only heightened the fervor and brutality of those most intent on eradicating their heritage. And, in a way, the forces of reaction succeeded. All of these remarkable individuals were essentially forgotten long before the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 and the emergence of a right-wing cultural climate in its aftermath. The Communists had as little use for them as their mainstream opponents. The alternative they offered to both the impoverished cultural landscape of contemporary capitalism and what increasingly became a socialism of grey is now almost a memory. But this is precisely what makes it important to preserve a sense of their visions and contest the darkness permeating the beautiful words of Erich Mühsam:

*Who will remember me when I am dead?
The sad day has snatched my youth.
Evening came too soon. Rain fell.
Happiness passed me by; I remained a stranger.
My poor heart has its fill of suffering.
Soon comes the night which had no stars.*

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Commemorating 1844 — Why Marx Still Matters

Christopher Phelps

THIS YEAR MARKS AN ANNIVERSARY OF NO MINOR SIGNIFICANCE for radicals. Not the media splash of the summer: the 25 years that have passed since the rock and revelry in the mud of Woodstock, New York. Nor even the 100th anniversary of the 1894 strike by workers at George Pullman's sleeping car factory in Chicago and their allies on the nation's rails — though that strike was extraordinarily important, for it was led by one of the first successful industrial unions, the American Railway Union, crushed by the federal government with the aid of Samuel Gompers and the American Federation of Labor, and resulted in the conversion to revolutionary socialism of Eugene V. Debs.

What I have in mind is a less-recognized occurrence of 150 years ago, when in August 1844 the young German exile Karl Marx ceased setting pen to notebook in Paris, breaking off his work on the book-length document now known as *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts*. Though Marx never completed the musings to his satisfaction, though he left the later sections in fragmentary form, though the several-part document was not published in German until nearly 90 years later, and though it did not appear in full English translation until 1959, 115 years later, the Paris manuscripts of Marx have come to constitute a vital piece of the theoretical heritage of the socialist movement.

The dominant theme of the manuscripts of 1844 was their explanation of how labor in capitalist society becomes *estranged*: how the product, or congealed labor, of the producer comes to stand over the laborer and dominate him or her in the form of privately held capital. The manuscripts are sometimes dismissed as the mere musings of an immature mind. Yet at that early date — before *Capital*, before the *Communist Manifesto*, even before *The German Ideology* — Marx already had many elements of his mature thought in place. He had found his way from Hegel to Feuerbach, and though he had not fully fought his way free from Feuerbach to his own unique approach, he had arrived at his unequivocal critique of bourgeois society, his projection of a communist future, his assertion that proletarian revolution was the road to human emancipation, and his philosophical method of active naturalism, the germ of historical materialism. The theme of alienation of labor, moreover, was carried forward in *The Grundrisse*, the unpublished economic notebooks of the late 1850s, and in *Capital*, both incontrovertible products of the mature Marx. Thus Marx's writings of 1844 should not be seen as the mere dalliance of an unformed, "pre-scientific" mind wholly separate from his later work.

But do Marx's ideas matter anymore? Is this an anniversary worth marking? To judge by the failure of practically anyone to recall that the anniversary even exists, apparently not. No special issues of journals, no symposia, no con-

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ferences are to be found on the concept of alienation or in commemoration of the Paris manuscripts. Why? Is it because, as one might infer, labor is no longer alienated? Quite the opposite: the absence of any serious consideration of the document paradoxically speaks to its enduring power, for labor's alienation is today so ubiquitous and unchallenged that it is taken by most social thinkers to be a natural, inescapable condition. Corporate managers might seek to sugarcoat the degradation of labor through the institution of programs for better relations between management and workers. But abolish wage labor? End class rule? Return to earth! Talk of eliminating that sort of alienation is beyond the pale.

HENCE IT IS THAT THE RULING IDEAS OF OUR MOMENT have erased the most brilliant ideas of our epoch. The reigning assumption today is that socialism and the method of social analysis inaugurated by Marx are obsolete. This is a notion distinct to our time. In Marx's day, socialism was ridiculed and pilloried as impractical, unrealistic dreaming — as *unattainable*. When the Paris Commune of 1871 and the Soviet revolution of 1917 shattered that traditional hobby-horse of reaction, another argument rose to preeminence: the *danger* of socialism. Any impulse toward human equality or social levelling was saddled with the burden of Stalin's great detour. Socialism, it was said, terminated necessarily in barbarism and totalitarianism. Since 1989, socialism has faced a different, though no less insidious, problem: not so much an argument or idea as an ideological presumption that has sunk deep into the popular unconscious. Socialism today is simply presumed to be *defunct*, failed and irretrievable. The great historical alternative to capitalism, it is thought, is gone forever.

At the same time, socialism has lost much of its former pride of place within the left itself. Self-identified radicals, especially of the postmodernist variety, frequently see Marxism as an antiquated worldview subject to any number of grave, damning errors. American academics inspired by French theorists like Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida (both of whom, it must be said, evince far more respect for Marx in their writings than their American epigones) attack any “universalizing” aim, socialism included, as an ambition innately totalitarian and repressive. They speak of the world as irreducibly contingent, fluctuating, malleable and textual. They talk themselves blue about “race, gender and class,” but they get excited only about the first two and have hardly anything to say about the third. When they do discuss class, it is to reduce the concept to an “ism,” *classism*, apparently without recognizing that class consciousness, unlike racism or sexism, is reflective of a keen understanding of social reality and ought to be encouraged rather than denigrated.

Most such theorists operate exclusively from the seminar room, lacking any practical connection to the world beyond the campus. But the social movements, too, such as they are, have been overtaken by a related trend: identity politics. This style of activism treats politics as connected in an immediate and unreflective way to self-interest, so that, for example, Asian students, black students, women students and gay students all are encouraged to engage in militant expression of their own separate identities, victimization and rage, irrespective of whether they complement or contradict the strategic and programmatic aims of comparable organizations or make any political sense given the particular conditions of a campus or locality.

Socialist criticism of these new currents of social thought and activism differs markedly from the fire they are receiving from the right. Socialists affirm the reality of oppression and degradation that identity politics purports to address, for socialists are acutely aware that the anger and bitterness of oppressed groups are not self-indulgent. Injustice and exploitation are not, as conservatives think, invented fabrications of the self-pitying. But socialists simultaneously assert the need to aspire to a common politics on a democratic basis. By declining to counterpose the common politics of social class to the self-organization of the oppressed, socialists can remain open to self-expression and self-organization by oppressed people while at the same time declaring the following blunt truth: solidarity is requisite. A disorganized, disaggregated, uncoordinated politics will never succeed in achieving radical social transformation. Indeed, by failing to establish a basis for a commonality that overarches diversity without suppressing it, identity politics creates divisions and resentments that ultimately undermine its moral claims, contributing strategically to its own defeat.

SOME CRITICISMS OF PAST LEFT PRACTICE made by the new theoretical currents are worthy of embrace. Sectarian party-building at the expense of autonomous movement development is a tragic mistake, for without broad independent movement activity, socialism will never regain momentum. Any attempt to compress other oppressions into the category of class fails to grasp that capitalism is the rule of a social layer that employs multiple forms of domination, not just exploitation, to maintain its position. Dogmatic recitations from sacred texts are insufficient ground for social theory. But where postmodernism goes awry is in supposing that radicals can do without a common politics — a universalizing project, as postmodernists disdainfully call it. Since social reality is neither exclusively nor primarily linguistic or textual, changing it requires more than cleverly adding slash marks between words or putting parentheses around syllables. Rather than indulge in abstruse convolutions or pose at an ironic remove, a responsible radical social theory should be immersed in the social world and in political practice.

Only at their peril, therefore, can radicals relinquish the hard-won conceptual centerpiece of class. Class struggle will remain central so long as society remains capitalist. That analytic and strategic judgment should not be confused with a moral ranking of class exploitation above the various forms of oppression. Nor need it regress into the old tendency to see labor battles as the only important social struggles. The point is simply that in a deeply class-divided society, social theory and political activism must pay proper attention to class.

The line of thought descended from Marx is in this sense far from obsolete. It expresses the real and present needs of social movements that are in a protracted crisis, in good part because most activists have adopted a politics and theory which, beneath their radical shell, replicate liberal interest-group politics — the most feeble and obsolete form of political engagement around. Combined action is needed to make disparate struggles for human liberation effective. Socialists seek to move movements beyond a radicalism limited to the celebration of unrefined, immediate identity and expressed in the metaphor of “deconstruction.” Marxism affirms the capacity of ordinary people to reason and draws upon a far-reaching heritage of social thought to illuminate the vital issues of the day: economic stagnation, underdevelopment, imperialism and the crisis of American democracy. It helps to explain how capitalism engenders cyni-

cism, mockery and irony and why those poses are therefore far from radical. Unlike deconstruction, socialism is oriented fundamentally toward a politics of hope, toward the construction of a better world: an imagined future of human cooperation, equality and justice whose seeds are already planted in the soil of the present.

The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844 are an exemplary case in point. Marx's conviction that human labor should be a realm of creativity, freedom and community is a powerful starting place for cultural criticism today. His assessment of the alienation of labor under capitalism, though written 150 years ago, reads like a vivid description of contemporary work life: "The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home." Who has not had these sensations? Who hasn't felt required to take leave of their real activities to go to work? Because people still work for others, not themselves, work remains a realm of necessity rather than freedom, a means to life rather than life itself.

But there are different ways of drawing upon the classical texts of a tradition, different ways of advocating the liberation of humankind through a revolution of working people, different ways, in short, of being Marxists. These competing varieties of socialist behavior, without any sacrifice of materialist outlook, can best be understood as competing *psychologies* — dispositions, mental outlooks, ways of seeing and acting. Too often in this century, revolutionaries have cultivated a *remnant psychology*. They have looked backward at great achievements, seen themselves as the last true believers in a world of the ignorant and the renegade, and clung to ideas that were appropriate at a given conjuncture but have been long outmoded by changing circumstances. Conceiving of the revolutionary movement as a righteous remnant has contributed to dogmatism and a sense of embattlement and marginality, aggravating among socialists themselves the estrangement and alienation endemic to human relations under capitalism, often resulting in bitterness and disenchantment.

Socialists have done better when they have managed to foster an outlook appreciative of innovation and experiment: a *psychology of reconstruction* that recognizes the significance of past struggles, theoretical legacies and heroic figures but is not afraid to treat them critically and does not attempt to deduce lessons from them without careful regard to the experience and social world of the present. Admiration for Lenin, for instance, need not entail mechanical applications to the contemporary United States of organizational norms developed for a militant industrial proletariat under conditions of Czarist repression in a predominantly peasant society. Lenin himself would have disdained such ahistorical schemas.

THE CRITIQUE OF ALIENATION HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE TO PLAY in a psychology of reconstruction that seeks to recover the emancipatory core of Marxism and revive international socialism. Stalinism and social democracy, in addition to other profound failings, never addressed themselves to the transformation of everyday work life imagined by Marx. If the abolition of alienation in labor were consistently upheld by socialists as a revolutionary aim, it would require them to commit themselves to a profoundly democratic program for the labor process, the primary sphere of human activity. What is most needed now is not a rehearsal of

past slogans but a moral renewal of socialism. The capacity of socialists to reason and express their aims clearly, not the recounting of past glories or invocation of founding figures as scriptural prophets, will be the rub in any attempt to widen the narrow boundaries of their movement. Thus socialists will have to recognize that the abolition of private property — that condition which Marx stressed repeatedly in 1844 — is not sufficient to eliminate alienation. The failure of the bureaucratic states to permit collective self-management on a democratic basis, to achieve the rule of the direct producers, resulted in the persistence of alienation in labor despite the replacement of private property by state ownership.

A socialist program to combat alienation would require a profoundly different society from capitalism, not a mere changing of the governmental guard of the kind that has been typical of social democracy in Europe. It would require the decisive removal of capital from social power, the running of offices, farms and factories by the workers themselves, and a correlative program of radical social measures: the extension of formal education to all ages and spheres of life, combined with a rotation of all odious duties, so as to overcome the separation of brain and hand by occupation; the guidance of production by ecological values so as to reconcile humankind to nature; the expansion of cultural freedom and resources for art, music and writing, thus encouraging creativity in all who wish to pursue it; the deepest possible political and workplace democracy, including freedom of expression and association as well as regular elections and recall, so to ensure workers' control; and thoroughgoing campaigns against racism and sexism so that men and women and whites and people of color will stand as true equals for the first time in human history.

Socialism today runs against the grain of received wisdom, but in its vision of a vastly improved and freer arrangement of social relations lies its enduring power and potential for redemption. Examination of the manuscripts that Marx wrote in Paris 150 years ago, like any study of Marx's writings, can only serve as a starting place. Socialists today cannot derive their course of action from the documents of the past. But it is worth noting that as early as the 1844 manuscripts — too often relegated to a sheerly Feuerbachian stage in Marx's intellectual development, since they fall just prior to the famous "Theses on Feuerbach" — Marx stressed the need for practical action and organization, as distinguished from mere criticism, in order to achieve communism. In that final lesson, the need for deliberate revolutionary action, lies another pertinent message for a time when many radicals think that "subversion" is accomplished by turning a text on its head.

Russia: The Silence Of the Lambs

Sebastian Job

LIKE A NEW-BORN ANIMAL (A LAMB PERHAPS), AWKWARDLY, SPORADICALLY, wobbly at the knees, the new Russia is wandering toward the wolf of a new authoritarianism. Here is the decisive fact for an understanding of both the strange and terrible events of the last months of 1993, and of the relative political equilibrium which broke out in the first half of 1994. From the abolition of the Parliament on September 21, through the subsequent killings and physical destruction of October 3-4, through the State of Emergency, the purges, round-ups, break-ins, censorship, and on through the December 12 constitutional referendum and Russia's "first free and fair multi-party elections," the path meandered ever further from the promise implicit in the fall of the old regime. By contrast, the new year was hushed. Once the post-election alarm about the rise of fascism had found its echo in the cabinet ouster of the most vociferous neo-liberals, the political elite began to look like it was willing to live with itself. But certain events suggested a different trajectory.

From President Yeltsin's February 24 speech to both houses of Parliament "On the Strengthening of the Russian State," to the amnestied release two days later of those jailed the previous October, to the scandal soon after around "Variant No. 1" — a document planning, or predicting, an anti-Yeltsin coup — to the growing panic as the scale of the industrial collapse emerged, to the near-cancellation, in late March, of the first "free" local government elections ever due to disinterest, to a mid-June presidential anti-crime decree clearly ignoring human rights provisions only just included in the new Constitution, to the presidential decision in June-July (again flouting the Constitution), initiating the second stage of privatization despite parliamentary objections, preparations for predatory power continued.

But if the direction is clear, the motive forces are not. And any attempt to isolate a primary cause courts simplification. How to confidently pick between contradictions; between the countrywide economic dislocations of reform and the desire to hold the nation together; between the indispensability of democratic legitimation and the impoverishing demands of the emerging place in the global division of labor; between the orderly imperatives of state power and the chaotic consequences of prop-

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erty re-allocation; between the need to stimulate entrepreneurial initiative and political reliance on mass alienation and passivity; between reliance on passivity and the recurrent requirement made of the democratic crowd that it mandate the government's authoritarian exit from yet another crisis?

At the turn into the last decade of the century the people of Russia and most of the Soviet Union let slip their most precious opportunity. The crisis of the party finally happened. The people watched, hoped, a small minority protested, a larger minority engaged in strikes, but at the political level they made few encroachments; they withdrew, ceding the task of coordinating the transformation to tiny grouplets of democrats, most of whom were highly placed in the old system. In so doing, the people saddled themselves with a new elite whose functionality extended with few exceptions simply to its *destructive* capacities. Its conditions of existence were mutually antagonistic, for it sought to base itself on an — as yet embryonic — class whose competence extended only to accelerating the very crisis in the means of production and distribution which prepared the new elite's own ascent.

But it had no choice. The task imposed on the democrats after the collapse of the party-state in August 1991 was to do what the party no longer could: provide itself with a mode of accumulation able to operate as its stable social support. Under the new conditions, appropriated power was to engineer a new property-managing class, one in some respects competitive, modernizing, "civilized." However, private property emerged to greet the sunlight not because it was suited to the demands of the economic-technological complex, but because social property, social self-regulation, refused, could not, would not be born.¹

Accumulating Power

THE ENDURING CONFLICT BETWEEN THE PREVIOUS RUSSIAN EXECUTIVE AND LEGISLATURE was a melodramatic expression of a contradiction between exchange value and use value. The one, primarily operative in the sphere of finance and trading capital, internationalized, multiplying at an astonishing rate; the other, operative in the sphere of the industrial enterprise and the collective farm, autarchic, starving, bitterly gnawing at itself: socio-economic forces moving at different speeds in different but overlapping spaces, fuelling a high-friction struggle between their champions within the political elite, a struggle which eventually, and horribly, escaped what it represented — a shadow dancing higher than the flame.

The timing of the clash was not accidental. It corresponded to a moment of Yeltsin's strength: after all the dress-rehearsals, virtually the whole cabinet and the leadership of the security forces were finally in line. The disproportions in the economy which were the precondition of the struggle, were also conditioning attitudes toward the government. Time was running out for the neo-liberal program.²

Thus, in September and October 1993, the governing circle saved (and nearly hung) itself, provoking a violent struggle and then exploiting it without compunction.³ The hand that had ruled by decree was abruptly pared back to its coercive bone; and a moment later sheathed again. Wearing the magic glove of promised elections, Yeltsin reached out and brusquely re-ordered all the structures of political order. "By mid-November," as Zhores Medvedev wrote, "after President Boris Yeltsin's decrees had abolished the regional, town and other local councils, the only democratically elected politician still in power in Russia was the President himself. Everyone else in authority — heads of administration, governors, mayors, representatives and sundry other people at various levels — had been appointed by presidential decree." (*Moscow Times*, December 1, 1993) It would be over-ambitious to try to detail the control the Yeltsin circle built up before, after, and over the elections. A short list of abuses relating only to the vote on the Constitution — that first among symbols of the post-totalitarian society — will have to stand as a general illustration of the dedication the neo-liberal political elite brought to all the democratic tasks entrusted to it.

The official referendum question, "Do you accept the Constitution of the Russian Federation?" was creative, putting in the present tense, as an established, already operative document, what people were theoretically yet to decide to accept, or not. By semantic ruse the existing (or non-existing?) Constitution was conjured away in a formulation that thereby had the benefit of making a No vote seem like a vote against Russia itself, since it suggested — as was probably the case — that the choice was acceptance of this Constitution, or no Constitution at all.

Just how hypothetical the choice was became clear enough when Yeltsin and his aides repeatedly told the heads of parties to steer clear of criticizing the president and the projected Constitution, or face exclusion from the election. The echo, otherwise known as the electronic media, repeated the story in the spurious terms in which Yeltsin framed it: candidates were to "refrain from using their free air time to attack the Constitution instead of explaining their platforms." At first it was unclear why a bloc's platform was necessarily exclusive of opinions on the Constitution only when you were *against* it, but then, Vladimir Shumeiko, at that point a candidate and a member of the government, was good enough to clarify things. Participation in the elections, he explained, was implicit acceptance of the Constitution because it would ground the Parliament to which all candidates were seeking election. The only thing Shumeiko's elegant mind forgot was to inform the voters that they, too, by voting, would be implicitly accepting the Constitution which guaranteed the elections, and that the referendum ballot would therefore be reprinted, this time with only one box, the place to mark Yes.

The most crucial aspect was perhaps the need to have 50% of the voting population actually take part. And yet if voters wanted to vote in the elections but boycott the referendum they had to register a refusal of acceptance of the referendum ballot. If not, even if they burned the referendum ballot, they were counted as participating. The existence of an option to refuse to accept the referendum ballot was so unpublicized that all the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) functionaries I contacted, bar the one responsible for this exact question, doubted it was possible.

Nikolai Ryabov, the chairperson of the allegedly neutral Commission, openly

endorsed a Yes vote on television. This “slip,” was no slip at all: it went on the air several times, each time simultaneously reinforced by a “slip” of an electronic TV pen that carefully crossed out and voided the No option on the ballot Ryabov was displaying. The show of partisanship provoked questions concerning what else the CEC (all of whose members were hand-picked by Yeltsin) was doing to get the right result. Communist Party of the Russian Federation leader, Gennady Zyuganov, would later claim the Yes vote amounted not to 54.8% of those participating, as the CEC claimed, but to 31%. Doubts such as these were circumstantially backed up by the suicide of one member of the Commission the morning after the election. The full text of his suicide note was not made public but, apparently, it read in part that he did “not wish to deceive the people.” Within a few weeks of the election there was a fire at the CEC’s Novy Arbat headquarters. Sadly, it destroyed electoral records stored on the 4th floor. In the atmosphere of general corruption and manipulation it would not be inappropriate even if the document founding the rule of law had been passed deceitfully.⁴

With respect to the elections themselves, however, the government was confident. Enjoying monopoly power it force-marched the country into what it thought would be a benediction. Yeltsin’s single fear was that the people would disdain to legitimize their own deception, would call his bluff by staying away, by not voting. They found another way. Even as they “approved” his authoritarian Constitution, they trumped it. The greatest single part of the electorate voted for chauvinist-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and seemed to shout back: is that all the degradation you have to offer? At least subject us to a humiliation we can be proud of! In the Father of the Nation stakes, the nation had found a higher bidder.

Order and Authoritarianism

“All the contesting parties had common statist tendencies; Zhirinovskiy expressed this openly, crudely, and was supported for doing so.”

Alexander Buzgalin, Party of Labor.

“Whoever the voters cast their ballots for, they were unanimous that Russia needed strong authority, that Russia needed order.”

Boris Yeltsin, President.

IS VLADIMIR VOLFOVICH ZHIRINOVSKY A FUTURE DESPOT OR A FUTURE GAME SHOW HOST, a wolf in clown’s clothing or a clown in wolf’s clothing? The secret of his epiphenomenal success is that he is both, depending on the opportunities of the moment. And that is what makes him an apt signifier. Nevertheless, he will become truly dangerous if, and only if, he can push beyond the opposition; remaining its faithful reflection he will become another of its victims. But whatever Zhirinovskiy’s fate, at the present moment his antics do *not* make him trivial, for he continues to play the signal role of ideological scout, opening up taboo territory which the government can ridicule, and then edge into. His is the quasi-fascism which makes softer nationalisms respectable, his is the disorder on display that reinforces the ideology of authoritarian order. Given his functionality, it is legitimate to ask about the responsibility of the Yeltsin regime for the voter support which brought him to prominence.⁵

The standard answer on the Russian left might be fairly sloganized as: Yeltsin force-fed the body politic shock therapy. Came its chance, and the body vomited Zhirinovskiy; thereby administering, as the *Segodnya* newspaper put it, its own shock therapy to the government. One or two additional factors pertaining to the vote for Zhirinovskiy and to the general complementary nature of “democrats” and “fascists” in the production of an authoritarian atmosphere can be outlined here.

The much better showing by pro-government forces in Moscow, where Zhirinovskiy ran no candidates, tends to confirm the suspicion that the votes he managed to escape with elsewhere rightfully belonged to the neo-liberal “party of ministers,” Russia’s Choice. Zhirinovskiy reaped the harvest of social debasement which the government had sweated so hard to sow. The contrary claim that Moscow, as the seat of the reforms, was and is more democratic by nature and the vote for the LDP represented “an expansion of the provincial subconscious” (*Segodnya*, December 15, 1994) is not baseless, but is in line with that liberal thought which excuses the present by finding all sins hiding in the darkness of the totalitarian or pre-modern past.⁶ What it can’t explain is precisely the *expansion* into the big cities because what it won’t admit is that archaisms are not merely being unearthed in the provinces, they are being fertilized in all regions by the contemporary process. In comparatively cosmopolitan Moscow the ground had actually been tilled with special care, it being the physical site of the destruction of the Parliament (which Zhirinovskiy supported), of the ugliest contrasts of wealth and poverty, and of the reintroduction in November 1993 of registration requirements akin to the old internal passport system which then allowed Mayor Yuri Luzhkov to rid the city of 10,000 “undesirables” from the Caucasus.

It is a measure of the advances made under Yeltsin that by the time of the elections, Gennady Burbulis, one of the ideologues up to then in Yeltsin’s inner circle, could readily admit that “‘Order’ now occupies approximately the place within propaganda that ‘democracy’ did in 1989-90.” Yet when democracy culminated in the elections, it was clear even to the neo-liberal elite just what their order had come to. All blocs were competing to be order’s representative, but the middle ground, carefully undermined by Yeltsin over the previous year, found few voters to resurrect it. In the extreme situation only extremists had a chance, and the two front running extremists were Russia’s Choice, and the LDP. “A choice,” as Yuri Nechipurenko, art-critic and bio-physicist put it, “between murderers and the mentally disturbed. Voters chose the mentally disturbed.” Impotent power contorted the order it promised into its ugliest form — violence — and then on to its negation in a spectacle of madness.

The Paradox of Normality

THE DESIRE FOR ORDER IS PROVOKED BY CURRENT CONDITIONS, but is grounded in a deeper cultural value. Its word is normality. Responding to popular feeling, there is no political force of any stripe that does not bow to the endlessly repeated injunction that people be allowed to lead “normal lives.” As a socio-political condition, order is to be the guarantor of normality; as psychological and behavioral attribute, order is what defines the normal person. There is an obvious cosmology here, and use of the words in Russian, even more so than in English, con-

stantly reveals both their normative and their naturalistic connotations, with nature doing for order what order did for normality: order is natural, and nature is orderly, determined, fixed, perfectly controlled and yet beyond control.

As an historical residue "normality" is a complex of meanings, a repository of memory, ideology, and fear, of a Brezhnev and pre-Brezhnev era sense of what constitutes the dignity of "simple people," and of images of what "civilized" countries grant to their citizen-consumers. Wherever else they conflict, these sources merge in their promotion of "life" as something opposed to and different from politics. Although often allied to a Russian traditionalist discourse, normality expresses the internationalist wisdom of the age: the point of political liberation is liberation from politics. In Russia liberation from the old system has been inseparable from a crisis of national and personal identity. Freedom has been experienced as acidic, and normality is the name of what, in exchange for an identity fix, would trade away any public use of that freedom. Normality therefore shapes up as that reaction to toxic freedom which negates any struggle for the real freedom due. It is the modest ideology of quietude, of non-participation. It is the explicable work of micro-surveying which maps a local territory of ever imperilled competence against the crazy few who would push further. It is the highest ambition of a life lived as self-preservation; it is the mirror discourse of a partly *self-suppressing* subject.

As an ideology of the private sphere it is no longer compelled into existence by a monolithic state, but new sources have appeared as compensation. From below it is bolstered twice by the spontaneous ideologies of the market. Once, because short of its own complete failure, the market never fails to teach that it is money, not political involvement, which meets life's needs; twice, because Russia's sudden immersion in consumer capitalism's cheerfully decadent media culture excites a wish for a dangerous loss of self-control, and normality is called forth as the policing operation capable of regulating the encounter. From all sides it is reinforced by the threatening environment, by the crime, corruption, domestic violence, family break-ups, late wages, ill-health, alcoholism, drug dependency, suicide, and all the other whirling signs of social decay whose message is, keep your head down! From above, it hears a cynical confirmation. Yes, the democratic elite will guarantee normality, after all, normality guarantees the elite. The exercise of the economic capacity to labor, domestically or publicly, contributes to the production of an ever more diverse and interdependent social system objectively requiring the exercise of commensurate political capacities. The need can be frustrated — the assertiveness of individual and collective subjects can lag badly — but not thwarted; it returns as specialized power wielded on high. The system which absents itself from self-regulation inevitably looks for a center, an axis of order, a father. The "normal, simple" people seek a leader.

The secret, then of "normality" may be humiliation: people making a virtue of finding it impossible, because kept apart, to be a fraction of what they could be. Need to be. The individual and collective refusal to exercise rights and capacities for self-representation introduces as anxiety, an unrecognizable need, that is, exactly a *disorder* into the orderly insular self-sufficiency. And, from outside, the disorder is complemented. The greater the unmet social input need, the greater either the repression or the social chaos. Now that Russia has traded repression for chaos, society's jagged edges dig at the vulnerable places of anxiety, needing a *desire* for a proxy who would salve the damage, a "control-locus" ⁷

who would meet the need. The determinist orrery which is normality's self-conception calls for a representative who would be the negation of representation's intrinsically divided and secondary status. Order, it comes to appear, can only be secured if the will of the people is mediated by representation as immediacy, as direct rule, as power personified. Unsurprisingly, the least assertive and least protected sense the lack most. So, the damage is reciprocated. The victims of chaos demand hyper-order. They feel most indifferent to its possible costs because they are already paying more than they can bear. A wolf-clown gets elected.

And thus to the paradox. Normality is not bereft of every good that is claimed for it. It is not a straight road to fascism. It is compatible also with apathy, cynicism, and loyal support for democratic representatives. More interesting, it is necessarily a fluid and contested term, and will long remain the psychological-ideological reference for almost all the political agitation that occurs in Russia, whether feminist, conservative, Communist, consumerist, monarchist, laborist, nationalist, ecological, liberal, or socialist. It is therefore an open question (I hope), whether mobilization proceeding from a desire for normality could come to recognize the conflict between its active practice and its dream of stasis; whether it could reduce the dream to irony, and then jettison it.

Meanwhile, normality remains firmly paradoxical: a determinedly inward-looking ideology of the private sphere sometimes functioning as a spur to public involvement. An example of the resultant tensions is the Women of Russia electoral bloc. Ekaterina Lahova and others established the organization so as to fight for social welfare policies that would conserve elements of the gender order and the domestic economy, arguing, "The family is the basis of our state." The ambiguous radicalism rather than straightforward conservatism of such thinking derived not only from the ambiguous role of conservatism in the resistance to Russia's free-market radicals,⁸ but from the specific role played by the family in pre-Gorbachev Russia. As the basic unit of friendship networks, the family operated and to some extent operates, as a substitute public sphere, as an alternative civil society. It is partly this role which allowed the cross-over to its public defense to be made. Part of the price was that when it did, the bridge was a masculinist humanism. Alevtina Fedulova, one of the leaders of Women of Russia, may be the first feminist ever to announce, and without blinking, "Most important for us is man."⁹

The Liberal Nation

THERE ARE OTHER INDICATIONS, TOO, THAT NORMALITY IS A PRECARIOUS BASIS for any progressive politics. If the double family-as-civil-society role allows ideological supplies to be carried in one direction, with masculinist humanism relatively easily mobilized as the family's public support, it is the reverse direction, with the patriarchal character of the family stamping its shape on political debate, which is seeing the most traffic. The ascendant ideology of the day is nationalism, and the gender relations of normality are doubtless now tightly entwined in its extraordinary encroachment on the redoubt of the citizen. If nationalism is not to be treated solely as an invention of state or ethnicity, then it may be that it is a masculinist militarism, not a humanism, which the normal patriarchal family now donates most unstintingly to society. In any event, the slippery character of normality is now more evident in the struggle between the claims of homeland

and human, than between feminine and masculine. The big winner in the elections was not Women of Russia, nor any other party, but a nationalism which was the first refuge of almost every contender. By the time the dust thrown up by the "fascist threat" had settled, every leading liberal democrat had publicly discovered the patriot beating fiercely in his/her breast, or had quit the stage. "Liberal-democracy," ideologically speaking, was quickly shaping up as that brief incubation period attendant on the rebirth of a nationalism whose best impulses would be hard to extricate from an illiberal and undemocratic chauvinism.

In the elections in St. Petersburg, censored nationalist media personality Alexander Nevzorov defeated Yurin V'dovin, the leader of the Commission for Free Speech, for a seat in the new Parliament. A week later, the eclipse of human rights by nationalist discourses was underscored again by the reappearance of cult musician Yegor Letov. When Letov was last visible three years ago he played a scene on the existential side of anarchism. Back on stage in December 1993 he had metamorphosed into an "ultra-Communist" a "national-bolshevik," that is, an extreme statist and imperialist. The concert, which happened to become the first serious riot in Moscow since the October days, was co-organized by Alexander Prokhanov, the editor of the currently suppressed nationalist newspaper *Dyen*.¹⁰ Censored and suppressed — the anti-humanist politics of people like Nevzorov and Prokhanov long predates the curtailment of their freedom of expression; but for many in their growing audience it is a daily encounter with capitalist human rights, which is now teaching them to clutch at nationalist defenses.¹¹

The static, defensive, individual yet abstract-universal character of human rights does not provide what people seem to need to re-glue their identities. It cannot respond adequately to a situation where in the main people are not being picked out for political persecution but are victims of demoralization and economic dislocation, processes that require an active, emotionally involving, extra-personal response. "Nation" proffers just such an illusion: authoritarian collectivism will safeguard the normal, decent, simple people. Order will protect the orderly. Where the exercise of civic freedoms is regarded as useless or alien, the only response liberalism can dredge up is the identity of the consumer.¹² But even this thin product line can't be marketed very convincingly among those who, as a new Zhirinovskiy Parliamentarian put it, "don't know how to steal or deal." In all but a few cases, liberalism is no longer the champion of civil society or of the individual against the party-state. It stands exposed rather as the apology for, as the official title of, a power of violation. For many, "human rights," is just the sound they hear in its laughter.

Even the driest liberals understand they must utilize the authoritarian nationalist antinomies of "modernization" to make good their own lack. As pertinent an example as any was evident in the electoral marketing choice of Russia's Choice. The *de facto* presidential party chose as its symbol the Bronze Horseman, Peter the Great, the legendary creator, founder of a westernized St. Petersburg on the bones of Russian laborers. The Europeanizing message was clear enough. But a second idea, the compensation for the fearful dialectic of suffering and achievement that was Czar Peter's rule was of rising significance: here is a man above men, quasi-divine, quasi-natural, the ancient center of order, the active point of judgment and decision, the nation's iron will, the figure whose extended hand embodies control as active immediacy. The text in the image? Maybe this: Don't worry, modernization is quite traditional, the future has happened

before. And anyway, you don't have to fix the present mess. The subjectivity you yielded to the free market, to the abstract and chaotic movement of tradeables, will not be squandered. The debit of the invisible hand will be cashed in by the presidential hand. For consenting to become "free" objects, people as commodities, we guarantee the concentrated subjectivity of the secular-czar, the patriarch "above the fray," the author of your Constitution in whom is invested ultimate authority, in whom will no longer contradicts law because will is law. With the use of such iconography — and much else — the politicians in Russia's Choice, fearless proponents of the open society, took ideological cover behind their alleged enemies. With Zhirinovskiy types around to share that cover it might not have been so wise, but then it would not be the first time that a capitalist state on the make had risked reconciling its own systemic authoritarianism with the institutions of formal democracy by recourse *backwards* to a patriarchal higher third.

Accumulating Powerlessness

FOR LIBERALS THE SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION UNDERWAY IN RUSSIA IS SUMMED UP as a move from totalitarianism to democracy. Socialists speak commonly of trading power for property. The latter has the merit of emphasizing that the changes are largely powered by, and to the benefit of, those already privileged by the old system, and of leaving open the question of what kind of society will eventuate.¹³ What it may obscure is that the entire dynamic of the Yeltsin regime is framed by the *ongoing* contradiction precisely between power and property. Neither is adequate to the other, and neither is adequate to the society. Power conjures up not a property form that will guarantee it, but one whose operative effects tend to undermine it. Rendered relatively ineffectual, the government's decrees are in turn incapable of protecting the capitalist class from itself. The problem of corruption and the development of banking can serve as illustrations.

"Corruption," according to millionaire and new Parliamentarian Artem Tarasov (to choose one voice among thousands), "has encroached on all levels of power, including the organs of law and order." (*Stolitsa*, No. 43 (153) 1993). This was to be expected. Corruption was endemic to the old system, a necessity as compensation both for the economic ineffectuality of the central plan and for the ideological inadequacy of a Communist ethic hopelessly at variance with real relations. Now it is one of the principal, and indispensable, means of accumulation. On April 16, 1993, Alexander Rutskoi, then vice-president, alleged in Parliament that more than 40% of Russia's GNP was under the control of organized crime. He made the mistake of supporting this and other generalities with names, times, places, and figures for numerous misappropriations, along with the decree numbers and signatures of the cabinet members who had authorized them.¹⁴ Shortly afterwards the Anti-Corruption Commission publicly accused Rutskoi of having an immodestly sized Swiss bank account. The charge would later be dropped, but only after Rutskoi's popularity had been weakened, allowing Yeltsin to strip him of his powers.¹⁵ The Commission was then dissolved.¹⁶ The difficulty this level of corruption poses for the state is not only the enormous income loss, but the corrosion of the much trumpeted rule of law even as it is allegedly established. If decrees replace legislation, then the separation of powers is nullified, and if decrees are constantly used to break even the rules established by prior

decree, the would-be rulers also lose.¹⁷

The situation of the bankers well illustrates the contradiction between steering and profitability, between the rule of law and the rule of money, between political power and the property forms it is supposed to guarantee. The new commercial banks are the capitalist flagship. Despite some irritating legislation bankers are nicely situated to key into the voucher privatization scheme, are buying much of the expensive real estate, own modern technologies, are situated in modern offices, are associated with the luxury end of the emerging consumer culture, have political clout via such means as the funding of electoral tickets, or, more simply, via simultaneous occupancy of state office, and recently quite a few of them have been getting shot.¹⁸

At the most general level their plight registers the impact of the money culture they benefit from as it corrodes the state of law that once might have saved them. However, in this case crime is also more specifically symptomatic. Criminality, while intrinsic to the existence of most, if not all the banks, has begun to impose objective limits on their further development. The larger among them, for instance, have quite enough funds to purchase the communications technology crucial to modern banking, but cannot properly utilize it because information on accounts is often too compromising to be provided even for money transfer purposes. The banks have proliferated as laundering operations and pirate privatization outfits attached to factories, but with more than 2,000 commercial banks the market is crowded. Regulations increasing minimum capitalization and raising Central Bank interest rates above inflation have imposed a squeeze. The relative stabilization of the ruble against the dollar has cut into profits from exchange-rate speculation. Most symptomatically, the sector has become exposed to problems in other parts of the economy. Although still capital's preferred site, the prolongation of the associated disinvestment in productive infrastructure and, more immediately, government policies which have forced liquidity crises in the enterprises, have eventually foreshortened even the banks' horizon. The killings, then, have been the most brutal expression of a battle for market share within an industry whose glory days are already fading. And as even the leading edge of the new class blunts the conditions of its own formation, conflict emerges with the politicians who would represent it. In the midst of the national election campaign dissatisfaction took the unusual form of an owner-led bank strike. Although ostensibly called to protest the felt lack of police protection for leading bankers, its insensitive timing evidenced the reach of the crisis. Even the heartland was unhappy.

Post-Election Cynicism

APPARENTLY THE CARNAGE OF OCTOBER 3 AND 4 WAS A FAIR PRICE TO PAY for the consolidation of power, for not a single leading government figure saw fit to look back and publicly repent the initial dissolution of the Parliament that had risked exactly what happened. Better a coup d'état than a compromise with the Parliament over the budget! Three months and an election later the need for social spending to calm the waters saw Yeltsin decreeing the release of additional Central Bank credits to the government that would increase the unfunded portion of the budget deficit by 63% for the first quarter of 1994. That this and other measures were understood as tactical maneuvers only made the cynicism the more

despicable. Was it not exactly the alleged opposition of the government free-market majority to "conservative, financially irresponsible" proposals of this kind that lay behind the Constitutional crisis and the crisis of power? Was it not opposition to this that justified the degradation of the new democracy these last two years to a matter of presidential signature and state seal? Was it not exactly opposition to this that justified the dissolution of the Parliament, the militarization of Moscow, the concentration of all power, the jailings, the lies, the bombardment of the White House, the killing of people?

Obviously not. One thing the crises of the last part of 1993 seemed to clarify is that justifications of power precede those of policy.¹⁹ By the end of 1993 the executive power had come to support a neo-liberal policy not despite, but also *because* it called for curtailment of the space for dissent. The economic sacrifices of the population were the reward accruing to the new capitalist class; the political sacrifices — the reward to the new political elite.

But, at the moment of its consecration, the deal came unstuck. The December election was supposed to be the finale in the three act accumulation of power play that ran to mixed reviews through the last months of the year. Instead it revealed the defeat crouching in victory. The effort to exterminate the political center by stigmatizing, disempowering and then abolishing the old Parliament had only reproduced a more reactionary element within the new Parliament and a stronger center inside the government. All the concentration of power was for a "reform" now being universally refused, and the only thing left to do with unusable power was to panic. With the much sought after control over Parliament in doubt, Gaidar discovered overnight that the "red-browns," the "communo-fascists," were not the twin opponents of democracy he always told us they were. Finance Minister Boris Fyodorov, however, was against any "anti-fascist alliance" on the grounds that its logic would soon roll right through his policies, and his job. Meanwhile, presidential press-secretary Vyacheslav Kostikov was hinting that even Zhirinovskiy might be welcome to join in a bloc against the fascists! The president, for his part, just stayed quiet, undoubtedly furious at being weakened in his moment of strength, and furiously preparing new purges of every wing of the administrative apparatus, from intelligence to archives, from foreign affairs to the media. All wanted to use the elections as a cloak for the concentration of manipulative means. All forgot that in that case the elections might silhouette the shape not only of manipulation, but of its incapacities, not only of its incapacities, but also of its discontents.

Yeltsin's first public reaction to the humiliation of his team in the election was to promise to use his powers, as he put it, "to protect democracy," meaning he intended to protect his powers from the democracy that crept into the elections. But the twisted response reflected a dilemma. Starkly put: press on, ignore the social process which Zhirinovskiy's vote registered, or compromise and establish the "government of national unity" which Volsky, Khasbulatov, Rutskoi, Zorkin, and all the other side-lined nasties of yesteryear were always urging.

At first, neither of these choices seemed possible. The former path would have opened on undisguised dictatorship, inevitably accompanied by magnified social decay and delegitimation. The country had not yet come to that. The latter path would have conceded much of the effective power which the neo-liberal ruling circle was just now willing to go to any length to gain. The first chosen option was an attempt to make some minor concessions so the former could pass

as the latter: a retreat on "reform" would be accompanied by a political tightening. It would be less than a month before the unstable momentum of this arrangement had reversed its own terms, producing a political realignment and a monetary tightening. Those whom the shift had been designed to save became its first victims; but then only to be honored in the fall, for the successors extended the policies of the vanquished.²⁰

After the Neo-Liberals

THE FOLLOWING FACTORS SEEM TO HAVE CONVERGED TO FORCE THE DEMISE of the most prominent neo-liberals. September 21-October 4 handed a total monopoly of power to Gaidar, Fyodorov, Pamfilova, and friends. They received, as the compulsory cliché of the day had it, their "window of opportunity" and duly dove at it, heedless of what floor they were on. Pushing through decrees removing or raising ceilings on exports; abolishing the state purchase of needed imports for resale at subsidized prices; eliminating the bread subsidy; choking off subsidized credits and low interest loans to farms and factories, they forced what even their hitherto loyal press had to belatedly recognize was "an unprecedented industrial fall."²¹ The neo-liberal cabinet majority was perfectly aware of these consequences, they were not incidental, but rather represented a second attempt to do what they had failed to do in the winter of 1991/92 with the initial price liberalization: reduce the budget deficit and inflation by bankrupting unprofitable enterprises in non-priority areas, forcing pseudo-market relations on producers and disciplining the labor market with high unemployment — this time in a context where the shift to a more authoritarian phase would make it possible to squash any protests.

However, the new phase of aggressive "reform" entailed an intensified attack not only on wages, living conditions, and social support, but on the other major factions in the political and economic elite. The increase in the executive's administrative power was therefore the necessary counterbalance to a drastic narrowing of its socio-economic base. Though in the main supporting elements in the old Parliament, the industrial and agricultural sectors had been able to live with the government on condition both of credit lines from the Central Bank and of possession of political weight sufficient to force advantageous changes to the voucher and land privatizations; now the crunch had arrived.²² At the same time, the tactical alliance between the banking and the raw materials and energy sectors²³ was beginning to unravel as the waving or loosening of limitations on exports, coupled, in the case of oil, to the drop in world prices, decreased the profitability of exports and increased a linked interest in the ability of Russian electricity stations, enterprises, and farms to pay their fuel and input debts.²⁴

The strategy was producing a narrow and brittle structure of power, and it had a fault point: the military. The army had just been demobilized at great risk, but the program, in whose cause they might well have to be mobilized again, was necessarily directed at the productive and technical base of the military's own industrial complex. The heavy vote for Zhirinovskiy inside the army and navy dug a little at this fault, while the very low popular vote for Russia's Choice dug some more, showing irrefutably that the August 1991 credit of faith had been squandered; there would be no salvation here. The conclusion confronting Yeltsin was that come the next "October" the divisions in the military would cut the

wrong way, and would prove fatal. So, he opted instead for preventive surgery.

Political life under the guidance of Prime Minister Victor Chernomyrdin, the person who won the election by not contesting it, has since motored into an unlikely calm. As the production slump deepened; as unemployment began to bite, as it became obvious to all that the first stage of privatization had brought no new investment capital to the enterprises, and that private investment in the second stage, whether foreign or domestic, would not even begin to approximate the requirements of the manufacturing and engineering sectors; as the loss of skilled workers and technological potential became so pronounced that commentators warned it would now take decades to return even to Brezhnev era levels; as, in a phrase, the primitivizing dynamic of capitalist modernization showed its face more clearly, conflict on the street, and in the Parliamentary chambers, all but disappeared.

In the medium term at least, the defeat of the President's favored bloc in the elections proved to be the best possible result for him, for it forced a tactical shift from exclusion to inclusion which quickly transformed into a loyal opposition many of whom six months before had only just escaped with their lives. Most factions in the new State Duma, receiving real or proxy representation in a pragmatic cabinet pared of arrogant neo-liberal rhetoric, decided to forsake policy fights in favor of honing their management skills for the victory all expected the proposed 1996 elections to deliver. With their eyes on recent results in Poland, Hungary, Latvia, Ukraine and Byelorussia, opposition leaders, whether relative centrists such as Grigorii Yavlinsky and Ivan Rybkin, or members of the "irreconcilable opposition" such as Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, Alexander Rutskoi, and Gennady Zyuganov, were determined to do nothing to give Yeltsin an excuse to miss his date with defeat.

The new "responsible" stance of the main opposition was made possible by three further factors: the powerlessness of the Duma as compared to the old Congress; the relative success of the Chernomyrdin team in reducing inflation, an occurrence which did much to alleviate the sense of crisis; and the decline of the street-level opposition. This last was due partly to the brutal lesson administered from September to December last year, and partly to disorientation deriving from the confusing liberal-nationalist visage of the cabinet and the accommodative politics of the new Parliament. More significant, however, was the fact that even as nationalist and anti-government *sentiment* won new converts, the corresponding *movements* did not.

Why not? In addition to the institutional and psychological factors discussed thus far, the political passivity of the population has been conditioned by the specific rhythm of the changes. The neo-liberal reforms have at least been successful in dramatically increasing the supply of (relatively expensive) food and private consumer services in the big cities. What its apologists have guiltily called a process of "primitive accumulation of capital" has in fact been largely a primitive consumption of accumulated capital, but in major urban areas the scale and intensity of this consumption has been so great as to spur a large petty mercantile economy into which the most active layers of the population, including school dropouts, have been drawn. Trading in this economy has in turn enabled people to participate as consumers of at least some of the imported goods. The mirror of primitive consumption is of course the production decline, but for the time being the interaction of the two sectors has yet, materially speaking, to push most

people to the edge. Unemployment has thus far mainly taken hidden forms which do not involve the formal loss of employment, and although the quality of provision is deteriorating, most people still have secure access to housing, health care and education.²⁵

Many of the preconditions for a prolongation of the calm — and hence for the growth of illusions in the soundness of the course — are consequently in place. But the clash of interests between economic sectors, between forms of value, and hence between factions in the elite, has not been resolved, it has been put in abeyance. The longer political crisis is forestalled, the less will the elite, whether as a part or as a whole, be able to give even distorted expression to the crisis unfolding beneath it.

If there is an element of compulsive repetition in this business of a socio-economic structure which constantly raises up an elite simply to mock it for incapacities which finally only scar the socio-economic structure, that repetition is nevertheless the shape of rapid change. Certainly Yeltsin is still in position, but something has elapsed. October '93 was undoubtedly the moment. It was this version of the repetition, this "monstrous mixture of impotence and omnipotence, of impotence in omnipotence" as Mikhail Gefer tentatively but accurately described it, which finally broke the liberal-democratic spell.²⁶ The support that Yeltsin still retains is dutiful but unfelt and without conviction. His last stocks of trust were consumed in a fire of shame and fear.

Most stayed bodily clear of the heat, but since then strange things have begun to cook under the lid of the celebrated patience of the Russian people. If their quietude is the guarantee of perpetual paralysis for a representative system that could only be healed by their impatient participation, paralysis too is stoking what could explode the quiet. Like water molecules collecting in the air, the national idea is condensing around every grievance and humiliation. As the humidity rises each ideological droplet grows larger, heavier, begins to work the shift from confused disbelief to distrust, from avowed distrust to conviction in something that nationalism seems to name, begins to reduce the space between the isolated subjects, cuts it closer and closer to the distance of a spark. But the program of this accumulation — nationalist, conservative, militaristic, imperialist — is moreover also capitalist, and its character necessarily undemocratic. If successful it will be momentary, eventually it will fail, as likely as not elevating a pointless but disastrous despot.

Left Oppositions

IN RUSSIA THE CONSEQUENCE OF THE APPROPRIATION OF SOCIAL POWER has become a means inadequate to the task of social transformation. But if the government seems capable only of aiding the suppression that guarantees it, and then guarantees its incapacity, the left likewise is incapable of taking advantage of power's incapacity because much of that suppression is something people inflict on themselves. How much can be partly gauged. The left is the political form of, and the place for developing theories about, the alienated subject's self-representation. Politics is an irreducible and unavoidable sphere of that representation. The numerical weakness of the left therefore provides some measure of the extent to which the task remains unapproached.

An exception does not usually confirm the rule, but in September-October

1993 it did. The opposition to Yeltsin's eventually triumphant effort to eliminate the Supreme Soviet can be recorded as a very partial qualification to the picture of universal non-involvement. The final weeks of the old Parliament saw a degree of activism by small but numerous groups in Moscow and to a lesser degree in other cities. They were overwhelmingly composed of the same nationalists and Communist conservatives who had dominated the protest movement ever since the price liberalization of January 1992. Redoubling their work, they were now joined by small committees of patriots, women, socialists, human rights activists, anti-Semites, monarchists, and political liberals with a conscience which surfaced around local soviets and daily papers, in unions, inside the Security Ministry, in the divisions of the army, among officers in the North and Black Sea fleets, in churches, museums, and art galleries. All organized meetings, wrote petitions, declarations and appeals calling variously for defense of the Constitution and the Parliament, restitution of the Soviet Union, jail for the Yeltsin gang, respect for the right of assembly and other civic rights, recognition for Alexander Rutskoi as the lawful president, defense of Russian culture, an end to shock therapy, an end to crime, an end to cosmopolitanism and the regime of Jews and foreign occupiers.

The democratic and libertarian left was active, either critically supporting the Parliament or equally condemning both belligerents; but caught between ogres it was unable to make any impact on the course of events. This fact, however, hardly robbed the resistance to the president of all progressive significance. In the mobilizations themselves the ambiguous character of the Parliament — by this stage heavily dominated by chauvinists and imperialists and yet playing an irreplaceable role in limiting Yeltsin's power — was reflected and extended, but in an unstable way.

The weight of reactionary ideas in the demonstrations increased and decreased corresponding to the state of the stalemate between the factions in the elite. In September, when Yeltsin pushed matters beyond words, crude and aggressive positions immediately became dominant on each side. But having secured overwhelming military might, Yeltsin found himself unable to use it; neither his democratic credentials, nor his generals, would allow him to simply crush the Parliamentarians unilaterally. At the same time the Supreme Soviet could not, as the president and his advisers mistakenly assumed, be left to rot. The crowds kept coming back, arms were being stockpiled, allies were being mobilized in the regional soviets, and on the night of the 23rd-24th a local resident and a member of the militia were killed in what was probably an attempted weapons grab by White House supporters. The consequent effort to choke the Parliament with a special forces cordon only turned police-demonstrator clashes into a daily and nightly occurrence. Along with heavy-handed intrigues in the regions, media censorship, the government demanded the opponents' complete surrender because of its insistence on *simultaneous* Parliamentary and presidential elections. This close-range experience of a police state in reformation provoked the beginnings of a recomposition of the street-level opposition. Constitutional and human rights liberals, genuine democrats, non-chauvinist republicans, disillusioned social-democrats and hibernating socialists began to appear as a minor but growing part of the crowd. Even the resolutely pro-Yeltsin electronic media started grumbling that it couldn't capture the requisite footage if the troops kept smashing its cameras and tape-recorders. As they rubbed

their baton-bruised heads it probably came to more than one reporter that they could be getting a foretaste of life as it might be with no opposition left to misrepresent.

Remarkably quickly the shift in the general mood was furnishing the environs in which a non-revanchist, non-redundant opposition could have coalesced. But what was a dangerous development for Yeltsin was what gave the demonstrators the confidence to break the stalemate, bringing Yeltsin perilously near to ruin before kindly providing him with the necessary exit. Specifically: the surge of activity peaked with the victorious breaking of the siege on October 3, was emptied of all legitimacy by the idiotic and criminal Ruskoi-Khasbulatov-Makashov decision to try to take power by force, and was then drowned by a vindictively and criminally destructive Yeltsin.

The immediate prospect of country-wide elections and, at the last minute, the addition of a Constitutional referendum, successfully drove the debate about the coup off the front pages, if not out of the back of people's minds. It was a mark of the culture of servility that the population would even deign to acknowledge the existence of the pack in the Kremlin which had transparently herded the country into the jaws of a convulsion. As it was, most people accepted the upcoming elections as a *fait accompli*, and the majority of opposition parties scurried off to collect signatures for an electoral registration they would then be denied. Some non-electoral activity survived, with anarchist groups and a few of the smaller Communist parties organizing an "active boycott," and the Movement in Defense of Democracy and Human Rights, led by Gleb Pavlovskii,²⁷ holding small conferences and demonstrations against the proposed Constitution. The most significant event in this respect was a large public meeting a few weeks before the election hosted by the so-called Constitutional Assembly of the old Parliament. The presence of a very broad spectrum, from former Constitutional Court chair Valery Zorkin, to the chief author of the Supreme Soviet's project-Constitution Oleg Rumyantsev, to members of Sergei Barburin's Russian National Union and of a number of Communist parties, seemed to imply the possibility of a crystallization of forces around opposition to the pending Constitution. Unfortunately, there was little specific action, and the meeting failed even to make a recommendation on the important tactical question of whether to boycott the referendum or to vote No.

AS THE GENERAL POLITICAL CONFLICT INTENSIFIED OVER THE COURSE OF 1993, virtually every leftist grouping underwent acknowledged or unacknowledged splits. From the various CPSU offshoot parties to the Confederation of Anarcho-Syndicalists the divisive issue, when not essentially a matter of internal struggles for influence over diminishing numbers of members, was that of the correct attitude to an ever more authoritarian regime facing off against an ever more reactionary Parliament. In all but one instance, however, these reorganizations failed to improve the prospects of the leftist parties in the elections. They provided them neither with the unity to fully participate, nor to refuse to participate. The left could not escape the social contradictions deriving from the abstentionism of its would-be constituencies; instead they were faithfully reproduced inside it as organizational incapacities.

The single grouping to improve its prospects was the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF) led by Gennady Zyuganov. Taking a middle ground

position during the October crisis it managed to avoid being pruned out of contention by the Central Electoral Commission and went on to enjoy the benefits of monopolizing the vote for the system-as-was. Although losing some voters to the LDP it too benefited electorally from a marked nationalist (and religious!) turn which coincided with Zyuganov's assumption of the leadership.²⁸

A simple shift toward nationalist positions, however, was evidently no automatic panacea. The biggest loser in the election was perhaps the Socialist Party of Workers (SPT) led by Lyudmilla Vartazarova and Roy Medvedev which, after disagreement within the leadership, also accented its patriotism. Long negotiations with the Party of Labor of Boris Kagarlitsky and Alexander Buzgalin ended as the SPT backed an *Otechestvo* [Fatherland] electoral bloc in which the SPT itself soon lost influence to less equivocally nationalistic forces.²⁹ Mobilizing behind a slogan of "Faith in Justice, Hope in the wisdom of the people, and Love for the Fatherland," the SPT and the *Otechestvo* bloc were successful only in achieving obscurity as they failed to gather sufficient signatures to contest the elections. With the star of the authoritarian leftist KPRF rising it became obvious the SPT had definitively lost the two year tussle for recognition as spiritual heir to the former ruling Communist Party of the Soviet Union.³⁰

No force on the left was able to function as the magnet around which a broad electoral bloc could be formed. Each was denied such a role due to the conservatism or the marginality of the social base it was trying to build. The Russian Communist Worker's Party was dedicated to recreating the system of factory soviets as they functioned prior to their reorganization by Stalin in 1937; the KPRF had what it called workers' production collectives; the SPT had links with the Russian Union of Workers' Collectives; the Party of Labor had long cooperated with the leadership of the Moscow Federation of Trade Unions and more recently with the FNPR: different strategies, uniformly discouraging results.

But the left was not content to simply live with the contradiction between objective need and subjective inaction. Knowing there could be no qualitative break beyond the chronic crises of the capitalist project without broad and deep struggle, without a politicized civil society, it had to seek to influence the then relatively active layers of the population, which is to say, those who had the function of intellectuals. There were reasons for optimism here. As both the authoritarian and the economically reactionary character of the government became clearer to more people, the need became acute for an alternative representative force that could reflect a majority social interest to some degree. In theory, forces opposed to reaction *ought* to have been able to make alliances. In theory, defense of political freedoms and support for economic and cultural renaissance *ought* to have been able to ally genuine democrats, honest political liberals, uncorrupted unionists, feminist social-welfarists and non-chauvinist republican nationalists, around what would in effect have been a proto-socialist program.

Attempts were made. Committees of intellectuals, scientists, and cultural figures were set up, the Congress of Left Democratic Forces, and the Union of Labor discussed joint action, left parties tried to cooperate or merge — to negligible effect. There was no effort of will that could enable the existing left to shoulder the general burden. It was caught on the wrong side of the critical mass which would allow it to gain acknowledgment and hence participants which would gain it acknowledgment; it inevitably lacked credibility as a force representative of social needs because it was just not a force.

This “dwarf dilemma” can be formulated as a left continually succumbing to the very crisis of political representation which it would resolve. Commenting on the Russian situation, American socialist Phyllis Jacobson has pushed a similar idea a bit further: “The tragedy was and is that there is no significant organized third force, no popular democratic, let alone socialist alternative and, therefore, no mass struggle from below.” (*New Politics*, Vol. 4, No. 4, Winter 1994.) This kind of perspective, which has a long pedigree especially in Russia, causes Russian socialists to put quite a lot of energy into the criticism of democratic intellectuals for their obstructive rather than constructive role in helping the people to recognize and proclaim their interests.³¹ What it overlooks is that the problem’s main hinge is nailed in the subject, not the sign. As Alexander Buzgalin responded when asked about left attempts to connect with the worker’s movement: “Please show me the worker’s movement, and we will try to connect with it!” (Interview with Buzgalin, December 18, 1993.)

AS THE STRUGGLE BETWEEN THE PRETENDERS TO POLITICAL CONTROL reached the point of open illegality and violence, Buzgalin and many other leftists reacted by attempting to cement opposition unity around the defense of human rights. It was a forced move; insufficient, but revealing in its insufficiency. Rights, as Jay Bernstein has summarized, “represent the fact that community in modernity is no longer a given.”³² However, rights do not represent the fact adequately, especially in a country where community has been lost but modernity itself is not yet a given. And rights discourse is only one among many products of the contradictions of attempted modernization, the one which, insofar as its appeal is to a traditional natural right, corresponds to the standpoint of all time, more pertinently, to the present, to how things *are*.³³ Though equally tied to modernity, nationalism presents itself from the standpoint of things as they *were*. Its appeal in a society which seems to have lost its past, whose narrative of societal becoming has suddenly become pointless, is explicable. In the same move, however, the loss of historical meaning also punishes that which needs the standpoint of the future — the left. Socialism has always involved a judgment of how things are according to how they *could be*. But a struggle for the future is difficult when the historical ground has dropped from beneath your feet. The retreat of some of the left to the perspective of the present, to the defense of the rights humans are said to have prior to any social formation, expressed their inability to fly forward on the wings of social struggle so as to look back from the heights of possibility.³⁴

And the recoil was necessary. It responded to a real threat. As government “democrats” and opposition “fascists” circled each other, matching authoritarian step to authoritarian counter-step, human rights became basic to society’s self-defense. The left had to hope the logic of resistance would break the circle, carrying liberal humanists from a defense of natural rights to a projection of the future social arrangements necessary to their guarantee. This development was made all but explicit in the documents of the newly formed Movement in Defense of Democracy and Human Rights in Russia to which some Party of Labor activists were central. However, the limitations of a strategy aimed at releasing the practical socialist within each authentic liberal was evidenced in relations with like-minded organizations. The new Movement was friendly with the famous Memorial organization’s Center for Human Rights, composed as the latter was of those who stress the legal foundations of rights and who don’t much take

to the abolition of Constitutions, suspension of judiciaries and such like. In contrast, in the context of an emerging political settlement within the elite, the Movement found it had little influence on Memorial itself, most of whose leadership needed no lesson from socialists that law expresses power more than power expresses law, but whose sympathies, undented by this or that minor infringement, already lay with the powers that be.³⁵

Conclusion

WHEN THERE IS A HUNGER IN THE LAND — and there is a hunger in the land — the sufficient condition for the rule of the wolf is the silence of the lambs. And yet some noises make even silence seem safe. What cause for “hope in the wisdom of the people” when at the first official invitation to speak, the greatest number decided to cry wolf — not as warning, as invitation!

But of course there is no one else to place hope in. Remarkably the whole of the Soviet interlude has left Russia confronting the old paradox, first recognized by Leon Trotsky, that its peculiar state to society and state to capital relations entail that any “bourgeois” revolution will not be sustained by the bourgeoisie. The demand for democratic structures will take on socialist features, or will be defeated. But, there should be no more waiting — if anyone was still waiting? — for a direct socialist reaction to the ongoing capitalist betrayal of the democratic promise. It is safe to predict that over the next decade or so, regardless of elections, coups, counter-coups, or revolts, Russia will evolve/plunge toward a politico-economic system that can best be termed state capitalist. The predominant role of the state will be assured by the incapacity and dependence of most of its *de jure* and *de facto* capitalists. Its capitalist character will be guaranteed by the great cultural, psychological, organizational, and experiential distances which for a long time yet will separate the population from any more comprehensive response to its own situation. Within this broad medium-term outlook, the measure of chaos, corruption, violence, and generalized barbarization will depend on many factors. One of the larger of these will be the extent of the self-assertive struggle of the working people.³⁶ At present, the level of workplace mobilization may well be at the beginning of its post-Communist upward curve.³⁷

Resistance seems faced with two basic developmental routes. The first possibility is that social and economic protest, passing through the prism of inter-elite struggles, will be organized and/or suppressed with primary reference to the idea of the nation. Work collective share ownership and continued reliance on budgetary support will reinforce a tendency for struggles to bridge the class lines of the undemocratic enterprise and to take shape as inter-sectoral contests for state funding and advantageous protective legislation. Defense industry conversion to consumer production will peter out as a hawkish foreign policy and an edgy internal political atmosphere bolster the status of the military and the revenue importance of earnings from weapons' exports. High income segmentation of the labor force in the context of rising unemployment and uneven sectoral development/decline will allow the continued buying off of select groups of fortunately positioned workers on condition of depressed living standards for the majority. Class consciousness will find expression as respect for Russian capitalists, whatever their actual roles, because they are “Our” capitalists. Decreasing state revenues coupled with the objective need for increasing expenditures will keep the

whole pot cooking with each crisis "solved" by recourse to further concentrations of an always elusive power. This route's best case outcome drives further into the present muddle. Its worst case outcome is war; precipitated so as to consolidate allegiance to the (rulers of the) nation state.

The second possibility will develop, to the extent that it does, as a subordinate aspect within and against the first. Finding that no part of the economy, whether sectorally or regionally, can hope to permanently inoculate itself against the crises of the other parts, the experience of market failure will reverse the market's lessons. The social and economic struggle which arises will reconfigure, in turn, the background associations of appropriate behavior, making "normality" an anachronism, allowing it to be disclaimed as a disastrous and debilitating apology for inactivity, a cladding from which must be awakened the resources it held entombed: the courage and generosity it gave expression to only in close and personal relations.

The struggle's strategic efforts will be twofold. First, to put an end to the leakage of capital, to the "primitive consumption" of the country's scientific, technological, labor, and ecological assets, and to replace it, eventually, with rational accumulation; second, to demilitarize society. The first will involve extensive re-nationalization of many privatized enterprises, and the further development of intra and inter-enterprise survival ties of market and cooperative kinds — extending both vertically from source to consumer, and horizontally across sectors — which will provide the objective reference for rational state coordination. The second will involve breaking the power of the military industry managers. Advance along either of these lines will depend upon parallel political developments, both within enterprises as workers organize to discipline managers, enforcing, where relevant, the shareholding rights of the labor collective, and more generally to democratize the bureaucratic policy apparatus and to institutionalize effective pressure on and representation within the legislative and executive branches.

Under the present circumstances the hope for this second route can only be faulted as romantic; but it is still the realistic minimum. Short of significant state involvement, from research coordination to sustained investment, the eventual recovery for most of Russian industry and farming will be at a level far below even its present injured capacities. One condition for raising the required revenue will be to end the hemorrhage of capital, and this will in turn require actions to limit the weight of banking, merchant capital and the oil and gas sectors within the state. Only the reorientation of Russian industry toward the domestic and, secondarily, foreign consumer markets, can support a government recovery policy based on improving the living standards and consumption levels of the population, thereby short-circuiting the impoverishment and degeneration which call forth authoritarianism as objective need and popular yearning.

Such a turn would amount to the institution of a new people-centered logic of accumulation. But it cannot begin to happen until workers in industry reach out to those in farming to elaborate their common interests, bridging the distances between them with the spark of *class* mobilization, offering for instance to support price controls on the manufactured inputs that are helping to bankrupt farms; asking for support in getting rid of the Central Bank policy of artificially boosting the ruble and thus subsidizing the consumer imports which undermine domestic manufacture (and farming). In the pursuit of these aims, alli-

ances will surely be made here and there with the leaders of industry and agriculture, but there will nonetheless be no breakthrough until organized labor is the dominant partner, the class with the initiative. The military industrial leadership especially must be ideologically disarmed, with effective power to organize conversion going to enterprise work collectives. Even assuming willingness at a bureaucratic level, there is no prospect of conversion to viable consumer production by ministerial fiat. On the other hand, as Seymour Melman has argued, waiting "for signals from The Market" is just a "cover story" for Russian (and American) governments afraid of stimulating the decision-making power of working people. Defense conversion will not be feasible without the central role of workplace conversion committees with the knowledge to draft and the power to implement detailed and realistic plans for the production of new products for domestic use.

The development of elements of self-management is consequently no whimsy. It is the practical solution to advancing disaster. The economy will be drawn more closely under popular control, or the government never will be. If authoritarianism has not yet properly reconsolidated itself it is only because its advance is blocked by the universal weakness of all political forces and of all figures. But what is to save the country from rule by the weak? The organic instability of an equilibrium of the impotent is evident, as is its bequest of corruption and social degradation. That the equilibrium can be administratively overcome — with bloody consequences — is evident; as is the chimerical character of that overcoming. Is *more* evidence needed that the great source of powerlessness into which the Russian elite is plugged is the non-exercise of power from below? The elite can perhaps maintain the momentum to careen down its spiral road, but there will be no exit while the population absents itself from building the political forms and the social trajectory which express its interests; no exit, that is, besides a dictatorial dead end.

NOTES

1. Unalloyed private capital is generally located only in the retail, trading, and banking sectors. Throughout much of the economy the (still unfinished) results of privatization have not produced private property in a strict sense, but rather mixtures of forms, often with a nominally controlling percentage of shares going to the relevant labor collective. A similar warning can be posted against most of the other primary concepts employed here — elite, state, nationalism, left, neo-liberal, etc. — as also against the manner of their connection; in this mobile situation both should be treated as more tentative than the strictures of narrative exposition can allow them to appear.

2. An all-Russian survey three months before Yeltsin acted showed that when asked "If there were a presidential election now, would you vote for B. Yeltsin?," 35.1% of respondents answered Yes, 46.2% No, and 18.7% Do Not Know. However, matters were worse if people were asked "Whom of the political figures of modern Russia do you trust?," only 16.1% named Yeltsin, and he came second, after his principal rival, Vice President A. Rutskoi, who was named by 22.2%. *Monitoring: the 1993 Russian Citizens' Opinion Poll Results*, by the Institute of Sociology, Russian Academy of Sciences (RAN), Moscow, July 1993.

3. There is much debate about the extent to which Yeltsin's confidants engineered the armed catharsis of October 3 and 4. The case for the conspiracy, a popular number in Russia, is well detailed in Alexander Tarasov's *Provokatsia*, self-published pamphlet, Janu-

ary 1994. The problem with arguments of this kind is that from the existence of conspiracies *per se* (and who was *not* conspiring at that time?) they derive evidence for a Conspiracy. But this conclusion entails an inability to account either for the reports of panic and disorganization inside the Kremlin on the night of the 3rd, or for why the Yeltsinites should have let the situation develop to the point where the loyalty of the military, and hence their hold on power, was in question. In general, such arguments underplay the dynamic of mass events themselves and overplay the capacities and foresight of the regime, crediting it with an omnipotence which probably owes more to the old Party's propaganda about itself than to careful analysis. Those interested in the events of October 3 and 4 should also know that a collection of witness accounts and analysis is currently being prepared by Andrei Kolganov for publication in English by *Monthly Review*.

4. And such is exactly what happened, if an investigatory commission set up under the President himself is to be believed. After a four-month investigation, the head of the Commission, Alexander Sobyanin, reported that only 46.1% of the population, not 54.8% had voted in the referendum. A total of nine million ballots, he said, had been falsified. The minimum 50% needed to validate the Constitution had therefore not been reached. See *Izvestia*, May 4, 1994. And for Sobyanin's reply to critics see *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, August 2, 1994. The idea that they are the proud owners of an invalid Constitution has attracted strenuous disinterest from both the government and the Parliamentary opposition (for different reasons), and genuine disinterest from the population. Tanks and swindles, thus is built a law based-state!

5. As late as July 1993, the above cited survey showed that, given a choice of 15 parties to vote for in elections to the Supreme Soviet, Zhirinovskiy's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) would have come 14th, followed only by Pamyat. *Monitoring*, op. cit.

6. Core support for the LDP in the election came from male industrial workers between the ages of 25 and 40 from small cities and towns. Two-thirds of those who voted for Zhirinovskiy's candidates were employed, only 10% were pensioners. Survey results published in *Izvestia*, cited in Renfrey Clarke, "Is Russia going Fascist?," *Green Left*, January 19, 1994.

7. See O.N. Dudchenko and A.V. Mytil, "Semeinaya Samoidentifikatsiya v Krizisnom Obshestve" in *Sotsialnaya Identifikatsiya Lichnosti*, Institute of Sociology, RAN, Moscow, 1993, pp. 89-90 on the problems of anxiety and disorientation attendant on the contemporary lack of this external "control-locus."

8. Dudchenko and Mytil in their study of the family and "pseudo-family," argue that women have been less active in their adaptation to the new conditions, more strongly attached to the past and to its rigid and passive stereotypes. *Sotsialnaya*, pp. 88, 105. Presumably one of the explanations for (but also one of the consequences of) this reaction lies in the fact that women are losing out very fast. According to the Center for Gender Studies their wages have dropped to 40 % of men's (down from 70% in the late Soviet era), and on Federal Employment Service figures they make up 70-75% of the unemployed. Among single mothers 55% live below the poverty line. Information from *Moscow Times*, Women's Issue, March 6, 1994.

9. Fedulova, electoral broadcast on Russian TV, December 2, 1993.

10. See also the interview with Yegor Letov and others in *Zavtra* (successor newspaper to *Dyen*), No 2 (7), January 1994.

11. Obviously the profile cited above of those giving electoral preferences to Zhirinovskiy's LDP cannot be conflated with sustained and active support for the LDP or for other groupings of the far right such as Dimitry Vasililyev's Pamyat faction, General Sterligov's Russian National Council [SOBOR], Alexander Barkashov's Russian National Unity (RNE), Sergei Barburin's slightly more centrist Russian National Union, and so on. No published research, to my knowledge, has yet been done on the membership and social background of such groups. Mikail Chernish of the Institute of Sociology, RAN, reports that his work on social stratification and authoritarian nationalist consciousness presently shows about 10% of the population identify with chauvinist groups possessing a

quasi-fascist image and ideology, while only about 5% of the intelligentsia makes this identification; among the latter, professionals in the humanities are highly represented. Women and men are equally represented, although women's stated motives for supporting extreme nationalist views more commonly refer to the security of their families and the future of their children than in the case of men. Interview with Chernish, April 12, 1994. A discussion of the various motives and conditions for membership in nationalist groups of all kinds has been attempted in M.C. Dzhunusov, *Suverenitet Kak Sotsialnii Fenomenon*, Moscow 1994, pp. 95-105. Demographic factors feeding Russian nationalist feeling since the break up of the USSR — for example, the possibility that at the next census in 1999 Russians will make up only 70% of the population, down from 82% at the last census — are developed in Valerii Tishkov, "Etnichnost, Natsionalizm i Gosudarstvo v Postkommunisticheskom Obshestve," *Voprosy Sotsiologii*, No. 1/2, 1993. However, reading these kinds of studies it becomes obvious you are in the presence of works with a more than explanatory function. No affiliation to far-right groups or their ideas, should be implied; nevertheless, where a Tishkov will publicize cautious suggestions for the introduction of special measures to support the development of the cultural traditions and ideals of the Russian people, who are allegedly losing out relative to some other nationalities in the ex-USSR, the RNE, responding to the same or similar sociological statistics (which are now well publicized), will speak of the need "to propagandize for a cult of the family" so that women will bear lots of children. In this way it will be possible to "increase the Russian population" and secure "the health and genetic purity of the Russian nation." See the RNE program, in *Russkii Poryadok*, No. 8(11), August 20, 1993.

12. Participating in the making of important political decisions is significant for only 4% of the Russian electorate; openness and free speech are significant values for only 12% (!), according to surveys administered by sociologist Nugzar Betaneli at the time of the election. *Segodnya*, December 15, 1993. However, in another survey in November 1993, when asked "Do you belong to a defined political party or movement?" 2.1% said Yes, up from 1.3% in July. *Zerkalo Menenii*, Institute of Sociology, RAN, November 1993. These are not insignificant figures since they refer to membership, although the contrast with the former figures on attitude only underlines the large gap between the tiny active minority and the repulsed majority.

13. Studies by Olga Kryshtanovskaya of the Elite Study Section of the Institute of Sociology, RAN, show that following Yeltsin's "democratic revolution" a grand total of 10% of the state elite have come to be composed of new (previously non-elite) people. *Business World Weekly*, June 27, 1994.

14. A few weeks later, on May 6, Yeltsin would use the opportunity afforded by a post-referendum television address to announce that he had lost his trust in Rutskoi.

15. Even in July, however, survey results showed that twice as many people (46.6%) opposed Yeltsin's decision to suspend Rutskoi as supported it (23.9%). *Monitoring* op. cit. Evidently Rutskoi was still a dangerous figure.

16. It would subsequently emerge that the evidence against Rutskoi had been forged. As Stanislav Govorukhin commented, it was "in reality the Anti-Rutskoi Commission." (Electoral broadcast on Russian TV, December 6, 1993.) Govorukhin is a film maker and Democratic Party leader who recently published a book popular among nationalists describing the contemporary process as "The Great Criminal Revolution."

17. An example of these effects was provided when Yeltsin delivered his Address to the Nation in the Kremlin on February 24, 1994. It would later become clear that just as he spoke of the need for all parties to respect the new Constitution, commenting that "not a single politician or government official today has as much support as the Constitution," he was strongly pressing his new public prosecutor and old ally, Alexei Kazannik, to disregard the Constitution and disallow the Parliament's decision to amnesty those arrested last October. Kazannik resigned in protest at the pressure two days later, the same day that Yeltsin's enemies walked free. In a nice conclusion to the episode, the president decided to get ahead of the game by appointing Alexei Ilyushenko, the former chief of the

above mentioned Anti-Corruption Commission, as his new public prosecutor. (Evidently there were won't be too many problems of finicky Constitutional adherence coming from this quarter.) However, it turns out the Ilyushenko appointment was unconstitutional!

18. *Segodnya* reported that according to unofficial figures, based only on the first part of 1993 in Russia, "120 leaders of firms and banks were killed, and there were more than 600 explosions, arson attacks and other terrorist acts related to businesses. The undeclared war in the market and for the market continues." *Segodnya*, December 15, 1993.

19. This conclusion, though perhaps simple, is crucial for an assessment of the government. Roy Medvedev of the Socialist Party of Workers cautiously draws the same point in *Levaya Gazeta*, No.16 (22), October 1993.

20. On this "paradoxical situation" see Ivan Zasurskii's comments in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 13, 1994.

21. Headline, *Kommersant*, No.3, February 1, 1994. Upon quitting the cabinet, Boris Fyodorov would find a less sympathetic audience for his warnings of an "economic coup d'etat" than he expected. At the time, projected monthly State Statistics Committee figures showed a likely fall in industrial production for the month of January alone of 25%. (The real fall would later turn out to be closer to 12-17%, depending on whom you believe.)

22. As Grigorii Yavlinsky has pointed out, in early 1992 enterprises were able to react by increasing non-payments and reducing their production volumes; this time they were just unable to acquire production inputs. Yavlinsky et. al. "Budzheth-94," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, April 14, 1994.

23. An alliance somewhat fortuitously embodied in the election in December 1992 of gas industry head, Victor Chernomyrdin, as Prime Minister of a neo-liberal cabinet, but more importantly manifest in support for the government from the newly created "free" trade unions in these sectors.

24. Interviews with Andrei Klepach, Institute of Economic Forecasting, RAN, and Boris Kagarlitsky, Party of Labor, early April 1994.

25. Some figures should give a picture of current consumption. In December 1993, the monthly subsistence minimum as estimated by the Ministry of Social Security, was 40,000 rubles. According to its figures, 30% of the population were below this minimum, most of them either young families on low pay, large families, single pensioners, or invalids. However, while wages in Russia in late 1993 were at 48% of the December 1991 level, they had only dropped to 93% of the December 1992 level. *Moscow News*, No. 14, April 5. The decline in wages therefore slowed considerably in 1993. Moreover, due to the net transfer from production to consumption, real (average) incomes actually rose slightly over the last year judging by home bank deposits. In addition, given the considerable size of the informal economy, non-wage incomes must be taken into account. According to a survey by Oleg Sabelyov, a sociologist with the All-Russian Center for the Study of Social Opinion, 45% of families say they partially support themselves by growing vegetables, doing their own repairs and so on, and 26% work a second job. Cited in *Trud*, April 7, 1994. An all Russian survey in November 1993 found only 20.5% (up insignificantly from 19.8% in July) reporting that they receive some kind of additional income; but there are good reasons why people might decide not to report certain sources of income. *Zerkalo*, op. cit.

26. Gefer speaking on Independent Television's *Itogi* program, October 10, 1993, transcript printed in *Vex Xx I Mir*, 1993. Gefer's comment is the more interesting because it comes from the belly of the beast; at the time he was a member of the President's Council.

27. The same Pavlovskii who would later come forward as the alleged author of "Variant No. 1,"

28. See the article "Derzhava" (meaning state, power or dominion) and used to indicate awe before the great empire character of the country (and now heard frequently on Foreign Minister Kozyrev's lips) by Zyuganov in *Sovietskaya Rossiya*, August 28, 1993. The article provoked condemnation inside the Communist parties for its nationalist and conciliatory emphasis. See for example the response to the expanded version in *Leninskii Put*, No. 16, March 1994.

29. The Party of Labor also sought to cooperate electorally with the Russian Social-Democratic Center, but talks came to a stop when the Center's leader, Oleg Rumyantsev, opted to run with the Civic Union ticket of industrial managers; a badly calculated move as the Civic Union would later be eliminated upon falling short of the 5% vote threshold for inclusion in the count. Kagarlitsky's account of the spoiled fruits of the Party of Labor's efforts to contest the elections can be found in *Solidarnost*, No. 20 (69).

30. For an explanation of the SPT's decision to work within the framework of the Otechestvo bloc see the interview with Vartazarova, *Levaya Gazeta*, op. cit.

31. See for instance, "Neostalinizm 'Pridvornoi' Intelligentsii," by Lyudmila Bulavka, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, December 1, 1993, and the piece by Petr Abovin-Yegidyev and Boris Slavin, "Apologia Avtoritarizma," *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, December 4, 1993.

32. See Bernstein's insightful "Right, Revolution and Community: Marx's 'On the Jewish Question'," in Peter Osborne (ed) *Socialism and the Limits of Liberalism*, Verso, London, 1991, p. 109.

33. The point is exemplified by the irony that the same ideological terrain was simultaneously being contested by the regime. Even as it was violating rights and laws the present power presided over the adoption of a Constitution which replaced the determinative powers of the old Congress — the abstract representative community — not only with increased presidential authority but also with a code of rights justified ultimately by a clearly Rousseauian recourse to nature. See in particular Article 17.2 of the new Constitution of the Russian Federation.

34. An interesting discussion of the social-psychological crisis in the "post-totalitarian period" has been advanced by Dydchenko and Mytil who believe they have detected a "temporal collapse" associated with a "thinning out of the 'present' in semantic space," See *Sotsialnaya*, op. cit., p. 104.

35. Neither, to the other side, was it evident that the Movement was able to adequately meet the concerns of people attracted to nationalist recipes. Officially the Movement depended on something like a distinction which stresses, "A division of values according to which 'ours' and 'not ours' are functions of national self-awareness, whereas 'higher' and 'lower,' 'better' and 'worse' are functions of nationalism," as Dzhunusov (not a member of the Movement) put it (*Suverenitet*, op. cit., p. 102), but in fact they had no way of making such a distinction politically operational. My impression was that many of their supporters considered a return to the true spirit of Russia (not the building of a people-oriented economy) to be the precondition of, and hence real meaning of, the rights they were demanding. The negative evaluation of other cultures which often explicitly inhabited these ideas was tolerated within the Movement as an understandable reaction to the ongoing destruction of Russian culture.

36. I am not convinced that a struggle organized along class lines without, for instance, significant transformation through women's and ecological struggles, will be sufficient to establish the basis for a democratic society. However, besides the difficulty of analytically incorporating these lines of force in an adequate way (which is no real excuse), the emphasis on class here seems justified because it is hierarchies of class power in the public economy that appear to be most proximately involved in the industrial decline and in blocking any democratic solution.

37. Compounding the confusing but risky crisis of legitimacy reflected in and attendant on the ideological shift from liberalism to patriotism, factors such as the insolvency of enterprises and institutes, leakage of skilled labor from institutes, and late wages and stipends, had begun to stimulate an increasingly widespread and emboldened mobilization.

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The Soviet Union Is Dead The “Russian Question” Remains

Part I: The Communist Past — Myth & Reality

Julius Jacobson

THE TURBULENT 30s OPENED ON A LANDSCAPE already scarred and battered by cruel and corrosive winds generated by the Crash of 1929, eroding faith in the American Dream, uprooting the lives of countless Americans, leaving in their wake an army of unemployed numbering in the millions. Particularly when viewed through a radical lens, the social panorama circa 1930 resembled a wasteland: the trade unions were all but decimated, and the Left was barely visible, seemingly impotent and irrelevant to American life.

Yet, during the Great Depression, America's industrial proletariat, so quiescent in 1930, revealed its amazing and inspirational capacity for renewal and struggle; so much so that by the middle of the decade workers laid siege, sometimes literally and often successfully, to what had only yesterday appeared impregnable citadels of corporate America. The working class not only built its unions and achieved economic gains but was able to wrest important social and legal concessions from both the governing political party and the judicial guardians of American capitalism.

That millions rallied to newly created industrial unions in the CIO (and to the AFL craft unions) and tens of thousands occupied factories in the famous sit-down strikes was more than a manifestation of “the instinctive self-mobilization of the masses” as some radical theorists would have it. There was an element of spontaneity in the powerful upsurge of class struggle militancy. But most decisive was the indispensable engagement of political activists who were members of organized parties or sects, and a large number of politically experienced, unaffiliated radicals who had developed organizational and administrative skills in one or another wing of a broadly defined Left, and contributed to building and shaping the contours of a renascent trade union movement.

Aiding the upsurge in trade union strength and militancy was perceived by the Left as a good in and of itself. But many socialists were additionally motivated to participate in the great labor struggles by the prospect — so they really believed — that workers would follow through on the revolutionary implications of taking over a factory to advance their economic interests, that they would be politically radicalized by their ex-

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perience, develop a social consciousness transcending bread-and-butter demands, grow receptive to socialist ideas and, before long, nourish and flesh out the Left's gaunt structures. Others had the more modest, still exhilarating expectation, that out of the struggle between capital and labor there would emerge a broad independent political party of the working class — a labor party.

It never worked out that way. The socialist movement benefited hardly at all, not even in the short run; and the labor party vision proved ephemeral. Several reasons for these failed expectations are central to our discussion of the "Russian Question" and will be touched on later. But to set the stage for that discussion it is important to note that socialist optimism in the 30s, more precisely the mid-30s, led to higher levels of political commitment and at times to an almost frenetic degree of activism. More public forums ("educational work"), more street corner meetings ("agitational work"). Endless leafletting of working-class neighborhoods, hawking or distributing party literature on the streets, at housing projects or outside factory gates. There was the missionary assignment known as "contacting" — uninvited proselytizing visits to the homes of those who, somehow or other, wound up as "contacts" on a well-guarded list of possible recruits. There were the additional time demands on comrades expected to be involved in trade union work, or active in unemployed councils or neighborhood and social organizations. And for those in such "fractions" in non-party organizations, there was the additional obligation to meet with one another and with party leaders to discuss what policy and strategy to pursue in their unions and "outside" organizations.

And there was more, considerably more, to absorb the 30s' activist, above all in the intensely ideational revolutionary Left of my experience where local branch meetings, citywide conferences and national conventions were often turned into ideological battlegrounds in what appeared to be the Permanent War of the Questions, as opposing factions fought over the Trade Union Question, the American Question, the Negro Question, the Woman Question and the Jewish Question, the National Question and the International Question and always, of course, the Organizational Question and ... the list is almost inexhaustible. The debates were never polite exchanges. If polemical thrusts had lethal force, most in the revolutionary movement I knew would have perished prematurely, eliminating the cadre who cranked the handles of antiquated mimeograph machines spitting out pages (not always legible) to be manually collated and stapled into volumes of discussion articles, Majority and Minority Reports, Theses and Resolutions; nor would there have been an audience.

The intensity of factional combat in the War of the Questions was often excessive, to say the least, as a debated Question frequently escalated into what was called a Split Question leading to further fragmentation of an already badly fractured socialist left. Unfortunately, any num-

ber of leftish chroniclers seized upon the fierceness of those debates to disparage, even mock, our concerns. Yet, whatever the incongruities and sectarian excesses, those debates reflected an admirable appreciation of the relevance of ideas and principles to building movements of struggle for social transformation. More than that, an objective reading of the “sectarian” literature of the period — polemics and “internal” bulletins included — revealed a level of sophistication, knowledge, passion and literatness that might benefit many academic historians, theorists and activists today.¹

Of all the Questions, the preeminent one was the notorious “Russian Question.” When the “Russian Question” was on the agenda, discussion and debate often spilled over until late at night at some eatery favored by radical habitués where stale danish washed down by incredibly bad coffee only seemed to stoke the appetite for discussion and mapping factional strategy.

Here, too, some chroniclers of the Old Left — more accurately of the old *socialist* left — dismiss the concentration on the Russian Question in an unseemly offhand manner as the hallmark of Talmudic sectarians preoccupied with the recondite minutiae of Russian history. More egregiously — since almost all factions debating the Russian Question shared a common opposition to Stalinism — this charge of sectarianism is a political judgment, accompanied as it often is, by innuendos and explicit criticisms that the socialist Left was more concerned with promoting “anti-Communism” than getting down to the nitty-gritty of building progressive movements in the U.S. That criticism is without the slightest merit. The Russian Question deserved to be a central concern of American socialists. It still does! In a fundamental way the Russian Question did relate to the nitty-gritty of building progressive movements in the U.S. When one looks at the critics closely, as we will do, it becomes apparent that what irks so many was less the authentic Old Left’s concern with the Russian Question than the fact that the results of the relevant discussion, study and debate led many to an uncompromising repudiation of Stalinism.

The Relevance of the Russian Question

THE RUSSIAN QUESTION LOOMED SO LARGE IN OUR POLITICAL (AND PERSONAL) LIVES precisely because, among other reasons, it *did* relate to building and advancing progressive and radical causes in the U.S.: in many ways, both subtle and apparent, almost all major international and domestic questions and events were linked to the Russian Question. In the early 30s Stalinism had already consolidated its

1. For example, the *New International*, a monthly revolutionary Marxist publication, between the years 1934-1941 included articles by Sidney Hook, Max Eastman, Hal Draper, Max Shachtman, A.J. Muste. Harold Isaacs, Ludwig Lore, Dwight Macdonald, C.L.R. James, Irving Howe, James Burnham, Daniel Guérin, Alfred Rosmer, Leon Trotsky.

power in the Soviet Union and the Soviet Party had the ultimate say in determining what course could be taken by a national party affiliated to the Third International, subordinating the interests of the working class in all countries to those of the Soviet Party/State. Above all, in countries where Communist parties were mass movements it was impossible to understand and intelligently respond to critical moments in national history in isolation from the Russian Question. The relative ease of Hitler's rise to power (the German Question) cannot be explained if divorced from the disastrous policies imposed on the powerful but subservient German Communist movement by the Soviet Union during the so-called "Third Period." The shattering defeat of the Spanish Revolution (the Spanish Question) cannot be fathomed without taking into account the manipulation, cynicism and treachery of Soviet involvement. A study of the Russian Question also sheds light on the evolution of the French Popular Front, as well as the historic events in China, Southeast Asia, the Middle East and the colonial and semi-colonial world.

The Communist movement in the United States was a significant force in the trade unions during the 30s and 40s, primed to adjust its trade union activity to conform to Soviet ambitions. If one is not blind to the American party's slavish fidelity to the Soviet Union, it becomes clear that the Russian Question had a profound effect on the American Trade Union Question. The direct relevance of the Russian Question to American political life is illustrated in the formation of the Communist-dominated Progressive Party and the calamitous Wallace presidential campaign of 1948 which was pressed on a hesitant CPUSA by the Soviet Union to satisfy Cold War objectives, suggesting that in a fundamental sense the Progressive Party was less an American phenomenon than a phenomenon that happened in America.

Though it is essential to appreciate the international scope of the Russian Question, there are other, more transcendent, reasons why the stormy debates of the 30s should not be allowed to collect dust in some antiquarian corner of the academic world. For the debates involved core theoretical conceptions and values of revolutionary socialism, i.e., Marxism. By the late 30s most participants agreed with Trotsky's damning indictment of the Soviet government as a "totalitarian abomination" that paralleled fascism. While there was a wide consensus about the abominable nature of Stalinism, many insisted — as did Trotsky — that despite the brutal dictatorship, the USSR remained a "workers state," albeit a "degenerated" one, to be defended "unconditionally" in the event of war. Others in the movement protested that a totalitarian society that deprived the working class of all social power, illegalized all political parties except the one in power, destroyed all democratic institutions and democratic rights, and ruled through the knout could not be given the blank check of "unconditional defense" by socialists.

Such differences, battled over in the 30s were never purely academic and took on a political immediacy when the Soviet Union invaded Poland, occupied the Baltic countries and made war on Finland in 1939-40. Inevitably, the view of the USSR as even a degenerated form of a workers state, along with its more general implications that a modern Party/State could be both a "totalitarian abomination" and "socially progressive," was challenged and repudiated by a section of the socialist Left.

Many of us emerged from those debates with the conviction that a workers

prison could never be a workers state. I would prescribe a study of 100 pages of fierce polemics in the 30s in defense of the basic Marxist principle of the indivisibility of democracy and socialism as an antidote to the counterpositions developed in 1000 pages I have read in the 90s which describe, as often as not in the most convoluted argot, all the “ambiguities” and “complexities” of democracy, in preparation for the bad news that democracy is not really central to socialism, that socialism need not mean freedom and that authoritarian movements and totalitarian societies, past and present, can, after all, be “socially progressive” and/or “historically justifiable.” If we were obsessed then, so long ago, with the Russian Question it was only because we were obsessed with socialism. The Russian Question was and remains the question of socialism. That is why, for example, so much passion and mimeograph ink was expended in debating the alleged causal link that many within and outside the movement sought to establish between the Stalinist terror and the theory and practice of Leninism. We were concerned, too, with the arguments of critics, often ex-radicals such as Max Eastman, grown hostile to socialism, who not only insisted that Stalinism flowed from Leninism but inveighed against “Stalinism/Leninism” as a frightful malignancy that grew within the womb of Marxism. (Earl Browder and Max Eastman had this much in common: both believed in the ideological unity of Stalinism/Leninism/Marxism. They shared more than that: Browder was a prominent shaman in a Stalinist cabal to distort Leninism beyond recognition and to disembowel Marxism; Eastman was an intellectual high priest in a more traditional right-wing cabal to discredit the Russian Revolution and Bolshevism and to defame Marxism.)

Those were the issues then and they are of even greater moment today since journalists and historians, from right to left, increasingly assume the identity of Stalinism and Leninism and, in this age of new conservatism, routinely extend the causal chain to include Marxism. For if it could be established that Stalinism did indeed flow from Leninism and Leninism was a natural child of Marxism we would have to concede, as we weep, that the Russian Revolution, which had been a sustaining source of inspiration and hope for the socialist Left, was a monumental social travesty, and that socialism, at least Marxian socialism, was a monstrous lie and the fount of incalculable human misery. (We will take up the alleged affinity of Marxism/Leninism/Stalinism in the second part of our discussion.)

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NO TENDENCY IN THE ANTI-STALINIST OLD LEFT had all the answers to the Russian Question. However, I believe that the analyses which have best withstood the test of time evolved in a tendency in the revolutionary socialist Left (i.e., the Trotskyists) in the late 30s which sought to establish itself as an independent revolutionary party in the 40s — the Workers Party — later known as the Independent Socialist League and perhaps best known as the Shachtmanites, in tribute (whether intended as such or not) to its leading personality and theoretician, Max Shachtman. It was an extraordinary movement whose contributions to socialist theory and courageous continuation, during World War II, of the finest class struggle traditions of revolutionary socialism are only now beginning to receive the interest and appreciation they deserve. Its analysis of Stalinism

culminating in the theory of a new parasitic Stalinist ruling class — bureaucratic collectivism — was its unique contribution to socialist theory.

But the theory of bureaucratic collectivism did not serve its proponents well as a crystal ball. We had no illusions about the viability of Stalinism, understanding better than most the inner contradictions of the Stalinist state that made it infinitely more fragile than it appeared on the totalitarian surface. But we did have illusions about a post-Stalinist future. We believed, almost assumed, that a corrupt and inefficient bureaucratic collectivist state would be superseded by some form of a democratic order. We foresaw (or dreamed of) a resurgent, socialistically-oriented working class with its natural allies found among the intelligentsia that would resist all efforts to privatize the nationalized economy. All an illusion, dashed for the historic moment.

I do not intend to draw the bow of pessimism too far. The subsequent disappointments notwithstanding, the toppling of the Wall, the liberation of the Baltic nations, the disintegration of the Stalinist empire in the East, the crumbling of Communist Party rule and the disintegration of the Soviet Union as a prison house of nations remain extraordinary achievements which represent an enormous advance over the Old Regime and create possibilities for fundamental progressive change denied in a single Party/State. But there can be no denying that what adds to the timeliness of the debates of the Russian Question is the ominous turn of events, foreseen by no one, in much of the post-Communist world, above all in the blood-soaked Balkans and in the tortured lands of the former USSR.

In the Russian Republic — as in most nations of the dismembered USSR — there is the anomaly, tragic and farcical, of leading elements of the former Communist ruling class, driven by personal and social instincts of survival, mauling each other as they scramble and strain to self-metamorphose into the executive committee and financial elite of an artificially created and militantly anti-Communist bourgeoisie. A unique kind of one-dimensional “class struggle” in which a ruling class is fiercely fighting to overthrow itself; from corrupt Party apparatchiks to corrupt would-be bourgeois statesmen, from Communist bosses in economic ministries into industrial magnates of such avarice and ruthlessness as to make the 19th century robber barons look like Robin Hoods and philanthropists by comparison; or while former Party ideologues and the occasionally recalcitrant, but usually obedient, economic managers of the old Communist system convert into passionate disciples of Adam Smith, Milton Friedman, Augusto Pinochet, Margaret Thatcher, et al. and, preaching the new gospel of the market, seek their fortunes as nouveaux riches capitalist speculators and swindlers. It is all part of the process of shock therapy, which translates into shock for the vast multitude below and therapy for the Party bureaucrats turned entrepreneurs on top.

While we erred in our optimism, our analysis of Soviet society elaborated years ago provides valuable insights today for an understanding of the historic roots of the emergent reactionary forces in the post-Communist world, above all in the former USSR. They provide the insight that this embryonic bourgeoisie, which could not have sprung from some mythical forehead, and the spreading manifestations of reaction, which threaten to plunge some former subjugated nations that made up the Soviet Union into new forms of barbarism, *were all spawned by Stalinism*. The link between the threatening present and the Stalinist past is more profound than the continuity of personnel noted above — former

Communist apparatchiks seeking fame and fortune as capitalist tycoons. The Yeltsins, Rutskois and Zhirinovskys and the legion of former apparatchiks have demagogically succeeded in turning the legitimate democratic struggle for national independence into its ugly opposite, a manifestation of primitive national chauvinism; the emergence of neo-fascism, of monarchism, the boldness of anti-Semites; the nexus of a political, economic and purely criminal mafioso — whatever the incompatibility of these post-Communist personalities and phenomena — all share a common birthright as the legatees of Stalinism. To couch my point in the idiom of the Old Left debates of the Russian Question: each and every diverse and contradictory form of reaction in the ex-Soviet Union flows from Stalinism. To expand the point a bit, in reverse form, the social structure, the politics, the “culture,” the personnel, all the social impulses and contradictions of Stalinism-in-power turned the USSR into a fertile breeding ground for parasites and parasitism, for bigotry and banditry which flourished under the old regime but now appear in new guise, more overt, sometimes bolder in post-Communist society.

Take the current frightening manifestations of xenophobia and anti-Semitism, as fascists and unreconstructed Communists lock arms in joint struggle against “foreigners” (non-Great Russians) and “kikes”; a rewind of the days of the Nazi-Soviet Pact when Molotov and von Ribbentrop embraced, and German and Soviet troops fraternized on Polish streets. One need not go back to the terrible days of the Black Hundreds and Czarism to find the antecedents of Pamyat and a host of rabidly anti-Semitic organizations. *Russian anti-Semitism today is the patrimony of the Communist system.* As the old anti-Stalinist Left long ago noted, anti-Semitism was endemic to Stalinism; not a social “aberration” or an “excess” but something that oozed out of the pores of the totalitarian ruling Party, contaminating all levels of society. Stalin killed tens of thousands of Jews, as Jews, the famous and the obscure, rivalling the number who fell victim to Czarist pogroms. The large-scale killing of Jews abated under Stalin’s successors, as did the terror, in general. Yet, even under Khrushchev, anti-Semitism was tolerated, often inflamed by the regime, and “the thaw” did not save numerous Jews executed for “economic crimes.” Nor did Gorbachev make any serious effort to counteract anti-Semitism deeply rooted in his Party and in Soviet society during his tenure. He never took on Pamyat but he callously used the plight of Jews as a bargaining chip in his dealings with the West.

As with anti-Semitism, a root cause of ethnic and nationalist violence within and between the former Republics of the USSR goes far deeper than the fall of Communism. The violence can be traced to the rise and consolidation of Communist power. The Communist State embraced a multiplicity of subjugated nations, less a Union of Republics than an internal empire dominated by an all-powerful Party in which the Great Russian Republic was more equal than all others; a prison house of nations whose wardens kept the empire intact in many ways, not least of all through the use of terror. The Soviet imperium offered neither means of expression nor possibility of redress of legitimate ethnic and national grievances against the Party/State and, conversely, the Kremlin had neither the will nor the capacity to find progressive resolutions of them. Instead, the Party manipulated rivalries for its own advantage and had not the slightest compunction about liquidating vast numbers of national subjects or sending into exile entire peoples when it was thought to serve some higher Party purpose. Against this

background it is not surprising that with the sudden collapse of the Communist empire, legitimate and long suppressed nationalist feelings which surfaced could be manipulated by demagogues who could effectively play on both legitimate national sentiments and ancient tribal prejudices and rivalries to preserve and enhance their personal careers. Just as Yeltsin, the-Communist-apparatchik was reborn as Yeltsin-the-capitalist-apparatchik, so were many of the pseudo nationalist demagogues, in their earlier guise, the viceroys of Soviet imperialism, willing to silence dissenting voices in their assigned republics by whatever means Moscow thought necessary.

But the patrimony of Communism is more disastrous than the sum of its details. What is most depressing is the social vacuum, at best the mere absence of concrete and significant manifestations of a democratic consciousness, of an independent working-class presence, of progressive social activism, of an organized and influential socialist voice. Consider the bloody confrontation between Yeltsin's forces and those of Rutsкои and Khasbulatov. That neither side could rally truly large numbers either to defend or assault the Parliament would have been more encouraging were it not for the fact that neither were there organizations which could rally thousands to protest the depredation of both sides.

There are, of course, individual voices of conscience and several small working-class, democratic, anarchist and socialist groups but that their voices were not multiplied a thousandfold on the streets of cosmopolitan Moscow, a city of nine million, when basic democratic rights were threatened by two contending authoritarian-oriented forces cannot be solely attributed to fear. Both the blood-bath and the lack of a popular response from below are the tragic consequences of Stalinism's innate impulse to destroy the institutions, the symbols, the history, the traditions of socialism. It sought to destroy socialist consciousness and the socialist culture in the name of "socialism," and to convince everyone that the USSR and its ruling Communist Party were the natural heirs of the best in the socialist tradition. Many in the West and the Third World swallowed this myth whole or in part, accepting the Soviet Union as a shining beacon of progress or, at least, as a progressive alternative to capitalist imperialism. The additional tragedy is that Soviet citizens also accepted the myth that the Party of Stalin and Gorbachev were the spiritual and political descendants of Marx. But since the misery of their lives under Communism carried more weight than the drivel dished out by apologists for the Party/State, their equation of Communism and socialism had the effect of turning them against socialism.

Estranged from socialism, millions of Soviet citizens were more easily seduced by the myth of the market as a potential cure-all for all the misery inflicted on them in the tortured past by a bureaucratic collectivist state. The allure of the capitalist market is not difficult to understand. Standing atop the economic ruins left by the decades-long inept and corrupt command economy, they see Paris and London, Rome and New York, Berlin and Madrid and all the other capitals of really existing capitalism and what they see seems to confirm all the fabled reports of fashionable boulevards, boutiques filled with luxury goods and chic shoppers, supermarkets overflowing with foodstuffs at affordable prices. And they know that whatever the economic variations among these Western meccas, all accept the primacy of capitalist forms of private property and the sanctity of the capitalist market. If capitalism could produce such abundance in the West, then capitalism could surely do the same for them. They despise the collectivist sys-

tem that has produced such hardship and chaos and refuse to believe that socialist forms of collectivism could be any different from the really existing collectivism they have had to endure under the old regime. Collectivism is collectivism! No form of it is acceptable. They are tired of being part of social "experiments," opposed to "utopias," a term of opprobrium to describe both the terrible Communist past and socialist projects for the future. They yearn, instead, for what the Russians call a "normal" life, the "normality" of abundance that they see in the West based on its capitalist organization of private property, profits, and that fabulous market.²

We of the American Left know that these are largely illusions not that different from the false hopes of the vast numbers who, earlier in the century, sought refuge in the U.S. a haven to escape repression and grinding poverty. Just as it was difficult then to convince a poor Jew living in a Polish shtetl in constant fear of pogromists that America was not really the *Goldene Medina* so it is difficult today to impress on the consciousness of the people of the former Soviet Union that in the U.S., too, there is unemployment, poverty, insecurity and a mounting meanness of spirit that has always afflicted this nation. What does register is the reality than an unemployed miner in West Virginia has better prospects and a higher standard of living than an employed coal miner in the Donbas; and that an elderly American trying to scrape by on a fixed income is better off than a humiliated Moscow pensioner trying to peddle her/his old pair of boots or some family heirloom to buy a life-sustaining loaf of bread.

Meanwhile standing on top of the economic and social debris that was the Soviet Union are right-wing ideologues taking copious notes for monographs, books and important lectures on the background and lessons of the post-Communist crisis. The chaos of post-Communist societies is presented as the bitter fruit of Stalinism which, they insist, was the natural emanation of Bolshevism and the Russian Revolution. A number of these ideologues, emboldened by the disintegration of "really existing socialism" trace the travail of the Russian people back to an earlier sinister source — Marxism — and, more generally, socialism. Some do not stop there. With Sherlockian doggedness, they stay on the trail of totalitarian precursors and are rewarded by the discovery that Soviet despotism and its disastrous aftermath, according to Richard Pipes, derived from "the Enlightenment, perhaps the most pernicious idea in the history of thought ..."

And the lessons do not end with this assault on the Enlightenment. The penultimate lesson is that the collapse of Soviet society proves that capitalism is the highest stage of social evolution. In the breathtaking formulation of Professor Martin Malia "...the Soviet failure has demonstrated that the market is part of the social order of nature."

The scholarly promulgation of the historical progression — Enlightenment/Marxism/Russian Revolution/Stalinism/post-Communist disorder — with the Soviet debacle offered as evidence of the noble impulses of triumphant capital-

2. As recent elections in the East clearly indicate much of this faith in the market has eroded in the last year or two. Instead of capitalist "reforms" moving the people a bit closer to perceived Western affluence, experimentation with the market has been accompanied by austerity programs, and the populace driven further into a general state of penury. Nevertheless, illusions about the curative powers of capitalism are prevalent and even the new governments, presumably resistant to market reforms, continue on the same path.

ism adds wider dimensions to the Russian Question. But right-wing ideologues of the Malia school are not the only ones surveying the wreckage that was the Soviet Union. Representatives from another political current are also on the scene, also taking notes, and they come up with altogether different lessons than those of the right, although from a socialist perspective they are no less noxious. They have sifted through the evidence of violence, corruption and other manifestations of social decay, and quickly reached the verdict, announced with a touch of nostalgia, that the defunct “really existing socialism,” despite its “flaws” (but, then, nothing is perfect) was a positive force for good. One of the more colorful deans of this school is Alexander Cockburn, an icon for many in the Left and a lifelong apologist for Stalinism who yearns for what was “relatively speaking, a golden age for the Soviet working class” during the preperestroika years when the Soviet Union befriended the world’s poor and oppressed in the spirit of “proletarian internationalism.”

Cockburn’s affection for the ancien regime does not have as wide an appreciative audience as Martin Malia’s anti-socialist polemics and joyous jubilate, *Glory to “the Market,”* but within a broadly defined Left, Cockburn’s wistful regard for the Brezhnevian age of stagnation and his nostalgia for the bygone years of the Red Army’s demonstration of “proletarian internationalism” in Afghanistan does not seem to diminish his popularity. At best, his apologies for “really existing socialism” are viewed with unseemly toleration; at worst, they are applauded.

That this school of apologetics has survived the collapse of “really existing socialism” also underscores the need for the Left to keep the Russian Question toward the top of its theoretical agenda.

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF *NEW POLITICS* I WILL EXPAND THE DISCUSSION of the affinity between Stalinism and post-Communist society with a more intensive review of Stalinist despotism, “really existing socialism,” and the Gorbachev phenomenon. I will rebut in greater detail bourgeois ideologues, such as the above mentioned Martin Malia who uses the collapse of Communism as a launching pad to distort the history of the Russian Revolution and calumniate Marxism as a root cause of Stalinist totalitarianism. I will also take a closer look at the ruminations of Alexander Cockburn, who manipulates the chaos of post-Communist society to air and promote his nostalgia for the better old days of “really existing socialism.” As a theoretical framework and to set the stage for this discussion, the debates on the Russian Question in the Old Socialist Left will be reviewed with special emphasis on the theory that the Stalinist bureaucracy was in fact a new exploitive totalitarian ruling class.

What follows now is a review of *American Stalinism*, which, as I will argue, cannot be adequately understood except as an aspect of the Russian Question. In a broad historical sense it is a subsidiary aspect, but for the American Left it is of major importance. This is because of the increasingly popular school of left-wing revisionist historians determined to prove that the U.S. Communist movement, above all in its halcyon years, during the Great Depression of the 30s and the Great Patriotic War of the 40s, enjoyed a semi-autonomous relationship to the Soviet Union and was responsive to American events even if that meant ig-

noring or flouting Moscow instructions.

If these revisionist historians used their analytical skills to objectively examine the Russian Question in depth, they might realize that the Stalinist state did not, because it could not, allow its American political appendage the degree of independence they invent. Perhaps that is why they never discuss the Russian Question. To do so might reveal the extent to which American Communism was a Soviet dependency; and to probe the question deeply would disclose the full and unrelieved horror of Stalinism. An American Communist Party revealed as slavishly obedient to a totalitarian state is not compatible with the more positive image of a party engaged in the good fight during the 30s and 40s. Better, then, to avoid serious discussion of the Russian Question and settle for a few fragmentary comments that usually begin with a ritualistic repudiation of Stalin's crimes and a note of regret about Soviet violations of democracy.

But inevitably the mythicization of American Stalinism promotes illusions about the Soviet Union. More often than not, in their brief comments, distress about Soviet terror is amended and often contradicted as they offer a more "balanced" account emphasizing Soviet "achievements": industrialization, the elimination of illiteracy, the victory against Hitler, aid to the Third World, etc. — the stock and trade of timeworn and discredited Soviet apologists.

Since the revisionist account of U.S. Communism is laden with historical error it is a disservice to American radicalism and serves to obscure the truth about a reactionary totalitarian state. It is therefore both useful and important to approach the Russian Question by way of an examination of the American Communist Party and those who would revise its history.

I HAVE TAKEN NOTE OF THE INTENSITY OF THE WAR OF THE QUESTIONS in the Old Left. That calls for a major amendment implied above but which should be made more pointedly here. The war of the questions was the exclusive hallmark of the anti-Stalinist Left. From roughly 1930 until Stalin's death, this democratic tradition was alien to American Stalinism just as democracy was anathema to the Stalinist Party/State. In the American Communist movement there were no ideological wars, not even skirmishes, since there were virtually no Questions, if by a Question one means not a dictum but a substantive issue thrown open to membership debate and then discussed, amended, accepted or rejected. By this definition of a Question — what other is there? — there was *never* a critical Question on the agenda of the Communist Party in that period; not the American Question or the International Question or the Trade Union Question or any other Question centered on basic political, theoretical, or strategic issues. Instead, there was a Line on everything — an American Line, a Negro Line, an International Line, a Line about the agricultural crisis and a Line about art, etc., transmitted to the rank and file by the Party leaders above and determined and monitored by forces very, very far away.

As for a debate in the Communist Party on the Russian Question, the very notion is fantastically absurd, wildly hilarious. Disputation in Communist circles about any aspect of Soviet society or Soviet intent, even in whispers, was unthinkable. Can one even imagine the bedlam that would have ensued if a loyal Communist with many hashmarks on his/her Party sleeve, had the temerity to take the floor at a Party gathering and begin her/his remarks with: "We are all grateful for Stalin's glorious contributions to humankind but I think that, possi-

bly, Stalin is somewhat mistaken on the question of” The reader can fill in the blank, guessing whatever our mythic aberrant Communist might have had in mind, since it is certain that he/she would not have remained on the podium long enough to identify the doubt. We know how such a display of bad manners would have been dealt with where the Party held state power. Here, fortunately, punishment for such a breach of Party etiquette could rarely be more painful than verbal pillorying and summary expulsion.

One cannot begin to understand the atmosphere, and the functioning of the American CP in its most Stalinist period, or grasp the social essence of Soviet totalitarianism, if one fails to recognize that debate, even a mild exchange of views about the nature of Soviet society or the wisdom of its international policies or its instructions to its American affiliate was even less likely than the Pope chairing a debate in the College of Cardinals on the question, “Does God Really Exist?”

OF COURSE, THERE WERE DISCUSSIONS AND DISAGREEMENTS (AND PERSONAL RIVALRIES) within the Communist Party. But they were confined to its upper echelons and even there, controversy had strict limits. One could argue about how best to apply a policy laid down by the Comintern (or later the Cominform) and by Stalin but never to dispute it. Or when problems arose for which there were no ready answers to be found in Moscow directives — a rare circumstance — different positions were argued within the leadership. But if these differences threatened to escalate out of control, disturbing the sacred “unity” of the Party, or if they had the potential of turning into a genuinely substantive disagreement, then a final determination was made, not by the American rank and file, but by Comintern representatives or by a *hegira* to the highest authorities in Moscow whose decision was final and irreversible (except subsequently by the Soviet Party itself).

The evidence that American Communism was totally subservient to the Stalinist Party/State, that its basic dogma and political strategy were not determined by the needs and interests of the American masses, has become so clear, accessible and abundant that one might have expected the umbilical tie of American Stalinism to Soviet Stalinism no longer needed to be proved. Nevertheless, we are informed by one of the contemporary academic left historians that the Communist Party, at least in the 1940s, was “Standing On Its Own Feet.”³ These historians, however, have never been able to demonstrate that the Communist Party during Stalin’s reign ever raised any part of its anatomy from a prostrate position to anything higher than a suppliant’s kneel, certainly never elevated itself to “standing on its own feet.” Yet, the preeminent view in the literature of the Left remains that the American Communist Party in the 30s and 40s was, again in the words of perhaps the most sophisticated and challenging of the revisionist historians, Fraser Ottanelli,

a diverse and adaptable organization rooted in the social and labor struggles of the time and capable of adjusting to the complexities and historical peculiarities of the nation’s society and the pressures that derived from them.

Space does not allow a fully detailed rebuttal to such mythology masquerading

3. A chapter heading from Fraser M. Ottanelli’s *The History of the Communist Party of the United States, from the Depression to World War II*.

as history, but at least we can remind the reader, in summary fashion, of the historical record which reveals that the American Communist Party was only as "diverse" as the Russian party would allow, that it was "adaptable" only to what the Kremlin would permit and, above all, that its response to the peculiarities and pressures of American society were prescribed, proscribed and conditioned by its ideological imperative of "adjusting to the complexities and historical peculiarities" of the Soviet Party/State and the pressures that derived from it.

Does American Stalinism circa 1930-1953 call for any less harsh judgment? Consider the historical record.

American Stalinism in the Third Period

IN THE EARLY 30S ALL NATIONAL TRIBUTARIES OF THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL were directed into a Moscow-created ideological and political phantasm, popularly known as the Third Period. The "first period" from 1917-1924 was one of international revolutionary offensives, followed in the "second period" by four years of capitalist stabilization, and now, according to Comrade Stalin by a Third Period of renewed revolutionary struggles led, of course, by Communist parties that would crush the bourgeoisie which, the General Secretary reassured his followers, was not only weakened everywhere by a cyclical crisis but was spasmodically gasping for breath in its final death agony.

This Third Period was marked by an ultra-leftism which, viewed in purely intellectual terms, was quixotic to the point of madness. Not the least of its idiosyncracies was the theory of "social fascism" which twinned social democracy with fascism. Placed in historical context, however, the theories of the Third Period were not really mad, merely insidious. For the pseudo-revolutionary clap-trap that accompanied Stalin's gross exaggeration of capitalism in profound social crisis was useful as both ideological adornment and weapon in his late 20s campaign to crush the last vestiges of an already defeated Bukharinite "right" in the Soviet Union. And mopping up the last outposts of dissidence from the "right" or from any other direction under the banner of Third Period ultra-revolutionary rhetoric was the preliminary to the extermination of millions of peasants, workers and intellectuals in the subsequent years of forced collectivization, forced industrialization and the Great Purges.

Thus what appeared on the surface to be irrational served the retrograde purpose of consolidating the stranglehold of a totalitarian Stalinist bureaucracy over all of Soviet society. Outside the Soviet Union, Third Period policies benefited neither the working class nor the national Communist parties. In Germany, it had horrifying consequences for the German working class, the German nation, the German Communist Party and for all of humanity. The only ones who gained from the Communist Third Period were the Nazis, since the refusal of the powerful Communist Party to propose and press collaboration with the even more powerful Social Democratic Party in a genuine anti-fascist united front (excluded by Party dogma of the moment which insisted that the Socialist Party was itself a fascist or even worse, a "social fascist" party), virtually guaranteed the triumph of Hitlerism. Loyalty to Moscow took precedence over the literally life and death question of crushing Naziism. If the huge German CP would not deviate from a suicidal policy arranged in Moscow, what possibility was there that the relatively minuscule American CP would adjust its "policies to the com-

plexities and peculiarities" of American society, as Ottanelli assures us was the case, when that conflicted with American Stalinism's primary allegiance to Moscow?

At least in Germany, the ultra-left rhetoric of the Communist Party came from a massive organization with hundreds of thousands of members which commanded the support and respect of millions of workers, youth and intellectuals. Hence, when we note that the Third Period policies of the German Communist Party were at odds with objective national realities, the measure of that criticism must be adjusted to the fact that the German CP, by virtue of its enormous strength, was itself one of the "objective realities" of pre-Hitler Germany. When the Communists boasted that even if Hitler came to power they would make short shrift of him ("After Hitler — Our Turn") one must remember that it was the boast of a Party that won nearly six million votes in the 1932 elections and even had its own para-military organizations. (Of course, after Hitler, instead of it being "Our Turn," the powerful Communist Party collapsed without a fight. However, that is for another discussion.)

But when the feeble American Communist Party, marginal to the objective realities of American life, railed against Roosevelt the "fascist" and Norman Thomas the "social fascist," when it interpreted episodic manifestations of militant struggle in the early 30s as evidence of a pre-revolutionary situation in the U.S., when every strike and demonstration was a precursor of an imminent struggle — that the Party would lead, naturally — to create a Soviet America (never mind, for the moment how frightful the prospect of a Stalinist version of a Soviet America), when the Communists sought to build "revolutionary" dual unions under Party control in a country where the traditional unions were battered to near oblivion — then the Third Period, American Stalinist-style, unlike Germany, was marked more by farce than tragedy. More pertinent here, is that the gross contradictions between the antics of the Third Period and the social realities revealed the extent to which American Communism in the early 30s, already congenitally incapable of standing on its own feet, had placed itself in political servitude to Moscow.

On the heels of Hitler's accession to power, the German New Order made it imperative that the Soviet Union respond with a new foreign policy that would oblige Communist movements everywhere to phase out the pseudo ultra-left of the Third Period. Gradually at first, the retreat from sectarianism and revolutionary bombast would give way to the conciliatory politics of the Soviet Union's hoped-for "Collective Security" of a political and military alliance with the major Western powers (only yesterday denounced as imperialist and fascist). Mid-1933 to mid-1935 was a transition period, when the line from Moscow was not always certain, yet the American CP with its political antennae constantly adjusted and readjusted, the better to receive Moscow's message clearly, sought to keep Party propaganda and actions within the Comintern's shifting guidelines.

Many revisionist historians, anxious to Americanize the Party, would like their readers to believe that the gradual shift from ultra-left sectarianism to policies that appeared to be related to American realities were the result of CPUSA initiatives. As when Fraser Ottanelli writes:

Eventually the bitter experiences of the first years of the deep depression, followed by the eruption of working-class militancy and the ominous expansion of fascism in Europe, exerted pressures on the leadership of the CPUSA to reconsider the Party line.

(p. 49) (emphasis added)

Simply not true. American Communists might have felt more comfortable with the changing line but the operative “pressures on the leadership” did not come from the leadership’s independent reevaluation. It came from Moscow, and only from Moscow.

One more example of Ottanelli’s mythmaking:

The experiences and failures of the TUUL [the “revolutionary” dual unions led by the Communists] combined with the growth of the AFL and the independent unions, as well as the strengthening within them of the pro-industrial union forces, led the Party to abandon dual-unionism in favor of returning to traditional unions. (p.51)

This is absurd on the face of it. If Ottanelli had a better understanding of the nature of the Soviet Union he might have realized that on questions as important as trade union policy, changing the American line was a Russian prerogative. At least he understands that to formally abandon dual unionism, permission was required of Higher Authorities:

By the end of 1934 red unions had been effectively discarded. However, *in order* to formalize its doings and *to officially disband the TUUL*, the Party *needed to secure the approval of the Comintern*. Consequently, in December 1934, Browder addressed the ECCI [Executive Committee of the Communist International] in Moscow, claiming that the new situation in the United States required the Communist party “to shift the main emphasis to work within the AFofL.” At a meeting in mid-January, following Moscow’s endorsement, the Party’s Central Committee announced the decision to liquidate the TUUL, ... (p. 55) (emphasis added)

Compare this to the previous quoted passage which claims that the Party, on its own initiative apparently, abandoned dual unionism in response to changing events. Now we are told that “in order” to “officially disband” the dual unions, it was necessary “to receive the approval of the Comintern.” It is hard to reconcile the two quotations. If the American Communists, on their own initiative could have achieved the de facto dissolution of the dual unions, why did they need Moscow’s approval? Is it possible that a Party that felt compelled to obtain such approval could have “effectively discarded” the TUUL unless it knew, formally and/or informally, that this was in compliance with what Moscow wanted?

It would have been helpful had Ottanelli called attention to the charade of Browder in Moscow pretending that it was the CPUSA that decided “to shift the main emphasis to work within the AFofL,” when Browder knew, as did everyone at the ECCI meeting, and as all scholars of American Communism should know, that what “required” the CPUSA “to shift” was far less the “new situation in the United States” than what Moscow perceived to be the new situation and new needs of the Soviet dictatorship following Hitler’s rise to power.

The Popular Front — From Red Flag to Old Glory

IT IS TRUE THAT DURING THIS TRANSITION PERIOD (from 1933 to 1935) Moscow held the American party on a longer leash because clear signals on all questions were not always forthcoming from Moscow since it dropped Third Period postures at an uneven pace. In August 1935 the leash was shortened with the famous speech by Comintern Secretary General Georgi Dimitrov at the Seventh World Congress of

the Communist International. The Popular Front was now unambiguously set in place. The Third Period was definitely over and all parties of the Comintern knew what was expected of them. Yesterday's "social fascists" were now coveted as allies in a sought after united front of all progressive and democratic forces to crush the menace of fascism. Class collaboration, reformism, chauvinism, etc., all the reputed attributes that turned treacherous social democrats into treacherous "social fascists" were now the ideological and political baggage of Communist movements everywhere. An American Communist going into hibernation at the close of 1934 and awakening a year later might well have retreated to the bliss of somnolence on seeing that his/her comrades had capitulated to "social fascism."

Franklin D. Roosevelt, the fascist of early 1935 was transformed by the wave of Moscow's wand into the popular leader of the progressive wing of the American bourgeoisie. Yesterday's fascist was now the Communists' choice for reelection as President.⁴

Meanwhile Earl Browder carefully put his Third Period revolutionary cloak into the Party's political blanket chest and was soon waltzing around on the national political stage resplendently outfitted in a new Party costume tailored from an American flag (with a Moscow address on the couturier's label). Emblazoned on his new Party dress, in large, bold letters was the aphorism that summed up Browder's momentous contribution to Marxist thought, "Communism Is 20th Century Americanism."⁵

For exactly four exhilarating years, the Communist Party sang the Star Spangled Banner (not metaphorically) at its meetings, wept for Paul Revere, exalted the Founding Fathers and generally celebrated the American Experience in its press, at Party functions, in its expanding network of front organizations. It all paid handsome dividends to the Party which grew geometrically, became a power to reckon with in the trade unions while its conglomeration of front organizations continued to proliferate.

The revisionist historians are generally most attracted to the Communist Party during this Popular Front phase. The Party seemed to address itself realistically to American problems, discarding all the "revolutionary" excesses of the Third Period. It helped build unions and was active in campaigns for racial equality. All very appealing to the revisionists. And the Party was successful in its Americanization drive; equally appealing. Because it was successful the Party must have been correct in what it was doing. I don't want to debate here whether or not the Party was "correct," in some abstract way, during the Popular Front (it

4. The Party did have Earl Browder running as a formal CP candidate for the highest office, but that was a mere formality since it worked assiduously to rally support for FDR's second term. It was also thought that running a candidate was in Roosevelt's best electoral interests since that weakened Republicans' efforts to tar FDR with the Communist brush.

5. This metaphoric picture of Browder had its more literal moments in Party history as when, in 1936, the Young Communist League, its patriotic sensibilities deeply wounded by the failure of the Daughters of the American Revolution to pay homage to Paul Revere on the anniversary of his famous ride, hired a horseman dressed in Colonial garb and a steed to prance along Manhattan's Broadway with a placard inscribed: "The DAR Forgets But the YCL Remembers." Not even Saturday Night Live could have matched that; truth can be more quixotic than parody.

was certainly correct for the Soviet Union). I don't believe that to be the case but it is a tangential matter. More important to establish about the essential nature of American Communism is that whether the Party, in one or another phase, had a ludicrous position or a "correct" position, the position taken was always whatever the ruling party of a totalitarian system decreed.

What if, at the Seventh World Congress, Dimitrov had called for the sharpening of the ultra-left policies of the Third Period? Large numbers of Party members might have left; that was often the case after a sudden change in line. But the Party itself would have been unmoved by defections or any other damage to itself, and as certain as night follows day it would have unanimously lauded the genius of Dimitrov and Stalin, and surpassed past performances in vituperative condemnation of Roosevelt-the-fascist in 1936. That is the reality of American Communism which eludes revisionist historians. "Correctness" had nothing to do with adopting or changing any Party line; loyalty to the Soviet Union had everything to do with it.

Some historians, Maurice Isserman, for example, prefer to think of the Popular Front as Communism's reformist phase, something reminiscent of classic social democracy. They are quite mistaken.

The united front against fascism had as its larger purpose to gain friends for the Soviet Union (and neutralize opponents) among bourgeois politicians, labor leaders, industrialists and the populace at large. This readiness to collaborate with sections of conflicting classes was altogether different in kind from the class collaborationism of reformist social democracy. The CPUSA's class collaborationism did not stem from ideological illusions about bourgeois democracy, about gradualism and incremental change, nor was it driven by the need to compromise with capital in order to protect a vested interest in the organized labor movement, as with traditional social democracy. Class collaborationism was not endemic to American Stalinism but was simply driven at a specific time by the Party's exclusive allegiance to the Soviet ruling class. E. Browder was no E. Bernstein.

The shift to the Popular Front was in no way a decision of the American CP. And the contending forces in the class struggle were not that different in late 1935 from what they had been earlier that year. There was certainly nothing that new about the New Deal Administration to call for such an abrupt reversal, and while the growth of industrial unionism was an exciting new element, that would hardly have required an authentic party of the Left to abandon basic class struggle principles, to strike the red flag and hoist Old Glory. A stronger case could be made for the opposite view that the circumstances surrounding the emergence of industrial unions should have inspired higher levels of commitment to political and economic class struggle militancy. (In any case, in mid-1935 when the Popular Front was officially installed, Communists were not yet fully committed to building the CIO.)

The Popular Front line was imposed on the American CP by Comintern fiat. Those Communists who didn't approve had the option of resigning from the Party. They did not have the choice of dissent. The Party would soon invoke the Spirit of '76, and the Declaration of Independence would make the front pages of the *Daily Worker* but nothing remotely resembling the principles of Jeffersonian democracy could be tolerated in the internal operation of the American Stalinist party.

The Stalin-Hitler Pact

THE POPULAR FRONT PHASE OF AMERICAN COMMUNISM came to a sudden shocking halt with the Nazi-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact signed on August 23, 1939. Shortly before this infamous rapprochement that sparked World War II, Earl Browder had dismissed the notion of such an agreement as an anti-Soviet canard. "There is as much chance," he said, "of a Russo-German agreement as of Earl Browder being elected president of the Chamber of Commerce." Six weeks later the Pact was signed without noticeable improvement of Browder's prospects for heading the Chamber.

Browder and the CPUSA were caught totally unprepared. How could he explain a rapprochement whose possibility he had just dismissed with ridicule; and how could the Party reconcile the "Democratic Front" with the image of a smiling German Ambassador von Ribbentrop and Stalin warmly exchanging toasts including those to Der Fuehrer Adolf Hitler? It was a Party nightmare. For a while the Party press stammered a few rationalizations. It even continued to print a few kind words about Roosevelt — but not for long. And a few very harsh words about the Nazi Blitzkrieg in Poland — but not for long. Stalin and the Comintern straightened out Browder and their American party; first, with a series of direct communications laying down the line and then with the Red Army's own invasion of Poland on September 17, which made it bloody clear that the Nazi-Soviet Pact was not simply a defensive non-aggression treaty but was part of a joint prearranged agreement for aggression against Poland and, with Hitler's permission, for Russian conquest of the Baltic nations and the assault against Finland.

By September 3, Browder and the Party were clearly on course, i.e., the Russian Stalinist course. On that day all the old chauvinist crap and anti-fascist affectations highlighting the Popular Front were unceremoniously tossed overboard while Browder neatly folded his patriotic costume and carefully put it back in the Party blanket chest (who could tell when he might need it again?) whence he pulled out and slipped into the threadbare garments of Third Period ultra-leftism. It was now Browder the revolutionary who thundered against the war between Germany and the Allied forces as an imperialist war. It was the duty of Communists to lead in the struggle to "turn the imperialist war into a civil war." (Including in Germany, the Soviet ally?) But in this imperialist war there was no equivalency of evil. British imperialism was the main aggressor while the German nation was the victim of a brutal blockade. Of course, Naziism was bad, too, but not *that* bad at the moment, and anyway, as Comrade Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov wisely explained, "Fascism is a matter of taste." Through omission and commission Stalinist parties everywhere — the U.S. was no exception — had become apologists for German fascism, while the Soviet Union became an active military collaborator of the Wehrmacht in Poland. (Collaboration existed on other levels, as well.)

As for Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the good Dr. Jekyll of early August turned into the hideous Mr. Hyde of September. In a December 1938 encomium to FDR, the President was exalted as "the symbol which unites the broadest masses of the progressive majority of the people." Even a week after the Nazi-Soviet Pact was signed, the Party was enthusiastic at the prospect of a third term for FDR who "has best expressed the hearts and minds of the people." In only a matter of weeks this symbol of the progressive majority and voice of the hearts and minds

of the people would stand exposed as “the political leader of the warmongers” and the “tool of financial oligarchs,” moving in the same direction as Hitler did in 1933 and — shades of the Third Period — of being, after all, a sort of fascist.

The policy of the American Communist Party during the Nazi-Soviet alliance was so indefensible, so reactionary, so contradictory to everything said for the previous four years and so blatantly a demonstration of its feudal servitude to the Soviet/Party State that it is difficult sometimes to understand why so many revisionist historians and scholars cannot fully recognize these realities and their implications. It is not that they approve of or even condone the Party's adaptation to the Pact. Some are even quite critical but given the nature of the offense, rarely sufficiently, and often angered but all too briefly. In fact, revisionist histories of the American Communist Party generally dispose of this period in a relatively few pages and hardly ever see it as damning evidence of the Party's subordination to Moscow. As, for example, when Fraser Ottanelli writes:

During the years of the Depression and World War II the increase in Communist strength, broadened influence, relative acceptance, and their ability to make significant contributions to the labor and social struggles of the time, were *direct consequences of their search* for political policies, language, and organizational forms which reflected the country's circumstances, culture and singular political system as Communists understood and articulated them. This process, sometimes termed “Americanization” transformed the Party into the leading left-wing organization in the country; it was *initiated and defined*, in its various phases, by United States Communists. (emphasis added)

This paean of praise for a U.S. Communist Party-that-never-was is immediately followed — in the same paragraph — by a less fanciful account:

The *new directions* of the Comintern and Soviet foreign policy of the Popular Front period *provided new opportunities* and *more room to maneuver* for those within the Party who were pushing for a revision of past sectarian policies in favor of the adoption of a new line that would enable them to deal with the challenges that had emerged from the complex political and economic situation that had developed during the Depression. (emphasis added)

In his first two sentences he would have us believe that the twists, turns, reversals and contradictions in this period (what he euphemistically refers to as one of its “various phases”) had its source (the “direct consequences”) in “their” — the Party's — efforts to Americanize itself, to relate to American circumstances and culture; that it was the U.S. Communists who not only “defined” new policies but “initiated” them. That would have been startling news to the Comintern, no less surprising to the CPUSA leadership and incomprehensible to a more objective historian. In fact, Ottanelli has his own doubts, otherwise he could not end his paragraph on the contradictory note that it was the “new directions” of the Comintern and the interests of Soviet foreign policy that “provided new opportunities” and “room to maneuver” for those in the CP who felt most comfortable with the Popular Front policy.

Can a movement really think for itself, initiate and define its own history when it is the Comintern and Soviet interests which determine the opportunities, the room to maneuver within which the Party can function? That would be like boasting of the freedom of a prisoner who is at liberty to move and maneuver within his cell.

In the above quotations, Ottanelli is summing up the CPUSA “during the Depression and World War II.” That means from the end of 1929 until Spring of 1946. During that time there were four somersaulting “phases” (and the beginning of a fifth, the Cold War period, already visible in 1946). But Ottanelli concentrates only on two phases — the Popular Front (the second phase) and the Soviet-American wartime alliance (phase four). The reason for such selectivity should be obvious. These Americanization periods are most congenial to Ottanelli and other revisionists, since they seem to offer the best evidence of a more politically free-wheeling movement responsive to specific American needs and circumstances. However, the Depression did not begin with the Popular Front but six years earlier when the ultra-left vagaries of the Comintern’s Third Period were most clearly at odds with American realities and more clearly imposed on its American affiliate. Better then, in his conclusions, to drop those years down the memory hole.

And World War II did not begin with the German attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941. The war began with the signing of the Nazi-Soviet Pact. Between the time of the signing of that Pact and its unilateral abrogation by Hitler, nearly two years later, the Party was in its third phase in the years covered in Ottanelli’s summary but he skips that phase as well. And for as good, or as bad, a reason since his creation of a fictionalized Party initiating and defining its various phases falls apart by any objective reading of how the Party responded to and behaved for the duration of the Hitler-Stalin alliance.

It is important to note that during that period the Party lost much of the political capital it had accrued in the broad progressive and labor movements during the headier days of the Popular Front. Despite the enormous erosion of its influence the Party’s loyalty to the Soviet/Party State was unshakened.

While its peripheral influence declined precipitously (a number of its front organizations were shattered) the Party, itself, was not nearly as adversely affected. Approximately 85% of the membership remained loyal, along with an even higher percentage of the leadership. Most shocking was that relatively few of its many Jewish members defected. The fact that the Party was already so steeled that it could withstand the shock of the Nazi-Soviet Pact was the most telling evidence of its moral bankruptcy, its political and organizational subservience to Moscow. This servility was just as pronounced during the Popular Front although less grotesque.

None of this is to suggest that Ottanelli and other revisionists are unaware that acceptance of the Moscow line during the Nazi-Soviet Pact revealed, in Ottanelli’s words, the Party membership’s “attachment to the Party, their faith in the USSR, and their strong sense of duty to defend the Workers State were such that most Communists submerged their doubts and accepted their leaders’ explanations virtually without debate ...”

“Their strong sense of duty” is at best a rather pallid description of the membership’s unconditional approval of the Stalin-Hitler Pact. It even suggests a sense of nobility in their devotion to principle. Actually, thousands of American Communists were no doubt deeply disturbed by the Pact, instinctively finding it repugnant. But given the nature of the Stalinist movement, they had no way of expressing their private feelings within the organization. Despite deep misgivings, they were impelled by their political and psychological conditioning and their perverted sense of discipline to demonstrate their uncritical support of the

Pact and overriding loyalty to the USSR.

The "Great Patriotic War"

THE DILEMMA OF HOW TO RETAIN A Foothold in labor and progressive movements and, at the same time, meet its primary obligation to defend the Nazi-Soviet alliance was resolved by Adolf Hitler on June 21, 1941 when he scrapped all agreements and friendship pacts with Moscow, unleashing the Wehrmacht's massive assault against an unprepared Soviet Union. A disbelieving Stalin was sent into shock.

Now everything was different. Just as ancient alchemists sought to transform base metals into gold, Communists argued that the forced entry of the Soviet Union into the war as a Western ally, transformed an imperialist war into a democratic war. Exactly how the deeply rooted imperialist impulses behind British aggression, exposed by the Communists until June 21, could have been dissipated by the German assault on the USSR and not previously by German aggression against Poland and the Low countries, and by its conquest of France is a mystery that the Communists could not explain. But magicians are notoriously secretive and, in any case, Communist prestigitators (otherwise known as theoreticians) were less concerned with rational explanations than with doing and saying whatever they believed was helpful to the defense of the USSR. That had long been the Party's guiding principle.

On June 22, Browder peeled off his anti-imperialist outerwear, returned it to the Party blanket chest and out came the Yankee Doodle Dandy costume that really was more becoming to him. The patriotic gore gushed out of the Party organs in torrents. Roosevelt, of course, was no longer a warmonger. He was not enough of a warmonger to suit the Party. The pre-June 21st "anti-war" chant, "The Yanks Are Not Coming," had the "Not" deleted. The Party campaigned for U.S. entry into the war, denouncing as traitors, the pacifists and anti-war activists whose support they had so recently sought. Said Browder:

We have in the United States a group of pacifist societies who, in the name of peace, are counseling unconditional surrender to the international bandits. Whatever their motives, such pacifists have become no better than the conscious agents of Hitler and Mussolini. (*The People's Front*, p.333)

Once the U.S. entered the war, the CP's campaign to prevent any interference with the prosecution of the war became even more frenzied. Above all, there could be no interference with war production. What to do about John L. Lewis — wooed by the Party before June 21 — who led his miners out on strike? The Communist response:

There is not the slightest doubt that Lewis is working *and has worked for the past two years years at least* as an integral part of the pro-Nazi fifth column, aiming at a negotiated peace with Hitler, and at the Nazi subjugation of the United States itself. ...this is treason. (emphasis original) (*The Communist*, July 1943.)

The Party suggested that jail might be the best way to handle A. Philip Randolph who it denounced as fascistic and a Nazi tool because he sought to organize mass struggles against racism on the home front and in this country's segregated Jim Crow army perpetuated by the Roosevelt Administration. What of the leaders of

the anti-war Trotskyist movement convicted and imprisoned — the first victims of the Smith Act? They got what they deserved. Throw away the keys. Stalin would not have let these fascist mad dogs off so lightly.

By then, widely recognized even by the business community as the extreme right wing in the trade unions, the Party supported the No Strike Pledge and acted as the watchdog of American capitalism in the interests of defending the Soviet Union. The Communist rank and file basked in Earl Browder's revealed wisdom as he explained that "We Communists are opposed to permitting an explosion of class conflict in our country when the war is over." Class conflict, Browder explained, would be promoted only by those motivated more by private greed than love of country. Ronald Reagan never said it better. Harry Bridges — who might or might not have been a member of the Party, in his case only a technical difference — raised the patriotic anti-labor ante in exchange for post-war Soviet-American harmony with the promise that "The strike weapon is overboard, not only for the duration of the war, but after the war, too."

The surface chauvinism of the Party exceeded anything it said or did during the Popular Front years when it led major militant strikes, and never offered capitalism the equivalent of the wartime No Strike Pledge. And during the Popular Front the Party wept over a forgotten Paul Revere and posthumously graced our Founding Fathers with honorary membership in the American Communist Party. Whatever else there is to say about Paul Revere and the Founding Fathers, they were, on the whole, committed to the good fight to free the Colonies from the tyranny of the British Crown. There is little, then, to match the Party's wartime jingoism epitomized in Earl Browder's famous offer in December 1943 "to clasp the hand of J.P. Morgan" if only he would endorse the postwar alliance envisioned at Teheran. Of course, to have grasped the financier's hand Browder would have had to turn necromancer or gravedigger since the billionaire banker and enemy of labor had died earlier that year and was, presumably, entombed. But that was just a detail and, as Browder later explained, it was the thought that counted. He was correct. It was the thought that mattered and this underlying thought really had nothing to do with the class collaborationist Party line during the wartime Soviet-American alliance, just as denunciations of Roosevelt as a warmonger had nothing to do with commitments to militant class struggle and anti-imperialism. The underlying thought that in its own way tied everything together was how best to defend the "Socialist Fatherland."

And it is the consistent application of this primary thought that proved so damaging to the Communist Party once the war ended and it became clear that the wartime Grand Alliance could not possibly survive the irreconcilable social and class antagonisms of Soviet and American imperialism. Even before the shooting war had ended, the Cold War had begun and Communist parties everywhere were called upon to renew the struggle against capitalist imperialism. The American Communists, now back in patched-up revolutionary overalls, in accord with Moscow's wishes, pursued policies in the labor movement and in the broader domestic political arena that left the Party particularly vulnerable to the vicious, punitive anti-Communism of Trumanism and McCarthyism and to the unconscionable surgical methods used by the bureaucratic leadership of the organized labor movement to solve its "Communist problem." But the fact that the Party followed the Moscow line like lemmings was only further evidence that thoughts about the Soviet Union always took precedence over thoughts about the welfare

of the American party or the mass of American people.

Moscow's Seignioral Rights

THE VERY NATURE OF THE SOVIET/PARTY STATE REQUIRED IT TO CONTROL the political flow of all its global tributaries. More than that, Moscow assumed, and it was rarely challenged, that it had seignioral rights to arrange the intimate details of the internal life of all affiliated parties. But perhaps in no other Party did Moscow exercise these feudal prerogatives more blatantly than with its particularly submissive American affiliate, notwithstanding the cheerier version of revisionist historians who project a false image of at least a semi-autonomous American movement deeply rooted in the American experience. Moscow acted as the final arbiter for whatever uncertainties or disputes arose in the American party. No less significant, from the time of Stalin's consolidation of his power until his death, i.e., 1929 to 1953, it was the Soviet party under the personal supervision of Stalin which fired and hired the top leaders of the CPUSA. I don't know that this can accurately be said of any other Communist movement.

Jay Lovestone inherited the mantle of Party Secretary from Charles Ruthenberg upon his death in 1927. Two years later the Party was to hold its Sixth Convention. In the interim, a faction led by William Z. Foster developed in opposition to the Lovestone leadership. The divisive issues were interesting but would take us too far afield. The important point is that in elections to the 1929 Convention the Lovestone leadership had won the support of roughly 90% of the delegates elected in March. The Foster faction was a negligible force. All that would soon change, once Stalin, suspicious that Lovestone had fallen under the influence of the disgraced N. Bukharin, personally intervened. Foster and Lovestone made the requisite pilgrimages to the Stalinist basilica in Moscow, each to plead his case before a court of Comintern Cardinals with the participation of the Pontiff, Josef Stalin. Lovestone, with the support of the vast majority of the Party, was confident. Thus, for all his astuteness, Lovestone was naive and showed terrible judgment in his underestimation of the boundless cynicism of the Comintern and Stalin, unimpressed by such irrelevancies as a "majority." This was made clear by Stalin himself in his verdict, delivered in terms reflective of bureaucratic arrogance and a chilling foretaste of bloodier things soon to come in the Soviet Union.

Do you [Lovestone] think that the American workers will follow your lead against the Comintern, that they will prefer the interest of your factional group to the interests of the Comintern? ...At present you still have a formal majority. But tomorrow you will have no majority and you will find yourselves completely isolated if you attempt to start a fight against the decisions of the Presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern. You may be certain of that, dear comrades.

Stalin's "dear comrades" smacked of a mafia Capo's kiss of death, as it would soon be for tens of thousands of Soviet "dear comrades" murdered in the coming decade. For the American party, the kiss of death took the more benign form of the political execution of Jay Lovestone as a Communist leader. Almost literally overnight, Lovestone's most ardent supporters now denounced him for his right-wing deviationism, engaging in a competitive blood sport as to who could impress Stalin most with vilification of the fallen leader. Lovestone's support shriv-

eled to a handful who vainly sought to reassure Stalin that they were loyal to him not to Bukharin. Hadn't they expelled the Trotskyists? Stalin was implacable. Lovestone and his little band were expelled though they continued to plead fruitlessly for readmission to the Party. What does this say of a movement so fickle in its loyalties that it could reverse itself politically, not because of the weight of counterarguments, but simply because of the weight of the Soviet Union and the supreme authority of Josef Stalin?

Having removed Lovestone, Stalin took it upon himself to find a reliable replacement. William Z. Foster seemed the likely choice. But Stalin, always the paranoid, decided (wrongly) that Foster had been soft on Trotskyism. That put a cap on Foster's ambitions for the moment (a very long moment, as it turned out). It was Stalin who decided that the anointed would be Earl Browder even though he had not even been in the country for most of 1927-1928 but stationed in China on a Comintern assignment. Naturally, the Party voted overwhelmingly for Browder to lead it. Although the delegates to the Convention voted for Browder, they didn't really elect him. Browder had already been elected by Stalin; all the Convention delegates did was, in Pavlovian response, to raise their hands to second Stalin's decision.

INFINITE IN HIS WISDOM, STALIN CHOSE WELL WHEN HE SELECTED EARL BROWDER. FOR Browder's backbone was to be historically proven so supple and his character so free of moral restraint that he had no difficulty at all adjusting to each and every somersault and jolting twist of the Party line determined in Moscow. These were talents Stalin could appreciate. So for 16 years, on Stalin's sufferance, Browder was permitted, through thick and thin, to serve as his leading American lickspittle, no matter the stench of the accumulated blood and gore on Stalin's boots. Too harsh an image? I think not. From the madness of the Third Period, to the Popular Front, to the phony anti-imperialism of the Hitler-Stalin Pact era, to extending the hand of friendship to J.P. Morgan during the Soviet-American war-time alliance — Browder was there, always at the ready, anxious to do whatever the higher authorities expected and required of him. (This picture of Browder may offend the sensibilities of some of the new historians who romanticize him as the great innovator and Americanizer. The historical record tells us otherwise.)

By the Spring of 1945, Earl Browder had outlived his usefulness. There were visible cracks in the Soviet-American alliance, preliminary indications of antagonisms that would erupt in a Cold War. There was a clear need for Moscow to execute an ideological turn to correspond to the new situation. Above all, the Communist Party in the competing superpower would have to be re-outfitted once again. Class collaborationism would have to give way to militant class struggle. There could be no more talk of Communist-capitalist cooperation; the emphasis would have to be on American imperialism's mounting threat to world peace. To achieve this, Browder's continued presence as Party leader would be a liability. He was too closely associated with a line no longer acceptable. Also, he could better serve Moscow as a necessary scapegoat. It made little difference that Browder's so-called innovations during this period were within Moscow's set guidelines and had met with its approval.

An article by French Communist Jacques Duclos criticizing the Party and chiding Comrade Browder for his alleged errors first appeared in a French Com-

munist publication in April 1945. Apparently the American leadership was taken by surprise. But they knew what was expected of them. In mid-June, just eight weeks after Duclos placed Stalin's dismissal notice to Browder in the *Cahiers du Communisme*, the Party's National Committee convened. In a remarkable show of gumption, Browder argued that the policy of peaceful co-existence between capitalism and Communism was not altogether wrong and was in accord with the best interests and theoretical pronouncements and directives of the Soviet apparatus at the time. His plea fell on deaf ears. Of the 54 members of the Central Committee there was just one vote for his position — his own. At the National Convention the following month "Browderism" was unanimously condemned and Browder was formally expelled from the Party in February 1946, unmasked as a "social imperialist." (This did not stop Browder in 1948 from pleading for readmission to the Party so that he could more effectively contribute to the struggle against the scourge of Titoism! Appeal denied, of course. At the September 1948 National Convention with peculiarly Stalinist Alice-in-Wonderland dialectic, the Party declared that "The appeal by Browder for reinstatement is in keeping with his anti-Party activities.") Thus it was that a Russian dictator through a French Communist intermediary, Jacques Duclos, prepared the groundwork for serving the leader of an American party with a dishonorable discharge.

William Z. Foster's moment had finally arrived. The circumstances surrounding Browder's Fall and Foster's Coronation were the nadir of American Communism, when the Party was most starkly exposed as an unadorned prototypical Stalinist movement. And the events were no less revealing of the totalitarian power of the Soviet/Party State over its affiliates. When Stalin removed and expelled Lovestone, he was manipulating a Party of only five or six thousand members with little influence in the outside world whose leader had occupied his post for only two years. But when the Kremlin removed Browder, it was able to effortlessly manipulate a Party that was perhaps over 100,000-strong including its youth section, with enormous influence in the organized labor movement, in cultural institutions, and with a network of front organizations. More than that, the Party even gained a toehold in the centers of political power that it could not boast of even in the heyday of the Popular Front. Party leaders were consulted by and shared platforms with bourgeois politicians, many of whom could appreciate a party that opposed the No Strike Pledge, was ready to put labor and civil rights leaders behind bars if they interfered with war production and generally held out the olive branch to capitalism.

Consider, too, that where Lovestone was admired briefly by the large majority of a tiny movement, Earl Browder was idolized — raised to the level of a cult figure — by an even larger majority of a far more meaningful movement he led for 16 years. Everything about him, his speech, his writings, his mannerisms, his family tree, testified to his greatness. When the CP packed Madison Square Garden with a wartime patriotic jamboree that took off with an inspirational rendition of the Star Spangled Banner, the Party faithful and friends were moved to evangelical fervor with the climactic appearance of the favorite son of Wichita, Kansas. Never mind that his voice had little affect and his speeches lacked content. As far as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn was concerned, the struggle for a better world was strengthened by "the voice and pen of the man from the heart of America."

Finally, consider that everything that Browder had written or said in imple-

menting the Moscow line during the war was taken as gospel truth. The Party had a huge media operation, from theoretical journals to daily periodicals, publishing enough pamphlets and books to fill a library. In none of this vast production did anyone dispute the Moscow-determined Party line faithfully interpreted by Browder that would soon be reviled by all as the heresy of "Browderism." Even William Z. Foster who grumbled in top leadership circles where he influenced hardly anyone, wrote articles and pamphlets that reflected Browder's views.⁶

Looked at rationally, it is simply mind-boggling that all the Party elders and theoreticians who had promulgated the Browder line (actually, the Stalin-Browder line) in countless texts, and tens of thousands of rank and file Communists who approved of what they read, could be convinced in a few weeks that everything that had been written was wrong, after reading an English translation of a short article (really nothing more than a memorandum) of no intrinsic theoretical merit, that originally appeared in some obscure Communist journal in recently-liberated Paris. That this memo should have had such persuasive powers appears preposterous; but only on the face of it, because it was evident that the reproach signed by Duclos did not originate in Paris but in Moscow and therefore had the force of a Papal Encyclical.

One may ask the same question about the fate of beloved comrade Browder. What were the changed circumstances of power that could induce so many thousands in the Party to suddenly strip Browder of his halo? Overnight, Browder was demonized by former acolytes and sycophants who had surrounded him, their denunciations as brutal as they had been rhapsodic in their recent homage. "Take a trip around the country, unknown, unhonored and unsung, but meet the people, Earl, and learn to be one of them again," raved the same Elizabeth Gurley Flynn who had so recently extolled the same Earl Browder as "the man from the heart of America."

What triggered this extraordinary reevaluation of Browder, the mass hysteria and witchhunting atmosphere was nothing more than a critical reference to Browder in Duclos' little memorandum. But that was enough for all those in the movement who could decode the Duclos document to recognize that, in addition to it being an encyclical call for a change in dogma, it was clearly also a writ of excommunication.

Not only was Moscow's power so great and the nature of American Stalinism such that a single, small document indirectly sent from the Kremlin could oblige Communists to rewrite their textbooks and destroy their leader, it also brought on a rising crescendo of pitiable wailing that was, at once, both appalling and comical. There were mea culpas, confessions and self-flagellation for having sinned along with the "revisionist" Browder. There was about it a touch of the Moscow Trials, in some ways even worse. The atmosphere was captured in the Irving Howe/ Lewis Coser *History of the American Communist Party*:

Looking back upon this extraordinary spectacle, it is impossible not to be struck by the comparison with the Moscow trials — except that in a way the American incident is worse. Many of those who confessed in Moscow had been shattered men, victims of

6. In fact, it was William Z. Foster who headed a Party disciplinary commission that brought about the expulsion of veteran Party leader Sam Darcy for expressing the same reservations about the Party line Foster had.

years of persecution by a totalitarian state, years of imprisonment and, in some instances, months of physical torture; many of them confessed, it would now appear, in order to save the lives of their wives and children; and even a few of the Moscow defendants like Bukharin, when pressed too hard by Vyshinsky, burst out with a sudden impulse to dignity, a brief display of dialectical brilliance mocking their tormentors. As the occasion for the collapse of once proud and powerful men, the Moscow trials contained an element of tragedy; but here, at the Communist National Committee, there was no tragedy: it was all simply repugnant, an ultimate example of how a totalitarian creed can destroy man's will and dissolve his moral fiber. (p.446)

Of special interest is that the penitents were not importuning the American Communist movement. They were imploring the Russians for forgiveness.

(The anti-Browder hysteria was undoubtedly induced in large measure by the emotional stress at the prospect of being ignominiously dismissed from a movement they had served so loyally, in which so many genuinely believed and through which they achieved a degree of prestige, even fame. But there is little doubt that for many the trauma was aggravated by more material considerations. There were several thousand functionaries in the Party and a large number of others who worked in Party-controlled businesses, cultural institutions and trade unions whose livelihoods would have been at risk if they failed to demonstrate, through demeaning displays of both self-abnegation and idolatry, that they were purged of the sins of Browderism. About four years later those material considerations were decisive for any number of Communist trade unionists who deserted the Party, not for reasons of principle, but in order to maintain the benefits and prestige of their positions.)

CP and the "New Social Historians"

ONE OF THE MOST IRRITATING POSTURES OF THE REVISIONIST HISTORIANS of American Stalinism — and when we talk about the history of the American Communist Party during Stalin's lifetime and later, we are talking about American *Stalinism* — is the conceit of examining the Party as "social historians." They are furious (even if some are respectful at times) with such historians of American Communism as Theodore Draper, Irving Howe, Lewis Coser, and Harvey Klehr. Perhaps their main complaint is that these historians failed to probe beneath the surface of Party resolutions and activities to examine the personal lives of rank and file Communists. Had they done so, they might have tempered their condemnation of the Party, since they would come into contact with human beings who joined from the most noble motives; forced to suffer the indignities imposed by a capitalist, racist society, they joined to fight their oppressors. In that struggle to escape the ghetto, the sweatshop and the backbreaking work on an Alabama plantation — to create a better world — many were prepared to make enormous personal sacrifices, to undergo economic hardships, beatings and even death fighting on the picket line or for racial justice in the South. Thousands of American Communists were prepared to lose their lives in Spain and many hundreds did.

Perhaps Draper, Howe, Coser, Klehr could have enriched their histories had they woven into them more strands of the human element that concerns social historians. But had they done so, it would not have required a change in their analysis of this very special kind of party. For many of these revisionist historians the mere fact that the CP recruited thousands who were oppressed and ide-

alistic automatically gives the Party moral worth; at the very least, it presumably discredits the militant anti-Stalinism of people like Draper and Howe who saw the Party as reactionary and manipulative. But it simply does not follow that the idealism of recruits influences the organization they join because they feel it addresses their concerns and advances their interests. They could be making the wrong, even disastrous and tragic choice. That was the case, I believe, for those who joined the Communist Party. If I am wrong, it can only be established on the basis of an objective historical analysis of the Party — what it said, did, represented — and not at all on the basis of its ability to attract idealistic people.

The revisionists like to project the flattering self-image of social historians in the democratic historical tradition of E.P. Thompson who examined the lives of working people and how they shaped politics, created their own culture, and influenced history from below. In discussing the experiences of True Levellers, of Diggers and a host of other revolutionary movements from below in the 17th century, or of Luddites and a variety of associations and movements of working-class protest in late 18th century and early 19th century England which were the precursors of the magnificent Chartist movement, Thompson sought to show how workers and the lowly can make their own history and their own culture. *But these movements from below were all polar opposites of the Communist Party.* When workers joined the Chartist movement it was the continuation of a process in which they were defining their own consciousness and shaping, from below, England's first great, mass democratic movement of working-class struggle.

But when workers, for the best and most understandable of reasons, joined the CP, they were not joining a democratic, progressive movement which working-class recruits could mold into a dynamic instrument of struggle reflecting their needs and interests. They were joining a party committed to an anti-working class, totalitarian state which was exalted as a model of socialism, a party which, reflecting its organizational and ideological commitment to totalitarianism, was, in its hierarchical structure, authoritarian in the extreme. These are historically certifiable realities. Thus, when working people joined the Party it might well have reflected an expanding awareness and consciousness but retaining membership represented a regressive step since that meant surrendering the freedom to discuss, debate, and decide Party policy and being obliged, as well, to allow themselves to be misused and manipulated *for as long as they wanted to remain Party members.*

I am not questioning the value of examining the history and character of the Communist movement through the prism of social history; merely pointing out its inherent limitations where the CP is concerned. Moreover, the effort of revisionist historians to mimic E.P. Thompson in order to mythicize the CP is not only asocial and ahistorical, it completely misses or obscures the truly tragic human dimension of the CP's history.

It was impossible that most people free of legal compulsion could remain loyal to a party that pretended to be everything it was not. Inevitably, at some point, doubts and misgivings chipped away at the wall of dogma and the demands of Party discipline that prevented them from seeing the Party for what it really was. As the wall cracked, personal tensions mounted since there was no democratic outlet where doubters could express themselves. Either they had to leave or, if they gave any overt sign that they had serious questions about the Party line, they would be expelled and ostracized. Eventually, this is what hap-

pened after a month, a year, a decade, sometimes longer, to the overwhelming majority of those who joined the CP in the 30s and 40s. The Party became a revolving door through which literally hundreds of thousands entered bursting with the spirit of idealism and came out the other side, as often as not, demoralized, disillusioned, cynical about politics and sometimes psychologically battered by the experience.

On the darker side of Party life, "social historians" (if they had the objective political inclination) might want to explore the psychological mechanisms at work, as well as to recreate the moral tone and atmosphere of a Party whose members — rational people in their non-political lives — could accept and repeat with such fierce fundamentalist conviction the palpable Stalinist absurdity that every major figure (except One), and virtually every secondary leader of the Russian Revolution had become agents or spies for Hitler and Hirohito, were terrorists, saboteurs, etc. (I have yet to see proof that a single member of the Party who took exception to the bloody purges remained a member.) Just think of how extraordinary this is as an example of political and personal pathology.

Non-Communists also accepted the legitimacy of the Moscow Trials. There were fellow travellers who congratulated Stalin for his vigilance and fairness in the pages of the *Nation* and the *New Republic*. Unreliable journalists like Walter Duranty who assured *N.Y. Times* readers that the trials were plausible to him because he understood "the Russian soul." There was FDR's blockhead Ambassador to the USSR, Joseph Davies, babbling on in his memoir, *Mission to Moscow*, about the anti-Soviet fifth column. But the behavior of so many Party members in this period was uniquely different for its pathological levels of abuse: Party members in a kind of blood frenzy shrieking denunciations of "Trotskyite fascist mad dogs," grabbing leaflets out of the hands of "Trotskyite prostitutes" (usually teenage girls), drawing a swastika outside Trotskyist headquarters in the Bronx (with an almost exclusively Jewish membership). The occasional social contact with a Trotskyist was politically criminalized, and sexual encounters with a Trotskyist an unspeakable perversion, more sinful than Adam sinking his teeth into the apple proffered by Eve. For their transgressions, Adam and Eve were expelled from Paradise. However, the Communist who ate the Forbidden Fruit could only be expelled from the Communist Party, hardly a Garden of Eden.

Generally, the revisionist historians acknowledge the subservience of American Communism to the Soviet Union, but that is not allowed to interfere with what they believe is an objective, balanced analysis of the Party's activist role in American political life. Yes, American Communism was slavishly loyal to the Soviet Union, and that was not healthy; for some even deplorable. But didn't they build the CIO? And wasn't that admirable? And weren't they active in the struggle for racial justice in the 30s? Etc., etc. Pointing to the "good" that Communists allegedly did at selective times and specific places in the long history of American Communism becomes the political and moral measuring rod. Why belabor the American-Soviet connection, why concentrate on Party ideology or overviews which can only cloud our view of the "good" the Party did, and might lead one down the primrose path of anti-Communism?

This makes for bad history and worse politics. It is not possible to intelligently and rationally judge a political movement — above all the Communist movement — selectively isolating one or another detail of its contradictory history. More profoundly revealing about the nature of American Stalinism is that

the decision to work toward building industrial unions was less a decision of the American Communist rank and file than of the Comintern. The CP was not allowed to throw itself wholeheartedly into the campaign for the CIO until relatively late, after the Popular Front, set in place at the Seventh World Congress in 1935, deemed it the right thing to do in accordance with Soviet interests. Had the Comintern developed a foreign policy that was incompatible with building the CIO, the American CP would not have helped to build it.

The fact is that Comrade X who did “good” work in building the CIO in the 30s was the same Comrade X who acted as a scab in the 40s. And Comrade Y who fought for racial equality in the 30s was the same Comrade Y who sabotaged the struggle against segregation in the 40s. That doesn’t mean that Comrades X and Y were good Communists in the 30s and bad Communists in the 40s. It means that both comrades were part of a movement which reacted not to what was good or bad for the masses but to what the Soviet Party/State believed best served its interests.

The Revisionist Historians

AN EXAMPLE OF THIS NARROW REVISIONIST FOCUS IS TO BE FOUND in Robin D.G. Kelley’s well-received and impressive work, *Hammer and Hoe, A History of Alabama Communists During the Depression*. Kelley seems to believe that it is not only legitimate to present his subject in virtual isolation, but that it is foolish to be side-tracked into debating such matters as:

...the now infamous debate over the CPUSA’s relationship to the Communist International. Although it had been brewing since the “new social historians,” who sought to rewrite CP history from the “bottom up,” challenged earlier studies by Theodore Draper and others depicting American Communists as veritable puppets of Kremlin intrigue, the controversy reached a climax in 1985 when battle lines were drawn between pro- and anti-Draper forces and a deluge of articles and letters engulfed the *New York Review of Books*. ... after spending the next four years living and breathing Alabama CP history, the whole debate seems, in retrospect, rather superfluous, even silly.

The deluge that “engulfed” the *New York Review of Books* was, indeed, a bitter polemical exchange, on both sides, between Draper and his mainly young revisionist critics. The exchange concerned the relationships between the American movement and Moscow, and the American party’s history and ideology.

Why should Kelley expect his readers to accept as credible his description of such debates as “superfluous” and “silly” while his concerns with the tiny Alabama Communist movement, detailed in 250 pages of text and another hundred pages of footnotes and references, is presumably more relevant and wise? (This question is not to doubt in the slightest the value of a history of the Alabama CP during this early period.)

There is reason to suspect a larger purpose behind this curt dismissal of a serious and important exchange in the *NYRB*. By concentrating on the self-sacrifice, idealism and heroism of Alabama Communists — all of which might be true — and emphasizing the good they aspired to in the face of savage adversity, there is the not-so-hidden suggestion that American Communism — and not just in Alabama — was a positive force in American life without having to come to grips with the counter-arguments of Theodore Draper and others who tell quite a different story.

Yet, for all his disdain for the “silly” and “superfluous” exchanges, Kelley, himself, is trapped in a contradiction that does damage to the case he tries to build for the autonomy, (or semi-autonomy) of American Communism vis-a-vis the Comintern.

Thus, in his preface (page XIV) he assures his readers that:

...because neither Joe Stalin, Earl Browder, nor William Z. Foster spoke directly to them or to their daily problems, Alabama Communists developed strategies and tactics in response to local circumstances that, in most cases, had nothing to do with international crises. Besides, if Alabamians had waited patiently for orders from Moscow they might still be waiting today. Not only were lines of communication between New York and Birmingham hazy throughout the 1930s and 1940s, but Birmingham Communists had enough difficulty maintaining contact with comrades as close as Tallapoosa County.

By the time we reach his Epilogue on page 220, we learn of the Alabama Communists:

Yet these women and men, veterans and neophytes alike, shared something in common with the old Party. They responded to the Central Committee and Comintern directives with *blind faith, blissful ignorance, and bitter independence* — and in the confusion of world war, Alabama Communists frequently showed signs of all three ... (Emphasis added)

How is it possible that in his preface Alabama Communists had nothing to do with international crises (read: directives from the Comintern) but by the time he reaches his Epilogue, one of their three *responses* to *Comintern directives* was that of “blind faith”? (And how could they respond with both “blind faith” and “bitter independence”? Independence could hardly have been that bitter if faith was that blind.) And if the lines of communication between New York, Moscow and Alabama were so hazy on page XIV, how could communications between the three distant points have so improved by the time we reach page 220? It doesn't help Kelley's case to reassure his readers further in his Epilogue that for black Communists in the Deep South “skepticism overruled faith and reinforced their independence.” It only makes the picture more confusing.

I am not for a moment questioning the possibility that black Communists in Alabama — tiny in number — did not respond to Comintern directives as reflexively as Communists in New York or Chicago were obliged to. Yet, even among Alabama Communists, the Comintern line could be evaded up to a point but not boldly or directly challenged in a spirit of bitter independence.

WHERE KELLEY FINDS THE ISSUES RAISED BY THEODORE DRAPER, and the subsequent contretemps in the *New York Review of Books*, superfluous and silly, revisionist Michael Brown is deeply involved in the debates and far more combative. He and several colleagues have assembled a number of essays into a portentously titled volume, *Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism* which, for the most part, has little that is new and even less that qualifies as “studies.”

Brown, in his long introductory essay, is infuriated by those traditional historians who have written extensively and most critically about American Communism. His fiercest blows are directed at Theodore Draper. But despite all the tumbling and pummeling, Draper emerges unscathed.

What is almost amusing in Professor Brown's polemic is its affected air of

scholarly detachment. He quotes approvingly from Sean Wilentz's comments in the *Voice Literary Supplement* on the debates that appeared in the *New York Review of Books*:

It's sad how the history of American Communism can still provoke gang warfare in the intelligentsia. In 1985, half a century after the American CP reached its peak and more than a generation after American Communism all but died, it should be possible to approach the subject with something like detachment. Not, to be sure, dispassion, which is neither attainable nor desirable when studying Stalinism; rather, the kind of distance that informs historical passions and turns them into good history. But where the CP is concerned, memories are long, and old loyalties and grudges live on like folk traditions.

I don't know whether Wilentz would approve today of his sanctimonious advice then. In any case, it is Brown who interests us here, speaking through the voice of Wilentz. And what we hear resonates with the sound of pomposity. Since *not* to speak with dispassion means to speak *with* passion, how is it possible to speak *with* passion and, at the same time, *with* detachment?"

Although Brown's advice is not altogether coherent, there can be no mistaking the intent: there is nothing about the history of the American Communist Party or, as we know from his other writings, about the history of the former Soviet Union that should unduly ruffle the feathers of the objective historian. That's because Brown is so attached to his illusions about Stalinism in general and its American affiliate in particular. (Would he also give the same sterile advice to a researcher of the Holocaust; that one cannot intelligently study and interpret the past — in this case, the Holocaust — unless it is approached with detachment? And doesn't Brown have as many books on his shelf as I do by great revolutionary thinkers whom he admires, as much as I do, and who rarely, if ever, wrote with detachment?)

Most absurd is that Brown's appeal for detachment takes the form of a diatribe against Draper and all those "orthodox" historians whose writings reveal "an almost palpable pathos" and are "predicated on a profound philosophical malaise"; writings that are "outside of social science" and filled with "bitterness," "exemplars of a distinctive polemical genre" marked by "extraordinarily, overtly, tendentious type of satire." Is this what Brown means by detached scholarship?

All this flailing, mainly against Draper, whose two volumes on American and Soviet Communism are recognized even by revisionist historians as significant scholarly achievements, will hardly ruin Draper's well-earned reputation. But Brown makes one charge that he is obliged to document. He writes in the *New York Review of Books* (August 15, 1985), of "the 'professional anti-Communism' advocated by Draper." (emphasis added) Unless Brown can document his charge that Draper "advocated" "professional anti-Communism" he is guilty of more than the modest offense of polemical abuse.

Since Brown is such a strong proponent of maintaining the highest levels of scholarship, of writing "good history," one wonders why Ellen Shrecker's article made it into the collection? How could any historian who meets Brown's rigorous standard of viewing the past with "something like detachment" write about "McCarthyism and the Decline of American Communism, 1945-1960" and fail to mention that among the first victims of McCarthyite-type witchhunts were not the Communists but the leaders of the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party (SWP), 18 of whom were sent to jail in 1941, convicted for violating the same Smith Act

that was to be the legal basis for the persecution of Communists after the war. This omission cannot be excused on the ground that the Trotskyists were jailed in 1941. Rather, given Shrecker's very non-detached political agenda, it is embarrassing for her to acknowledge in an essay denouncing McCarthyism, that in the 40s the Stalinists were pre-McCarthy McCarthyites who, in their patriotic fervor, applauded the jailing of the SWP leaders.⁷ ("The American people can find no objection to the destruction of the Fifth Column in this country," said CP journalist Milton Howard. "On the contrary, they must insist on it.")

Also, if this volume was designed to "assist teachers and students" to understand Communist history, why print Annette T. Rubinstein's fairy-tale account of her 20-year tour of duty in the Party, "The Cultural World of the Communist Party: An Historical Overview." Are teachers expected to teach and students expected to believe that

...while directives coming down from headquarters to the CP members in a trade union, a consumer's group, a parent-teacher organization, or any other body (often even a local CP club) may have amounted to a great deal of paper — *that's all they amounted to.* (emphasis added)

One of the few interesting essays in the Brown collection is Mark Naison's, "Remaking America: Communists and Liberals in the Popular Front." Naison makes no apologies for the Soviet Union which "had evolved into something truly evil, a society in which paranoia, thought control, and murder had become institutionalized." Nor does he apologize for American Communist leaders who "still functioned as though they thought their real constituency, the one that could make or break them as leaders, was in the Soviet Union. Without the slightest embarrassment, they translated the Soviet obsession with internal opposition into a U.S. setting... ." and "what all pop frontiers shared was a set of principles and affinities: unwavering support for the Soviet Union, domestically and internationally... ."

All this seems to leave no room for equivocation about the servility of American Communism. But logic does not prevail. Naison still finds that while Party leaders functioned under "tight discipline" "the party rank and file moving in and out of the party functioned with a great deal of autonomy."

Communists were always free to use their feet to walk or run out of the Party. This lawful, inalienable right had absolutely nothing to do with autonomy. Autonomy is manifest only where members have the right to be critical of Party policies and of the Soviet Union and retain membership; and autonomy for the Party as a whole means to sever the umbilical cord tying it to Moscow. Since neither the rank and file nor the leadership enjoyed the right of independent and critical self-expression on substantive questions within the Party, and it was unthinkable that the CP would make important decisions on its own which conflicted with the Soviet line, autonomy was an alien concept in the history of American Communism.

Defending U.S. Communists against the accusations of "cynicism" Naison

7. That this omission was no oversight is proved by her essay on Communists in the labor movement and the role of the government in another collection, *The CIO's Left Led Unions* (1992) in which there is no mention that during the war Communists in and outside the labor movement operated as if they had a covenant with government witchhunters.

argues:

Though the Comintern may have employed anti-fascist appeals largely for Soviet *raisons d'état*, neither the rank and file party membership, or the much larger network of party sympathizers and allies approached this activity in the spirit of mechanical obedience. It did not take much persuasion to make a Jewish printer or a Croatian steelworker hate Hitler, or a black school teacher denounce Mussolini, or an Austrian refugee actor raise funds for victims of the Dolfuss regime. Such individuals, the bones and sinews of the Communist movement, approached the anti-fascist cause with the feeling that their own lives were at stake.

I don't know of any critic of the American CP who would contradict the generalization that the members were often bonded to the Party on the basis of their own experiences and agreed with its positions. But that tells us very little about the "bones and sinews" of either the membership or the Party. If people joined a Party in which they did not believe we would not be discussing a political organization but a political madhouse.

In any case, Naison is making it much too easy for himself. Of course it is understandable why the Jewish printer or the Croatian steelworker were drawn to the Party during its Popular Front phase when it appeared as the champion of anti-fascism. That doesn't address itself to the more pertinent question of what would have happened to the Jewish and Croat workers if they decided that the policy of "collective security" was the wrong way to carry on the struggle. But the most apparent flaw in Naison's defense of rank and file virtue is that he doesn't ask himself or his readers the following: if these ethnic workers did not join the Party in the "spirit of mechanical obedience" when anti-Naziism was being promoted, in what spirit did these workers remain loyal to the Party, and unwavering in their support for the Soviet Union, during the Nazi-Soviet alliance?

I don't know about the Croats but the vast majority of Jewish Party members remained in the Party. Did they sincerely "believe" in the Stalin-Hitler Pact? That is hard to believe. Certainly, the Jewish worker did not support Soviet collaboration with the Nazis with the enthusiasm and in the pure uncomplicated sense in which she/he believed in the anti-Nazi appeals of the Popular Front era. To believe in the Pact, political-psychological reserves based on faith had to be drawn upon so that this atrocious alliance could be rationalized. But doesn't belief that relies on such rationalization require the repudiation of political principles and the sacrifice of moral values? And isn't cynicism precisely about a loss of moral values and rationalizing lies to oneself and others to give them the appearance of truth?

JOEL KOVEL's *Red Hunting in the Promised Land: Anti-Communism and the Making of America* covers the period from American entry into World War I until the Soviet system crumbled. Alger Hiss Professor of Social Studies at Bard College, he is a felicitous writer, a skilled historian and a trained psychologist who effectively applies his talents to provide insights into the antecedents and precursors of anticommunism which he finds in the mean-spirited ethos and witchhunts of 17th century Puritan New England and in later nativist know-nothing movements. He studies these links from a dozen angles and makes subtle and interesting observations. But what is most striking is that he has achieved what I would not have thought possible — a book on the hunting of Communists with practically no discussion of the Communists or their movement, and with many

pages on the Cold War but virtually no discussion of the Soviet Union. We learn more about Cotton Mather than we do about the Communist victims of McCarthyism, more about Puritan New England than about the Soviet Union and less about the dynamics of the Cold War than about the war against "witches" in Salem.

This basic flaw can be traced to what Kovel calls "(a) few terminological points" about his use of Communism with a capital C and communism with a small c. He uses capital C "to designate actually existing movements, governments, and so on which took life from the Bolshevik Revolution and its many offshoots." To wit: the Communism of the American Communist Party and the Communism of the Soviet Union. He uses the lower case c "to designate whatever inherently belongs to the ideal form of the vision of a classless society." And Kovel explains that the "Soviet system while nominally Communist was, given its hierarchy, exploitation and lack of democracy, neither communist nor even authentically socialist." He then goes on to say "(b)ecause this study is about anticommunism and not anti-Communism, little effort will be made to sort out the vast complexities of the Communist experience except as they cast light on our own ideological system." This writer is the last person to deny the contradiction between the Communism of Stalinist despotism and the communism of social emancipation. But I also know that in the context of a discussion of witchhunts in America during the Cold War to virtually ignore "the vast complexities of the Communist experience" can be a form of apologetics by way of evasion. With this approach, he can feel free to ignore the fact that not long before the foul weed of McCarthyism sprouted, *one of the leading anticommunist forces (with a small c) was the Communist Party with a very large C* when it sought to suppress labor militants and radical visionaries during America's wartime alliance with the Soviet Union.

While Kovel avoids a discussion in any depth of the Soviet Union, he does not totally ignore it. Early on, he assures the reader that

... I consider the Soviet Union to have been a colossal failure and a wrong turn in the history of socialism. This is especially so for the regime of Stalin which was a period of criminality on a scale scarcely ever seen in human history.

Kovel's libertarian anti-Communism looks promising. But not for long. Just a dozen pages later his abhorrence of Soviet criminality on an unprecedented scale sounds less convincing when he complains that

... Soviet slave labor...is hardly ever seen as a phase, brutal and heinous to be sure, yet related to the industrialization of backward Russia and not to any socialist goal, as such. To call attention to this feature would remind us that the United States has had a vastly more extended slave period as part of its own capitalist, development. Where the black hole [of anti-communism] operates, Communism can never be bad enough. Communism must be all bad, drawn to hell *in toto*.

The first sentence is a rationalization for Russian slave labor that might have been inspired by Isaac Deutscher whose apologias for Stalinism had a profoundly negative influence on the left that is still apparent. The notion that slave labor was a "phase" that served some historic purpose as a factor in industrializing backward Russia, even though this industrialization was achieved on top of the corpses of millions, and despite the fact that the leading beneficiary of that bloody "phase" was a brutal Communist ruling class, is repugnant and in the ugliest

tradition of anticommunism. It is a view worthy of Cotton Mather, not of a socialist. And unless Kovel, or anyone, can find something more convincing than the contributions of slave labor to industrialization, I will remain convinced that Stalinism was indeed “bad, all bad.”

I am no expert on pre-Civil War America but I do not recall it being argued that the extended period of slavery in the ante bellum South was “part of” — which, in the context of his argument can only mean contributed to — capitalist development in this country. I was always under the impression that slavery was a crippling restraint on the growth of the productive forces. But even if I am wrong, and slavery was a part of the development of American capitalism parallel to the slave labor phase in the industrialization of backward Russia, then, intentionally or not, Kovel is advancing an apologia for chattel slavery in the American South.

Our doubt that Kovel's outrage over Stalinist criminality is more than pro forma is strengthened when he says:

Granted, the Soviets had much that was odious about them, perhaps more[!] than any of the other players at the time. But the question is, did the Soviets belong to the same moral species or not? Should the Soviet Union be regarded as an adversary sharing in a common humanity with whom one has basic disagreements or as an adversary so far outside the human community that the question of agreeing or disagreeing never comes up except in superficial tactical ways?

“[D]id the Soviets belong to the same moral species or not?” Which moral species is Kovel asking about? As a lifelong socialist (therefore a lifelong anti-Communist), I believe that the Soviet Union — that is the “odious” state that slaughtered tens of millions — definitely does not belong to the same moral species as those who have a genuine regard for human rights and human dignity. “Should the Soviet Union be regarded as an adversary sharing in a common humanity ...” etc., etc. A common humanity! Soviet despotism had no common humanity to share.

Was the Soviet power “far outside the human community”? I suppose that all of us, Stalin and Hitler, Jacobson and Kovel, belong to the same biological community of homo sapiens, but if we are talking about “human” in a social and moral sense, I would like to think that both Jacobson and Kovel are such irreconcilable adversaries of Stalinism and Hitlerism that some day it would be unthinkable for anyone to pose that question.

One final point on Kovel's failure to discuss Communism or communism in a serious way is his unseemly, abrupt treatment of those who contributed to the famous collection of memoirs, *The God That Failed* which included André Gide, Ignazio Silone, Stephen Spender, Richard Wright, and Arthur Koestler. In several pages that smack of an old-fashioned Stalinist diatribe these intellectuals are denounced in the most personal terms for their anticommunism. Above all, Arthur Koestler, whose opinions are totally ignored, is personally assaulted in psychoanalytic terms: a “narcissist” who was “tormented by hatred and guilt” and whose politics “derived from his inordinate self-regard.” And on and on. But about what Koestler, Silone, Gide et al said of their experiences within the Stalinist movement, and the views they developed of Communist society, Kovel has nothing to say.

Radical Representations, Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction 1929-1941

by Barbara Foley is described by her publisher as a work which “recaptures an important literature and rewrites a segment of American cultural history long obscured and distorted by the anti-Communist bias of contemporaries and subsequent critics.” That she recaptures an important literature I do not dispute. I may not agree with her literary taste or her evaluation of individual authors but that is not my concern here. My interest is in the politics of her cultural history.

For all the imposing number of references and substantive footnotes, Foley reveals that she doesn’t have a clue about the nature of the American Communist Party or the Soviet Union and their interlocking relationship. Her perception of the fundamentals of Stalinist society and Stalinist parties is impaired by her theoretical framework established with a defiant display of in-your-face know-nothingness when she states flat-out that “[a]t various points in this discussion I shall treat the terms ‘anti-Communist,’ ‘anti-Marxist’ and ‘anti-Stalinist’ as interchangeable.” If we factor out the antis in her formulation what looms up is the suggestion that Stalinism and Marxism are interchangeable. And Foley treats them as such. With this interchangeability of socialism (or Marxism) and Stalinism as a guiding principle, she cannot write coherently and truthfully about her subject.

Consistent with her pro-Stalinist bias, Foley categorically denies that Stalinism sought to subordinate art to politics and denies that “art as a weapon” was a Stalinist homily. In fact

[c]ontesting this view is a *major thesis of Radical Representations*; I shall demonstrate that most CP writers, *while not guided by anything resembling a party ‘line’ on aesthetic matters*, were in fact uneasy with the view of literature as weaponry and repudiated the notion that proletarian literature should be written as ‘propaganda.’ (Emphasis added)

Foley has as much chance of proving this major thesis as I do of proving — if I were so inclined — that the world is flat. How can she? Any person even minimally familiar with the history of the American Communist Party knows that the Party did indeed have a line on “aesthetic matters,” that the line changed drastically in tandem with changing policies in the Soviet Union, that art was most certainly used as weapon and that in the party’s cultural and political life creative writers were pressured to produce propaganda advancing whatever happened to be the Party line at the time. In truth, the atmosphere was such that pressure did not always have to be exerted since self-censorship was so successfully cultivated. To deny that “anything resembling” this was the case is to offer a picture of the Communist world that is as flat as a pancake.

Unquestionably the Party was less rigid on cultural issues than on questions directly political and of vital interest to the Soviet Union. Uncritical support of the Nazi-Soviet Pact or the Peoples Front line was obviously more significant than developing a precise definition of proletarian literature. The Party also understood that trying to enforce precise guidelines, allowing for no flexibility on aesthetic matters would have cost it dearly in the loss of support among intellectuals. It was more important to persuade intellectuals to dishonor themselves by signing Party petitions saluting the Moscow Trials. However, it is one thing to recognize the longer leash allowed Party intellectuals but quite another to insist that there was no Party line at all.

As evidence for her position, Foley quotes an Earl Browder speech to the Party-dominated 1935 Writers’ Congress: “There is no fixed ‘Party line’ by which

works of art can be separated into sheep and goats." This is supposed to reassure doubters that "as regards literary matters, it [the Party] really had no line at all." To take Browder's word, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, is like arguing that the Soviet Union in 1936, already turned into a charnel house, was the world's most democratic society because that year the Stalin Constitution was adopted declaring the USSR a democratic society governed by the rule of law.

Would Stalin lie? Would Browder tell a fib?

If the Party did not insist on aesthetic standards conforming to its political objectives why was it that in 1940 Lillian Hellman's anti-Nazi play *Watch on the Rhine*, was attacked in the Communist *New Masses* while the same play when it appeared as a film in 1942 was highly praised by Communist reviewers? Was it due to differing aesthetic judgments or rather a change of heart because in 1940, during the Hitler-Stalin Pact, a vigorous anti-Nazi play was all but *verboten*, while in 1942 the Soviet Union was at war with its former collaborators?

And if the Party never had a line and never treated art as a weapon what could have moved the well-known novelist and longtime Party member Albert Maltz to complain so bitterly of the Communist "... vulgarization of the theory of art which lies behind left-wing [read: Communist Party] thinking; namely, 'art is a weapon'." Was Maltz being misled by anti-Stalinist propaganda? And if the Party had no line why did it react so ferociously to Maltz's criticisms; a barrage so intense that after a few months a battered Maltz capitulated, confessing to his error in a truly pitiful performance.

Foley's no-line thesis is so fallible that she cannot sustain the myth and contradicts it as often as she affirms it. As when she writes: "... on the whole the CP *did* [her emphasis] function as its writers' ideological leadership; both inspiring them with a sense of revolutionary possibility and *setting the limits* [my emphasis] within which they could imagine this possibility."

Barbara Foley meet Barbara Foley.

Her discussion of the CPUSA and its relations with the Soviet Union is riddled with contradictions. As with all revisionists anxious to invent a Communist Party with at least a minimal degree of autonomy, Foley places great emphasis on those instances where individual Communist writers took exception to some aspect of Soviet cultural policy. Yet, the reality is such that even she acknowledges that "Soviet cultural developments clearly shaped the outlook and goals of American literary radicals."

One might expect that a good historian, a serious cultural critic and a conscientious Marxist would relate Soviet cultural developments (which, remember, "clearly shaped" American Communists' approach to culture) to what was happening in Soviet society between 1929-1941, the period with which Foley is concerned. Yet, when she discusses the notorious international cultural conference held in Kharkov in 1930, where a hard line on cultural questions was laid down (of which, she says, recalcitrant American Communists were "convinced"), there is no suggestion that Kharkov was a major metropolis in the Ukraine where the large-scale slaughter of peasants and destruction of villages was already under way in a de-kulakization campaign that would take the lives of five million people. As if there was no connection between Stalin's murderous campaign of forced collectivization and the Stalinist campaign to impose a cultural policy on all Communist parties compatible with his drive to consolidate his personal power and

consistent with the policies of the Third Period. And when she reports on speeches in the early 30s by such luminaries as Bukharin and Radek, there is no mention of the fact that both would soon be executed. Nor is there an inkling in her discussion of cultural policy debates that countless hundreds of Soviet writers, critics, cultural theorists who participated in the various cultural conferences she refers to would soon be humiliated, persecuted and murdered.

Foley does not completely ignore the "Russian Question" and she is not totally uncritical of Stalinist Russia. But, then, who is other than some fire-breathing dinosaur? Thus she lists her reservations about

the forced collectivization of the peasantry, the proclamation of the end to the class struggle in the USSR in the 1930s [!], the abolition of abortion in 1936, the stress upon Great Russian chauvinism in the Patriotic War, the resurgence of anti-Semitism in the postwar period, the mass incarcerations and executions.

Perhaps to warn the reader who might think that she is succumbing to anti-Stalinism (interchangeable, remember, with anti-Marxism), in her very next breath Foley applauds the

...tremendous achievements that also occurred in this period: the involvement of millions of workers in socialist construction, the emancipation of women from feudalistic practices, the struggle against racism and anti-Semitism, the fostering of previously suppressed minority cultures ...

On socialist construction: Not just "millions of workers" but tens of millions were involved in Soviet construction. That includes, of course, millions of slave laborers and an entire proletariat totally deprived of any voice on the conditions of their labor or on the goal of that construction or the quality of their lives. Foley might want to explain why construction by slave laborers and a brutally exploited working class is "socialist."

On the emancipation of women: Just ten lines above her announcement that Stalinism freed women from feudalistic practices, Foley took critical note of the abolition of abortion in 1936. Wasn't this anti-abortion policy in the spirit of feudalistic practices? And in her research hasn't Foley come across the wealth of documentation that confirms what so many already knew years ago, that the condition of women's lives during the Stalin era was one of utter degradation?

On racism and the struggle against anti-Semitism: Again, a few lines earlier, she noted the resurgence of anti-Semitism in the postwar period. How does that translate into a struggle against anti-Semitism? And isn't she aware of the abundant material documenting the virulence of anti-Semitism throughout the Stalin era and later? As for racism she fails to understand that the outbreak of racism in contemporary Russia had its historic roots in the Stalin era and earlier.

On minority cultures: Another outrageous plaudit. Anyone who reads a newspaper is surely aware that a major cause of the disintegration of the USSR were the profound historic and justifiable grievances of tens of millions of non-Great Russians — the Chechens, Volga Germans, Ukrainians, Armenians, Georgians, the Moslem people of the northern Caucasus, etc. — actually a majority of the USSR's population. Not only were their cultures suppressed but entire minority peoples were displaced and sent to the gulag.

Finally, I would like to reassure Barbara Foley that Stalin never abandoned "the class struggle in the USSR in the mid-1930s" but raised that struggle *against*

the working class to previously unimaginable heights.

Imagine the Communist Party in Power!

TO GET AT THE FUNDAMENTAL CHARACTER OF AMERICAN COMMUNISM, we can borrow a useful method of discussing a problem favored by the old socialist Left. It was the "what if" approach which was often a fanciful way of getting to the essence of a question realistically. In that spirit I pose the question to all those revisionist historians working long hours to prove that the Communist movement of the 30s, 40s, and later, enjoyed an autonomous or semi-autonomous relationship to the Soviet Union and was such a force for good in American society.

What if by some extraordinary miracle the CP had become the governmental power in this country during that period? Wouldn't this have posed a calamitous threat to democracy? Wherever Communist parties did come to power, whether installed on the tips of Soviet bayonets as in Eastern Europe or riding the crest of powerful mass upsurge as in China, Cuba and North Vietnam, the reigning Communist Party instinctively moved to destroy independent trade unions, clamped down on social activism, illegalized opposition parties, destroyed all civil liberties, instituted purges and arranged executions. Why should one believe that the American Communist Party in power would have behaved any differently? Why doubt that unions would have been dismantled or metamorphosed into Party-controlled state institutions, autonomous social movements prohibited, political opposition criminalized, cultural and social life straight-jacketed?

Former Communist leader Dorothy Healey put it this way:

I would not deny the fact that in the '30s and by and large our concept of what a socialist America would look like would not have included the freedom of dissent, the right to disagree, the right to organize separate parties. We would probably have considered that a political heresy.

Had General Secretary William Z. Foster, through some less than divine intervention, been propelled into the Oval Office in, say, 1948, who among us could doubt that the recently defrocked ex-General Secretary, Earl Browder, would have been summarily dispatched? Why should old rivals and useful scapegoats have enjoyed greater longevity in this imaginary American nightmare than in the very real existing phantasmagoria of Communist Czechoslovakia, Poland, Hungary, Cuba, etc.?

Didn't the CPUSA suggest that John L. Lewis be imprisoned for pulling miners out on strike during the post-June 22 phase of World War II, with A. Philip Randolph sent to keep him company in prison because his struggle against Jim Crow in the Army and in the war economy presumably hurt the war effort? Didn't they applaud jailing political opponents during the war and justify "as a necessary war measure" the Roosevelt Administration's rounding-up 120,000 Japanese Americans and sending them off to concentration camps? Is there any reason to doubt that had the Party been in power it would have gone Roosevelt and Truman one better in smashing anything and everything it saw interfering with the war, not so much for the purpose of defeating Naziism as for defending the Stalinist state? And not just to defend the Stalinist state but to consolidate its own power and create a Party/State in the image of Soviet despotism?

When Earl Browder praised Stalin with undisguised elation because, in

Russia, “the Trotskyites and Bukharinites have been detected in their nefarious work, rounded-up, and put out of business” can any serious historian believe that in power he and his Party would not have “rounded-up” their enemies and “put them out of business” just as their mentor did? Browder alerted his Party and the nation that “some pacifists have become no better than the conscious agents of Hitler and Mussolini” and that “[t]he time has come to end the fascist menace to world peace” had Browder and party the opportunity is there reason to doubt that they would they have ended this pacifist-fascist threat in a way that would have made Stalin proud?

Are revisionist historians American exceptionalists? Do they believe that a “Soviet America” under Communist auspices would have been any different, an exception to the rule that wherever Stalinist parties came to power civil society was shattered? Consider, too, that the CPUSA sought to approximate an internal atmosphere and procedures that drew inspiration from the totalitarian model in power. Fortunately, the Party had no enforcement powers more menacing than expulsion and ostracism. Nevertheless, the authoritarian impulses were deeply rooted. What is remarkable is that in the period of escalating terror there was more dissent expressed in the Soviet party than in its American affiliate! At least in the early 30s a number of Soviet party members led by Mikhail Riutin signed and circulated a document calling for a halt to the brutal policy of Stalinist collectivization of agriculture and forced industrialization and included the demand that Stalin be removed. Not only did Riutin and his comrades attack Stalin but so did any number of anonymous members of the Soviet party who, at great personal risk, managed to get letters and articles to opposition journals abroad.

I have yet to learn of any comparable document originating in the U.S. before the Duclos letter calling for the removal of Earl Browder during his tenure. And in my own research on American Communism, including reading the works of many revisionist historians, I have not come across a reference to a single article or a footnote in the Party press, or an entry in a diary, or a letter from one friend to another which so much as hinted of a disagreement with the Maximum Leader of the Communist movement. Yet we know that of the hundreds of thousands who joined the Party in the Stalin era, not all could have agreed with all the important Party positions that were of vital concern to the Soviet Union. The question then is: If an American Communist Party out of power could achieve this level of conformity on the basis of Party discipline which could only rely on moral suasion and psychological intimidation, what would be the atmosphere in the Party and in society if the CPUSA were the ruling Party and had at its disposal all the state instruments of coercion?

The Nature of Stalinist Parties

OUR CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON THE MISUSE OF SOCIAL HISTORY touches a larger issue debated under the rubric of the Russian Question: What Is the Nature of Stalinist Parties? This question was not that much of a conundrum for those who viewed the Soviet Union as a “degenerated” workers’ state from which it followed that national Communist parties were a legitimate but badly deformed wing of the international labor movement.

But what of socialists who perceive the Soviet Union, not as an imperfect workers’ state, but as the dominion of a new parasitic totalitarian class with an

omnipresent and omniscient Communist Party in command of all aspects of political, social and economic life? From this perspective, servile national Communist parties cast in the same ideological mold and with the same aspirations were neither socialist organizations nor, in any meaningful sense, "of the Left" if one agrees that "the Left" is an umbrella term for a multitude of tendencies whose political common denominator includes a basic commitment to democracy and social justice. Logically, it made as little sense to speak of an organized "Stalinist Left" as it does to refer to "an anti-democratic democrat," or "an anti-socialist socialist," or "an anti-leftist Left." "Stalinist Left" is an oxymoron just as anti-Stalinist Left is a redundancy since to be of the Left is, by definition, to be anti-totalitarian, which also assumes to be anti-Stalinist.

Nevertheless, in our propaganda and political functioning the old socialist left never ignored the paradoxes and subtleties of Communist parties. Although the CPUSA placed itself in servitude to a totalitarian state it was not equated to a fascist party. The American Communist Party was not the German-American Bund. Here, as in all advanced capitalist countries, the Communist movement sought a mass base in the working class and from among oppressed minorities. It functioned within most progressive social movements and laid its greatest emphasis on trade union work. These were hardly the areas of operation for the Bund or the American Silver Shirts.

For all the inner contradictions of Stalinism in power that would prove its undoing, there was a social dynamism to the Stalinist Party/State and its satellite parties rooted in their ideological pretensions which appeared to address the problems of the poor and the exploited, clothed in a language that often bore a surface resemblance to the idiom of proletarian and social solidarity, of Marxism. The Bund or nativist fascist movements here hardly comparable. They sought enlistments on the basis of raw pseudo-populist rhetoric mingling with strident chauvinism and grotesquely racist, anti-Semitic and anti-labor propaganda.

Thus, the contempt we had for the Communist Party ideologically and as a movement wed to a totalitarian state was not translated into a personal-political animus. We did, after all, appear to share certain values and objectives with the Communist rank and file. Communists joined the Party moved by basic human and social values that we shared — among them, opposition to racial discrimination and all forms of bigotry — and recruits were attracted to the CP by its lip service to socialist principles. We even laid common claim to certain traditions and heroes: the Paris Commune and the Russian Revolution; Marx, Engels and Debs. (Of course, our list included Trotsky whose murder they celebrated and theirs included Stalin, his executioner.)

Yet, for all the paradoxes and contradictions between the generous impulses of the rank and file and the objective realities of American Stalinism as an organized movement, it is the latter which is historically decisive. And the fact that Stalinism used some dialect of the language of socialism and liberation did not disguise its real voice which was heard in the cries of the condemned and the dying in the gulag and torture chambers, and the death rattle of millions succumbing to starvation during the years of de-kulakization and forced industrialization. Stalinism's authentic voice was the forced silence of people denied a voice in deciding their own destiny. While the American party, with a membership which truly sought a better world, spoke to the working class, it listened to, parroted, and obeyed the authorities and instructions of a totalitarian state alien

to the proletariat, inimical to socialism. The real voice of American Stalinism was little more than the Kremlin echo.

Recent Books Noted in this Article

The Communist Party of the United States. From the Depression to World War II by Fraser M. Ottanelli, Rutgers University Press, 1991.

Hammer and Hoe. Alabama Communists During the Great Depression by Robin D.G. Kelley, University of North Carolina Press, 1990.

New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U.S. Communism edited by Michael E. Brown, Randy Martin, Frank Rosengarten and George Snedeker, Monthly Review Press, 1993.

Red Hunting in the Promised Land. Anticommunism and the Making of America by Joel Kovel, Basic Books, 1994.

Radical Representations. Politics and Form in U.S. Proletarian Fiction, 1929-1941 by Barbara Foley, Duke University Press, 1993.

***Russia Before the Deluge:* Workers' State or Bureaucratic Collectivism?**

Barry Finger

THE CHOICE THAT INTELLECTUALS MAKE, THE REAL CONTENT of their politics and the political roles they play, is largely determined by the social forces to which they are primarily oriented. Marxists labored to rouse the working class to revolutionary consciousness and to mobilize this mass-majority into acting on its own behalf. This was done not out of displaced religious faith, but rather through the conviction that the working class was the only agency situated to overturn capitalism, which is also driven to do so in defense of its own vital self-interests. But Marxism, with its reliance on democratic mass movements from below, is only one current of anti-capitalist thought. There are other tendencies, repugnant to Marxists, whose anti-capitalist impulse are nourished by reactionary fantasies about "benevolent" wielders of state power, selflessly "serving the people," a modern variation of Babeuf's "educational dictatorship" which presumably protects the masses from themselves by abolishing the very democratic rights and procedures whose exercise might otherwise lead to irreparable folly. Viewed through this elitist prism, the working class and its natural allies are perceived as the grateful beneficiaries of socialism rather than as its creative force.*

This anti-socialist form of anti-capitalism invariably subscribes to the related proposition that any form of collectivism — of state planning based on nationalized production — represents a step forward for humanity, because it presumably offers the realistic promise of overtaking and outachieving the material accomplishments of capitalism; that once having rid themselves of the threat of capitalism such systems would be free to exercise the newly found luxury of political reform and voluntarily democratize themselves from on high. This stubborn denial of the cen-

*Illustrating this elitist delusion is Eugene Genovese's recent mea culpa: "I supported the communist movement and the Soviet Union because I was convinced of the moral as well as material superiority of socialism over capitalism — convinced that the socialist countries could and would reform themselves and end their political brutality while preserving socialism itself." While Genovese confesses his lifelong error — how could he not given the economic, physical and moral collapse of the Soviet Union — the elitist ideological underpinning has not been exorcised. He still insists that: "Socialism, like capitalism, is a socio-economic system, and I see no theoretical reason to believe that socialism must be democratic."

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trality of democracy to socialism reinforces an increasingly popular parallel failure to come to grips with the political and social implications of the Communist debacle. The breakdown of Stalinism is accredited not to the attributes unique to it, but rather to the values and ideals of *socialism* which in practice, as opposed to propagandistic rhetoric, were entirely alien to it and *against* which the system remained in perpetual vigilance. What has ensued in the wake of Stalinism's death is not a political and social stocktaking, an honest settling of accounts, but rather the wholesale displacement of the crimes of Stalinism onto the back of socialism. This is a continuation of Stalinism in a post-Stalinist context — its final, posthumous ideological victory.

It is not surprising that bourgeois forums should provide platforms catering to such distortions of socialist theory; that is their wont. But are chastened radicals of all stripes now obliged to propagate the absurdity that the demise of Stalinism, where workers were reduced to semi-slavery, demonstrates the bankruptcy of "radical egalitarianism," or repudiate the vision of a population consciously self-mobilized to determine, oversee and democratically control the institutions of society, because of the exposed failure of Stalinist planning by bureaucratic ukase? Will what should be a welcome end to Communism lead to the demoralizing, yet wholly unjustified conclusion, that the working masses are congenitally incapable of reorganizing the economy in terms of usefulness rather than profitmaking and of ushering society to a classless future where all forms of violence and coercion can be eliminated?

Today, for the left to intervene effectively in history requires an understanding of the unique nature of the Communist ruling class, the political circumstances of its domination and the social relations it engendered. It would be no exaggeration to assert that the unwillingness to pursue to the end the necessary discussion of Stalinism remains the Achilles heel of the socialist movement, a fundamental source of its disorientation. For at its core that review involves the very nature of socialism and the type of struggle needed to realize it. That this discussion has always been confined to the margins of the revolutionary movement only lends added urgency to it.

THE INTELLECTUAL ROOTS OF THIS DISCUSSION ARE TO BE FOUND in the international workers' movement, especially and most systematically in the Left Opposition headed by Leon Trotsky and in the disputes which eventually arose from within its ranks. These ensued in response to the degeneration of Soviet power from the early 1920s onward and centered not on whether Soviet Russia had implemented a socialist regime, an assertion as yet heard nowhere in the movement, but rather on whether and to what degree it still retained the transitional and intermediary characteristics of a workers' state despite the complete ouster of the working class from political power. At issue was the unprecedented scale and character of the social transformation involved, an upheaval whose momentum by the early 30s appeared to rival in its political sweep the October revolution

itself.

Trotsky had identified and charted the dynamic of Stalin's "Thermidorean Reaction" in the piecemeal dissolution of the Bolshevik Party as an authentic and effective working class organization culminating in its subordination and eventual merger with the state bureaucracy. Trotsky's attempts to revive the Party as a democratic force failed. Yet, despite the utter rout of the socialist opposition and the total usurpation of political power by the Stalinist bureaucracy, Trotsky nevertheless insisted that what he believed to be the essential conquests of the October revolution — a planned economy resting on nationalized property — had been preserved and corresponded to the social basis of working class hegemony. The Soviet Union, he held, therefore retained the characteristics of a workers' state, but in a degenerated and imperiled form. According to Trotsky, the bureaucracy was compelled, in its own reactionary, wavering and inconsistent way, to preserve state property because its entire network of privileges was wholly contingent on its doing so. To be sure, he admitted that "in no other regime has a bureaucracy ever achieved such a degree of independence from the dominating class," that "the very fact of its appropriation of political power in a country where the principal means of production are in the hands of the state, creates a new and hitherto unknown relationship between the bureaucracy and the riches of the nation," and even conceded that the bureaucracy exercised an "uncontrolled appropriation of an absolutely disproportionate part of the national income." He nevertheless held fast to his contention that the bureaucracy could not yet be considered a new exploiting class and remained instead a parasitic excrescence.

Trotsky compared the Soviet bureaucracy to conservative Western labor leaderships.

The fact that such union bureaucracies defend private property in the means of production characterizes them as bourgeois. Should these gentlemen in addition defend the income of the bourgeoisie from attacks on the part of the workers, should they conduct a struggle against strikes, against the raising of wages, against help to the unemployed, then we should have an organization of scabs and not a trade union. However, [AFL President] Green and Co., in order not to lose their base, must lead, within certain limits, the struggle of the workers for an increase — or at least against a diminution — of their share of the national income. This objective symptom is sufficient in all important cases to permit us to draw a line of demarcation between the most reactionary trade union and an organization of scabs. Thus, we carry on work in the AFL, but to defend it from scabs, the Ku Klux Klan and the like...

WITH THIS ANALOGY TROTSKY HOPED TO ILLUSTRATE WHY THE STALINIST BUREAUCRACY, whatever its aspirations, could not play an *independent* class role. Though an impediment to effective working class advancement, as is the conservative trade union bureaucracy, and occupying an intermediate strata between the working class and the bourgeoisie in the world arena, the Stalinist bureaucracy nevertheless remained, in the final analysis, *indirectly* accountable to the Russian working class. Should it seek to stabilize its privileges by acting as agents of capitalist restoration it would spark an immanent revolt from below — just as he believed that if conservative trade union bureaucrats turned into direct agents of the bourgeoisie by converting their unions into scab organizations, that would provoke a fierce, militant response from the unions' rank-and-file. Yet, like the conservative labor bureaucracy which cautiously advanced the material interests of the union membership while respectfully acknowledging the bosses' right to a "rea-

sonable" profit, the Stalinist bureaucracy cultivated the material base of the workers' state, while betraying the social revolution in Russia and internationally.

But Trotsky's analogy begs the question. "Trade unions," "bureaucracies" and "state property" can take a multiplicity of forms and exist in a variety of social contexts. But they derive their character functionally by the social ends to which they are harnessed. They cannot be treated as free floating Platonic essences. Capitalist states, too, preside over "state property." Its primary purpose, however, is to serve as a prop for capitalist accumulation and no thinking individual would assert that the extension of such property forms per se represent a social conquest for the working class. Similarly, trade union bureaucracies can be intermediaries between capitalists and workers when they seek to square the interests of the contending classes, but they can also act as direct extensions of the capitalist state when "unions" take the form of fascist labor fronts. And where a "union" is organized or totally under the thumb of a crime family, no one could defend the syndicate's collective property as having laid the groundwork for working class rule, or claim to discern through the cowering social quietude the tacit consent of the governed, or hail the syndicate's goon squads as a workers' guard, or assert with dialectical superiority that this gangster regime when subjected to proper scientific analysis and dispassionate scrutiny could be nothing other than a microcosmic equivalent of a counterrevolutionary workers' state.

By assigning specific characteristics to the Stalinist bureaucracy arbitrarily derived from the behavior of conservative pro-capitalist trade union leaders, Trotsky loaded the argument by replacing analysis with assertion. It was an analogy which, in any case, history would soon demolish. For shortly thereafter the Stalinist bureaucracy extended nationalized property forms to eastern Poland and the Baltic states under its own initiative and in the absence, to put it politely, of any detectable pressure from below. And while Trotsky welcomed this extension, he never asserted that Polish and Baltic working class acquiescence in the face of superior force evidenced *indirect* consent.

If anything the Stalinist bureaucracy represented neither a pro-capitalist scab-herding directorship nor a semi-collaborative labor aristocracy. It would have been far more accurate to compare it to union gangsterism writ large. But this would have forced Trotsky to concede that the Stalinist bureaucracy operated contrary to the consistent interests of either the capitalist or the working class; that it was answerable to neither and had not only aspired to but had actually attained social independence. Of course, the bureaucracy's larger aspirations would not preclude it from periodically appearing to lease its services to the bourgeoisie, as during the Popular Front period. But the class collaborationism in that era, imposed on all parties affiliated to the Communist International, was designed to "normalize" relations with Western capitalism for the exclusive purposes of stabilizing the Soviet ruling party as it pursued its primary goals of extending and consolidating its hegemony over the wealth-producing apparatus of society and to secure its functioning by capturing the state and reducing the working class to the level of industrial slaves.

WHILE LEON TROTSKY HAD DONE MORE THAN ANYONE TO COMBAT AND ANALYZE the degeneration of the Russian revolution, he stubbornly refused to disavow his characterization of Russia as a workers' state long after the objective basis for it had

been destroyed by the Stalinist counterrevolution. As a result, hardly a year in the history of the Trotskyist movement transpired without a new source of dissonance surfacing over his views on the "Russian Question." His reasons for adhering to the contention that the bureaucracy had yet to become a fully fledged ruling class were becoming increasingly thin: initially, that the Party could be reformed and the bureaucratic degeneration of Soviet society reversed. Even after he abandoned illusions about peacefully reforming the Party, he still insisted that collective property reinforced by a monopoly over foreign trade met the decisive criteria for a workers' state. Toward the end of his life, when these criteria and their political implications were challenged by critics in the movement, Trotsky all but conceded the issue, without embracing their conclusions. In his last writings, Trotsky retreated to the judgment that the precise characterization of the bureaucracy was, in any case, inconsequential since he believed that Stalinism, before achieving historic viability, would be swept away in a revolutionary aftermath to the oncoming war.

To be sure, Trotsky never held that the bureaucracy presiding over nationalized property could lead the workers' state to socialism, only that it could prevent the restoration of capitalism. The victory of socialism would require the ouster of the bureaucracy by the socialist proletariat breathing democratic norms into all aspects of social life in conjunction with successful socialist revolutions in the advanced nations. But if unwilling to ascribe a socialist mission to the bureaucracy, neither did Trotsky ever explicitly embrace the reality of a new ruling class commanding a society which was neither capitalist nor socialist.

This was left to a faction within the U.S. Trotskyist movement led by Max Shachtman who had earlier rejected Trotsky's commitment to the "unconditional defense of the Soviet Union." Shachtman and his supporters argued, in response to Trotsky, that the question of political domination differed fundamentally in regimes based on private property from those arising on a collectivist basis. In the former, social rule changes to adjust to the form with which private property is held. While this permits the formal separation of political from economic power, political institutions nevertheless express, if only indirectly, the social dynamics of the predominant economic class. Even a Bonapartist regime, where the capitalist class does not wield full or direct political power, is tolerated only so long as its rule secures, consolidates, and expands the province of capital. Were it to act otherwise, the immense resources of the bourgeoisie would be decisively mobilized against it.

The state is not a class, but the network of coercive institutions reinforcing class domination. In collectivist regimes, where political and economic power are fused, the class character of the state, the source of its political power and the direction toward which it is evolving, cannot be determined by its given or static characteristic — the form of property. To assert otherwise would be to deny social diversity to collectivism, to find evidence of socialism, for instance, in ancient Inca civilizations or in other forms of what Marx termed Asiatic Despotism. That is why the orthodox Trotskyist movement, through prolonged exposure to reckoning by means of vicious circles, lost its bearings to political vertigo. Max Shachtman summed up the tautology: "To the question, 'Why is it [Stalinist Russia] a worker's state?' They answer, 'Because the state owns the property.' To the question, 'But what is the class character of this state that owns the property?' They answer, 'A workers state!'"

The Shachtman group argued that for a collectivist society to be a workers' state, its institutions must be subordinated on all levels to the working class. Because the working class is a "propertyless" class its social power resides, and can only reside, in its collective *political* preeminence. In an authentic workers' state there would be complete democracy exercised through workers' councils and trade unions. There would be no suppression of rival parties. Even in the deformed workers' state which arose directly from the Bolshevik revolution, where extreme limitations on Soviet and trade union democracy marked its earliest days — the flames of democracy still flickered precariously in soviets, in factory committees, in trade unions, in cultural activities and in the competition of factions within the mass revolutionary party. The Stalinist counterrevolution consisted precisely in the "systematic hacking away of every finger of control the working class had over its state." The political disfranchisement of the working class was at the same time its economic expropriation.

With democracy extinguished, the state and all its institutions passed into the hands of a now uncontrolled bureaucracy, paving the way to a new and reactionary form of exploitative society fully based on collective property forms. This, Shachtman and his comrades labeled "bureaucratic collectivism." The basic motor force of this economy was the extraction of ever greater quantities of surplus labor from the working class to augment the power and independent authority of the bureaucracy. The economy was organized and directed by totalitarian state planning commissions and reinforced by political terrorism. The monopoly exercised over foreign trade by the state not only fortified it against capitalist encroachments, but also prepared and secured the subject peoples and national minorities within the USSR for imperialist exploitation by the Stalinist ruling class. Collectivized property was now no longer an instrument in the struggle for working class emancipation, but a mechanism for its subjugation under conditions so onerous as to be without parallel outside of Hitler's Germany.

Could this bureaucratic collectivist society ever be expected to *democratize* itself from above? Under capitalism the economic base of society is privately owned and it is through that ownership that the capitalist class can indirectly exercise its control over the state. The capitalist class is able, under pressure from below, to relinquish a limited degree of political power, precisely because such concessions do not threaten the social basis of its power. In contrast, because economic and political power are fused within a bureaucratic collectivist system, such concessions would be suicidal. A democratic opening to the masses would be an invitation to them to intervene decisively in the internal disputes of the bureaucracy, to set one ruling class faction against the other, to stymie the operations of the system — to begin, in other words, to dissolve the basis of *bureaucratic* exploitation. It was therefore always incumbent on the bureaucracy to exude from its midst a supreme arbiter, one who would resolve the internal conflicts within the bureaucracy, while suppressing any temptation to appeal to the masses.

The bureaucracy's power lies in its ability to circumscribe popular initiative and, by so doing, shape society decisively in accordance with its own priorities. But bureaucratic economic commands are necessarily a one way system, which, by choking off all feedback from below, precludes a continuous correction process. In this it differs from socialist planning which aims to bring into *ex ante* alignment production decisions with previously ascertained consumer wants. Such a free association of producers would effectively invoke a system of production-to-

order. The progressive and long-term development of the productive forces is therefore critically dependent on the active oversight of the masses at all levels, equally as producers, planners and consumers. But this presupposes the fusion of economic and political power within the democratic self-governing organs of society. It is otherwise inconceivable. This marks socialist planning apart as the very antithesis of bureaucratic collectivist planning. It is the very lack of a reliable feedback mechanism within the bureaucratic collectivist structure that accounts for its unique class contradictions, because it dictates from the outset that the conditions of bureaucratic exploitation themselves must unavoidably impose system-specific obstacles to the growth of social productivity.

Consequently, disproportionalities cannot be detected until large, multiple bottlenecks dam up the system. But the rate at which the economy can grow is critically dependent, in the final analysis, upon the mass of surplus-labor which can be effectively reapplied. Without an operative feedback mechanism, bureaucratic planning lacks the sensitivity to anticipate and locate potential disruptions. Offsetting this requires an enormous reserve of spare parts, inventories, intermediate goods and semi-finished products, in short, a colossal tie-up of necessary labor in social overhead before an hour of surplus-labor can actually be expended. This is reflected in the hypertrophic growth of the producer goods sector. Bourgeois economists attribute this phenomenon to some misguided ideological attachment to "Marxist" theory; while those of the "state capitalist" school claim to have discovered the dynamic of capital accumulation at play. Both conceptions are profoundly mistaken.

ACCUMULATION UNDER CAPITALISM, IT IS TRUE, NECESSITATES AN INCREASE in the capital-intensity or the organic composition of capital. Capitalists find it profitable to invest ever greater amounts of value in new, labor-saving technology as long as the savings in labor costs exceed the additional expenditure in constant capital. This occurs with coercive regularity to obtain the temporary profits of innovation and, at the other pole, as a defensive means to preserve the value of capital previously invested by meeting the innovator's challenge. But the key point is this: the increase in the organic composition of capital is the way in which *increased* productivity is expressed under capitalism. It results, after filtering through the system, in the shortening of the necessary part of the working day and the increase in the amount of surplus labor appropriated in profits and related revenues.

The increase in the "capital intensity" (for lack of a more appropriate term) under bureaucratic collectivism bears no necessary correlation to realizable productivity gains. Neither is it necessarily related to the investment in more expensive technological improvements. On the contrary, the mere multiplication of production spheres, even under conditions of simple expanded reproduction, multiplies the points of potential disruption. For this process to proceed smoothly an increase in the offsetting "capital" reserves per hour of productive labor performed is required. This means, moreover, that every actual percentage increase in productivity that does occur results in a smaller increment in final output than would be the case under capitalism, owing to the difference necessarily held as reserves. If this is multiplied by the problem of substandard, even unusable, quality of much of the output, the economic potential for bureaucratic economic crises becomes apparent. Additions to the stock of "capital" goods must contrib-

ute ever less to the growth of output. Consequently, lead times for introducing new production innovations remain pending for long periods of time, technologies often become obsolete before their introduction and bureaucratic production relations so dampen the productivity-enhancing effectiveness of those new processes which do find their way into the system as to guarantee that their potential can rarely be realized. Accordingly, the investment share of output would not only have to grow as a share of GNP, but it must also eventually culminate at a level where the application of producer goods to noninvestment uses would actually have to decline! Rather than a glut of goods unmatched by the level of purchasing power needed to sustain profits at a given rate, as under capitalism, bureaucratic crises are characterized by an absolute shortage of output; an inadequate turnout of producer goods needed to sustain a particular level of growth paralleled by an absolute diminution of consumer provisions required to maintain a given standard of living even for a non-growing population.

The bureaucracy has historically sought indemnification for this through increasing the intensity of labor and in extending the length of the collective working year. But bad housing, shoddy consumer goods, inadequate caloric intake and deficient urban infrastructures — the very “noninvestment uses” necessarily shortchanged by bureaucratic accumulation itself — impose secondary limits in terms of physical exhaustion.

That is why Communist economies have had difficulties making a convincing transition from “extensive” to “intensive” growth patterns. Yet it is just this self-same intensive accumulation pattern which, according to Marx, characterizes the “specific methods of capitalist production,” the continuous revolutionizing “out and out of the technological process of labor, and the composition of society.” This *specifically capitalist form of growth* is based on *raising* the productivity of labor by way of simultaneously increasing the mass of means of production per unit of productive labor (the technical composition of capital) and the value of the constant capital advanced to the value of the living labor-time productively worked up (the organic composition of capital) which together result in a rising rate of exploitation *despite rising real wage rates*. On the basis of this specific form of capitalist growth, Marx deduced that the rate of profit must fall because the rate of increase of surplus-value, having attained a certain height with capitalism’s maturity, cannot keep pace with the rise in the organic composition of capital. In that sense the tendential fall in the rate of profit is a further lawfully derivable consequence to the gains in labor productivity characteristically achieved under capitalism.

Considering the labor process as such, all increases in the productivity of labor are based on the ability to produce more with less labor. From the standpoint of capital, however, expanded reproduction through technological improvement can only continue through the enlargement of values embodied in material use-values. *By increasing the productivity of labor through innovations which increase the organic composition of capital, capitalism frees the value production process from the barrier which the natural rate of population increase would otherwise impose on it.* Accretions to the mass of surplus-value come primarily from a reduction in the relative part of the collective working day, rather than through measures which add to the collective work time of society. What makes the process of capitalist accumulation contradictory is that capital incessantly strives to reduce necessary labor-time to a minimum, while predicating its continuance

on the appropriation of ever growing quantities of surplus-labor-time. The continuous rise in the organic composition of capital diminishes that portion of a given capital which yields surplus-value. The percentage of capital accumulated out of surplus-value must therefore grow fast enough so that the mass of labor exploited — even at higher rates — not fall below the level needed to generate an absolute increase in the mass of surplus-value. This rate of accumulation cannot be extended indefinitely. Eventually the accumulation of the entire mass of surplus-value would not suffice to sustain the requisite growth rate, no matter how high the existing rate of exploitation. The falling rate of profit gives way to an absolute decline in the mass of profits and the system plunges into crisis.

The crisis of capitalism is ultimately a crisis of value production. The existing capital can be seen as both too large and too small. It is too large relative to the existing level of exploitation and too small for the employment of sufficient labor to overcome the dearth of surplus-value. And while there is an underproduction of use-values to meet the needs of society, there is an overproduction of commodities relative to effective demand. That is, the existing purchasing power cannot be made use of because it does not pay capitalists to expand production only to realize as much or even less surplus-value than they realized at the previous level of production. Such periodic crises of overproduction are overcome primarily through the massive slaughter of capital-values and their reorganization on a more centralized basis, by assaults on wage-rates driving them beneath the value of labor-power, and by the plundering of foreign markets.

HOW DOES THIS COMPARE TO THE CRISIS OF BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISM? Clearly the Communist economies, whether their growth rates were historically high or low, are based on the massive, sustained mobilization of means of production and labor of which only a command economy is capable. Output growth, unlike under capitalism, is essentially separated and indeed critically independent of improvements in labor productivity. *The extraction of surplus-labor is primarily an extensive process which is, in effect, exhausted when the absolute limits to the growth of the collective working day are reached.* This, in turn, is conditioned by the rate of population growth both natural and induced and by the drain of the existing surplus population from the countryside. From a capitalist standpoint, production would have long since ceased with the absolute decline in the mass of surplus-labor time yielded. But the command system can postpone its economic collapse, in this sense alone, beyond the limits which would otherwise exist in a profit-based economy, without at the same time ever attaining the productive levels of capitalism. This downward spiral to stagnation, moreover, fuels bureaucratic collectivism's imperialist drive and to the extent that new reservoirs of labor can be tapped and additional material inputs looted the tendency to breakdown can be averted.

Its elasticity with respect to capitalism should not be overstated. For parallel to bureaucratic collectivism's lack of an effective feedback mechanism is the absence of a self-generating restructuring process. Because capitalist economic crises can always be overcome through the convulsive destruction and partial withdrawal of excess capital-values in conjunction with the ratcheting down of wage rates which is its consequence, there cannot be a terminal capitalist economic crisis. Imperialism to an extent provides this service for Communism, but beyond that it is forced to graft capitalist hybrids onto itself by means of shadow-

pricing techniques and other artifacts which simulate a pricing system. This surgical transplant necessarily fails, however, because of its fundamental incompatibility with the host system.

These fundamental dissimilarities disprove the contention that the Communist economies represent a form of "state capitalism," wherein private capitalist property relations were held to be destroyed without abolishing the specifically capitalist laws of accumulation and breakdown. Behind this theory is the spurious notion that the Communist ruling class can be treated as a "bureaucratic capitalist class" because it personifies the drive to accumulate capital. This is argued despite the glaring absence of commodity production. Value relations are then attributed to the system with no further justification beyond the recognition that all social existence and development is unalterably linked to labor-time relations in the production process. But to insist that a "law of value" nevertheless operates behind the bureaucratic command system is to drain "value" and "surplus-value" of their specific explanatory significance and to reduce them to generic terms expressing nothing more than the relations that exist between labor and surplus labor in any social system. Indeed what is usually cited as evidence for this theory are relations which are, in fact, common to all forms of class exploitation and which invariably mimic one another — authoritarian forms of management, basic inequalities in distribution and the appropriation of income independent of work.

That the Stalinist counterrevolution emerged out of bureaucratic social differentiation is seen by the adherents of the state capitalist theory as an aberrant, non-organic development of tendencies firmly embedded in capitalism, wherein the laws of competition give way first to monopolies and then to the further centralization of control in the form of statified trusts. Were this the case, it would be manifestly evident that Stalinist economies, being a higher stage in the developmental cycle of capitalism, would exhibit labor productivity gains markedly in advance of market capitalism. What then in the theory of "state capitalism" explains their notorious inability even to generate the intensive growth patterns and higher levels of labor-process efficiency which, according to Marx, differentiates capitalist production techniques from its predecessors?

If, however, Stalinist societies were seen in context as retrogressive throwbacks, this conundrum would cease to present a dilemma without resolution. This is, indeed, what the theory of bureaucratic collectivism accounted for and why it succeeded in advancing a Marxist understanding of the epoch. For with the bureaucratic abolition of market relationships, even in its partial NEP forms, the labor market also withered. Competition and bargaining among prospective labor-power buyers came to an end. Labor-power had thereby discontinued existing in commodity form and when it, like all other property, passed into the hands of the totalitarian state the working class ceased to be free, even in the provisional capitalist sense. Labor was in effect and in reality reduced to abject slavery by the bureaucratic owners of the means of production. Had this form of industrial slavery outproduced capitalism, the very foundations of Marxist theory would have been irretrievably subverted. For it would have provided undeniable historical evidence refuting the notion that the struggle of the oppressed to emerge from the shackles of class exploitation is itself the most important instrument of social development and organization in the modern era, and would have verified the theoretically inexplicable, namely that the bearers of retrograde production

relations might themselves be the transformative agents of a higher social order.

It was rather in its *political* challenge to capitalism, that Stalinism displayed its greatest strengths. It fed massively on the justified hatred of capitalist exploitation known by the masses primarily, but not exclusively, in the Third World who had no direct experience with Stalinist oppression. It was therefore able to ride the wave of revolutionary activity occasioned by the upsurge of Third World nationalism and anti-colonialism. And equally it was capable of annexing and inspiring vast sections of left-leaning intellectuals, student movements, and political activists in the West to its cause through their enduring sympathies with the Third World.

But in order to meet the economic challenge of post-war capitalism, bureaucratic collectivism found itself unable to resist limited openings to the technical and professional middle classes, as well as to small scale entrepreneurs. Instead of simplifying class relations, Communist development was politically compelled by its struggle with capitalism to compound and expand them. Modern Communism, like the slave societies of classical antiquity, began to face a multiplicity of unforeseen class alliances and potential class alliances — domestically as well as internationally. This complication of an emerging capitalist class was not anticipated by the theorists of bureaucratic collectivism who, optimistically, did not believe that bureaucratic exploitation could be dissolved in a non-proletarian solution.

With the partial openings to the intermediate strata of society, the Gorbachev reforms exposed the bureaucracy to outside intervention and the basis of Communist exploitation rapidly unravelled. The most prominent casualty was Gorbachev himself, who, by abandoning the function of bureaucratic arbiter, consigned himself to political irrelevancy before being consigned to historical irrelevancy. To date what has transpired is the revolt of the factory and enterprise managers. In the past, these elements dutifully labored under the critical eye of the Stalinist political functionaries. They were themselves, as a distinct social category, excluded from political power but nevertheless forced to cope with unrealistic and unenforceable directives from above. Yet as intermediate strata, they were also the conduit of popular worker discontent from below. These elements have so far succeeded in breaking the source of their specific managerial oppression — the Communist Party — by parlaying popular dissatisfaction and leveraging support from the new middle classes and from Western ruling classes to their side.

The work of actually introducing capitalism, however, is staggering. As the central ministries disintegrate, control of enterprise and goods fall into the hands of the next bureaucratic tier — the factory managers. But there is neither a viable monetary system nor an efficient system of alternative, competitive market linkages needed to permit the effective coordination of economic activity on a capitalist basis. Without massive economic intervention on the part of the West, the new men of power may find themselves unable to walk on capitalist legs, without heavy reliance on bureaucratic crutches.

Still, the bulk of the productive apparatus remains in the hands of the state leaving the class status of the workers formally the same, but clearly in a transitional stage. The breakdown of the state's industrial authority and the rise of alternative employers combined with wide-scale unemployment conspire to con-

cede back to the worker control over the disposal of labor-power. Whatever hybrid forms these societies assume, bureaucratic collectivism in its traditional form is dead.

HISTORY KNOWS EPOCHS OF DISMAYING COMPLACENCY AND SOCIAL TORPOR, as well as of inspiring revolutionary ferment. The working class has clearly not reached the limits of its endurance with capitalist exploitation nor has it come to grips with the mounting reversal of fortunes which now marks its experience with capitalist production. It may never — there is no certainty. But if the socialist movement is to play a decisive role in pushing oppositional behavior to revolutionary consciousness, it must first sweep clean its own house of the lingering debris of authoritarianism. This is what the theory of bureaucratic collectivism intended to do.

Book Reviews

Labor, the New Left and After

THE NEW LEFT AND LABOR IN THE 1960s by Peter B. Levy. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1994. \$17.95 PB

SOLIDARITY UNIONISM: REBUILDING THE LABOR MOVEMENT FROM BELOW by Staughton Lynd. Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Company, 1993. \$7.95 PB

HARD-PRESSED IN THE HEARTLAND: THE HORMEL STRIKE AND THE FUTURE OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT by Peter Rachleff. Boston: South End Press, 1993. \$12.00 PB

Reviewed by Paul Buhle

AS PETER LEVY SUGGESTS IN HIS EXCELLENT VOLUME, *The New Left and Labor*, the complex images of organized labor in the modern era can almost be said to have shrunk down to a single frame: 200 hard-hats rampaging through Wall Street in May 1970, attacking not the stock-swindlers but the college students who had come to protest the war in Vietnam. Actually staged by Richard Nixon's chums in the construction trades, this photo-op neatly reversed the old Communist picture of big-muscled workers readying themselves to assault the capitalist enemy in its lair. AFL-CIO chiefs along with their public relations entourage, and more than a few radicals of one kind or another, reaffirmed both sides of this political dichotomy. Rebellious workers were seen, when seen at all, only as angered racial minorities or aging rednecks. Despite the best efforts of socialists in the decades since, the images have never quite faded. Anyone with family and friends in blue-collar America, especially but not only during that explosive era of the 1960s-70s, knows how vastly much more complex and conflicted the picture has been. Military Keynesianism did transform considerable sections of the post-Depression working class, bringing otherwise hapless industrial regions (like much of blue-collar New England) out of a downward spiral, creating a vast infrastructure in the hitherto underpopulated South and West, and reshaping sev-

PAUL BUHLE founded *Radical America* and was active in the local labor history/labor support groups in Rhode Island for many years. His biography of historian William Appleman Williams and his picture-book, *Images of American Radicalism*, will both appear in 1995.

eral generations' attitudes about the defense industry as a way of life. Racial lines, reinforced by generational perceptions, further predisposed the middle-aged workers of the 1960s to resent both the material comfort and the radicalism of young people (including their own children), without being able to understand the real sources of their resentment. The raging arguments between parents and grown-up children often avoided "class" altogether, because neither side knew how to deal with the almost unspoken issue.

In time, families reconciled as well as they could, oldtimers faded out, young people had families of their own, and the scars seemed to disappear. (Unfortunately, the family lore of members who had worked for part of their lives in factories and felt the solidarity of real labor conflict receded even faster.) But basic issues that had been so vivid during the 1940s remained somehow unaddressed a half-century later. The more fortunate section of the working class had made its way to technological/ managerial positions now suddenly being sliced away by major corporations, or struggled to find the good life by adding full- and part-time extra jobs to the family household. The less fortunate, once able to count on semi-steady (and often unionized) industrial work, often lost everything in a generation or two of downward mobility to the underclass. Stress and misery somehow came out as suburbs vs. ghetto, white against non-white. It is either one of the great human tragedies of our time or (from the neo-liberal, neo-conservative and plain old conservative standpoint) the happy triumph of capital over socialism.

What really happened? Could it have turned out differently? And, more important, could it still turn out differently? Levy offers some wonderful anecdotes, observations and suggestions on the first question. Staughton Lynd and Peter Rachleff, two of the most devoted and democratic labor activists around, provide us with food for thought on the second and third.

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LEVY'S *THE NEW LEFT AND LABOR* HAS, IN ONE WAY, AN IMPOSSIBLE burden to bear. A book like this is so long overdue that every longtime labor activist will recall favorite incidents and personalities left out. But in truth, the author packs an enormous amount of detail into slightly more than 200 pages of text. For the first time, *The New Left and Labor* pins down the intricate web of contacts that connected various unions with CORE, SNCC and SDS of the early and middle 1960s. It is a bit staggering, to this writer, to contemplate labor officials on hand at the Student Peace Union's Washington Action of 1963 or the Trade Union Leadership Council of Detroit operating as a progressive center, and even more astonishing to imagine the American Federation of Teachers in Prince Edward County, Virginia, starting what was arguably the first "freedom school" for African-American children. Old *New Politics* hands like Kim Moody and Stanley Aronowitz were already hyperactive, writing, seminarizing and generally trying to make the connections real and lasting.

Things fell apart, of course. George Meany's mean-spirited refusal to endorse the March on Washington (and the general absence of white-dominated southern union locals from civil rights struggles, notwithstanding the courage of many individuals) was an opening gun. As documented by *New Politics* at the time, the AFL-CIO attempt to stonewall complaints by A. Philip Randolph and Herbert Hill (representing the NAACP) against racist union practices set the

tone of much internecine conflict to follow.

Levy makes the vital point, however, that the split was not as early or severe as many writers have portrayed. United Auto Worker general counsel Joseph Rauh actually encouraged the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party's (MFDP) challenge to the regular (i.e., racist) delegation at the Democratic Party convention of 1964. In their own bureaucratic way, Reuther-style liberals believed that the moment for "realignment" of the two parties had almost begun with the prospective dispossession of the Dixiecrats. On another level, the UAW, Packinghouse Workers, Machinists and others supported SDS's Economic Research and Action Projects (ERAPs) financially, hoping to mobilize the unemployed and underemployed in support of the labor movement.

It has often been suggested that the 1964 Democratic Party convention in Atlantic City marked the end of labor/civil rights/New Left coalition when the MFDP refused the demeaning offer of token representation. Actually, a spirit of hope prevailed at least through the Selma March of the following year, including unionists in various marches of kindred spirit from Washington DC and New York to Chicago, San Francisco and many smaller cities. Unionists polled nationally reported strong support for the Selma activists, and a great deal more enthusiasm for integration than professionals had. The successful push for the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was, indeed, inconceivable without the broad spirit of cooperation between the Movement and its amalgam of supporters.

Levy slips somewhat, however, in portraying the Vietnam War as the single, overriding cause for the decisive breakup of the coalition. As Manning Marable and Robin D.G. Kelley have keenly argued, class divisions within the civil rights community had surfaced as early as the March on Washington, and became increasingly obvious as the prospects for institutional desegregation appeared in sight. Older generation black leaders, with the partial exception of Martin Luther King, Jr., had little sense of what the underclass wanted or how explosive its temper could be. At the same time, optimistic assessments of labor's contribution repressed memories of the traumatic McCarthy era, when more than a few labor leaders of noted liberal reputation worked enthusiastically with employers to nab radical (Communist or non-Communist) troublemakers among the ranks, and with an FBI hellbent to quash civil rights organizations. The "new men of power," as C. Wright Mills had called them, were not deeply committed to racial egalitarianism because they felt threatened by real egalitarianism of any kind. Rhetoric aside, they enjoyed being on top, and maneuvered to keep themselves there. With some notable exceptions, racial idealism invariably came from the middle ranks and below, often from the Old and New Left in disguise.

At any rate, trade union leaders were not about to march with non-anti-Communists anywhere, let alone in protests against a Cold War conflict purportedly defending "American values" against the Red (or Yellow) Hordes. By 1967, the *AFL-CIO News* began crudely attacking the peaceniks. ILGWU officials meanwhile revealed the new coldness of a rightward-drifting Jewish establishment toward Martin Luther King, a coldness that grew into a bitter chill by the time of King's assassination in 1968. According to insiders, Walter Reuther actually wanted to break with the Meany hard line (his brother, Victor, had taken part in the exposé of long-term AFL collaboration with the CIA) but lacked the will to do so. Levy does not say it, but Walter had long since committed himself to the defense of leadership against his own restless younger (and notably black) mem-

bers reacting to automation and the intensification of labor. There was no road back.

IF LEVY GIVES VASTLY TOO MUCH CREDENCE TO THE SINCERITY of labor officials and their spokesmen, such as Tom Kahn, he points accurately to the important factors that brought together younger people, from students to the working class, in the later 1960s and early 1970s. He could easily have done more with the Vietnam Vets, white, black and brown, who returned to the factory full of rage (often full of drugs as well) against the corporate class happy to send them away to fight and now eager to profit from their sweated labor. It was this generational factor, within a relative vacuum of other organized forces, which led to a politics of culture and of protest more than of economics and structural change. Older Social Democrats, Communists and assorted other radicals could readily see the limitations of a generational ("Youth Culture") perspective, but they had too little to offer activists anxious to halt the war and unable to find any basis for patient confidence in the ultimate triumph of democracy.

Exceptionally low moments followed. The lowest, perhaps, was the sight of AFL-CIO leaders rallying in 1972 around Henry "Scoop" Jackson, the "Senator from Boeing" whose hardline zeal for the Vietnam war was matched only by his greed for the defense industry payoffs to his campaign coffers. George Meany and Albert Shanker were about as regretful for the massacres at My Lai as the then-new media star, Oliver North, and just as disingenuous in drawing political conclusions. Twenty-five internationals still backed George McGovern, as Levy points out. But no one could doubt the *Schadenfreude* of the Executive Council toward the crushing defeat of the prairie liberal with the feminist and gay rights sympathies that the chiefs so enjoyed ridiculing in private (sometimes in public).

They were, in fact, far more comfortable with Nixon, and despite their public relations bombast, more comfortable yet with Ronald Reagan whose administration funded their international adventures beyond any earlier labor leader's wildest dreams. As a consequence of turning a blind eye to the newer sectors of the workforce, AFL-CIO bosses saw the labor movement sink further and further down. But their prestige and power (to say nothing of their sky-high salaries) had long since come to rest upon other sources. They imagined themselves players in the New World Order, power executives bankrolled to install business unionism around the globe even as it lost its function at home.

One of the best sections of *The New Left and Labor* shifts from the background of this dreary scene to the ongoing attempts to organize at the fringes of the AFL-CIO, where color reinforced class or where the New Left spoke to its own constituencies on the campus. Had Martin Luther King, Jr., not been killed, had his dream of uniting labor and the black community not fallen with him, there might conceivably have been a great crusade to save labor's morals and existence. In failure, it nevertheless manifested extraordinary moments of hope — from the League of Revolutionary Black Workers in Detroit to the Teaching Assistants Association in Madison, Wisconsin to the Memphis garbage collectors whom King died aiding.

Thousands of idealists at that moment kept the faith. In what can only be remembered as a Children's Crusade, a diaspora of campus activists moved into factories and blue-collar towns during 1970-73, published several dozen newspapers, and engaged with the variety of struggles at hand. My own memory keeps

going back emblematically to the radical musician who lost his fingers in a drill-press, although there were many happier stories of friendships, solidarity, and hope. By and large, however, the rush of independents, vanguard groupuscules and others ended in isolation and disappointment by the time the recession, factory relocation and union repression had done their work. A few thousand individuals stubbornly stuck it out in one way or another, less as union insurgents than as support-movement activists, OSHA-related organizers, labor and community historians, social service providers, and state-paid labor education professionals. They set the pace, in turn, for newer generations to follow.

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ENTER STAUGHTON LYND AND, A DECADE LATER, PETER RACHLEFF AS WELL. Most of the latest colonizers suffered from a "line" that locked them into an unrealistic expectation of either political recruitment, early breakthroughs or both. They lacked fresh ideas, above all, ways to connect different constituencies. Sooner or later the most energetic or flexible found themselves casting around for allies, among older and younger generations of workers, discovering life-long rank-and-file militants, affable priests, feminists and gays, old ex-Communists, young ex-Maoists and assorted others willing to pull against the tide. Here and there, an organizer had the skill and fluency to make the most of the immediate situation and offer possible lessons for others engaged in similar struggles elsewhere.

Lynd is *sui generis*. Son of famed sociologists Robert and Helen Lynd, Staughton had been successively a Trotskyist of sorts, a tenant organizer, a founder of *Liberation* magazine, a leader of the anti-war movement, and a prominent historian virtually blacklisted from the teaching profession. Working with rank-and-file activists in Gary, Indiana, of the late 1960s, he encouraged history workshops and oral histories to recover the memories of democratic unionism. Relocated in Youngstown, Ohio, Lynd became one of those labor attorneys reminiscent of the selfless 1930s idealists who hung up a shingle and began assisting hapless ordinary folks while organizing constituencies. His early coalition effort, to slow or reverse the factory shut-downs in the Mahoning Valley, was characteristically Sisyphean. In losing, he and others nevertheless won a sense of pride for Valley residents who mobilized themselves instead of just giving up.

Solidarity Unionism tells part of this story by way of its after-effects. Steel mill retirees facing the collapse of company pension funds organized themselves into "Solidarity U.S.A." At a contract meeting in 1987 over LTV Steel offers, they were placed behind a rope (as non-voting USW members), their very organization denounced by union leaders as unnecessary and divisive. Workers Against Toxic Chemical Hazards (WATCH) likewise held their own citizens' meetings and forced local union leaders to cease ignoring company indifference to industrial health-risks. Most distinctively, Ohioans formed a Workers Solidarity Club with a variety of members from various unions, picketing with strikers, organizing rallies and generally promoting a spirit of common purpose which had all but disappeared since the 1940s.

Lynd wisely disclaims any large or certain significance for these organizations. But they suggest, as he rightly says, some of the possibilities for organizations and groups parallel to rather than mere auxiliaries of the labor movement. Citing the historical precedent that the CIO grew out of such informal networks

and the realistic prognosis that the AFL-CIO left to itself has no future, he projects what might have happened and still might happen under proper conditions.

As Lynd rereads the history of labor in the 1930s, the CIO brought together enormous talent and energy, but also channeled it very quickly into bureaucratic bodies, whether presided over by "Left" or "Right." Arising out of the most democratic mass impulses in American society between the 1910s strikes (or perhaps the Populist movement) and the Civil Rights crusade, it served ironically to centralize power and to marginalize the surviving progressive impulses in the local AFL central labor councils. Thus the widespread hope for a labor party was easily crushed, and the future defeat of labor was prepared in the unwillingness to rock the New Deal boat by confronting Democratic Party racism with a no-holds-barred anti-racist southern organizing drive.

Much of the story has been left out here, and one can quarrel with details (for instance, ethnic communities voted enthusiastically for FDR without prompting in 1936, and often convinced themselves that the Democratic Party held their future). But Lynd raises a set of issues which semi-official union histories and even most left-oriented scholars have probed too rarely. The various McCarthy Era tactics of government and management, from the close collaboration of the FBI with CIO officials like James Carey to the expulsions of the Communist-led unions and even the Taft-Hartley Act, were arguably the after-effects of battles already lost or given up in advance. Labor radicals who had rushed to incorporate local independent unions into the internationals, who focused all radical attention upon the men of mass industries at the expense of women and minorities in the clerical and service trades, and who devoted their most precious time to contesting top union leadership, inadvertently undercut the possibilities of labor as a social movement.

Lynd argues that they also missed the elements of solidarity such as informal shop committees, cross-occupational networks, work-to-rule and other tactical innovations which depended upon local initiatives. He lacks the space to develop the historical examples very far. But he seeks mainly to get us to the present. Following Stan Weir, he proposes expanded use of democratic claims in the workplace, such as free speech, due-process and the right to confront a company accuser who makes charges against a worker. We leave *Solidarity Unionism* with a last chapter on the hopes raised by the Pittston Strike and the cheerful thought that true solidarity breeds kinship that breaks down all barriers.

Unfortunately, life is full not of epiphanic Pittstons but of reminders that those barriers remain. Lynd says that we should cherish the feminization of labor and, I am sure, he also welcomes the appearance of a drastically new working class composed largely of immigrants from Asia, the Pacific Islands and the Caribbean Basin. But the same historic force that enriches the human experience makes the events of the American labor past seem geologically distant.

The college or highschool student of ten or twenty years ago had a father, mother, aunt or uncle who worked in a factory and could relate some vanishing memory of solidarity. Now that link is gone and the drastically changed perception of unions is based not only on business propaganda but on the decades of markedly unidealistic labor leadership. As any college activist learns quickly, the mainstream of labor officials (not all, but the mainstream) can generally be counted upon for cynical support of political hacks in both parties; for hostility toward

environmentalism; for indifference to the underemployed; for yahoo enthusiasm at the prospects of war and war-related jobs; and above all, for avid personal membership in a suburban lifestyle once restricted to the middle class. Speaking as a sometime teacher of U.S. history, it's tough even to get a kid of any kind, middle class idealist or blue-collar immigrant, to take the glorious historic moments of labor seriously when the available evidence is so negative.

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PETER RACHLEFF'S *Hard-Pressed in the Heartland* offers dramatic counter-evidence, as Rachleff himself does for the decline of the younger labor idealist. Too bad this guy can't be cloned and put down in every industrial or post-industrial village, union hall and classroom. A history professor at Macalester College in St. Paul and a very fine historian of race and class, Rachleff has obviously put aside lots of scholarly projects to devote himself to solidarity-building in the most democratic ways imaginable. The *St. Paul Pioneer Press*, which treats him as a genial Don Quixote of labor, likes to recount his life as a peripatetic speaker at union locals and national rank-and-file meetings, a tireless preacher of solidarity, and a small "d" democrat who listens carefully. He was also Chair of the Twin Cities P-9 Committee, and there hangs a tale.

Hard-Pressed in the Heartland relates, at one level, a story that *New Politics* readers already know well, of the meatpackers' local which refused both givebacks and the sabotage of their strike by union higher-ups. Most observers have already made up their minds on the validity of Barbara Koppel's Academy Award-winning documentary of the strike, *The American Dream*, and will feel either reinforced or unshaken by Rachleff's particular account of leadership and struggle. But he offers a great deal more as well. Returning to the scene of events, he finds an IWW-style unionism, the Independent Union of All Workers, at the same Austin, Minnesota, Hormel company during the 1930s, militantly autonomous until pressured (by Communists, Trotskyists and union officials alike) into affiliating with the CIO. With that affiliation, they lost the qualities of local control and horizontal solidarity that had distinguished them earlier. Once lost, these would be immensely difficult to recover.

At another level, the Hormel story is one of unceasing bureaucratic opposition to rank-and-file activity and an eagerness to back away from the aggressive tactics of the company determined both to cut wages and to intensify the work process. Very sadly, most sections of the organized left were willing to support union leaders; worse, in some ways, they joined the solidarity movement mainly with an eye to taking it over. In any case, the international and the company won. Maybe the strikers never had a chance. But Rachleff assesses the self-organization, the outreach touching 3,000 union locals and drawing tens of thousands of union members to Austin, the courage, good times and hopeful moments of picnics, parades and dances. He draws from this experience the conclusion that "the new wave of unionism represented by the P-9 strikers and their supporters is necessary for the revitalization of the labor movement but is not yet sufficiently developed."

A chapter-length survey of American labor's great leaps forward from the 1820s to the Knights, the IWW and the CIO to P-9 and other 1980s movements prompts Rachleff like Lynd to suggest "social unionism" might be the answer.

Real international solidarity (and not merely an exchange of visits between officials) is mandatory. An “organizing model” of active communications within and between workplaces and communities offers hope where the “service model” of business unionism promises only doom. Civil disobedience, uniting non-violence with direct action, can cut through the old chain of command and its failed tactical notions. All this is somewhat vague, and Rachleff’s description of “something very significant... percolating beneath the surface, erupting here and there,” may be wishful thinking at a moment when capital seems to hold just about all the cards. Then again, anyone who sees a hard-fought struggle up close, win or lose, sees also a fragment of a possible future. One of the best things about this book is that in showing us the people of P-9, Rachleff shows us himself, why he can believe and why he keeps fighting.

The Intellectual Roots of Fascism

THE BIRTH OF FASCIST IDEOLOGY: FROM CULTURAL REBELLION TO POLITICAL REVOLUTION by Zeev Sternhell with Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri, Princeton, N.J., Princeton University Press, 1994, 338 pp. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Ernest Erber

THIS IS (AND SHOULD BE) A DISTURBING, AND EVEN FRIGHTENING, book. Its subtitle could have been — to borrow from Joseph Conrad — *Europe's Heart of Darkness*. This is about the underside of Western Civilization's canon, rarely noticed in the multicultural battles. Except, possibly, for Joseph de Maistre — targeted by Isaiah Berlin, in a relatively recent and exhaustive essay, as the earliest precursor of fascism — those 19th and early 20th Century authors whose critiques of the liberating principles of the French Revolution and the Enlightenment created the intellectual basis of fascism, are familiar only to scholars specializing in the subject matter. Even those familiar with the philosophical and/or political polemics of this period tend to see them as disputes over particular doctrines or theories, such as materialism, determinism, rationalism, natural rights, democracy, individualism, et al. rather than as the accumulation of increasingly related principles that eventually emerged as the foundation of fascist ideology.

If it is disturbing to be made aware of the existence of this sizable literature as the foundation stones of fascist doctrine, and to be reminded of its continuing influence on current thought, it is truly frightening to discover that the intellectual thugs who are influenced by it are not as alien to us, i.e. the political left, as we have assumed. Though the existence of common ancestors is questionable on the basis of this book's tracing of political genealogies, the history of fairly frequent cross-fertilizations is not (nor is its continuation in current political and public policy thinking). Fortunately, previous accusations, such as the claim by the American scholar, A. James Gregor, that the fascists are our first cousins, do not stand up according to Sternhell's account; second or third cousins, perhaps.

True; this was all in the dim, distant past. But the reemergence of Italian Fascism as a contemporary political phenomenon, not to speak of the reappearance of Neo-Nazism in Germany, gives this book's American edition a timeliness that was evidently not anticipated by its author when he wrote it for publication in 1989 (France), since he concludes the volume by relegating fascism — as he defines it — to the history of the first half of our century.

The author's erroneous conclusion that fascism is a thing of the past should not, however, be used to detract from the importance of this work, which marks a milestone in scholarly documentation on the origins of fascist ideology and in fresh insights into its causes, a subject matter that continues to challenge our efforts to understand the massive political and social movements that shaped the course of the 20th century. Though this challenge applies to schools of interpretation across the board, it is particularly relevant to work done in the Marxist

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tradition, since the latter's comprehension of the origins and causes of fascism remains shallow in comparison to the effectiveness of Marxist scholarship in other fields.

Zeev Sternhell, Leon Blum Professor of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and, deservedly, an internationally-recognized authority on the book's subject matter, capsulizes his thesis in the subtitle, *From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution*. He traces the historical roots of fascist ideology to the rejection of the culture of bourgeois democracy in France by rebellious intellectuals in the latter part of the 19th Century, finding an echo in, and linking up with, the violent protests against rising capitalism by French proletarians organized in direct-actionist trade unions (*syndicats*). Both currents eventually identified their discontent with the fortunes of the defeated and dominated French nation — post-Waterloo, post-1848, post-Franco-Prussian War, post-Commune — to articulate a violently passionate and tribal nationalism that saw the materialism (not in the philosophic, but in the acquisitive, sense) of the bourgeoisie as the cause of France's weakness and subservience. Abandoning revolution solely from above or solely from below, they now saw the French people as a supraclass whole serving as the instrument of revolutionary change.

THIS MELANGE OF REBELLIOUS CULTURAL CURRENTS (BOTH *MASSE* AND *HAUT*), according to Sternhell, found a common voice at the turn of the century in the gifted, iconoclastic publicist and political theorist, Georges Sorel; in turn (and in modified and ill-suited combination) Marxist, syndicalist, nationalist — but always the enemy of bourgeois social conformity and the advocate of violence as the cleansing, therapeutical agent for curing society's ills, which he most often diagnosed as bourgeois decadence, exemplified by parliamentarism.

Sternhell traces the spread of Sorelian concepts — nurtured by their progenitor as transcendent mythology possessing power to move the masses — beyond the borders of France; mainly, and with pervasive effect, into Italy, where it soon found acceptance beyond the working class, and eventually found its political form in the Fascist party.

Because Sternhell considers Sorel's contributions to the formative period of fascism to have been critical, both in respect to theory and to practice, he devotes his first and longest chapter to an explication of Sorelian thought and action. This is no easy task, since Sorel was unconventional in almost everything he thought and did; unconventional, but not necessarily irrational.

Identifying the rationale for Sorel's constantly unexpected shifts and turns in strategy and tactics and finding it in his core of relatively simple concepts, firmly held and endlessly articulated, establishes Sternhell as one of the foremost authorities on Sorel, if not the foremost. (This is not small recognition, since the field of Sorel studies is very crowded; the growing number of scholars, leading to the creation of a Society of Sorelian Studies in recent times, testifies to the continuing historical and contemporary importance of Sorel.)

In tracing the factual origins and maturation of fascist ideology through its labyrinthian development and change, Sternhell never loses sight of the larger historical context of 18th and 19th century Europe in the grip of deep and sweeping transformation powered by the Industrial Revolution, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution (and its decades-long repercussions) — all identified with the rise and dominance of the bourgeoisie. He sees fascist ideology as no less a

product of massive discontent with, and rejection of, new bourgeois social formations and institutions than was the labor and socialist movement and its ideological expression in Marxism. But, whereas, the latter sought to extend and expand the egalitarian and democratic side of the newly emerging society, including the materialistic (wages, living conditions, personal improvement) and the rationalistic (science, reason, individual rights), fascist ideology expressed the hierarchical and authoritarian side of the new industrial order (rank, obedience, obligation) and sought to resurrect and preserve the older tribalist social values (kinship, fraternity, honor, nation).

In contrast to the widely held view that fascist ideology was completely eclectic, largely contrived to catch popular discontent, Sternhell describes the "supporting pillars of the Fascist edifice" as representing "a coherent, logical, and well-structured totality," and argues that,

fascism's intellectual baggage enabled it to travel alone, and its theoretical content was neither less homogeneous nor more heterogenous than that of liberalism or socialism. Nor were the incoherences and contradictions greater in number or more profound than those that existed in liberal or socialist thought for a hundred years. The opportunism of the various Fascist parties and movements, including that of the Mussolini regime, hardly differed from the way in which socialist parties struggled to gain power, or that had already gained power, compromised on principles.

Sternhell sees nationalism as the adhesive that bound together all other strands of fascist thought and as the bridge over which all other anti-bourgeois currents that found common points of agreement with it passed over into the fascist camp, including Sorel's revolutionary syndicalism. The latter moved via "socialist nationalism" to "national socialism". It is surprising to discover that the latter term, mainly identified with Hitler's National Socialist Workers Party, was being used in the revolutionary syndicalist movement some years before World War I. (The one-time leader of the pre-war left wing of socialism who turned super-patriot in 1914, Gustave Hervé, founded the National Socialist Party of France in 1919, together with the attorney who had defended the assassin of Jean Jaures, pacifist leader of the French Socialist Party, who was killed while trying to mobilize mass resistance to the outbreak of World War I.)

"Not all Italian revolutionary syndicalists became Fascists," writes Sternhell, "but most syndicalist leaders were among the founders of the Fascist movement. Many even held key posts in the regime founded by the most famous fellow traveler of revolutionary syndicalism, Benito Mussolini."

The latter freely acknowledged his intellectual debt to the radical left. In his contribution to the *Italian Encyclopedia*, some 20 years after his transition toward fascism had begun, Mussolini wrote:

Reformism, revolutionarism, centrism — these are terms the very memory of which is forgotten, but in the great river of fascism you will find currents that go back to the Sorels, to the Peguys, to the Lagadelles of the *Mouvement socialiste*, and to that group of Italian syndicalists who, thanks to Olivetti's *Pagine Libere*, Orano's *La Lupa*, and Enrico Leone's *Il Divenire Sociale*, between 1904 and 1914 introduced a new note into socialist circles emasculated and chloroformed by the Giolittian fornication.

Sternhell confines his book to the *birth* of fascist ideology. This relieves him of

the obligation of dealing with fascism in power, except to note that "the Mussolini regime of the 1930s was much closer to the ideological synthesis of *La Lupa* or the Cercle Proudhon than the Stalin regime was to the original Marxism." This might or might not be true. Nor is it relevant. It seeks to make an objective, value-free comparison within the context of subject matter that deals with the future course of Western civilization, essentially an inquiry into choices that must of necessity be normative, based on moral values. What matters is that Mussolini had little to betray when he trod upon whatever might have been left of the proletarian syndicalist beginnings of fascism as he embraced the financiers, industrialists, large landowners, military and church hierarchy to carry out his pompous vision of Italy as the new Roman Empire, while Stalin betrayed the egalitarianism for which the Bolshevik Revolution and the first years of the Soviet regime had stood.

STERNHELL'S BOOK DESERVES HIGH MARKS AS A HISTORY OF IDEAS. This is not to downgrade it to chronology and documentation. It is history of the highest order. But as such it leaves unanswered questions of enormous importance. Sternhell seems at times to be aware of these questions; even hinting at them, but then skirting around them, e.g. the relationship between fascism's espousal of violence as a principle and the brutality of fascist regimes. At times Sternhell seems to be leaning over backward to maintain scholarly objectivity; simply avoiding making judgments. Yet he never seems to miss an opportunity to present evidence to counter the hostility and contempt toward fascism and its history that dominates in the public opinion of most of the democratic nations, certainly among their intellectuals and academics. Perhaps Sternhell believes this to be necessary because he believes that fascist ideology has been treated unfairly by scholars who are biased toward liberalism or socialism. Sometimes it appears that the central purpose of the book is to right the scales.

But these attempts at explanation weaken, if not evaporate, upon a closer reading of the book's "Epilogue," where Sternhell becomes less the historian and more the political scientist. He ends the "Epilogue" and the book with a curious final judgment:

Thus, if a conclusion is needed now, *at the end of our century*, to the great cultural rebellion that swept over Europe in the first half of the twentieth century, it is that to this day no better basis has been found for a human order worthy of the name than the universalism and humanism of the Enlightenment. (Emphasis added.)

This is a strange ending for a book, and certainly for its "Epilogue," that never misses an opportunity to trash the partisans and defenders of the Enlightenment and, particularly, the French Revolution, and to present its fascist detractors, including Mussolini, in the best possible light. One possible explanation of what Sternhell means is that it is fortunate that "the great cultural rebellion that swept over Europe in the first half of the twentieth century" (his euphemism for the fascist movement and ideology) made — and left — its mark upon European society so that the condition of today's "universalism and humanism" is made more tolerable for those who believe that fascist ideology had so much to offer as a cure for bourgeois decadence. How else explain this odd conclusion to an "Epilogue" that argues the case for fascism's "great cultural rebellion" against

the Enlightenment's heritage ?

One last observation on the book. To this reviewer's surprise and dismay, Sternhell lays down a dictum on page two of his introduction that "Fascism can in no way be identified with Naziism." He supports this with a few brief points that in no way counter the overwhelming evidence to the contrary, viz. (1) "the basis of Naziism was racism in its most extreme sense"; (2) the Italian Fascist Party contained many Jews; (3) the Italian Fascist regime passed no anti-Semitic laws until 1938; (4) "during the Second World War Jews felt less danger in Nice or Haute-Savoie, (French) areas under Italian occupation, than in Marseilles, which was under the control of the Vichy government."

"Having clarified this question, let us now return to our definition of fascism," concludes Sternhell and finds no further occasion to return to the subject of Nazism in this book, except for passing references that serve to undermine his case for exclusion. It is as if a physician x-rayed and examined a patient's right lung and ignored the left with the observation that it is biologically different.

Despite this mystery regarding Nazism, Sternhell has given us a substantial and worthwhile book. In one sense, the "Epilogue" is its most challenging part. It deserves treatment in a separate article.

M. Ghilan's Analysis of Peace Accords on Tape

Maxim Ghilan, the well-known editor of *Israel & Palestine*, in the United States on a lecture tour, spoke to a group of local *New Politics* supporters and subscribers on November 20. In his speech he discussed the background of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, critically analyzed the Oslo peace accords and ended with a series of recommendations for peace-oriented forces. In a lively question and discussion period Maxim expanded on aspects of his talk and summed up his political conclusions.

This fascinating, informative lecture and discussion was taped and the tape is now available. To obtain a copy just send \$8.00 to New Politics, P.O. Box 98, Brooklyn, NY 11231-0098.

Rise and Fall of an American Radical

MAX SHACHTMAN AND HIS LEFT. A SOCIALIST ODYSSEY THROUGH THE "AMERICAN CENTURY" by Peter Drucker, Atlantic Highlands New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994. 346 pp. \$18.50, paper.

Reviewed by Michael Löwy

THIS IS NOT AN ORDINARY POLITICAL BIOGRAPHY: the whole history of revolution and counterrevolution in the 20th century is reflected in the sometimes magnifying and sometimes deforming and obscuring mirror of an American radical's life. The book is a remarkable achievement, not only because of its extraordinary wealth of research and scholarship, but also, and above all, because the illuminating insights it offers on the dilemmas and paradoxes of revolutionary commitment in the context of U.S. political life.

Max Shachtman's evolution has much in common with that of a whole generation of American Marxists who became increasingly "de-radicalized" after 1950. There is, however, something paradoxical in his life-story: unlike others, he did not move to the right during the Cold War but rather after it, in the 60s, when a new generation was being radicalized. Moreover, he still claimed to be a Marxist even when, during his last years, he supported the right wing of the Democratic Party.

A Jewish immigrant (he was born in Warsaw in 1904), raised in East Harlem — at that time a Jewish area — Shachtman became a Communist in the early 20s. After taking an active part in the Sacco and Vanzetti campaign, he was attracted to Trotsky's criticism of Stalinism and was expelled, along with J.P. Cannon and many others, from the Communist Party.

After visiting Trotsky in Büyük-Ada (Turkey), Shachtman became a sort of "commissar for foreign affairs" for the founder of the Red Army, during the early 30s, as well as the main exponent of his ideas in the English-speaking world. In 1938 he helped to create the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) — a Trotskyist split from the Socialist Party — and presided over the founding congress of the Fourth International in France. Under the common leadership of J.P. Cannon and Max Shachtman, the SWP became the largest Trotskyist group in the world.

But the two leaders soon clashed on the issue of the Soviet invasion of Finland and Poland (1939-40), when Shachtman for the first time refused to support the unconditional defense of the Soviet Union. After a heated — but democratic — debate (in which Cannon supported Trotsky), the minority chose to leave and create a new organization, the Workers Party.

It was at this time that Shachtman elaborated his most original contribution to Marxist theory: that the Soviet Union was not a workers' state, as Trotsky

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and his followers claimed, but a new social formation, which he defined as *bureaucratic collectivism*, a formation where political and economic power are monopolized by a new class — the Stalinist bureaucracy. His heterodox views were presented for the first time in the December 1940 issue of *New International*, where he argued that there could be no workers' state without workers' political power. For him, Stalin's USSR was "a workers' prison" rather than a workers' state: its motive force was not workers' interests but bureaucratic hunger for power and privilege. He used the term "bureaucratic collectivism" because he believed that the economy and the state were the collective property of the bureaucracy.

Shachtman insisted that democracy was central to any transition to socialism. He was suspicious of any analogy between socialist and bourgeois revolutions. The latter had not required conscious capitalist leadership, because the capitalist economy had already developed within feudal societies and only required the removal of the feudal fetters. Bourgeois revolutions could therefore be carried out by a Protestant general like Oliver Cromwell in England, the Jacobins in France, or even a landowner like Otto von Bismarck in Germany. But only conscious, organized workers could make socialist revolutions. In many respects, the proletariat differs from all classes that preceded it in history. It does not own property in the sense that the capitalists, the feudal lords or the slaveholders own theirs. It "owns" social property *only* by virtue of the fact that the state, which is the repository of the means of production and exchange, is in its hands, is *its* state.

At the same time, however, Shachtman insisted that the new system was not capitalist, since the collectivized property created by the October revolution survived. Though bureaucratic mismanagement undermined this new form of property, it was superior in terms of economic and human progress to the anarchy of capitalism. Like Trotsky, he still considered the USSR a transitional society that Marxists had to defend against any attempt to restore private property.

Although Shachtman's theory of bureaucratic collectivism has its own problems (to what degree was the bureaucracy really a social class?), it avoided most of the difficulties and contradictions raised by the rival definitions of the USSR: workers' state or state capitalism. Peter Drucker is right to refer to it as an ambitious attempt to preserve the best of Trotsky's analysis while avoiding its limitations, and as Shachtman's chief contribution to socialist thought.

One of the consequences of the new theory was that Shachtman and his comrades refused to "defend the USSR" in its war with Finland. Moreover, they developed the concept of a "Third Camp" in international politics, finding the first signs of such an independent force, during the war, in some of the anti-fascist resistance movements, like Tito's partisans or the Indochinese Vietminh.

In the early post-war years, Shachtman remained a Marxist revolutionist. He believed that the choice for humanity was either death in atomic warfare — as a result of capitalist and Stalinist politics — or socialism. He advocated an "all inclusive revolutionary party," more diverse than any existing group on the left, combining pluralism with revolutionary unity, a multi-tendency Marxist party reminiscent of the Bolshevik party of 1917. As Drucker observes, this model was, if not a departure from the Bolshevik tradition, a development of it, even an innovation within it.

How far did Shachtman go with his idea of an "all inclusive revolutionary

party?" For a few months in 1947-48 there was an attempt (prompted by Fourth International leaders Michel Raptis and Ernest Mandel) to reunify the two U.S. Trotskyist groups, but ultimately it proved impossible to bring Cannon's and Shachtman's followers into a common organization... Finding himself isolated at the II World Congress of the 4th International in 1948, Shachtman persuaded his comrades to break any remaining links with the Trotskyist movement.

During the Cold War Shachtman's politics became less and less radical. The "Third Camp" was now identified with such figures as UAW leader Walter Reuther, the English Labor Prime Minister Clement Attlee, or the Indian leader J. Nehru. Communism was increasingly seen by the Independent Socialist League (the new name of his group after 1949) as *the* main enemy of democratic socialism and the world's greatest evil.

In 1957 Shachtman and the majority of the ISL decided to dissolve their organization — which had a small but not irrelevant influence in the trade-union and civil rights movements — and join Norman Thomas' Socialist Party: certainly an "all inclusive" but hardly a revolutionary movement. From that moment on began an astonishing decline, leading the former revolutionist Max Shachtman to support — always in the name of the "democratic labor movement" — the Bay of Pigs invasion of Cuba (1961), Lyndon Johnson for president (1964) and U.S. intervention in Vietnam (1965). His former associate Hal Draper condemned him as a "State Department Socialist" and fellow-socialist Michael Harrington described his stand on Vietnam as "reactionary anti-communism." In fact, during his last years (1961-72), Max Shachtman moved to the right wing not only of the Socialist, but even of the Democratic Party. In a posthumous commentary, his former friend and comrade Julius Jacobson regretted that he died "a renegade" from "his earlier, most fundamental commitment to social justice."

Peter Drucker, the author of this powerful piece of historical biography, does not hide his opinions behind academic "neutrality." He believes that many of the ideas and arguments of the radical, internationalist and revolutionary Shachtman of the 30s and 40s are still relevant for a renewal of socialism in the U.S. According to Drucker, Shachtman's most enduring legacy is the inseparability of socialism and democracy which he stubbornly defended against the apologists for both capitalism and Stalinism. However, he ultimately failed what he himself had called (in 1940) "the real test of the American revolutionist": not "opposition to British, French, or German capitalisms or even to Stalinism, but to the ruling class and its social system in the United States."

Unarmed or Disarmed?

UTOPIA UNARMED: THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT AFTER THE COLD WAR, by
Jorge Castañeda. New York, Alfred A. Knopf. 1993, \$27.50.

Reviewed by Eric Hershberg

THE LATIN AMERICAN LEFT HAS BEEN ROMANTICIZED FOR DECADES by its proponents and reviled by its antagonists, but it has never been analyzed in as systematic a manner as by Jorge Castañeda in *Utopia Unarmed: The Latin American Left After the Cold War*. This weighty volume is a masterful attempt by a prominent Mexican intellectual to capture the essence of what the Latin American left has signified in the past, and to articulate what it can — and ought to — become in the future. Castañeda crosses conventional boundaries of both journalism and social science, and he does so with such ease that his work reads at times like a well written novel. Yet *Utopia Unarmed* meets the standards of the most rigorous scholarship: dozens of interviews with key figures of the intellectual and activist left throughout the region are supplemented with analysis of the most up to date statistical data on economic and political trends, and with careful review of the secondary literature in Spanish and Portuguese, as well as in English and (to a lesser degree) French. It is perhaps inevitable that the product of such an ambitious inquiry, on so controversial a topic, will fully satisfy few of us whose intellectual and political identities are rooted, like Castañeda's, in the experience of the Latin American left. Despite whatever quarrels one might have with the author, however, this comparative study is nothing less than a tour de force, and it merits careful reading by specialists and generalists alike.

As its sub-title suggests, *Utopia Unarmed* is in part an assessment of Latin America's (many different) lefts in the wake of the Cold War, and thus in the aftermath of the collapse of the Cuban and Nicaraguan experiments. But the reflection on the past is carefully crafted to set the stage for Castañeda's effort to offer a blueprint for the future of the left in a region that continues to suffer profound inequalities and endemic social injustice.

During the 1980s, in one country after another, neo-liberal orthodoxy compelled the most vulnerable sectors of society to pay disproportionately for the irresponsibility of the most privileged. Reflecting on the social legacy of the "lost decade" and of the policies espoused by the "Washington consensus" that peaked during the late 1980s, as well as on the history of progressive movements in the region, Castañeda makes a compelling case for the continued relevance of the Latin American left on the eve of the 21st century.

AN UNSWERVING COMMITMENT TO DEMOCRACY CONSTITUTES THE CORE element of Castañeda's platform for a contemporary left. On the surface, this emphasis on political democracy will offer little that is new to informed readers, as it is widely

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recognized that the experience of reactionary military dictatorships and the collapse of authoritarian socialism have led virtually all of the Latin American left to identify the preservation of democracy as the keystone of any progressive agenda for the region. Yet Castañeda goes further than many other advocates of a "renovated" Latin American left in his prescription for a democratization of democracy. The fundamental challenge, he acknowledges, must be to combine a commitment to formal political democracy with viable strategies to extend a full range of citizenship rights to the vast segments of the population that continue to fall outside the purview of democratic politics.

This means that grassroots movements must achieve significant influence over the direction of policies that affect popular sectors, and a wide range of political institutions must be reformed in such a way as to enforce accountability and to empower collective actors to participate in government decision-making processes. Thus the left should assume the mantle of clean and transparent government as part of a program to overcome the corruption and patronage that has long characterized Latin American politics. Moreover, the institutions associated with the left itself, particularly political parties, but also unions and other social actors, must practice the open and democratic politics that they preach when criticizing the regime as a whole. In this regard, Castañeda argues persuasively that successful administration of local government in such cities as Montevideo and Sao Paulo augurs well for the prospects of the left at the national level. Similarly, he correctly highlights the importance of democratizing local spaces at a time when scarce resources preclude many of the more traditional mechanisms for improving conditions of life for the most disadvantaged urban sectors.

Castañeda is far too sophisticated to believe that the locus of political activism must shift exclusively to the local level, however. To the contrary, precisely because of the increasing globalization of capitalism and the demise of the bipolar geo-political order, Latin American states are compelled to reevaluate their mode of insertion into the international political economy. In a particularly provocative section of the book, and one that is likely to be quite controversial, Castañeda argues that the Latin American left must retain its nationalist credentials, although its nationalism must be of a modernized sort. He implicitly concedes (perhaps too hastily) that anti-imperialism may have become a topic of interest only to historians, but unlike many mainstream observers Castañeda recognizes that the North-South divide retains much of its historic relevance. At least in the short and medium terms, the interests of creditor and debtor states remain very much at odds.

The practical implication of this insight is that processes of economic integration should be pursued among roughly equal partners at the subregional level, and only then, if at all, between Latin American states and the far more powerful economies of the North. Openly critical of the Mexican government's obsession with NAFTA, and implicitly questioning the desire of much of the Chilean left to hasten integration with the United States, Castañeda advocates a gradual expansion of integration processes through negotiations in which social and political, as well as economic issues must be on the table. That the strengthening (and, in the European sense of the term, the deepening) of Mercosur, the Andean Pact, the Central American Common Market or the Group of Three (Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela) are programmatic planks that could attract support from

the private sector and other segments of society not traditionally allied with the left is simply another reason that a reinvigorated Latin American left should emphasize the goal of regional integration.

Castañeda's vision of a progressive economic policy for the end of the millenium also encompasses a range of measures designed to strengthen the state and to compensate for adverse distributional effects of market processes. In addition to a renegotiation on more favorable terms of the debt owed to first world creditors, the development model Castañeda advocates rests upon a wholesale reform of the ineffective and regressive tax systems that condemn most Latin American states to chronic fiscal crisis. Only by building a capacity to extract revenues from those most able to pay for public goods will it be possible to construct a welfare state which, focused on the resolution of issues faced by the majority of Latin Americans who live in urban areas, would also include mechanisms for improving the conditions of life for rural populations.

THE PENULTIMATE CHAPTER OF THE BOOK, ON THE "LATIN AMERICAN DILEMMA," is a brilliant and insightful analysis of the frustrating trade offs between equity and growth, highlighting the contradictions of the left's historically just, yet unviable approaches to this central challenge of development. Especially useful is the chapter's consideration of the adverse consequences of contemporary neo-liberal reforms, in which the state sheds its direct involvement in production (via state enterprises) and in many aspects of economic regulation but fails to create alternative mechanisms for supplying public goods. Among other insights Castañeda reminds us that state enterprises often have functioned as cash cows generating resources for socially useful purposes, as well as for corruption, in systems that have lacked the capacity to tax the rich directly to fund social programs. This chapter highlights Castañeda's social science at its best—weaving together abundant citations of primary data (ECLA, World Bank, etc.) and secondary literature in order to cut through much of the conventional wisdom about Latin American political economy and to argue the case for building a Latin American welfare state. The resulting prescription is an explicitly non-revolutionary development model, tailored after the European and Asian models of capitalist development, as distinct from the Anglo-American variety of capitalism which Castañeda sees embodied in the "Washington consensus" and in the policies advanced by such multi-lateral financial institutions as the World Bank and the IMF. The pursuit of a model of market-oriented development with a lean but powerful state capable of regulating the economy and promoting equity is acknowledged to be a modest, but nonetheless essential task for the left to assume. Despite its apparent limitations, Castañeda correctly asserts that the creation of a viable welfare state in Latin America would constitute a remarkable achievement.

Whether it is at all realistic is an entirely different matter. Even after having emerged from the worst of the debt crisis and from more than a decade of painful restructuring, Latin American economies are as vulnerable as ever to external shocks. Moreover, the question of how democratic rulers are to harness the abundant resources that are located within the region, but remain beyond the reach of democratically constituted authorities, is never answered adequately in Castañeda's analysis.

Perhaps it is too much to insist that Castañeda provide such an answer, for if there existed an obvious blueprint the history of the Latin American left would

be far less tragic than it has been to date. Yet one cannot assume that the development of welfare states is a plausible goal in an era of unprecedented globalization of production and exchange, and in a region in which the untrammelled expansion of market processes continues to generate a progressive deterioration of the material conditions necessary for sustaining collective identities and social solidarities. Nor is it altogether clear that an attempt to emulate the experience of Western European social democracy or of (typically authoritarian) East Asian capitalism can appropriately be labelled "utopian." As Castañeda is aware, the historic specificities of the Latin American left—armed and unarmed—reflected not only responses to local conditions but also a determination to go beyond the reformist traditions that had prevailed elsewhere, particularly in Europe. In this regard, the moderation of the programmatic agenda advanced by the democratic left in much of the region can be interpreted as evidence of exhaustion rather than newfound strength.

IT COMES AS NO SURPRISE THAT MUCH OF WHAT CASTAÑEDA PRESCRIBES for a reinvigorated Latin American left can be found to one degree or another in the discourse—and occasionally in the practice—of center-left political parties across much of contemporary Latin America. Yet whether in government (e.g. Chile) or in opposition (e.g. Mexico), these parties have exhibited little capacity to sustain linkages with the popular movements in which the Latin American left has historically placed the most utopian of its aspirations.

It is in this context that we must ponder what many readers will consider the relative neglect of popular movements in Castañeda's analysis of the Latin American left. If the experience of progressive social movements and grassroots actors is underemphasized in the contemporary practice of the reformist left in the sphere of institutional politics, so too is it largely absent from Castañeda's exposition. To be sure, a chapter of the book is devoted to sympathetic treatment of the urban popular movement, student activism, and feminism, but these collective actors disappear completely when Castañeda shifts his attention to outlining a development model for the future. Equally striking is the study's inattention to the expansion of ecological activism across Latin America and the absence of discussion of the diverse popular movements asserting collective rights of indigenous people.

These omissions underscore the continuing gulf separating "unconventional" segments of the Latin American left, those remaining largely outside the system, from their counterparts who have opted to work within the boundaries established by existing institutional configurations. That Castañeda's purportedly comprehensive study ignores the fundamental challenge to the Ecuadorean state posed by that country's burgeoning indigenous movement provides one illustration of the problem. Even more troubling is the absence from Castañeda's left of the subaltern groups whose resistance struggles have been a recurrent feature of the political landscape in the Southernmost Mexican state of Chiapas. As one of the principal ideologues of the major center-left electoral coalition in Mexico (a point that Castañeda does not mention in the book), the author's remoteness from the Zapatista phenomenon testifies to the failure of the "acceptable" Latin American left to overcome its historic estrangement from the social sectors that inevitably constitute the basis for any politics of transformation.

Thus, it is reasonable to conclude that, while much of the Latin American

left—overwhelmingly urban, highly educated and largely incorporated into the prevailing order—has adopted the means and ends described by Castañeda, other segments of the left remain outside this apparent consensus. It is far from certain that the pursuit of his brand of utopia can satisfy the rebels in Chiapas or their sympathizers in countless other places far removed from the familiar corridors of the university and the urban cafes.

We can only hope that, if in practice the model proves unsatisfactory, the future will bring us many more books such as this one, which strives to articulate one vision of utopia, and thereby to advance toward greater social justice, in Latin America and beyond.

Jews, the State and Anti-Semitism

THE FATAL EMBRACE: JEWS AND THE STATE by Benjamin Ginsberg. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1993. 286 pp. \$22.

Reviewed by Horst Brand

BENJAMIN GINSBERG'S BOOK IS ABOUT THE RELATION OF JEWS TO THE STATE as protector of their social and economic existence. Such protection has invariably extended to the Jewish religious tradition, and it thus constituted a salient political fact that safeguarded their identity and viability. But never permanently. Jews remained vulnerable to anti-Semitism, and anti-Semitism could and would be used as means to mobilize discontent with given policies of the state, or with the regime carrying them out. Both the policies and the regime would be discredited as being associated with Jews. The state would (and will) then distance itself from Jews, and diminish or withdraw its protection. Such is Ginsberg's essential argument.

Here, Ginsberg is not concerned with the roots of anti-Semitism in Christian theology, economic competition, or cultural antagonism. He takes it as a given, a form of attack upon a politically and socially prominent but marginal group. The book's value resides not least in his detailed rendering of the effects of anti-Semitism on the situation of American Jews, and of the ways in which they took advantage of developments favorable to their status as citizens and to their efforts to combat anti-Semitism.

The author, it seems to me, does not sufficiently appreciate the transformation of either the political situation of Jews or of anti-Semitism since the late 18th century. More about this later. Still, the book's shortcomings are few, and may in large part be traced to Ginsberg's undeviating intent to hone his argument. *The Fatal Embrace* is, at once, highly informative and greatly disturbing.

It is no apologia. Ginsberg rejects the notion that Jewish liberalism flows from a humanism supposedly inherent in Jewish values and traditions. He cites the leading positions Jews held in Stalin's Russia and Soviet-occupied Eastern Europe. He discusses at length the "Republican-Jewish alliance," led during most of the 1980s by the American-Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC) and important Jewish financiers. AIPAC faithfully implemented Likud policies, and strongly supported Ronald Reagan and the bloated national security apparatus built during his tenure. Financial deregulation conferred substantial advantages upon Wall Street, and "Jews presided over the great expansion of liquidity — money and credit — that fueled the economic boom and expansion of equity values during the Reagan era," he writes. Jewish financiers played key roles in corporate takeovers, and hence in the frequent loss of jobs which resulted. But the "Republican-Jewish alliance," having risen, as it were, on a philo-Semitic note, fell on an anti-Semitic one. The harsh prison sentence imposed on Jonathan Pollard as a spy for Israel — a declared ally of the United States — was

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a warning to American Jews. And Bush's conditioned delay of loan guarantees for housing construction in Israel, pressed rather too insistently by AIPAC, was a setback charged by an unacknowledged symbolism. Also, some of the financiers who had greatly facilitated the Reagan boom were indicted for having violated the securities act — and indictments, as Ginsberg notes, requiring as they do considerable resources in government funds, are invariably based on political decisions.

More vulnerable to anti-Semitic attack, however, have been the liberal and left-wing politics of American Jews. This was particularly the case of the New Deal agenda, which was not only supported but often implemented by (highly placed) Jews. Earlier social legislation, when introduced by Jewish legislators (as, for example, in New York) was at times stymied by way of anti-Semitic innuendo. Anti-Semitism undermined the alliance between left-wing Jews and Progressives; was a powerful factor in promoting the Red Scare following the Russian revolution in 1917; and nearly forestalled President Wilson's appointment of Louis Brandeis to the Supreme Court.

Jews had every reason to support and help expand the liberal state, and the anti-discrimination legislation it made possible. They had been deliberately excluded from the social and business elite of the country since the late 19th century; could not attend the great universities except under small quotas; would be rejected from holding the more responsible jobs in much of industry and finance; and were subjected to newly restrictive immigration laws. They had been traumatized by the notorious case of Leo Frank, an Atlanta Jew falsely accused of having murdered a young girl, and lynched in 1914. The case was attended by vicious anti-Semitic attacks by Populists (led by Tom Watson) upon Atlanta's Jewish merchants.

THE NEW DEAL WAS NATURALLY WELCOMED BY MOST AMERICAN JEWS. It created the "domestic state" (the term is Ginsberg's), i.e., the agencies newly serving the social and economic needs of the American people. It opened employment opportunities to talented Jews, denied them in much of the private sector at that time. The Jews' status and influence thus grew, and came to be institutionally anchored in the Democratic Party.

Their prominence as officials of the New Deal agencies, as journalists defending New Deal policies, and as ardent supporters of Roosevelt's anti-Nazi and pro-British stance during the economic crisis and high unemployment of the 1930s encouraged a great deal of anti-Semitism. Father Coughlin's fascist and anti-Semitic *Social Justice* boasted a monthly circulation of one million. Essential to the political success of anti-Semitism — meaning the defeat of policies attacked under its guise, and the removal of Jews responsible for formulating and conducting such policies — is, or would be, dependent on at least the partial support of ruling oligarchies. But such support is likely to be reluctant or not forthcoming when populist anti-Semites advance radical programs, such as "sharing the wealth," which would threaten vested interests.

A more decisive obstacle to the political success of anti-Semitism, however, has been the comparative cohesiveness of the liberal coalition upon which the emergence of Jews from ostracism to broad recognition has depended since the inception of the New Deal. This is indeed Ginsberg's basic thesis. The weakening of that coalition during the 1970s and 1980s, due to such factors as the breakup

of Democratic city machines, the alienation of blue-collar voters because of the Democrats' advocacy of civil rights, and the rise of black anti-Semitism since the mid-1960s, rendered Jews' social and political position once again vulnerable — notwithstanding (so Ginsberg argues) their large number in high office in the Clinton Administration. A manifestation of such vulnerability, according to Ginsberg, has been the openly expressed anti-Semitism by prominent members of the Republican right, as well as the large white vote received by Louisiana's gubernatorial candidate, David Duke. That vote, and Patrick Buchanan's relatively strong showing in primaries demonstrate, Ginsberg writes, "that a record of anti-Semitism is no disqualification to political office in the United States today."

The unabashed anti-Semitism of leading blacks has contributed to making open expression of anti-Semitism respectable again. Ginsberg argues that black anti-Semitism, like that of other groups, is ultimately rooted in institutional rivalries. Such rivalries are exemplified by struggles between Jewish and black academics over the universities' budgetary resources. The demise of university admission quotas in the 1940s, and the ascendancy of large numbers of Jewish academics who have generally been careful to adhere to traditional academic values which determine universities' rewards, has aggravated those rivalries. Ginsberg believes, however, that neither blacks nor Jews can afford to allow a breakup of the Democratic Party over these and similar rivalries, for that Party safeguards the institutional interests both groups share in the preservation of the domestic state. It should be noted, however, that to explain the mobilization of anti-Semitism merely in terms of interest group rivalry is a bit facile. Such mobilization draws upon latent ideological sources, which Ginsberg overlooks. We know from the history of this century that ideology carries a more ominous meaning than the idea of material interests.

IT IS A FUNDAMENTAL TRUTH OF THE HISTORY OF THE JEWS that, over the two-and-a-half millennia since the Babylonian exile, they required the protection of the state within which they resided. Historically, moreover, the state's protection was conditioned upon Jews (or their representatives) performing tasks that often were inimical to the interests of large strata of the state's non-Jewish subjects, in turn intensifying anti-Semitism. The emergence of the liberal state, however, which the masses of Jews passionately supported, and whose reach they have assiduously helped to enlarge, rendered obsolete the Jew's previous dependence upon the authoritarian state's conditional protection. "The law of the state is the law" had always been a cardinal principle insisted upon by the rabbis (although they did not concede the inferiority of Jewish law). The liberal state, however, made it possible for Jews to participate in the law's very formulation. Also, the hazards to which they were exposed changed drastically. Earlier, attacks on Jews might at least in part be read as attacks upon the oppressive policies of the sovereign who protected them. In modern times, anti-Semitism has frequently been the guise under which the liberal state was attacked — the New Deal became the "Jew Deal." The moral basis of the Jews' political status was thus transformed along with their status. It seems to me that Ginsberg does not fully appreciate this altogether salutary transformation.

The emancipation of Jews — their attainment of civic equality — imparted new dimensions to their political life, becoming as they did ever more actively

involved with the politics of the states in which they resided. The term “emancipation” does not occur in Ginsberg’s book. The book is mostly devoted to the United States where Jews’ citizenship was safeguarded by the Constitution. For European Jewry, emancipation was a historical watershed. True, it meant the loss of autonomy for Jewish community institutions, the decay of rabbinic authority, and the disappearance of the ghetto. It spelled the inevitable secularization of education, and the concomitant contraction of Torah and Talmud study, and hence of the culture of which they were the core. For the masses of European Jews, however, the French Revolution, the embodiment of emancipation was a near messianic event, unforgotten until deep into the 20th century. Simon Dubnow, one of the great historians of the Jews, wrote under the shadow of the Nazis in the 1930s:

In our epoch of counter-emancipation, we dare not pose the ironic question: “Well, what has emancipation brought us?” True, it brought assimilation, but also freedom and human dignity. It revived the free person in the Jew...Now, at a time of the most terrible counter-revolution, we celebrate the 150th anniversary of the great French revolution, which established a new epoch in world history...We stand or fall with the progress or regress of entire mankind...and not with a few of its degenerate parts.

As indicated, emancipation, together with the westward mass migration of East European Jews after 1880, redirected and broadened the Jews’ political involvement; it was not tantamount, as Ginsberg implies, to a continuation of their embrace of the state as protector. Dubnow’s words, “We stand or fall with the progress or regress of entire mankind,” implied this discontinuity. Prior to emancipation, the Jews, through their leadership, were of necessity linked to the conservative if not reactionary forces that formed the protective state. Emancipation (and mass migration) liberated them from such ties; more, it revolutionized their politics. As Ginsberg says, “Jews supported liberal movements everywhere and benefited from their success.” Jews were leading spokesmen in the Prussian national assembly in 1848, participated in the Vienna uprising that year, supported the revolution in France, also in 1848, and stood with Mazzini’s “Young Italy” in the 1830s. In the United States, Jews, having brought their political radicalism with them from Eastern Europe, “constituted a major fraction of the leadership of American Socialist and Communist movements,” and “...urban immigrant voters...became part of the electoral constituency for liberal and socialist candidates... .”

Indeed, Ginsberg is too dogmatic in insisting that the liberalism of the Jews is associated with their interest in protecting their position in the domestic state. The evidence of sacrifice on the part of Jews in the social movements of the past century-and-a-half need hardly be adduced here to invalidate such insistence. If, to give but one example he himself cites, one-third of all the whites who travelled to the South in the 1960s to participate in the struggle for civil rights were Jews, then something other than Jewish self-interest must be credited.

As Ginsberg juxtaposes rather than contrasts the political links to the state before and after emancipation, so he treats anti-Semitism as a constant, a more or less fixed instrument in mobilizing the adversaries of a given state or regime or policies. No doubt, abstaining from delving into the changing social and ideological sources of anti-Semitism, and treating it as a given, sharpens the focus of Ginsberg’s argument. But the integration of Jews in the politics of the liberal state has proved hardly less fateful to them than the rise and spread of political

anti-Semitism. True, anti-Semitism — or anti-Judaism — was rooted deeply in Christian teachings; and these teachings made large sectors of European and perhaps also of overseas societies receptive to *political* anti-Semitism. Nevertheless, 2000 years of Christian teachings at no time gave rise to the state-propagated virulence of anti-Semitism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries that led to the deliberate destruction of European Jewry. Thus the nature of anti-Semitism had changed in fundamental respects. Yet it must also be considered that the states or governments which adopted anti-Semitism as official policy were all swept away in World War II. Hence the ideological bases of anti-Semitism were discredited, its usefulness as an instrument of political mobilization diminished. Ginsberg has not weighed this factor in the aftermath, not only of the defeat of Nazism, but of the destruction of Germany as a state.

Insofar as the Jews have flourished since the 18th century, it has depended mostly upon the liberal state and the democracy it has engendered and irrepressibly widened. Arthur Rosenberg, a great if half-forgotten socialist scholar, wrote at the very height of Hitler's rule in Germany that "Wherever democratic self-government has not been decreed mechanically ... but has developed historically out of the life of the working people, it exhibits a remarkable power of resistance. In modern times no real democracy has yet perished." No matter how strong the enemies of the liberal state, no matter how damaging their anti-Semitism and racialism, American Jewry is indeed bound in fate to the liberal state. It cannot give up the struggle to ensure its imperishability.

The Last Must Be First

WOMEN AND CHILDREN FIRST: ENVIRONMENT, POVERTY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT edited by Filomena Chioma Steady. Rochester, Vermont: Schenkman Books, 1993. 475 pp.

Reviewed by Linda Longmire

THE TITLE OF THIS VOLUME SUGGESTS THAT WOMEN AND CHILDREN should be the first into the lifeboats when disaster strikes and the ship begins to sink. But as this valuable book, edited by Filomena Chioma Steady, clearly demonstrates, this is hollow rhetoric, since women and children in the developing world are, in the words of Vandana Shiva, one of the authors, not the first to be saved, but "the first to fall into the abyss that is poverty" when the global economy begins to capsize.

This book is a comprehensive collection of papers and documents from a 1991 conference in Geneva, which was held in preparation for the 1992 Earth Summit in Brazil. It explores the critical relationship among environment, poverty and development from the point of view of women and children and affirms the central role that women play in fostering both economic and environmental responsibility. According to authors like Rosina Wiltshire and Irene Dankelman, unsustainable development strategies have nearly shipwrecked many of the economies and ecosystems of the developing world. The enormous debt which weighs down most poor countries is used to justify the pressure by international financial institutions to restructure their overburdened economies. These structural adjustment programs (SAPs) imposed on developing countries over the last decade or so have had a dire effect on the poor, particularly women and children. The feminization of poverty as a global process continues to relegate most of world's women and children to economic marginality, if not abject misery. Rather than being the first to be supported and affirmed, women and children have become the first to drown as a result of the economic and environmental destruction wrought by these development policies. The imposition of such treatment actually produces what Vandana Shiva calls "maldevelopment" rather than the promised economic progress.

According to the authors in this volume, the industrial development strategies of transnational financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the IMF, play a key role in destabilizing developing economies which they then try to rescue. These institutions, while encouraging economic growth, free trade, privatization, devaluation of currencies and structural adjustment, exert a convulsive effect on developing economies. The "shock therapy" that is usually introduced by international financial institutions is intended to jolt developing economies into line with the dominant powers, and the costs to people are enormous.

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Simply put, the developed nations in the North are getting richer by making those in the South poorer. According to Dankelman, the reverse flow of funds from the poor to rich was estimated at \$242 billion in 1988. Additionally, structural adjustment programs often force developing countries to increase their exports which are usually derived from diminishing and nonrenewable natural resources, thereby depleting their future for the sake of immediate survival.

OUT OF ECONOMIC DESPERATION DEVELOPING COUNTRIES may have to become garbage colonies or dumping grounds for the refuge of the developed world. Industrialized nations that use a disproportionate amount of natural resources and generate an equally large amount of pollution, must change their ways and practice the ecological responsibility that they preach to the poor countries, according to the authors of this volume. For example, individuals in the rich countries of the North use three times as much fresh water, ten times as much energy and 19 times as much aluminium as those in the developing world. It is, after all, the developed countries that produce most of the world's hazardous and toxic pollutants, including radioactive wastes. In this connection, Maria Mies cautions against a double standard in which the rich, enjoying all the freedom and power, exhort the poor to cultivate environmental responsibility and developmental restraint. The assessment of environmental problems is further complicated because traditional measures of GNP do not even take into account the costs of environmental degradation. As public sector funding is cut according to structural adjustment conditionalities, there are fewer funds available to enforce the environmental protections that are in place. Shortsightedly, environmental regulations may be removed in order for developing nations to become more economically competitive in the global market. As Maria Mies goes on to point out "... a conception like sustainable development for all is not compatible with a growth-oriented, industrial world-market system ... [which] is simply not sustainable."

Instead of cultivating sustainability in any real sense, these structural adjustment programs further undermine long-term, equitable and stabilizing restructuring. Poor countries are forced to sell their undervalued commodities in a global market of declining prices. At the same time, the World Bank may insist that developing countries open their own markets to cheap and unregulated imports, further eroding their long-term economic viability. In order to make payments on their mushrooming debt, governments in many developing countries are required to make mandated cuts in public spending for desperately needed services such as basic health care and primary education. Pressures to privatize industries and to produce goods for export increase unemployment and precipitously lower real wages. In Mexico, for example, over the last decade of adjustment, real wages have dropped some 50%. Under the banner of free trade and in the name of making developing economies more competitive, global markets often devastate domestic producers. As scarce resources are redirected to the export sector, local production and control are undermined. Food prices skyrocket, agricultural subsidies are cut and more people are forced from the land into the overcrowded cities.

The third worlds within the United States also have been damaged by these misguided and unsustainable development models. Two examples are described by Holly Young Bear-Tibets in her piece on the Leech Lake Indian Reservation of Northern Minnesota and Dolores Huerta in her account of migrant workers strug-

gling against the pesticide poisoning perpetrated by agribusinesses in California's San Joaquin Valley.

Women and Children First is not only valuable for describing the condition of women and children throughout the world. It also calls into question some of the fundamental categories of an economic paradigm based on growth, large scale technology, materialism, and a one-dimensional view of progress. According to Vandana Shiva, this paradigm has also privileged domination over cooperation, profit over people's needs and technological control over nature rather than harmony with her.

According to the authors in this collection, decentralized, human scaled, moral economies must be supported as alternatives to the concentrated, oversized, exclusively profit-centric systems which are so destructive to women and children. Rather than "adjusting" people to the dictates, priorities and interests of financial institutions like the World Bank and the IMF, policies themselves should be adjusted to serve the real needs of human beings.

This also means a readjustment of values, lifestyles and priorities in the North where these patterns originate. For these consumption habits in the North are not only destructive for the South, at whose expense they are maintained, according to Maria Mies; they are dangerous even for the wealthy whose addiction to commodity accumulation undermines the quality of their lives. She argues that we must cultivate an ethic of voluntary simplicity if we are to restore any equilibrium to our relationship with nature, the global political economy and to our own lives. Self-reliance and self-control are needed to establish a social and moral ecology encouraging cooperation, participation and creativity rather than the "pseudo-satisfaction" of compulsive and conspicuous consumption.

EVEN THOUGH WOMEN AND CHILDREN ARE CRUELLY AND DISPROPORTIONATELY affected by the maldevelopment described in *Women and Children First*, the book also emphasizes that they are not just passive victims awaiting rescue. The volume affirms the centrality of women and children to these developing societies and to the struggles to resist and transform these conditions. For it is the contributions of women to environmental and societal sustainability that have enabled people to survive under great economic duress. And women are increasingly taking matters into their own hands and organizing, at least at the micro-level, to try to steer the ship themselves. The book lists numerous inspiring examples: Soon Young Soon and Margaret Mwangola describe women's water management projects in Senegal and in Kenya, respectively. Frances Dennis and Dulce Castleton discuss a low-cost community housing experiment led by women in Costa Rica. Ruth Lechte documents women's efforts to develop alternative energy sources such as micro-hydroelectricity in Fiji and Western Samoa and solar photovoltaics in the Solomon Islands and French Polynesia. Women are leading efforts in Africa to address deforestation because they use and manage forest resources every day, as Paula Williams recounts. Emphasizing appropriate technology and human-scaled organization, women have started small businesses in the Philippines, Honduras, and Guyana, which are both environmentally and economically sustainable. Throughout the world they are forming independent organizations and cooperatives, recognizing that self-reliance and collective solidarity are necessary for survival and that in a true community everyone must be prepared to take the helm.

In 1963 Bob Dylan optimistically prophesized,

*The order is
Rapidly fadin'.
And the first ones now
Will later be last,
For the times they are a-changin'.*

The question raised in *Women and Children First* remains: Will the unsustainable and unjust order which has placed the rich first, fade rapidly enough for the poor women and children who have typically been last in such a world, to stay afloat?

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Diverse and Eclectic Radicals

THE AMERICAN RADICAL. Edited by Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Harvey Kaye. New York: Routledge, 1994, 392 pp., \$17.95 PB.

Reviewed by Kent Worcester

The American Radical features short biographies of some 46 individuals who managed to make an impression on U.S. history and culture while retaining leftist views. It is a diverse and eclectic bunch, ranging from environmentalists (John Muir, Rachel Carson), to labor activists (Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Mother Jones), to Communist hacks and fellow travellers (William Z. Foster, Vito Marcantonio). African-Americans are particularly well represented, including Sojourner Truth, W.E.B. Du Bois, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, and Paul Robeson. Ample space is also provided for what can only be described as cultural types — Isadora Duncan, Lewis Mumford, Abbie Hoffman.

As this summary suggests, the editors have put together a suitably multicultural compendium that goes beyond the narrow boundaries of traditional leftist politics. In this spirit, the volume opens with two Native American military leaders, Pontiac and Neolin, who fought British troops stationed in mid-18th Century America. Notre Dame historian Gregory Evans Dowd does an admirable job of introducing these pre-revolutionary war figures, who sent shivers down the spines of the colonial authorities but about whom distressingly little is verified. The book ends on an equally multicultural note, with an essay by Lisa Duggan on the “black lesbian feminist poet, essayist, and activist,” Audre Lord.

Some of the best essays focus on lesser-known individuals, or people who are not usually regarded as “radicals.” For example, Franklin Rosemont’s bio of the naturalist John Muir retrieves Muir’s pacifism, pantheism, and animal rights sympathies. He quotes Muir as saying that “a palm tree preached far grander things than was ever uttered by human priest,” and says that he “railed against ‘devotees of ravaging commercialism,’ the ‘gobble-gobble school of economics,’ the system of ‘legal theft’, and those ‘robbers of every degree, from Satan to Senators’, who try ‘to make everything dollarable’.” While Muir was unfamiliar with most varieties of socialism, he drew on the writings of romantics like Emerson, Thoreau, Henry George, and John Ruskin to forge an anti-industrial critique of America’s westward expansion.

As Rosemont notes, however, Muir’s central message centered around the importance of gaining a “direct experience with wilderness.” For this reason, he would have been wary of Marxism, with its characteristic emphasis on the mastery of man over nature, and on the necessity of economic growth. According to one biographer, Muir “hoped both to save humans *for* the wilderness and the wilderness *from* humans.” Rosemont has vividly captured Muir’s pro-wilderness dialectic, thereby rescuing the great naturalist from the clutches of the “government-oriented, business-as-usual environmentalist organizations that dominate

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the field today.”

Mari Jo Buhle's essay on Ruth Fulton Benedict similarly recovers the life of a pioneer. Benedict made her name in the field of anthropology, writing books that once climbed to the top of the best-sellers' list. Educated at Vassar and Columbia, Benedict became a leading proponent of tolerance and cultural relativism. Her books *Patterns of Culture* (1934), *Race: Science and Politics* (1940), and *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns in Japanese Culture* (1945) all sought to “celebrate diversity as a source of human creativity,” Buhle writes. As a public intellectual, Benedict signed Popular Front petitions and joined groups like the National Council for Pan-American Democracy and the Descendants of the American Revolution, “a left-leaning organization founded in opposition to the ultra-conservative Daughters of the American Revolution.”

Benedict also helped write *The Races of Mankind* (1943), a ten-cent pamphlet by Columbia professors that “emphasized above all the imperative to appreciate ‘differences’ and to resist interpreting them as ‘inferiorities.’” Not surprisingly, *The Races of Mankind* caused a furor, but also sold over one million copies. According to Buhle, it was later turned into a comic book, and made into an animated movie by the United Auto Workers. (The pamphlet was banned by the army, however.) Defamed as a Communist sympathizer after the War, Benedict died the year Henry Wallace ran his doomed campaign. Although she is only one of a number of the book's subjects who gravitated toward the Communist Left, Buhle insists she maintained her political independence, and that she “abjured all ideologies as enforcers of conformity.”

Many of the other entries are equally intriguing. Thomas C. Holt's portrait of W.E.B. Du Bois draws a stark contrast between Du Bois' life and scholarship and “our academic scholarship,” which is “too fragmented and self-servingly professional to be adequate to the problem of human liberation and self-realization.” Vera Norwood's essay on Rachel Carson convincingly proves that “Carson was not an eccentric lady bird-watcher who stumbled unknowingly into public terrain” when she published *Silent Spring* (1962). And so it goes; each biography piling on top of each other, a roll-call of left-wing excellence, an incitement to agitate harder, write better pamphlets, lead more productive and Establishment-rattling lives.

For my taste, there are a few too many Stalinists and semi-Stalinists in this volume, although thankfully the editors left out the redoubtable Earl Browder. The New Left is not particularly well represented, unless you count Michael Harrington, which hardly makes sense. I would have been interested in reading something about deaf, mute, and blind Helen Keller, although maybe most readers already know that she was an eloquent defender of socialist principles and, according to FBI chief J. Edgar Hoover, a menace to society.

Having recently read Douglas Clayton's first rate biography (*Floyd Dell: The Life and Times of an American Rebel*), I would say that this once-legendary Greenwich Village feminist, playwright, and lover also deserved inclusion. Strong cases could also be made for James P. Cannon, Max Shachtman, and Dwight McDonald, among others on the anti-Stalinist Left. In any event, readers should form their own list of favorites, and not be unduly swayed by the particular choices made here.

That said, this book makes an excellent introduction not only to American

radicalism, but to American history. Ideally, it should find its way to libraries and schools across the 50 states. Happily, it's also a good-looking book, with a Ralph Fasanella painting on the cover, and 12 black-and-white photographs inside. Although the picture of Martin Luther King and Malcolm X has been over-used, and fundamentally misrepresents their political relationship, most are well-chosen. The picture of the 1930s playwright (and fellow traveller) Clifford Odets, holding a cigarette and smiling wanly, is priceless. It perfectly captures the Machiavellian arrogance of the Communist Left, which did so much to taint the finer aspirations of the radical movement.

Two Views of the UAW

HEROES OF UNWRITTEN HISTORY: THE UAW 1934-1939 by Henry Kraus.
Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1994. 469 pp., \$48.95.

INFIGHTING IN THE UAW: THE 1946 ELECTION AND THE ASCENDANCY OF WALTER
REUTHER by Bill Goode. Westport, Greenwood Press, 1994. 165 pp.,
\$49.95.

Reviewed by B.J. Widick

HENRY KRAUS HAS WRITTEN A COMPREHENSIVE AND DETAILED STORY of the United Autoworkers Union from 1934-1939 based on his own participation as an unabashed supporter of the Communist faction whose two leaders, Wyndham Mortimer and Robert Travis, he greatly admired. (At its 1976 convention, the UAW awarded these pioneers special recognition for their early union organizing work, rescuing their names from oblivion.) While *Heroes of Unwritten History* is calculated to buttress the memoirs of old leftists and the views of New Left historians it has unintended consequences.

The book describes how those unionists became mere pawns in the political objectives of the Communist Party and, in the end, tragic figures. A lively chapter, "The CIO Steps In, the UAW Starts Anew" about the politics of the 1939 convention highlights this point. Kraus argues that John L. Lewis dictated the removal of Mortimer, Ed Hall and Travis from leadership posts, and selected R.J. Thomas over the more popular George Addes. Sidney Hillman and Philip Murray actually did the job for Lewis. But who do you think arrived and forced the CP ranks to swallow this defeat? Earl Browder, secretary of the Communist Party. "I was enraged with the Communist Party," Kraus writes, "for the defeatist influence that it had sedulously sought to exert after hypocritically declaring it was staying aloof from the choice of officers at the convention." (Chapter footnotes explain this more fully. Kraus did understand that the CIO leaders had, in his words, "destroyed the careers of some of the finest people in the auto union.")

While Kraus details the nefarious activities of Jay Lovestone and his clique, and the role of Socialists and Trotskyists as "factionalists," he retains a blind spot about the activities CP political leaders like William Weinstone and B.K. Gebert who made decisions for the CP cadres in the UAW. Somehow, he never sees them as "outside factionalists." But his story speaks for itself.

Heroes of Unwritten History is an authentic, if biased, version of UAW history. Kraus has exceptional credentials. His book, *The Many and the Few* (1947), on the 1937 General Motors sitdown strike — a titanic event in labor history — has become a minor classic. It's a durable work, even if it lacks the objectivity of the best book in that field, Sidney Fine's *Sitdown: The General Motors Strike of*

B.J. WIDICK, who has participated in and written about labor and political struggles in the U.S. since 1935, has authored four books and innumerable articles over a 50 year span. He has also taught at Wayne State, Michigan State and Columbia universities.

1936-1937.

Henry Kraus went on to become a scholar and writer on medieval art and architecture, winning a MacArthur award for his work. After a 25-year sojourn in Paris, he returned to the U.S. to write his story of the UAW.

BILL GOODE'S *Infighting in the UAW: The 1946 Election and the Ascendancy of Walter Reuther* is a refreshing counterbalance to Kraus' version of UAW history. It is also an effective antidote to the views about labor of old left and New Left historians. Based on a solid foundation of excellent research, the factual material supports his analysis of Walter Reuther's triumph which is superior to other versions.

Goode writes: "The reason given for his victory are varied and vigorously disputed, depending on the political orientation of the writers. Early observers had attributed his victory to the exposure of the totalitarian nature of the Communist Party and his aggressive militancy, not to repression or turning to reaction."¹

"On the other hand," he says, "two writers on labor, both self-proclaimed radicals, saw Reuther's success due to his 'red-baiting.'² Another leftist author concurred about the red-baiting, but added several other factors leading to the defeat of the George Addes, R.J. Thomas and Dick Leonard caucus (ATL), 'red company unionism,' government repression and the sectarian policies of the communists themselves."³

All these explanations held the conflict with the CP to be central to the dispute. But Goode makes a telling point against these and other writers on the UAW. He believes that the actual conflict and its resolution became obscured by the symbolic value attached to the conflict between good and evil, totalitarianism and democracy, or left wing and reactionary politics. All the horrors of McCarthyism and the Cold War were linked in hindsight to the contest but it did not deserve such attributions. *The elections in 1946 and 1947 were first and foremost trade union disputes, and the outcome was predicated on the way the caucuses conducted themselves on union affairs.*

During his six years of research for this book, Goode found confirmation for his thesis from an impeccable source — a CPer. "Even Nat Ganley," Goode writes, "a leading Communist in the UAW and an implacable Reuther foe, generally ignored the Communist issue and ascribed Reuther's successful bid for the union's presidency to his militancy during World War II and his fight against the piecework system that the Communists had proposed. Ganley pointed to Reuther's leadership in the 1945-46 General Motors (GM) strike and the wartime 'opportunism' of the Communist Party as other key factors that aided in Reuther's victory." (p. 32)

IN A WAY, THERE IS A CERTAIN SYMMETRY between the two books. Goode's chapter, "The UAW Prior to 1940" is a succinct and devastating critique not only of the Communist Party, but also of the way the other political factions functioned.

His chapter on the war years picks up where Kraus' book ends, with a pitiless analysis of the stupidities of the CP cadres. The coalition of George Addes, R.J. Thomas and Dick Leonard leaned heavily on the CP for policy and organizational tactics. Only Walter Reuther was prepared for the post war struggles. He was growing in stature, increasingly attracting a staff of talented people, and

keeping in touch with the mood of the ranks. His charisma, oratorical skills, and his shrewd sense of publicity came into play in the 116-day strike at General Motors. After World War I, unions took a terrible beating in the steel and coal strikes. After World War II, Reuther led the UAW ranks to victory over General Motors. His bargaining slogans, "Open the Books of GM and Higher Wages Without Price Increases," projected a new vision and a fresh voice in the leadership of American unions. Reuther believed, as did most of the ranks that "We are the vanguard. We are the architects of the future."

Compare those sentiments to the embittered mood of the once proud, cool-headed union leader, Wyndham Mortimer. In a 1947 memo to R.J. Thomas he wrote:

I feel very strongly that you should fight to make it [the UAW-Farm Equipment merger] at the convention *now* to cut this bastard [Reuther] down to size. I think we have got to start comparing him to Homer Martin... If this is done, he will soon go on the defensive, and then we can trim his ass for him. One thing is certain, Tom, that redhead is not going to be licked by our staying on the defensive. If this bastard is not a stool pigeon, I never saw one. Don't forget, Tom. I said Martin was a stool pigeon before you did, and the present bird is another one, or else I have lost my sense of smell. (p. 141)

The contrast between the two leaders' outlook speaks for itself.

Bill Goode brings impressive credentials to his study. His career included ten years as a skilled worker at Ford, a shop committeeman in Local 400, and educational director of the UAW. He earned a Ph.D. at Rutgers and after teaching at the Empire State Labor College, he became the Dean. He makes no bones about his socialist background.

It is a pity that these books are priced beyond the reach of most readers but, hopefully, they can be found in libraries. Enriched by the copious footnotes, which are very much worth reading, both books are indispensable to an understanding of the labor and radical movements of that time.

NOTES

1. Irving Howe and B.J. Widick, *The UAW and Walter Reuther* (1947).
2. James A. Geschwender, *Class, Race and Worker Insurgence* (1977). James R. Green, *The World of the Worker* (1980).
3. Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises* (1974).

Resistance to Labor Discipline

WORKERS AGAINST WORK: LABOR IN PARIS AND BARCELONA DURING THE POPULAR FRONTS by Michael Seidman, University of California Press, 1991. 399 pp., \$42.50 HB.

Reviewed by Curtis Price

MICHAEL SEIDMAN'S PROVOCATIVE ACCOUNT OF THE FRENCH AND SPANISH Popular Fronts challenges a well-entrenched orthodoxy of traditional labor history. According to the author, an unstated "productivist" ideology has dominated the left's understanding of the institution and everyday lived experience of work for almost 100 years. The underlying assumption, whether expressed in liberal or Marxist terms, is that workers have some sort of vital identification with their jobs — that work itself is a significant (if often unfulfilled) source of dignity. Thus, as Seidman puts it, "the acceptance, if not glorification of work has encouraged the study of certain aspects of working class existence and discouraged an exploration of others." (p.9) Through a comparative historical study of the mass self-activity of the Parisian and Barcelonan working class during the 30s, Seidman explores a chapter in the hidden history of resistance to labor discipline. His alternative model of workers' struggle yields a rich, bold new picture of left parties' relations with the class they claimed to represent.

Drawing on a submerged current of radical analysis dating back to Paul Lafargues' classic *The Right To Be Lazy* (1898), Seidman argues that labor history can be written from the perspective of the continual resistance by workers to factory discipline: a resistance expressed in such everyday acts as sabotage, absenteeism, indifference to production goals, lateness, theft, and feigned illness. This analysis rejects the slogan — enshrined on countless Stakhanovite posters — extolling the "dignity of labor." Instead, it insists on defining work as "travail" and "trabajo": the French and Spanish derivatives, respectively, of the Latin word "tripalium," meaning "instrument of torture." During the Popular Front period in Spain and France, as Seidman argues with a fascinating wealth of documentation, these differing perspectives came to a head. Left parties fostered a vision of the proletariat as self-disciplined, hard working, and ready to sacrifice for the national interest — and downplayed those aspects of working-class activity which conflicted with this ideal. The gap between working-class parties and shop-floor resistance revealed a difference in aspirations seldom openly acknowledged by either side.

Seidman argues that, despite their phraseology, both the Spanish and French lefts during the Popular Fronts essentially functioned as agents of modernization. They acted as substitutes for a bourgeoisie that was too lazy (as in Spain) or too wrapped up in authoritarian parochialism (as in France). The author avoids the traditional emphasis on what political parties were saying and doing, focusing instead on workers' shop-floor experience of the changed balance of forces. Under the Popular Front, workers were expected to work diligently and increase

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production in the face of rising expectations. Instead, they staged a massive resistance to work and discipline. This resistance — “apolitical” and hidden — can be measured in reports from both management and revolutionary militants who found themselves curiously united in denouncing the “laziness” and “irresponsibility” of workers in meeting production goals.

THIS ERUPTION OF WIDESPREAD AND SPONTANEOUS RESISTANCE had no ideological platform or conscious expression. Nonetheless, it revealed the yawning gap between ordinary workers' expectations and the often sincere intentions of party militants who claimed to represent working-class interests. If leftist parties' anti-fascism led to political and electoral alliances, workers on the shop floor intuitively interpreted anti-fascism quite differently. “Fascist” became a popular everyday epithet applied to particularly hated foremen and managers. From an ordinary worker's point of view, the struggle against work discipline also became a struggle against “fascism” — much to the frustration of party militants who expected workers to produce more now that Left governments were in power and were faced with combatting the external threat of the right.

In Spain, writes Seidman, “faced with sabotage, theft, absenteeism, lateness, false illness and other forms of working-class resistance to work and workspace, the unions and the collectives cooperated to establish strict rules and regulations that equaled or surpassed the controls imposed by capitalist enterprises.” Piecework rates, compulsory overtime, and abolition of holidays were all imposed by union councils. At the height of the war effort, the anarcho-syndicalist CNT denounced a decree establishing a 40-hour week as “ruinous, suicidal, and counterrevolutionary.” Labor camps were set-up for those judged to be “parasitic” and “saboteurs.” Workers who demanded higher wages were labelled “unclass-conscious” and “irresponsible.”

As Seidman notes, “Anarcho-syndicalist plans for a rationalized, modern Barcelona within an economically independent nation failed to inspire many of the rank and file to wholehearted sacrifice... . The workers' refusal to participate enthusiastically in workers' control demonstrated that their class consciousness differed from that of their new industrial managers. For the union militants, class consciousness meant active participation in the building of socialism or libertarian communism; many workers expressed their class consciousness by avoiding the space, time, and demands of wage labor.”

In France, a similar explosion of worker discontent and strike activity spread in the wake of the electoral victory of the Blum government in May 1936. Workers who had previously chafed under authoritarian labor discipline forced on them by French bosses in the bleak depression years of the early 30s launched a series of factory occupations — as well as a broader wave of everyday insubordination against management prerogatives.

At Renault in 1936, a worker who had received a company medal for being one of the best workers in France was followed by 300 “agitators” who “covered him from head to feet with spit” until police dispersed “the mob.” Later that year, Renault exploded in what was one of the most prolonged violent strikes in French history. The foreman and supervisors were attacked; workers hauled new cars out of the factory, using them to build barricades; and windows and clocks were smashed. Similar, if less spectacular confrontations took place in countless factories and workplaces around the country.

Despite the presence and numerical weight of Communist militants in the French unions, many of these factory sit-ins were spontaneous in character. As police reports at the time noted, Communist cadres were frequently “the last to be informed” of workers’ actions.

As a result of these strikes, the disposable income of French workers increased. New mass leisure and vacation opportunities became available, expressing and responding to workers’ desires to be freed from the constraints and discipline of the workspace. Yet as Seidman observes, “Unlike its Spanish counterpart, the French Popular Front became the birthplace of the weekend and mass tourism, not of revolution. The Soviet or anarcho-syndicalist alternative of workers’ control and development of the means of production had declining appeal for French working-class activists In France, the demand for revolution was superseded by guerilla warfare against work.”

THROUGHOUT *WORKERS AGAINST WORK*, SEIDMAN WISELY AVOIDS the temptation to oversimplify. He doesn’t counterpose a spontaneously revolutionary rank-and-file to a cautious and conservatizing leadership. Yet if there is one complaint to make about this book — besides noting the outrageous price — it is that, at times, the author treats the distinction between ideological militant and apolitical worker in too static a manner. During periods of ferment and change when everything is open to questioning, the interchange between the two layers on the shop floor was probably much more fluid than the author sometimes acknowledges.

But certainly the questions Seidman raises here are far from dated or of historical interest only. It is to the author’s credit that he not only challenges many of the traditional interpretations of the period — whether liberal, Marxist, or anarchist — but also, in the process, supplies an alternative framework for analyzing contemporary issues and struggles from below.

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Protests Account of Left Rally at City Hall

To the Editors:

IN HIS ARTICLE ON NEW YORK CITY’S FISCAL CRISIS (Summer 1994), Michael Hirsch decries the dismal reaction of the mainstream Left to the Giuliani offensive. However, his out of hand dismissal of a “far-Left” rally at City Hall in April to “Push Rudy Back” is uncharitable. The bulk of the demonstrators of “less [!] than 1,000” were members of Hospital Workers Local 420 of District Council 37. The ability of a socialist group, the Workers World Party, to mesh with such a large group of unionists, overwhelmingly African-American and Latino, is a breath of fresh air, given the stagnant radical scene of recent years.

Hirsch’s caricature of the rally as a call to “let the City go bankrupt” unfortunately smacks of elitism. (In his article Hirsch rightly demands Left scholarship and infers that the agitators couldn’t have done their homework.) However, the speakers, although Hirsch doesn’t seem to have noticed it, were men of the accomplished deed; militant union leader, James Butler, anti-Semitic battler, Congressman Major Owens, fiery Al Sharpton, and militant Councilman Tom Duane. Oh yes, the socialist speakers put in a pitch or two, such as a demand for full rights for aliens, but at least they were not speaking to themselves.

Louis Becker