Contents

Clinton & the Shame of the Left

David Finkel

HERE'S A SAMPLING OF WHAT BILL CLINTON HAS GIVEN US LATELY:

• An "anti-terrorism" bill with police-state surveillance authorization so sweeping that the American Civil Liberties Union and the National Rifle Association, of all things, combined their forces to modify it.

Even in the form signed into law, the legislation enables the deportation of non-citizens suspected of "terrorism" on the basis of secret "evidence" which the accused will not be allowed to scrutinize or interrogate. The ostensible impetus for this, the Oklahoma City bombing, was an act of far-right domestic terror in which no foreign involvement whatsoever has been shown, or even alleged.

The same legislation sharply curtails federal appeals for death-row prisoners, ensuring accelerated death schedules — including the inevitable executions of some falsely convicted.

• "Line-item veto" legislation that will vastly expand the powers of an already imperial Presidency — truly one of the few reforms that could make a badly run system even worse. In the name of budgetary responsibility and eliminating Congressional pork-barreling, future occupants of the White House will have nearly unlimited powers to blackmail legislators, further breaking down what remains of representative democracy at the federal level.

• The enthusiastic embrace of "welfare reform," as pioneered by Republican Governors like Tommy Thompson in Wisconsin and the hard-right John Engler in Michigan, forcing recipients of cash assistance into so-called "Work First" programs. Under the guise of promoting "dignity" and "ending welfare dependency," many of these programs aggressively force people out of educational programs and into dead-end minimum-wage jobs, for which they must compete with the already desperately hard-pressed working poor.

• Against all this, it's true, can be counted Clinton's veto of the monstrous "partial birth abortion" bill, which would for the first time criminalize a specific medical procedure. Revealing the actual deadly agenda of the Right-to-Lie movement with special clarity, this bill would deprive women of a procedure called intact dilation and evacuation (D&E), which is specifically used in cases of real medical emergency.

In a thuggish political climate where women's lives are like so many expendable trading cards, Clinton's veto all by itself may be taken as sufficient to warrant enthusiastic support for his reelection. This kind of thinking, however, misses a central political lesson of the episode.

Clinton himself was initially sympathetic to the "partial birth" bill, no doubt seeing it as a politically expedient way to appease anti-choice constituencies without infringing on the first-trimester protections of Roe v. Wade. Only when women's groups mobilized to present testimony of patients whose lives had been

DAVID FINKEL *is an editor of the socialist bi-monthly* Against the Current.

saved by the D&E procedure did the President locate his missing backbone.

This is exactly the kind of pressure that's been missing when it came to death-row appeals or the rights of those subject to deportation without evidence or due process.

Surely Clinton is under no pressure from the new leadership of the labor movement, which has given away its endorsement without conditions or demands at all. With a handful of exceptions — Ron Carey of the Teamsters argued against the endorsement as premature; Bob Wages of OCAW (the main union backing Labor Party Advocates) left the room during the vote — the AFL-CIO executive council was virtually unanimous in its early backing of Clinton.

In its own press release, the AFL-CIO pledged "a $35 million national effort to educate union members and the public about elected officials' positions on the issues most important to working families." Whether this effort will highlight the Administration's enthusiasm for NAFTA, or its disinterest in any fight to ban permanent replacement workers, remains to be seen.

How far labor's willingness to sacrifice everything for Clinton's reelection runs is demonstrated by the following incident: A UAW regional officer in Missouri circulated a memorandum to UAW locals throughout the Southwest, instructing them not to support state ballot propositions to raise the minimum wage on the grounds that such measures on the ballot would damage Clinton's reelection! (When a UAW member who obtained the memorandum protested to the International, the order was canceled. See Peter Downs, "How Labor Loses When It Wins," *Against the Current*, May-June 1996.)

• The absence of pressure on Clinton from the left showed with devastating clarity in the passage of the anti-Cuban Helms-Burton bill, to which Clinton's own name should properly be added. Until the shooting down of the "Brothers to the Rescue" adventurers, the embargo appeared to be on its way out. Many observers considered its demise almost certain following the 1996 election.

Now, in true Remember-the-Maine fashion, United States economic terrorism against Cuba is not only a presidential order, but the law of the land, which cannot be reversed for the foreseeable future. In attempting to impose penalties on non-U.S. corporations doing business with Cuba, the Clinton-Helms-Burton bill seeks to turn the clock back to the turn-of-the-century Platt Amendment.

That this atrocity was perpetrated in the name of "restoring Cuban democracy" is particularly disgraceful. Because the legislation was so purely opportunist — essentially a rush to win the Florida vote in response to a manufactured crisis — countervailing political pressure could have stopped Clinton in this instance. There was none, in part because virtually all of what passes for the broad U.S. left is committed not to push Clinton on anything.

• Clinton has consolidated his great "foreign policy success," the military-political intervention in Haiti, by cutting off desperately needed assistance to the post-Aristide government. This action has been taken to punish Aristide and his successor Preval for failing to "privatize" rapidly enough — that is, failing to sell off all of Haiti's state property at flea market prices to local and transnational elites in proper neoliberal fashion. The resulting misery is of small importance to Clinton since it has no material impact on the U.S. election.

• Finally, the left in this country has morally disgraced itself by the lack of protest against Israel's murderous bombing of Lebanon. In previous such episodes, there's been a visible show of opposition from the left to Israeli atrocities; in this case, the Arab-American community has essentially stood all alone in mobilizing visible protest.

It's true that the strategic commitment of the United States to Israel, and to the Peres government in particular, meant that no protest movement could have forced Washington to reverse its all-out support for Israeli terror against the Lebanese. This is a case, however, where the moral fiber of the U.S. peace movement, more than its political muscle, has been tested and found wanting. Its failure to respond is a deeply depressing indicator of how much of the life-blood of the peace movement has been sucked dry during the Clinton years.

Not the least of Bill Clinton's contributions to ruling class America has been his administration's success in stilling most criticisms from liberals and much of the left. It's true that those critical voices were already weak, but their yawning silence now allows the right wing — among its many ludicrous and fantastic arguments — to amalgamate Clinton with the "left." Small wonder then that popular anger over corporate destruction of working people's lives tends to flow toward the likes of Patrick Buchanan rather than independent movements of resistance. And even smaller wonder that corporate capital itself looks favorably on the prospects of a second Clinton term.

All this goes to show how far back the left has fallen and how vast our task of rebuilding. For openers, it would at least be a welcome change if the major institutions of labor and the left in the United States could demonstrate the independence and political backbone of Ralph Nader.

The Million Man March — And After

Reginald Wilson

ON OCTOBER 16, 1995, THE LARGEST GATHERING OF AFRICAN AMERICANS in history stretched from the Lincoln Memorial to the steps of the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Nearly one million black men (according to the estimate by Boston University) gathered in the nation's capital in brotherhood and unity. It was indeed a powerful demonstration, an awesome sight, an historic occasion. More than one participant spoke of a sense of personal and spiritual commitment flowing through the crowd. Some noted that never in their lives had they felt so secure among so many African American men.

There was no drinking, no drugs, and only one arrest recorded, a miracle in itself considering the magnitude of the crowd. Random acts of kindness were observed and remarked on throughout the day.

And at the pinnacle of it all, looking out from behind bullet proof glass at the hundreds of thousands of black men before him, was the charismatic Minister Louis Farrakhan, intoning, "In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful..." And going on for nearly three hours.

Black men came from all over the United States. They came hoping, despairing, frustrated, alienated. They came seeking and communing. Yes, and they came in the spirit of brotherhood. They came together in a country that has more black men in prison than in college. They came together in a country where more black men, ages 18 to 24, are killed by gunshots every year than died in Vietnam, most of them killed by other black men. They came together in a country where the growing backlash against affirmative action is joined by many liberals. They came together in a country where the victories of the 1960s — "which couldn't be taken away" — *are* being taken away. One cannot understand the response to the Million Man March without acknowledging the mood of this country and black people's increasing sense of isolation and hostility. The question is: did the March result in a renewed sense of purpose and direction? Did it produce a new leadership?

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE MILLION MAN MARCH HIT THE BLACK COMMUNITY like a thunderbolt, taking on a life of its own. It raised the possibility of meaningful action for the first time since the glory days of the civil rights movement.

The civil rights organizations had become moribund; the NAACP, always a middle class organization, had grown increasingly distant from the black lower class which was sinking deeper into hopelessness and despair. The Legal Defense Fund was fighting a rearguard action against a conservative Supreme Court, witnessing its string of liberal victories on desegregation, voting rights and affirmative action increasingly narrowed or defeated, with the *Bradley v. Milliken* decision restricting school desegregation; the *Fordice* decision affect-

REGINALD WILSON, *the Senior Scholar at the American Council on Education and a member of the* New Politics *editorial board*.

ing higher education; the *Croson* and *Adarand* decisions nearly eliminating set-asides and the *Hopwood* decision saying race is irrelevant to college admission decisions, thereby rendering the victories of the 1960s and 1970s nearly ineffective.

Sinking deeper into poverty, the black lower class became more dependent on social welfare programs just as a conservative Republican Congress was dismantling these programs. And there were few white liberals speaking out in support of them, and too few in the left and progressive community speaking out *unequivocally* for black rights.

For example, in a retreat from consistent and militant support for affirmative action, the Democratic Socialists of America argues that affirmative action should be based on class and economic circumstances rather than race; the American Jewish Committee is even less ambiguous in its opposition to affirmative action; in the name of protecting seniority, most unions are party to a policy of black workers being the last hired, the first fired; and the other ethnic groups seem less inclined to join with blacks in mutually beneficial endeavors as they have in the past.

Into this void stepped Louis Farrakhan with a Nation of Islam stronger than ever after the death of Elijah Muhammed despite the controversy surrounding the assassination of Malcolm X. His positive reputation has grown with his ability to take black men from the streets and from the prisons and turn them into clean, drug-free citizens, with many of them becoming independent businessmen, with prosperous shops, restaurants and stores. He formed a security service from the Fruit of Islam — unarmed, karate-trained men — which has moved into public housing units and driven out the drug dealers, thieves, and gangsters.

When he called for a "Million Man March" on Washington, it struck a responsive chord in the black community. It was thrilling to hear someone saying, "Let's do something." And it did not particularly matter what it was. The March developed tremendous momentum, becoming something larger than Farrakhan, although he remained at its center, giving it direction and focus. In the words of Haki Madhabuti, poet and publisher of Third World Press, and a member of the March's Executive Committee, "to try to separate Minister Farrakhan from the shared spirit and renewed energy of the million-plus men ... is to encourage dishonesty and to deny reality and history."

Farrakhan spoke with the urgency and stridency that the situation called for, saying things no one else apparently dared to say, speaking so effectively that his is now the major voice in the black community. He was becoming, in Cornel West's words "white America's worst nightmare" and, seemingly, black America's savior.

At the conclusion of the March, Farrakhan was even more prominent than he had been before. Representative Floyd Flake, a black Congressman from New York, predicted a "much greater dialogue with him than we've ever had."

BUT FARRAKHAN HAS A DARKER, MORE DISTURBING SIDE. He preaches a virulent brand of racially based religion directed against white people, particularly Jews. His garbled, contradictory message centers around a demand for six states where black people can live separately, both economically and socially. In his lexicon, Jews are "blood suckers" and a "cancer." He legitimizes the notorious *Protocols* *of Zion*, selling it at his public meetings. His appearances (and especially those of his principal spokesperson, Khalid Mohammed) on college campuses have been characterized by virulent anti-Semitism and homophobia and have drawn loud and angry protests from white students and Jewish groups. Unfortunately, his retrograde version of black nationalism and separatism appeals to large numbers of blacks. So much so, that with few exceptions, black leaders are reluctant to criticize Farrakhan publicly; and many prominent African Americans rushed to join him on the platform, especially when it became evident that the March would attract a huge crowd. Thus, Jesse Jackson moved from initial non-endorsement to the speaker's platform where he was joined by Cornel West, Maulana Karenga, Rev. Frank Reid III, Dorothy Height, Maya Angelou, Dick Gregory, and Gwendolyn Brooks, among others.

While professing that the March was for black unity, some speakers lost little time denouncing those who chose not to attend. Madhabuti groused that "the Julian Bonds, Roger Wilkins', Angela Davis' and their white and black imitators were allotted prime television, radio and print space to denounce Minister Farrakhan..." which is somewhat ironic since these people and others who refused to attend put their lives on the line many times in the struggle for black rights when Madhabuti was in knee pants.

Several of the black attendees performed contortions trying to distance themselves from Farrakhan on the one hand while embracing him on the other. Cornel West hastened to separate himself from Farrakhan "with whom I have deep disagreements," but said in another context, "I haven't given up on that brother yet." A rather naive statement, as though rational argument could convince Farrakhan that he is wrong about the Jews, Catholics, women and gays. Such naiveté ignores the fact that Farrakhan's ideology is inseparable from his demagoguery and his popularity relies on his ability to persuade black people that we must do battle with the Jews who rob us blind, with the Catholics who worship false idols, with the gays and lesbians who defile God's laws.

Yet, despite Farrakhan's racial and religious invective and for all his social and economic conservatism, the March ignited a positive emotion in black men, a desire to do something to improve the quality of their lives and the lives of their children. They were overcome by powerful feelings of solidarity, an emotion far more profound and humane than the perverse nature of Farrakhan's ambition to become the undisputed leader and spokesperson of the black community.

AND WHAT OF BLACK WOMEN WHO WERE INITIALLY ADMONISHED BY FARRAKHAN to stay home and assume the traditional roles assigned to Muslim women, to "take care of the babies, teach them and pray." American feminists were rightfully outraged. Nevertheless, black women were some of the strongest supporters of the March. According to a survey by the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, only 31 percent of black women felt that they should have been included in the March. On the other hand, many prominent black women — among them, Angela Davis, Pearl Cleage, Julianne Malveaux, Mary Frances Berry — were forceful in their condemnation of a March supposedly for unity that excluded black women, ordered to stay home to "pray and teach" while the men "marched and led." Many of them were equally disturbed by Farrakhan's conservative politics and deeply ingrained sexism. Julianne Malveaux, in her column in *Black Issues* *in Higher Education*, states the case succinctly:

> African American men and women have both been affected by a capitalist patriarchy that devalues our culture and our communities. Our pain has been a collective pain, and we have sometimes inflicted pain on each other. In writing about economic liberation, I would be less than honest if I didn't tackle issues about the status of African American women and the way institutions in the African American community are sometimes instruments of oppression.

The demeaning and misogynistic manner in which women were excluded ultimately did provoke such resentment and public notoriety that Reverend Benjamin Chavis, co-leader of the March and former head of the NAACP, made the all-too-modest concession to gallantry that "if the women come, they will be treated with respect." That hardly changed the macho dimension of the March.

Though the spirit of (male) solidarity was palpable among the vast sea of marchers, ultimately, the March must be viewed historically and objectively. What was its purpose?

The question was posed and answered in the fact sheet issued by the Million Man March Committee:

> The Million Man March is a Holy Day of Atonement and Reconciliation for, and by, black men who will march in Washington, DC to convey to the world a vastly different picture of the black male, and to publicly proclaim to the global community that the black man is prepared and moving forward to unify our families and build our communities.

Few mainstream commentators could find fault with this very conservative agenda. The focus on black moral regeneration and communal self-help is of a piece with right-wing demagogy which blames the victims for their plight. Furthermore, it did nothing to energize the black community to join with others similarly situated.

In the words of historian Paula Giddings, "On Tuesday [Farrakhan] will emerge as one of the most influential spokesmen of black America, boding ill for blacks who want to build bridges."

Using the momentum generated by the March, Louis Farrakhan went on a 16-nation tour of the Arab world. He was welcomed like a head of state in Sudan where he denounced the allegations of slavery in that country as "propaganda…to divert attention from the role Jews played in the slave trade in America." This, despite overwhelming proof of slavery in the Sudan provided by black journalists Clarence Page and Samuel Cotton, and by eyewitness reports by Aluat Majok. Farrakhan also traveled to Nigeria where he announced that he approved the hanging of internationally famed writer Ken Saro-Wiwa by General Sani Abacha, the military dictator of that country that shocked the civilized world. He then moved on to Libya where he indicated he would take a multi-million dollar gift (no one is quite sure of the actual amount) from Col. Mummar Quadaffi to promote his political organization of blacks in the U.S. Clearly, Paula Giddings' foreboding was accurate, and embarrassing to some of the blacks who supported him.

THE TRADITIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS ORGANIZATIONS, FOUNDED JUST AFTER the turn of the century, had very specific motivations and agendas attuned to the desperate needs of African Americans. The NAACP was formed in 1908 in response to the alarming rise in lynching, the Urban League (1910) to the overwhelming need for jobs for the blacks moving in droves from the South to the North. Although their concerns have broadened to include a wider cognizance of civil rights and other factors impinging on black life in America, they have essentially remained true to their original mainstream purposes of fighting discrimination and segregation through the courts, and of empowering African Americans in the economic sphere. They were powerful giants during the 40s and 50s and anyone proposing to lead the black struggle was destined to assume a prominent position in these organizations or their offspring (CORE, Legal Defense Fund, National Council of Negro Women, etc.).

The primacy of these organizations was not challenged until the late 1950s and early 1960s with the formation of the direct action organizations — the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) — that took that struggle to the streets and directly confronted white America. Their purpose, however, was essentially the same — to end discrimination and segregation — through direct action in the streets. Both were enormously effective for a while but they suffered from their own limitations which became increasingly apparent.

The wide sweep of executive orders, court decisions and legislation from the 60s through the 70s proved that the civil rights organizations in coalition with other social movements could make great strides. But the backlash of the Reagan years took their toll and the movement was left gravely weakened and began to lose the ground it had gained decades earlier.

SNCC is gone and SCLC has become a shadow of its former self for a variety of historical reasons. The major civil rights organizations have become impotent and disorganized, even irrelevant, unable to cope with the major problems confronting black people in the U.S. today. Into this vacuum stepped the Nation of Islam, its fiery leader spouting words of hope and promise, as well as, unfortunately, words of hate and separatism. Today, when blacks are more isolated than ever, the need for a radical political agenda and coalitions across racial lines is greater than ever. The Million Man March made those indispensable alliances more difficult and strained already existing ones.

The apolitical and conservative program of the March served to reinforce the status quo while ostensibly challenging it. The March failed to address the vital issues threatening the black community: increasing wage inequality, black men in prison, the assault on social programs, the initiatives against affirmative action, and last but not least, the economic, social and political injustice of capitalism. Not one of these was raised as a central issue of the March.

In these days of desperate need, the black community is searching for inspired leadership, for voices expressing a new vision. The Million Man March, despite its awesome numbers, failed to provide the inspiration or to point the way to emancipation.

The Specter of Nationalism

Norman Kelley

LOUIS FARRAKHAN'S "LEGITIMATION" AS A BLACK POLITICAL LEADER via the Million Man March unmistakably spotlights the central paradox of black politics: integration has been a material success but an ideological and spiritual failure; black nationalism, on the other hand, has been an ideological success but a material failure. Although the general impetus toward integration appears to be moribund (if not dead), one cannot argue that it has been unsuccessful. A black middle class has come into existence during the last 30 years through programs like affirmative action.

It was also a tremendous success for American propaganda during the Cold War. Externally, the United States could broadcast to the world (especially to the then-Soviet bloc and Third World nations) that America was making racial progress. It could parade people like Ralph Bunche, Dorothy Dandridge, Martin Luther King, Bill Cosby, Arthur Ashe, Oprah Winfrey, Henry Louis Gates and the late Ron Brown, Colin Powell and O.J. Simpson (inasmuch as a rich black man could also buy justice) as proof of racial progress and equality. For internal consumption, putative integration convinced whites that racism and discrimination had ended, abolished during the 60s. That those blacks who did not achieve were malingerers and race racketeers. Since integration had occurred — evidenced by the aforementioned celebrity signposts — there was little need to deal with structural or institutional racism. It was up to blacks to take greater personal responsibility.

To be clear, integration has only been materially successful for the black middle class. As top-down strategy, it created a middle class that was able to take advantage of certain opportunities: entrance to universities and middle-level management positions in the private and public sectors, and political offices at the local, national, and federal levels. Yet this material success came at a cost. The black middle and professional classes, as observed by Ellis Cose in his book *The Rage of a Privileged Class*, suffer from suppressed rage, a rage stemming from their inability to move to the positions of power and influence they think they deserve. Having done everything they were supposed to do — go to school, comport themselves as middle class, and not threaten the sensibilities of whites — they still face a glass ceiling. Believing the propaganda of integration, they fail to understand that so-called individual achievement is, in fact, predicated on the political and economic power of the ethnic or social group from which an individual comes.

The so-called black underclass does not suffer from such rage but is constantly under assault. Ever since Daniel P. Moynihan's infamous *Report on the Negro Family* and continuing on into the present, conservative policy wonks and members of the white intelligentsia have been working overtime to estab-

NORMAN KELLEY *is a writer who lives in Brooklyn.*

lish "black pathologies" as fact. These pathologies are "intrinsic" particularly to lower class blacks, and are seldom seen as a consequence of historical, social and economic factors. Moynihan's *Report*, Murray and Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve*, and Dinesh D'Souza's *The End of Racism*, all point the finger at the black family, black genetic make-up or black culture.

For years, the black middle class could sidestep such an assault by virtue of its class position, but the conservative ideological and programmatic counter-revolution now threatens them as well. The demonization of affirmative action is the primary threat to the black middle class since it has been the beneficiary of such programs. Worse yet, this sustained campaign by a largely white conservative movement has enlisted the support of black conservatives to help undermine relative black achievement by attacking affirmative action.

BLACK POWER NATIONALISM FAILED MISERABLY AT ALLEVIATING THE PROBLEMS of lower class blacks, urban and rural. Forsaking a programmatic, structural or analytic approach to community empowerment, the Black Power movement, instead, engaged in rhetorical flourishes and excesses. It fluctuated between the "revolutionary Marxist-Leninist" nationalism of the Black Panthers (which did engage in community self-help endeavors: breakfast for children, health clinics, monitoring police brutality) or the cultural nationalism of US (United Slaves). It raised the black fist but never went beyond the legacy of Malcolm X, the man who exemplified black nationalism and was trying to make it an operative force at the time of his death. Martin Luther King clearly understood that the dashiki-clad militants had nothing programmatically to offer the lower class, yet King conceded that Black Power had greater significance for the residents of the urban Bantustans than the promises of middle class integration.

Due to ideological incoherence and the government's policy of extermination (i.e., the FBI's counterintelligence program), Black Power nationalism ceased to exist as a force by the middle 70s. Its legacy and primary achievements were black pride, challenging the idea of white supremacy, and the establishment of academic Black Studies programs which later spawned today's generation of black intellectuals and Afrocentrism.

During the Reagan-Bush era it was quite clear to those on the street, in the barber shops and in beauty parlors, that the conservative movement posed a clear and present danger to black interests. However, black political leadership did not change its tactics or goals or try to forge a new strategy. The decline in manufacturing jobs due to automation, the transfer of jobs to nations with cheap labor, and the general decline in wages dramatically affected black communities and underscored a new post-civil rights phenomenon: the problems facing blacks were not only a resurgence of racism but the shortage of jobs compounded by institutional racism. Clearly, one of the major blunders of the civil rights movement was its inability to foster a black economic agenda that could weather the vicissitudes of a market economy and the vicious political mood swings of whites. The idea of a black economy or economic self-sufficiency has generally been greeted with charges of black separatism or as impractical. Blacks were told instead that they should engage in coalition politics. Actually, they have done exactly that since Roosevelt and up to Clinton.

The question is: what have they gotten out of it? As a minority, blacks have always suffered the tyranny of the majority and they are increasingly unwilling to wait for the transformative agency of either integration or coalition politics. Blacks should be ruthless and realize that they may not have permanent friends or allies but they do have permanent interests.

Enter the nigger you love to hate, Louis Farrakhan — with apologies to Ice Cube. Farrakhan's rise has to be understood as a confluence of factors.

THE LEFT, LIBERALS, CONSERVATIVES, AND ESTABLISHMENT BLACKS were given a rude awakening when Farrakhan issued the call for the Million Man March and, arguably, amassed a million black men. Dismissed as a psychological reaction, black nationalism, to varying degrees, exists in almost every black man and woman. Call it black pride, respect for self or the race, pan-Africanism, Afrocentrism, it is a component or an essential element of a specific nation within a nation that has a set of nationalistic beliefs, attitudes, behavior patterns. Some of it, the ideological component, is well thought out and some of it is inchoate and visceral. This nationalism is the search for and the declaration of an identity in a society that has always viewed blacks and their achievements as less than nothing. Farrakhan's success to date has been his ability to tap into the latent and overt nationalistic feelings of ordinary black people who pay attention to him because, unlike the black establishment, he is not influenced, controlled or beholden to whites. Farrakhan is the only black leader who speaks about black economic development, a theme that parallels the Republican Party's nostrums about business and opportunity, but that does not invalidate it as a legitimate concern.

Farrakhan's nationalism, the Nation of Islam variant, however is a cheap nationalism because of his anti-Semitism and inflammatory rhetoric about other ethnic groups, women, and the gay and lesbian communities. The Nation of Islam (NOI) is numerically small but influential because it has served as a counterpoint to white supremacy primarily by preaching black supremacy, and has helped lower class blacks to escape poverty, drugs, mental and social degradation. NOI went into the jails and ghettos and recruited "the living dead" when black churches were scornful and closed their doors to the fallen.

But the Nation has some issues to answer: the death of Malcolm X; the controversy surrounding allegations that the late Elijah Muhammad fathered children out wedlock; the role of women in the NOI; the palatial surroundings of some members of its hierarchy as it asks the rank and file to be frugal; and, the issue of slavery in Arab countries such as Mauritania and Sudan. Yet with all these warts there is still a grudging respect for the Nation of Islam as an unintimidated black institution.

It remains to be seen whether or not the Nation or Minister Farrakhan can enter the mainstream. Notice how Ben Chavis, Jesse Jackson, Rep. Kwesi Mfume, Rep. Charles Rangel, Al Sharpton and Cornel West gravitated to him. Except for Colin Powell's brief shining moment, Farrakhan has become the only game in town, and he has shaken the white establishment. (Cornel West in *The New York Times* wrote that he was marching because of "black operational unity." That begs the question: What *exactly* is the operation?)

The left has always dismissed black nationalism as a distraction, calling on blacks to concentrate on the class struggle, but ignoring the fact that blacks are plagued more by the problems of race than class. During the 1930s the Communist Party's position was that blacks were a national minority, but the Party wanted a national minority that wasn't nationalistic: it was okay to be black, but don't think black. Farrakhan's appearance is a sore reminder that the left has not adequately dealt with the issue of black nationalism and hasn't learned anything since the death of Malcolm. Blacks are no longer predisposed to wait for labor, the left, and the Democrats to get their act together. And since the left is hardly a mass movement it would be incapable of getting a million or more men and women to Washington.

Farrakhan's "hijacking" of the black struggle underscored the black left's inability to articulate and organize an alternative to the Nation before the March. Cornel West and Michael Eric Dyson endorsed the march; Aldoph Reed denounced Farrakhan as a "fascist"; bell hooks complained about black men not confronting patriarchy; and Angela Davis and others organized a forum on black issues, Agenda 2000, at Columbia University on the day of the Million Man March. Not to be outdone in outreach to the black community, Kristal Brent Zook wrote a manifesto announcing a new black feminism in *The New York Times Magazine*.

FARRAKHAN'S APPEARANCE IS A BLOW TO THE AMERICAN CONCEIT that the United States is an egalitarian society. His "success" underscores what many blacks know: that American society is corrupt and hypocritical. Farrakhan can be dismissed to some degree but his ability to mobilize a million black men cannot, and that causes concern. Does he know something that we don't know, the powers that be may be asking? Farrakhan showed his hand and proved that he has some degree of power, and power is something that must always remain in white control.

Farrakhan is a demagogue who understands something that the black elite and establishment have yet to fathom: that the days of the colonized black mentality are over. Blacks have interests that may not neatly cohere with the left's, right's, or the mainstream's, for that matter.

But the chances of Farrakhan becoming the paramount leader of a significant portion of blacks is remote for several reasons. His megalomania, as evidenced by his almost three-hour speech, shows that Farrakhan is accustomed to a captive and narcotized audience and not to democratic dialogue. He and the Nation will be placed under greater scrutiny and questions will be raised about him, the Nation and its past — the good, the bad and the ugly. When things become uncomfortable, Farrakhan usually falls back on a harangue against the Jews. This will set him on the road to becoming a "black martyr" who has been castigated by "Jewish power" and thus become a distraction that will probably catch the attention of some blacks who will feel the need to rally around "the brother."

Given the history of previous government operations against black leaders (e.g., Marcus Garvey, W.E.B. Du Bois, Malcolm X, Martin Luther King, the Black Panthers, etc.) one can speculate that the government's security apparatus may be dusting off old operational plans. (This isn't too far fetched given the Clinton Administration's Omnibus Counterterrorism Act and the FBI's desire for even greater wiretapping measures.) Since Farrakhan has a quarter of Malcolm X's intelligence, he can be expected to aid in his own demise. The more he speaks the clearer it becomes that he is something of a buffoon.

Farrakhan's credibility with blacks will depend on what he and his cohort, Ben Chavis, offer as a follow-up to the March. The African-American Leadership Summit plans to offer an economic agenda that sounds questionable given that both Farrakhan and Chavis are reported to have dubious financial practices, Farrakhan within the Nation and Chavis with the NAACP, the organization he once headed. Unlike King and Malcolm, Farrakhan, lusts after power and recognition in a way that makes him vulnerable to corruption. Like Jackson, he wants to be deferred to without doing the essential work of leadership. To paraphrase Marion Barry on Jesse Jackson: Farrakhan doesn't want to run for office; he only wants to run his mouth. More important, blacks have needs that are far greater than Farrakhan's ego. Put another way, Farrakhan may articulate a certain strain of black nationalism, but his vision isn't expansive enough to make him the genuine leader of his generation that King and Malcolm were of theirs. He is the man of the moment but not of a movement.

Louis Farrakhan's rise squarely indicts black leadership, a leadership that has always placed an inordinate amount of faith and time in the legislative and judicial process controlled by whites, yet never understood that what Caesar renders, Caesar can also withdraw. In other words, those programs put into effect by a sympathetic or indifferent majority can be dismantled by a hostile or indifferent majority. The doom and gloom that permeates black leadership would not be nearly as palpable if blacks had embarked on a dual track program of self-reliance and economic self-sufficiency, as well as working to influence public policies.

As far back as the Great Depression, intellectuals like W.E.B. Du Bois thought about the idea of creating an economy of sorts that accommodated the needs of blacks in a racist society. Du Bois himself was driven out of the NAACP for merely speculating about the possibility of self-segregation and a black economy based on cooperatives. Notwithstanding the dismantling of *de jure* second class citizenship, segregation, to varying degrees, continues as a fact of life for many blacks in the realm of education, housing, health care, and advancing to positions above middle-level management. Blacks should fight for inclusion in all those areas. They do, after all contribute tax dollars as undifferentiated members of the tax-paying public. However, they should also devise alternative structures that meet their needs when confronting a hostile or indifferent majority.

FARRAKHAN HAS BEEN ABLE TO MOVE BEYOND THE NATION OF ISLAM because he speaks about economic development as *something that blacks can do for themselves*. Of course, we're talking about black capitalism, the mom-and-pop, bean-pie variant. But let's not kid ourselves. How revolutionary or socialistic were the liberal top-down strategies of affirmative action of welfare? Farrakhan, to a limited degree, is calling for black self-empowerment, a revolutionary idea for a people who don't have any real power. Notice how almost everyone on the left is for saving affirmative action but in terms of redressing previous wrongs, the issue of reparations is not fully embraced by many on the left. The fact that conservatives blacks like Booker T. Washington and Elijah Muhammad, Farrakhan's mentor, emphasize economic development underscores a very salient concern of blacks who are aware that not to have capital in a capitalist society makes one a political prisoner.

Farrakhan's shortsightedness, however, is that he does not envision a "dual track” of black economic development: pressuring the government for more job training programs, decent paying jobs, better health care, a higher minimum wage and, simultaneously, organizing blacks into cooperative ventures based on their needs as consumers, producers and stakeholders. Instead, he believes that he and the Nation can offer a “privatized” version of the welfare state based on the teaching of Elijah Muhammad. The “Messenger” has something to offer, but it is insufficient for the task at hand. A better blueprint is DuBois' “cooperative commonwealth” outlined in his book *Dusk at Dawn*. Harold Cruse, author of *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual,* building on DuBois, advocated a “new institutionalism,” an intelligent blend of privately-owned, collectively-owned, cooperative-owned, as well as state-sponsored economic organizations. Notwithstanding the organizational task, black intellectuals have not produced any original economic theory that could realistically cope with either capitalism or socialism as it pertains to the unique historical circumstances of blacks, the “forced emigrants” of the American experience.

Just as Farrakhan saw an opening, a weakness and timidity within black leadership, his ability to call a million men to Washington may be an opportunity to consider the merits of *progressive nationalism*. Farrakhan's biggest contribution may indeed be the mobilization of a people's energy to do something and think beyond the encrusted paradigms of the welfare state and the Nation of Islam. Blacks and others may be able to use the opening created by Farrakhan to create popular institutions that can sustain communities through job creation and education. This does not necessarily mean a retreat from the concerns of public policy in matters of employment, education, health care and housing. What it does mean is reclaiming the idea of power, direct participatory power and not being solely dependent upon exercising power through agents like political representatives and their ilk. Power is far too important to be left in the hands of politicians or someone like Farrakhan.

The left no longer speaks of power; it is too weak to do so. But the right — the militia movement, the Christian Coalition, Newt Gingrich, so-called empowerment conservatives — is on the move to seize, control, defuse, redefine, and hand over power to its constituent groups, especially corporations. Farrakhan has made the scene because there is a dearth of imaginative black popular leaders and some blacks, particularly those without the depth of historical memory, may be willing to listen to him because they believe he has the answers. The tragedy is that some blacks may be willing to give him the nod because, as the saying goes (attributed to Du Bois), “Blacks folks want to get on the train so bad, they don't even ask where it's going.”

Right now the Farrakhan Express has arrived.

The Million Man March:
Wrong Message, Wrong Messenger

Paul Robeson, Jr.

THE OCTOBER 16, 1995 MILLION MAN MARCH IN WASHINGTON, D.C. assembled in response to the wrong message from the wrong messenger for the wrong purpose at the wrong time. It had a narrow religious theme of atonement, rather than a broad secular theme of protest, and was identified with a sectarian leader. No coherent program was articulated, and no central unifying issue was defined around which African-Americans as a group could be mobilized for effective political struggle in a decisive political year. The March was organized for black men only, and no effort was made to include black women or the many people outside the black community who are willing to support the black struggle for equal opportunity.

The Million Man March substituted symbolism for struggle, but it must be acknowledged that the symbolism was both positive and powerful. This is why the March was such a dangerous diversion from the real tasks confronting today's African-American leaders.

A million African-American men assembled peacefully on the Washington, D.C. Mall, and by their quiet self-imposed discipline shattered the racist stereotypes of the African-American male which have inundated the American popular culture. These men created a powerful image of majestic dignity, infinite patience, peaceful communion, and warm fellowship.

The marchers transformed the narrow religious theme of atonement into a more secular theme of universal brotherhood; they converted the Nation of Islam's patronizing exclusion of black women into a temporary division of assignments, and welcomed the few women who came; they overcame the lack of a program and the absence of protest by manifesting an overwhelming display of unity and pride. Above all, black men were presented as responsible individuals belonging to a cohesive ethnic group with specific group interests. Nevertheless, the dominant place of the Nation of Islam in the image of the March fatally narrowed its appeal.

The March was essentially controlled by Minister Farrakhan, rather than by a representative committee of black leadership, and therefore it was designed as a self-serving vehicle for Farrakhan to fill a real leadership void in the black community. The shallow rhetoric which dominated the event drowned out any effective program around which millions of African-Americans could be organized into a movement, and Minister Louis Farrakhan's inappropriate announcement that he acted as the messenger of God in calling the March staked out his claim that the day belonged to him personally. The marchers refuted this idea by distancing themselves from Farrakhan, but it was not possible for them to separate the message from the messenger.

PAUL ROBESON, JR. *is a Brooklyn-based writer and lecturer.*

As a result, the March has served to divide, rather than to unify, African-Americans, and has failed to focus attention on the economic and political issues that are at the root of the crisis in the African-American community. The exclusion of black women from full and equal participation has proved to be especially damaging, since women account for 60% of the black vote and are rightfully beginning to challenge the patriarchal attitudes within the current black leadership. Moreover, there has been no significant organizational or political result from the March because the continuation committees set up to advance the goals of the March suffer from the same failings and misguided focus as did the March itself.

My negative assessment of the Million Man March is based on six specific criticisms:

• The March was not sufficiently inclusive: many important black organizations and individuals refused to endorse the event. These included religious, civic, social, political, trade-union, professional, and women's organizations, as well as most black achievers.

• The marchers were overwhelmingly middle-class; the black working class and the black poor were largely absent. As a result, the values, goals, and priorities of the March were those of the black middle class: primary emphasis on entrepreneurship, narrow reliance on self-help, excessive focus on individualism, and failure to fight for the expansion of the public sector of the economy. These middle-class interests conflict with the vital needs of the black working class and poor, which require the vast expansion of federal economic programs, a strong shift in emphasis from undisciplined individualism to collective responsibility, a strengthened and extended economic "safety net" as a prerequisite for self-help on a mass scale, and priority for the massive creation of jobs with a living wage.

• The sectarian ideology emanating from the leadership of the March and of the continuation committees, as well as the persistent message of atonement, reflects the guilt felt by the black middle class. For 30 years, most of this middle class has abandoned the interests of the black working class and poor in exclusive pursuit of its own maximum advancement. The new black nationalism which has become so vocal in the black community serves to cover up this political betrayal and to obscure the absence of substantive black leadership. This explains why the March, with its powerful racial symbolism, was so attractive to a black middle class that fears to confront the vital issue of economic fairness.

• The leadership of the March consciously stripped it of all political content at a time when the vital interests of African-Americans as a cohesive ethnic group require the most intense political struggle around specific issues in a complex political environment. The victory of right-wing Republicans in the 1994 Congressional elections and their "Contract With America" threaten to roll back all the gains achieved by the civil rights movement. Moreover, the current Republican crusade against the Federal Government and for the devolution of power to the *States* is nothing less than an attempt to replace the Union with a revived Confederacy; it is an attempt to reverse the result of the Civil War. The March failed even to recognize these dire external threats to the entire African-American community.

Having assembled a million black men, the speakers at the March failed to mobilize this huge potential political power in defense of black interests. Contrary to the empty promises made by the leaders of the March, most follow-up meetings have merely repeated the same inadequate message presented in Washington, and little effort has been made to broaden the continuation committees.

Instead of these self-appointed spokesmen, it was President Clinton who, despite his numerous political compromises, articulated the central issues affecting black Americans. In a speech delivered on the day of the March, Clinton invoked Rev. Martin Luther King's march in Memphis with the sanitation workers for "economic justice," and acknowledged that black and white Americans often "see the same world in drastically different ways" due to "the awful history and stubborn persistence of racism." Then he observed that "white racism may be black people's burden, but it's white people's problem," and demanded that white America clean its house of racism.

• The March ignored the traditional African-American values which derive from the time of slavery and are firmly rooted in the black working class and among non-entrepreneurial black professionals. These values are ecumenical and tolerant, emphasizing the oneness of humankind and rejecting nationalism, sexism, or cultural exclusivity. Above all, they teach that the achievement of individual wealth and power without also advancing the cause of the entire African-American community is not worthy of admiration; as Mary McCleod Bethune once said, "lift while you climb."

• The conveners of the March failed to address the central leadership problem in black America: the struggle for equal opportunity long ago replaced the fight for equal rights, but black leadership has mistakenly continued to pursue a civil rights agenda. Rev. Martin Luther King's poor people's campaign and his latter-day shift to a radical emphasis on economic justice is highly relevant today, whereas Minister Farrakhan's conservative focus on self-help and atonement is fundamentally misguided.

THE 1995 MILLION MAN MARCH AND THE 1963 MARCH ON WASHINGTON, while held on the same site, were vastly different. Although the Million Man March was four times the size of the March On Washington, making it the largest-ever demonstration in the nation's capital, it amounted merely to a symbolic gesture unconnected to a mass movement or to a stable organizational base. On the other hand, the March On Washington mobilized an ongoing mass movement and focused its energies in a civil rights struggle that partially transformed America.

In 1995, Minister Farrakhan delivered a rambling two-hour–and–twenty minute lecture which was part homily, part sermon on family values, part excursion into obscurantist numerology, part sectarian religious dogma. More than six months later, no significant change is discernible in the black community, not to speak of the nation. In 1963, Reverend King delivered an inspirational 19-minute address that set forth the ultimate goal of the civil rights movement, spelled out its immediate tasks, and rallied the movement to the sustained struggle culminating in the passage of the Civil Rights Act two years later. Thus, there can be no doubt that the King march, rather than the Farrakhan march, harbors the most important lessons for today.

Rejoinder to Marable
On Black Intellectuals

Adolph Reed, Jr.

A YEAR AGO I PUBLISHED AN ARTICLE IN THE *VILLAGE VOICE* (April 11, 1995) that commented critically on the group of "black public intellectuals" currently enjoying the spotlight, instructively, in both left and mainstream media. The essay focused on a group including Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Gloria Watkins (aka bell hooks), Michael Eric Dyson and Robin Kelley to note two troubling aspects of the role of this status in black American intellectual life.

First, the posture is just that — a pose, not a discrete intellectual or political tendency. I likened their position to Marx's quip about his French anarchist contemporary, Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. Marx said that Proudhon presented himself in Germany, where they didn't know much political economy, as a political economist and in France, where they didn't know much philosophy, as a philosopher. The black public intellectuals, I argued, claim recognition in the university as conduits to the mind of the "black community"(Gates is the lone, principled exception to this claim) and outside the academy as world-class academics. The consequence is simultaneously to avoid the requirements of both careful scholarship and committed political practice. The move is always to be from and on the way to the other place.

Second, although Gates and Kelley have produced respectable scholarship, in their public intellectual roles the group of Super Friends, as I called them (noting that they maintain no critical dialogue among themselves but function as a mutual promotional society), blur counterproductively the different warrants of engaged black intellectual activity. They confuse explaining and defending black Americans to whites with investigation of the intricacies and nuances of black life. As a result, their work is shallow and longer on form than substance, and the same applies to their politics. They substitute explaining the heart of darkness to whites, with the stylized trappings of militant activism, for political action and serious intellectual inquiry.

Subsequently, Manning Marable published a response to my critique in *New Politics* (Summer 1995), in which he made three basic objections: that I didn't adequately account for the differences among the Super Friends; that, in what is little more than a passing comparison, I misrepresent Booker T. Washington's role in black political history; and that it is irresponsible to attack "progressive" black intellectuals now that they face an onslaught from the racist right. At the request of the editors of *New Politics* I responded to Marable's

ADOLPH REED, JR. *teaches at Northwestern University. He is co-chair of the Chicago-based Coalition for New Priorities, a member of the Interim Executive Committee of Labor Party Advocates and on the Board of the Public Citizen Foundation.*

charges, which showed little evidence of his having read my initial article. My response was published, along with three other contributions to the exchange and his reply, in the Winter 1996 issue. Readers interested in the specifics of the exchange can consult that issue. I want here to comment on the approach to politics and intellectual activity that Marable's criticisms reflect.

Not only does Marable's reply suggest that he still hasn't read my initial article; it also seems that he didn't read my response.

THERE'S NO NEED TO DRAG READERS THROUGH ALL THE LAYERS of sophistry that make up Marable's bill of particulars. I'll offer just a few illustrative examples. In his initial "criticism" Marable accuses me of focusing exclusively on black "fellow progressives," claiming that I don't attack the right. As I indicated in my initial response, the black public intellectuals' status as progressives is exactly and explicitly what I challenge in the *Voice* article, a challenge Marable never confronts. In his reply he merely repeats a version of his initial charge. Moreover, anyone at all familiar with my writing in *The Progressive*, *The Nation*, the *Voice* or elsewhere knows that that charge is blatantly untrue.

Nor does he respond to my objections that his circle-the-wagons rhetoric — in which he invokes an imaginary rightist onslaught, consisting of a couple of hostile articles within an avalanche of public adulation, to stifle criticism among a bunch of secure, tenured professors at elite universities (including him and me) — exhibits both an absurdly exaggerated sense of our importance and cheapens the real suffering and danger that the right has imposed now and in the past. This move is simply a cheap canard, the first refuge of those who would shut off dissent, as Marable's backhanded attempt to link me to Charles Murray and Dinesh D'Souza lays bare. Actually, Marable wants to have it both ways: on the one hand, the Super Friends can't be criticized sharply because they're in unspecified peril from the right; on the other, they shouldn't be attacked because they're "some of the most influential African-Americans on the scene today." (Is that part of his application for membership in their Hall of Justice? His puerile resort to the "if-Reed-would-only-use-his-powers-for-good" trope suggests an appropriately cartoonish cast of mind.) And even if Cornel West, for instance, weren't on the White House's dinner invitation list, Bill Bradley's callback list and the Harvard senior faculty; even if any of the bunch really did embrace a left politics that goes beyond a patina of clichéd declarations over empty, at best depoliticized, puffery, that still wouldn't exempt them from criticism. The left, after all, is always under attack; it's part of who we are. By Marable's logic we'd never be able to challenge sharply anything said or done by anyone who simply announces, "I am a progressive."

In charging me with not adequately distinguishing among the group I discussed, Marable notes that Gates runs an institute at Harvard and "sees himself as something of an entrepreneur." My reply was "are we somehow to believe that West, Watkins and Dyson don't [function as entrepreneurs]? Yes, Gates runs an institute at Harvard, but Marable runs one at Columbia. What's the dif?" Marable responds sanctimoniously, and without answering my question, by accusing me of throwing the entrepreneurialism charge around unfairly — after he introduced the category in the first place. Does he write his own stuff? Does he even read it?

Then there's his bit of revealing biographical sleight-of-hand. Marable notes that in the mid-1970s he was a young professor and that I was a graduate student and recites a list of his organizational affiliations to characterize as "not only false, but dishonest" my suggestion — a charitable interpretation, in my view — that his naïve notions about political activism stem in part from his not having been around when there was a real, popular black political mobilization. He should have left well enough alone.

He's correct on the particulars. He was a young professor when I was a grad student. I'm also three years older than he is. I'm sure that his precocity explains some of the difference in our points in the academic trajectory then. However, what mainly accounts for it is that I'd spent several years working full time as a political organizer in the GI and antiwar movements and in the poor people's movement — where black power radicalism sought to mobilize real constituencies — in North Carolina, prior to attending graduate school. My decision to go back to school grew partly from a perception that the movement was drying up around me, that opportunities for the kind of organizing I'd been doing were disappearing, that radical activism was being pressed onto the margins of black politics.

There are some simple actuarial constraints on what can be true here. I was at the younger end of the cohort of 1960s activists. I was 19 when Stokely Carmichael, who was 25 or 26 at the time, shouted "Black Power" on the Meredith March; Marable was about 16. I had just turned 21 when King was killed; Marable was about 18. I was 25 when I went to graduate school in 1972; when I first encountered Marable two or three years later, he was already a professor (at Smith College, I believe, or Wellesley). When could he have squeezed his activism in? And how substantial could it have been?

Marable says that he was "an active leader of the National Black Political Assembly (NBPA) in the 1970s, and was in various organizations on the left." The latter claim is indisputable. During his time in Tuskegee (where he apparently picked up some of his ideology), the years when the detritus of the New Left and black power movements were purging themselves out of existence, splitting into ever-smaller grouplets over ever more arcane disagreements, Marable stood out to quizzical black leftists as he simultaneously courted the Communist Party, the Maoist October League and the Trotskyist Socialist Worker Party. At the time we suspected that his behavior was opportunist; now I think that's also maybe just what he imagines political activism to be — having a bunch of organizational affiliations.

HIS CLAIM ABOUT HIS ROLE IN THE NBPA, THOUGH, IS ANOTHER MATTER. When I read it, it brought me up short. I was never active in the NBPA. I was close to it, however, because it was the product of the broad strain of black power activism in which I was embedded. I helped organize the North Carolina delegation to the 1972 National Black Political Convention in Gary and the related attempt to form a statewide independent black political party. I also was a working participant in the African Liberation Day Coordinating Committee that organized the North Carolina contingent to the first African Liberation Day demonstration in that same year and later was active in the African Liberation Support Committee that grew out of those efforts. (Unlike the precocious Marable, though I was a functionary in those organizations, I wasn't a "leader" of anything; it wasn't even a category that came to mind.)

I mention these involvements because they overlapped the cohort of activists who were visible in the cultural nationalist-dominated NBPA in the early '70s. Although I moved from a different ideological orientation (my first real publication was a critique of Pan-Africanism from within black radicalism in *The Black Scholar*), the black power nationalist and radical Pan-Africanist strains dominated independent black activism during those years. Those were, therefore, the venues within which I worked and most of the people with whom I associated as comrades. I attended NBPA conferences, knew and was at least vaguely known in those circles. It seemed to me that if Marable had been "an active leader of the NBPA" — as were, for instance, Maulana Ron Karenga, Amiri Baraka (until his newfound Marxism made him unclean), Ron Daniels, Haki Madhubuti, Jitu Weusi, Hannah Atkins or blasts from the past like General Chui — I'd have been aware of it at the time. The claim seemed especially curious considering his tender age then and lack of an extramural base; this was a period, after all, when representation of a popular constituency, or at least plausible appearance of representing one, was a prerequisite for prominence in key movement organizations like the NBPA.

Well, I checked around with others who were more closely connected to the NBPA than I was. No one has Marable's recollection of his prominence. The closest I found was one person who recalls that he may have attended some meetings and been noticeable on the organization's periphery. He suggested what I'd speculated may have been the case: that Marable conflates his association with the National Black Independent Political Party initiative in the late 1970s and early 1980s — a paper entity formed well after the movement's demise and which never had any political reality — and the NBPA. Another possibility is that, like the SWP's gambit of using the fact that they'd captured a moribund Student Mobilization Committee to instruct subsequent generations of naïve youth that they'd led the antiwar movement, Marable may have held some title in the organization's last, meaningless days. (And, yes, I was North Carolina organizer for the Young Socialist Alliance, the SWP's youth arm, for about a year in the late '60s.)

MY POINT IN ALL THIS ISN'T TO ESTABLISH MY BONA FIDES as a Long Marcher and to one-up Marable's political history, although I confess to relief at giving in to a long repressed impulse to set the record straight. Marable provoked that impulse by a cheap, cowardly innuendo in his initial article, his attempt to discredit my arguments by backhandedly challenging my legitimacy to comment. He alleges that I have "few connections with real social forces, with the present-day struggles of women and men who are attempting to halt the tide of political reaction against black folk." Not only is the charge ludicrous on its face; I'm confident that more of my time goes to political activism than his, especially if the notion of activism extends deeper than photo-ops, giving celebrity speeches, or appearances on stationery and at hollow, silly conferences. It is also tawdry and beside the point.

It's beside the point because reference to a speaker's social position doesn't automatically say anything at all about the merits of his argument. That's one way that Marable's move is cowardly; it's an attempt to sidestep dealing substantively with my critique. What I said could be true even if I had no political background or connections. It's also cowardly because he doesn't want to own up to its slimy subtext, that my arguments are invalid because I'm in some way racially inauthentic.

I said in my reply that I expected better from him, partly because — unlike West, Dyson and Watkins, who had never been anywhere near activist politics — Marable certainly knew enough about my history not to be tempted by such a canard. Partly also because I had retained a respect for him as someone who at least wanted to identify with the activist left and had some recollection of what a political movement is.

Ironically, that — as I've pointed out to several people who asked about his absence — is the main reason that I didn't include him among the group I discussed in the *Voice* essay.

There've long been too many '60s relics hanging around, living off the past. It's not like we were wildly victorious anyway, at least not so much that we deserve to pat ourselves on the back or command deference from others. There are also far too many hacks on college campuses trading on the imagery of activism — real or imagined — and propagating idiotic notions of what radicalism is and how political movements are created.

A mutual friend indicated not long ago, in Marable's defense, that politics for him is about building organizations, not organizing. In that context it's significant that his defense of his political history is all about organizations with which he's been affiliated and positions he's held in them — and nothing about what he's *done*. This is a bogus, pro forma, show-up-for-picture-day notion of politics. It's also a politics tailor-made for the racial opportunism that operates these days on the white left. Fixating on projecting black faces as organizational "leaders" — even "honorary" ones, as in Democratic Socialists of America — is a quick and dirty alternative to trying to think strategically through the nuances of politics among black people. Marable, and West until he went upscale, are there to fill the bill.

What's most problematic about Marable's brand of opportunism is that its superficiality disposes him to defend any black person who makes any claim to having a constituency. Politics for him is about who you hang out with, not what you stand for. He suggests that it's improper to criticize Booker T. Washington's heinous alliance with New South racists because some black people agreed with his program and because there have been black conservatives before him and after. Never mind that Washington worked overtime, as David Levering Lewis has shown most devastatingly in his recent biography, *W. E. B. Du Bois: Biography of a Race*, to make certain that no challenges to the Jim Crow order emerged in black politics; Marable has no space in his head for such details. If we could produce a poll that shows significant black agreement with Clarence Thomas, does that validate his agenda on the Supreme Court? And isn't that exactly the scam that Thomas's supporters perpetrated to silence weak-kneed Democratic liberals?

Marable accuses me of not recognizing that the likes of Washington represent some black interests and of characterizing them simplistically as Uncle Toms, a construction I never use. I explicitly acknowledged the fact of their black support: that was the context in which I raised the issue of Marable's political experience. I asked the same question I ask here, to which Marable has refused to respond. "Does the fact that some other black people agreed with him validate his reactionary politics?" And I noted that "if Marable had been around when there actually was an insurgent black political movement, he'd realize that the guys who had the ears of the funding sources always had a constituency in the black community." He sidesteps the issue with his Uncle Tom invention.

He dismisses me as "most out of step with Black America" — itself a revealing charge: how does Marable become gatekeeper of black legitimacy? — in my criticisms of Ben Chavis, who was my contemporary in the same broad strain of North Carolina radicalism, and Louis Farrakhan. Here as well I made direct, explicit references to Chavis's disreputable politics (which I'd discussed in my October, 1994 *Progressive* column): his underhanded lobbying for NAFTA after the NAACP had voted to oppose it, his sellout of the environmental racism movement, his misfeasance at the NAACP and misappropriation of funds and the specter of sexual harassment. Marable addresses none of those points, dismissing them as generic "mistakes," and rehearses boilerplate folderol about Chavis's "reaching out to the Hip Hop generation."

ON FARRAKHAN, MARABLE MOST SHOCKINGLY REVEALS THE BANKRUPTCY of his idea of politics. I'm irresponsible to describe Farrakhan as a fascist — again Marable sidesteps the issue of my description's accuracy — because we "must talk with Farrakhan" because he has black supporters and calling him a fascist "will not facilitate any dialogue." This is stunningly unprincipled, and all Marable's empty qualifications about expressing profound disagreements with Farrakhan, blah, blah blah are no mitigation. My first thought on reading that line was of those who made identical arguments in Germany in the early 1930s about appeasing Hitler: that he spoke to legitimate concerns, that he had a genuine popular base. Farrakhan *is* a fascist, and, if he had the power, he'd bulldoze every black leftist. The Nation of Islam has a history, after all, and Farrakhan is deeply implicated in it. And his recent defenses of the Abacha regime in Nigeria, the brutal theocracy in the Sudan and the Mobutu dictatorship in Zaïre should dispel any doubts about his model of politics.

Not only is this position immoral; it's idiotic strategically. Farrakhan has no reason to listen to Marable's tepid bromides, even if they were genuinely offered. He doesn't for the very reason that Marable and pals want to hang out with him: they don't represent anything that he needs except the superficial legitimacy of association, and he offers them the same thing ; they have nothing they can withhold from him, no political or resource base to which they can deny him access or mobilize against him. Marable is like West and Dyson in pimping that association to legitimize their claims to be in touch with a non-existent popular black politics. Even association with scoundrels can fill the bill because this politics isn't about organizing anything with a real base or about trying to shape the content and direction of black political activity through open, democratic debate and struggle. It's all a pose. This inevitably breeds opportunism because it's a politics that depends on having someone invite you to a meeting, so that you can't afford to take any sharp positions because doing so might keep you off a guest list. I take it back, Manning, I guess you are a "black public intellectual" after all.

Manning Marable Replies

When confronted with an absolutely scurrilous attack, one should usually ignore it. But because Adolph Reed basically distorts the history of the black movement, I felt compelled to respond. These destructive diatribes do not serve the interests of black struggle, and this will be my final comment on this matter.

The essay above says less about myself or the immediate political debate at hand among the black intellectuals of the current period, than the peculiar development and perspectives of Adolph Reed. Regrettably, I have finally joined a long line of former political comrades, academic colleagues and graduate students, viciously trashed by Reed. In a remarkably short time, Reed has become the "darling" of a marginal element of the white left, that maintains a sectarian distance from the actual struggles of black and working class people. For reasons only known to himself, Reed relishes attacking black leaders and intellectuals who are left of the political center. In his polemical assaults, Reed utilizes any argument, no matter how false or unscrupulous. He takes pride that his work on Jesse Jackson, for example, has been praised by black conservatives. Reed personifies the old phrase, "Left in form. Right in essence."

I want to speak directly to Reed's smears about my own political history. In March 1976. I was a delegate at the National Black Political Assembly's (NBPA) national convention in Cincinnati, which attempted to nominate Julian Bond as an independent black candidate for the presidency. (Incidentally, he declined.) From 1976 through 1980, I worked in the Assembly. I served for a time on the national executive committee; with Ron Daniels, I helped to write and edit the NBPA's national publication, *The Black Agenda*, in 1980. At the NBPA's 1980 convention in New Orleans, I served as director of communications. In November of that year, I coordinated the media and participated on the planning committee for the Black Political Convention in Philadelphia. Over 1500 participants at the convention established the National Black Independent Political Party (NBIPP). At Philadelphia, educator Barbara Sizemore and I were elected Northeastern Regional Representatives to the national executive of the NBIPP.

There are several sources which document the history of the NBPA, from its founding in Gary in 1972 through the establishment of NBIPP. One of my early essays of that period was "Through the Prism of Race and Class: Black Nationalism since the Civil Rights Movement," *Socialist Review*, Volume 10 (March-June 1980). But perhaps the best source on this history is Ron Daniels, head of the Center for Constitutional Rights, who served as head of the Assembly from 1975 through 1980. Reed may not be personally familiar with the history of black nationalism after the early 1970s. But in his eagerness to trash an ideological opponent and former friend, he twists history to suit himself.

New Politics should also be questioned for promoting and encouraging this sort of dishonest and unprincipled polemic by Reed.[*] But in the end, Reed distinguishes himself as a personality distinctly outside the main currents of black protest thought and activism. Reed is like the solitary man in an empty chamber, who hears the echo of his own voice and mistakes that for the roar of the masses.

•

[*] ***Editors' Comment:*** *Manning Marable's not-so-subtle accusation that* New Politics *should be taken to task for "promoting and encouraging" a "dishonest and unprincipled polemic by Reed" is utterly false. We egged nobody on. Just as we did not solicit Marable's original article, we did not solicit the above response by Reed which Marable finds "scurrilous." (Hardly a non-polemical term of comradely discourse.) If Marable chooses not to debate Reed's political views, such as his position on Farrakhan, that is his right. But his charge that* New Politics *manipulated the discussion is absolutely groundless.*

Gender, Sexuality, Political Economy

Micaela di Leonardo and Roger Lancaster

THE THREADS OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY run through all contemporary political debates, whether national or international. In the U.S. in particular, living as we do in the midst of a dominant identity politics that stresses immutable gender, sexual preference, and race/ethnic/national identities while eliding class, it is difficult to maintain a long historical vision of the shifting intersections of sex and politics. Many observers have held the identity-based "new social movements" responsible for the decline of organized left politics. This perspective, coupled with media commodifications and other misappropriations of our common history, has made it difficult to see both how integral clear understanding of gender and sexuality are to socialist thought and action — and how contentious feminist and gay scholarship and politics have been and are. (The importance and contentiousness of race analyses are far more recognized.) In what follows, we contextualize changing scholarly understandings of — and divisions over — gender and sexuality since the 1960s within the particularly American political-economic shifts that made those changes possible. We focus here primarily on the rise of the second wave of feminism and of gay liberation. In other, longer work, we include as well the central role of anticolonial and race liberation movements in reshaping our visions of sex.

The Second Wave

THE RENAISSANCE OF FEMINIST THOUGHT AND ACTIVISM, now more than a quarter-century in the making, was spurred by a concatenation of historical political-economic shifts. In the U.S., postwar economic expansion led to greatly increased demands for labor, and thus to women's rising labor force participation rate. The very possibility of supporting themselves without reliance on father or husband allowed many women to challenge male societal dominance, while the low pay, low status, and minimal prospects for advancement that characterized most "women's jobs" in that era stimulated feminist reaction. At the same time, the ongoing war in Vietnam gave rise to a nationwide protest movement, a movement deeply affected by and working in concert with civil rights/black power. The demographic bulge of a 1960s college-age cohort laid a further material

ROGER LANCASTER and MICAELA DI LEONARDO *have co-edited* The Gender/Sexuality Reader (*Routledge, forthcoming). di Leonardo teaches anthropology and Women's Studies at Northwestern University. She most recently edited* Gender at the Crossroads of Knowledge: Feminist Anthropology in the Postmodern Era *(California). Lancaster teaches anthropology and cultural studies at George Mason University. His* Life Is Hard: Machismo, Danger and the Intimacy of Power in Nicaragua *(California) received two prizes.*

basis for youth-based rebellion. Feminists drew both personnel and practices from these other contemporary movements, and the relatively youthful profile of feminist activists enhanced their emphasis on issues of sexuality, body, and reproduction.

Early second wave theorists and activists, following Simone de Beauvoir's postwar "made, not born" promulgation, coined the sex/gender distinction that has since become widespread. Assigning to "sex" the biological realities of differing male/female physiologies, and to "gender," a term theretofore largely used in formal grammar, the layering of enculturated notions of proper sex roles, feminists were thus able to query arguments for the "natural" status of female subjection to male control, confinement in the home, responsibility for housework and childcare, sexual passivity, and automatic heterosexuality.

"The personal is political" is of second-wave coinage, but its very specific meaning has become attenuated and vitiated in recent years. The 19th and early 20th-century woman movement — as it was then labeled — largely had not challenged prevalent household divisions of labor and dominant notions of aggressive, sexual males and passive, maternal, nonsexual females, and the scholarly establishment that asserted and rationalized such practices and ideologies. They reserved their fight for the scaling of public sphere walls — for the vote, for entrance into higher education and the professions, for a voice in the reform of government. Second-wave feminists expanded the definition of the political to "sexual politics": to include the struggle on the domestic front for women's control over their own reproduction, for parity in household labor, for equal involvement of male and female parents in childcare, and for admission of women's equal sexual needs and rights. In this vein, they illuminated the entirely social — and male-dominant — ideologies of women's sexual passivity, of "female frigidity," "female neurosis," a variety of mother-blaming psychological constructs, and notions of universally "correct" feminine body types, bodily self-presentation, and body grooming and adornment. They challenged the male bias of the "sexual revolution" of the 1960s; rediscovered Kinsey's work on female sexuality; unearthed early-20th-century feminist work on female sexual response; and engaged in their own survey research on female and male sexuality and sexual relationships. As well, activists revealed the serious consequences of male bias in medical practice and campaigned for reforms, including more and better research on breast cancer, contraceptive methods, the physiology of menopause, and the elimination of unnecessary hysterectomies, cesarean sections, and radical mastectomies.

THE DOMINANT ANALYTIC MODE OF THIS PERIOD, however, both as subject and as rhetoric, was the focus on women's labor. Feminists stripped away the veils of "feminine role" from women's underemunerated and undervalued work, whether unpaid in households or in the paid labor force, whether in Great Neck, Gujarat, Guam, or Soviet Georgia. They expanded the notion of labor, following Marx and Engels, to include the work of reproducing human beings, encompassing both their gestation and their nurturance to adulthood. The labor emphasis allowed feminists to envision women's lives outside the "affective role" assigned to them by Parsonian sociology. (This model defined men's roles as "instrumental," reproducing the dichotomous immanent/transcendent model de Beauvoir had analyzed and protested.) In the process of analyzing women's work activities across time and around the world, feminists newly saw households as sites of labor and consumption practices inflected unequally through gender; perceived the model of sexual services exchanged for financial support implicit in "traditional" heterosexual marriage; and investigated pornography, prostitution, sex tourism, and other forms of sex work as large-scale industries in which women, some younger men, and children provided the exploited labor for high-profiting male (and a very few female) entrepreneurs.

As productive (to pun) as the "laborizing" of feminist theory was in this period, it revealed inherent limits, and these limits showed themselves very clearly in considerations of sexuality and reproduction. The work analogy, derived from orthodox or vulgar Marxism, was fundamentally reductionist — it reduced all practice, agency, or activity down to "work," narrowly conceived; it defined sexuality and reproduction narrowly as "really" and "only" about economic exchange and exploitation. Just as more ordinarily envisioned labor — in a factory or office — can reflect at the same time exploitation, cooperation, and fundamental human satisfaction wrested from constraining circumstances, so can, and often are, women's and men's sexual, household and reproductive experiences. The practices of consciousness-raising groups, powerfully liberating as they were, enhanced the implicit and sometimes explicit model that women's sometimes positive evaluations of men and their "traditional" roles invariably revealed a simple "false consciousness." Thus Shulamith Firestone's aphorism, "Love is the victim's response to the rapist."

The labor mode proved a theoretical weakness in another, more indirect and non-Marxist thread of analysis. A cluster of feminist theorists focused on the notion that because of their reproductive bodies, women necessarily universally care for children and are excluded from the public sphere, leading their lower status lives in the domestic domain. Sherry Ortner elaborated on this frame from a Levi-Straussian structuralist perspective, and alleged that women universally are associated with nature (through childbirth and cooking), men with culture (through the public sphere and politics); and thus, as humans universally identify their project as the transcendence of nature through culture, women are associated with primitiveness, non-humanness, and therefore have lower status than men. Nancy Chodorow's feminist Freudian analysis complemented Ortner's. Chodorow alleged that psychoanalytically speaking, women's universal sole childminder role causes children to devalue women; in order to alter the human psyche and thus women's status, men must engage in childcare. Michelle Rosaldo's feminist Weberian frame contended in the same vein that universally, the less rigid the division between public and domestic sphere and the greater women's presence in public, the higher women's status would be.

All of these schema were based on the notion of a transhistorical and cross-cultural unchanging "women's work" of childbirth, childcare, cooking, and housework, work done in a more or less separate women's domestic sphere. But in fact, the very notion of "woman's sphere" is itself a Western historical construct, an artifact that became hegemonic in the Victorian era. Moreover, women by no means perform the same labors across time and space; even the work of caring for children is not solely women's, and involves very different activities in differing times and places. "Public" and "domestic" are not in any way universal human social divisions. Finally, as Carol MacCormack and Marilyn Strathern's edited 1980 volume, *Nature, Culture, Gender*, lays out in painstaking detail, human constructions of nature, culture, and gender not only do not universally identify women with nature, men with culture — many cultures simply do not construe the universe through a "nature/culture" dichotomy at all. "Nature" itself, as we understand it in the contemporary West, is a product of the anticlerical and antimonarchy struggles of the Enlightenment, a category of challenge that also encompassed struggles over the social meanings of gender difference. Thus not only is the "labor" frame incomplete and reductionist as the sole basis for feminist analyses of gender, sexuality, and the body; universalizing schema partially based on the notion of "women's bodies in labor" are empirically flawed. Certainly, women's public political participation and male involvement in the care of children cannot be bad things in any society. But the Western feminist idée fixe of the trapped housewife/mother as universal Woman ill served as a basis for understanding the lives of most of the world's women, present and past.

WHILE FEMINIST SOCIAL SCIENTISTS WERE WORKING THEIR WAYS OUT of early universalizing schema, historians, ironically, were vigorously moving forward through the incorporation of anthropological or ethnographic understandings of the contingency and specificity of social forms. E.P. Thompson's pioneering early-1960s *The Making of the English Working Class* laid the basis for the growth of cultural history, or the serious consideration of changing mentalités and cultural productions as inherently part of larger economic and political history. This frame allowed the blossoming of histories of gender and sexuality. Work in feminism was stimulated particularly by Carroll Smith-Rosenberg's piece, "The Female World of Love and Ritual," published in the premier issue of *Signs* in 1975. Smith-Rosenberg, in reviewing an archive of 19th-century letters among middle-class and better-off white American female friends and kinswomen, asserted both a 19th-century separate women's sphere and evidence of passionately romantic attachments between women, attachments lasting entire lifetimes and unaffected by heterosexual marriage. Historians' deep immersion in "anthropologizing" the past, in the notion that "the past is another country," allowed the writing of the histories of varieties of gender and sexual arrangements in Western and other histories. It allowed, in particular, the critical explication of changing hegemonic constructions of gendered bodies with the rise of Western science. Anthropologists, building on theoretical frames from symbolic/interpretive anthropology and a variety of Marxist traditions, began, especially with the rise of gay studies, to provide detailed ethnographies and analyses of Western and non-Western gender-sexual-body constructions.

The Problematics of Cultural Feminism

SMITH-ROSENBERG'S LANDMARK PIECE, HOWEVER, NOT ONLY HERALDED a new scholarly sensitivity to widespread homosocial attachments, but also indexed the devolution of American radical feminism into contemporary cultural feminism, a shift that was both influenced by and paralleled the rightward tilt of American, and Western politics generally, since the mid-1970s. Alice Echols, in her documentary history, *Daring To Be Bad*, has described this historical shift from "a political movement dedicated to eliminating the sex-class system" to "a countercultural movement aimed at reversing the cultural valuation of the male and devaluation of the female." "Valuing women," certainly a component of any feminist program, was transformed in the changing political climate into a celebration of characteristics assumed to be inherent to women's universal nature — nurturance, altruism, cooperativeness, pacifism, and benevolent or absent sexuality. This insistent portraiture coincided with the related gendered portrait of all men as inherently competitive, violent, and oppressive to women, and thus with a shift away from consideration of variations across time and space in women's and men's status and lives — away from analysis of the roles of varying, historical contingent institutions and politics in determining relative power and the characteristics of human gender relations. Feminist political activism in this era, particularly in its anti-militarist and environmental wings, increasingly operated with this Manichean symbolism (e.g., "Take the toys away from the boys," "Love your mother"). And much feminist scholarship reflected and further spurred this shift. Psychologist Carol Gilligan, in her best-selling *In a Different Voice*, asserted that women "not only define themselves in a context of human relationships but also judge themselves in terms of their ability to care." This feminist essentialist stance neatly recuperates the Victorian vision of woman as the "angel on the hearth," the morally superior domestic being whose influence cleanses the father/husband/son returning from the vicious, competitive marketplace. And this vision parallels the Victorian construct in its presumption either of women's inherent passionlessness or of sexual needs that (unlike men's) somehow never involve harm or inconvenience to others. Certainly, in some historical moments, in some places, women have appeared thus to themselves and others; but in many others they have not. Theft, the use of one's sexuality for material gain or to damage others, the abandonment of children, torture, murder, sexual abuse — all of these activities have been engaged in by at least some women in most past and present societies, and these actions are not necessarily explained away by prevalent male domination. Also, the "nurturant" and "unselfish" activities of caring for home and children often involve a great deal of self-seeking. Children, after all, until very recently in the industrialized West, labored for their parents and as adults owed them — often especially their mothers — loyalty, labor, and cash.

Cultural feminism thus denies the "sameness" pole of the enduring sameness/difference antinomy in the history of Western feminism, and fuses the construction of women's difference to a morality play in which women act only as heroines and victims. It fails to challenge the gender-functionalist leitmotif in Western political thought; it fits uncommonly well, in fact, with contemporary antifeminist politics, which valorizes women in their "traditional" roles. We shall see, as well, that in asserting a universalist category "woman," cultural feminism simultaneously invites disproof on the grounds of women's diversity, and shapes that disproof to the problematic structures of contemporary identity politics. Most important for our project here, however, is the role of cultural feminism in the "feminist sex wars" of the 1980s.

As we have seen, both asserting women's right to sexual pleasure and protesting the prevalence of sexual violence against women were high on the agenda of the early feminist second wave. Between 1970 and 1975, for example, best-selling American books included Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics* (1970), which detailed contemporary male writers' misogynist, often sexually violent, portraiture; Shulamith Firestone's apocalyptic *The Dialectic of Sex* (1970), which excoriated the myth of romantic love and suggested a science fiction future of test tube pregnancies; Germaine Greer's *The Female Eunuch* (1970), a gorgeous romp through literary history in the service of upholding a vision of women's randy capacity for pleasure and damning male sexual misogyny; Erica Jong's picaresque, wildly successful, and rather badly written roman à clef *Fear of Flying* (1973), which contributed the phrase "zipless fuck" to American culture; and finally, Susan Brownmiller's Second Sex-like passionate summary tome on rape, *Against Our Will* (1975). Activists demanded sexual freedom, lesbian rights, reproductive control, abortion on demand, and freedom from sexual fear. They (we) inaugurated Take Back the Night Marches, campaigned against violent pornographic representations of women in mass media, founded and worked in rape crisis centers and battered women's shelters, lobbied for legislative changes, discussed female sexual desires (including desires for other women), and challenged men — individually and collectively — to reform their sexual behavior. By the waning of the decade, though, with the rigidification of cultural feminism, the sexual freedom/freedom from sexual fear unity of second wave feminism began to unravel.

At one end of the new divide, writers like Susan Brownmiller, Catherine MacKinnon, and Andrea Dworkin focused overwhelmingly on violence against women, and in particular on pornography as the key or only feminist issue. MacKinnon, a legal scholar, and other anti-pornography feminists cooperated with the Christian Right in efforts to write and/or influence legislation to outlaw print and video sexual representations in the U.S. and Canada. These feminists, in their obsessions with pornography and red-light districts, have tended ironically to neglect the issues of real-world rape, battery, and sexual abuse, and the concerns of women and men who serve and advocate for victims of these crimes. Nevertheless, their hyperbolic pronouncements have gained them access to mass media, where they often represent "the feminist perspective." Catherine MacKinnon in particular has come to stand for the feminist perspective on sexuality in the contemporary U.S. — in fact, she lays claim to it in *Feminism Unmodified*, in which she states, "In my view — you will notice that I equate 'in my view' with 'feminism'." Let us then — with the aid of Mariana Valverde's 1989 analysis in *Feminist Studies* — consider MacKinnon's view of human sexuality.

MacKinnon envisions sexuality alone as the fulcrum of women's oppression, and unequal sexual experience as a transhistorical and cross-cultural constant: "I would argue that sexuality is the set of practices that inscribes gender as unequal in social life." She declares roundly that "what defines woman as such is what turns men on," thus denying, as Valverde notes, "the social and economic roots of women's oppression" — not to mention erasing all female sexual agency from human history. Inevitably, this essentialist, anti-historical stance leads to a denial as well of any variation in sexual experience across history and by race, class, or nationality — and, indeed, to a denial of the equal (or even, any) importance of those categories to an analysis of the human condition. In an essay that addresses her critics, MacKinnon evades charges of ignoring class and race, but holds the historians' objection up to ridicule, and ignores, for example, the complicated new scholarship on the political uses of pornography in modernizing Europe:

> For such suggestions, feminists have been called antihistorical. Oh, dear. We have disrespected the profundity and fascination of all the different ways in which men fuck us in order to emphasize that however they do it, they do it. And they do it to us. If that hasn't changed all that much, enough to fit their definition of what a history has to look like, I submit to you that that is not our fault.

Unlike many other cultural feminists, who focus on women's heroic resistance, MacKinnon's theoretical frame disallows it, thus denying women, Valverde points out, "any position, however precarious, from which to reclaim or invent nonpatriarchal sexual desires." MacKinnon includes lesbianism in her broad-brush indictment of heterosexual sex, as "so long as gender is a system of power, and it is women who have less power, like any other benefit of abstract equality, it can merely extend this choice to women who can get the power to enforce it." Valverde concludes that

> [t]he eventual result is a construction of sexuality as uniformly oppressive, a picture of relentless male violence drawn with the twin brushes of feminist functionalism (all phenomena are explained as serving a purpose for "patriarchy" in general) and philosophical pessimism. Resistance, subversion, and pleasure are written out of the account.

While the anti-pornography group has been relatively uninterested in women's lives as mothers, a great deal of cultural feminist energy in both popular culture and scholarship has gone into the fetishization of motherhood. The presumptions that the acts of giving birth and rearing children are always experienced identically, that males never care for children, and that continuous, attentive, altruistic "maternal thinking," as philosopher Sara Ruddick has labeled it, best describes female consciousness across space and time are widespread in Western popular culture since the Victorian era. Cultural feminists simply tapped into this broad ideological "Madonna and Child" vein, attempting to "spin" it toward a greater valorization of women's lives. Perhaps the best critique of this sentimentalizing and ethnocentric perspective is political essayist Katha Pollitt's piece, "Marooned on Gilligan's Island," which takes on Sara Ruddick, Carol Gilligan, and linguist (*You Just Don't Understand*) Deborah Tannen:

> But the biggest problem with all these accounts of gender is that they credit the differences they find to universal features of male and female development rather than to the economic and social positions men and women hold, or to the actual power differences between individual men and women.

Pollitt points out that the cultural feminist *Weltanschauung* ill-describes the realities of motherhood even in the contemporary U.S.:

> ...Ruddick claims to be describing what mothers do, but all too often she is really prescribing what she thinks they ought to do...But mothers feature prominently in local struggles against busing, mergers of rich and poor schools and the opening in their neighborhoods of group homes for foster children, boarder babies and the retarded....The true reasons may be property values and racism, but what these mothers often say is that they are simply protecting their kids.

Cultural feminist pieties give us no tools to comprehend the actions and understandings of mothers living in extreme poverty; nor do they help us engage with the gendered realities of reproduction, global demographic trends, and neo-

Malthusian population theories. Cultural feminism capitulates to bad, misogynist science in its insistence on women's utterly different nature. It cannot comprehend the necessity of a carefully historical, sociology of knowledge approach to gender and science. Nor can it at all comprehend the varying realities of sexual violence against women — and men — around the globe today. It gives us no purchase whatsoever on the varying and changing ways in which race is inscribed in gendered sexuality. Finally, it is well to remember that many women of all races and nationalities, gay and straight, do pursue and find sexual pleasure. As Cindy Lauper reminded us, Girls just wanna have fun.

At the other end of the growing ideological abyss — although far less often represented in popular culture — are most feminist and gay scholars of sexuality and reproduction, as well as free speech advocates. The two American "feminist sex bibles" of the 1980s — the anthologies *Powers of Desire* and *Pleasure and Danger* (1983, 1984) — brought together many of these researchers across many disciplines. While individuals may have disagreed on a number of issues, they came together in the common projects of open investigation of female sexual desires; in recognition of the ubiquitous (but not necessarily identical or universal) constraints on women; in a commitment to detailed historical and cross-cultural research on the varieties of female and male sexual lives; and finally, in open acknowledgement that gender is by no means the only meaningful human division to be considered in sexual theory and research — the analytic categories of class, caste, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, age, reproductive status, religion, and nationality may be as necessary as gender to the understanding of sexuality in particular places and times. In line with the growing divide among feminists, neither volume dealt at length with issues of violence against women — except as they intersect with American race stratification. Nevertheless, unlike the cultural feminists and MacKinnon, these scholars, who sometimes took on the label "pro-sex feminists," recognized and deplored the newly-dominant notion that feminists must choose to identify sex only with pleasure or with terror. "We oscillate between two perspectives," warned the *Powers of Desire* editors, "on the one hand, a self righteous feminine censoriousness; on the other, a somewhat cavalier libertinism, which deals but minimally with vulnerability." *Pleasure and Danger* editor Carole Vance underlined the realities of extraordinary variation in women's — even in any one woman's — sexual experience:

> For some, the dangers of sexuality — violence, brutality, and coercion, in the form of rape, forcible incest, and exploitation, as well as everyday cruelty and humiliation — make the pleasures pale by comparison. For others, the positive possibilities of sexuality — explorations of the body, curiosity, intimacy,sensuality, adventure, excitement, human connection, basking in the infantile and non-rational — are not only worthwhile but provide sustaining energy. Nor are these positions fixed, since a woman might choose one perspective or the other at different points in her life in response to external and internal events.

Finally, the commitment to history not only kept these scholars more intellectually honest than the cultural feminists; it revealed to them the embeddedness of Western sexual ideologies in the stream of time, and thus the value of considering ourselves in the context of a century of Western feminist history. Ellen Carol DuBois and Linda Gordon's insightful 1984 piece, "Seeking

Ecstasy on the Battlefield," laid out the extraordinary parallels between the late-19th century social purity movement, which focused on prostitution and fostered the notion of women's innate passionlessness, and contemporary cultural feminism, which focuses on pornography and is silent on the issue of female sexual pleasure:

> [S]ocial purity politics, although an understandable reaction to women's 19th-century experience, was a limited and limiting vision for women...Today, there seems to be a revival of social purity politics within feminism...a feminist attack on pornography and sexual "perversion" in our time, which fails to distinguish its politics from a conservative and antifeminist version of social purity, the Moral Majority and "family protection movement." The increasing tendency to focus almost exclusively on sex as the primary arena of women's exploitation, and to attribute women's sexual victimization to some violent essence labeled "male sexuality" is even more conservative today because our situation as women has changed so radically.

Many other scholars have investigated the connections among American and European women's sexual radicalism or resistance, class divisions, political organization, and evolving sexual moralities over the past two centuries; and yet others have begun to investigate the interpenetrating realms of sexuality and politics in the states we used to label the Third World. Alice Echols' summary commentary on the feminist political present draws from this historical depth:

> The cultural feminists...appeal to women's sense of sexual vulnerability and the resilience of gender stereotypes in their struggle to organize all women into a grand and virtuous sisterhood to combat male lasciviousness...[T]he antipornography crusade functions as the feminist equivalent of the anti-abortion movement — reinforcing and validating women's traditional sexual conservatism and manipulating women's sense of themselves as culture's victims and its moral guardians.

The issue of lesbianism, as well, has been central to the "feminist sex wars," but in order to understand its ramifications, we must first engage with the rise of gay rights and gay studies.

Gay Revolution and the Queering of Theory

> As human beings we are unique among animals in having a largely unspecified potential. Besides the basic biological needs for food, water and rest, we have needs which are specifically human and subject to conscious development: the need for relationship, the need to create and build. We are all erotic beings. We experience our lives as a striving for satisfaction. We experience our lives sexually, as enlivened by beauty and feeling. At base we have a need for active involvement and creation, the need to give form and meaning to our environment and ourselves.
>
> — Red Butterfly, *Gay Liberation*

LIKE FEMINISM, THE MODERN MOVEMENT FOR GAY/LESBIAN EMANCIPATION draws on a long, rich history. It comes after centuries of dissident sexual subcultures and cunning resistance to various gender hegemonies. It absorbs lessons from a counter-canon of "underground" or "coded" literary, artistic, and social expression — a presence which occasionally broke into the open as a love which dared speak its name. And it builds on many-stranded traditions of sexological, liberal, left, and social democratic campaigns for homosexual rights and social tolerance, beginning most visibly with such early figures as Magnus Hirschfeld, Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, Edward Westermark, and Karl Ulrichs.

Gay history, however, is hardly continuous. Certainly, the mid-20th century represents an abrupt pause in the visibility of this political tradition. Stalinism in the USSR and Eastern Europe, Nazism in Germany and Central Europe, and McCarthyism in the U.S. all vigorously repressed homosexual speech, politics, representation — and activity. Each drew on pseudo-scientific theories to prove that homosexuality was a grave moral, medical, or psychological threat to national stability and social well-being. Each dispatched state powers to the ends of homosexual detection, persecution, imprisonment, brainwashing, physical maiming — and in some cases, execution. During that long interregnum that commences before World War II and begins to dissipate in the late 1960s, queer bodies, bent desires, were very much the objects of legal regulation, social supervision, political surveillance, scientific curiosity, and "medical" or psychiatric invasion. In the U.S., as late as the 1960s, lesbians and gay men were subjected to hormonal "therapies," electroshock treatment, and even frontal lobotomies.

Even at its most tolerant, the (Cold) War Family of the 1950s scarcely provided a fertile ground for openly homosexual politics. Although small clusters of brave and dedicated people like the Mattachine Society endured state surveillance and political repression, the open expression of gay/lesbian politics on a substantial scale awaited the opportunity of a political opening. But whatever else gay history shows, it is that things are not always what they seem. Although the period from 1945 to 1969 was one of unprecedented, national-level persecutions, it was also preceded by the large-scale mobilizations of the Federal Works Projects — and, of course, by the military draft of World War II. As Allan Bérubé has shown, these mobilizations drew young adults out of small-town isolation and provincialism, giving many their first taste of relative freedom. The expansive same-sex environments thus created, afforded many the opportunity for sexual experimentation — and for new modes of self-fashioning.

The collective experience of World War II had many unanticipated effects. War production by "Rosie-the-Riveters" is now widely understood as an early (though halted) stimulus to feminist thinking. Black Americans, mobilized in the fight against fascism, returned home to face Jim Crow segregation — a collective experience of disjuncture which strengthened pre-existing demands for civil rights. And in bringing together lesbians and gay men of all classes and regions, these vast military mobilizations also presaged and encouraged the first wave of gay migration to environments of greater personal freedom and individual autonomy — the big cities — a trend that ran directly counter to the pervasive suburbanization of the American landscape in the post-war years. It was this pattern of urban concentration which eventually made possible the organization of gays and lesbians as a coherent political bloc. In unprecedented numbers, gays and lesbians settled in liberal, tolerant, and "Bohemian" neighborhoods, and their concentration in cities like San Francisco and New York allowed the accumulation of a new scale of community resources: in informal networks, in gay neighborhoods, and in social institutions like gay bars and meeting places.

The newly-emergent gay liberation movement drew on a subculture which had been expanding, in spite of social censure and police harassment, since the end of World War II. (Not by accident, the routine police harassment of patrons at a gay bar — the Stonewall Inn — provided the push that set the movement in motion.) And it capitalized on the life cycle of that demographic bulge, the Baby Boom, whose masses simultaneously began entering young adulthood and seeking exit from the enclosures of sexual and political McCarthyism. Taking cues from the civil rights movement, from feminism, and from the militant anti-war movement, the Gay Liberation Front creatively confronted a repressive psychoanalytic establishment, attacked sodomy laws (with limited although by no means complete success), challenged the most visible forms of discrimination, forged tentative alliances with other political movements, and urged gay men and lesbians to collective self-disclosure — in the process, converting a covert practice into the basis for a radical politics, and capturing the imagination of millions with slogans like “Out of the closets and into the streets.”

In those heady days, the Gay Liberation Front and other groups made no apologies about the scope of gay revolution. One slogan urged: “Two, four, six, eight; Smash the family, church, and state.” Since the gay movement is so often invoked as the example par excellence of a “new social movement” — a genre of mobilization tied to fragmentary identities and supposedly seeking small-scale, personalistic, everyday changes as opposed to totalizing, systemic, macro-political transformations — it is good to remember that gay liberation in fact expressed a totalizing, global perspective, and that it analytically linked oppression in the sphere of sexuality with oppression in other arenas, most notably gender, but also race and class. The perspective of gay liberation was anything but “narrow” — its vision was, in the words of one activist, a revolution more total than feminism and more terrifying than death itself. Echoing Marx’s and Engels’ vision of a stateless, classless society, some militants and theorists envisioned a long-term revolution that would change personal life and social institutions so thoroughly that even the very categories of struggle and mobilization, “heterosexual” and “homosexual,” would come to an end. The subsequent turn to a gradualist, rights-oriented approach, the quasi-ethnic focus on identity and the florescence of a gay consumer sub-economy, even the more recent celebrations of resistant marginality over politicized identity, can each be viewed in various ways, depending on one’s perspective: as political retreats in the face of a less-than-revolutionary situation; as necessary developments in a process of maturation; as cooptations by a repressively-tolerant consumer society; or as extremes in a necessary and dialectical tacking back and forth between utopian dreams and pragmatic advances. Whatever the case, the gay movement was launched and nurtured by anything but a “micropolitical” vision.

As was the case with feminism, political practice implied a social theory. And like second-wave feminism, the early models of gay/lesbian studies represented a turning of the tables on conventional theory. If various disciplines had obsessed for decades over the “causes” of and “cures” for homosexuality, new and empowering scholarship inquired instead into the causes and structures of homosexual oppression, and explored scenarios for gay liberation. If previous theory had always assumed, not just a heterosexual perspective, but a hetero-normalizing perspective, then just seeing matters from a gay or lesbian point of view constituted a radical break with previous hegemonizing models. In thus exposing the coercive dynamics of heterosexual normativity — in institutions such as the family, religion, psychology, and medicine — gay/lesbian studies opened new possibilities for the critical study, not simply of gay and lesbian sexualities, but also of sexualities in general.

Like early second-wave feminism, early versions of gay theory tended toward expansive universalism and open generalization. It was assumed that homosexuality, like womanhood, was a readily-demarcated and already-known thing — an identity subject to historical and cultural variations, surely, but singular, unequivocal, and stable at the core. In some of these models, a homosexual or lesbian identity is seen, explicitly or implicitly, as "essential" or "given" — that is, as a tendency either universally given in all people, or present among a minority in all societies. In other paradigms, heterosexism serves as a universal framework of culture: a system of oppression intricately articulated with other systems of power, and as enduring as its nearest relative, sexism. Gayle Rubin's 1975 "The Traffic in Women," for example, a tour de force of Marxism, structuralism, and Freudo-Lacanian theory, draws on analogies with political economy to hypothesize a universal "sex-gender system." Rubin associates the universal presence of gender asymmetry with a system of compulsory heterosexuality. The one implies and mandates the other: the taboo on same-sex behavior both bars women from phallic power and mandates heterosexual alliance — the traffic in women. At the same time, the system of gender inequality requires an enforced and coercive production of dichotomous gender differences — an equilibrium that can only be enforced by a strict taboo on homologous couplings. Although overstated in their universalist scope, such arguments were mainstays of lesbian feminism, and signaled early on the possibilities of collaboration between feminism and gay/lesbian studies.

In the 1970s and 1980s, an expanding literature treated the forms and functions of homosexual stigma — in history, in society. Clearly, the denigration of homosexuality regulates and reinforces gender norms — just as gender norms regulate and reinforce homosexual stigma. But although a taboo on homosexual activity is old, nothing seems implicit, necessary, or universal about it. As Weeks, Goodich, Boswell, Greenberg, and others have shown, homosexual oppression has a history. It comes into existence under certain circumstances; its force waxes and wanes over long periods of time; its definitions and configurations shift; it is both produced within and productive of certain kinds of struggles and projects. It is uniquely tied to the history of the West as "the West" — indeed, to its very designation apart from "the rest" — and, once established, provides a resource perpetually available to the authoritarian projects of institutions.

In Europe, the persecution of sodomy intensified during the 12th and 13th centuries: first among the clergy themselves, and then on a larger social scale, as the church extended its influence over the laity. The ensuing anti-sodomy campaigns of church and secular authorities have been analyzed in various regards. Most obviously, they participated in the increasing regulation of sexual activity and family life. But these campaigns, which shaped important elements of Western culture, were also dynamically connected with broad political and economic developments. Portrayals of sexually dissolute lives were commonly invoked in political discourse; such representations mobilized popular resentments against the privileged aristocracy to the advantage of the rising burghers.

Harnessed to class conflict, hostility to sodomy thus played a role in the decline of feudalism and in the rise of the bourgeois class.

The menace of sodomy was also a leitmotif of Christian campaigns against both Islam and heresy. European languages still carry traces of this history. Thus the term "bugger" was derived from "Bulgar" (Bulgarian) as an index of heresy, an implication of Islam, and an uneasy marking of the frontier of the Christian West. Similarly, for a long time the ambiguous term "sodomy" was synonymous with religious heresy (the Other within) and evocative of paganism or Islam (the alien without). The absolute and unconditional prohibition of homosexual acts — and the perceived encirclement of Europe by sodomitical cultures — was both unique to the West, and defined a distinctive and self-conscious masculinity of imperialism. In short, the taboo on homosexual intercourse played a variegated role in the rise of capitalism, in the self-definition of the West, in the cultivation of religious and political intolerance, in the emergence of the modern nation-state, in the discourses and the forms of colonialism, and in authoritarianism of all kinds.

Parallel to a stream of feminist writing, one tendency of the gay studies literature is recuperative, even celebratory. An enduring task of gay history and ethnography is to discover hidden lives and to reclaim forgotten voices. The practices of "reclamation" and "uncloseting," however, raise questions when they are applied to histories very remote or cultures very different from the contemporary Western setting that gave rise to this imperative.

In the footsteps of anthropologist Ruth Benedict, a certain style of study looks for homosexuals and lesbians in other cultures and historical periods. These studies usually take one of two narrative forms. In one variant, gays and lesbians live happily because their society is more tolerant and enlightened than our own — and thus provides a model to be emulated. Alternatively, other gays and lesbians in other cultures persevere in the face of social intolerance and circumstantial adversity — and thus are *themselves* good role models. Obviously, in either case, the cultural self is being written into history or ethnography. The writer, the readers, project themselves into other cultures and periods, exploring the possibilities of another life there — a leap of identification.

Such leaps are perhaps necessary, but they are not quite adequate conditions for serious study. Historical studies of oppression and empirical studies of sexuality soon encountered an enormous range of historical difference and cross-cultural diversity. For if the homosexual taboo is not universally or invariably present, then what of the identity it both prohibits and necessarily implies? And even where taboos are present, if they are cast in terms different from modern Western homophobia, then is the object of prohibition necessarily the same as our own? Such questions of designation posed serious problems — and generated exciting innovations — in a field which had once assumed that 'a rose is a rose is a rose,' and that homosexuality could be understood as an undifferentiated, uniform, and universal tendency.

What to make, for instance, of the pre-modern Sodomite, whose labeling bears some affinity to that of the modern homosexual, but whose identity scarcely revolves around the same sun of sexual object choice? Although both Sodomite and homosexual are clearly stigmatized on the basis of some sexual activity, the former is a "sinner" (as all men are sinners!), whereas the latter is medically and psychologically defined as either "degenerate" or as "different." (It is not even clear that Sodomites were consistently labeled in terms of same-sex intercourse, and much of the confusion over the definition of "sodomy," even in legal circles today, participates in this ambiguity.) And what to make of man-boy love in classical antiquity? Clearly, Greek pederasty involved two males. But whereas Greeks approved, even endorsed, sexual relations between adult men and rank inferiors — women, slaves, adolescent boys — sexual intimacy between two adult free men (the very definition of male homosexuality today) was considered repugnant. How to understand the various practices reported in parts of Melanesia? There, semen is understood as a substance that is acquired, not produced; thus, older, affinal youths or young men inseminate younger boys in order to "grow" them into men. In these societies, semen is properly, necessarily, transacted between males. What would be improper there would be the flow of semen in the wrong generational direction. And what to make of the Native North American berdache and similar trans-gendered statuses? Although once glossed as Native American homosexuals, Whitehead has argued that the berdache status is better understood as an intermediary gender (which sometimes implies bi-or homo-sexual patterns) than as a "homosexual niche."

As the gay studies literature developed and expanded, its object of inquiry tended either to slip away or to transmute into hitherto unimagined identities and unposed questions. By the 1980s, then, it had become increasingly apparent that it made little sense to speak of homosexuality — and heterosexuality — as "universal" forms with minor, superficial variations. What sophisticated scholarship discovered was not cultural and historical variations on a theme, but rather, deep thematic variation. In that sense, the "end of the homosexual" (and of the correlative heterosexual, too) thus came about in theory before it came about in practice.

At the same time, a parallel approach to identity emerged in the field of gender. Citing Simone de Beauvoir and renouncing all the romantic and essentialist themes that had accrued as "cultural feminism," Monique Wittig's manifesto of lesbian materialist feminism threw down the gauntlet: "One is not born a woman" — and one should not aspire to be one, either. Soon, authors began putting not just "Woman" but also "women" and even "sex" in quotation marks to signify the arbitrariness of their invention as cultural categories. In an interdisciplinary crucible of politics and scholarship, and in a shared space between feminist theory and gay/lesbian studies, a new approach emerged. The more social specificities and cultural differences come to the fore of investigation, the more problematic become such already-given and already-understood rubrics such as "men," "women," "gay," "straight." The "Cyborg" literature — which exploits the myth of a being who blurs the distinctions between humans, animals, and machines (see especially Donna Haraway) — and the recent wave of Queer Theory — which likewise throws all boundaries into question — both gather in and extend these tropes of feminist and gay/lesbian scholarship, further problematizing the notion of stable core identities, and urging caution toward categorical traps.

The debates over "lesbian sexuality" in the 1980s bore on these new insights. A group of lesbian scholars and activists, with Gayle Rubin in a leadership role, argued strongly against the then-dominant vision of women's/lesbians' sexual feelings and actions as profoundly different from (gay or straight) men's — as innately cooperative, benevolent — "vanilla" in their parlance. These theorists objected to the counterempirical claim that some women did not also have violent, overwhelming sexual feelings and desires to engage in extreme behavior, including (mutually agreed-upon) lesbian sado-masochism. These claims whipped (as it were) the antipornography feminists into a frenzy, culminating in their disruption of the 1982 Barnard College Scholar and the Feminist Conference because of the published views of some of the participants. Once again, the Moral Mother's dead hand weighed like a nightmare upon the living, demanding, in the name of feminism, that women repress sexual feelings; even, in the name of a putative core female identity, that women repress their own discussions of variations in female sexuality.

WE HAVE FOCUSED HERE ON THE DEVELOPMENT of essentializing identity-politics strands in feminist and gay theory and practice, the tendencies most dominant and harmful in the contemporary public political realm. Since the 1980s, however, the academic world has been overwhelmed by poststructuralist/postmodern interpretations. The domain of gender/sexuality in particular has been swamped by work extending the denial of stable core sexual identities to the denial of any identities at all, and of the reality of the material world to boot. Within this frame, the intelligent insight that gender and sexuality are socially constructed tips over into a rudderless idealism that denies our human embodiment in ongoing political economy. While MacKinnon's gender-Manicheanism, for example, may have easy access to the *New York Times* and certain precincts of law, inside the ivy walls, purely discursive analyses of gender and sexuality rule the academic roost for all the world as if discourse were not embodied in, produced by, and affecting the lives of real, material human animals. Historian Lisa Duggan has gently guyed this state of affairs in her *Social Text* essay "Queering the State," which hilariously imagines various postmodern academic stars attempting to communicate to the public on "Oprah."

In between the ahistorical and ethnocentric essentialisms of identity politics and the necessary-but-insufficient idealist work of the "turn to language" lies evolving left scholarship and politics on sexuality — the tradition we have traced in these pages. Historical political-economic work and associated activism may not at the moment be winning the megaphone war in either forum of the public sphere. But the gender/sexuality domain they illuminate is for that reason no less crucial to a larger political vision. We on the left should not leave home — or go home — without it.

Our Labor Leaders Need French Lessons

Bob Fitch

THIS WINTER, ON OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE ATLANTIC, two broadly similar budget-cutting packages were offered by two balding conservative politicians. Both austerity plans — one for France, one for New York — won initial rave reviews from their respective Establishments and from the media. But the political outcomes were startlingly different.

In France, public sector unions, written off by U.S. academic experts as hopelessly small, weak, divided and in terminal decline, sparked a successful national revolt. Transportation workers shut down trains and subways across the country. Postal workers struck. Students, staff, and faculty occupied buildings and closed down the universities. At the University of Metz, students even held a top education official hostage. After three and a half weeks of rising tempers and falling bond prices, the regime of Prime Minister Alain Juppé backed down.

In New York City, by contrast, public sector union leaders charted a strategy of appeasement. Zigging and zagging behind a flying wedge of municipal union leaders led by DC 37's Stanley Hill, Mayor Rudolph Giuliani was able to sweep aside a numerically strong but fragmented labor opposition. Workers apparently voted down a 60-month contract with no pay increases for the first two years and weak job-security provisions. But Hill got to count the ballots in secret. He says his side won. Yet he refused to make the results of the local elections public. Now the mayor's gotten most of the austerity measures he asked for, plus a pay boost from $130,000 to $165,000 for himself. It even seems as if he can count on the active support of Hill's 125,000-member, largely African American union for his upcoming reelection campaign. (Hill has already contributed $2000 to Giuliani's campaign.)

How did Giuliani manage these stunning victories while Juppé, his even balder counterpart, failed so ignominiously? Last year, conservative Jacques Chirac won the presidency promising jobs, jobs, jobs. Then he appointed Juppé, who proceeded to cut them. Juppé started with doctors and railroad workers. He proposed increasing copayments for drugs, increases in social security taxes, increases in retirement age, massive hospital closings, and transportation cutbacks. Some say Juppé flopped because he was seen as an arrogant technocrat, with no concern for the little people he was calling upon to make sacrifices. Surely, though, it was Giuliani who gave the master class in arrogance when he unilaterally raised the salaries of all the top city pols up to 28% and top city managers 7% while demanding the salaries of starting city workers be cut by

BOB FITCH *is a former union organizer and former consultant to CWA Local 1180. Presently, he teaches in NYU's Metropolitan Studies Program.*

7%.

Others say the problem was that Juppé's plan was too comprehensive. He cut too much, all at once. Salami tactics — slicing off a little at a time — would have been better. But Giuliani's austerity targets were also huge and comprehensive. They broadly overlapped with Juppé's cuts in welfare, transportation, education, health care.

Giuliani tacitly endorsed the biggest subway fare hike in history as well as defended Governor George Pataki's massive cuts to SUNY and CUNY and slashing of grants for middle-income and poor students. The mayor announced a plan to sell off public hospitals, and to attract buyers, he ostentatiously refused to give hospital workers, even the highly qualified, two-year job-security guarantees he promised other city workers. In his contract with city workers, he extracted an agreement from DC 37 — which represents 125,000 city employees — to replace public sector workers with an estimated 40,000 welfare recipients who will work just for their welfare checks — while giving city employees "double zeros" — no pay increases for the first two years of a five-year contract.

The two austerity programs — Giuliani's and Juppé's — boiled down to the same message to public sector unions: "Decommission all your weapons and surrender." But in New York, labor conflict was mainly restricted to a single incident at DC 37's Barclay Street headquarters — when a contract ratification meeting turned into a nasty confrontation between a couple of senescent leaders and hecklers. In France all hell broke loose.

The Sequestering of Aunt Nicole

IN NOVEMBER, FRENCH RAILROAD WORKERS, CREATING A HISTORIC ALLIANCE between the Communist-affiliated Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT) and the anticommunist Force Ouvrière (FO) trade union federations, shut down the nation's transportation system. For more than three weeks, trains and subways stopped running. Parisian traffic snarled. Commuters bought mountain bikes and inline skates to get to work. Meanwhile, the atmosphere in the nearly empty downtown department stores turned sepulchral.

Workers were joined by students. Throughout France, *anars* and *trotskis*, together with more mainline Socialists and Communists, shut down universities. Some campuses remained closed for over a month. To calm the uprising of 17,000 students at Metz who had seized campus buildings, the Minister of National Education sent a top aide, Nicole Ferrier. But the strikers took "Aunt Nicole" hostage. Mme. Ferrier eventually escaped and fled the campus by car.

After three tumultuous weeks, despite nearly unanimous press support and strong initial backing from mainstream political leaders from the conservatives to the Socialists, Juppé was clearly losing it. In November he'd said 2 million demonstrators would force him to back down. On December 12, unions and students finally reached that number in giant demonstrations from Marseilles to Paris, protests they called "the Juppéthon."

At this point, Juppé could at least take consolation from the failure of the strike to spread to the private sector. But bad omens began to appear from the sacred Temple — falling bond and stock prices on the Bourse. Garbage was beginning to pile up. And speculation mounted over whether the strikers would turn the country dark by shutting off the nation's power system. Meanwhile, the public, while greatly inconvenienced by the strikes, remained solidly behind the unions — with approval ratings never falling below 55%. Finally, the following week, Juppé withdrew the part of his plan that directly affected the unions and entered into negotiations with union leaders over his broader austerity plan with union leaders.

Why then — if arrogance and austerity were in rough equilibrium in Paris and New York — did the two plans play out so differently? If the elites' actions can't be readily distinguished, then the answer must be found in the superior ability of the French unions to mobilize their members and win over the public.

Yet few American academics who study them find this explanation credible. At a conference on French unions sponsored by NYU's Center for European Studies and Columbia's Institute on Western Europe, held here in February, U.S. specialists read papers on the "Decline of Militantism" as if nothing much had really happened in December. Indeed, ample evidence was marshaled by the experts to explain why the December events could never have taken place.

In France, it turns out, union membership is actually lower than in the U.S., and much lower than union membership in New York. Only 8% of French workers belong to unions. And in the French public sector, it's only 20%. In New York, there are more than double those shares.

During a break in the conference, Georgetown political science professor Anthony Daley stood in the Washington Mews, explaining to me that French unions are hobbled by an over politicized multi-union system that prevents common action. The unions rely on voluntary dues from their members, so they have no money and can't afford to hire truly professional staffs. "Do you know how many people the CGT has to study the entire European community?" Daley asked. "Only eight," he replied in a shocked tone.

Yet, despite the lack of an ample well-paid professional staff, the French public sector unions still managed to shut down much of the country. Our public sector unions employ armies of highly paid professionals. At DC 37, it's not only elected union officials who make up to a quarter of a million a year.

Six-Figure Socialists

THERE ARE A DOZEN NON-ELECTED DC 37 STAFFERS who make over $100,000. Ten more are in the over $90,000-a-year bracket. Besides Hill, the executive director, who makes $245,000, there is his "assistant," Brenda White, who makes $124,000. There is DC 37's "director," who makes $113,000, and various "assistant division directors" who make $99,000. The editor of the DC 37 paper makes $105,000. His assistant makes $72,000. And the staff economist earns over $100,000 — three times more than the head of the CGT or the head of the FO.

Yet the likelihood of these six-figure socialists organizing a militant movement to block the march of austerity lies somewhere between remote and unimaginable. How come?

Our problems touch. But in the ability to fight back against our respective Establishments, we might as well be on different planets — not just different continents.

It just may be that the "weaknesses" of French unions are really their strengths. And the supposed strengths of New York unions — gushing cash flow, huge, highly paid professional staffs, automatic dues checkoff, exclusive recognition of single unions — represent a dead weight anchoring them to the status quo. And separating them from the concerns of members.

France, like much of Europe, has a multi-union system. Workers become members of unions only if they choose to join, not because the boss has granted a single union exclusive bargaining rights. Joining a union is an act of political identity. Three main union federations — Communist, Socialist, and centrist — compete for the political allegiance of workers on the job and in work-council elections.

"There's been a left-right split since the French revolution," points out Herman Benson of the Association for Union Democracy, a Brooklyn-based workers' rights advocacy group. Common political allegiances enable people inside and outside the workplace to see beyond narrow union issues. "The French," he explains, "don't see cutbacks as a separate labor issue. For them it's a social issue. And the unions aren't looked upon as 'big labor.' It's not like here where the bureaucrats sit back, isolated from the members, and don't give a shit," says Benson.

Deeply political, but with no automatic cash flow or contractual right to get workers fired if they refuse to pay dues, French unions must address the concerns of the members each month to get their support. "We have these little books," explained Jean-Pierre Page, a former Air France worker who serves as head of the International Department of the CGT. "Every month we go around to the workers in the factory or the office and ask them to buy a stamp and paste it in their book."

This stamp gathering, or *philatelisme,* as it is sometimes jokingly called, doesn't take much out of the workers' pay: anywhere from half a percent to 1%. And it's not enough to allow leaders and staffers to get rich. "We make the equivalent of $2400 a month," volunteered Page, "about what a skilled worker in the Paris region makes." This amount is a ceiling for labor leaders. Louis Viannet, the head of the CGT, makes no more. Page offers: "We are poor, but militant."

In New York, like the rest of America, we have monopoly unions. Even nonmembers — the so-called provisionals — must pay dues to a single union that represents everyone. All city workers covered by collective bargaining agreements have money deducted by the city from their checks. It goes directly to the union. In 1994, DC 37's income was $66 million.

With these huge sums at stake, union leaders take the checkoff very seriously. I once asked Barry Feinstein, just after he'd been forced to step down by the Justice Department as chief of the powerful Teamsters Local 237, "What was the formative event in the history of municipal unionism?" A French unionist might have said the mass sit-down strikes of '36 that won French workers the two-week vacation. Or further back, the lost railroad strike of 1920 for nationalization in which 20,000 *cheminots* were fired and their leaders imprisoned for years. But Feinstein said unhesitatingly, "When Mayor Robert Wagner gave us the dues checkoff."

Unfortunately, Feinstein's historical analysis is all too accurate. Unlike in France, where the unions must rely on the members, in New York successive reformers have failed to uproot a tradition that forced weak unions to rely on a strong mayor. And not just for the dues checkoff.

Collective Begging Revisited

JERRY WURF, WHO PUT DC 37 ON THE MAP nearly half a century ago, saw the degenerative process of domestication at work even then. He called it "collective begging." Municipal trade union leaders, like corrupt courtiers, sought to develop ties to Democratic Party clubhouse hacks in order to gain influence with the mayor and get back petty perks for themselves. Henry Feinstein, Barry's father and Wurf's predecessor, was a city chauffeur who managed to arrange a deal whereby he got driven around in a limousine provided by Mayor Wagner. "Can you imagine that," recollected Wurf in an interview with DC 37's official historians, "a chauffeured chauffeur?"

Wurf begat Victor Gotbaum, who begat Stanley Hill. Hill took control of the union in 1986, which by then had grown to close to 120,000 members. At $245,000 a year, Stanley Hill can afford to send a chauffeur to drive the mayor around. But despite its growth in conventional terms — more members, more dues, more staff, bigger budget — DC 37 has devolved to a position not much different from the one it held in the pre-Wurf period. What's changed is that Henry Feinstein and his buddies were subservient to a mildly liberal Democratic mayor. Hill and his crowd kowtow to a fiscally conservative Republican.

A recent issue of the *Public Employee Press* has a picture of Board of Education Local 372 President Charlie Hughes being hugged by the mayor. Hughes's feeble grin suggests he is only a bit more enthusiastic than journalist Pete Hamill was with being kissed by erstwhile *Post* owner Abe Hirschfeld. But what's Hughes going to do? Quit his $179,000-a-year job? Tell Giuliani to beat it? Hughes knows that individual unions can grow, shrink, or simply disappear at the mayor's pleasure.

Perhaps it's only anecdotal, but it seems that good things happen to union leaders who support the mayor. The head of the firefighters union endorsed Rudy's election. Now he's the fire commissioner. And when Rudy and the Policemen's Benevolent Association (PBA) were in their post-mayoral election honeymoon phase, the mayor bolstered the PBA by dissolving the transit cops union and the housing cops union, adding 7,000 dues-paying members to the PBA. Then there's Hughes himself. Because he represents so many part-time workers, Hughes's union is being used by the mayor as the wedge for the introduction of workfare people into the civil service system. But Hughes will get more dues-paying members out of the deal.

On the other hand, bad things seem to happen to leaders who oppose the mayor. Tony Bernardo, president of the Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Local 2507, fought the merger of EMS into the fire department. Last month he was dismissed from the EMS. The EMS charged that he'd driven an ambulance without a valid license in 1988, and that this February he'd left his post to attend a meeting at the Office of Labor Relations.

Arthur Cheliotes, president of Communication Workers of America (CWA) 1180, has been the most outspoken critic of Giuliani's austerity plan. He's promoted a tax-the-rich counterplan that shifts the burden to Giuliani's chief backers — the real estate rich. Perhaps coincidentally, he's also lost the most members to city budget cuts: CWA has dropped from 9,500 to 7,000. A union with less than 3% of all city workers has taken about 15% of the cuts. But Cheliotes remains unrepentant. "Did they come after us?" he asks. "Yes. Did we beat them back? Yes."

Cheliotes remains exceptional. Typically, the municipal union leaders who survive in the political ecology of New York City are the least militant, the least responsive to members, the most anxious to pile up huge compensation packages and surround themselves with fabulously paid staffers whose main talent is unblinking loyalty to the chief.

The striking difference in combativeness between French and New York officials illustrates Darwin's distinction between artificial and natural selection. In France, labor leaders are produced by natural selection. They develop traits that are the product of free competition between union confederations for rank and file members. When Nicole Notat, head of the centrist union federation CFDT, backed the Juppé plan, her railroad members simply deserted her. Now they've formed a new autonomous railroad federation. French leaders must either lead where members want to go, or get trampled by those looking for another union.

In New York, leaders are the product of artificial selection. They're bred by City Hall for certain desirable traits — the chief one being docility toward their handlers. Competing with each other for the mayor's favor for the right to graze on members' dues, our public sector union leaders increasingly resemble what's happened to fat-tailed sheep. These creatures, who are raised for their tasty, marbled mutton, are now so heavy, they can't even mate without assistance.

The return of collective begging certainly hasn't paid off for the members, who in salary terms have regressed to the pre-'60s days when private sector workers made substantially more than unionized city workers. Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show that private sector secretaries make $80 a week more than public sector workers. Private sector clerks, $60 more. Security guards represented by DC 37 now make less money in real terms than they did a quarter century ago.

Today, starting city clerks make only $17,000. Under the terms of the new contract they will make 7% less. How can Hill justify pay increases for top officials and staff and pay cuts for workers? I asked Hill, "How can you have a 5-1 or even a 10-1 gap between union staffers and the people who pay their dues. Is that fair?" "It has nothing to do with fairness," Hill explained. "A staff person has to deal with the services. We have guys who give tons of services that are outstanding. You look at the time, the incredible amount of skill and time that goes into that service. We've got a staff that works seven days a week. We bring in the best people and we feel very confident that they do an outstanding job."

Hill also feels that he negotiated an exemplary contract, given the nature of the period — though many of his members still don't agree. The true measure of a contract's worth is not what the critics think but what the workers who have to live under the contract think. And as far as this latest contract goes, only a handful of top officials will ever know what the members truly thought of the deal. Hill says his members approved the pact 19,513 to 14,438 but he refuses to release the results in individual locals. If Hill didn't "steal" the votes to win, he gave a good imitation of someone who feared scrutiny. If he had nothing to hide, why did he refuse requests to allow the American Arbitration Association to count all the votes?

As reported in *Union Democracy Review*, the presidents of two AFSME locals accused DC 37 officers of manipulating the ratification vote. They cite Hill's refusal to break down the vote by locals, to repeated extensions of the voting period "and an unusually large and suspicious turnout recorded from one big local which voted late and overwhelmingly for the contract."

French Lessons

IF NEW YORK MAKES US CYNICAL ABOUT THE CAPACITY of working people to organize their own affairs, then at least, as Bogart said, "We'll always have Paris." At the Gare du Nord and Gare d'Austerlitz in Paris and at railroad stations across France, workers met each day to discuss the tactics and strategy of the strike. As Georges Seguy, the former head of the CGT, told me in an interview, "The meetings were open. Anyone on strike had a right to speak — CGT, FO, CFDT — as well as workers who didn't belong to any union. They not only met and debated — each day the workers voted by secret ballot whether to carry on their strike."

Paul Barets, a professor at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris, argues that in some ways, December '95 was a big advance over the great May '68 revolt that toppled De Gaulle. In '68, the students and workers spoke a totally different language of opposition. The students insisted on "All power to the imagination" while the workers demanded longer vacations.

In '95, however, the workers spoke out not just for their own narrow demands — like keeping retirement at age 50 — but for increased benefits for students, young workers, for the unemployed, for the lowest paid workers in the society. They marched under slogans like "37 and a Half for Everybody" and "All of Us Together, Yes!" Meanwhile, the students not only shut down campuses, they used their free time to collect funds for the workers and presented their collection at a ceremony for the *traminots* at Austerlitz.

The French December shows what can happen when walls between unions and workers, and workers and society, begin to crack. The strikers left their workplaces to meet with other strikers and even to try to convince other non-striking workers to join in the movement. As Professor Barets puts it, December demonstrates "the depth of a movement that refused to be imprisoned in the demands of a single corporation."

Appeasement means pursuing concessions at someone else's expense: it's how our corporatist union leaders earn their living. By turning unions into insurance companies, by atomizing workers into consumers who purchase union services with their dues, municipal union leaders have made the exercise of solidarity not just unfeasible but almost unimaginable. New Yorkers need more than a raise. We have to learn how to resist a bald-headed bully. Perhaps we could begin by learning some French.

BUT WHILE THE FRENCH DECEMBER SHOWS THE IMMENSE POTENTIAL of mass action, DC 37's winter fiasco illustrates the fragility of the bedrock assumptions on which American trade union leaders have built their regimes. How do our trade union bosses understand the nature of leadership and membership? To what extent do they think the members can be expected to participate in the life of the union? Who should leaders turn to for role models? It turns out that our trade union tops have been thinking quite rigorously about these questions for some time. They are all addressed by the official historians of DC 37, Jewel and

Bernard Bellush.*

The Bellushes write as disciples of Mancur Olsen, author of *The Logic of Collective Action*. By the early 1970s Olsen had earned a national following in higher trade union circles by proving logically that mass participation in modern organizations could never happen. At least if actors behaved as they do in economics textbooks — as rational individuals maximizing their utility functions.

D.C. 37, write the Bellushes, exemplifies Olsen's non-participatory logic:

> Because of its success in attaining the agency shop and dues checkoff, large numbers of workers automatically become members. Thus the union acquired a stable membership and a secure source of financial support. Participation, as a result, appeared less urgent.

In order to stimulate rational individuals to participate in the life of the union, they argue, you have to give each of them "separate and selective incentives." A system of perquisites and payments, i.e., a reward system "similar to the old style clubhouse" has to be put in place. Invoking Tammany Hall fixer George Washington Plunkett, they conclude,"When a man (sic) works in politics, he should get something out of it."

So it seems as if those annual winter vacation trips to Bermuda — actually, this year it was Israel — by the staff and leaders of DC 37 are the practical outcome of what the Bellushes, following conservative guru James Q. Wilson call "exchange theory." Explicit in exchange theory is the proposition that union leaders model themselves after capitalists. The aim of "exchange theory" is to create a leader-follower relationship like that of businessmen and their customers. The union leader, say the Bellushes, is the entrepreneur who provides "the initiative and the capital." The union leader, as capitalist, sells "services" to the members. And because the services are of such high quality, as Stanley Hill explained to me, the rewards to the staff and the leaders must be proportionately high.

Now while Stanley Hill may be an entrepreneur in the Bellushian sense. He is decidedly not an entrepreneur in the classic Schumpeterian sense: he doesn't undertake anything new; he hasn't created any new product; or introduced any new organizational methods — unless giving cash to Giuliani is considered a path-breaking novelty.

Hill doesn't upset and reorganize organizational structures: he's a standpatter who insists that measures to improve democratic participation and transparency are impossible because they violate the rules. In this respect, Hill simply follows Gotbaum. The American labor movement has a thousand Gotbaums. And ten thousand Hills. Indeed, this is the value of the Bellushes' work: it reveals the extent to which the practice of trade union leaders is the product of theory. Union leaders have tried, self-consciously, to use capitalists as their role model for organizing relations with their members.

But the union boss as capitalist is an even less justifiable figure than the capitalist exploiter he once claimed to combat. The real capitalist can at least argue he provides the worker with a job. (In German, he is called an *arbeitgeber*)

**Union Power in New York: Victor Gotbaum and District Council 37*. (Praeger: New York, 1984).

The capitalist can provide the jobs because, initially, he either has capital or borrows it somewhere.

The union leader's "capital" by contrast, is appropriated from the members. It comes to the union leader by means of an agreement with boss and comes from the workers' check. Moreover, the consumption of the services the union leader provides is forced. Dues check-off compels workers to buy services from a particular union whether they like it or not. Add to this, the lack of accountability through the ballot box of the leaders to the members and the model of union leader as entrepreneur begins to resemble serfdom more than capitalism.

Indeed, in New York's mob-run unions — mason tenders, carpenters, plumbers, carters — where the crime families control not only the union but have their hooks into the industry as well, the serfdom model isn't all that far-fetched. The Five Families have created a kind of criminal aristocracy based on supreme values of family and honor. They offer "protection" to their clients. And they will defend their territories to the death.

Civil service unions like DC 37 however stand as remote from the organized crime model as they do from true entrepreneurialism. But with a stretch of the imagination, you can understand why AFL-CIO thinkers imagine they're entrepreneurs. Or at least descended from entrepreneurs. They get capital to hire organizers and staff from the international. Then the Jerry Wurfs and Lillian Roberts go out to win representation elections which, if successful result in the creation of cash flow.

THE ORIGINS OF LAWS LIKE NEW YORK'S "LITTLE WAGNER ACT" or the Wagner Act itself, laws that legally protect entrepreneurial activities, have been conveniently forgotten by the apostles of trade union entrepreneurialism. It wasn't labor leaders who got the Wagner Act passed. Nor was it the product of mediocre Tammany hacks like Robert Wagner. The Wagner Act got passed in 1935 because — the U.S. — like France at the time — was in the midst of a mass movement of factory occupations. And the bosses wanted their factories back. Granting union recognition to CIO leaders who publicly deplored sit-down strikes and advocated collective bargaining — seemed preferable to chaos or further radicalization. The Wagner Act sailed through Congress.

Ultimately, in other words, it was mass action by rank-and-file workers that created the "capital" for today's union leaders. Mass action built the unions. Re-building them on the principles of radical individualism is destroying them.

Game theory itself explains why individualism doesn't work as an organizing principle of trade unionism. Union leaders find themselves regularly trapped in what game theoreticians call," the prisoners' dilemma." In the classic prisoners' dilemma, if prisoners can avoid squealing on each other, they'll get off. But they are isolated from each other, in different cells. The incentive, for the individual rational actor, concerned only with his own survival is to confess and let others suffer the consequences.

New York City's municipal union leaders, imprisoned in the mentality of rational individualism, each in their own organizational cells, predictably give each other up to Giuliani the jailer. They behave exactly as game theory predicts: each tries to shift the burden of austerity onto the other union leader.

The point then is not to try to cast Stanley Hill into the seventh circle of trade union Hell, reserved for terrible twisted traitors. It's rather that he is the human, all-too human product of institutions whose individualistic premises cause them to fail in predictable ways.

Nor is DC 37 itself a bad union by American standards. On the contrary, DC 37 operates as a large and representative component of — whose president, Gerald McEntee is widely credited with initiating the reform movement that toppled AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland.

DC 37's characteristic problems however, illustrate the shallowness of the AFL-CIO's reform agenda. Newly elected President John Sweeney has staked out organizing the unorganized and electing Democrats as his top priorities. Twenty million dollars will go to hire new organizers. And thirty million to elect new Democrats.

Here in New York though — and in most cities across the country — has the problem unions faced been that there weren't enough Democrats? The City council has been overwhelmingly Democratic as far back as anyone can remember. Of course some now will point to the present Republican occupant of City Hall as the source of the unions' problems. But not those who remember the fiscal crisis of the '70s — when two Brooklyn Democrats with strong ties to municipal labor were elected Governor and Mayor — and combined to lay off 66,000 workers.

THE COMPARATIVELY LIMP POSTURE OF MUNICIPAL UNIONISM when confronted by any determined adversary also suggests that the principal problem with American unions is not that they lack members. Low union density is merely a symptom of deeper problems. It's not even ultimately that U.S. labor laws are stacked against organizing.

Of course America's labor laws are a disgrace: more appropriate to the days of the Robber Barons and the Ludlow Massacre than a country that sees itself as the world's premier exemplar of "human rights." But when the legal framework makes union recognition easy — as is generally the case with city, state and municipal workers — when union density approaches European levels of 50% and more, we still don't have European levels of combativity.

"That's because this is America, not Europe," many will argue. "We don't have the French tradition of revolution — or their reverence for *egalité* and *fraternité*. Our historical tradition is based strictly on *liberté* and the pursuit of individual happiness. Our rebels up in Montana are perfectly in American character when they call themselves 'the Free Men.' So don't blame union leaders for the way our unions have turned out. They are co-dependent with the members. As much as anything leaders do, members shape the unions by their fierce devotion to personal rather than public life. And that's not going to change."

Certainly it's not going to change if labor activists inspired by collectivist values do nothing. We can use history as a pillow or as goad. We can lament the fact that the French had four revolutions between 1789 and 1871 while we were shut out. Or we can recall proudly that by 1935, American workers weren't organizationally all that far behind the Europeans. And in many respects — incidence of strikes, strike militance — American workers were in the lead.

Yes, for more than a century, we've had the racist, business-oriented AFL. We had the CIO that by the late 1940s was more interested in kicking Communists out than in bringing workers in. And in a surprisingly large portion of the trades, trucking and food service industries we've had organized crime running unions. But the U.S. has always had people and organizations that challenged them for the soul of the labor movement.

We had the IWW, Big Bill Haywood, Eugene Debs, Mother Jones, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Farrell Dobbs. We've had leaders, movements and organizations based on worker participation and mass action. That American counter-tradition continues today with Ken Paff and the TDU; Wing Lam; Jo Anne Lum and the Chinese Staff and Restaurant Workers' Union. Unlike the efforts of official reformers who seek to preserve the AFL-CIO's top-down structure while expanding its organizational influence, they seek to base American trade unionism on different principles.

The future of trade unionism depends on which principles prevail — those of Hill, Sweeney and Mancur Olsen or those of Paff, Wing Lam and Georges Seguy. No one can know what's going to happen in the future. But we can know at least which set of principles are consistent: which are based on the potential of solidarity; and which are predicated on the dissolution of solidarity and the impossibility of mass action.

We need to understand that the different state of the labor unions on the two sides of the Atlantic emerges less from historical inevitability than from different kinds of choices made by thousands of people who have formed commitments to contrasting sets of organizational principles. If we are dissatisfied with the conditions on this side, we need to clarify our commitments and concentrate our energies: how, right now, are we using our leverage? Who are we working with? Whose side are we really on?

A shorter version of this article appears in the April 16, 1996 Village Voice.

The Dayton Strike

Staughton Lynd

THE BASIC FACTS ABOUT THE RECENT STRIKE IN DAYTON, OHIO are not in dispute: 3,000 workers at two General Motors brake plants in Dayton went on strike March 5 and approved a settlement on March 22. At the time of the settlement, 26 General Motors assembly plants had shut down because of lack of parts and more than 175,000 workers (of whom more than 100,000 were UAW members) had been laid off.

The union called the strike in response to GM's decision to buy technology for a new generation of anti-lock brakes from a contractor named Robert Bosch. While UAW employees at Big Three plants make nearly $19 an hour and (at the Dayton plants) average $69,000 a year, Bosch pays workers at non-union parts plants $8.50 to $13.15 an hour.

GM lost production of about 240,000 vehicles as a result of the strike. GM's sales in March dropped 2.2% from 1995 levels. Its first quarter profits were about $900 million less than expected.

The strike cost the UAW about $1.2 million in strike benefits for the 3,000 workers in Dayton. But GM had opposed unemployment compensation payments to union members laid off elsewhere and this put "tremendous pressure" on the UAW to begin paying them strike benefits. "[I]f the strike had gone on much longer, it could have cost the union as much as $36 million a week."[1]

In the settlement, the company agreed to hire more than 400 workers, most of them during the next two years. However, approximately 300 of the plants' workers retire every year and GM is required by contract to hire half the number of those who retire. Thus GM would have been obliged, without a strike, to hire about 450 workers in the next three years.[2]

There has been no change in GM's intention to sub-contract to Bosch, or in the contractual procedure that gives UAW members the opportunity to bid against non-union workers who are paid much less than they are before work is contracted out.

A Lost Opportunity

THE DAY AFTER THE STRIKE SETTLEMENT WAS APPROVED BY THE STRIKERS, I met with about 50 shop stewards who are members of Local 377 of the Teamsters here in Youngstown. Each of our classes had begun with a "show and tell" time during which participants shared victories, defeats, and unresolved problems that had arisen at their various workplaces since the last class.

This week the stewards wanted to talk about Dayton. They were mystified that the strike had done nothing to change GM's intention to contract-out brake work to Bosch. Wasn't that the reason for striking?, they wanted to know. Why

STAUGHTON LYND *is a labor historian and a Legal Services lawyer who works in Youngstown.*

did the union settle?, they wondered. They viewed the strike as a defeat.

The stewards' analysis reminded me of what Bill Serrin said about the UAW 25 years ago in his book *The Company and the Union*. As Serrin explained about the UAW's GM strike of 1970:

> A strike has value for both sides. A strike, by putting the workers on the streets, rolls the steam out of them — it reduces their demands and thus brings agreement and ratification; it also solidifies the authority of the union hierarchy. . . . Emil Mazey, secretary-treasurer of the United Automobile Workers and one of the union's founders, says, "I think that strikes make ratification easier. Even though the worker may not think so, when he votes on a contract he is reacting to economic pressures. I really believe that if the wife is raising hell and the bills are piling up, he may be more apt to settle than otherwise."[3]

In the conclusion of his book, Serrin quotes "a man who has watched these talks for years, a neutral man." The man said of the 1970 strike: "Nobody lost; both sides won. . . . A continuing relationship requires no loser."[4]

There are indications that just this dynamic was at work in the Dayton strike. David Cole, director of the University of Michigan's Center for the Study of Automotive Transportation, commented: "You almost have to have, as a matter of course, some kind of strike to let everybody vent their emotion — and this may have done that."[5] The symbolic character of the strike is suggested by the fact that UAW officials apparently ordered 300 of the Dayton workers to cross the picket lines to make parts for Chrysler and American Isuzu Motors.[6]

The Sweeney Administration: A Pattern

JOHN SWEENEY'S TRACK RECORD AS PRESIDENT of the Service Employees International Union before taking office as president of the AFL-CIO hardly suggested the militant social unionist that some liberal intellectuals perceived in him.

Sweeney never worked a day in the low-paid service jobs held by most SEIU members. After moving from president of SEIU Local 32B to SEIU president, Sweeney "double-dipped" by receiving both his presidential salary of more than $200,000 and continuing payments of many thousands of dollars a year from Local 32B. When teachers struck the Los Angeles public schools in 1989, Sweeney and SEIU Local 99 Secretary-Treasurer Walter Backstrom ordered school bus drivers to scab. When several drivers honored the picket lines, SEIU joined with the school board in threatening them with discharge.

The national SEIU convention endorsed single-payer health care, but after the 1992 election Sweeney became point man for the AFL-CIO's support of the Clintons' managed competition health insurance proposal.

In June 1995, an opposition slate calling itself the "Multiracial Alliance" defeated almost all the incumbents in SEIU Local 399, a 25,000-member Los Angeles-based local of janitors and health care workers with a Latino majority. Sweeney's response as SEIU president was to put Local 399 into trusteeship.[7]

Since his elevation to the presidency of the AFL-CIO, Sweeney's performance has been, if anything, more dismaying.

There were three great labor struggles underway when the Sweeney administration took office: the UAW strike at Caterpillar; the lockout at the A. E. Staley plant in Decatur, Illinois; and the Detroit newspaper strike.

At Caterpillar, 80% of the membership rejected company proposals but the UAW declared the strike over and ordered its members back to work. Labor reporter John Lippert calls it the UAW's "most crushing defeat in decades."[8]

At Staley, warmed-over concessionary demands by the company were rejected by the local union officers and negotiating committee, but the Paperworkers International insisted on a ratification vote, campaigned vigorously for acceptance, and prevailed.

In Detroit, the "new" AFL-CIO has shown no inclination (at this writing) to return to the tactics that seemed so promising last fall: mass picketing in defiance of an injunction at the plant where the scab papers are produced. Yet these are precisely the kind of tactics Sweeney's pre-election talk about blocking bridges would have led one to think that he espoused.

Dayton was a lost opportunity, not a catastrophe like Caterpillar or Staley. But it was a lost opportunity that fits squarely into the pattern of Sweeney's class collaborationist rhetoric. Sweeney recently told the National Press Club that "we can no longer afford the luxury of pretending that productivity, quality and competitiveness are not our business."[9] And his general counsel applauds the fact that "unions and employers, through collective bargaining, are forging strong labor-management partnerships dedicated to achieving world class standards of productivity and efficiency."[10]

In sum, to quote the *Village Voice*, "so far the New Voice leadership's record has given reason to wonder when the fighting is going to start."[11]

The Strike Weapon

ADVOCACY OF LABOR INVOLVEMENT IN "PRODUCTIVITY, QUALITY AND COMPETITIVENESS" and in "labor-management partnerships" is typically coupled with comment that the strike is no longer effective.

There is evidence for this view. The number of work stoppages in 1995 was the smallest in the United States since the Labor Department first began collecting data in 1947.[12]

Use of the strike weapon has declined for several reasons. First, beginning with the PATCO and Phelps Dodge strikes in the early 1980s, employers began to use a weapon of their own, legally available since before World War II: they hired permanent strike replacements. Second, a longterm recessionary trend developed. Workers by the mid-1990s earned 20% less in real wages than they had two decades earlier. Plant shutdowns, downsizing and disinvestment became the norm throughout the United States economy. Frightened, workers became less active.[13]

A positive byproduct of declining use of the strike has been revival of the old Wobbly idea of an "in-plant strategy." Working to rule — that is, carrying out the foreman's orders literally, no matter how ridiculous they may be or how much damage to the pace of production they produce — and other forms of action on the job are more likely to elicit workers' participation than an outside strike in an era when companies do not hesitate to replace strikers permanently.

All this said, Dayton nevertheless demonstrates that obituaries for the conventional, outside strike have been decidedly premature. The Dayton strike was so effective precisely because of a contradiction in the very modernistic capitalism that has been thought to be invincible. It was GM's "just in time" inventory strategy that made the monster corporation so vulnerable.

Events in France last November and December proved that the general strike is still a viable idea, even where (or perhaps, especially where) less than 10% of the private sector workforce belongs to unions. The Dayton strike, which brought the largest corporation in the world to a standstill, showed something similar about the efficacy of the strike weapon in a particular economic sector or against a single firm.

In producing astonishingly broad effects from action at a single location, the GM strike at Dayton resembled the strikes that created the UAW: the sit-down strikes at the Kelsey Hayes Wheel plant in Detroit and at the GM plant in Flint, Michigan in the winter of 1936-1937. Just as more than two dozen GM assembly plants in 1996 received their brakes from two brake plants in Dayton, in 1936 Ford received most of its brake shoes and brake drums from Kelsey Hayes. As a result of the strike begun at Kelsey Hayes in December 1936 Ford was forced to lay off 20,000 workers and halt production at the Rouge assembly plant.[14] Similarly, GM's Fisher Body plants in Flint made bodies for many of the company's assembly plants, and "bodies were extremely difficult to store so that the UAW could be certain that the company had no bank of bodies to draw on should the flow of bodies suddenly be halted by a strike."[15]

The differences between the Dayton and Flint strikes are just as striking as the similarities. In Dayton, the union settled for a cosmetic victory that concealed the underlying fact that the company's contracting-out could proceed undeterred. In Flint, a similar stalemate was exploded from below when rank and filers devised a strategy to spread the sit-in from Fisher Body to Chevrolet No. 4.

Shop-floor Leaders and Grassroots Radicals

IN SEEKING TO ACCOUNT FOR THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN FLINT AND DAYTON, one is first of all struck by the apparent absence in Dayton of shop-floor leaders like "Bud" Simons in Flint. Thirty-one years old in 1936, a veteran of the Communist-dominated Auto Workers Union and the AFL "federal union" at Fisher Body No. 1, Simons led a spectacular action on November 13 in the "body-in-white" department. On arriving at work that evening, workers found that three welders who had participated in a quickie sit-down the previous night had been discharged. Simons shut down the department, idling 700 men. When GM promised to bring the three men back after the weekend, Simons said that production would resume when the men appeared on the shop floor. The company caved, and even paid the 700 for the time they had stopped work.[16]

Shop-floor leaders like Bud Simons tend to appear in a local culture nurtured by grassroots radicals.[17] Simons took his stand and won his battle after months of quiet, door-to-door organizing in Flint by Socialist Roy Reuther and Communists (or Communist-leaning) Wyndham Mortimer and Bob Travis. Sometimes the roles of shop-floor leader and grassroots radical were joined in the same person. An example at Flint was Kermit Johnson, a Chevrolet worker, a member of the Socialist Party, and husband of Genora Dollinger, leader of the famed Womens' Emergency Brigade.

If the "body-in-white" action was the key to the beginning of the Flint sit-down, the key to winning the struggle was occupying Chevrolet No. 4. The strategy for taking it — "one of the most daring and spectacular bits of strike strategy in the history of the labor movement"[18] — was to *pretend* to take Chevrolet No. 9, and then when security forces had concentrated on the decoy target, to occupy No. 4.

Who suggested the strategy for taking Chevrolet No. 4? Victor Reuther says it was two outside organizers, Roy Reuther and Bob Travis.[19] Henry Kraus says it was Bob Travis (whose political inclinations he shared) and that Kermit Johnson blew his assignment.[20] Sidney Fine hedges as to individuals but is clear that it was "the local Flint leadership rather than the UAW international officers or CIO officials."[21] But Nelson Lichtenstein, in his recent biography of Walter Reuther, credits *shop-floor leader Kermit Johnson* and says that outside organizer Walter Reuther violently objected.

> Kermit Johnson, a Socialist in the Chevy plant, outlined the idea to an expanded SP caucus in the city. . . . Walter [Reuther] exploded in derision, calling the plan "insane," a prescription for disaster and embarrassment. . . . [Johnson's wife Genora Dollinger appealed to Norman Thomas, who sent the SP's labor secretary to check out the idea.] Roy [Reuther] now swung squarely behind the idea at an SP caucus; outvoted, Walter reportedly shouted, "I wash my hands of it," as he left the meeting.[22]

The role played by grassroots radicals and shop-floor leaders in the Flint sit-down strike is not the same as the vanguard leadership proposed by Lenin. Lenin considered shop-floor workers to be incapable of developing radical consciousness on their own. He urged that shop-floor leaders should be removed from the workplace so that they might become itinerant professional revolutionaries.[23]

The term that best describes what grassroots and shop-floor radicals did in Flint and did not do in Dayton is the Latin American term "accompaniment." To accompany means to be present, to offer one's skills and experience as needed, to seek solutions *together with* the working people among whom one is working. For radical intellectuals, the easy part of analyzing Dayton is to criticize UAW and AFL-CIO bureaucrats for a lost opportunity. The hard part is to decide how best to go about accompanying the Bud Simonses and Kermit Johnsons of the contemporary workplace, who are out there and who need our help.

NOTES

1. Keith Bradsher, "Market Place," *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1996.

2. Local 696 UAW summary of strike settlement; conversation with Dave Yettaw, a leader of the UAW New Directions movement and president of Local 599 UAW, the largest GM local; Keith Bradsher, "Market Place," *New York Times*, Mar. 25, 1996.

3. William Serrin, *The Company and the Union: The "Civilized Relationship" of the General Motors Corporation and the United Automobile Workers* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1973), p. 4.

4. Ibid., p. 305.

5. "GM plants getting back into gear," *USA Today*, Mar. 26, 1996.

6. "UAW Orders Union Scabbing," *Industrial Worker*, Apr. 1996.

7. I set forth the foregoing four paragraphs as credible allegations in an open letter "Bottom up," *In These Times*, Feb. 5, 1996, responding to an open letter signed by 43 liberal intellectuals, "The Rise of the House of Labor," *In These Times*, Dec. 25, 1995. In *In These Times*, Apr. 15, 1996, Local 399 trustee Mike Garcia says that the local was put into trusteeship not as a response to the election of an opposition slate, but as a "re-

sponse to a political deadlock that had paralyzed" the local. My statement was based on an account by a member of the Multiracial Alliance, Iris Bennett, "Los Angeles workers fight for union democracy," *The Labor Page*, Dec. 1995. Bennett states that the incumbent president (whose seat the Alliance had not contested) "refused to implement the new Board's decisions and asked the international union to intervene on his behalf."

8. John Lippert, "Rough Road Ahead," *In These Times*, Apr. 1, 1996.

9. Sweeney is quoted approvingly in AFL-CIO General Counsel Jonathan P. Hiatt and Lee W. Jackson, Esq., "Union Survival Strategies for the Twenty-First Century," a paper prepared for ABA Labor Law Conference, published by BNA, Mar. 6, 1996.

10. Ibid.

11. Adolph Reed, Jr., "New Voice, Old School?," *Village Voice*, Mar. 19, 1996.

12. BNA, *Labor Relations Reporter*, Mar. 4, 1996, 151 LRR 286.

13. *Trade Union Politics: American Unions and Economic Change*, eds. Glenn Perusek and Kent Worcester (Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Humanities Press, 1995).

14. Sophie Reuther to Myra Smith, Dec. 20, 1936, quoted in Victor G. Reuther, *The Brothers Reuther and the Story of the UAW: A Memoir* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1976), p. 140. "Since the Ford Motor Company received most of its brake shoes and brake drums from Kelsey-Hayes, production at the giant Rouge plant was crippled by the strike." Sidney Fine, *Sit-down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1969), p. 131.

15. Fine, *Sit-down*, p. 141, citing interviews with John W. Anderson and Bob Travis.

16. Fine, *Sit-down*, pp. 116-117.

17. Henry Kraus adds about Simons' background: "Once while working in a plant at Des Moines some of the men suddenly began running through the shop shouting: 'Strike! Strike!' Before he knew it Simons was walking out with the rest of the workers. The strike, he discovered, had been called by the IWW. It didn't last long but the incident aroused Simons' curiosity about unions and the like and thereafter he always looked for newspaper items about the 'Wobblies'." *The Many and the Few: A Chronicle of the Dynamic Auto Workers*, second edition (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), p. 34. For more on the influence of the IWW on the union revival of the 1930s, see *"We Are All Leaders": The Alternative Unionism of the Early 1930s*, ed. Staughton Lynd (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996), forthcoming.

18. *The Brothers Reuther*, p. 164.

19. Ibid.

20. Kraus, *The Many and the Few*, chapters 10, 11.

21. Fine, *Sit-down*, p. 267.

22. Nelson Lichtenstein, *The Most Dangerous Man in Detroit: Walter Reuther and the Fate of American Labor* (New York: Basic Books, 1995), pp. 78-79.

23. V. I. Lenin, *What Is To Be Done?*, in *Collected Works of V. I. Lenin*, v. 4 (New York: International Publishers, 1929), p. 206.

Labor and Community: The Strike at Yale

Gordon Lafer

IN THE PAST SIX MONTHS, YALE UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN RACKED by a series of strikes stretching across almost every part of the campus' operations. Librarians and lab technicians, cooks and custodians, groundskeepers and graduate teachers have all walked off their jobs in protest over the Yale administration's labor policies. President Richard Levin's insistence on cutting the wages, benefits and job security of unionized employees — and refusing altogether to negotiate with the graduate student union — has left the campus inflamed and divided. As of May, 3,700 employees are working without a contract, having struck for most of the past semester and facing difficult decisions about the coming school year. The nearly 700 graduate students who signed union cards calling on the university to negotiate in good faith with their representatives remain frustrated and embittered, and are discussing their own options for achieving bargaining rights in the university. And everyone is looking toward Memorial Day, when AFL-CIO Secretary Treasurer Richard Trumka, Rev. Jesse Jackson and thousands of union members from across the northeast will descend on New Haven for a "People's Graduation" just outside the walls where Yale's traditional commencement exercises are to be held.

The specter of such bitter labor conflicts at a University runs counter to the assumed character of academic communities. For both students and faculty, the college campus stands as a refuge from market pressures, a place for intellectual and personal exploration of a type which is generally not tolerated in the work world. The bucolic images marketed by every liberal arts school suggest that even for campus workers, college life is, well, nice. Nor is this simply an issue of nostalgic imagery; the massive tax exemptions enjoyed by every university rest on the assumption that the logic of the academy is fundamentally different from that of for-profit corporations. That even this territory has now been colonized by rapacious labor relations points to the dwindling distinction between profit and non-profit sectors.

To some extent, the prolonged battle at Yale reflects the particular circumstances of a wealthy, elite institution. But in many ways, the strikes here offer a window onto the current crisis in the university sector — both on the academic side and the non-academic side of campus employment. And for scholars themselves, campus labor relations offer a particularly important subject, both because they immediately impact the material conditions of intellectual workers and because they call on thinkers whose subjects are normally far removed to define their principles in the immediacy of local conflict.

For the non-academic members of the University staff, this year's strike

GORDON LAFER *has a PhD in political science from Yale. He is Research Director for the Federation of University Employees.*

points to the changing role of the university in a depressed economy. Yale's relationship to New Haven mirrors that of a number of other elite schools stranded by deindustrialization in what were once prosperous areas. Columbia and Morningside Heights, the University of Chicago and Hyde Park, USC and South Central — in all these cases a wealthy institution has found itself surrounded by devastated communities that look to the universities as the company in a company town. In New Haven, the town-gown contrast is particularly stark: Yale is the second richest school in the country, with a $4.6 billion endowment, while the city's per capita income ranks it as the seventh poorest in the nation. Yale has long been the biggest employer in New Haven, and in 1996 one out of every seven city jobs is a Yale job. For city residents, the University's near-monopoly in the labor market means that the fight over campus conditions represents a last chance at decently-paying jobs. For Yale managers, by contrast, the desperation of New Haven offers an almost irresistible temptation to force cutbacks on its workforce, counting on the knowledge that many qualified workers consider themselves lucky to be employed at all.

With the defunding of public higher education, many universities have been faced with genuine fiscal crises. Yale, however, has been extremely profitable. The university's endowment generates a profit — net of all expenses and net of inflation — of well over $1 million per day. Furthermore, the school's major sources of income — tuition, alumni donations, endowment investments and federal grants — derive from essentially non-competitive markets. Thus, Yale represents the extreme of corporate downsizing — a company out to cut its employees' wages and benefits not because it has to, but simply because it can.

What Is the Strike About?

FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF PRESIDENT RICHARD LEVIN, the current strike is not about money. Rather, the university seems to have seized on the weakness of the local economy as an opportunity to move toward the long-cherished goal of returning Yale to its union-free origins. None of the issues which forced the strike involve union demands for increased wages or benefits; all of them revolve around Yale's insistence on cutbacks, and most importantly on demands which would likely eliminate the union over the next 10-20 years:

Subcontracting At Will. Yale is insisting on the unlimited right to fill all job openings — whether through expansion, retirement, or turnover — with outside subcontractors. The current contract allows subcontracting only of work which is not normally performed by union employees; Yale wants to replace this with the unrestricted right to subcontract any work, for any reason. Roughly 40% of the union turns over each decade. Thus, within a short period of time, large parts of the campus will be union-free — toiling at lower wages, with few benefits and no bargaining rights — allowing the administration to present its next set of cuts to a much-weakened union.

Contingent Workers. Yale wants to replace more full-time positions with a variety of contingent labor. There are now roughly 1,000 regular Yale workers who get no health insurance. The majority of these — "casual," "on-call" or temporary workers — also have no job security and no bargaining rights. Apart from the financial hardships this causes, these workers live with a pervading insecurity, forever hoping for the promotion to a permanent position and dreading the announcement that they're no longer needed. This "flexibility" allows Yale to treat workers as a "just-in-time" factor of production which can be turned on or off at will, and intensifies the university's political control over a workforce which knows that its livelihood is forever dependent on the personal good will of immediate supervisors.

Wage Cuts and Seasonal Labor. Yale wants to institute a two-tiered wage system in the dining halls which will cut the average wage from $23,000 to $10,000 per year. This will be done both by cutting the hourly wage rate and by eliminating summer work for new dining hall staff, who now serve painting buildings or performing maintenance work in the months when students are absent. In 1970, before winning the right to summer work, one-third of Yale's unionized workers were on welfare despite holding down University jobs; this proposal will undo the past 25 years' of progress and return us to those conditions.

Cuts in Retiree Health Benefits. Yale wants to limit the health benefits provided to retirees. Yale's proposal would force retired workers to pay an increasing share of their health benefits as out-of-pocket expenses. This would effectively cut the monthly pension to $350-$400 for New Haven area workers. This proposal falls particularly heavily on Local 34, whose largely female workforce often serves in lower-wage jobs, is less likely to accrue 25-30 years of service, and is more likely to live longer in retirement. Nationally, the fastest growing group of Americans in poverty is women over the age of 65; if Yale gets its way, the university will be a significant contributor to this trend.

Yale has devoted millions of dollars to this attempt at creeping de-unionization. Levin has hired high-priced public relations specialists, an infamous union-busting lawyer, and an outside "strike security" firm. Indeed, Yale is spending more on this "security" force than it would save under its most recent proposal for wage cuts in the dining halls. At the start of the strike, Yale cut off the unions' dues payments and threatened to suspend strikers' health insurance. Union members were disciplined for talking to casual workers, and several casual workers who joined the Local 34 strike were fired for their union activity. There are dozens of unfair labor charges waiting to be heard by the labor board, but Yale seems willing to pay this price in order to maximize pressure during the period of negotiations.

Why Yale?

GIVEN YALE'S FINANCIAL POSITION, THE LENGTHS TO WHICH IT HAS GONE to roll back employee gains begs an obvious question: if not money, what is driving the administration? I think one answer to this question has to do with the way power functions internally within the university. In some ways, the university's internal regime can best be glimpsed by examining the situation of faculty. Yale is rare in refusing to abide by the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) standards for academic due process. It has no tenure track. And not only is there no faculty union; there is not even a faculty Senate. Indeed, there is not a single elected faculty representative to any Yale body; when faculty sit on University committees, they are not elected by their peers, but rather handpicked by central administrators.

Even senior faculty at Yale are remarkably weak political actors. Many liberal faculty, when faced with a call to speak out for the union, reveal themselves to be not anti-union but simply spineless. Certainly this phenomenon is not limited to the academy. But there are structural dynamics within Yale which strongly encourage it. Specifically, the whole internal economy of the university — salaries, offices, computers, the number of graduate students and research assistants one receives funding for, summer research money, travel grants, even budgets for photocopying and long-distance phone calls — is based on informal relations with higher-ups. None of these is based on meritocratic criteria — or indeed on any written code at all. All of them are based on cultivating the personal good favor of central administrators. In this sense, faculty are governed through much the same type of dynamic (though obviously much less extreme) as casual workers.

This is the essence of how power functions at Yale. The basic, day to day functioning of the university — from departmental chairs to custodians — is grounded in a system in which everyone is made to confront central authority as an atomized individual, trying to cut the best deal they can for themselves, wary of challenging authority, thankful for whatever they can get and more often than not blaming themselves for what they fail to achieve. It is a system of constant deference and pervasive, low-level degradation, which works to maximize the discretionary authority of those at the center. Except for the liberated zones of Local 34 and 35, this is the system which governs the work lives of everyone at Yale, from top to bottom. And it is this system which is radically challenged by unionization.

This is why the unionization drive of Yale graduate students touched such a raw nerve among administrators and senior faculty: the fear that allowing graduate students to pull out of this system, to act collectively rather than individually, to protect each other, to hold administrators accountable to formal standards, and above all to exercise independent leverage in policy-making negotiations, would fundamentally unravel the university's operating logic.

Graduate Student Unionization

THE SIX-YEAR UNIONIZATION DRIVE OF THE GRADUATE EMPLOYEES and Students Organization (GESO) reflects national changes in the academic economy. Across the country, the number of tenured faculty positions has been cut by one-third since 1980. Like other schools, Yale has been downsizing — meaning that it has found ways to get by with fewer full-time faculty, and more and more of the teaching being done by adjunct lecturers and PhD candidates. In 1994-95, responsibility for classroom hours at Yale was divided into equal thirds between regular faculty, adjunct teachers and graduate students. In the same year, Yale's use of graduate teachers saved the university $5.5 million over what it would cost to have junior faculty perform this work. For PhD candidates, the destruction of the academic job market represents a double bind: on one hand, while in graduate school they are the cheap labor force which is asked to shoulder much of the teaching duty for a fraction the pay or power; on the other, when graduating, they face a decimated job market because everyone else is doing the same thing as Yale.

This combination of increased teaching responsibility with diminished career prospects has fueled unionization drives at a growing number of campuses.

At Yale, GESO was formed in 1990 after years of trying and failing to effect policy through more informal means. In every year since the first membership drive was begun in the fall of 1991, a majority of graduate students have signed union cards; in an April 1995 election supervised by the League of Women Voters, graduate students voted 600-166 in favor of unionization. In December 1995, after a year of petitions, letter writing, and countless meetings with administrators, GESO members voted to authorize a grade strike, meaning that Teaching Assistants would withhold fall semester grades until the university agreed to begin good-faith negotiations.

Although the administration's attacks on clerical and maintenance workers are generally justified as serving the primary needs of students, the GESO strike revealed Yale's virulent opposition to any part of the school community which seeks to break out of the regime of paternalism. Almost immediately following the December vote, administrators attacked the strike by playing on all the academic ties which were supposed to be sacred. Graduate teachers were called by faculty "mentors" with the message that they would never receive a letter of recommendation, they would lose their advisers, and that they would be expelled. The administration informed faculty and graduate students that strike participation was a legitimate reason for withholding academic letters of recommendation or inserting negative comments into the evaluations of otherwise stellar scholars. Strike participants were told that they would be fired from spring semester jobs, and in some cases that they would "never teach at Yale again." And of the 250 teachers participating in the grade strike Yale singled out three elected leaders of the union for disciplinary hearings, charging them with "disobeying an order issued in the line of duty by a faculty member" in a procedure which can result in anything from probation to expulsion. Ultimately, this blacklisting campaign succeeded in convincing teachers to end the strike at the start of the Spring semester.

The GESO drive provides perhaps the most dramatic example of the relative unimportance of money in Yale's considerations. All of GESO's demands packaged together would cost under $2 million — approximately one-half of 1% of the university's annual net profit. Indeed, over the course of the five year recognition fight, Yale has occasionally come across with financial concessions, including a 28% raise after GESO's first strike in 1992. Granting graduate students the right to collective bargaining is dangerous not because it portends uncontrollable financial liabilities in the future, but because it radically challenges the basic form of power within the university. If graduate students no longer have to go one by one to appeal to Deans and Provosts, but can formulate group proposals and pursue them with independent leverage, the whole system breaks down. For this reason, numerous faculty commented that the administration's opposition to GESO was driven in part by the conviction that, were graduate students to succeed, junior faculty would not be far behind.

Labor, Power and Community

THROUGHOUT THE YEAR, ADMINISTRATORS HAVE CONSTANTLY JUXTAPOSED the demands of Yale's unions with the rhetoric of family and community. Unions are accused of replacing collegiality with animosity and cooperation with conflict. Most importantly, the system of infornal, personal and discretionary authority is itself defended as the hallmark of warm, communal relations. Unions' insistence on formal policies, written codes and outside arbitrators are all taken as attacks on the bonds of community. Clearly, the administration's attempts to replace permanent staff with subcontracted or temporary workers belies its commitment to a broader campus community. Beyond this, however, I believe it is particularly important for academics to contest the vision of community offered by the administration at Yale and elsewhere. In fact, the form of governance promoted by Levin et. al. rests on a vast network of deference and degradation, in which widespread fear and numbness create the illusion of harmony.

By contrast, the unions here have forged an alternative vision of community. Each of the two recognized locals has brought workers together across a remarkably wide range of racial, gender and occupational divides. Moreover, this alliance has been accomplished only by rejecting the atomizing advice of university administrators. When Local 34 was first organized in 1984, Yale sought to persuade clerical workers that they were too good for a union — collective bargaining might be appropriate for the men in uniforms with dirty hands and limited educations, but not for those whose clerical duties were part of the academic mission of the university. At the same time, administrators counseled the blue collar members of Local 35 that the 85% female clerical unit would prove an unworthy ally. When Local 34 struck for its first contract, then-University Secretary John Wilkinson predicted that "the ladies will be back in three days." Instead, "the ladies" stayed out for ten weeks, during which the predominantly male Local 35 honored the picket line almost to a person. The alliance forged in the strike of a decade ago has built a labor community which stretches across the university. And when facing the combined effects of economic anxiety and administrative indifference, it is this community which graduate teachers turned to.

I do not wish to romanticize the alliance of disparate Yale employees — there are many real differences and frequent tensions between different parts of the workforce. Nevertheless, even as a flawed and imperfect model, the union alliance offers a powerful alternative to the administration vision of community. Perhaps paradoxically, it is specifically through the insistence on formalized rules rather than informal discretion, and on the readiness to engage in conflict, that the unions have wrought a more dignified role in the Yale hierarchy. While employees always remain subject to myriad forms of managerial control, unionization has brought the members of Local 34 and 35 something which no one else at Yale has: the ability to walk with a straight back, to stick up for your friends, and to speak out against things you think are wrong without fear of reprisal. As much as the battle over economic conditions, it is also the battle over these competing visions of community which will be on the table when thousands of union supporters gather for the People's Graduation on Memorial Day.

Readers wishing to support the Yale strike can send checks to
FUE Strike Fund, 425 College St., New Haven, CT 06511.

The March Elections in Spain: No "Splendid Victory" for the Right

Wilebaldo Solano

SPAIN CONTINUES TO BE THE COUNTRY OF SURPRISES. Almost everyone took it for granted that the general elections in March 1996 would result in a drubbing for the socialists and a splendid victory for the right, grouped around José Maria Aznar's Popular Party. But that was not the way things turned out. Felipé Gonzalez's Spanish Socialist Labor Party (PSOE) won 9,425,678 votes and 141 seats while the Popular Party got 9,716,006 votes and 156 seats. Only some 300,000 votes separated them. As a result, the Aznar forces fell short of the 176 seats needed to give them an absolute majority and the Socialist Party was the beneficiary of what some are calling a "sweet defeat" or a "limited failure."

The electoral campaign was one of the most bitterly fought and demagogic Spain has experienced since the death of Franco. The Popular Party never accepted its defeat in 1993 and has been engaged ever since in an unrelenting offensive against the Socialist government. As a pretext, the right has seized on the mistakes and failures of the Socialists. Chief among these was the corruption scandal involving the PSOE-appointed Governor of the Bank of Spain, the head of the Civil Guard, and other officers of the PSOE. There was also some murky business involving the GAL Anti-Terrorist Liberation League (GAL), a clandestine anti-terrorist unit established to combat the Basque Homeland and Liberty (ETA) nationalist movement. Aznar and his allies in the right-wing radio and print media unleashed a brutal campaign against the Gonzalez government with the aim of forcing it to resign. Their ulterior motive, however, was actually to destroy the Socialist Party itself.

The "Vote Against the Right"

EVENTS IN SPAIN HAVE FOLLOWED A PATTERN COMMON TO OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES. Bourgeois and reactionary forces originally threw their support to the Socialists in the hope of erasing the memory of their role under Francoism. Now, they believe that the time has come for them to recoup the power they had monopolized since the 1936-1939 civil war. That accounts for the ferocity of the campaign conducted against the Socialists and against the concessions won by ethnic minorities such as the Catalans and Basques in the autonomous states created by the constitution approved in 1978.

Before proceeding, it is worth recalling that Aznar's Popular Party is the successor to the Popular Alliance founded by Manuel Fraga Iriberne, a former minister in the Franco regime and head of the Autonomous Community of Galicia

WILEBALDO SOLANO *is a journalist, the former general secretary of POUM and the manager of* Combat *and* Socialist Tribune.

since the death of the longtime dictator. Fraga proved incapable of achieving any democratic credibility for his party of ex-Franco loyalists and handed the leadership to Aznar who was expected to renew the party and invest it with the appearance of a centrist political force. In terms of personnel, the Popular Party really did overhaul itself with a new leadership consisting of people in their 40s, with many young women given a prominent place in its ranks. But the same cannot be said about its program or mode of operation. Aznar has always acted in an ambiguous manner without ever spelling out his political program. Nevertheless, it is undeniable that Aznar has managed to unite all the forces of conservatism and reaction under his banner. In Spain at present, there is no party similar to the National Front of Le Pen. All of those forces have rallied to Aznar which is seen to be perfectly proper. No one has publicly raised a question about Aznar's dual boast that "there is nobody to my right" and "ours is a party of the center."

But despite the policy of "renewal" and the outrageous campaign against the PSOE and the nationalist forces of Catalonia and the Basque country, the Popular Party was unable to win a large enough majority to take power. What is more, the right failed to achieve its objective of siphoning votes from the PSOE through collaboration with the United Left encompassing all of Andalusia and Extremadura. It should be pointed out that Julio Anguito and the small Neo-Stalinist group running the United Left in a bureaucratic manner, acted exactly like the German Stalinists did in 1931-1933. The United Left singled out the PSOE as Public Enemy Number One and has maintained a relationship with the Popular Party which I denounced as "politically and aesthetically immoral" in a June 1995 article in *El Pais*.

The predictions of the various polling companies gave Aznar and the right a 6-10 point lead over the PSOE. All the political analysts and most of periodical press, including much of the left, treated the prospect of an Aznar government as a foregone conclusion. This situation gave rise to a strong mood of defeatism that spread in labor circles and among the public at large, as well as among political activists. Nobody anticipated that the last days of the campaign would see a strong surge for a "vote against the right." The same must also be said of those who fought against defeatism and called for a left-wing or class vote against the bourgeoisie under the slogan of "We will not give up!" (Including socialist left militants, Marxist revolutionaries close to the POUM, Trotskyists, etc). But the fact remains that the surge prevailed and averted a complete victory of the Aznar right.

The Maneuvers of José Maria Aznar

THE RESULTS OF THE MARCH 3 ELECTIONS WERE A GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT for the right and have created a complex political situation with serious problems for all the players. Aznar has relied upon the support of finance capital and the big bourgeoisie. The leader of the right intends to bring Spain solidly into the neo-liberal current now prevalent in Europe. He also seeks to roll back the concessions won by the Catalans and Basques to run their own affairs as autonomous ethnic groups by resurrecting a chauvinistic centralist Spanish nationalism.

In the economic realm, Aznar seeks to curtail the social security system and the rights of labor while emphasizing the privatization of everything in sight, especially education. In this respect, he would be following the lead of the Christian Democratic and conservative forces in the European Union and NATO. It all adds up to an attempt to turn the back the clock on the process of the transformation of Spain initiated after the fall of the Franco dictatorship. The task seems impossible 60 years after the Spanish revolution of 1936-1939.

Because Aznar's majority in parliament is actually a minority, he now intends to change course and seek the support of the more closely related bourgeois political forces. But these are limited to the Convergence and Democratic Union of Catalan run by Jordi Pujol and the Basque Nationalist Party of Xabier Arzallus. Aznar had previously conducted a very energetic campaign against each of these parties. As a result, both want and will continue to seek to expand and consolidate the autonomous authority granted to Catalonia and the Basque country. The situation will play itself out in one of two ways. Aznar must either reach a compromise with Jordi Pujol and Arzallus or dissolve the recently installed parliament. Possibly the Catalan and Basque nationalists will wind up reaching a compromise because the Catalan bourgeoisie (National Job Creation, Economic Circle, and the Institute of Family Business) and the church are vigorously pushing in that direction. But none of this will procure the "stability" demanded by Aznar and those who support him.

Felipé Gonzalez and the leaders of the PSOE have not yet fully recovered from the shock of seeing more than nine million Spaniards voting for them. They seem to have abandoned any notion of drawing up a critical balance sheet of their 13 years in power and are not even talking about a "renewal" of their party or of the underlying causes of the "sweet defeat." Quite the contrary, they are confident that the Aznar-Pujol-Arzallus alliance will not hold up and the PSOE will soon return to power. Gonzalez has announced his retirement several times in the past and hesitated before entering the recent electoral campaign. But he is now offering himself as a candidate for general secretary of the PSOE and the head of government.

As could be expected, the results of the elections have aggravated the permanent crisis of the United Left, an ambiguous organization established by the rump apparatus of the Communist Party, an eccentric by the name of Julio Anguita, and various small organizations of the left (new left, PASOC, and so forth). Anguita and his friends have established a united front with Aznar in order to destabilize the regional governments of Andalusia and Extremadura which are run by the Socialists. Their hostility toward Gonzalez and the PSOE has lead them into crazy conspiracies with Aznar. This has given rise to a growing uneasiness within the ranks of the United Left and has driven its organizations in Catalonia and Valencia, along with many activists, into total opposition. Despite all its shortcomings, the United Left has capitalized on a general hostility to PSOE politicians for their corruption, and the strengths of its own social policy, to win 2,639,774 votes and 21 seats. But these votes and seats cannot play a significant role while the United Left adheres to the absurd course imposed on it by the Neo-Stalinist core which leads it.

For much the same reasons, there is a chance that the political elements including critical Communists who are rebelling against this type of organization, will break with the United Left. They may then join independent Marxist groups which are trying to build a bridge to the PSOE left and do not base their policy on a battle against the Socialists as the main enemy.

THERE IS NO REASON TO PAINT A PESSIMISTIC PICTURE of Spain's immediate future following the March elections. There can be no doubt that the final results showed a considerable gain for the right as a result of the serious errors and terrible failures of the Socialists and, to a lesser extent, the warped policy (not leftist, as some claim) of the United Left and Julio Anguito. But the left still commands a majority in the country despite an electoral system which places them at a disadvantage because it dilutes the real weight of the industrial regions. The right-wing offensive has failed in Catalonia, Andalusia, the Basque country, Extremadura, and other regions.

The attempt to return to a centralized authoritarian state and roll back the gains of ethnic minorities has also failed. Spain has 40 million citizens, with young people becoming better educated every day, and a GNP of 525 billion dollars ($13,289 dollars per capita). The labor movement remains a force to be reckoned with, both in terms of trade union strength and political clout. Spanish society has changed fundamentally over the past 15 years as a result of the end of all the autarchies (economic, political, social. cultural) imposed by the Franco dictatorship during the long years of barbarism and poverty both material and moral. If a potential government of the right intends to move against these achievements, it will run headlong into firm and widespread resistance. The future cannot belong to forces which embody the worst of the Spanish past.

April 15, 1996

Translated from the Spanish by Patrick Flaherty.

The Civil War in Spain:
Revolution and Counterrevolution
1. Land and Freedom

Martine Vidal

IN THIS ERA OF TRIUMPHALIST MARKET ECONOMICS, it is wonderful to see a film dealing with a revolution 60 years ago greeted with such emotion, even fervor.

In effect, the members of the audience are identifying with the militants from all the countries (France, Ireland, Germany, England, Italy, the United States, etc.) who came voluntarily to the aid of the Spanish revolutionaries in their fight against fascism and their struggle to build a better society.

Land and Freedom, directed by Ken Loach, has been a cinematographic, political, and social event in Spain, Italy, England, Germany, Switzerland, and France. Entered into competition at the Cannes Film Festival, it won the critics' award as well as many other European prizes. In France, the film has been running for more than six months with many special screenings followed by audience discussions with the actors and former POUM militants. The cinemas have been full to capacity and it has not been unusual for the audience to give the film a standing ovation at its conclusion. Laudatory and polemical articles have appeared in all the magazines and, for the first time, many people are familiarizing themselves with the history of *Partido Obrero de Unification Marxista* (POUM), Stalinist repression, and the show trials and executions conducted outside of Russia. Booksellers have been doing a brisk business in works on the Spanish Civil War and especially George Orwell's *Homage to Catalonia*.

We are not talking about another documentary about the Spanish Civil War or a soap opera set against the backdrop of a revolution. In *Land and Freedom*, Ken Loach has chosen a particular moment (a few months in 1936-1937), a certain place, a POUM military unit on the Aragon front, and specific characters (David, a member of the English Communist Party who left home to fight fascism, and a group of young men and women who had enlisted in the POUM militia).

The film begins in the present with the former soldier, David, having just passed away. His granddaughter comes across his archive: clippings from magazines of the period, snapshots, and letters David had sent from the Aragon front to his girlfriend back home in England. The story is told in a series of flashbacks between the young woman pouring over the documents or reading the

MARTINE VIDAL *was a member of Socialism or Barbarism from 1951 to 1953 and after that was involved in Workers Power. She is presently a union activist in the alternative school movement and a member of the Greens.*

letters, and the actual field of battle where David and his comrades are brought back to life. Thanks to these shifts back and forth in time, we see events unfolding through the eyes of the various characters.

Just like Orwell, the young David is initially motivated by a desire to defend the Spanish Republic against fascism. In the course of events, he gradually becomes aware of the complexity of the situation.

Along with his militia unit, David takes part in the capture of a small town. The local farmers have long lived under the thumb of a large landowner. Their village had been occupied by the fascists and only just been liberated by POUM troops. The villagers must now make a decision about what to do with the land and how it should be run in the future. They all come together to discuss the matter among themselves, and invite the soldiers to give their opinions. The debate is far-ranging. Some are for the partition of the land into small private plots while others want to collectivize it. All the attendant problems are addressed: the urgency of a military victory over the fascists, the need for social transformation, the Western democracies which must not be alarmed by excessive radicalism, the possible solidarity of the European proletariat, etc. This meeting in the town hall of the recaptured village is a model of political debate but it does not seem artificial or forced because the characters embody their positions, and especially because it is based on a concrete situation where decisions have to be made.

DAVID'S POLITICAL OUTLOOK EVOLVES OVER TIME as he is drawn more deeply into the thick of events. The poor quality of the weapons at the disposal of his detachment gives him cause for reflection, especially after a rifle explodes in his hands. Wounded, he returns to Barcelona where he meets up once more with his Communist Party comrades and enlists in the International Brigades. At that very moment, the Stalinists have stepped up their propaganda against the POUM, accusing its members of treason. On the streets of the city, the police begin to make arrests. Learning from him that he has enlisted in the International Brigades, David is rejected by Blanca, his girlfriend from the POUM militia. He takes part in the street fighting of May 1937 which pits the Communists and the Republican police against the militants of the anarcho-syndicalist *Confederacion National del Trabajo* (CNT) and the POUM. He quickly finds himself firing dispiritedly upon his old friends. Finally in a café, David overhears officers of the Catalonian Stalinist *Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* (PSUC) exchanging denigrating tough talk and insults about the Aragon militants. His growing disgust drives him to tear up his Communist Party card and set off to rejoin the POUM militia on the Aragon front. At last, he realizes that his political outlook is most in tune with his former frontline comrades.

Soon after this, David takes part in a major offensive against Huesca where only the POUM battalions of the 29th Division (the former Lenin Column) succeed in breaking through to their objectives and wind up isolated when the other assaults are beaten back. The film depicts a key moment of this battle when Major Vidal, the POUM battalion commander, putting up desperate resistance, calls for artillery support and none is forthcoming. Right after the battle, when the survivors are still tending to their wounded, a Republican unit under the command of the PSUC arrives on the scene with orders to disband the 29th Division. The POUM has just been declared illegal.

The scene is rendered particularly touching by the sight first, of the militia members' stupefaction, then their outrage when they find themselves surrounded by their own army, ordered to lay down their arms, and finally the roll call of the names of officers subject to arrest. The episode ends with the death of Blanca who tries to avoid a massacre by disarming a comrade who was preparing to fire on the army. Her death marks the demise of the revolutionary project.

The final scene, the burial of David in England, brings the film back to the present and establishes the continuity between the past and present. Even if some members of the audience fail to grasp the full significance of the history of the POUM militias and the events of May 1937 in Barcelona, the link has been established tenuously but distinctly.

This film is exceptional and important. Exceptional because it enables us to perceive the political in history not by long-winded speeches or didactic displays but through the unfolding events, the situations in which the characters find themselves, the choices confronting them, and the decisions they have to make.

Land and Freedom sheds light on a little-known aspect of the Spanish Civil War which was not just a struggle of the Republic against fascism but also a genuine social revolution unleashed by the revolt of Franco's army. The film also reveals the real role of the Communists who wanted to destroy the revolutionary achievements (the militias, committees, collectivization, etc.) in order to rebuild the former political structures of the bourgeois Republic while, at the same time, conspiring to infiltrate them. Their success would have been nothing more than a Eastern European style "People's Democracy" hatched before its time.

LAND AND FREEDOM IS ALSO IMPORTANT BECAUSE IT ENCOURAGES the audience to ask questions and delve further into the reasons why things turned out as they did, why this war has acquired a one-sided mythical reputation as an exclusively anti-fascist struggle with the Communist Party, and the International Brigades under its control, portrayed as the principal actors.

Finally, we come to the most remarkable aspect of the film. We live in an age when money, consumerism, individualism, duplicity, and cynicism rule the world. When barbarism is erupting across every continent, including the very heart of Europe. Against this sorry landscape, Ken Loach's film recounts a story of a group of men and women who had an ideal and sought to transform society and the relationships between people. *Land and Freedom* is an antidote to the moral and physical squalor surrounding us because it emphasizes friendship, solidarity, generosity, and the endeavor to understand and be understood.

That is why the interest and the enthusiasm that the film has aroused, are signs of hope.

Translated from the French by Patrick Flaherty.

2. The Hidden Story of the Revolution

Andy Durgan

KEN LOACH'S *TIERRA Y LIBERTAD* (LAND AND FREEDOM) CONTINUES, not only to attract enthusiastic audiences, but to be heaped with praise. Not many people have criticized the film publicly, but there is an undercurrent of disagreement which comes out privately. This is not surprising. A whole generation looked, or continue to look, toward the official Communist movement in its various guises — Euro-Communists, pro-Soviets, varieties of Maoism — albeit very "post" if not "ex"; all sharing a version of what happened in the Civil War. The objections that are made about Loach's film are that it is "historically inaccurate," "partial" and "irrelevant" to today's world. Let us, then, consider these objections.

The historian, Josep Maria Solé i Sabaté, Director of the museum of Catalan History and former leading member of *Iniciativa per Catalunya*, an electoral alliance backed by the *Partit Socialista Unificat de Catalunya* (PSUC), has denounced *Land and Freedom* as "a film that does not stand up historically" although "as a work of fiction if is alright." (*El Temps*, 4/24/95)

Inevitably, given that it is a *film* and thus a *dramatization*, there are "errors" from an historical point of view. However, none of them alter the basic accuracy of the events portrayed.

What then is the relationship between the film and historical fact?

David Carr decides to go to Spain after attending a solidarity meeting organized in late August 1936 by the Liverpool Communist Party of which he is a member. Prior to October, the Communist movement did not organize volunteers for the fight in Spain, and those individual foreign Communists who did fight, did so on their own initiative and not always in Party-led units. Thus in the summer of 1936, the young English poet and Communist, John Cornford, found himself fighting in the POUM militia on the Aragon front. Another young British Communist, Staff Cottman, also fought with the POUM after his own Party refused to send him. His experiences led him to break with the Party and join the Independent Labour Party — the POUM's sister organization in Britain at the time.

David arrives in Catalonia in October 1936 and receives rudimentary training from weary, but loyal, army officers at the Lenin Barracks (Cuartel de Lepanto) in Barcelona — as described so graphically by George Orwell in his *Homage to Catalonia*.

By the time David arrives at the front, the lines have stabilized. The majority of the POUM militia, the Lenin Column, was stationed on the front around Huesca where it had up to 6,000 fighters. With them were another 15,000 or so militia, principally from the CNT but also the PSUC. The Lenin Column was organized into centurias (later battalions), which were subdivided into companies of 10 to 20. It included in its ranks some 200 foreign volunteers, including

ANDY DURGAN, *who lives in Barcelona, was the historical advisor for Ken Loach's* Land and Freedom.

30 Britons. David's company is made up of mainly foreigners and some Spaniards and is part of a centuria commanded by Vidal. The fact that it is "English speaking" is fictitous, but obviously necessary for an English speaking director who uses improvization as a central part of his films. There were also some women in the POUM militia; most did not fight, but a few did.

Due to the lack of suitable arms the Huesca front stagnated after early October 1936 and there was no further major activity until the offensive of June 1937. The main danger for the militiamen was the boredom, the cold, themselves (many casualties were accidents) and the occasional shell, as is described not only by Orwell but by other participants in their memoirs. The lines were often close enough for the two sides to shout at each other. The only strictly military activities were occasional raids and expeditions into no-mans land.

In the film, we see David taking part in an attack on a village in early spring 1937. This is the only major "distortion" of historical reality that occurs in the film. The POUM and other militia had seized a number of villages and strategic points around Huesca between late July and the end of September 1936 (Vidal, the battalion commander, shouts out a list in the later scene when his unit is disbanded). Such was the limited nature of both the defenders' and attackers' resources, that these assaults often took place at dawn and involved little more than rifles, rudimentary hand grenades and the occasional heavy machine-gun and mortar.

Loach permits himself this "distortion" for various obvious reasons — to change the rhythm of the film and, above all, to introduce the central debate about whether to collectivize the land or not, within which the relationship between the war and the revolution is posed. The altered chronology does not seriously undermine the film's credibility at an historical level.

In April 1937, the Lenin Column was finally integrated into the Popular Army, becoming the 29th Division. This decision was accepted with disquiet by the POUM, which had argued instead for the creation of a "Red Army" under the control of a Workers' and Peasants' Government based on workers,' peasants' and fighters' committees. In the film we see this situation debated by David's company which votes to support the Column's *Estado Mayor* in its attempt to preserve the revolutionary character of its units. Rather than represent a completely accurate picture of what happened, this scene serves to illustrate both the criticisms the POUM had of the new army and the democratic nature of the militia. Inside the Lenin Column, as with other militia, political discussion was a regular feature of life.

David is sent to hospital in Barcelona after a rifle explodes in his hands — a frequent enough occurrence given the antiquated arms used on the Aragon front. There he meets other foreign Communists and is both informed about their view of the political situation and persuaded that he should be in the International Brigades with his fellow Party members. He then takes part in the street fighting during the *Hechos de mayo*, defending a PSUC headquarters. Disgusted with what he sees, David returns to the militia at the Aragon front and then takes part in the POUM forces' last attack.

ON THE JUNE 12, AN OFFENSIVE WAS FINALLY LAUNCHED on the Huesca front. In order to carry this out, well-armed Communist units were brought from the Central front, much to the resentment of the ill-equipped troops that had defended the lines since the previous October. On the June 16 (the very day the POUM was declared illegal by the Republican government and Andreu Nin arrested in Barcelona) two battalions of the 129th brigade of the 29th Division (former Lenin Column) were ordered to launch a diversionary attack on the fascist position on the Loma de los Mártires just outside Huesca. To their rear was stationed a unit of Assault Guards, supposedly in reserve but widely believed to be there to watch over the "suspect" POUM troops.

The only attack that succeeded that day was the one on the Loma de los Mártires, taken by the POUM units without the promised artillery support. They were joined in the seized fascist trenches by the rest of the 129th Brigade and a section of the 128th Brigade. Given that all other attacks around Huesca had failed, the fascists could concentrate on the captured position and the POUM fighters soon had to resist the attacks of Moroccan *Regulares* as well as concentrated tank, machine-gun and artillery fire. Despite repeated calls for artillery and air support, it was not forthcoming. After two days, the 129th Brigade was given the order to withdraw. POUM sources speak of 300 casualties. The battle scene in the film is based on these events.

During the following days, the 29th Division was disbanded and its officers arrested. During this process, the Division's crack *Batalló de Xoc Rovira* was nearly involved in an armed clash with troops from the PSUC-led 27th Division sent to take over the 29th's *Parc Mobil* at Belillas. In the film, these dramatic events are represented through the arrival of Popular Army Troops to disband David's and other units commanded by Vidal.

David takes Blanca's body to her village, an unlikely occurrence but not impossible if this is not too far behind the frontline. Loach uses this scene to mention the breakup of the collectives in Aragon — the last stronghold of the revolution — in August 1937 by troops under the command of the Communist Enrique Lister. David then has to escape from Spain as his name is on a wanted list, as did Orwell, Cottman and other foreign volunteers who had fought with the POUM. Others were not so lucky, especially the Germans and Italians (obviously "fascists" for their Stalinist persecutors), many of whom were imprisoned or murdered.

As Solé i Sabate said, "...as a work of fiction it is alright."

Partial History or Which Part of History

SOME PEOPLE WOULD NO DOUBT AGREE WITH THE CRITICISM that Loach's film is "partial" or "simplistic" and that it does not show how "complicated" the Civil War was. This is true of course. *Land and Freedom* is not a documentary nor does it pretend to be a film "about the Civil War." It is, as the opening credits state, "a story of the Spanish Revolution." And it is "partial." Ken Loach does not apologize for this. It is partial *for* the revolution and *against* counterrevolution and fascism. Yes, he takes sides.

Santiago Carrillo (*El Pais* 4/6/95) dismisses the film as presenting the struggle of the Spanish people as "distorted and reduced to an ultra leftist view of events." According to Solé i Sabaté "it is the best favor one could do for the Francoist regime: giving the impression of an internal war inside the Republican side." The solution, one must assume, is that Loach should have presented the "other side" of the argument.

So, let's look at the "other" side of the argument. The Communists argued that the only way to win the war was to construct a centralized and orthodox army and to win support from the western democracies. In order to do this, the revolution had to be eliminated. Unhappy with the "excesses" involved, many latter-day apologists of the Stalinist line defend the need to curb the revolution but criticize the "errors" committed in doing so.

The problem is that "doing away" with revolutions inevitably means repression. Moreover, the Popular Front strategy — changing the left's program to adapt middle class opinion home and abroad — was not developed by chance but imposed by Moscow throughout the world regardless of local circumstances. In Spain it "fitted" in the sense that there was a need for unity against the fascist threat. It was grafted onto the resuscitated Republican-Socialist electoral coalition.

Certain observations need to be made. Neither the Republican parties nor the moderate wing of Spanish Socialism (Prieto) wanted a revolution before, during or after the war. The Spanish Communists on the other hand, like all their counterparts internationally, had only two years previously denounced the Socialists as the main enemy of the working masses, as "social fascists." By late 1934, the Spanish Communist Party (PCE) had begun to talk of the need for a "Bloque Popular Anti-fascista" involving all anti-fascists. An illustration of how little serious analyisis there was behind what would soon be the Communists' insistence on the need to placate the middle classes was the PCE's Catalan section's claim in April 1935 that, "*molta part de la petita burguesia laboriosa ..havien perdut llurs illusions en els partits republicans burgesos i que actualment dirigien la mirada cap al comunisme..*" ["a good part of the working petit bourgeoise ...having lost its illusions about the leadership of the bourgeois republican parties is looking to Communism."]

Were these middle classes, represented for the Communist Party by left Republicanism, so influential that they had to be won over at any cost, even the destruction of the revolution of July 1936? Hardly. In the elections of November 1933, there had been no alliance between Republicans and the Socialists. The left lost, but the result for the left Republicans was particularly disastrous: outside of Catalonia, only one of their candidates was elected without the help of parties to their left or right.

The POUM, in contrast, did not argue that the petit bourgeoisie should be ignored, but that the revolution had to address itself to their problems. For this reason, Nin's party opposed enforced collectivization. But it did insist on the workers' movement keeping its ideological independence.

The PCE's argument that the Western democracies had to be wooed is also deficient. The latter had little doubt as to where their interests lay and only their need not to be seen to be publicly condoning the overthrow of democracy prevented them from recognizing Franco before 1939. Instead, the Republic had to suffer the indignities of "non-intervention," while German warplanes and Italian troops smashed its army and its civilian supporters. Even Soviet historians recognize that "from the end of 1937," that is after the revolution had clearly been defeated, "connivance (against the Spanish Republic) between the Fascist states and the USA, France and Britain was increasingly obvious" (cited in F. Claudin, *The Communist Movement*, Harmondsworth 1975, p.235).

The Popular Front — either the Socialist-Republican or Communist version — was not the only strategy available to win the war but was the only one available to undermine the revolution in the name of "anti-fascist unity."

An orthodox war against Franco could not be won, even less so without sufficient military aid, and with the very partial "advice" given by Soviet military advisors. But the Republic had one very important factor in its favor — the revolutionary enthusiasm of the masses which had resisted the military uprising and within days had gone far beyond the confines of Republican democracy. By pushing the war back into these confines, the Stalinists and their allies destroyed the very enthusiasm that could have defeated Franco. As they did by bowing to military advice that did not, in fact, put the needs of the war first but rather the needs of Soviet foreign policy. Events of the Aragon front and in Barcelona in May 1937 clearly demonstrate this.

Which brings us back to *Land and Freedom*. It may be true that Loach shows only a small part of the war, but it is this part, symbolized in the suppression of the POUM, which explains exactly who was responsible for dividing the anti-fascist struggle and why the Republic lost. Loach could have shown the undoubted heroism of thousands of Communists and others, apart from the POUM, in fighting fascism, but his failure to do so does not remove the central problem posed by the Republic's defeat. Neither does bemoaning the fact that everyone committed "errors" (the anarchists killed people too). The problem is that some committed errors and others carried out a counterrevolution whose historical consequences we are still paying for — the victory of Franco and the strenthening of Stalinism.

Out of Date or Out of Sight ?

WITH THE RE-EMERGENCE OF FASCISM, MASS UNEMPLOYMENT AND WAR in Europe, *Tierra y Libertad* is a timely reminder of when hundreds of thousands of men and women fought for a better world. That it was working-class internationalism, not liberal democracy, that backed the beleaguered Republic.

The collapse of the Communist states, does not make a film which denounces Stalinism irrelevant but makes it more necessary than ever. The Spanish revolution shows there was and is a revolutionary alternative to the authoritarian one-party police states that have masqueraded as "socialism," much to the right's delight, for so long.

Today, when those who "know better" never tire of telling us that all is lost, nothing can be changed and nothing can be done, rather than forget about the past we have every reason to remember it. Revolutions mark the highest points in human history, when ordinary people, for once, really take control of their own destinies. In Spain, and elsewhere, the experience of the revolution of 1936, has deliberately been hidden, forgotten, it has even not been talked about in the name of some abstract "left unity." No, we must remember. We must learn.

At the end of the film we see not just the dead being buried. David's grandaughter is the link between the past and the present. By mixing the *Tierra* from 1936 with today's, Loach is saying the fight against fascism and the fight to end the system that breeds it, the fight for *Libertad*, goes on.

3. The Meaning of a Defeat

Pelai Pagès

BETWEEN MAY 3-8, 1937, THERE WERE A SERIES OF ARMED CLASHES in Barcelona and other Catalan towns between various social and political forces of the Catalan anti-fascist coalition. In *Land and Freedom*, Ken Loach has boldly and convincingly set out the events at the rear of the Catalan front which climaxed in the annihilation of the dissident Workers Party of Marxist Unification or POUM by the intervention of Stalinist Soviet Russia.

A War Which Ignited a Revolution

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR WAS TOUCHED OFF BY A REVOLT of the army opposed to the Republic in July 1936. The conflict unleashed a revolutionary process which embodied a great deal of popular and worker spontaneity, as well as a good deal of political irrationality as it developed. In part, the revolution surged up from grassroots worker organizations with a sophisticated political consciousness along with a high level of organizational and political maturity. After five years of failed Republican reformism, these political forces had begun to consider the possibility of achieving their immediate objectives through the vehicle of a social revolution.

First, we should familiarize ourselves with the profound economic, social, and political transformations which began during that same month of July 1936 on the territory that remained under Republican control. A social revolution was working its way up from the spontaneous actions of the masses who belonged to these organizations with a history full of struggles, sacrifices, repression, and a great deal of sorrow. I have no intention of turning the revolution into a glorious myth. As is the case in all revolutions accompanied by a good deal of spontaneity and/or voluntarism, many errors were made and numerous acts committed which were unpardonable from any point of view. Without presuming to justify anything, it seems obvious to me that a revolution which sprang out of an act of violence as grave as a military insurrection had to engender a particular historical mindset. This psychology only becomes explicable when set within the larger context of the kind of violence that unleashed multiform hatreds and encompassed sentiments having little to do with revolution.

Amid the confusion, some time was needed to clarify the situation. An extremely complex logic of reality began to unfold. On one side was the war with all its cruelty and drama. For the most part, the working class, whatever its ideological bent, was well aware that a victory for the army would mean the

PELAI PAGÈS *is a professor of contemporary history at the University of Barcelona and the author of many books, including a history of the Spanish Communist Party (1920-1930), the Spanish Civil War in Catalonia (1936-1939) and, most recently, the Modelo Prison of Barcelona (1936-1939).*

victory of fascism, barbarism, and hopelessness. Elsewhere, without following any preconceived plan, a shift of political and social hegemony had been engineered in Catalonia and the other territories of Republican Spain which propelled the working class into a position of historical protagonist, a position it had never before attained. This hegemonic shift was responsible for launching the revolutionary transformations.

We are dealing with a complex reality. Yet at the same time, war and revolution viewed in their totality appear to be elements of alternative realities, at least at the outset.

The International Situation: A Causal Framework

THE SPANISH CIVIL WAR BROKE OUT IN AN EXTREMELY COMPLEX INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT which, to a great extent, foreshadowed World War II. When the Spanish conflict began, the aggressiveness of European fascism was being spurred on by the weakness of the Western democracies which proved incapable of standing up to the incursions of fascism. Simultaneously, in the Soviet Union, a process of the consolidation of the autocratic rule of Stalin was under way. Stalin emerged from the turbulent years of the 1930s with the Trotskyist opposition purged and a specific political project in place whose contours and content could soon no longer be questioned by anybody. Only from this perspective can we explain the big show trials of the Bolshevik Old Guard which facilitated the annihilation of Lenin's revolutionary colleagues whose inauguration coincided with the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War. In the service of the supreme truth of socialism incarnated in Comrade Stalin, everything was justified at any cost.

Many would be taken in by this subterfuge, especially when Russia emerged as the only force standing up to the fascist challenge. Stalin played the anti-fascist card very capably and was able to exploit the profound anti-fascist and anti-war mood prevailing among the European public. This enabled Stalin to pull off an abrupt shift in his international policy, proposing the Popular Front strategy of 1935 as a magic formula to stop fascism in its tracks. French and Spanish Communists applied this policy in their own countries and it helped boost their popularity. Who in Europe could doubt that Comrade Stalin was throwing into concentration camps and executing anybody other than the genuine enemies of socialism? Safeguarding the socialist fatherland constantly threatened by fascism became the motive force used to justify everything. This threat also came to encompass the eradication of a cancer which, under the guise of purported political dissidence, menaced the Soviet Union from within.

When the war broke out in Spain, nobody questioned the position of neutrality adopted and maintained by the USSR throughout the first few months of the conflict. More surprisingly, the USSR zealously adhered to the non-intervention agreement while, from the outset, the governments of Italy and Germany had no compunctions about publicly subscribing to the accords while simultaneously supplying weapons and troops to the military insurrectionists. Only in October did Stalin finally decide to intervene in the Spanish Civil War.

The Soviet Intervention in Spain

SOVIET AID TO THE REPUBLIC WAS HARDLY AN ACT OF PURE BENEVOLENCE. In October

1936, the first contingents of the International Brigades arrived in Barcelona duly organized and equipped by the Communist parties of Europe and the U.S. With them also came the Soviet ambassador to Madrid, Mikhail Rosenberg; the Counsel-General to Barcelona, Vladimir Antonov-Ovseenko; and a host of military advisors and political commissars. Dispensing with the usual diplomatic niceties, Stalin began to give advice freely to Francisco Largo Caballero, then the President of the Republican government, on how to run the war. There was no dearth of advisors ready to pass on this "advice" whenever needed. The entire policy of the Spanish CP and PSUC was tightly controlled by new grey eminences such as the Italian Palmiro Togliatti, the French-Catalan André Marti, the Hungarian Erno Geroe, and the terrible Bulgarian Stapanov. Out of touch with our reality in my view, all of them arrived in anti-fascist Spain to teach us how to stifle a revolution and lose a war.

Obviously, my judgment comes after the fact and may appear sectarian. Moreover, some may believe in the selfless courage of such international allies. But the time has come for us to uncover the cynicism behind the story and call things by their names. We know that from the moment Stalin's agents arrived in Spain, the destruction of the POUM became an obsession. The astonishing thing is that we are talking about a small party numbering 30,000 in December 1936 and mainly rooted in Catalonia. However the POUM was the critical conscience of the Russian Revolution which was then drowning in blood. The leaders of the POUM represented the first defenders of the October Revolution in Catalonia. Some, like Andreu Nin had lived almost a decade in the Soviet Union and possessed a keen knowledge of the intricacies of the Stalinist bureaucracy. This obsession with the POUM spread and led to the exit of the POUM from the Autonomous Catalan Government in the name of anti-fascist unity in December 1936.

It was coupled with yet another fixation: how to rein in a revolutionary process in Spain which represented the very antithesis of the Soviet revolutionary process and was very unruly from the Communist perspective.

The Counter-Revolutionary Assault

IF THE EXISTENCE OF THE POUM WAS AN AFFRONT TO STALINISM, the revolution was mainly driven and defended at all costs by the CNT. The CNT was the great anarcho-syndicalist trade union which, from the time of its founding in 1910, had spearheaded all the major working class struggles in Catalonia and the other regions of the Spanish state. Along with the CNT, the POUM and other key segments of the socialist left did not want to squander the historical opportunity presented to them by a revolution for which so many workers had given their lives. Many perceived the revolution as the dream of a lifetime come true, a challenge issued only a few times before in history, and a compelling rationale for a war pitting them against the fascist army that had rebelled against the Republic.

Opting for thoroughgoing revolution was definitely a class choice, a view not shared unanimously within the anti-fascist camp. Neither was opposition confined solely to those whose class interests predisposed them against a radicalization of the revolution, as was the case with the organizations of the bourgeois left. The socialist right-wing and inevitably the Spanish Communist

Party and the Catalonian PSUC very quickly mapped out a course for the return of the Republic to the conditions of institutional normality which existed prior to July 1936. For them, the brunt of the offensive had to be directed against the new political organizations issuing from the revolution. A systematic campaign was begun to rein in the excesses of collectivization in both industry and agriculture. Tensions were sparked which often led to bloodshed and portended the widespread clashes of May 1937.

The Actions of May 1937: Some Irreparable Consequences

THE DECISION WAS MADE TO CANCEL THE 1937 MAY DAY CELEBRATION in Barcelona in order to avoid provocations that might have done serious damage to the antifascist cause. But just two days later, tensions boiled over when three trucks full of commandos were sent by the Autonomous Catalan Government to take over the Barcelona telephone exchange under the pretext that the worker committees established by the CNT-UGT would control inter-governmental communications. This was the spark, the dreaded provocation. As on other occasions in the recent past, a fresh spontaneous wave of Barcelona workers took to the barricades. Only this time, workers lined up against each other on opposite sides of the barricades. The situation was Kafkaesque to the extent that a mini-civil war had erupted in the midst of another civil war of greater scope.

Both camps were very clearly defined: the CNT-FAI (*Federacion Anarquista Iberica*) and POUM were ready to defend the revolution at any price. The Autonmous Catalan Government, the liberal *Esquerra Republicana de Catalunya* (ERC), and the PSUC saw a golden opportunity to put an end to the power of the Committees and finally tame the revolution. The fighting was intense and not just confined to Barcelona. But fortunately, the clashes lasted only a few days. By Saturday May 8, the streets were almost calm once again. In the interim however, Catalonia had lost its autonomous authority in matters of public order and the number of victims reached almost 300 dead and over 2,000 wounded. Moreover, those wounds would never heal.

After the battle, both sides tried to present the confrontation as an unfortunate misunderstanding in which there were no winners or losers. But the fallaciousness of this position soon became obvious because there certainly were winners and losers. The May crisis set off an institutional crisis which led to the fall of the Largo Caballero government and his replacement by Juan Negrin, a moderate socialist leader who soon fell under Communist influence. In the meantime, the authority of the Autonomous Catalan Government continued to wither until its powers were finally annulled entirely when the Republican government was transferred to Catalonia in the autumn of 1938.

Once the possessor of uncontested popular hegemony in Catalan before May 1937, the CNT was now being systematically frozen out of policy-making. CNT members would soon see prominent anarcho-syndicalist activists rotting in jail and exemplary organs of the revolution like the Aragon Defense Council being dissolved. The revolution had been put on a very short leash. A new Communist hegemony was imposed on the ranks of the army and new police apparatus which began to mushroom in the summer of 1937. There now began a new period of the militarization of society, widespread terror, and the nationalization of the economy. Many analysts have come to view these events as an attempt to found what would later become known as a “People’s Democracy” in postwar Eastern Europe.

The main victim of the May confrontation was the POUM which stood accused by the Communists of having provoked the fight and being part of an international fascist conspiracy. The libel and slander employed by the PCE and the PSUC against the POUM culminated in the dissolution of the party and the assassination of its principal leader, Andreu Nin.

The suppression of the POUM had implications far deeper than those that come immediately to mind. For the first time in history, Stalin dared to apply outside of the USSR the same system of terror that he employed at home. In Republican Spain and Catalonia, he accomplished this feat with the aid of so few accomplices because there were many segments of the population which welcomed the return to a certain social normality and a chance to concentrate all their energies on winning the war. But as the irony of history would have it, the Republic would begin to suffer its most spectacular defeats after Stalinism had achieved its objectives. The May events obviously had a lasting demoralizing effect on many of those who continued to fight for the Spanish Republic.

Translated from the Spanish by Patrick Flaherty.

“Amiable Visionaries” and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

Mark Dow

IN 1896, THEODORE HERZL, THE PATRIARCH OF ZIONISM, PUBLISHED *Der Judenstaat*, or *The Jewish State*, in Vienna. The pamphlet proposes “the restoration of the Jewish State” as a solution to anti-semitism. In his conclusion, Herzl wrote:

> It might be further said that we ought not to create new distinctions between people; we ought not to raise fresh barriers, we should rather make the old disappear. But men who think in this way are amiable visionaries; and the idea of a native land will still flourish when the dust of their bones will have vanished tracelessly in the winds. Universal brotherhood is not even a beautiful dream. Antagonism is essential to man’s greatest efforts.
>
> But the Jews, once settled in their own State, would probably have no more enemies....

Herzl gives no indication in his brief proposal that a potential enemy might already be living in Palestine. (He does refer to “the sparse population” of the Argentine Republic, a candidate for the Jewish homeland which he considers and dismisses.)[1]

Norman Finkelstein, who teaches international relations and political theory at City University of New York and New York University, would agree that antagonism is essential — or at least that the founders of the Jewish State believed it to be so. In the opening chapter of *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict** he writes: “the Zionist leadership did not suffer from any illusions that its project would not have to be imposed on Palestine’s overwhelmingly Arab majority or that its implementation could be accomplished without the egregious violation of democratic norms.” Democracy, or majority rule, was, for the Zionist movement, contingent on the establishment of a Jewish majority. “Nonetheless,” Finkelstein argues, “the mainstream Zionist movement never doubted its ‘historical right’ to impose a Jewish state through the ‘Right of Return’ on the indigenous Arab population of Palestine.” (13)

Finkelstein is concerned with the truths about Zionist ideology, the establishment of Israel in 1948 and its consequences for the Palestinians, the 1967 war, and the peace with Egypt. Throughout the book, he frames his arguments by using other accounts of these issues and events as foils. In that sense, his book is for scholars, yet it remains accessible in its meticulous detail. And a direct confrontation with accepted versions of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is

---

*Norman Finkelstein, *Image and Reality*, New York: Verso, 1995. 243pp. $18.95 pb.

MARK DOW, *a Miami-based writer and poet has written numerous articles for* New Politics *on Haiti. His last article on Israel-Palestine appeared in New Politics, Volume III, No. 3, Summer 1991.*

essential to understanding not just what has been happening there, but what has been happening here. "[T]he exposure of the fragile foundations of [elder statesman Abba] Eban's interpretative edifice offers insight not only into the mythology surrounding the June [1967] war but also into the dominant culture that sustains that mythology." (124) Finkelstein's whole book is about exposing the foundations of that dominant mythology.

Political argument on "the left" these days sometimes seems to challenge the dominant cultural mythologies by rote, as if challenging the *New York Times*, for example, were an end in itself. A different kind of example comes from a small meeting of Haiti activists in New York City before President Aristide had been returned to office, in the months when Aristide's willingness to negotiate his return had brought criticism from some of his supporters. One man at the meeting challenged Aristide's worthiness by stating, simply, that Aristide had gone to school in Israel. Father Aristide did indeed study theology in Jerusalem. The idiotic code of the man who spoke meant, I assume, that we "leftists" should oppose Aristide since we "oppose" Israel.

But I mention that absurd example only in passing, and to say that Finkelstein's challenge to the dominant cultural mythology surrounding Israel/Palestine is, on the contrary, thorough and substantive. In fact, it is fascinating sometimes — and frightening — to see exposed the foundations of myths one absorbed long ago without a thought. Of course, that unthinking absorption is the whole point. Take the issue of demography. As mentioned above, the early Zionist leadership was well aware of the importance of establishing a Jewish majority in its homeland. When I was in Hebrew school in the 1970s, a teacher matter-of-factly spoke of the danger for Israel of the Arabs' higher birthrate. One can imagine the subtext, perhaps unconscious, about these overbreeders. The danger, as we students were to understand it, was to Israel's "existence." Of course, the underlying question was really whether a Jewish state can also be a democratic state (Finkelstein tells us that that question is what led him to his book). Last year, I spoke with the Associate Director of Yesha (Judea-Samaria-Gaza), the Jewish settlers' council; she is originally from Chicago. She told me proudly that "we [in the settlements] have the highest birthrate in the country." Shimon Peres, explaining the timing of the secret Oslo peace talks, writes, "Terrorism continued, and the demographics were changing fast. If Israel was not careful, it would lose its lead in population growth between the sea and the Jordan River, and thereby invite tragedy — the same sort of ethnic conflict that destabilized Yugoslavia."[1a]

In his chapter on Joan Peters's *From Time Immemorial* (1984), Finkelstein leads us into the forest of demographic statistics. He summarizes: Peters's "explanation of the Arab population's unusual growth ... [is] massive 'hidden' immigration. That is, Peters avers that a significant part of the population of Palestine in 1947 was not indigenous." (25) Frankly, I am not armed to enter into this debate, but Finkelstein is more than convincing in his use of Peters's own data to demonstrate that her "demographic 'study' is a carefully contrived, premeditated hoax." (39) And the question of the dominant culture's mythology returns; after all, it is not hard to imagine the attraction of Peters's claims. As Edward Said puts it, "Peters entitled everyone to enclose the designation of a people in the quotation marks of suspicion," that is, "*the Palestinians.*"[2]

But again, as interesting as the Peters book itself is the reception of it. It was widely acclaimed, to put it mildly — at least in the United States. Saul Bellow, in an effusive blurb, had not only praised Peters's book, but also condemned the "experts [who] speak from utter ignorance," and written how grateful the millions would be who have been "smothered by false history and propaganda." Bellow later said, according to Finkelstein, "that 'with hindsight and given another chance' he 'would do no such thing'...." (48) In England, on the other hand, the reviews "were devastating," Finkelstein reports. The Israeli daily *Ha'aretz* reported that "at an international conference on Palestinian demography at Haifa University, virtually all the participants ridiculed Peters's demographic 'theses' and the most authoritative scholar in attendance, Professor Yehoshua Ben-Arieh of the Hebrew University, *condemned the Peters enterprise for discrediting the 'Zionist cause.'* " (my emphasis) (45, 47) Finkelstein, by the way, considerably understates his own role in exposing the hoax, Chomsky notes in a recent review.[3]

In another chapter, Finkelstein subjects the work of Benny Morris to his scrutiny. Morris is one of Israel's "new historians," whose work in recent years, particularly on 1948 and the origins of the Israeli state, has gained much attention. I should mention that Morris's first book, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947-1949* (Cambridge, 1987), played a crucial role for me in replacing the foundations of an American Zionist education (see my "Ideal Israel: The Education of an American Jew," *New Politic*s #11, Summer 1991). So I was surprised, even skeptical, when I began to read Finkelstein: on page one he calls Morris's arguments "largely apologetic." It was in Morris's *Birth*, after all, that I had read how David Ben-Gurion gave the order to expel the Palestinian inhabitants of the town of Lydda, and how Yitzhak Rabin signed that order. Like countless other Hebrew school children, I contributed money to the Jewish National Fund (JNF), to plant trees in Israel and "redeem the land." Years later, in Morris, I read about Yosef Weitz, director of the JNF's Lands Department and head of the self-appointed Transfer Committee. In 1940, Weitz wrote in his diary:

> it must be clear that there is no room in the country for both peoples ... If the Arabs leave it, the country will become wide and spacious for us ... The only solution [after the end of World War II] is a Land of Israel, at least a western land of Israel [i.e., Palestine], without Arabs. There is no room here for compromises ... There is no way but to transfer the Arabs from here to the neighbouring countries, to transfer all of them, save perhaps for [the Arabs of] Bethlehem, Nazareth and old Jerusalem. Not one village must be left, not one [bedouin] tribe. The transfer must be directed at Iraq, Syria and even Transjordan. For this goal funds will be found ... And only after this transfer will the country be able to absorb millions of our brothers and the Jewish problem will cease to exist. There is no other solution.[4]

Finkelstein does praise what he calls Morris's "landmark studies," and his "dispatching to oblivion the standard Israeli claims about 'Arab [radio] broadcasts'" encouraging flight. (86-7) But he believes that Morris has ignored the implications of his own evidence, namely, "that Palestine's Arabs were expelled systematically and with premeditation."(53) "In *Birth*," Finkelstein writes, "Morris definitively shatters one of the most enduring myths about the origins of the Israeli-Arab conflict — but only to substitute another scarcely more credible one in its place." (52) The shattered myth is that the roughly 700,000 Palestinian Arabs fled their homes voluntarily. The "happy median" which Finkelstein accuses Morris of substituting is "that 'war, without a Jewish masterplan or indeed, without any preplanning whatsoever, brought a Palestinian exodus of itself,' and that 'with a little nudging in the right direction, the low-key exodus ... turned into a mass flood and fait accompli.' What is this if not official Zionism's 'astonishing' flight of Palestine's Arabs now graced with Morris's imprimatur?" (87)

It seems to me that Finkelstein overstates his case with that last, rhetorical flourish. Morris's version of events seems too complex to be a very useful myth for anyone. As he writes in his own defense, with reference to Finkelstein and another voice of what he terms "mainstream Palestinian academic opinion":

> [They both] somehow avoid the rich world of nuance and deny multiple causation, and resist or ignore the variety and localism of which much of history, and certainly the 1948 war, is composed.... For Finkelstein, it might be said, the only good Israeli is a bad Israeli (and, perhaps, all Arabs are good Arabs).... History is one large morality play, with the protagonists carefully separated into heroes and villains, good and bad. The historian is there not so much to describe and explain as to judge ... [5]

And yet, I think that Finkelstein is right that Morris summarizes his own very detailed work in ways that also moderate it, that Morris insists on a certain balance after presenting evidence — admittedly nuanced — that tends to weigh toward a conscious if inconsistent Zionist policy of expulsion. It would be impossible for me to begin citing examples without having to reproduce the entire debate; even my summary of it is practically lost in qualification. Instead, consider this revealing ambivalence in an interview Morris gave to Israeli journalist Rami Tal in December 1994:

> **Morris**: ... I believe that in 1994 Israel and its institutions are strong enough to withstand an objective and accurate rendition of the Zionist past.... I think the best thing for Israel is to know the truth. Maybe there was some justification for the lies and half-truths in the 1950s, but now the warfare against the Arabs is already pretty much over. We are here to remain here.
>
> **Tal**: I detect a contradiction in your words. On the one hand you say that it is good to disclose the truth. On the other hand, you say that in the fifties lying was justified.
>
> **Morris**: I believe in absolute truth.... I believe that there exists an objective factual truth and that historians can approximate it. But I can understand the people in the 1950s who wanted to hide the truth and cover it up, because they thought that Israel was still too weak to admit it. I can understand them without agreeing with them. Today this is unforgivable.... Propaganda and apologetics are the job of government officials, not of historians. [6]

More recently Morris writes another sentence which seems intent on having it both ways: "The return of Labor to power and the start of Israeli-PLO negotiations triggered a renewal of terrorism against Palestinians in the West Bank (itself in large part a reaction against Palestinian terrorism against Jews) ..." Certainly there is a cycle of violence. As I write, Israel is shelling Beirut in retaliation for Hezbollah's firing rockets into Kiryat Shemona in retaliation for what Israel claims were accidental killings of civilians outside the so-called security zone in southern Lebanon. But Morris's balancing act on the subject of settler violence surprises me. B'Tselem, the Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, provides a very different picture, in my reading.[7] Still, as Finkelstein himself says, Morris has "permanently redefined the parameters of legitimate scholarly debate on the origins of the Palestinian refugee problem." (87)

THE VALUE OF *IMAGE AND REALITY* COMES FROM FINKELSTEIN'S WILLINGNESS to take on any and all authorities. A few times in the book, that tendency also results in gratuitous swipes at individuals and even a brief but unsubstantiated attack on contemporary Israeli culture. In general, though, the book is unsettling in a very useful way. It ends with the Camp David agreements and an eye toward Israel's attempts "to consolidate its control of the West Bank and Gaza." (171) Finkelstein points out that Anwar Sadat's famous peacemaking visit to Jerusalem in 1977 was theater — in secret talks, Israel had already agreed to return the Sinai. This has much resonance today, in this post-handshake-on-the-White-House-lawn era. I will return to the subject of the "peace process" below (at this writing, the Israeli elections are over a month away).

Finkelstein dedicates his book to his mother and father. The former, he indicates, is a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and of Maidanek concentration camp, and his father a survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto and of Auschwitz. He writes: "May I never forget or forgive what was done to them." In the introduction he tells of hearing his mother lecture about her experiences in the ghetto and the camps. "Asked afterwards her views on the Middle East conflict my mother briefly replied, 'What crime did the Palestinians commit except to be born in Palestine?' That is the core reality lost in all the fabricated images of the Israel-Palestine conflict." (3)

I mention this because it remains virtually impossible to discuss attitudes fueling the Middle East conflict without also discussing the Holocaust in one way or another. Finkelstein goes on to compare much of the rhetoric of Zionism with Nazi rhetoric. This, too, will make many readers squirm, but it is worth sitting through the discomfort. Finkelstein demonstrates similarities in a variety of "conquest myths," including "the apparently disparate instances of the English conquest of North America, the Dutch conquest of South Africa, the Nazi conquest of eastern Europe, and the Zionist conquest of Palestine." (89) The similarities are the myths of self-defense, "purity of arms," and, especially, "virgin land or wilderness." (88)

In my essay on Zionism in this journal five years ago, I made the observation (based on Morris again) that even in the 1940s, Zionists had compared their own actions to Nazi actions. For me, the point was not the historical accuracy of the comparison but this early precedent for breaking down the psychological barrier which would prohibit it. Commenting on the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) killing of Muslims in Galilee and the South, Labor minister Aharon Zisling wrote, "This is something that determines the character of the nation ... Jews too have committed Nazi acts." Zisling felt the incidents should be investigated internally — but that for the sake of Israel's image, nothing should be admitted.[8]

Israel Shahak observes that such "public breast-beating" by Zisling functioned "as a magic ritual which absolves a person not only from guilt but also from the need to do anything to remedy a wrong." And, Shahak argues, this reaction is typical of the Israeli "peace camp" to this day.[9] Shahak is a longtime activist and retired professor of chemistry at Hebrew University. When I interviewed him in early 1995, he discussed the danger "that every society and every people is in danger of being nazified." In searching for the origins of Nazism, he found

> that for twenty years the official Nazi program was only the expulsion of Jews from Germany. Purification or cleansing, as they used to say. Germany without Jews. So it immediately drew my attention to the fact that there are Jews, in fact organized and recognized parties — not only the Kahanes, but the Moledet party and other tendencies — who want to expel all the Arabs from the Land of Israel. Such tendencies were very strong in the Labor movement, in the Zionist movement, in the beginning. Because of this, I am saying that there are Jewish Nazis. Jews who are officially saying that Arabs should be expelled from Israel, or from the Occupied Territories, are, in my opinion, Jewish Nazis. And there are Nazi-like tendencies in Judaism, meaning toleration for people who in their official program desire that all Arabs be expelled.
>
> But this is not unique to Jews. I specified it for Jews, but it is not unique to Jews. We see it before our eyes in Bosnia. [10]

PROFESSOR SHAHAK WAS RAISED AS AN ORTHODOX JEW IN POLAND, and moved to Palestine in 1945 as an ardent Zionist. He is also a survivor of the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. I asked him about the fact that his publishers seem to use this last biographical fact as a sort of credential for him, since his work is so critical of Israeli policies. "I dislike this," Shahak replied, adding that he is willing to go along with their perceived need to protect themselves. (He added that he feels "a stronger protection of my credibility than being a Holocaust survivor" is the fact that he is a law-abiding Israeli citizen who has lived there since 1945, and served his required time in the army — and that he would serve again in an emergency, though he is over-age, if Israel were invaded.)

Shahak's recent book, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years** is another crucial tool for exposing and dismantling hidden foundations. The short book is an urgent and angry plea for self-criticism, in which Shahak maintains that the racist policies of Israel and the Zionist movement can only be understood in light of the racism of Jewish religious law. Though I cannot judge Shahak's use of primarily rabbinic source material, I can say that the "exclusivist ideology" (7) he describes resonates strongly in my own Conservative Jewish education. He writes, "the same kind of exclusivity that is regarded by a majority of the diaspora Jews as antisemitic is regarded by the majority of all Jews as Jewish." (4)

Shahak gives the following potent example about the Yiddish word "shiksa," which many readers have probably used lightly to identify a non-Jewish woman. In its entry for "shiksa," Leo Rosten's *The Joys of Yiddish*, gives

> the original Hebrew word, *shequetz* (or, in his transliteration, *sheques*) and defines its Hebrew meaning as 'blemish.' This is a barefaced lie, as every speaker of Hebrew knows. The *Megiddo Modern Hebrew-English Dictionary*, published in Israel, correctly defines *shequetz* as follows: 'unclean animal; loathesome creature, abomination (colloquial - pronounced shaygets) wretch, unruly youngster; Gentile youngster.' (26)

---

*Israel Shahak, *Jewish History, Jewish Religion: The Weight of Three Thousand Years*, Boulder, CO, Pluto Press, 1994.

Why does this matter? Because, as Shahak observes, exclusivism, like other ideologies, can be all the more powerful for being hidden.

Shahak details the origins of this exclusivist ideology as a foundation for a new understanding of Israeli policies toward Palestinians. He discusses the official discrimination in Israel toward non-Jews — not only Arabs, he points out — in the domains of residency rights, the right to work and the right to equality before the law. He discusses the ideology of "redeemed" land and the racist policies of the Jewish National Fund, which also raises the question of demography again. "[L]and which has been 'redeemed' is the land which has passed from non-Jewish to Jewish ownership. The ownership can be either private, or belong to either the JNF or the Jewish state." The "official aim" of this policy is "minimizing the number of non-Jews" in the Land of Israel. (7) On the related question of Israel's confiscating Palestinian land, Shahak added, when I spoke with him:

> Every state confiscates land, and I cannot on principle deny the right of the state of Israel to confiscate a piece of land, at least until I investigate the circumstances. What I can deny is that once the state of Israel confiscates land, it only gives it to Jews....
>
> Empty land, confiscated of course from Arabs in the first place, is used only for Jewish development. Let us say there is an Arab village and near it a kibbutz, and in the middle a piece of empty land belonging to the state. The Israeli principle is that the Arab village will remain with what it has, but the kibbutz or another Jewish settlement may receive the empty land.
>
> In the United States, there would be a debate based on rational or pseudo-rational principles [about] what will happen with the land ... in principle the empty land belonging to the state is serving all citizens. In Israel the empty land is serving only Jews.

"In my view," Shahak summarizes in the book, "Israel as a Jewish state constitutes a danger not only to itself and its inhabitants, but to all Jews and to all other peoples and states in the Middle East and beyond." As when he discusses Nazi-like societies, Shahak is careful to emphasize his objectivity: "I also consider that other Middle Eastern states or entities which define themselves as 'Arab' or 'Muslim,' like the Israeli self-definition as being 'Jewish,' likewise constitute a danger. However, while this danger is widely discussed, the danger inherent in the Jewish character of the State of Israel is not." (2) Shahak is calling for "a genuine revolution in Judaism" (74), beginning with self-criticism. "The most important part of such a critique must be a detailed and honest confrontation of the Jewish attitude to non-Jews. This is what many Jews justly demand from non-Jews ...." (103)

I HAVE REFERRED BRIEFLY TO THE ISSUE OF "BALANCE" in Finkelstein, Morris, and Shahak. It plays a critical role in the conceptualizing of Meron Benvenisti, as his recent title suggests: *Intimate Enemies: Jews and Arabs in a Shared Land*.* The Temple Mount massacre of October 8, 1990, stripped the Israeli-Palestinian conflict of its "ideological and religious garb," writes Benvenisti, and showed its heart: "a primeval contest, a shepards' war, in which the motivating force

---

*Meron Benvenisti, *Intimate Enemies: Jews and Arabs in a Shared Land*, Berkeley, CA, University of California, 1995.

was hatred of the other, classic tribal strife in no need of subtle exegesis." (9) Many observers have pointed to such balance — one land, two peoples — as a way of evading a crucial reality, namely, that the Palestinians are still the victims in this conflict. Not Benvenisti: the massacre also showed the Israelis "as a dominating ethnic group with a monopoly on legal violence, which it used indiscriminately against a dominated and defenseless ethnic group." (13) (After the Hamas suicide bombings early this year, Israeli journalist Nahum Barnea wrote that Clinton "was the first recent American President not to feel compelled to be 'balanced' in his relationship with Israel.") [11]

Benvenisti's work is invaluable in laying out the complex psychic and geographic terrain of the conflict. Benvenisti himself, a columnist for the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*, was Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem under Teddy Kollek, administrator of Arab East Jerusalem and the Old City, and in 1982 established the authoritative West Bank Database Project. For him, the intimacy of the conflict, both historical and day-to-day, is everything. Thus he focuses early in his book on Israeli police testimony concerning their dialogue with Muslim leaders just before the Temple Mount massacre. " 'I spoke with the Mufti there,' " says the officer in charge; " 'we spoke with the Little Mufti and the Red Mufti, that's what we call them. I hope I'm not offending anyone.... I don't know his name actually ...' " Benvenisti comments: "The police officer in charge thus did not even know the names of the spiritual leaders of a million Palestinians." (7) For Benvenisti personally, who in an earlier book describes his relationship with his Arab neighbors, (*Conflicts and Contradictions* [NY: Villard Books, 1986]) this is inconceivable; for Benvenisti the historian, it is emblematic of the whole problem.

On the other side of the coin, the Israeli "longing for legitimacy" explains "the special importance that Israelis attributed to the peace process and bilateral, face-to-face talks with the Arabs. Arabs negotiating directly with Israeli legitimize the Jewish state." Here Benvenisti is referring to the Bush-Baker Madrid conference of 1991. He continues: "The need for legitimacy resounds even more strongly in Israelis on the liberal left.... Only Palestinian recognition could liberate them from deep mental anguish, from guilt feelings over the fact that the Zionist enterprise had been achieved by the destruction of the Palestinians.... A peace process in which representatives of the two warring communities participated was, then, the object — a peace process, not necessarily peace terms." (155-57) Recalling Finkelstein on the theater of the Sadat visit, Benvenisti notes that Baker "wanted a ceremonial event, intentionally cut off from reality." And the illusion of balance again: "The rules imposed by the Americans created, during four long and well-photographed days, a procedural and symbolic symmetry between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The huge discrepancy in physical power and the asymmetry of their international standing were nullified, or so it seemed." (153)

ON THE SUBJECT OF KNOWING ONE'S ENEMY, EDWARD SAID PROVIDES an astounding detail. Said, of course, has been an outspoken critic of the negotiations and of the PLO leadership. In a 1994 interview he said: "In the negotiations that went from Oslo to Cairo, all — literally all — of the facts, documents, figures, and even the maps that were used were produced by the Israelis. The PLO has been unable to produce one item of information that is not derived from an Israeli source. And this is about our land! This is what I mean by the discipline of detail. If you're going to negotiate with your enemy — and Israel *is* our enemy — you need maps that you yourself make.... Their historical motto was 'Another Acre, Another Goat.' Historically, the Palestinians have never produced a counterstrategy." [12]

The results of these negotiations, widely ignored in the mainstream media here, have been discussed. (See the opening paragraphs of Tikva Honig-Parnass's article in *New Politics*, Winter 1996, #20.) Some things bear repeating. Rabin himself told the Knesset late last year that Oslo II leaves Israel with exclusive control of "over 70 percent of the West Bank." As Meir Shteglitz put it in the Israeli paper *Yediot Ahronot*, " ... the only 'price' Israel paid was its withdrawal from the areas densely inhabited by Palestinians, something that was agreed upon since Israel felt the pressure of the Intifada." Those who "agreed," Shahak explains, are "the Israeli army and intelligence circles, from which the author comes."

Moreover, in giving the demographic justification for his peace agreement, Rabin reiterated Israel's larger claim: "We had to choose between Greater Israel, *which although we believe the Jewish people have a right to,* means a binational state with a population — in today's figures — of 4.5 million Jews and over 3 million Palestinians who constitute a separate religious, political, and national entity; and a state that was smaller in territory but Jewish in nature. We, of our own free will, opted for a Jewish state." (my emphasis) And in the same speech: "We want the [Palestinian] entity to be less than a state." What little the Palestinians do control is in the hands of the Palestinian Authority and Yassir Arafat; in the aftermath of the Hamas suicide bombings inside Israel in February and March (1996), Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu confirmed (if it needed confirming) that Arafat was Israel's intended "subcontractor." True, Netanyahu was referring to the fight against "terrorism," but the implication is clear. [13]

One commentator notes that an important clause in Oslo II "establishes continuing Israeli control over all state and 'absentee' lands [recall Shahak], even in Areas A and B," that is, those areas under varying degrees of Palestinian Authority and shared control — all of which remain surrounded by the exclusively-Israel-controlled Area C. Yet something does seem to have changed, even if it has little to do with Palestinian independence. That same commentator notes that Oslo II "does represent the first time that Israel has established *any* limitation on its territorial claims to the areas." [14]

Maybe it is that grain of difference — though Rabin, as just quoted, contradicts it — that Benvenisti foresaw when he wrote the optimistic final chapter of *Intimate Enemies*. (A version of the book appeared in Hebrew in 1992, but there is no indication of what has been revised.) "The Green Line," he writes, referring to the early negotiations, "has thus been reestablished." (215) In that last chapter, he writes his own self-criticism: "The unfolding events and especially the signing of the declaration of Israeli-Palestinian mutual recognition have stunned me." The reader may then be, as I was, stunned in turn by Benvenisti's new outlook. The mutual recognition, he argues, "put an end to a bloody ideological strife, *at least on the formal, diplomatic plane*." The emphasis is mine: if this logic already seems confusing, it is because Benvenisti seems to reinforce pessimism at every turn of his justification for optimism. He continues: "When asking myself where I erred, I detected one basic fault: my own romantic perception of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict gave excessive weight to its ideological and emotional elements." Benvenisti unapologetically describes his own "profound attachment to Zionist ideology." "Infused with anachronisms and nostalgia myself, I gravitated to and identified with the tragedy, failing to perceive how drawn people are to catharsis." (209) Then again, "It goes without saying that 'cooperation' based on the current power relationship is no more than permanent Israeli domination in disguise, and that Palestinian self-rule is merely a euphemism for bantustanization." And he ends the book with a brief defense of "dreamers" such as himself who continue to believe that coexistence may still be possible in "confederated Israel/Palestine." (232-34)

SINCE THEN, BENVENISTI HAS WRITTEN OF THE INTIMATE COMPLEXITY which makes catharsis impossible. Here he describes Israel's military redeployment late last year:

> All important components of the Israeli conquest regime did not change. The [Palestinian] municipal independence which was achieved could yet change to a worse conquest regime than before. The new situation is very much better from the point of view of the Israeli conqueror. The redeployment, the abolition of the Civil Administration and the withdrawal of the army from areas densely inhabited by Palestinians may serve under other circumstances as a beginning of a change of the situation, but by themselves they don't constitute "independence." Those who now encourage great expectations may be responsible for the inevitable disappointment ...[15]

Again Benvenisti seems determined to carve out a space for optimism within his pessimism.

A hundred years have passed since Herzl wrote, "Universal brotherhood is not even a beautiful dream." Early last year, an Israeli soldier stopped me and a Palestinian companion at the bottom of steps leading to a Jewish holy site in the West Bank town of Hebron; saying nothing to my companion, the soldier asked me, "Are you a Jew?" The Palestinian showing me around was a young journalist. "I am against the peace process that took place," he told me. "That does not mean that we are against peace." He explained that his people have been occupied by the Turks, the British, the Jordanians, the Israelis, and now by the Palestinian Authority. "I have no feeling of security ... They give you autonomy and they keep on confiscating.... What makes me nervous is that the American people think that the suffering of the Palestinian people is no more."

April 1996

NOTES

1. Theodore Herzl, *The Jewish State* (NY: American Zionist Emergency Council, 1946), 69, 153, 95-6.

1a. Peres, *The New Middle East* (NY: Henry Holt, 1993), 16.

2. Edward Said, "Conspiracy of Praise," in Said and Christopher Hitchens (eds.), *Blaming the Victims* (NY: Verso, 1988), 24.

3. Noam Chomsky, "Eastern Exposure: Misrepresenting the Peace Process," *Voice Literary Supplement*, February 1996, 9.

4. Morris, *Birth*, 207, 27. (Ellipses and brackets in the Weitz quote are Morris's.)

5. Morris, *1948 and After* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 37.

6. Morris interview in *Yediot Ahronot*, December 16, 1994, excerpted in Israel Shahak, *Report #150: The New Israeli Historians*, February 12, 1995 (available under Archive of News and Reports at alquds.org).

7. Morris, "After Rabin," *Journal of Palestine Studies (JPS)* #98, Winter 1996, 84. B'Tselem, *Law Enforcement Vis-a-Vis Israeli Civilians in the Occupied Territories* (Jerusalem, March 1994).

8. Morris, *Birth*, 233.

9. Shahak, *Report #150*.

10. "An Interview with Israel Shahak," *The Link* (NY: Americans for Middle East Understanding), May-June 1995. A shorter version appeared in *Z Magazine*, April 1995.

11. Serge Schmemann, "Clinton, In Israel, Stresses Support For Peace Effort," *New York Times*, March 15, 1996.

12. "An Interview with Edward W. Said," *JPS* #94, Winter 1995, 64-5.

13. Rabin, Speech to the Extraordinary Knesset Session on the Interim Agreement, October 5, 1995, reprinted in *JPS* #98, 138. Shteglitz, "The Worthlessness of a Peace Obtained for Nothing," *Yediot Ahronot*, February 29, 1996, in Israel Shahak, *From the Hebrew Press*, April 1996 (available through Middle East Data Center, Box 337, Woodbridge, VA 22194; 703-643-2773). Joel Greenberg, Israeli Troops Raid Camp Where 2 Bombers Lived," *New York Times*, March 5, 1996.

14. Geoffrey Aronson, *Settlement Report*, Sept.-Nov. 1995, in *JPS* #98, 117.

15. Benvenisti, "Palestinian Illusions Created by the Israel Army's Redeployment, *Ha'aretz*, December 14, 1995, in *From the Hebrew Press*, February 1996.

Argentina in the Hour of the Furnaces

Pablo Pozzi and Alejandro Schneider

ARGENTINA RETURNED TO A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF GOVERNMENT thirteen years ago, after a long and harsh seven-year dictatorship. For most Argentines, 1983 was a year of hope and confidence in the future. Political participation was high as was social activism, and the Left began a period of what appeared to be sustained growth despite the aftermath of the 1976-1983 repression. Raúl Alfonsin, a leader of the center-right Radical Civic Union (UCR) was elected President on a progressive platform.[1] In 1989, he was forced out of office, in the midst of hyperinflation, riots, and economic bankruptcy. His successor, Carlos Menem, from the center-Left Justicialist (Peronist) Party learned his lesson well and adopted a series of neoconservative economic and social policies very similar to those implemented by the dictatorship, resulting in a political crisis.

Since the 1930s Argentina has been an unusual Third World nation. Economically it had a strong industrial base geared mostly to consumer products for a protected domestic market. Argentine industry fueled its growth with the foreign currency obtained through agricultural and beef exports by a few large landowning families, often at odds with protectionist policies but without sufficient political strength to overturn them. By the 1960s these families had links to foreign industrial and banking interests in Argentina and were able to destabilize elected governments in order to promote their own economic agenda. At the same time, the growth of the state sector of the economy, the creation of a welfare state under the first Peronist government (1946-1952-1955), and the fact that

---

[1]Campaign promises included respect for human rights, the rule of law, popular education, protection for national industry, justice for those affected by the repression, diplomatic non-alignment and improvement of relations with the Third World, and economic development. The only campaign promise fulfilled was to try the members of the dictatorship's Military Junta for human rights abuses.

PABLO POZZI *was born in Argentina and did his graduate study in the U.S. He teaches U.S. history at the University of Buenos Aires and is Dean for Academic Affairs at the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at the Universidad de Palermo (Argentina). He is the author of several books on Argentine labor studies.*

ALEJANDRO SCHNEIDER *was born in Argentina. He teaches at the University of Buenos Aires and is professor of Contemporary Argentine History at the Universidad de Palermo (Argentina). He has published several books and articles on Argentine history. The title of this article comes from a film made in 1971.*

the state generated much of the domestic demand for goods and services, turned it into a key economic factor leading to hard fought battles over its control.

Socially, Argentina developed a large middle class which saw the state as a channel for social mobility and a source of jobs. The rural population was relatively small, made up of farmers (sharecroppers or small landholders) or wage earners (ranch hands and peons). At the same time, industrial growth created a large working class, organized in strong unions. Culturally many of these workers leaned to the Left expressing their anti-imperialist and laborite feelings through Peronism. Both middle-class aspirations, and working-class interests clashed with those of the foreign-oriented bourgeoisie.

Thus, politically, a majority of the working class and rural wage earners were Peronists, the middle class tended toward the UCR, while the conservative bourgeoisie alternated between the two majority parties and small provincial political organizations. The Left included a sizeable Communist Party and smaller Trotskyist groups, all with little or no influence within the working class. This meant that economic might was highly concentrated in few hands but the electoral system permitted the majority of the population to express its support for the socio-economic system worked out between 1945 and 1955. The result was a political stalemate, leading to instability over three-and-a-half decades, during which no elected government was allowed to finish its term in office and military dictatorships represented the interests of the highly concentrated economic power groups.

FROM 1969 TO 1975 THE WORKING CLASS AND THE LEFT, THROUGH VARIOUS MEANS, including sizeable guerrilla organizations, attempted to break this stalemate posing, for the first time in Argentine history, the possibility of an anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist revolution. The divisions within the Left, together with the repression unleashed by the 1973-1976 Peronist government, brought this attempt to a dead end. In turn, the Right attempted to break the political stalemate through the 1976 coup d'état. The 1976-1983 dictatorship intended to change this situation by applying free market and monetarist policies buttressed by the repression of political and social activists. Human rights organizations estimate that the dictatorship caused 30,000 disappearances, about 8,000 deaths, jailed some 10,000 persons, and forced tens of thousands into exile. Working class resistance went underground and succeeded in blocking many military policies.[2] This resistance made one of the goals of the dictatorship, generating a new consensus, impossible. But the repression was so brutal that the resistance was atomized and unable to pose a political alternative to the dictatorship. When Argentina returned to elections, and the military were forced to withdraw after the fiasco of the Malvinas/Falkland Islands War, the Left emerged defeated and with serious problems, but with a mass following expressed by its collective 10% of the electoral vote. In addition, the military had left the nation in a state of economic disarray with a speculative economy, deindustrialization, and a huge foreign debt.[3]

Convinced that popular disaffection with the dictatorship could generate a new round of revolutionary upheavals, Alfonsin, during the election campaign,

---

[2]See: Pablo Pozzi. *Oposición obrera a la dictadura* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Contrapunto, 1988).

[3]Argentina's foreign debt increased from five billion dollars in 1975 to 36 billion in 1983.

accepted many of the demands made by the Left under the dictatorship.[4] However, once he became President he had little opportunity to carry out even his limited reformist program since he was subjected both to economic destabilization and military pressures. Between 1983 and 1989 there were three military uprisings[5] which succeeded in obtaining concessions from the government. In addition, the bourgeoisie refused to support any economic policy intended to limit speculation as the main form of capital accumulation. After 1985 Alfonsin had, for the most part, caved in to economic pressures and adopted neoconservative economic policies including wage freezes and the privatization of the state sector. Opposed to these policies, labor carried out 13 general strikes. This rank and file pressure was bolstered by trade union leaders most of whom were Peronists, and thus members of the opposition party. In addition, advances in human rights were eschewed in favor of a pragmatic approach to power politics. Thus, between 1989 and 1990, both Alfonsin and Menem passed a series of laws putting an end to trials for human rights violations. Eventually, the dictators condemned in 1985 were freed and allowed to rejoin society.

The 1989 election was supposed to herald the definitive return to democracy in Argentina. The Peronist candidate, Carlos Menem, handily won the Presidency promising a "productive revolution," a large wage increase, and support for labor's demands. Once the election was over, these promises were forgotten. The new Minister of the Economy, an executive of the Bunge and Born multinational grain corporation, instituted an economic program with a counterpart in the social, political, and diplomatic areas.[6] The policies implemented by the Menem government bear a remarkable resemblance to those of the 1976 dictatorship; both have succeeded in changing Argentina forever.

What were these changes? Let us consider them one at a time, aware that they are all part of a whole and can be considered separately only as a tool for analysis. Economically, the Menem government, like many others in Argentina's history, believed that the problem centered on three interlinked aspects. First, that protectionism had generated an inefficient industry with high labor costs. Second, that a large state sector constituted a drain on national resources since it was not subjected to free market competition and was also inefficient and the main source of corruption. And third, that Argentina had to modify its role within the international division of labor. Thus, rather than attempt to reindustrialize it should focus on those economic areas to which it was particularly suited:

---

[4]In spite of Alfonsín's progressive, and democratic image, he has always been closer to the political right than to the center. For instance, throughout the 1976-1983 military dictatorship he advised the Minister of the Interior, General Albano Harguindeguy (who was also his business partner) about many legal and political problems, especially in terms of how to deal with "the human rights issue."

[5]There was a fourth one, in December 1989, under the Menem Administration.

[6]The Menem government has had four Ministers of the Economy. The first two, Miguel Roig and Nestor Rapanelli belonged to Bunge & Born. The third one was Erman Gonzalez, a lawyer closely linked to Menem and reputedly his "money-man," who was forced to resign in 1991 accused of corruption. The fourth and current Minister, Domingo Cavallo, is a Harvard man, with close ties to the United States and the highly concentrated economic groups; during the last dictatorship he was President of Argentina's Central Bank and responsible for the state taking charge of some thirty billion dollars in foreign debt owed by private firms.

agriculture and agribusiness.

THE EFFECT OF THESE CHANGES WAS FELT IMMEDIATELY. On the one hand, credit for small and middle industrial concerns was reduced, while the nation was opened to imports. Those small and mid-size businesses which had survived the harsh policies of the dictatorship, now began going under. Wages, already low (they were about 60% of 1975 values) were reduced even further; first, through inflation and later, once inflation was limited to no more than 50% a year, by a wage freeze. This also reduced domestic demand at a time when supply increased, because imports were freed.

At the same time, the Menem administration decided to combine economic standards with need, and began selling off many state-owned enterprises. These enterprises could be bought either with cash (through various forms of financing) or with Argentine foreign debt bonds to be redeemed at face value (though their market price was about 75% below par). Between 1990 and 1992 most profitable state-owned enterprises were sold either to the private sector or to foreign state-owned corporations. Thus, Iberia bought Argentine Airlines, the French and Spanish state telephone companies bought the Argentine telephone system, various private corporations bought the railroads, and so on. Altogether, 23 billion dollars were obtained by the government this way, of which 13 billion were foreign debt bonds. Those state-owned service or industrial sectors which found no buyers, like passenger railroad lines, were shut down.

The initial result of these measures was a flux of funds flowing into Argentina taking advantage of the state bargain basement sale. This was passed off by Menem as productive investment. The reality was very different. Though the service sector did grow significantly, the industrial sector continued its recession which had the effect of stabilizing the rate of inflation. The influx of dollars permitted the government to maintain a fictitiously low rate of exchange for the dollar (one for one). The agricultural export sector, which had benefited from the low production costs generated by hyperinflation, now had problems competing internationally because of high dollar costs. Agriculture also began contracting. The increase in imports, combined with a reduction in income from agricultural exports, has generated serious problems in the balance of Argentine trade for the first time in decades. At the same time, profit repatriation, debt interest payment, and the payment of services to foreign-owned companies that participated in the privatization of the state has led to an increase in the Argentine foreign debt. In 1989 Argentina owed 61 billion dollars to foreign institutions. In 1994, after selling off 23 billion in assets, it owed 73 billion.

Those who participated in the privatization (even as minor partners of foreign corporations) surged ahead making windfall profits; those who did not fell by the wayside and were absorbed by the others. Between 1991 and 1994 there was a record number of takeovers of Argentine corporations by foreign firms. American, British, French, Spanish, Mexican, Brazilian, and even Chilean corporations have become firmly ensconced in Argentina through buyouts or takeovers of Argentine food, electrical, energy, and garment firms. Most have been able to retain an oligopolic control of the shrinking domestic market, gearing their products to the ten percent earning more than $3,000 a month. This has brought them record profits in spite of reduced sales compared to 1975. For instance, automobiles sold in Argentina cost twice as much as they do in the

United States in dollars; and even a car produced in Argentina sells, on average, for 40% more within the country than in Chile, where it is exported.

All of this is combined with Argentina's realignment within the world market. Free trade agreements, such as Mercosur with Brazil, Uruguay, and Paraguay, have resulted in a veritable flood of cheaper Brazilian goods into the Argentine market with little or no benefits for local products. In addition, Argentina has aligned itself diplomatically with the United States, resigning from the Non-Aligned Movement, and beginning what Menem has called "carnal relations." Thus Argentina sent ships to the Gulf War, troops to Bosnia and Haiti, and counterinsurgency advisors to Mexico and Peru. The rationale for these decisions is that Argentina has made an enemy of the United States for too long, through its non-alignment, and must now make amends to earn the trust, and thus economic support, from both the American government and the business community. In this sense, it has abandoned any semblance of a Latin Americanist position in order to support any and all U.S. initiatives within world forums.

Socially the overall effects of these policies has been devastating. The neoconservative, free market policies, have led to a drop in real wages, and a huge increase in unemployment. According to government statistics, 62% of Argentine wage earners receive $300 dollars or less a month, 27% earn between $300 and $800 a month, and only 11% earn more. At the same time, the government estimates that a family of four needs an income of $1400 a month to meet its basic necessities. According to the Argentine Census Institute (INDEC), at least 25% of the population is below the poverty line of "basic unsatisfied necessities." In December 1995, unemployment was calculated at 18.3%, with another 20% underemployed. Nobody has calculated the percentage of those who have dropped out of the labor market altogether. In addition, many Argentines hold more than one job, and the eight-hour work day has literally disappeared. Most workers fight for overtime to make ends meet.

Entire regions of Argentina, like the Northwest, have become impoverished; hunger, malnutrition, and infant mortality have increased to rates unheard of since the 1930s. Health has also suffered. Diseases such as cholera, polio, and tuberculosis, which had disappeared by 1960, have reached epidemic proportions. The elimination of "inefficient" rail lines, and the reduction of airline flights, have made ghost towns of many areas. For example, until 1992, the town of Trelew (pop. 80,000) had 5,000 garment and textile workers. Only 900 remain employed today and five families a week emigrate from the area. The city is now surrounded by shanty towns.

Lay-offs in Argentina, until 1993, were governed by a law which forced the employer to pay a sizeable severance (three months for the first year worked, and another month for each year thereafter), instead of unemployment insurance. In addition, a series of "voluntary retirement" programs were set up with World Bank funds. Thus, there was an initial cushion for unemployment, as well as a short-term cash influx into the economy. Unable to find other employment, laid-off workers set up numerous small businesses such as newspaper stands, vegetable and grocery stores, and taxi services. For instance, between 1988 and 1994 the number of taxicabs in Buenos Aires increased from 36,000 to 55,000. But these businesses were short-lived since, at the same time, demand dropped precipitously. A year after a worker had been laid-off, the severance pay had been spent, and the standard of living declined.

The result was a record number of strikes, protests, and riots. In 1989 thousands of people in Buenos Aires and Rosario rioted, sacking supermarkets and grocery stores. By 1993 the riots had turned more violent, with people attacking (and burning down) the government house in Northwestern Santiago del Estero province, as well as in Jujuy, La Rioja, Chaco, Tucuman, and Corrientes. The government response included repression by security forces, and two to three months of economic relief. Also, elderly retirees have carried out numerous demonstrations, and had several very violent clashes with the police over their meager pensions (on average $150 a month). Strikes have numbered in the hundreds over the past four years, turning increasingly violent. Many of these job actions end in defeat, because of government repression, employer intransigence, and trade union betrayal. For instance, the coal miners of the southern Rio Turbio mines struck in November 1994 demanding a 30% (or $100 dollar) raise. They took over the mines for ten days, and were besieged by the security forces. Both unions and mainstream political parties were unsupportive and, in the end, the strikers settled for a $50 a month raise.

Though strikes are numerous, they are also atomized, a result of the role played by the mostly Peronist trade unions. In the late 1940s Argentine labor leaders became heavily dependent on the state for their legal standing and bargaining rights. Most belonged to the Peronist Party. When Carlos Menem, a Peronist President with close ties to the unions, unleashed capital's offensive on labor, the trade unions were singularly unable to resist. On the one hand, the social structure of Argentina was changing, reducing both their bargaining strength and their economic power. On the other, they were unwilling to openly take on a state led by a Peronist. Menem craftily applied a policy of punishments and rewards for those unions which didn't accept the new status quo. Labor leaders who supported Menem quickly found that, in the short run, their union members were spared initial massive lay-offs, that they were called into the halls of power and asked to participate, and finally that their unions were allowed to buy into the privatized state industries. Those who were not supportive soon found themselves hemmed in by both employers and the state. By mid 1990, Menem had succeeded in splitting the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) into two camps.[7] Indecision, negotiations, and the outright bribery of several leaders led to the disappearance of the opposition CGT by 1992. Slowly, but surely, many Argentine labor leaders adopted a new union model. If the pre-1989 model was based on mass affiliation, and a heavily politicized labor movement that functioned as "the backbone" of Peronism, the post-1989 model was closer to American business unionism. The slogan seems to be "fewer but better." Thus many unions accepted the lay-off of many of their members in exchange for wage increases for those remaining, and participation in the decision-making process leading to the lay-offs. For instance, the state Oil Workers Union (SUPE) named its Secretary General to join the board that privatized the state Petroleum Company (YPF) which resulted in laying off 75% of all oil

[7]Informants claim that the government bought the vote of many CGT delegates at between $20,000 and $50,000, depending on the union, in order to force a showdown with the more traditionally Peronist UOM (Steelworkers) and their allies.

workers. The union guaranteed that the lay-offs would not cause conflict. In exchange SUPE was able to set up several middle-sized businesses within the oil industry. The same thing happened with the Railroad Workers Union (UF), while the Light and Power Workers Union (FATLyF) used pension funds to buy into hotels, banks, coal mines, and electrical power plants. When the above-mentioned Rio Turbio coal miners went on strike, they found that one of the most powerful CGT unions, FATLyF, was in bed with the employers.

The net result has been social dislocation with a great deal of conflict, which has been so atomized, so unorganized, that it has had little political impact and slight or no capacity to stop the decline in workers' living standards. And this has not only affected the working class. The middle class has been hard hit also. Traditionally state employment has been the channel for middle-class social mobility in Argentina. Cutbacks in state employees have significantly reduced middle-class opportunities and unleashed a kind of cannibalism previously unseen. Many state employees were fired, hiring freezes applied, and wages reduced, while a few privileged employees saw their salaries increase significantly. For example, one-third of national university professors were fired, their salaries redistributed among the remaining two-thirds, and education as a road to better employment was severely curtailed. Since the 19th century, Argentine university education has been free and, has generally had high standards, with few low-quality private universities. After 1991 tuition was instituted at several national universities (for instance, the National University of Cordoba). Primarily, this affected the children of working class and lower middle class families. In addition, entrance exams were instituted (National University of Cuyo) which favored those students who went to the wealthier secondary schools. The number of university students dropped 12% between 1992 and 1994.

SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION HAS ALSO HAD A PROFOUND IMPACT on national politics. Argentina has had what could be termed an organic crisis since 1955 (when Peron was overthrown); no social sector has had the power or consensus to impose its objectives on the nation's direction. The bourgeoisie, and the Menem government, have solved this, not by achieving a new consensus but by de-linking politics from its mass electoral base. Rather than establish a political party that would express its interests, the highly concentrated bourgeoisie has succeeded in co-opting the two traditional mass parties (UCR and Peronism). Elections are no longer issue- or program-oriented but have become a question of polls, slogans, publicity, and marketing. All mainstream politicians agree with Menem's economic policies, and attempt to differentiate themselves only in terms of "efficiency" or "honesty." To win an election a party has to obtain the support of economic groups that will provide it with resources, and media, to mobilize the voters. Once an election is won, daily politics have little or nothing to do with the electorate. Those elected are responsive to lobbies. Thus, though over 100,000 workers came to Buenos Aires, from all over the country in July 1994, to protest Menem's economic policies, they had little impact on a government more concerned with maintaining the goodwill of the American embassy and of big business. As a result, the prestige of democratic institutions has plummeted over the past few years; politicians are commonly seen as lying and corrupt; and voting is down all over the country. While an average 90% of the electorate voted between 1946 and 1991, in the 1993 by-elections 25% of the voters abstained, while another 6% cast blank ballots (a constitutional right meaning "none of the above"). In addition, party affiliation has dropped, and most local party structures are in crisis. But since mass struggles seem to have little impact on government policy, people retain some faith in the electoral process. This has resulted in significant set-backs for the creation of a political alternative to Menem's neoconservatism. Workers struggle, bravely face the police and the security forces, challenge labor bureaucrats, and defy employers, and then they try to get a congressman or a senator to get involved, pass a law, or get a subsidy to help them out. This means that the mainstream political parties can (for the moment) afford to remain unresponsive to popular needs without losing too many votes.

In addition, a contradiction has emerged. Since the government has become a prisoner of the multinational economic groups, its prime reason for existence is the maintenance of its economic program. As a result, the current Minister of Economics, Domingo Cavallo, has become the most powerful member of the government. Despite its bourgeois democratic forms, any conflict between the Constitution and economic policy is quickly resolved in favor of the latter. For example, in late October 1994 the courts ruled in favor of a retiree demanding his proper pension under the Constitution, and not less. Minister Cavallo openly refused to comply, saying that to do so would endanger economic "stability." The result was telling: the President suspended the court's decision, riding roughshod over the letter of the law. The same thing happened with the privatization of the postal system. The President supported a law which favored an Argentine economic group. Cavallo opposed the law since he favored Federal Express. Not only was the Minister not forced to resign but, supported by the U.S. Embassy, he was also able to force the President to back off publicly.

PERHAPS THE GREATEST POLITICAL IMPACT HAS BEEN ON THE WORKING CLASS. Traditionally most Argentine workers have responded favorably to Peronism as a defender of a populist, protectionist, laborite, welfare state. Suddenly a Peronist President, elected under a traditional populist program, implements neoconservative, free market, policies while retaining the populist image. The ensuing ideological crisis has left most of the working class in shock, without a political reference point. This has produced a great deal of political confusion and a breakdown of decades-old political loyalties. For instance, though Menem won in 1989, the vote of the joint Communist Party-Movement Toward Socialism (MAS, a Trostkyist party) United Left front, increased significantly in traditional working-class Peronist neighborhoods. In 1991, the Left's vote decreased in these neighborhoods and, instead, many of those voters (and many others) voted for the right-wing nationalist (neofascist) National Dignity Movement (MODIN), led by Colonel Aldo Rico.[8] And in 1994, these same voters swung to

---

[8]Colonel Aldo Rico is a highly trained officer responsible for many human rights violations between 1976 and 1983. In addition, between 1983 and 1989 he led two military uprisings against the Alfonsín administration, which he accused of being Communist (his slogan was: "Lenin, Stalin, Alfonsín"). The neofascist MODIN split in 1994, with the majority of the party accepting neoconservativism and joining a political alliance with Menem in exchange for numerous political appointments. The minority retained a nationalist, neofascist perspective, but with little or no impact on national politics.

the center-Left once again, making the Broad Front (Frente Grande: a loose coalition of Peronists, Christian Democrats, Social Democrats, and Leftists) the second political party in Buenos Aires Province behind Menem's Peronists.

Thus, though many workers, and especially the older ones, remain Peronistas de corazón (Peronists in their hearts) their political loyalty has been severely shaken. What has replaced it, for the moment, is politics based on clientism and "possibilism." Voting against the provincial or municipal power structure, can be very costly: subsidies can be curtailed, bus lines rerouted, housing projects not built; the police can be given a free hand in the area turning it into a free-fire zone. People view this as "so-and-so does things for our neighborhood," and rarely as electoral blackmail. However, when the opposition accumulates enough strength in a neighborhood (from neighborhood associations and soccer clubs, through labor unions and municipal councilmen), there is a noticeable electoral shift that can only be interpreted as meaning the costs of bucking the power structure have gone down or become acceptable. A clear example of this was the triumph, in 1990, of the social-democratic Popular Socialist Party (PSP) in Rosario, Argentina's second city and a former Peronist stronghold.

Still, popular politics in Argentina are marked by two major characteristics. The first is that politics, in general, have been Menemized. This means, essentially, that most parties have de-linked themselves from the electoral base in order to seek the support of various economic power groups. The net result has been a level of corruption and unaccountability unseen in Argentina since the 1930s (the so-called Infamous Decade). Both the Judicial and Legislative branches of government have become appendages of the Executive. Though there have been myriad cases of corruption registered, not a single person has been imprisoned as a result.[9] The opposition has accepted the rules of the game. The UCR, led by former president Raúl Alfonsín, signed a public agreement in 1993, called the Olivos Pact (after the President's country residence) in support of the new economic and social laws, and agreeing to Menem's Constitutional reform. The result was telling. On the one hand, the UCR's electoral share dropped from 30 to 14%. On the other, it has been permitted to share power through appointments and subsidies. In exchange, the UCR agreed to a new Constitution that enshrined the reelection of the President, reduced social benefits, and strengthened executive power.

THE SECOND MAJOR CHARACTERISTIC OF POPULAR POLITICS is the crisis of the Left. Though it grew significantly between 1983 and 1986, the Left was profoundly affected by the 1976-1983 repression, the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the overall international situation. The disappearance without a whimper of the USSR demoralized many activists, including those who had traditionally criticized Stalinism. For many, it implied that socialism was no longer on the agenda, if it had ever been. This resulted in a range of reformist options, including sev-

[9]The most noted case occurred in 1991, when the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires went public and denounced Emir Yoma, a Presidential advisor and Menem in-law, for demanding a million-dollar kick-back from Swift Corporation in order to certify their new Rosario meat-packing plant. The advisor was eventually fired, and though the kick-back was proved he was neither tried nor imprisoned.

eral social-democratic variants, which ultimately meant reaching an accommodation with capitalism in an attempt to humanize its worst characteristics. The road to socialism suddenly became, not revolution, but rather an evolution of incremental democratic reforms to be obtained through the electoral process. This was buttressed by the effects of the dictatorship. The 1976-1983 repression physically eliminated an entire generation of experienced activists, instilling fear of another round of military intervention. Without the activists, trained over decades of struggle, the new and younger Leftists lacked the necessary ideological strength or political skills to create strong social and political organizations to challenge neoconservatism. The many social and human rights struggles failed to produce a political alternative. Placed on the defensive, the Left tended to accept the style and many of the goals of the bourgeois parties.

Between 1983 and 1987 there was a sharp debate in Argentina about the meaning of democracy. The UCR, led by Alfonsín, was able to impose its views on Argentine society.[10] Briefly summarized, they were the following. First, that Argentines were unprepared for democracy, and thus had to go through a period of "transition" during which both citizens and institutions (such as the Armed Forces) were to be democratized. Democracy was equated, not with popular participation and empowerment, but rather with voting from time to time. Second, the UCR insisted that human rights violations between 1976 and 1983 were a result of the struggle between "two evils": the Right (the dictatorship) and the Left (the guerrillas). The Right had sinned by over-reacting, but the Left had caused it by violently attempting to impose a social system at odds with the Argentine "western and Christian way of life." If this was true, then the solution to Argentine political problems was to reach a national reconciliation, to forgive and forget. Thus, after the dictators' trial in 1985, laws were adopted which exonerated all other human rights violators and, in 1989, an amnesty was declared releasing the nine condemned generals and admirals. Finally, in 1994, everything came full circle, when Menem publicly thanked the military for saving Argentina from the subversive threat.

Much to everyone's surprise the Left has come to accept these conceptions. Many Leftist parties have abandoned the struggle for justice and human rights. Yet, most polls indicate that the struggle for human rights remains a popular concern. In addition, there has been a noticeable increase of popular interest and approval for the 1970s guerrillas. Books, such as a favorable biography of People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) leader Mario Santucho,[11] have become bestsellers. Also, the Argentine-Cuban revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara has become very popular among the young.[12] And many former Montonero guerrillas, who participate in the Menem government (especially within the security services), are seen as little better than traitors. In spite of this, most of the Left has

[10]The UCR was ably supported in this by both Peronists and social democrats.

[11]María Seoane, *Todo o nada. La historia secreta y la historia pública del jefe guerrillero Mario Roberto Santucho* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Planeta, 1992).

[12]For instance, witnesses explained to us that when the secondary students in the southern Patagonian town of Trelew held an election to find a name for their school, Che Guevara won by 80% of the vote, much to the discomfort of the school district authorities and of the Left in the area. The authorities finally overturned the vote and named the school "Julio Cortazar," for the writer who was also a Leftist, but acceptable in cultural circles.

refused to reexamine the 1970s experience, and consider the guerrillas little better than dangerous, middle class terrorists.

From 1983 to 1991 most Leftist organizations threw themselves into the electoral struggle hoping to elect a few legislators. This meant that many Leftist groups spent their scarce resources on elections, removing their activists from mass work. A great deal of energy was spent in forming electoral alliances (and in jockeying within them to be at the top of a ticket). And finally, it meant that the Left made efforts to become acceptable to the press and to mainstream voters. Since the middle class has a higher electoral turnout than workers, the Left tended to move to the right adopting middle class symbols, language, and demands. They sought "acceptable" candidates, those with media presence, or mainstream politicians overlooked by their own parties. Increases in votes for the Left thus meant moving away from their base among workers and the urban poor.

INITIALLY THIS WAS RELATIVELY SUCCESSFUL. The PCA and the MAS, together with smaller groups, formed the United Left (IU) in 1989, garnering close to 8% of the vote. The main force within IU was the MAS, which had done a lot of work among both students and workers for over a decade, with noticeable success. Through the IU, the MAS succeeded in electing one national congressman, a local councilman and a provincial deputy. But the cost was high. Cadre and resources were removed from mass work in favor of electoral activities. Electoral success generated pressure for a continuation of this policy. A tendency arose within the party which claimed that participation in mass struggles imperiled further electoral advances because it alienated the middle class. The net result was a series of splits within the MAS, setbacks in the organizing they had so carefully nurtured for over a decade, and a crisis that continues today.

The same is true of the Communist Party (PCA). Focusing most of its activity on elections and political alliances, it has succeeded in fracturing its mass base, and its cadre. For instance, in 1993 the PCA was instrumental in setting up the Broad Front (FG), an electoral alliance that includes Leftists, and a number of Peronist groups left out of the Menem coalition. Its main public figure is Carlos "Chacho" Alvarez, a charismatic Peronist politician who was a Menem supporter until 1990. While forming alliances to his right[13], Alvarez has demanded that the PCA dissolve itself in order to remain within the FG, since "the Left scares away voters." At the same time, the FG has publicly declared that it agrees with the Menem economic program, but not with corruption. The result is that the PCA has become paralyzed and split into three.[14]

Beyond these main parties, there is a heterogeneous Left; hundreds of small groups, ranging from a dozen to several hundred activists, exist within neighborhoods, trade unions, and universities. Most are short lived, and linked to local demands. Few have publications, and even fewer coordinate their activity with each other. A sizeable number have accepted the FG umbrella as a means

[13]In 1994, the FG formed an electoral alliance with PAIS, a political party formed by the former Menemist Governor of Mendoza Province, José Octavio Bordín, a man with strong links to the Catholic Church.

[14]Evidently this is a simplification. Both PCA and MAS had splits and problems beyond electoral politics, grounded in the international crisis of the Left.

of obtaining some national influence. But this means that they have had to accept a leadership which is increasingly wed to the Menemist system.

Not all the Left remains involved in electoral politics. After its several splits, what remained of the MAS focused once again on mass work eschewing all but token electoral participation. The *Corriente Patria Libre* (an independent Left organization formed by former 70s activists and a lot of young people) is geared mostly toward neighborhood and university organizing, with relatively good results. The Trotskyist *Partido Obrero* (Worker Party) focuses on union organizing. These parties, and the many smaller groups, participate actively in most social struggles. However, the main problem with all of them is that ideological differences have kept them from engaging in joint struggles.

There does exist a broad but atomized resistance movement. Consider that over the first nine months of 1994 there were 755 labor actions, 99 in September alone. Throughout 1994 there were several mass-based riots (Santiago de Estero, Tucuman, Corrientes); numerous nationwide demonstrations; the above noted 100,000 workers who came to Buenos Aires in July to protest against the government; a national strike (August 2) which paralyzed many cities despite CGT opposition; the student takeover of several colleges (Córdoba, La Plata, Buenos Aires) to protest the new education laws; demonstrations by retirees and pensioners; and a National Day of Protest by farmers and some unions centered in the city of Rosario. But reliance on parliamentary politics and the weakness and confusion of the Left means that most of these struggles do not result in anything even remotely resembling a political alternative. There are too few activists to provide the link between popular struggles and political activity. Even more serious is the fact that without the Left it is hard to overcome mistakes and synthesize national collective experience.

Nevertheless, this resistance is sufficient to worry the government and the bourgeoisie. Menem has successfully welded together the different factions of the bourgeoisie in support of his government. One of the reasons is that they are making record profits through his economic program. But the other is that a political struggle for Menem's successor might create a channel for popular protests, putting "stability" in danger, which explains the support which the government receives permanently from the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, international bankers, and Argentine economic groups. Also, the government has spent increasing amounts to prepare the security forces to repress future social conflict. According to the daily *Clarín*, by December 1995 the only area of government that had increased its overall number of employees was the security and Armed Forces which reached a total of 60% of all state employees.[15] Harassment and persecution of Left activists has increased significantly over the past three years, as has government surveillance of the population in general. Menem has said several times that the "future will see new Mothers of Plaza de Mayo" (the mothers of those who were disappeared between 1976 and 1983 and who still maintain a silent vigil in front of the Presidential Palace every Thursday afternoon). In addition, the economic program is already showing signs that it

[15]*Clarín*, December 9, 1995. It should be pointed out that this number represents the "public" members of the security forces. If we take into account the numerous members of the intelligence community as well as the undercover security teams and police informers, the overall percentage goes up.

might fail. Having sold off most state assets, and failed to obtain significant productive investment, the end, most observers believe, is in sight. The combination of social conflict and possible economic failure generates a good deal of concern within government circles. Of course, this does not guarantee a political alternative. As noted before, the Left is in disarray, while the Right has joined Menemism. What it does mean is the possibility of the kind of chaos and disorder seen in mid-1989.

IN MAY 1995 THERE WERE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS IN ARGENTINA. Thanks to the new constitutional reform, Carlos Menem was reelected, receiving 52% of the ballots cast. The other two main contenders, the FG and the UCR, came in second and third.[16] Whereas Menem received most of the right-wing vote, many Leftists and progressives cast their ballot for José Bordón, the FG candidate, as the lesser of two evils though he supported Menem's socio-economic program. The number of "blanks" and of people who didn't even bother to vote increased to about 35% of the total.

Once the election was over, conflict within the Menem coalition flared as possible 1999 successors jockeyed for position. Unemployment shot up to 20.3% in October 1995; poverty, popular discontent, and rioting increased. Faced with a possibly uncontrollable situation, Argentine economic groups together with Wall Street and the IMF imposed order on the unruly government party.

With no viable alternatives, the future looks bleak. While Argentina has been transformed over the past 20 years these changes are not yet expressed at the electoral level. Nevertheless, as in the crisis and changes of the 1930s, which gave birth to Peronism, this transformation may yet produce a new political movement, a reflection of the current popular struggles, synthesizing Argentina's strong Leftist culture and its Peronist tradition.

Postscript

THE FIRST FEW MONTHS OF 1996 HAVE DEEPENED THE TENDENCIES outlined above. Unemployment has increased two points, while the standard of living has declined. On March 6, a scandal involving the IBM Corporation and the Argentine National Bank came to light. In a confusing episode replete with bribery and political skullduggery, IBM overcharged the bank 69 million dollars on a 180 million contract, with the knowledge of the Ministry of Economics and other national authorities. As yet, the courts have been unwilling to do more than charge a few low level administrators.

There have been a few more riots in the Northwest of the country; more significantly, the riots have begun to spread toward Buenos Aires. In late February 1996 the neighbors of Ciudad Evita, a working class area in the suburbs of Buenos Aires, rioted for two days to oppose a deal made by the local mayor to

[16]Most analysts believe that the pro-Menem ballot reflected not support for his policies or his government, but rather fear of unleashing a new period of economic instability. Many middle-class households have a very high level of debt in dollars. This plus the fact that the other two major candidates promised to maintain the same economic policies, while Menem augured an unstable transition should he lose, decided many voters in the President's favor.

lay high tension wires through the center of the town. At the same time, on February 20, the Police repressed a student protest in La Plata. In an episode reminiscent of the dictatorship, dozens of students were beaten, 237 were arrested. Parents, journalists, lawyers, and even the Mothers of Plaza de Mayo were battered by hundreds of policemen while attempting to protect the students. A month later, on the 20th anniversary of the 1976 military coup, over a hundred thousand people demonstrated in front of the Presidential Palace in support of democracy. However, insecurity increased as the Army Chief of Staff, General Mario C. Díaz, publicly, and with government approval, justified the military's role in the coup. Two days later, a self-styled People's Revolutionary Organization shot down Doctor Jorge Bergez, known as the "Mengele" of the 1976 concentration camps. Most of the Left and human rights organizations repudiated the attack.

April 8, 1996

In Britain—
Little Will Change Under Labor

John Palmer

AS THE CONSERVATIVE GOVERNMENT LED BY JOHN MAJOR enters the final stages of its protracted death agony, the opposition Labor Party appears a near certainty to win the next British general election. Although the election could be delayed until next April or May, the odds are that it will have to be held a lot sooner — perhaps in October or November of this year. John Major's majority in the House of Commons has all but disappeared and his capacity to govern now depends on the increasingly fragile support of the Ulster Unionist parties.

The Tory government is intensely unpopular. There is genuine anger at the incompetence, venality, and sheer bloody mindedness of the government after 17 long years of Tory rule and the devastating economic and social consequences of Thatcherism. The new model Labor Party led by Tony Blair has a commanding lead in the opinion polls. But, in spite of his personal popularity, there is a rather eerie lack of expectation about what Labor will deliver in office.

It is as though the British electorate, including Labor voters, instinctively know that little of substance will change under a Blairite government. Certainly Labor's leaders lose no opportunity to talk down expectations of significant economic or social reform. They also still insist on giving bipartisan support to the Tories in key areas of foreign policy, justice, policing, including — most critically — Northern Ireland.

Tony Blair has successfully minimized the Labor Party's residual commitment to social-democratic reform. He has also disdained even the most perfunctory lip service to wider socialist goals which were the stock in trade of previous right wing Labor leaders. By forcing through changes to the party constitution Blair has effectively marginalized a much reduced and greatly demoralized Labor left. The left no longer has any real influence on policy formation.

Much the same has happened to the trade unions. Although they are still formally affiliated to the Labor Party, the trade unions no longer play a major role in determining party policy at annual conference or in selecting Parliamentary candidates. Labor's economic strategy puts top priority on working with the private sector to achieve improved competitiveness while Labor leaders have also made it clear that they will not reverse all the Tory anti-trade union laws.

The Labor leadership hopes and expects to inherit office from a greatly discredited Conservative Party with a minimum of disruption to the normal business of state and government. But just to be on the safe side and as an insurance policy against any unexpected revival of the left inside the party or the wider labor movement, the Blair leadership is negotiating an "understanding" with the Liberal Democratic party. This might appear unnecessary given the potential parliamentary majority Labor could obtain at the next election.

JOHN PALMER *is the European Editor of* The Guardian *in Brussels.*

But, partly because of the potentially stormy constitutional issues to be tackled over the next few years, Blair and his colleagues want to be sure of having an unassailable parliamentary majority beyond the general election after next.

THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FACING BLAIR AND HIS GOVERNMENT is going to be constitutional reform. The secretive, antediluvian and deeply corrupt British state is facing a political crisis on three separate but related fronts: mounting support for extensive self-government in Scotland and Wales, and a more muted call for devolution of powers from the UKanian state to the English regions.

Labor — together with the Scottish nationalists, the Liberal Democrats, and the independent red/green left — is deeply involved with the campaign for Scottish autonomy. If Labor were to hesitate about putting its promises of devolution into effect it would face possible political extinction at the hands of the left leaning nationalists in its Scottish heartland.

Second, there is growing disgust with other aspects of the UK state system. There is massive support for a move to a proportional system of election which is also a condition for Liberal Democratic support of Labor in office. Blair and his colleagues are now trying to devise a system of proportional representation that will minimize the future representation of the independent left. They know that socialists outside the Labor Party, as well as Greens and a growing number of activists inside the Labor Party, are debating the terms and timing for launching a new political party which might first see the light of day in Scotland.

Campaigns for a Bill of Rights, for the incorporation of the European convention on human rights into the UK constitution, for a Freedom of Information Bill, for drastic reform of Parliament (including the abolition of the House of Lords) and even for the replacement of the monarchy by a republic now also have considerable popular support. Even the Blairites are aware of the dramatic decline in the popular standing of the House of Windsor and promise to abolish life peers if not the House of Lords as a whole.

Third, the UK, as a member state of the European Union (EU), is deeply involved in the current constitutional review within the EU. The Tories are bitterly resisting moves toward a more federal style political union which would involve more decision-making at the European level and greater powers for the elected European parliament. There is a profound and potentially explosive dialectic between pressure on the UKanian state to devolve powers downward to the UK nations and regions and, at the same time, upward to a rapidly evolving European political, as well as, economic union.

The question of constitutional reform might not seem at first to be such a promising issue for the left. But that is to ignore the antiquarian character of the British state — formed as it was historically from the failure of the British bourgeoisie to complete its own revolution after the 17th century. To break up the power structures of the British state will be to help regenerate a new radical left agenda for the 21st century. The issue of constitutional rights touches intimately on wider questions of economic and social rights and hence on a new programmatic basis for an anti-capitalist left. It remains to be seen whether the British left can make the issue of constitutional reform, including Scottish self government and closer European integration, its own. On that may turn the left's capacity not only to revive and constitute itself but to provide a serious alternative to Tony Blair's New Labor Party.

Dismantling Germany's Welfare State

Hanna Behrend

"The Federal Republic of Germany is a democratic and social federal state," according to Article 20 of the German Constitution. After the defeat of Nazi Germany, all the newly established political parties in West Germany, including the conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU), adopted policies in the immediate post-war period designed to curb the unbridled power of capitalist enterprise. Legislation was passed which authorized organized labor to negotiate agreements on wages and working conditions binding on entire branches of industry and trade. Government policy was designed to balance industrial expansion and public welfare. Free enterprise in the German Federal Republic was thus subject to collective bargaining, staff representation, and other labor and social legislation. A system of general state-operated social insurance, financed since the days of Bismarck by equal contributions from both the gainfully employed and their employers, safeguarded the former from risks arising from their employment and ensured them an old-age pension, as a rule sufficient to live on even unsupported by any private provisions of their own. Social security, the modern and more enlightened successor to the old poor law provisions, then supplied the basic means of support only to those relatively few who had no claim to unemployment benefits or unemployment assistance (to which laid-off employees are eligible after their claim to unemployment benefits lapses).

For almost 40 years, the German welfare state was solidly based "on full employment in a free society." A rubble heap in 1945, West Germany recovered the rank of a leading industrial power within a decade. Benefitting from Marshall Plan aid and paying only token reparations, West Germany blossomed into an economic miracle, which turned the country into a consumers' paradise and ushered in a period of full employment and desirable working conditions. The Cold War ensured that the former enemy would be welcomed into the Western alliance. The social-democratic concept of equal opportunities for all and a network of welfare provisions for those in need was basically approved by even conservatives and liberals. The Federal Republic became, particularly in the eyes of the majority in the other German state, a much envied place. Under

Hanna Behrend, *former senior lecturer in English literature at Humboldt University, Berlin, has published on feminist theory and cultural studies, particularly on East German women. Her most recent book is* German Unification. The Destruction of an Economy, *Pluto Press, London, New Haven 1995. She also publishes a series on global issues; latest volume is on women in the global migrations published in March 1996.*

conditions of a still bridled global expansion and relatively mild international competition, funds were available not only for West Germany's then up-to-date social, educational and health services, and for the necessary infrastructural ventures, but also for the promotion of science, research and development; even the arts were subsidized on a grand scale. Indeed, not only did industry, big business and finance thrive, but considerable sections of the West German population, including skilled (male) workers, benefitted from the long post-war boom. Their living standards were high and their incomes enabled them to save and invest savings not only in national but also in global financial undertakings, thereby also partaking in the exploitation of the Third World.

East Germany: A Unique Testing Ground for Neoliberalism

THE SOCIAL WELFARE SYSTEM OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC (GDR) was superior to West Germany's. While never openly admitted, it did provide a political obstacle to efforts to dismantle the West German welfare state during the 1980s, prior to unification. Standards of living in the GDR were relatively low (though the highest in all the Comecon countries), but there were neither really wealthy nor really poor people. Full employment included 91% of women; adequate childcare provisions and paid leave in case of children's illness permitted mothers to continue working. Education was open to everyone, the health service including prophylactic treatment, and medication was completely free, as were abortion on demand and contraceptives. These "assets" were, understandably, not appreciated by the East German people. They resented the deficient supply of consumer goods, the police state methods, and the state's interference with free travel, as well as the absence of other civil rights.

After unification in 1990, all the welfare and social insurance systems of the GDR were scrapped and replaced by the far more costly and bureaucratic West German versions. The inferior West German welfare state was itself increasingly in jeopardy. The *Anschluss* of East Germany to the FederalRepublic, however, provided the conservative government and the industrialists' lobby with an unexpected breathing space, warding off the impending economic recession for two years. The steamrolling of the GDR economy, irrespective of whether enterprises were competitive or not, also rid West German industry of unwanted competitors and presented it with new markets which included the GDR's East European customers.

Unification and complete economic and political hegemony over East Germany also supplied those in power in the Federal Republic with a unique testing ground for their new policy of unbridled neoliberalism. This meant industrial reconstruction totally geared to the vested interests of the major capital owners and riding roughshod over the concerns of the majority, for whom the policy brought mass unemployment, the dismantling of the welfare state, the undermining of national wage/salary agreements, a general deterioration of working conditions, higher prices for commodities and services, higher taxes and rates, growing criminal delinquency and violence, and a general lowering of safety standards and quality controls in all spheres.

This new policy was first practiced in post-unification East Germany on a stunned, confused, and divided population who had been promised changes that would turn the country into a "thriving land." It included ruthless de-industrialization, decimation of the GDR's former research potential, and the takeover of its wholesale and retail trade by West German chains which, for a long time, had boycotted East German products. The attempt to push the efficient agricultural cooperatives into dissolving themselves and to privilege non-viable family farming was only partly successful. In short, the destruction of the GDR's economy and half of its jobs was the outcome of the irresponsible privatization policy practiced, on behalf of the Kohl government, by the Treuhand holding company[1]. By squandering assets and preventing necessary modernization and replacement of obsolete equipment, much valuable property ended up mostly in the hands of West German trusts, which got the choicest bits for a song and, in addition, were given billions of DM subsidies. Meanwhile, quite a few West German companies have closed the East German plants they acquired from Treuhand under such favorable conditions to save their West German plants[2]. When the Treuhand agency closed its books in 1994, German taxpayers were presented with liabilities of about 200 billion DM, while the people of the ex-GDR emerged from this "privatization drive" with nothing to show for two generations' labor.

In addition to this collective expropriation, tens of thousands of East Germans lost their homes through the "restitution of property to former owners before compensation" ruling. This also robbed cooperatives, urban and rural communities, and even whole regions, of property they had used and improved generally for decades. The appropriation of the GDR State Bank by the Federal German Bank, moreover, turned loans granted by the GDR planning authorities to individual and corporate house builders, industrial and agricultural enterprises, and local communities into genuine liabilities. Under centralized administration these "loans" were considered mere bookkeeping operations in keeping with the planned allotment of funds for investment and development ventures; under market conditions, they became crippling burdens on individual home owners, building societies and other enterprises, and local, regional and state administrations.

The mere interest on the capital has meanwhile risen to 1.2 million DM. So far, the government has refused to write off these sham debts, which contribute to enormous rent increases, capital shortages for indigenous East German (small and middle) industrial and agricultural enterprises and, above all, the threat of bankruptcy that hovers over most local, regional and state administrations in the East, already impoverished by shrinking revenue from taxes and rates. They are hard put to provide those unable to earn their own living with the social security to which they are entitled, let alone finance road works or sewer repairs, or keep up social and educational projects. Most urban communities are heavily overdrawn, and they are scrapping or quietly folding up youth, women's, senior citizens' and many other self-help projects, with the subsequent loss of jobs adding, particularly, to the rate of female unemployment in the East.

The ratio of East to West German wages rose from 20-40% in 1994 to the present average of 60%, with East Germans working an annual average of 1,700 hours as against 1,580 hours in the West, but in defiance of 1994 election promises there has been a slowing-down of the adjustment process. A report issued by the Social Democratic Party (SPD) parliamentary group in April 1996 states that

> even five years after unification a market economy is still not working properly in East Germany...[It] is,...by and large, run by public funds...The Federal Government is playing down the deficit of millions of jobs in East Germany...The real problem...is the net loss of 3.477 million jobs from 1989 to 1994 and only a feeble rise in the number of gainfully employed since.

The report pleads for a continuation and restructuring of state subsidies to prevent East Germany from "remaining a destitute area with a high rate of unemployment." The coalition government, however, insists that East Germany is prosperous enough to support itself.

According to a 1995 survey, the average four-person household income of employed East German workers and employees was 4,263 DM compared to 5,214 DM in West Germany. While 99.4% of West German household income is earned by one person, the chief wage-earner in East German households provides only 72%.

Low pay and insecure employment have meant poverty even for many of those with jobs: 15.9% of couples with two children and 40.2% of couples with three and more offsprings. Many women are forced by job creation and retraining programs to accept lesser skilled, part-time and temporary low-paying employment. This suits the conservative government, which has tried in vain to push East German women into the "silent labor reserve." According to a 1993 official statement, 43% of those women in full-time employment and 26.5% of the self-employed are unable to support themselves without assistance.

Insecure, part-time employment affects not only women, of course. Single fathers, school dropouts, the elderly, foreigners and the handicapped all belong to "risk groups" in danger of falling below the poverty line, either as a result of being laid off or of being unable to find jobs that would provide them with a living wage. Thus, since the 1.2 million jobs reserved for the handicapped in GDR times were slashed, handicapped people are finding it extremely hard to find qualified jobs or places as trainees. Many are falling below the poverty line because of cuts in social security, or because of low pensions.

Of those claiming social security, however, 88% need it because of unemployment. Unemployment hits East German women, with a rate of 21.5%, twice as hard as men. On average, women who are laid off remain unemployed twice as long as men. More than a quarter of East German children live in households supported by unemployment benefits. While in 1990, 25,000 East German children lived in households whose only source of income was social security, this figure had risen to 63,000 by 1993. Homelessness, which was totally unknown in the GDR, now affects 30,000 people in East Germany; 6,000 of whom actually live permanently on the road. Urban and rural communities are unable to provide them with homes or pay the rent they owe to prevent their eviction.

An investigation undertaken in 1994 into the financial situation of East Germans over age 50 found that only 20% owned any property at all, and no more than 18% owned their own homes. Only 59% of this age bracket, considered by the labor offices as practically unemployable, can fall back on savings. Altogether, the poor sections of the East German population increased from 3.5% in 1990 to 8.9% in 1993.

The policies that brought these results have not been challenged by either the West-dominated German trade unions or the West-dominated German opposition parties. This is consistent with a general move toward the right across the entire political spectrum and has encouraged industry, big business, and finance to clamor more and more vociferously for a “reform” of the welfare state, i.e. its dismantling. Testing neoliberalism in East Germany proved successful since resistance remained local, regional or, at best, involved only the five East German states; the neoliberal program, therefore, could safely be expanded to cover all of united Germany.

The Decline of the West German Welfare State

THE WEST GERMAN WELFARE STATE HAD BEGUN TO CRACK LONG BEFORE UNIFICATION. Even in periods of increasing economic activity the labor market no longer provided the number of jobs to ensure temporary unemployment. This development profoundly affected the foundations of the German welfare state.

Mass unemployment is the result of structural changes. Automated workshops and computerized administration have increased the per capita performance of labor to between three and four times the output of the early 1980s. Even in the boom period from 1983 to 1990 the unemployment rate remained stable in all West European countries. In the mid-1980s, the German Trade Unions Association forecast that by the year 2000, failing regulatory interventions in the labor market, only a quarter of the labor force would still hold secure jobs at negotiated rates of pay, while another quarter would make do with insecure, low skilled and badly paid jobs. The remaining 50% would be permanently out of work or have temporary, part-time, casual, seasonal, or menial jobs. This prognosis is well on its way to being realized.

To cope with the need to transform industrial enterprises to keep up with the leap in technology and with the increasing pressure of global competition, German employers, as early as the 1980s, began to press for a policy of deregulating labor and scaling back social legislation. Wage agreements were undermined by local exceptions to the national rates. Provisions for part-time work, shorter hours without higher pay, farming work out to subcontractors or homeworkers, etc., led to a gradual erosion of “normal gainful employment.” In 1982, wages still made up 72% of the gross national product; by 1994 this figure had dropped to 66%.

As mass unemployment became a permanent reality, more and more people failed to find work when they gave up or lost their jobs and thus became long-term unemployed. After their claims to unemployment benefits or assistance lapsed, they had to resort to social security, thus becoming a burden on local, regional, and state authorities rather than a tax-paying asset to them. The December 1995 unemployment figures of 3.79 million were the highest since 1945. The rate of unemployment (excluding those not registered, in job creating schemes, in early retirement, and in retraining) stands officially at 8.7% in the West and 14.9% in the East. *Every tenth employable German is out of work*. Forecasts emphasize that this trend will continue.

Poverty, defined by the European Community (EC) as affecting people with incomes of 50% below average, is growing fast in all of Germany. Among those claiming social security, 56% in the West and 64% in the East must be classified as poor according to EC standards. Every seventh child in the whole of Germany belongs, at least temporarily, to a household living on social security. Of single adults, 16% are considered poor in the West, most of them single women. Three times as many foreign residents as Germans are reduced to social security. More than 900,000 people are homeless, 35,000 of them permanently; last winter, eight people died from exposure.

The German Unemployed Workers Federation stated that since 1990 1,150 people lost their jobs every day. Every day 560 people drop into insecure jobs, 505 become long-term unemployed, 1,100 become poor and 220 homeless. The elderly, women, youth, foreigners and the handicapped are particularly affected. In 1993, 180,000 handicapped unemployed fully capable of working in normal workshops had no option but to take jobs in special publicly or privately run workshops. They are deprived of social and trade union rights and paid no more than a miserly amount of pocket money. They are employed on simple mechanical jobs, but since their workshops subcontract for big firms (70% of all handicapped workshops' products are supplied under contract to Volkswagen, Ford or Hoechst), their work provides those firms with a total turnover of 4 billion DM. Added to which, the firms save on the penalties they would have to pay for not employing any handicapped staff.

While taxation on wages and salaries rose from 15.8% in 1980 to 20.6 in 1995, taxes on business dropped from 21.2% to 13.9% during that period. With the rise of unemployment and legislation enabling multinationals to avoid taxation, the public authorities on all levels are less and less able to meet their liabilities. The national debt and the interest thereon escalates to the benefit of the banks and major bond holders, while it cripples the budgets of the federal, state and regional administrations which have, therefore, taken to privatizing vital public services, such as posts and telecommunications, railways and buses. Higher rates and fares, reduced range and poorer quality service (e.g. less attention to passenger safety) are the results, largely because of massive staff cuts. The local and state governments' restricted means curtails the construction of public housing; this, in turn, leaves the building industry to provide chiefly unsubsidized residential and business premises, which often find no tenants. Smaller construction companies unable to compete go bankrupt while large firms avail themselves of cheap, illegally imported labor, undercutting even the low minimum wages won after protracted struggle. In 1995 Germany, along with Greece and Italy, had the greatest number of bankruptcies in Europe, chiefly of small and middle-sized enterprises.

The "Alliance for Creating Jobs"

According to investigations by the German Unemployed Workers Federation, the country is short of 9.4 million permanent jobs. Providing them would require radical cuts in working hours without loss of pay and granting basic incomes to everyone. To cope with the present crisis, a number of left-wing theoreticians, many of them feminists, also call for a complete restructuring of the patriarchal and capitalist concept of gainful employment to include work hitherto considered non-profitable. They suggest cutting working hours to a permitted maximum flexible time per year or over an employed person's lifetime with optional periods for parenthood, professional development or retraining; banning overtime and transforming it into new jobs instead; and providing part-time work for senior employees. Feminist critics especially insist on an adequate subsistence allowance for those temporarily or permanently without an income of their own, which, they claim, would allow people to volunteer for work in the social, health, and caring fields that, for lack of funds, is left undone.

While none of these ideas was seriously considered by the government or leaders of the major opposition parties, the “Alliance for Creating Jobs,” initiated by trade union leader Klaus Zwickel, did so. His proposals are fully in accord with the dominant view, which takes it for granted that only higher profits as a result of abstention from wage demands and acceptance of poorer working conditions create new jobs. Zwickel, on behalf of the unions, offered employers moderate wage demands, approval of local undercutting of national wage and salary agreements, and cuts in social provisions in return for a promise by the employers to create new jobs. He appealed to the government to support the initiative. Kohl himself then formed a 14-member commission and promised to create two million new jobs by the year 2000, an undertaking that the Institute for Industrial Research in Halle derided as wishful thinking.

In a massive barrage, the employers' spokespersons put forward their interpretation of the trade unions' Alliance venture. The former vice president of the Employers Federation (BDI), Necker, was all in favor of it as far as the acceptance of real wage and other cuts was concerned but rejected the idea that employers could actually create new jobs; only the market could do that. Jobs would be plentiful, he claimed, if German industry were relieved of excessive social liabilities and thus enabled to produce globally competitive commodities. In a joint statement issued in December 1995, the BDI, the Federation of German Employers Associations, the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the Central Association of German Trades demanded cuts in the cost of labor and a “reform of the welfare state.” They called for further tax reductions on industrial capital, profits and estates; according to them, the special subsidies granted to East Germany (*Solidarzuschlag*) and, incidently, paid for by all East and West German taxpayers, should subside in 1997; no new ecological tax should be imposed. Instead, they suggested, the quota of public expenditure should drop from more than 50% of the gross national product to 46% by the year 2000. To reduce mass unemployment they offered to invest profits from surplus productivity in new jobs, provided the unions agreed to a wage freeze for a number of years and to cuts in holiday and Christmas bonuses, to less sickpay and further inroads into rehabilitation measures, cures, etc. The erosion of sickpay regulations has recently been accepted by several prominent trade union leaders as perfectly legitimate. Spokesperson for the SPD parliamentary party, Gerd Andres, also came out in favor of such a “reform.” This, however, went too far for SPD leader Oskar Lafontaine, who declared on April 12, 1996, that his party was determined to combat the dismantling of the welfare state and would never agree to the scrapping of sickpay.

In an interview, Erich Gerard, president of the Federation of Employers' Associations in Berlin and Brandenburg and the boss of Siemens, also clamored for long term wage freezes and cuts in social expenditure. Although 80 million hours overtime per year are worked in Berlin and Brandenburg, Gerard rejected the idea of transforming them into new jobs as “technically impossible.” Other prominent industrialists, bankers, managers and business advisers followed suit, arguing that unless German workers accepted a deterioration of their living standards, investment capital would migrate to low wage countries.

Investigations into German investment abroad, however, reveal that more than 90% of capital investments in the first half of 1995 went into the EC countries, Japan, and the United States, and not to low wage countries. According to a metal workers union investigation, surplus from German metalware exports from 1991 to 1994 amounted to 122 billion DM, which would be sufficient to create 513,000 new jobs.

In their 1995 autumn statement, the six major economic institutes forecast a 2.5% rise in the gross domestic income which inspired them to join the faction of those clamoring for "moderate wage demands." The BDI immediately declared this forecast over-optimistic and stressed not only the need for moderation in wage agreements but also the indispensability of further delays in adapting the East German wages to the West German standard.

This campaign goes on, unmoved by the fact that net capital returns have risen by 177% since 1977; profits have doubled since 1982/83, when Kohl came to power. The leading chemical firm of BASF (the successor to IG Farben) had a turnover of 49.4 billion DM in 1995 and was able to double its annual surplus to 2.47 billion DM. Hoechst and Beyer were no less successful. Banks, too, made record profits; the Commerzbank had a record-breaking year in 1995, doubling its returns to 1.45 billion DM with an 18.2% rise in the bank's balance. Since this surplus was largely made abroad, no taxes were paid on it.

In the early 1980s, the share of taxes paid on profit from industrial enterprises and capital levies stood at 37%; it has since dropped to a mere 25%. According to an uncontested report by the magazine *Stern*, multinational industrial and financial enterprises are paying less and less taxes. The Deutsche Bank's profits prior to tax deduction rose by 77% in 1993; the DB, however, paid 9% less taxes on its 1993 profits than in 1990.

The incongruity of higher profits and lower taxes on the one hand, and soaring unemployment on the other is also due to the increasing refusal of major enterprises to reinvest profits. They prefer to invest their surplus in national and foreign bonds rather than in riskier industrial production. Only 32 billion DM were invested in Germany in the course of the last ten years. Productive capital investment rose by an average of 2% while investment in bonds has leapt to 12.2% since 1989.

The Neoliberal Backlash in Action

ACCORDING TO THE NEOLIBERAL DEFENDERS OF THE "STANDORT DEUTSCHLAND" (preserving Germany's status as a leading industrial power), competitiveness of the German trusts is the indispensable precondition of "national wealth and welfare." It is to be achieved exclusively at the expense of the working class. Experience has shown that the capitalist market is blind to the social needs of the people and that yielding to the demands of the employers never creates jobs but rather destroys them. Nevertheless, the neoliberal approach is supported by the heads of the trade unions and large sections of the SPD leadership. The SPD's policy of broadly accepting the government's dismantling of the welfare state was largely responsible for its loss of popularity. This became particularly evident in the Berlin elections of October 1995 when the SPD vote fell to a mere 23.5% — thus prompting much of the Berlin membership to demand that the party stop aping the CDU, which had lost far fewer votes.

Only in January 1996 did the SPD issue a ten-point program calling on the government to offer foreign investors three tax-free years if they created jobs in Germany; it demanded state support for the promotion of ecological industries; generous loans for people prepared to start up businesses; temporary subsidies to employers in the service industries willing to provide jobs to the long-term unemployed; and 20% tax reductions for private homeowners who employ registered craftspeople rather than cheap undeclared labor.

Though there has been some protest against the alignment of the German trade unions with neoliberalism, notably from a group of about 180 shop stewards, the leadership of the German Trade Union Federation (DGB) has stuck to its policy. The head of the DGB, Dieter Schulte, agreed with the employers that new jobs depended on lowering the cost of labor. Instead of insisting on legally binding agreements he was satisfied with the employers' promises of new jobs. Agreeing to wage freezes and cuts and other measures of social deregulation cost the trade unions 520,000 members in 1994.

With union approval, Volkswagen introduced the four-day work week in November 1993, which spelled wage cuts, fewer paid holidays and longer working hours as a result of the flexible time model. Consequently, the average VW worker now earns 3,300 DM per month instead of 4,100 DM, as formerly. These and other sacrifices made by workers have not, so far, stopped the big firms from destroying jobs, dismantling production sites, or shifting production abroad. But they enabled VW to increase productivity by 13% in 1995 and save a total of 1.6 billion DM. From 1992 to 1995 Mercedes Benz has slashed 40,000 jobs, which contributed to a 6 billion DM rise in profits. By introducing work teams, the firm was able to dispense with yet another 4,000 jobs.

The conservative-liberal coalition government's budget for 1996 contributes to the dismantling of the welfare state by helping the rich to rob the poor. The budget of the Ministry of Labor will be cut by 7.8%, thus slashing job creation and retraining programs. Unemployment assistance is to be reduced; workers not eligible for unemployment benefits will have to go on social security when they lose their jobs. Benefit and assistance claims, in the future, will be subject to intensified means testing. Moreover, legislation is being prepared to force the unemployed to accept jobs paying up to 30% less than their previous earnings. Periods of unemployment benefits are to be shortened, even for the elderly. The level of savings allowed by the means test will be lowered from 8,000 to 2,500 DM. Unemployment assistance is to be cut by an average of 60 DM per month. Well-off people offering domestic service jobs will receive substantial tax breaks.

The 1996 budget provides for total cuts of almost 60% for the support of families, senior citizens, women and youth. The right of every three-year old to admission to a kindergarten, promised in 1993 to discourage abortions, has been reduced to an offer of merely half-a-day care. Spending on the health service, environment and public transportation is also subjected to serious cutbacks. Student grants, which, unlike in the GDR, always had to be repaid, were cut in 1994. Now, students will also have to pay interest on the capital. For the first time since 1945, students will pay college fees. This will increasingly restrict higher education to the children of the moneyed elite.

Increased funds will be made available chiefly to industry (an additional 48.8%), research, technology, development aid, foreign affairs, and, of course, defense. As far as development aid is concerned, there will be a slight rise, overdue in view of the fact that Germany's contribution in 1994 was a modest 0.33% of GNP, while the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries allotted 0.7%. The budget will bring the national debt to approximately 60 billion DM.

Uneasiness, but No Resistance

THE MEDIA PROVIDE AN INVALUABLE SERVICE TO GERMANY'S ELITE by constantly warning workers that "immoderate demands" will "jeopardize Germany's status as a leading industrial power." People are forever having dinned into them that the "state" can no longer afford the "explosion" of social benefits because of international competition. "We must all tighten our belts," they proclaim, and large sections of the population, especially in West Germany, believe them — particularly the poorest and often most uneducated and helpless, who are hardest hit by deregulation and cuts. The trade unions are told to "act responsibly" in the face of this challenge to the German *Standort*, and their leaders hasten to show their willingness to do so. Resistance to this campaign is not considered "politically correct." None of this, of course, applies to the wealthy, whose fortunes constantly increase, and the mighty, who continue to thrive. Thus, parliamentary allowances have continued to rise, as have the salaries of members of federal and state cabinets and of the top echelons of the civil service and business. There have been many warnings of impending social unrest by the churches and welfare organizations, the Unemployed Workers' Federation, the odd trade unionist and politician, and research institutions if mass unemployment and the policy of dismantling the welfare state continue. Yet the response of the majority of the people to the decline in the general quality of life, marred by increasing traffic jams and noise, by air and water pollution, rising crime and violence, by low-quality entertainment replacing valuable cultural achievements, is to deplore it in private but refrain from public protest.

A factor which paralyzes such protest is the tremendous segmentation of those affected by the dismantling of the welfare state and the employers' offensive. There is no mutual assistance given by East German to West German workers and vice versa, or by those who still hold safe jobs to those in precarious temporary or part-time employment. Male workers observe women workers being fired with total indifference. German workers resent the immigrants and foreign residents as competitors for jobs. A highly skilled male worker cares little about what happens to his elderly colleague pushed into early retirement or part-time work and is even less interested in the apprentice dismissed after completion of his training. Students know nothing about the situation of trainees or apprentices, and vice versa. The fierce competition between these different segments of the labor market is at the root of their atomization. They consider their interests to be incompatible. The fear of losing one's job rules supreme, unchecked by solidarity. As a result, a growing number of people from previously stable sectors of society are gradually and silently being pauperized.

Though there is little public evidence of this, large numbers of people are very worried about the future and quite able to perceive the symptoms of a growing crisis. But they do not know what they can do about it. The failure in the past of political or trade union activities to force the government to change its policies has discouraged many former activists and whittled away mass support for even the most deserving issues. There are the rarely successful local or, at best, regional token strikes and demonstrations of workers threatened by mass job destruction. There are the Easter Marches and other events of public protest attended by a decreasing numbers of people. The general public's response to the crisis seems restricted to growing abstention from voting or, on a gradually increasing scale, by turning away from the established parties.

The turnout in Berlin's October elections hit bottom with under 65% of the voters going to the polls. As for those who do vote, the majority, particularly in the West, as three recent *land* elections showed, still put more trust in the conservatives than their competitors — largely for fear things might become worse if there were a change, since they consider other parties even less competent to stave off impending disaster and guide the country safely through the present crisis. The increasing popularity of the Greens in the West and the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS) — the successor to the Communists — in the East continues the trend already evident in last year's general elections. The fact that the SPD has so low an alternative profile and shows no apparent inclination to form an anti-conservative alliance strengthens the vote for the CDU and Free Democratic Party (FDP).

The present political stalemate is thus the result of a number of complex factors. There is tremendous fragmentation among those victimized by the changes, which engenders fear and distrust. The disintegration of the Left prevents it from playing a more active role, putting pressure on the trade unions and the SPD. This, in turn, hinders the ability of those who have traditionally led social and political struggles in West Germany to elaborate an effective and convincing strategy, and leaves the right-wing leaders in complete command. Last but not least, there is the tremendous pressure exercised by the government, the employers, and the media to convince people that there is no option to the neoliberal line of scuttling the welfare state. This is all the more effective because socialist and Green alternatives have been popularly experienced as failures, as have even the restricted industrial and political actions of recent years. This impedes the emergence of any effective resistance movement. While it would be a mistake to believe that the silent majority are content and optimistic, it is also true that unless they begin to overcome fragmentation and find a way to cooperate without any group trying to subordinate the others, the establishment will continue to handle the structural crisis exclusively in the interest of big business and finance and entirely at the expense of the majority of the German people.

POSTSCRIPT

On April 25, 1996 the CDU-FDP coalition announced its "Programme to Promote Economic Growth and Create Jobs," surpassing by far the anti-welfare state measures hitherto implemented. Below is a selection characteristic of the kind of decisions made none of which is likely to create a single new job: abolition of capital levy, reduction of trade and sales taxes, more favorable conditions for deducting items from taxable income, increase of the death duties allowance from 250,000 DM to one million DM; tax allowances for employing domestic staff.

As against these measures, clearly benefitting the employers and those who enjoy unearned incomes, the gainfully employed will suffer from the deregulation of protective legislation against dismissal; payment of wages/ salaries in case of sickness will be restricted to 80%, vacation pay will no longer include overtime. Pensioners will incur further losses of income; the retirement age for women will be raised from 60 to 63 by 1997, with a 3.6% cut per annum for early retirement. Unemployment pay for the first week of redundancy will be halved. Starting 1997 the Federal Labor Office will no longer be subsidized by federal funds. Health care contributions by the insured will increase. Child benefit increases are postponed for another year, as are child allowances. The social security increase scheduled for July 1, 1997 will be scrapped. Further cuts are proposed in job creation programs, and in various other areas of social benefits.

While the employers' federations welcomed the program, it was unanimously rejected by the opposition: DGB (German Trade Unions) Chairman Schulte called it a program of early capitalism incompatible with the creation of jobs. SPD Chairman Lafontaine considered it an election fraud; Fischer of Bundnis 90/ The Greens Party censured the dismantling of the welfare state; Gysi, PDS Chairman, said that it was not the budget but society that was in a crisis. Whether the first general outcry against this "program of horrors" will lead to a determined and effective opposition to it, remains to be seen.

If, however, the opposition allows the government and the employers' lobby to get away with this program, it will definitely spell the end of the welfare state period in the history of the Federal Republic of Germany. Germany will become a country where the wealthy and powerful are unchallenged in the pursuance of a policy ruthlessly depriving the majority of the people of the social and political achievements won in the course of almost half a century of struggle. Who knows but that those who sowed the wind may not then reap the whirlwind?

May 1, 1996

NOTES

1. On the Treuhand-Anstalt (Trust Fund Society) see my article, "Germany: The Stage is Reset" in *New Politics*, No. 14, Winter 1993.

2. There were spectacular instances of West German buyers illegally transferring the state subsidies they had been granted to modernize their East German acquisitions to West German sites. One concerned East German shipyards bought by the Bremen Vulkan Trust. The embezzlement of subsidies, of which the authorities were well aware, failed, however, to save the tottering Trust. Eventually it was decided to rescue the shipyards with more public money, thus forcing German taxpayers to subsidize endangered East German firms once more.

Canon on the Left

Marvin Mandell

> I believe in Michelangelo, Velasquez, and Rembrandt; in the might of design, the mystery of color, the redemption of all things by Beauty everlasting, and the message of Art that has made these hands blessed.
>
> — G. B. Shaw, *The Doctor's Dilemma* (Act IV), 1906

Why has the Left ceded the legacy of the Great Tradition[1] to the Right?

Great writers have reached out for universal truths about humans and the world we live in. No matter how dehumanized their age may have been in its joylessness, anomie, and callousness, these writers have magnified, not trivialized, their language and life itself.

To be conservative means, among other things, to be preservative. In their clamor for armaments and prisons, for despoliation of the earth and its atmosphere, for war against the poor (especially poor children), whom or what are Gingrich and Co. preserving? Today's Right is not at all conservative in ways recognizable by an Aristophanes, a Plato, a Swift, or a Burke, to name but a few genuine conservatives. They are reactionary in their mean spiritedness, elitism, xenophobia, and narcissism. On election day I asked a "conservative" lock 'em up candidate politicking near the polls what he thought of Nikos Kazantzakis' belief that "Inside the most hardened criminal there is a saint who is weeping and waiting." He growled at me.

Yet a cultural war pitting the Right on the side of the Great Tradition and the Left against it began with Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* (1987) and continued with such books as Charles J. Sykes' *The Hollow Men* (1990) and Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education* (1991). Partly this was due to the Right's resistance to the much needed inclusion of texts hitherto neglected, texts of other cultures and of women. But it was also due to too many Leftists buying into the false dichotomy of *either* the Great Tradition *or* a multi-cultural curriculum. The writers of the Great Tradition became Dead White Males, upholders and justifiers of white imperialism and male chauvinism.

• In the late '60s and early '70s Louis Kampf waged a frontal assault against the canon:

> The very category of art has become one more instrument of making class distinctions.[2]

Hence, it was only logical for Kampf to conclude that

> Initiating the underprivileged to the cultural treasures of the West could be a form of oppression ... a weapon in the hands of those who rule.... High culture ... tends to

MARVIN MANDELL, *a retired English professor, is a fiction writer and a member of the* New Politics *editorial board.*

reinforce the given alignments of power within the society.[3]

Is not withholding cultural treasures of the West from the underprivileged somewhat elitist? On the contrary, for Kampf, the concept of culture itself "is rooted in social elitism." It can be "little else but an instrument of class oppression."[4] Perhaps desiring to replicate in New York the Chinese Red Guard cultural revolution, Kampf wrote,

> The movement should have harassed the Lincoln Center from the beginning. Not a performance should go by without disruption. The fountains should be dried with calcium chloride, the statuary pissed on, the walls smeared with shit."[5]

Would this have been an effective tactic for the movement struggling to end the Vietnam War?

• Years later some feminist and post-modernists continued the attack on the canon, albeit usually without the Maoist bizarreness. For Susan Gubar, "The treasures of Western culture" are nothing more than "the patrimony of male writers."[6]

• Herbert Lindenberger, a professor at Stanford, said that canons that focus on great literature are intellectual tyrants.[7]

• At the 1992 meeting of the Modern Language Association, a Yale English professor denounced a donation to Yale that would fund a chair in Western civilization. "Why not a chair for colonialism, slavery, empire, and poverty?" she asked. Another professor called for the extermination of "white male Eur-American texts."[8]

• The post-modernist Ihab Hassan concluded:

> Thus from the "death of god" to the "death of the author" and "death of the father," from the derision of authority to revision of the curriculum, we decanonize culture, demystify knowledge, deconstruct the languages of power, desire, deceit.[9]

And on and on. But the Maoists, the feminists,[10] post-modernists, etc. do not have exclusive rights to a warped view of the canon. Defending the canon, William Bennett, in his 1988 address at Stanford University, said,

> We must study the West (because) it is good.... The West has produced the world's most just and effective system of government: the system of representative democracy.

As Matthew Goodman has pointed out, this kind of argument

> recalls the proclamations of past Soviet ministers of art and education who... extolled socialist realism because it was said to be purified and dignified by the communist political system which produced it.[11]

Thus we have moved full circle from the Maoism of an M.I.T. professor who wanted to disrupt Lincoln Center concerts and smear shit on the Center's walls to the Stalinist sentiment of a U.S. Secretary of Education who wanted to pay attention to those concerts because of the supposed superiority of Western politics.

I maintain that this warping is mostly due to a misreading — or a nonreading — of the texts by both the Left and the Right.

TAKE HOMER'S *ILIAD*. In the popular view — not one shared by most scholars —

it is an epic glorifying macho militarism.[12] Surely most of the epic portrays men in mortal combat as they endure conflicts of courage and cowardice, of patriotism and family devotion, of friendship and betrayal. But how does it portray them? At the height of his *aristeia* (string of victories), Achilleus, Homer tells us,"was straining to win glory, his invincible hands spattered with bloody filth." (Book XX) Achilleus, every Greek knew, had chosen a short glorious life over a long infamous one. And this battlefield glory was spattered with bloody filth — hardly a glorification of war. Briefly thereafter, Achilleus, driven into a mad frenzy by the killing of his friend Patroklos, cries out, "Die on, all" (XXI) and (to his enemy, Hektor) "I wish only that my spirit and fury would drive me to hack your meat away and eat it raw"(XXII). And this latter wish finds its echo when Hekuba, the mother of the slain Hektor, says of Achilleus, his killer, "I wish I could set teeth in the middle of his liver and eat it."(XXIV) In her brilliant essay "*The Iliad* or the Poem of Force," Simone Weil, writing in 1940-41, the darkest days of World War II, shows that force turns humans into things, that it destroys everyone, that all the victors become victims:

> Force is as pitiless to the man who possesses it, or thinks he does, as it is to its victims; the second it crushes, the first it intoxicates. The truth is, nobody really possesses it.... In this poem there is not a single man who does not at one time or another have to bow his neck to force.[13]

Near the end of *The Iliad* Achilleus tells Hektor's father, Priam, "Far from the land of my fathers I sit here in Troy, and bring nothing but sorrow to you and your children." (XXIV) All of this makes it hard indeed to understand how some see Homer as a right wing jingoist. The legacy of Homer belongs more to humanists, than to the war hawks of Vietnam, Grenada, Panama, and the Persian Gulf.

And Homer, like Shakespeare, has won fame for his inscrutability, his nearly perfect objectivity. Euripides is very different: he passionately takes sides — with the wretched against their oppressors.[14] "The poet of the world's grief," he has been called. Born in 485 B. C., Euripides witnessed and participated in the rising and the flourishing of the Golden Age of Greek culture, an age of celebration of the *joie de vivre* in every aspect of life: art, literature, politics, sport, philosophy. But during the last 25 years of his life, he witnessed and possibly was victimized by the downfall of this culture as Athenians and Spartans destroyed each other, their neighbors, and themselves in the seemingly endless Peloponnesian War (twenty-seven years from 431 to 404 B.C.).

Albert Camus believed it was the duty of all writers "to bear witness and shout aloud every time it is possible, insofar as our talents allow, for those who are enslaved...." Euripides did this. In *The Suppliant Women* (418 B. C.), he is interested not in the politics of war, but in the sufferings of mothers who seek only to bury their dead warrior sons. *The Trojan Women* (416 B. C.) again presents war from the victims' point of view: while Troy burns, the Trojan women wait for their captors — killers of their fathers, sons, husbands — to take them to Greece as domestic and concubine slaves; and they watch them murder a child out of war-crazed fear. Once perhaps a princess or a queen, each woman is now a *geras*, a prize of battle, comparable to a tripod or a horse. Andromache (widow of Hektor): "O Greeks, you have found out ways to torture that are not Greek.... God has destroyed me." For Euripides' predecessor Aeschylus, God punishes the wicked. “No hiding place covers sin.” *(Agamemnon)* But in Euripides’ *The Trojan Women*, God punishes all. Hekuba: “Oh God — Do I call to you? You did not help.” Another female victim, Elektra, in Euripides’ play of the same name, makes the same plaint: “Gods? Not one god has heard my helpless cry.” Is this a legacy today’s right wing religious conservatives would want to claim?

When the Peloponnesian War had lasted 15 years, a small island (Melos) offended Athens, not by revolting, but only by trying to maintain its neutrality. The island had no military significance. But Athens, cradle of democracy, quintessence of the Golden Age, captured the island, killed all the men, and enslaved the women and children. A few months later Euripides produced *The Trojan Women*.

In *Iphigenia at Aulis* (405 B. C.) male war leaders trick a mother into bringing her child to them; instead of marrying her to Achilleus as promised, her own father (Agamemnon) murders her as a “sacrifice.” Most ironically, the daughter (Iphigenia) comes to accept the jingoism of her father and his cohorts as she goes to her death. A father’s sacrificing his child — can anything be more barbaric? Yet many miss the irony of Iphigenia’s last words as she resigns herself to dying so that the Greeks may sail and fight the Trojans: “It is a right thing that Greeks rule barbarians. Not barbarians Greeks.” Without standing the text on its head, can anyone identify Dead White Male Euripides as an imperialist and a chauvinist?

IN A SENSE, *THE BACCHAE* (405 B. C.) IS A CULMINATION OF EURIPIDES’ THOUGHT. One way to read the play is to recognize that, for Euripides, male brutalization of women derives from man’s hatred of his own body, that is, his fear of his own sexual functioning. Like every Greek tragedy, *The Bacchae* is based on a myth. Young King Pentheus refuses to honor his cousin, the young god Dionysius (also called Bacchus); more than that, he tries to capture and chain him. But Dionysius is the god of sexual energy, and this cannot be manacled. Pentheus has enjoyed athletics and the hunt, along with his male buddies; he has disdained the company of women and especially the Bacchae (female followers of Dionysius). He is a moral young man (someone a William Bennett might parade as a role model to the odd teenager listening); but, deeply ignorant of his own nature, he becomes self-righteous. Dionysius offers to give Pentheus a “peek” at the Bacchae engaged in their mountain revels. Having originally offered to kill these women, Pentheus jumps at the chance to peek at them. (Beneath the moralist is an immoralist voyeur — cf. Jimmy Swaggart!) Dionysius dresses him in women’s clothes and plants him in a tree near the revels. He is discovered and is mistaken for a lion cub. His own mother, Agave, becomes possessed and leads the Bacchae in killing and dismembering him. (Such is the fate of the man cut off from his own nature.) Agave proudly carries Pentheus’ head to the city and is brought to her senses by her father, Kadmus, who shows her that she has killed her own son. Dionysius, the victim at the beginning of the play, has become the implacable, merciless avenger. But at the end of the play, the humans, not the gods, express *aidos* — compassion — for each other. They have suffered terribly, but, unlike the gods, they are capable of the only true wisdom (*sophia*), that born of love.

I have spent some time on *The Bacchae* because here Euripides is not merely siding with the victims: he is unraveling the mechanism of a major disease. We can see the extent and the seriousness of the disease when we read

> When you took that woman did you all take turns and bang her? She liked variety in men, the fickle bitch! ... I wish there were no women in the world — except for me.
> (Euripides, *The Cyclops*, 425 B. C. ?)

This machoism is egregious in the male war leaders of both *The Trojan Women* and *Iphigenia in Aulis*. Clearly Euripides saw it as a disease: "The man is mad who sacks cities and desolates temples..." (*The Trojan Women)* Even Agamemnon (in *Iphigenia in Aulis*), the same Agamemnon who later murders his own child as a "sacrifice," tells his brother, "Greece, like yourself/Some god has driven mad." In both plays a child is murdered as a consequence of the disease of male war leaders.

IN FEBRUARY, 1944, THE RESISTANCE, WANTING TO PREPARE PARISIANS for D-Day and to ready them for a Paris uprising, chose Sophokles' *Antigone* (adapted by Jean Anouilh) as the clarion call of resistance. In this play a daughter of Oedipus, Antigone, resists her uncle, King Creon's refusal to permit burial of her dead brother, Polynices, killed by her other brother, Eteocles in a struggle for power after Oedipus' death. Scholars have debated the religious significance of a "proper" burial, but for me, the essence of the play lies in the often referred to concept of honor. I believe that, for the Greeks, honor is the preservation of one's identity. Antigone tells her fearful sister (Ismene), "I am doing only what I must.... I am not afraid of the danger; if it means death/ It will not be the worst of deaths — death without honor." Later she tells the King, "I deny nothing.... If I had left my brother/ Lying in death unburied, I should have suffered./ Now I do not." The law of the State is not the law of God or of what we feel to be the natural force. In modern times we have seen such resisters as Henry Thoreau, Mohandas Gandhi, and Martin Luther King also appeal to a law higher than that of the State.

Like the macho males of Homer and Euripides, Creon cries out, "No woman rules me while I live," and later he warns Haimon (his son and Antigone's fiance) that she would be "a hellcat in bed." Creon is afraid "to show myself weak before the people."[15]

After Creon condemns Antigone to be buried alive, the seer Teiresias warns him:

> You have confused the upper and lower worlds. You sent a life to settle in a tomb;
> You keep up here that which belongs below, the corpse unburied, robbed of its release.

In an evil world we are all confronted with this challenge: can we remain true to our nature, to Nature itself, or must we go along, that is, bury the living spirit within us and let the dead rot on top?

In André Malraux's *Man's Fate,* a State inquisitor, seeking to force a captured revolutionary to reveal the names of his comrades, asks him, "Do you want to live?" His answer: "It depends how."

Anouilh ends his version of *Antigone* with these unambiguous words of the Chorus:

> Creon was the most rational, the most plausible of tyrants. But like all tyrants, he refused to distinguish between the things that are Caesar's and the things that are

> God's. Now and again, in the three thousand years since the first Antigone was heard of, someone has had to come forward to remind men of this distinction. And whether we say that the result is Christianity, or popular revolution, or *underground resistance*, the cause is always the same — a passionate belief that moral law exists, and a passionate regard for the sanctity of human personality. (emphasis mine)[16]

The *Antigone* theme of resistance to unjust authority is common to the works of two very different poets of the late Middle Ages — Dante and Villon. Both had been penniless exiles hounded by both Church and State. Had Dante returned to his native Florence after 1302, he would have been burned alive, victim of what were almost surely trumped up charges of graft. Dante places several cardinals and popes in his imagined hell (mostly due to their avarice); he scorns the opportunists or trimmers of his time. "I had not thought death had undone so many." His chagrin would have been deepened by Sen. Alfonse D'Amato's reference to his home turf as "the land of opportunism,"[17] a blue ribbon malapropism. Interestingly, because Dante considers sins of fraud more grievous than those of violence, flatterers and hypocrites are found in deeper pits of his hell than murderers. Hypocrites would surely include Gingrich and his Contract signers who title their war against poor women and children a "Personal Responsibility Act." Flatterers ("adulatori") pervert language and would include Madison Avenue hucksters, and propagandists (most contemporary politicians—both Republican and Democrat — and their public relations "spin doctor" men). It would certainly include those Republicans who, recently, on the advice of their p.r. men, doctored the rhetoric of their plans to weaken and perhaps wreck Social Security by claiming they are trying to save it.[18] The language perverters are sunken not in blood as are the murderers, but in excrement. Brown nosers? They shoveled it on others; now it is being shoveled on them. In the bottom pit, locked in ice alongside Satan who gnaws on them, lie the traitors — those who betray their fellow human beings. "The traitor is cruel," the critic Charles Williams has commented. Note that for Dante, the core of hell is ice, not fire; this best represents the core of the rigid personality.

While both Dante and Villon are expert at showing human degradation and utter loathsomeness, both always carry a vision of a very different world deep within us, a world of love and beauty, of trust and generosity. "God has showed me a fair city," Villon wrote; surely that city is as real as the one we find ourselves in. And later in Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov:*

> "Don't cry, mother," (Father Zossima's dying brother) answered. "Life is paradise, and we are all in paradise, but we refuse to see it. If we would, we should have heaven on earth the next day. (Book VI, Ch. 1)

Villon lived at the end of the Hundred Years War when France was ravaged by famine, disease, and crime. "From childhood on I have been poor," Villon tells us while describing his life in crime.

> Necessity makes people err. / And hunger drives wolf from woods.

(At this time wolves, desperately hungry, did invade towns and attack children.) In his *Testament*, Villon has Diomedes, a pirate, dragged in chains before the emperor Alexander:

> Alexander: Why are you a robber on the high seas?...
> Diomedes: Why do you call me a robber?

Because I'm seen marauding about
In a tiny skiff?
If I could arm myself
Like you I'd be an emperor....

Know that in great poverty...
Not emany scruples remain.
lines 138,140-44, 150,152 (tr. Galway Kinnell)

OF COURSE THE CANON IS NOT AN UNCHANGING GRANITE BLOCK, and viewing it as such would be a huge error. Melville's *Moby Dick* sold only 200 copies and was unrecognized for 70 years. Melville died in obscurity, as did Blake and Dickinson. Gide, as a publisher's reader, rejected Marcel Proust's manuscript of *Remembrances of Things Past*. Johnson and Coleridge disliked the poetry of John Donne. Stravinsky had as little use for Romantic music as T. S. Eliot did for Romantic writing. Voltaire ridiculed Homer, Dante, and Shakespeare;[19] and Mme. de Stael, in turn, rejected Voltaire, who, in creating *Candide*, she thought, was "laughing like a demon or an ape at the miseries of this human race with which he has nothing in common."[20]

For me, the most curious rejection of one master by another is Tolstoy's condemnation of Shakespeare. He scorns all Shakespeare's plays and focuses on *King Lear*, which he considers "absurd... very bad, carelessly composed." He refers to the "pompous characterless language of Lear."[21] George Orwell astutely reminds us that Tolstoy, despite his detailed rehash of the plot of *King Lear*, misses the central theme of the play: renunciation. Lear renounces his throne just as Tolstoy renounced his estate. Like Lear, Tolstoy found that his renunciation brought him no happiness. "On the contrary, he was driven to the edge of madness by the behavior of the people around him, who persecuted him precisely *because* of his renunciation." (emphasis his) No wonder this play upset Tolstoy. But Orwell goes further and points to a quarrel between the religious and the humanist attitudes towards life:

> All of (Shakespeare's) tragedies start out with the humanist assumption that life, although full of sorrow, is worth living, and that Man is a noble animal — a belief which Tolstoy in his old age did not share.[22]

When Tolstoy speaks of the "pompous characterless language of Lear," he is missing a crucial point: early in the play Lear's pompous speech is most revealing of his character: an insensitive, unaware, rigid man who parcels out his kingdom by the measured amount of love that each daughter professes. (Actually the parceling has already been accomplished.) Compare his early pompous speeches with their rigid, formalistic cadences to what we find later when he meets Cordelia on the battleground. He has begun to understand himself and others and to feel in a human way, rather than reacting mechanistically:

> Thou (Cordelia) art a soul in bliss; but I am bound
> Upon a wheel of fire that mine own tears
> Do scald like molten lead. (IV-7)

And compare the early speeches of Lear to his outburst in the raging storm when after much suffering he has realized that, as king, he has ignored the homeless wretches of his kingdom:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are,
That bide the pelting of this pitiless storm,
How shall your houseless heads and unfed sides,
Your looped and windowed raggedness, defend you
From seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en
Too little care of this! Take physic, pomp;
Expose thyself to feel what wretches feel,
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them
And show the heavens more just. (III-4)

But perhaps because Shakespeare is not a tidy playwright, because his plays teem with life and burst the boundaries of the three unities,[23] he is often misunderstood. Yes, there are hundreds of ways of reading him because he reaches so deeply into our souls, but some are plainly wrong. Even a critic as insightful as Coleridge could misunderstand Cordelia's famous reply of "Nothing" when Lear was supposedly dividing his kingdom: "There is ... some little faulty admixture of pride and sullenness in Cordelia's 'Nothing.'"[24] But Cordelia's "Nothing" was not in reply to the question "How much do you love me?" but to this question: "... what can you say to draw/A third more opulent than your sisters?" Cordelia refused to play this crass game that her sisters were so good at: "I cannot heave/My heart into my mouth." (I-1) Lear's question reminds me of Blake's "Bring out number, weight, & measure in a year of dearth." (*Marriage of Heaven and Hell)* That is, start counting when you're hard up. Lear is emotionally hard up and must count. Insensitive, he has no other way of evaluating his daughters' feelings for him. Lear says, "Nothing will come of nothing ("*ex nihilo nihil fit,*" an old maxim) and he repeats this later (I-4). But at that battlefield meeting with Cordelia:

Lear: I know you do not love me, for your sisters
Have, as I do remember, done me wrong:
You have some cause, they have not.
Cordelia: No cause, no cause. (IV-7)

Again the "Nothing." Cordelia is not counting; her forgiveness is natural. The maxim is proven wrong: something does come from "nothing." Love is beyond the reaches of real estate bequests.

As I have indicated, Shakespeare, unlike Euripides, cannot be considered a Left poet. But he struggles for truth and beauty; he tries to understand the roots of injustice; he affirms the human condition. For 400 years he has been for all of us.

NO WORK OF THE GREAT TRADITION HAS BEEN SUBJECT to as much wildly divergent explication as the *Bible*. Consider the "Song of Songs," a poem of rich sexual imagery. It is the only work in the *Old Testament* not to include sin, guilt or punishment, and like the book of *Esther* — and no other — it doesn't even mention God . The "Song of Songs" includes

- yearning of both woman and man;
- a nightmarish fear of losing one's lover;
- an invitation ("Awake, O north wind; and come thou south;/Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out,/Let my beloved come into his garden,/ and eat his pleasant fruits");

• the man and the woman's *wasfs* (praises of the physical charms of the loved one);[25]

• sexual union ("My beloved is gone down into his garden,/ To the bed of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies");

• and finally an affirmation of love ("Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm:/ For love is as strong as death...").

Despite the unlikelihood that allegory was a known literary device at the time of the writing of the *Song of Songs*, Church authorities insisted on an allegorical interpretation with Jesus as the bridegroom and the Church as the bride.

Far more dangerous are moralistic explications of the *Bible*, as they became justifications for inquisitions, excommunications, and *autos-da-fé* and a climate of intolerance that has persisted to the present day.

Three stories dominate the *Bible*:

• exodus: escape from bondage in Egypt; we are not ordained to be slaves to this or that Pharaoh and we must resist.

• exile and return: the fifty years spent in exile in Babylonia and the return ("By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion"); we live in an alien culture and long to return to our garden of Eden.

• the priestly story: sin, guilt, sacrifice, and forgiveness; God sent his son to die for our sins.

As Marcus Borg has pointed out, the priestly story is a politically domesticating one, whereas the other two are subversive.[26]

THE POET WILLIAM BLAKE, MORE CLEARLY THAN ANY OTHER MAJOR WRITER I have read, saw this subversive quality in Jesus himself. In fact, he sides with Jesus *against* God, the father:

> Thinking as I do that the Creator of this World is a very Cruel Being, & being a Worshipper of Christ, I cannot help saying: "the Son, O how unlike the Father!" First God Almighty comes with a Thump on the Head. Then Jesus Christ comes with a balm to heal it.
>
> —A Vision of the Last Judgment (1810)

And in "The Everlasting Gospel" (1818), he envisions Jesus in a revolution against God. The issue is Mary Magdalene found in adulterous bed. "Moses commands that she be stoned to death." But Jesus

> laid his hand on Moses' law
> The ancient heavens in silent awe,
> Writ with curses from pole to pole,
> All away began to roll...

And Jesus cries out,

> Good and evil are no more!
> Sinai's trumpets, cease to roar!

Then Jesus asks God, the father,

> Wherefore has thou writ these laws
> And created hell's dark jaws?
> My presence I will take from thee:
> A cold leper thou shalt be.

And Jesus tells Mary to "fear not."

Blake rejects the God of judgment and punishment and embraces a God of love and compassion *and* revolution. He despises the repressive priestly caste:[27]

> I went to the garden of love
> And saw what I had never seen:
> A chapel was built in the midst,
> Where I used to play on the green.
>
> And the gates of the chapel were shut,
> And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door.
> So I turn'd to the garden of love
> That so many sweet flowers bore,
>
> And I saw it was filled with graves,
> And tomb-stones where flowers should be,
> And priests in black gowns were walking their rounds
> And binding with briars my joys & desires.
>
> The Garden of Love (from *Songs of Experience*), 1794

Blake knows that the power of the priestly caste depends on fear, on "Thou shalt not" moralism, the core of the laws of a Moses and the teaching of a Socrates, not that of Jesus. "If morality was Christianity, Socrates was the savior." ("The Laocoon," 1818-20) Therefore the priests had to turn Jesus' teaching upside down. "Know that after Christ's death, he became Jehovah." *(The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1793)

In "London" (*Songs of Experience*) Blake indicts the rulers of church, state, and industry:

> I wander thro' each charter'd street,
> Near where the charter'd Thames does flow,
> And mark in every face I meet
> Marks of weakness, marks of woe.
>
> In every cry of every man,
> In every infant's cry of fear,
> In every voice, in every ban,
> The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.
>
> How the chimney-sweeper's cry
> Every black'ning church appalls;
> And the hapless soldier's sigh
> Runs in blood down palace walls.
>
> But most thro' midnight streets I hear
> How the youthful harlot's curse
> Blasts the new born infant's tear,
> And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

Capitalism is destroying society by chartering — hiring — the bodies of children as chimney sweeps, of soldiers for war, of prostitutes for sex. Economic exploitation, sexual repression (the "ban," the "mind-forged manacles"), and war are the cornerstones of society.

Not only does Blake fight moralism, but, like Euripides, he sees the connection between moralism and immoralism: "Prisons are built with stones of Law, Brothels with bricks of Religion." (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell)*[28]

Despite the burden of sin and guilt in the *Bible*'s priestly story (see above), there is also forgiveness; thus, each human is sacred and worthy of redemption. Rejecting the sin and guilt, Blake maintains the sacredness of life ("Everything that lives is holy" — *Ibid.*) As we have seen, Blake locates the cause of human woe in both economic exploitation and sexual repression. Thus the road of return from exile to paradise is through both political and sexual revolution. Regarding the latter, Blake believes that the five senses are five windows on eternity, and that the way to return to paradise is to clean the five windows (*Europe*, 1794). Most important is the sense of touch, which Blake equates with sexuality. Humans are kept from passing into eternity by the dark secrecy shrouding their sexuality and moralism inhibiting it.

> Prudence is a rich, ugly old maid courted by Incapacity....
> As the caterpillar chooses the fairest leaves to lay her eggs on, so the priest lays his curse on the fairest joys....
> Energy is Eternal Delight....
> If the doors of perception were cleansed everything would appear to man as it is, infinite.
>
> *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

By advocating overthrow of the tyrant, by pointing to the return to paradise, by proclaiming the preciousness of each human being,[29] Blake, while not the first or only person to explicate the *Bible* from a humanistic perspective, fuses the three *Bible* stories into his own coherent system.

Art is a part of life and the artist cannot easily turn away from the injustices of the world he or she lives in. In *Las Meninas* (*Maids of Honor)*, 1656, Velasquez, the court painter, thrusts the dwarf Maribarbola opposite the pampered doll-like Infanta as a counterpoint. Again and again he paints dwarves — all beyond the scope of his commission. The poet Leon-Filipe has written of one of those paintings:

> From here no one goes away.
> While this broken head
> of the Child of Vallecas exists,
> no one goes away. No one.
> Neither the mystic nor the suicide.
>
> First, it is necessary to undo this wrong,
> first it is necessary to resolve this enigma
> And it is necessary to resolve it among us all,
> and it is necessary to resolve it without cowardice....
>
> Caption for "The Child of Vallecas" of Velasquez, c. 1936

As I suggested while discussing Homer and Shakespeare, I do not mean to imply that the Great Tradition belongs exclusively to the Left or that all great artists share our politics. Hardly. But insofar as art plumbs universal truths — sometimes in spite of the artist's intentions — and insofar as our politics are just and humanistic, the Great Tradition has much to offer us. Thus, while Dostoevsky in his later years became a xenophobic national chauvinist and a religious zealot, his art touches us, burns us, transforms us.

Before the mid-eighteenth century, women and other subjugated people were mostly prevented from writing, painting, composing. As Virginia Woolf pointed out,

> A highly gifted girl who had tried to use her gift for poetry would have been so

thwarted and hindered by other people, so tortured and pulled asunder by her own contrary instincts, that she must have lost her health and sanity.... *A Room of One's Own*, 1929[30]

What those women and minorities have suffered and what we have lost is both tragic and immeasurable. But in no way does the exclusion of them from the pre-eighteenth century canon invalidate the worth of the male artists and philosophers, who themselves often opposed the injustice of sexism and exploitation. Had they gone along with it in their writing, those works would not be worth reading. Yes, there are exceptions. Juvenal and Strindberg are two. One reads them in spite of their crazed misogyny, just as one reads Pound, Eliot, and Céline despite their anti-Semitism. But the point is that the writers of the Great Tradition have not been valued for sexism, anti-Semitism, imperialism; they have been valued because each had a unique way of looking at the world, a way that future generations valued because it spoke to them. Picasso is reported to have said, "Anyone can make a yellow ball out of a sun, but to take a yellow ball and make a sun out of it — *that* is art!" Isn't that what Rembrandt did when he took a derelict out of the Amsterdam slums and made a Christ out of him? And what he did when, in 1655, he transfigured a slaughtered ox into what Malraux has called "his sudden sense of the immanence of a universe of which he feels this picture to be but one manifestation; it is as though in this scene of shambles a poignant symphony of form and color had found its perfect orchestration."[31]

The Great Tradition is a treasure. For the Left to abandon that treasure either because the expeditions to find it were often financed and supported by a ruling class or because many were unjustly prevented from joining the expeditions would be a deprivation not only of ourselves but of posterity. Let the Right read Homer, Euripides, Dante, Shakespeare, and the *Bible* with open eyes and heart and weep. And let the Left not forsake them, but read them and take heart.[32]

NOTES

1. Throughout this article I shall use the words "Great Tradition," but perhaps they are ill chosen. They imply exclusivity and a supposition that all the writers of the West build into a meta-narrative. To regard world literature as "*g*reat *t*radition*s*" would be more appropriate.

2. "The Humanist Tradition in Eighteenth Century England," *New Literary History*, 3 (1971) p. 167.

3. "The Trouble with Literature," *Change in Higher Education*, 2 (1970) pp. 28, 30.

4. "Notes Toward a Radical Culture," *The New Left*, ed. P. Long (Boston, 1969) pp. 422, 424, 426, 431.

5. *Ibid*.

6. quoted in Peter Shaw, "Feminist Literary Criticism," *The American Scholar*, autumn, 1988, p. 504.

7. From Ron Grossman, "Will Stanford Alter the Course of Western Civilization?" *American Scholar*, winter, 1988, p. 102.

8. In Rick Martin, "Classics Confusion," *Vogue*, April, 1993, p. 270.

9. Ihab Hassan, "Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective," *Critical Inquiry*, 12, spring, 1986.

10. I refer of course only to some feminists, not all by any means. And I should add

that feminist negative comments about the canon should be considered in context: they often reflected desperation at the intransigence of some about opening the canon to works of women, minorities, South Americans, Africans, etc.

11. Matthew Goodman, "Ammunition for the Canon," *Utne Reader*, May-June, 1991, p. 130.

12. Even a former Columbia professor, Carolyn G. Heilbrun, said, "Great-books courses teach young men to be warriors the first semester, priests the second; an exaggeration, but a small one." Quoted from David Denby, "Does Homer Have Legs?" *The New Yorker*, Sept. 6, 1993, p. 54. And Louis Kampf: "Whom did the values represented by Homer's Achilles serve?" "The Trouble with Literature," *Ibid.*, p. 30.

13. In Q. Anderson and J. A. Mazzeo, *The Proper Study* (N.Y.: St. Martin's, 1962) p. 10.

14. First, I should point out that Homer too sides with the wretched against their oppressors, but perhaps more circumspectly. For example, when Achilleus grieves for his slain comrade Patroklos, his Trojan women slaves grieve with him "openly for Patroklos, but for her own sorrow each." (Book XIX) Perhaps it is fair to say that Homer does not begin with an ax to grind, as does his later compatriot Euripides, but his psychological insight leads him to a similar stance. Second, if Euripides is more *engagé* than Homer, we must remember that Homer is writing about a war at a distance of possibly hundreds of years, whereas Euripides is in the middle of a war that is shattering his world.

15. Creon bears comparison to Melville's Captain Vere, who rejects mercy to Billy Budd because "You know what sailors are.... They would think that we flinch, that we are afraid of them." ("Billy Budd," 1888-91)

16. The words "underground resistance" were illegal during the Occupation, yet the German officers sitting in the first three rows allowed them, as did the censor. After the war Anouilh radically changed the play for a New York (Katherine Cornell) production so that Creon, not Antigone, engaged the sympathies of the American audience. Anouilh gutted the revolutionary content: among other changes, the Chorus says nothing about underground resistance or "the passionate regard for the sanctity of the human personality," concluding instead, "We shall never know the name of the fever that consumed Antigone." Today, alas, the 1946, not the 1944, version is distributed in both French (La Table Ronde and Didier) and most English editions.

17. Quoted in Thomas Oliphant, "D'Amato Muscles New York for Dole," Boston *Globe*, March 7, 1996.

18. Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language" unravels perverted speech and demonstrates how serviceable it is for totalitarians.

19. "... this monster (Shakespeare) has his admirers in France, and to compound this horror, I was the first Frenchman to mention his name. I was the first to reveal a few pearls I had discovered in his enormous manure pile." — in Wayne Andrews, *Voltaire* (N. Y.: New Directions, 1981) p. 19.

20. *De l'Allemagne*, 1810.

21. "On Shakespeare and the Drama," tr. V. Tchertkoff *Fortnightly Review*, LXXXVI (1906), pp. 963-83.

22. From "Lear, Tolstoy and the Fool," in *Shooting Elephants and Other Essays* (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace, 1989) p. 49.

23. Unities of plot (one plot, no sub-plots), of place (one setting), and of time (one day). Actually Aristotle prescribed only the first; the other two were added by 17th and 18th century neo-classicist critics.

24. *Lectures and Notes on Shakespeare* (1818), collected by T. Ashe (London: George Bell and Sons, 1890).

25. Norman Gottwald in *The Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) speaks of the sexual equality in the man and the woman's being "'toe to toe' in the assertive acts and expressive words." p. 549

26. *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time* (San Francisco: Harper, 1994) p. 131.

27. Re: the danger of a powerful priestly caste — Consider the difference between ancient Egypt, ruled by such a caste, and fifth century B. C. Greece, where the priests were losing their power. A tomb in Egypt and a theatre in Greece. Consider also the power of the Church during the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

28. Mark Twain also locates moralism at the root of human evil: "I find this Defect to be the Moral Sense. Man is the only animal that has it. It is the secret of his degradation." "Man the Lowest Animal," Part V of *The Damned Human Race,* 1905-09. Twain also ridicules religious fundamentalism: "Take the case of Jeroboam. 'I will cut off from Jeroboam him that pisseth against the wall.' (I Kings, 14:10) It was done. And not only was the man that did it cut off, but everybody else. The same with the house of Baasha: everybody was exterminated, kinsfolk, friends, and all, leaving 'not one that pisseth against a wall.' (I Kings, 16:11) In the case of Jeroboam you have a striking instance of the Deity's custom of not limiting his punishments to the guilty; the innocent are included. Even the 'remnant' of that unhappy house was removed, even ' as a man taketh away dung, till it be all gone.' That includes the women, the young maids, and the little girls. All innocent, for they couldn't piss against a wall. Nobody of that sex can." Letter 10 of *Letters from the Earth*, 1910

29. For Blake, the human *is* divine: "Men forgot that All deities reside in the human breast." — *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*

30. (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace, 1989) p. 49.

31. Quoted in J. Dupont and F. Mathey, *The Seventeenth Century* (N. Y.: Skira, 1951) p. 66.

32. For other defenses of the canon not emanating from the Right, see also

- Harold Bloom, *The Western Canon* (N. Y.: Harcourt, Brace, 1993);
- David Denby, "Does Homer Have Legs?" *The New Yorker*, Sept. 6, 1993;
- Irving Howe, "The Value of the Canon," *The New Republic*, Feb. 18, 1991;
- Martha Nussbaum, *Poetic Justice* (Boston: Beacon, 1996)

A Reply to Stephen Eric Bronner
Renaissance or Enlightenment?

Loren Goldner

> *In the movement from Boehme to Bacon, there is a great step forward in precision and an equally great step backward in sensuousness.*
>
> G.F.W. Hegel
> *History of Philosophy*

THE FOLLOWING IS A "COMRADELY CRITICISM" of Stephen Eric Bronner's defense of the Enlightenment in *New Politics* (Vol. V, No. 3.). Bronner's article is on the whole a breath of fresh air in the contemporary climate of postmodernism and "identity politics," whose hostility to the Enlightenment, drawing on Nietzsche and Heidegger (often without knowing it) he rightly decries. It draws on a historical culture which is totally unfashionable, suspiciously "white male," in today's trendy academic radicalism. But Bronner's article also shows signs that he himself does not realize how serious the problem is. He does not seem to understand that today one cannot defend the Enlightenment (and we agree that a defense is necessary) with the ideas of the Enlightenment alone. However unpalatable it may be to do so in the contemporary climate, where the Enlightenment project is under attack everywhere by Nietzscheans, "cultural studies" ideologues, Christian, Jewish and Muslim fundamentalists, Foucaultians, Frankfurt Schoolers, Afrocentrists and (most) ecologists, it is necessary to discuss the limits of the Enlightenment in order to defend it, *and* to go beyond it.

This critique will not deal directly with Bronner's politics, which he calls "liberal socialism," as in his curious assertion that since 1989 the practical issues which divided liberals and socialists have been essentially overcome. It is possible to agree with the need to defend the Enlightenment and completely reject such politics. I can't imagine what real-world liberals he means and as a Marxist I didn't need 1989 to know that the Soviet bloc was weak on democracy. This reply will rather focus on the meaning of the Enlightenment as a total project, and its limits.

Bronner says the Enlightenment has always had its critics, citing Burke, de Maistre, Chamberlain and Spengler. But he knows very well that there was another critique of the Enlightenment afoot in Europe well before the French Revolution, the German *Sturm und Drang* movement, which included figures of no less stature than Herder and Goethe,

LOREN GOLDNER *is a writer who lives in Cambridge.*

and which prepared the way for another critique of the Enlightenment which Bronner significantly never mentions, romanticism. It is true that there are few romantics today, and consequently few postmodernist nihilists waste any breath attacking "the dialectic of romanticism." The proto-romantic *Sturm und Drang*, and the romantic movement throughout Europe after 1800, added many elements to the revolutionary tradition which passed into the work of another post-Enlightenment thinker, Karl Marx. Winckelmann's study of Greek art founded a Hellenophilism which was foreign to the Latin-Roman contours of the Enlightenment in France, and pointed toward a vision of community in the polis which inspired Hoelderlin (hardly an "Enlightenment" figure) and the early Hegel, in pointed rejection of the statism of most of the French *Aufklärer*. Out of the work of Herder (and the lesser-known Vico) came an understanding foreign to the Enlightenment that social institutions do not derive from abstract principles but are the *factum*, the *product* of history.

Bronner knows very well that Marx studied the work of the conservative German historical school of law, in order to appropriate elements of its organicist critique of the abstraction of the Enlightenment for the revolutionary movement. The romantic philosophers Schelling and Fichte developed an idea that also exists nowhere in the Enlightenment, except as adumbrated (at its end) by Kant: that human activity *constitutes* reality through its praxis. G.F.W. Hegel, who critiqued both the limits of Enlightenment and of romanticism, pulled all these elements into a philosophy of history that was, as Herzen said, the "algebra" of revolution. There would have been no "Theses on Feuerbach" without these figures, and hence no Marx as we know him today. What did the "Theses on Feuerbach" say? They said "all previous materialisms, including Feuerbach's, do not understand activity as *objective*." Marx here is explicitly referring to Enlightenment materialists such as Hobbes, Mersenne, and Holbach, emphasizing the importance of the "active side developed by idealism," by which he means Schelling, Fichte and Hegel, none of whom can be considered "Enlightenment" thinkers, even if they are also not "anti-Enlightenment," in the same way as figures such as Maistre, for whom the Enlightenment and then the French Revolution were quite simply the eruption of the satanic in history.

ANOTHER MAJOR DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE ENLIGHTENMENT AND MARX is the attitude toward religion. This is particularly important since most Marxists have tended to think that Marx's view is basically identical with that of Voltaire: religion is "wrong," "false," *l'infâme*. But Marx, coming after 50 years of the rich philosophical discussion of religion in German idealism and then in his materialist predecessor Feuerbach, saw religion "as the heart of a heartless world, the spirit of a world without spirit." Religion for Marx was a prime case of what he called alienation, whereby human beings invert dreams of a better life into an other-worldly form. But a Voltairean would never have said, as Marx did, that "you cannot abolish religion without realizing it." Simple Enlightenment atheism never asserted there was anything to "realize," because such a view accords its (alienated) truth to religion.

History vs. abstract principles, polis community vs. statism, the alienated human truth of religion vs. 18th-century atheism, constitution of the world by activity vs. a mere contemplative vision of reality as "out there": all these key concepts were developed not by the Enlightenment but by *Sturm und Drang*, and then romanticism and idealism, they were all fundamental for Marx, and yet Bronner makes no mention of them. He therefore draws a straight line from the Enlightenment to socialism which does not exist, thus making both of them an easier target for the postmodernists as a "master narrative" of "domination," resting on schoolboy notions of "materialism" which derive from Newton's atomism. This telescoping of Enlightenment and socialism is actually (and quite unintentionally on Bronner's part) reminiscent of Stalinism, which did not have much use for the post-Enlightenment (not to mention pre-Enlightenment) sources of Marx (as sketched above) either.[1]

Bronner offers a discussion of the impact of Enlightenment political thought through Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau and Kant. But it is exactly here that the problems arise. The Enlightenment is not just, not even primarily, a body of thought; it is that, but it is still more a social project and a social practice that was, in the majority of cases, taken up and implemented by state civil servants. This was not the case in England, where Enlightenment thought of the 17th and 18th century, the work of Bacon, Newton, Hobbes, Locke, Hooke, Boyle, Smith, Gibbon, Johnson, Hume and Paine unfolded in a new civil society which had successfully freed itself from absolutism by the revolutions of 1640 and 1688. Nor was this the case in America, where Jefferson, Franklin, Paine and Madison were just as much at the cutting edge, freeing America from colonial domination. But the Enlightenment on the continent, to a great extent as ideology and above all as the practice of Enlightened absolutism, was statist through and through, from the philosophes and their dreams of benign Asian despots, to the Jacobins, to the Prussian reformers of 1808. In France, Spain, Portugal, the Italian states, Prussia, Sweden, Austria and Russia (and in the Iberian and French colonies in the New World) the Enlightenment was the theory and practice of civil servants working for absolutist states. Voltaire at the Prussian court of Frederick II or Diderot at the Russian court of Catherine the Great are only the most memorable instances of the intertwining of the philosophes and the Enlightened absolutisms of their time. Even Napoleon, in a warped way, was spreading Enlightened statist reform through his conquest of Europe.

It may well be the case that the best of the thought of Voltaire and Diderot was "in contradiction" with their idea of influencing powerful monarchs to do the right thing. To point out the realities of their statism is not to fall into a Foucaultian view of the Enlightenment as about nothing but "power," nor is it to echo a Frankfurt School view of the Enlightenment as mere "domination." Bronner is quite right in rejecting these Nietzschean and Weberian views of rationality. The problem with Bronner's view is that it takes over without discussion, as a bedrock foundation, what the Enlightenment itself accepted as its undisputed point of departure, its model of the power of rational thought: Newton's physics. But Newton's physics (which were, in their time, undoubtedly revolutionary) were not merely about physics, or nature: they stood for 150 years, and in reality for 300 years, as the very model of what "science" was and ought to be. For most figures of the Enlightenment (important exceptions are Diderot and Rousseau) the rigor and exactness of mathematical physics stood as a model for all realms of human endeavor, including the psyche and the arts. Figures such as Condillac and Holbach spent decades trying to work out a psychology (as Hobbes had earlier done with politics) based on the central Newtonian concept of "force," and Condorcet dreamed of a "social mathematics." LaMettrie went from "*la nature machine*" to "*l'homme machine*," and this was generalized by LaPlace and LaGrange into "*l'univers machine*." And, lest one get the impression that these were mainly late Enlightenment aberrations, one should recall the great impact of Euclid and Galileo on Hobbes, Voltaire's pamphleteering for Newton, or finally Kant's statement, just about the time that Gauss was realizing otherwise, that Euclidean space was the only possible space.

THESE STRONG METAPHORS, AND THE PROGRAM THEY INSPIRED, generalized from a powerful breakthrough in the dynamics of physical bodies in the new abstract space and time, to the totality of science and culture, died out very recently. Only a generation ago psychological behaviorism, which has to be seen as a very degenerate heir of the late Enlightenment of Condillac, LaMettrie and Holbach, still got a serious hearing in Anglo-American universities, and Talcott Parsons in the 1940's boasted that he was "close to splitting the sociological atom."

So one can turn around Bronner's question to the postmodernists, "What are you going to substitute for the Enlightenment?" at him: what are you going to do with the Enlightenment today? What conceivable intellectual, political and social program is possible today built on the Enlightenment alone? (This is a very separate question from its defense against those who deny its once-radical edge.)

Newton's physics were, once again, not merely a physics, (the latter undoubtedly being of great power, a guiding research program for over 200 years), they were little less than an ontology, and they were unquestioned by the Enlightenment. Neither Bronner nor most uncritical defenders of the Enlightenment have much to say about Newton's alchemy, astrology, Biblical commentary, history (attempting to confirm the truth of Old Testament chronology), anti-Trinitarian theology or search for the Egyptian cubit, a body of work which Newton himself placed on an equal footing with his physics and of which, for him, his physics was only a part. (Interestingly, and revealingly, the Frankfurt School and the Foucaultian critics of the Enlightenment have little to say about them either.) Many of these pursuits were already becoming unfashionable in Newton's own time, and Voltaire's popularization of Newton on the continent after 1730 already passed them over in total silence. But the discovery of this Newton is already enough to show that he was not exactly, or certainly not only, an "Enlightenment" thinker. Bronner is quite right to date the Enlightenment not from the 18th century French philosophes but from 17th century English figures such as Bacon (even if he wrong-headedly calls Descartes, with his ontological proof of the existence of God, and the pantheist Spinoza "Enlightenment" figures). But in rightly situating the question in the 17th century, Bronner also steps into the quagmire in which received ideas about the Enlightenment and its origins disappear.

Newtonian science, and hence the Enlightenment, defeated the kind of church-sponsored obscurantism represented by the trial of Galileo, or the earlier trial and execution of Giordano Bruno. But it also defeated what I would call Renaissance-Reformation cosmobiology, as the latter is associated with names such as Nicholas of Cusa, Bruno , Paracelsus, John Dee, Robert Fludd, Boehme and above all Kepler. Elements of it persist as late as Leibniz, co-inventor with Newton of the calculus, and who already polemicized against

Newton's mechanism. Newton, as sketched above, still had much of the Renaissance magus about him. This cosmobiological world view further found its cultural expression in figures such as Dürer, the Brueghels, Bosch, Shakespeare and Rabelais, just as later Pope and Dryden attempted to create a literature in keeping with Newtonian science. In this transition, an empty, atomistic space and time, based on an infinity understood as mere repetition (the infinitesimal) deflated and expelled a universe brimming with life, in which, further, human imagination was central.

One need only think of Paracelsus, the peripatetic alchemist, astrologer, chemist, herbalist, tireless researcher and medical practitioner who called the human imagination "the star in man" (*astrum in homine*) and who placed it higher than the mere stars which preoccupied astronomers. But no figure is more exemplary than Kepler, who looked for the Platonic solids in the order of the solar system and who attempted to demonstrate that the distance between the planets was in accordance with the well-tempered tuning of the "music of the spheres." This was the world view — the cosmology — which was deflated and replaced by Newton's colorless, tasteless, odorless space and time, and the latter deflation reached into every domain of culture for 300 years. And this cosmobiological world view was an indisputable precursor of Marx's "sensuous transformative praxis" (*sinnliche umwälzende Tätigkeit*) and hence of modern socialism. By its notion of human participation of the constitution of the world, it was closer to Marx than any of the intervening Enlightenment views.

UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY, IT WAS CUSTOMARY TO ACKNOWLEDGE many of these figures, and Paracelsus and Kepler in particular, as pioneers who contributed to the transition "from alchemy to chemistry," "from astrology to astronomy." But the Enlightenment vision of their advance was completely linear, as if nothing of importance had been lost. But already a figure of the stature of Leibniz, who himself made a major contribution to the new science, argued in his polemics against Newton's publicist Clarke that something had been lost: *life*, not as the random result of a billiard ball universe, but as a phenomenon central to the meaning of the universe, as it had been for Paracelsus and Kepler.

The Enlightenment did not shed light on this transition; on the contrary, it was mainly totally oblivious to it, when it was not actively obscuring it. The Enlightenment created the myth of the "dark ages" of religion between Greco-Roman antiquity and the 17th century (one need only think, by contrast, of the brilliant culture, including the scientific culture, of Islam). It saw a monolithic Christianity completely hostile to science and thereby fashioned the modern (and modernist) myth that history prior to Newtonian science was strictly a battle between "religion" and "materialist atheism," the latter being exactly the kind of materialism which Marx rejected in the "Theses on Feuerbach." (This is not to suggest that Marx was not an atheist but merely to insist on the distinction, developed earlier, between his critique of religion and Voltaire's.)

In reality, while most of the figures of Renaissance-Reformation cosmobiology were at least nominally Christian believers of one kind or another (although in the case of Bruno, one wonders) their significance is precisely that they represented a "third stream," an alternative to both the dominant Aristotelian scholasticism propagated by the Church and to the atomistic materialism that congealed in the Enlightenment. This "third stream" was also often combatted, along with atheist materialism, by the Church as the highest heresy.[2] And this "third stream" and its significance were essentially hidden for three centuries by the Manichean portrait of the past developed by the Enlightenment and taken over in the ideology of modernity.

This "third stream," of which again Kepler is the culminating figure, was hardly, as Enlightenment ideology portrayed it by assimilating it to "religion," hostile to science or to scientific research. Indeed, Kepler's work provided one part of the key to Newton's theory of universal gravitation. The "third stream" was of course characterized by many untenable a priori views such as the correspondence of the microcosm-man and the macrocosm-universe, or by Kepler's own search for Platonic form, as in a perfect Platonic circle in the orbit of the planets. Kepler passed over into modern science by abandoning that form for the empirically-discovered ellipse, but he got there by looking for it. The "third stream" had little or nothing to counter the successes of the Newtonian-atomist program, until the latter had exhausted itself. Nevertheless, a history of the science since Newton which has attempted to revive the "third stream," too complex to concern us here, would include names of the stature of Baader, Schelling, Oersted, Davy, Faraday, Goethe, W.R. Hamilton, Georg Cantor and Joseph Needham, and the issues they raise are far from settled.

It is significant that neither the pro-Enlightenment Bronner and the anti-Enlightenment Frankfurt School and Foucaultians have much use for Renaissance-Reformation cosmobiology, and the reason is that all of them tacitly accept the Enlightenment linear view of history and progress as the sole possible kind of progress, in which the "third stream" disappears into the "religion" of the "dark ages." There is an unacknowledged agreement here between opposing sides which makes possible a recasting of the debate. This largely unspoken agreement accepts the division of the world between culture and nature, (or *Geist* and *Natur* as the Germans would say) and, however differently various figures may treat the world of consciousness, they *concede the world of nature to the mechanists*. Such a division was only possible after Newton and the ideological suppression of the cosmobiological "third stream," which, whatever its flaws, presented a unitary vision of consciousness and nature. The reaction to the implications of the Enlightenment program for consciousness was quick in coming, and many took up Donne's lament of "all coherence gone." But from Pascal to Rousseau to Hegel (for whom nature was "boring," the world of repetition) to Nietzsche to Heidegger, all the different formulations on the impossibility of treating human consciousness on the model of mathematical physics (which is indeed impossible) took off from the assumption of *dead nature*, in which "life" had to appear not as Paracelsus' astrum *in homine* or Leibniz's *vis vitae* but as some "irrational," "vitalistic" force.

Nor should the reader get the impression that Renaissance-Reformation cosmobiology did not have political implications, as Bronner has drawn them out for the political thought of the Enlightenment. Its first and major political implication stems from the fact that it was decidedly an ideology of "interregnum," appearing between the collapse of the medieval Holy Roman Empire and the consolidation of English capitalism and above all continental absolutism, both of which eradicated it everywhere. In a meaningful sense, the Renaissance and Reformation as a whole can be understood as an interregnum phenomena, but many other currents within them competed with what I call cosmobiology. These political implications were not as well articulated by its theoreticians as was Bronner's Enlightenment, partly because the concept of the "political" (itself recognized by Marx as an alienated separation) only autonomized itself later and partly because these movements, unlike the Enlightenment, were primarily of the lower classes, and thus were completely defeated, and their history mainly written by the victors. Their finest hours were the radical wing of the Reformation (essentially, the Anabaptists and their leader Thomas Munzer) and the radical wing of the English Revolution, the Levellers, Diggers and smaller sects. (Gerard Winstanley stands out as a spokesman for this milieu.) One only fully appreciates Newton's political meaning when one understands the importance of his tirades against these "enthusiasts," as they were called. Here it can be seen clearly that the English Enlightenment triumphed not merely by defeating reactionary Stuart absolutism but also by defeating radical currents to its left.

When the interregnum was over, ca. 1650, the radical social base of the "third stream" was socially and politically defeated, and the Enlightenment could begin, with its two contending models of English constitutional monarchy and French absolutism, the latter becoming the model for most of the continent. But Bronner, like most left defenders of the Enlightenment, passes over in silence the fact that the Anglo-French Enlightenment triumphed over a radical as well as a reactionary rival, and always bore the markings of that fact.

STATED BRIEFLY, THE SPIRIT OF MARX'S UNDERLYING WORLD VIEW is more truly the direct heir, the "realization" of the sensuousness of figures such as Shakespeare, the Brueghels and Paracelsus, than of any subsequent phase of the Anglo-French Enlightenment and its aftermath.

Bronner might well ask, as he asks the postmodernists, what such a critique of the Enlightenment, from the vantage point of Renaissance-Reformation "cosmobiology" means today, in political terms.

What it means is this. From the French Revolution until the 1970s, the dominant currents of the Western left, and the movements it influenced in the colonial and post-colonial world, were indeed heirs of the Enlightenment. They were the heirs because, in practice if not always in rhetoric, they inherited the tasks of completing the bourgeois revolution, tasks for which the Enlightenment, as the most advanced outlook of that revolution, was eminently suitable. First Social Democracy, from the 1860s onward, and then Stalinism, from the 1920s, took over a large part of the Enlightenment attitudes toward science, the state, technology, heavy industry, rationality, nature, a linear view of progress, philosophy and religion. That view was at bottom atomistic and mechanistic, even when dressed up as "dialectical materialism." Their statist development ideology and strategy was most successful in countries where no liberal bourgeoisie was strong enough to fight in its own name for the Enlightenment program against pre-capitalist social relations. Social Democracy and later Stalinism took over the full weight of Enlightenment statism of the continental variety. This was not surprising, since they gained influence mainly in the same backward countries in which Enlightenment statism had been successful, for essentially the same reasons. With the virtually universal spread of state bureaucracy for the century up to ca. 1975, whether in liberal democracy, Social Democracy, Stalinism or Third World nationalism, this Enlightenment ideology was rooted practically in a vast global stratum of middle class state civil servants, whatever else they may have disagreed about. Not accidentally, their theory of history, when they felt they needed one, was articulated by the state civil servants par excellence Kant, Fichte and Hegel.

The crisis of the Enlightenment today is the world-wide crisis of that state civil service stratum, welfare-statist, Stalinist or Third Worldist, and its inability after the mid-1970s to continue to develop the productive forces and to advance their Enlightenment program, something they had done rather successfully in the previous century, particularly from 1945 to 1975. Bronner's left is in crisis because it uncritically took over the Enlightenment, and thereby confused the tasks of the bourgeois revolution with those of the socialist revolution; the left's claims to fight for social emancipation got completely entwined with the state bureaucracy and civil service, which are irreducible obstacles to full social emancipation. There is nothing more to be done with the Enlightenment, taken by itself, because there is no more bourgeois revolution to make. There is also nothing more to be done with the Enlightenment view of nature, derived as it is from Newton's atomism and mechanism. The Enlightenment grasped in a one-sided way the impact of the natural environment on man but, lacking the idea of constitutive practice, has little to say in an era such as our own, so shaped by the problems of man's impact on the environment. This is not because, as the postmodernists say, Western science and technology are nothing but "domination," but because the unique role of humanity in the biosphere, its "species-being" to use Marx's term, was articulated not by the Enlightenment but by the "active side developed by idealism" as Marx put it in the "Theses on Feuerbach." The Enlightenment looked to Nature to underpin its abstract theories of Natural Man; it did not understand that human history constantly creates "new natures," and hence new "human natures," by its interaction with the biosphere.

The Foucaultian and Frankfurt School critics of the Enlightenment, whom Bronner rightly decries, live off the impoverishment of the left by its extended romance with a one-sided appropriation of the Enlightenment, by the left's century-long confusion of the completion of the bourgeois revolution by state civil servants with socialism, and by the world-wide crackup of that project. The pre-Enlightenment, Renaissance-Reformation cosmobiology which passed through German idealism into Marx's species-being means even less to them than it does to Bronner. Yet Bronner's critique of them is undermined by his tacit agreement with them that "nature is boring," i.e. the realm of mechanism, as Hegel, articulating the ultimate state civil servant view, cut off from practice in nature, said. Both Bronner and his opponents still inhabit the separation of culture and nature, *Geist* and *Natur*, which came into existence through the Enlightenment's deflation of cosmobiology. It is the rehabilitation, in suitably contemporary form, of the outlook of Paracelsus and Kepler, not of Voltaire and Newton, which the left requires today for a (necessarily simultaneous) regeneration of nature, culture and society, out of Blake's fallen world of Urizen and what he called "single vision and Newton's sleep."

NOTES

1. Thus it is simply wrong to say, as Bronner does in an aside, that racism arose as part of the 19th century reaction *against* the Enlightenment, in such figures as Houston

Stewart Chamberlain or Gobineau. The appearance of racist ideology actually dates from the 1670s, concurrent *with* the Enlightenment, as the unintended but consequential by-product of the redefinition of nature, including biology, in accordance with "la nature machine" as LaMettrie would later put it. This recognition has nothing to do with the stupid contemporary assertion that because all Enlightenment thinkers were white European males, their outlook was suitable only for them, and necessarily racist, sexist and Eurocentric. There had always been, in European and in other world cultures, ethnocentric ideologies such as the division between "the Greeks" and "barbarians", which meant all non-Greeks, or China's "Middle Kingdom" ideology. In the European High Middle Ages, the world was divided up among believers and infidels, which in practice mainly meant between Christians, Jews and Muslims. Wars and massacres were conducted through the ages with the legitimation of such ideologies. But prior to the 17th century, i.e. prior to the Enlightenment, *the concept of race did not exist*, because the concept of biology and a purely biological definition of man (l'homme machine) did not exist. In a world in which Hobbes could define human beings as essentially animals, it was an easy next step to come up with a "scientific" ordering of the emerging color codes developed by the new European hegemony. The most important practical basis for the emergence of racism was the Atlantic slave trade. Europeans had encountered Africans for centuries, often as Muslim warriors, scholars and officials, and as slaves, in the vast and multiracial Mediterranean slave pool. As late as the 16th century half of the slaves in the Iberian peninsula were what would today be called "white." Africans appeared in Western art as warriors, black virgins or, more commonly, as one of the three Maguses at the birth of Christ. By the 17th century, however, the burgeoning Atlantic slave trade meant that Europeans encountered Africans for the first time primarily as slaves. The political economist William Petty codified this shift in one of the earliest known racist treatises (1676), drawing on the new biologist definition of man to say that Africans obviously were fit for nothing else. In the course of the 18th century, such impulses were further elaborated as the hierarchy of the Great Chain of Being was invoked as the "scientific" grounding of the world color hierarchy, with whites at the top. And as we know, "scientific" racism has been with us ever since.

2. Cf. the work of Frances Yates, particularly her *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago, 1964) and above all *The Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (Boulder, 1978).

A Rejoinder:

Politics or Utopia?

Stephen Eric Bronner

The niveau of radicalism has been raised yet again. There is only one problem: no one can attain it any longer.
— Karl Kraus

DEBATES BETWEEN FRIENDS ARE SOMETIMES MORE INTERESTING than those between members of different camps. Genuine differences have divided Loren Goldner and myself since we first met in Berkeley in the last days of the student movement nearly 25 years ago. He is a sophisticated person. And so, even if his concerns are often esoteric, they are always of interest. They deserve a response in terms of *both* theory and practice.

Goldner seems to believe the goals of the enlightenment project have been realized. I don't. Quite the contrary. Its unfulfilled core values of internationalism, economic justice, and republican democracy remain the basic *political* values on which any contemporary progressive movement must rely. The enlightenment concern with constricting the arbitrary exercise of power should even serve as what Hegel might have termed the "axis" for evaluating the various political proposals and ideas generated by other movements.

None of this, however, even remotely suggests the need to reject all knowledge produced before or after the Enlightenment. My article also never considered it as "primarily a body of thought" or anything other than a "social project and a social practice" informed by philosophical aims. I simply refused to reduce its ideas to its social context. Thus, my article could view the enduring relevance of the Enlightenment from its inherently *critical* and unfinished character rather than any of the fixed claims or systems developed by any given thinker.

No western tradition has clean hands on issues concerning bigotry and, I guess, 1650 is as good a date as any other for the beginning of "racism." The Jews of the Middle Ages, the original inhabitants of Cuba wiped out by the followers of Columbus, or the Native Americans of the New World might not agree. But — I almost forgot — they were *termed* "peoples" or "tribes" rather than "races" and they were less considered

STEPHEN ERIC BRONNER *is a professor of political science and comparative literature at Rutgers University and a member of the* New Politics *editorial board.*

biologically "inferior" than servants of the devil or non-human. I always thought that the great epistemological innovation of Hegel and Marx was to generate categories from practice rather than insist upon practice meeting the predefined concerns of theory. But, like many contemporary historians, Goldner apparently takes a different view. That's fine except the politics get lost.

Even postmodern critics of the Enlightenment emphasize its universalism and "essentialism." There is little sense in making a fuss about the half-baked philosophical musings of an economist like William Petty or engaging in another fruitless academic debate about when "racism" *began* for the purpose of scoring points. Goldner's judgment is indeed all the more peculiar given the anti-Semitism of major Renaissance and Reformation figures like Melancthon or Martin Luther, the genuinely powerful political and theoretical impact of vile works like "The Nigger Question" by anti-enlightenment romantics like Thomas Carlyle, and the clearcut connection between neoromanticism and Nazism.

The real issues, which Goldner avoids, are simple enough: Is the emancipatory *political* thrust of the Enlightenment invalidated by the many personal prejudices of even its most important representatives? When did racism become an explicit *political* force? Was modern racism promulgated primarily by movements committed to enlightenment *political* ideals or by those opposed to them?

GOLDNER CLAIMS HE ADMIRES THE ENLIGHTENMENT. But what exactly does he admire about it? His piece never makes this clear. Marx was frank in his admiration for English political economy, which is barely mentioned by Goldner, and French materialism. Both these "mechanistic" forms of theory, in concert with German Idealism, are generally recognized as having had far more influence on Marx and the socialist tradition than *Sturm und Drang* or the host of names Goldner arbitrarily drops. Yet, he doesn't deal with any of this since it would force him to consider Marx and — more importantly socialism — as the philosophical heir to enlightenment philosophy.

Goldner simply identifies it with materialism.[1] But idealist thinkers also saw themselves as representatives of the enlightenment project and, especially in their most radical phases, were seen as such by their opponents. All of them embraced universal values predicated on reason and conceptualized reality in its light. All were critical of religious dogmatism as well as the irrational hold of tradition and prejudice. All sought to curb the exercise of arbitrary power. The most radical aspects of their thinking, whatever the differences between them, were also inspired by the practical political undertakings internationally generated during what R.R. Palmer called the "age of the bourgeois revolution."

Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel all initially embraced the "critical philosophy" of the greatest enlightenment thinker: Immanuel Kant. They too were "critical" of tradition, experience, and metaphysical dogmatism. But Kant's lack of a system and an ontological "grounding" for freedom, his separation of metaphysics from science, irked them. Each after his fashion sought *immanently* to move beyond Kant as surely as Marx *immanently* sought to move beyond Hegel. Some may, regrettably, have been led to rely on the intuitive and the organic. Others may have sought a new system in which metaphysics could finally provide "absolute knowledge." But they were Kantians, which Goldner cannot admit, in the same sense that Marx was a Hegelian. All these younger idealists stood in a far more coherent relation to their enlightenment precursors than more typical romantic philosophers like Edmund Burke or Johann Georg Hamann.

Most of this is, again, generally acknowledged by philosophers and intellectual historians. It becomes a matter of contention only insofar as Goldner insists on blaming the Enlightenment for destroying the utopian thinking inspiring the Renaissance and the Reformation while praising both idealism and romanticism for passing on its spirit to Marx. But he has it wrong. The Enlightenment did not bury the critical heritage of the Renaissance and the Reformation. It was already dead prior to the 18th century. Classicism had smothered it.[2]

Romanticism fed off classicism and opposed its strictures. This was also true of the Enlightenment. A common enemy explains the initial connection between these two seemingly diametrically opposed tendencies in the years before their final parting of the ways toward the end of the Napoleonic Wars. It also explains their complexity and contradictions. Thus, while the enlightenment critique of classicism produced emancipatory breakthroughs in critical philosophy and liberal politics far more than in art, it was exactly the opposite with romanticism.

Its *aesthetic* emphasis on subjective experience and rejection of formal classical constraints would have an extraordinarily liberating effect and prove of enduring importance for cultural modernism. But the *philosophy and politics*, the theory and practice, of romanticism is another matter entirely. Freedom lost any institutional referent as romanticism sundered the enlightenment connection between nationalism, republicanism and internationalism. Its proponents usually embraced either an organicist nationalism with racialist and anti-Semitic overtones or a supra-nationalism predicated on the return to what Novalis called "authentically catholic and authentically christian times" (*echtkatholischen und echtchristlichen Zeiten*).

ROMANTICISM INFORMS THE POLITICAL THEORY OF RADICAL NATIONALISM; its theocratic supra-nationalist off-shoot, meanwhile, finds a modern analog in various forms of religious "fundamentalism." Goldner deals far too cavalierly with the generally reactionary political tenets of romanticism and ignores the ways in which they conflict with its more progressive aesthetic impetus. But, then, he generally refuses to distinguish between different spheres of inquiry. The result is a mish-mash in which Goldner swerves into "cosmobiology" and interprets issues concerning the philosophical status of nature and scientific methodology as though they were matters of political theory. That is why he cannot indicate their implications for contemporary political practice. What would result politically from embracing Kepler and Galileo rather than Newton and Voltaire? I have no idea.

Goldner wishes to counter mechanical materialism and its supposedly direct influence on Marx by asserting the importance of what Ernst Bloch initially called an "aristotelian left."[3] But its central philosophical premise was actually far less influential on the left than on an irrationalist philosophical tradition whose opposition to the Enlightenment, again, retained distinctly reactionary political overtones. Belief in a life-force preserved from what has been objectified in theory and practice helped shape the elusive "will" of Schopenhauer, which was transformed by Nietzsche into the subterranean "will to power," the *elan vital* of Henri Bergson, and ultimately the revelatory notion of "Being" underlying the phenomenology of Martin Heidegger. Indeed, if Goldner has unearthed a new "third" path for modern philosophy, he has incorrectly charted its social trajectory.

But there is no need to invent such a "third" tradition. It already exists. Composed of vitalism, life-philosophy (*Lebens-philosophie*), neo-romanticism, and various forms of "religious atheism," this third path emerged during the last *fin de siècle* as a conscious response to idealism and materialism. All its philosophical tendencies were subjectivist and relativist, particularist and irrationalist, indeterminate and decisionist; all were historically in dangerously close alignment with a budding fascism; and all have generated intense contemporary interest among postmodernists.

NONE OF THIS IS TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT BY GOLDNER. Neither is the possibility that an anti-mechanistic *social theory* of nature *can* conform with the "critical" and ethical thrust of the enlightenment undertaking. There is surely something legitimate about turning the holistic functioning of nature into the point of reference for making judgments about given forms of scientific practice. Such a social theory can raise questions of planetary responsibility, inform a new critical ecological ethic, and highlight — like Kant — the limits of our knowledge and power.

None of this, however, says anything about unilaterally rejecting Newton whose physics obviously maintains some degree of relevance whatever the limitations exposed by quantum mechanics and other more modern approaches. Social theory and science are not the same. An *external* theory of nature, indeed, need not and should not make claims about the *internal* demands of scientific practice.

Goldner, however, never draws this distinction. His "cosmobiology," for this reason, becomes nothing more than the sketch for a metatheory with scientific pretensions. It simply inveighs against bourgeois materialism for its collusion with capitalism without specifying any alternative criteria capable of falsifying or verifying scientific claims. Everything for him merely revolves around the acceptance of a "proper" philosophical stance for unspecified political rather than scientific reasons. The result is a criticism oddly reminiscent of those made by Communist believers in teleology from the 1920s who attacked Einstein for promoting relativism. Under any circumstances, if Goldner wishes to transform science and resurrect nature, then he should offer some form of practical referent for his implicitly utopian idea.

Utopia is a complex and valuable concept. But it cannot be used to invalidate a concern with practice. That occurs when Goldner speaks about nature and it also occurs when he deals with religion. Here, in fact, the argument gets particularly confused. Usually *deists* rather than *atheists*, concerned with fostering tolerance rather than embracing any type of dogma, enlightenment thinkers essentially left *religiosity* or matters of faith to the private individual. Their aim was to constrain the institutional power of *religion* and, for this, conservatives and irrationalists have criticized them unmercifully ever since.

Modern theology, building on Pascal and Kierkegaard, differentiates between religiosity and religion. Goldner conflates the two, however, when he creates the impression that the Enlightenment was somehow not "radical" enough on the matter of religion. An alternative historical or political course, once again, is evidently not worth mentioning. It is enough to chastise the Enlightenment — while forgetting about Rousseau, Kant, Lessing, Mendelssohn, and even Voltaire who built a church for his peasants at Ferney — for only understanding *religion* as an "opium of the masses" rather than also as a "sigh of the oppressed creature." This apparently produced an inability to understand its causes which, according to Goldner, logically translated into an unwillingness to deal with its abolition in such a way that humanity in the future will not simply "wear the chain that is without fantasy or consolation, but ... will throw it off and pluck the living flower."[4]

Everyone cites these beautiful phrases of the young Marx. But few ask about their implications for practice. Goldner joins the chorus. As a "Marxist," without wondering why Marx himself never returned to the theme in later works, he obediently renders the proper citation without any attempt to make it relevant. No causes for religion are specified and no proposals — of even the most rudimentary sort — are made for dealing with them. And, again, for good reason. Marx misconstrued the problem. For he was actually not dealing with *religion* at all, but with *religiosity* or what Camus called "the longing for God." No political policy can grapple with such an elusive phenomenon and, more important, Goldner gives no concrete reason why it should.

Religiosity — if not religion — is a pseudo-problem for progressive politics. Uncertainty, loneliness, meaninglessness, and death are among the reasons this longing has remained with humanity for its entire history and promises to remain with us far into the foreseeable future. It never occurs to Goldner that the anthropological terms in which Marx framed the question of religious alienation — and also the division of labor — prevents anything other than an indeterminate response in theory or practice. Recourse to "species being" doesn't help matters. It only makes sense that Marx should also have quickly jettisoned this imprecise, organicist, and utopian concept.

EVEN REVOLUTION CANNOT PRODUCE NIRVANA; it cannot solve every existential doubt. But, for Goldner, it is all or nothing. Voltaire and his enlightenment comrades were, thankfully, more modest. All of them considered reality as a mutable and secular product. But they were never intent on "abolishing religion in order to realize it" because they were never primarily inspired by such utopian daydreams. They were instead preoccupied with more substantial *institutional* issues of real relevance today. Their concern was with separating church from state, challenging censorship, contesting religious dogma, denouncing prejudice, decrying superstition, furthering civil liberties, and generally limiting the power of the church.

Such undertakings were possible, however, only through the monarchical or, when possible, constitutional state. Goldner conveniently forgets that the aristocracy and the church largely served as the primary opposition to both and as the bastion of reaction during and after the French Revolution. Enlightenment thinkers prior to 1789 preoccupied with progressive reform had no practical choice other than to seek the ear of "enlightened despots." The situation was similar, especially where no vibrant bourgeoisie existed, for imaginative "state civil servants" many of whom were among the most intelligent supporters of

1776 and 1789. None of this has anything to do with Stalinism and Ernst Bloch hit the mark when he wrote that, in principle, "enlightenment does not tolerate any form of dictatorship."[5]

GOLDNER ALLUDES TO THE POLITICS OF THE *INTERREGNUM* between feudalism and capitalism. As usual, however, he never indicates anything specific about its progressive *institutional* legacy. He is apparently content to make the reified and misleading claim that the Enlightenment destroyed the radical movements of the Renaissance and Reformation, which were actually crushed before the Enlightenment even became an issue. Goldner also never mentions the disastrous costs of the peasant wars any more than the continuing peasant uprisings in Italy and Hungary and elsewhere, which often mixed religious fanaticism with genuine social protest, during the 18th and 19th centuries. He feels it sufficient simply to identify with the legendary figure of Thomas Munzer whose classic biography, again by Ernst Bloch, appeared in 1921 during the high-tide of the European councilist movement.[6]

A place may still exist for workers' councils in order to mediate community concerns with those of the state. But they cannot substitute themselves for the state especially when the theory behind this councilist tendency has remained virtually stagnant for nearly 75 years. The most *basic* issues concerning the division of labor and the dangers of moving beyond "mechanical" notions like checks and balances have not been faced. Questions of economic coordination remain virtually unexplored, crucial issues concerning the judiciary or the institutional reproduction of democracy are rarely considered, while romantic assumptions about the virtues of local rule continue without any sense of the provincialism, patronage, or corruption it inspires. In any case, all this aside, hardly a single major representative of the real councilist movement was even remotely concerned with "cosmobiology." Thus, it is all the more strange when Goldner questions the existence of a constituency for "liberal socialism."

The link between liberalism and socialism was reflected in the demands and goals articulated during the Revolutions of 1848, and by the non-anarchist factions of the First International as well as representatives from every major faction — Eduard Bernstein, Karl Kautsky, Rosa Luxemburg — of the socialist movement during the 19th and early 20th century. It became manifest in the progressive policies undertaken by labor governments in the ill-fated, if remarkably progressive, republics of Europe during the 1920s. It appeared in the New Deal and the Popular Front. It occurred in the attempt to transform the civil rights into a "poor people's" movement and now — in 1996 — in the uprisings of the French and Belgian workers not against the "state," but against conservative regimes whose austerity measures were seeking to dismantle it.

The enlightenment legacy was a crucial element in these *real* movements of workers and the disenfranchised because its values contest the practices of the very class they originally inspired. This is also the case with respect to the enlightenment notion of progress. It is not an empty concept. Quite the contrary. A critical perspective identifies progress with autonomy and the institutional ability to reflect on its exercise. This notion of freedom also informs the practical interests of socialists and democrats in an emancipatory public sphere, the accountability of institutions, the right of the individual to seek redress from the state, the ability to organize freely, and the very idea of the "engaged" intellectual. All these concerns were generated by the Enlightenment. But they reflect only the tip of the iceberg. There is indeed nothing exaggerated in the claim by one of the best contemporary socialist historians of fascism 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."[7]

NOTES

1. Excluding Descartes from the enlightenment tradition is similarly arbitrary. Hobbes, Leibniz, and Locke explicitly recognized their debt to him. The metaphysics of Descartes may have been sharply separated from his physics, but there is no question that "mechanical materialism adopted *Descartes' physics* ... and that *Cartesian materialism still exists today in France*. It has achieved great successes in *mechanical natural science* which, speaking exactly and in the *prosaic sense*, will be least of all reproached with *romanticism*." Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism* (Moscow, 1975), p. 148.

2. Note the discussion by Paul Hazard, *The European Mind: The Critical Years 1680-1715* trans. J. Lewis May (New York, 1990), p. 3, xv.

3. Ernst Bloch, *Das Materialismusproblem, seine Geschichte und Substanz* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972), pp. 479.

4. Karl Marx, "Toward the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law: Introduction" in *Writings of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society* eds. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (New York, 1969), p. 250.

5. Ernst Bloch, *Natural Law and Human Dignity* trans. Dennis J. Schmidt (Cambridge, MA, 1986), p. 67.

6. Cf. Ernst Bloch, *Thomas Münzer: Als Theologe der Revolution* (Frankfurt am Main, 1972).

7. Zev Sternhell with Mario Sznajder and Maia Asheri, *The Birth of Fascist Ideology: From Cultural Rebellion to Political Revolution* (Princeton, 1994), p. 287.

The Obliteration of Hiroshima

Stephen R. Shalom

THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ATOMIC BOMBINGS OF HIROSHIMA and Nagasaki elicited an outpouring of books and articles and evoked passionate debate, as well it might given the profound moral and political issues involved.

Most discussions of Hiroshima, unfortunately, treat the bomb in isolation from a broader assessment of the war in the Pacific. All too often, there is an unstated assumption that the war represented a clash between absolute good and absolute evil, and the question of the bomb is reduced to one of means and ends: was it proper to use this horrible weapon for noble ends? A less one-sided view of the war, on the other hand, provides a rather different context within which to evaluate the dropping of the bomb.

To a considerable extent the Pacific War was a war between colonial powers. The United States did not get involved until military bases on three of its colonial territories — Hawaii, the Philippines, and Guam — were attacked by the Japanese. Britain was drawn in by the attack on its colonies of Malaya, Singapore, and Hong Kong. And the Dutch declared war on Japan in anticipation of the assault on their colony, the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia). Before Pearl Harbor, Washington tightened its economic sanctions on Japan when the latter moved into northern Indochina in September 1940, and southern Indochina in July 1941 — that is, when Tokyo encroached on the colonial domains of Vichy France. As Britain's First Sea Lord had earlier privately acknowledged, the western powers had "got most of the world already, or the best parts of it" and they sought to "prevent others taking it away."[1]

In much of Asia there was considerable sympathy for Japan's ousting of the western colonialists. A nationalist leader in the East Indies acknowledged that a majority of his compatriots "rejoiced over Japanese victories." Even Nehru told Edgar Snow privately of his emotional sympathy for Japan (Thorne, pp. 6, 154, 1561).

China was the main independent country victimized by Japanese aggression, but that aggression had been going on for ten years before Pearl Harbor with great brutality, though evoking little reaction from Washington and London. Indeed, the chief protests from the United States and Britain related to Japanese interference with their "rights" in China,

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

rights that made a mockery of Chinese independence in the first place. Among these rights were extraterritoriality, the administration of an "International Settlement" at Shanghai, control of Chinese maritime customs, and the right to deploy military forces within China's territory. When Japan invaded China in 1937, for example, Washington had more than 2,000 troops ashore and another 1,800 on its 13 naval vessels that patrolled Chinese waters. In U.S.-Japanese talks it was the issue of "the treatment of American business in China" that "engaged as much of the time of the negotiators as any other," in the words of mainstream diplomat and historian Herbert Feis.[2]

The Pacific War had its roots in the Great Depression. The colonial powers had responded to the economic crisis by imposing high protective tariffs around their empires, to the benefit of their own firms. Washington placed the huge U.S. market behind the Smoot-Hawley tariff and maintained special preferences for its own business interests in the Philippines and Cuba. "All over the world," a State Department official noted, "various obstacles to the free and natural flow of Japanese exports" had been raised.[3] Given this situation, it is not surprising that Japan sought to emulate the other colonial powers and establish a self-sufficient economic empire of its own, which meant expansion into China. To U.S. officials, the United States was entitled to its Monroe Doctrine for Latin America, but the Japanese could not have their Monroe Doctrine for Asia. This inevitably led to a clash between Tokyo and Washington, but it was a war not for freedom, but to determine who would dominate Asia.

The goals of the war were clearly revealed at the fighting's end. The United States took over a vast network of Pacific islands as strategic bases without the consent of their inhabitants. Washington granted independence to the Philippines, but maintained U.S. economic and military privileges there, while restoring the pre-war elite to power. The British, using Japanese troops and U.S. weapons, secured Indonesia for the Netherlands and Vietnam for the French. In the south of Korea, U.S. troops installed a reactionary and corrupt dictatorship. And in China, Washington intervened in the civil war, providing massive military and economic aid to Chiang Kai-shek and deploying 50,000 marines to

Books Discussed in this Article

Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar, *Code-Name Downfall*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995.

Gar Alperovitz, et al., *The Decision To Use the Atomic Bomb and the Architecture of an American Myth*, New York: Knopf, 1995.

Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell, *Hiroshima in America: Fifty Years of Denial*, New York: G. P. Putnam, 1995.

Robert James Maddox, *Weapons for Victory: The Hiroshima Decision Fifty Years Later*, Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1995.

Ronald Takaki, *Hiroshima: Why America Dropped the Bomb*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1995.

"Hiroshima in History and Memory: A Symposium," in *Diplomatic History*, vol. 19, no. 2, Spring 1995.

hold key communication and transportation routes while Chiang consolidated his hold.[4] Washington, of course, was not omnipotent, and it was unable to impose its will everywhere. But throughout Asia, the U.S. victory in World War II meant that Washington replaced Tokyo as the dominant power. And it was *this* war, not some abstract pure moral crusade, during which Hiroshima and Nagasaki were obliterated.

Historians and the Bomb

OVER THE PAST FIFTY YEARS, MUCH DOCUMENTATION HAS BECOME AVAILABLE relating to the historical question — why did the United States government drop the bombs? — which bears on, but is logically distinct from, the moral/political question — was dropping the bombs justified?

In 1965 Gar Alperovitz wrote *Atomic Diplomacy*, the first full-length study to advance the thesis that the bombs were dropped in order to intimidate the Soviet Union. Now, together with a team of researchers, he has written *The Decision To Use the Atomic Bomb*, in which he argues that the modern evidence not only sustains but reinforces his position. He provides a vast amount of documentation; at some crucial points in his argument, however, the evidence seems less definitive than he rather insistently suggests.

That U.S. policy-makers saw a benefit vis-a-vis the Soviet Union from using the bomb has now been widely accepted, but that relations with Moscow constituted *the* reason for obliterating Hiroshima and Nagasaki is still much disputed, even on the left. Over the years in numerous articles, and most recently in a symposium in the journal *Diplomatic History* (hereafter *DH*), Barton J. Bernstein has argued that the atomic bombings were "over-determined," that U.S. officials welcomed the opportunity to intimidate Moscow by using the bomb, but they would have used it even if the Soviet Union didn't exist.

The traditional view — that of the U.S. officials responsible for the bombing and their supporters — is that the bomb was used for no other reason than to hasten the end of the war and save American lives, and it was fully justified. Robert James Maddox, who two decades ago challenged the academic integrity of New Left historians, including Alperovitz (though his own use of evidence left much to be desired), has now written *Weapons for Victory*, a defense of the bomb and an often vituperative attack on its critics. In *Code-Name Downfall*, two military historians, Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar, describe the planned invasion of Japan and conclude that the bomb was justified to forestall the bloodletting that such an invasion would have entailed.

Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell have written a wide-ranging book, *Hiroshima in America*, providing a wealth of information, not so much on the decision to use the bomb, but on the response to that decision over the past half-century. Ronald Takaki's volume, *Hiroshima*, starts off accepting the Alperovitz thesis, and thus doesn't help us evaluate it, but his information on the context of racism within which U.S. decision-making took place is useful.

Aside from the question of why U.S. leaders used the bomb, there are other historical controversies: for example, why did Japanese leaders surrender when they did and would they have done so in the absence of the bomb? These are interesting and significant questions, but it is important to see that these are not directly relevant to answering either the moral/political question of the bomb's justification or the historical question of why the bomb was dropped.

Consider a recent comment by Ian Buruma:

> Alperovitz's case that the bomb was not dropped to prevent a final bloody battle rests entirely on the assumption that Truman and his advisers knew perfectly well that the Japanese were on the verge of capitulation before the destruction of Hiroshima. Closer examination of what went on in Tokyo shows that the Japanese were not.[5]

But what went on in Tokyo is strictly irrelevant to what Truman and his advisers knew (or, more accurately, what they believed). Suppose Truman believed that the Japanese were prepared to surrender but decided to drop the bombs anyway. If Buruma is correct that Japanese leaders were not in fact prepared to surrender (a matter to which we will later return), this has no bearing on our moral judgment of Truman's action nor on our understanding of why he did it.[6]

Killing Civilians

A GOOD PLACE TO START THINKING ABOUT THE MORAL ISSUES INVOLVED in the atomic bombing is with this description of the Japanese attack on Hong Kong from Allen and Polmar (p. 158):

> To force the surrender of Fort Stanley in Hong Kong in December 1941, Japanese troops began torturing British and Chinese captives, cutting off ears and fingers, cutting out tongues, and gouging eyes before killing the victims by dismemberment. British and Chinese nurses were tied down on corpses and raped, then bayoneted to death. The captors allowed some witnesses to escape and report the atrocities. Fort Stanley surrendered.

We are naturally nauseated by this behavior. But why? Presumably there are some Japanese apologists who would be only too glad to point out that the number of civilians raped and butchered to induce surrender was less than the number of Japanese soldiers who might have died in an assault on the fort. Nevertheless, Allen and Polmar expect us to be repelled by the Japanese action — and rightly so, because there is a moral distinction between civilians and combatants. But nowhere in their book on why "the atom bomb had to be dropped" (to quote their subtitle) do they ever apply this same moral standard to U.S. behavior.

Of course, the dropping of the atomic bombs was not the first U.S. action to fail to distinguish between combatants and civilians. U.S. warplanes had already incinerated hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians, and not as the incidental byproduct of destroying military targets, but intentionally. Maddox (p. 120) quotes White House chief of staff Admiral William D. Leahy's dissent from the use of the atomic bomb — "Wars cannot be won by destroying women and children" — to which Maddox comments, "How he thought women and children would have fared had LeMay [the commander of the fire-bombing raids] gone on for months 'driving them back to the stone age' he did not say." Maddox is quite right to point out Leahy's moral hypocrisy, but Maddox does not conclude that both the conventional and atomic bombings were immoral; instead he considers both justified. There are two compelling indications, however, that even U.S. officials didn't believe their conventional terror bombing could be justified: first, they had vigorously denounced earlier air attacks on civilians by the Japanese as breaches of basic standards of morality and international law, and, second, they made efforts to disguise their actions as aimed at military targets when in fact they were not.

Truman's Secretary of State, James F. Byrnes, was one among many who has argued that while there were many casualties from the atomic bombs, these were "not nearly so many as there would have been had our air force continued to drop incendiary bombs on Japan's cities."[7] Allen and Polmar add to this argument by suggesting that without the atomic bomb, not only would the United States have continued its conventional fire raids, but quite possibly it would have resorted to other "horror weapons" as well: gas warfare, biological attacks on rice fields, and V-1 missiles (pp. 173-191, 256, 293, 93). This argument for using the atomic bomb, however, was well answered by Michael Walzer almost 20 years ago: it is one thing to say I must do a horrible thing in order to prevent someone from doing something even more horrible (a plausible argument); it is quite another to say I must do a horrible thing or else *I* will do something even more horrible. In Walzer's words, "Our purpose, then, was not to avert a 'butchery' that someone else was threatening, but one that we were threatening, and had already begun to carry out."[8]

The Invasion

SOME ARGUE THAT THE ABSOLUTE MORAL PROHIBITION AGAINST KILLING CIVILIANS cannot be sustained under conditions of modern warfare. According to this view it is permissible to kill some enemy civilians if a large number of one's soldiers can thereby be saved. After all, conscripts are often no less "innocent" victims than civilians, and civilians frequently work to support their country's military effort. If we were to accept this view, however, surely numbers would matter: that is, the number of lives saved and the number of civilians killed. U.S. policymakers understood the importance of the numbers, and that's why they claimed such inflated figures for the expected U.S. casualties in an invasion. Maddox says these later exaggerations — if such they were — are perfectly understandable if not admirable, but tell us nothing about the thinking at the time of Truman and others. On the contrary, however, the misrepresentations indicate that U.S. officials themselves knew that the bombings could not be morally justified unless they led to some huge saving of lives. Truman would have used the bombs, says Maddox, even to save only 10,000 U.S. lives. That may be, but the question remains whether that would have been justified, and Truman's fabrications suggest that he knew the answer was no.

Covering all his bases, Maddox argues that the claims by Truman and others may not have been exaggerated at all, but his argument is extremely slippery. The only official casualty prediction known to have been seen by Truman was a June 18, 1945, estimate of 31,000 casualties (and thus deaths of about a fifth that number) in the first 30 days of an invasion of the Japanese home island of Kyushu scheduled for November 1, 1945. Military planners estimated that the full Kyushu campaign and an invasion of the Tokyo plain the following spring (which they didn't believe would be necessary) would cost some 40,000 U.S. lives. However, an unanticipated Japanese buildup after mid-June, says Maddox, makes these figures worthless, and those who cite them "either remain unaware of the literature on the subject, in which case they are incompetent to write about it, or they know the figures had become meaningless but nonetheless continue to employ them to promote their own agendas" (p. 4). Truman claimed in his memoirs that U.S. deaths would be half a million, and this figure, says Maddox, did not come out of thin air. Then he cites an August 1944 Joint Chiefs of Staff study, which he says "never was officially revised." But of course it was revised: that is what the estimates developed 10 months later were, after Japan's military situation had drastically deteriorated and a detailed invasion plan had been worked out. In May 1945, former president Herbert Hoover wrote to Truman, urging a clarification of surrender terms in order to avoid the loss of half a million to a million lives. Hoover, of course, had no access to military planning documents, but his letter was passed on to the War Department for review. The resulting analysis, Maddox says, found Hoover's estimate "too high" (it actually found it "'entirely too high'" — Alperovitz, p. 521). So while denouncing those who rely on an allegedly out-of-date June 18, 1945, estimate as being incompetent or worse, Maddox himself relies on earlier, and surely less authoritative figures.

At Potsdam in July, General Marshall told other military leaders that there were 500,000 Japanese troops on Kyushu, more than earlier estimates showed. Maddox writes (p. 118) that "It is inconceivable that he failed to inform Truman about the Japanese buildup when they met the next day to discuss 'the tactical and political situation.'" That meeting, which took at most 35 minutes, was described in full as follows by Truman in his diary: "At 10:15 I had Gen. Marshall come in and discuss with me the tactical and political situation. He is a level headed man — so is Mountbatten."[9] Given Truman's concern about U.S. casualties, if Marshall now told him that an invasion that was thought would cost 40,000 deaths would now cost 500,000 deaths — 70% more U.S. combat deaths than in all the rest of World War II — one would think the president might have been moved to record something more. Indeed, it is inconceivable that Truman or Marshall would ever have authorized an operation they expected would involve half a million U.S. deaths.

An alleged meeting at Potsdam is also the source for another exaggerated casualty estimate. In a 1953 letter to an Army historian, Truman wrote that after receiving word of the successful test of the atom bomb at Alamogordo, he called together his top advisers:

> I asked General Marshall what it would cost in lives to land on the Tokio [sic] plain and other places in Japan. It was his opinion that such an invasion would cost at a minimum one quarter of a million casualties, and might cost as much as a million, on the American side alone, with an equal number of the enemy. The other military and naval men present agreed.[10]

Allen and Polmar (pp. 266-67, 329n) take this account seriously, but there are a number of problems with it. First, there is no evidence that such a meeting ever took place: it is referred to in no official record of the conference or any of the many contemporaneous diaries (Alperovitz, p. 518). Second, we know that Truman's first draft of his 1953 letter used the figure of 250,000 casualties and that he was advised by an aide that his figure was lower than one offered by former Secretary of War Stimson and, though Truman's recollection sounded "more reasonable than Stimson's," in order to avoid a conflict he ought to change it to read 250,000 to a million (Alperovitz, pp. 517-18). Third, the rest of Truman's letter includes the claim that at this same meeting he asked Stimson which cities in Japan were devoted "exclusively to war production," a request that if actually made would have sent his advisers into fits of laughter. And fourth, even if the account in Truman's letter is true, his original figure of 250,000 *casualties* corresponds to a death toll of about 50,000, which is about one tenth of the "half a million lives" Truman mentions in his memoirs.[11]

Defenders of the bomb have produced all sorts of other evidence to support higher casualty estimates for the invasion of Japan; none of it, however, is very convincing.[12]

Maddox writes (p. 60) that "Perhaps only an intellectual could assert that 193,500 anticipated casualties were too insignificant to have caused Truman to use atomic bombs." Obviously, such casualties, and 40,000 deaths, are profoundly significant. But does their moral significance override that of the 200,000 deaths in Hiroshima and Nagasaki? Most of these deaths were of civilians, including many conscripted Korean laborers.[13] Maddox thinks only an intellectual would have qualms about this moral trade-off, but Truman and other officials knew that many Americans would find it unsettling. And thus, they exaggerated not only the invasion costs, but also the military importance of the target cities, claiming falsely that the latter were "devoted almost exclusively to the manufacture of ammunition and weapons of destruction" (Lifton & Mitchell, p. 172, citing Dec. 12, 1946 Truman letter).[14]

Saving Civilians?

A MORE SUBTLE DEFENSE OF THE BOMB IS THE CLAIM that even without intentional attacks on civilians, more Japanese civilians might have died in a last ditch defense against invasion than died at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. After all, some 150,000 civilians died on Okinawa though there was no specific U.S. effort to target them. If the bomb actually *saved* the lives of many civilians, then its use might seem justified. This argument assumes, however, that these were the only two choices: invade or drop the bomb. On the contrary, there is persuasive evidence that there were other alternatives. Before turning to an analysis of these alternatives, two points should be noted.

First, despite Maddox's claim (p. 1) that the "official justification for using the bombs was that they saved enormous losses on both sides by avoiding an invasion of Japan," he gives no citation. In fact there is no "official justification." There are various statements by various U.S. officials at different times, most of which refer only to American casualties. No one has found any evidence from the internal record showing any policy maker worried about Japanese civilian casualties in an invasion. And it is hard to believe that the same policymakers who so blithely burned up hundreds of thousands of Japanese civilians would be concerned about *Japanese* invasion costs.[15]

Second, high Japanese civilian casualties are often blamed on the fanaticism of Japanese resistance. Some of this fanaticism was a myth propelled by racist U.S. stereotypes and carefully constructed Japanese government propaganda.[16] To the extent that a fight-to-the death sentiment did exist among Japanese, however, it was a phenomenon with social causes, and one of the key causes was U.S. racism. Much of the discussion about racism and the bomb deals only with the question of whether racism played a role in the decision to use the weapon. Just as anti-Japanese racism documented by Takaki and others helps explain the far greater hatred by the American public and GIs for Japanese than Germans, the relocation into concentration camps of people of Japanese, but not German or Italian, descent, and the lesser degree of hesitation and caution shown in launching conventional attacks on civilians in Japan than in Germany,[17] so too racism made Japan an easier atomic target than Germany would have been.

But racism was crucial in another respect as well: it encouraged precisely the kind of last-ditch resistance that U.S. policy-makers said the bomb was needed to overcome. Postwar public opinion surveys in Japan found that more than two-thirds of the population expected that defeat would bring "brutalities, starvation, enslavement, annihilation" (Sherry, p. 314). Obviously this belief was encouraged by Japanese leaders, but their propaganda was significantly aided by pre-war anti-Japanese racism in the United States, by the relocations, by the reluctance of U.S. troops to take prisoners, by exterminationist statements made by prominent Americans, and by such well-publicized occurrences as the gift to President Roosevelt of a letter-opener made from the bone of a Japanese soldier or the *Life* magazine picture of a woman whose boyfriend sent home a skull from the Pacific.[18] When the U.S. broadcast to Japan that it would not be destroyed if it surrendered, Japanese broadcasters quoted Admiral Halsey's recommendation that Shinto shrines be bombed.[19] Don't judge the Americans by what they said, Prime Minister Suzuki told the Japanese people, but by their deeds. And fire-raids that wiped out hundreds of thousands of civilians were awfully dramatic deeds.[20] In these circumstances, that many Japanese were willing to support their leaders' calls for fanatical or suicidal resistance should not be very surprising.

Warnings and Demonstrations

BERNSTEIN (*DH*, 235) COMMENTS THAT IN EXAMINING ALTERNATIVES TO THE BOMB, it is important to keep in mind that policy-makers at the time were not seeking alternatives to the bomb; the bomb didn't pose sharp moral dilemmas for them, and they gave little consideration to any alternatives. Bernstein's point is well taken, but it should not stop us from rendering a moral judgment regarding the dropping of the bomb. If there were alternatives to dropping the bomb, then the moral argument that the bomb had to be used to forestall a horrific invasion fails. Of course, if the alternatives were unknown to the policy-makers, or if they had good reason to believe that the alternatives wouldn't work, then there is no moral onus. In fact, however, the possibility of each alternative was made known to top officials and there is persuasive evidence that they did not have good reasons for rejecting them.

The first alternative was to modify the way in which the bomb was used, either by (1) providing a warning first, (2) conducting a demonstration of the bomb's power, either on some uninhabited area of Japan, a Pacific island, or even at Alamogordo, New Mexico, (3) dropping the bomb on a genuine military target, and (4) some combination of the above. These options were proposed at one time or another not just by dissenting scientists (who, it might be argued, were unaware of the realities outside their labs), but by such people as the Army Chief of Staff, the Navy and War under secretaries, and the later head of the Atomic Energy Commission (Bernstein, *DH*, p. 261; Alperovitz, pp. 225, 332-

33; Lifton & Mitchell, pp. 141-42, 135). All of these options were rejected with the most cursory of consideration. The counter-arguments are worth examining.

One objection to both a demonstration drop in Japan and any warning that a specific target was to be hit was said to be that the wily Japanese might move Allied prisoners of war into the drop site (Byrnes, p. 261). Let us leave aside the fact that when Air Force officials in Guam received unconfirmed information that there might be an Allied POW camp one mile north of the center of Nagasaki and asked the War Department whether this influenced the choice of target, they were told "Targets previously assigned ... remain unchanged."[21] More significant is the fact that the Japanese hadn't used POWs to deter incendiary attacks, when they might well have done so. And if U.S. policy-makers worried about prisoners being moved to a demonstration site, why did they drop leaflets on Tokyo on August 13 warning the city to be evacuated?[22] Since we know that Tokyo was still considered a possible atomic target (Craven & Cate, pp. 732-3; Lifton & Mitchell, p. 29), the leaflets could have led Japanese authorities to shift large numbers of POWs to the city.

A second argument against a demonstration or warning is that the bomb might turn out to be a dud, and thereby give aid and comfort to the Japanese militarists (Byrnes, p. 261). This too is not very compelling. First, after the test at Alamogordo fears of the bomb not working were very slight. The test showed that the plutonium device worked, and the uranium device was considered such a sure thing that it didn't even have to be tested. Byrnes says in his memoirs that a static test was not a guarantee that a bomb would detonate when dropped from a plane. But then why, when he learned of the successful test, did he actively try to discourage Soviet participation in the war (Alperovitz, pp. 267-75)? And if Truman feared a dud, how do we explain his telling junior officers on board the *Augusta* about the bomb before it was dropped? If it were a dud, word would have gotten out when the ship docked, giving the same comfort to Japanese militarists as a failed demonstration (Lifton & Mitchell, p. 157).

Moreover, the aid and comfort argument contains a logical flaw. Either Japanese leaders intended to fight to the bloody end or they did not. If they did, there was no risk of emboldening them. If they did not, the invasion would not have been necessary, and the moral argument for the bomb collapses.

Some have argued that a demonstration was impractical because the United States only had two bombs on hand and therefore couldn't afford to waste one. The bombs, however, were in production and the next one would have been available later in August, with three more ready in September, and possibly seven or more in December.[23] There is thus no reason why one bomb couldn't have been spared for a demonstration.

Maddox offers another argument against a demonstration (p. 148): U.S. officials "assumed Japanese hardliners would try to minimize the first explosion or to explain it away as some sort of natural event such as an earthquake or a 'huge meteor.' That was one of the reasons for rejecting a demonstration." He provides no citation, but in any event if U.S. officials worried about this, the problem could be easily remedied. They could have flooded Japan with leaflets beforehand warning that an atomic bomb was coming. If hardliners then tried to claim that the explosion was an earthquake or meteor, U.S. power would appear even more awesome, able to call down natural catastrophes on Japan at will. Allen and Polmar (p. 209) argue that a demonstration would have been hard to arrange, and anyway the Japanese might try to shoot down the U.S. plane carrying the bomb. U.S. control of the air, however, was near total over Japan, and absolutely total over many Pacific islands. And, again, U.S. officials didn't worry that the warning leaflets they dropped on Tokyo on August 13 would endanger the plane with the third bomb. Allen and Polmar (p. 209) also claim that after witnessing a demonstration Japanese leaders could have spent weeks or months debating what they had seen. But nothing would have prevented U.S. officials from declaring that after such and such a time they would move on to bomb a military target.

In fact, none of the arguments considered thus far addresses the option of hitting a military target. And since Japanese leaders — even the emperor and other members of the "peace faction," as Herbert Bix has shown (*DH*, 210-14; 1992) — were deeply callous about civilian casualties, there is no reason to think that wiping out an air base, for example, would have had much less of an impact on Japanese decision-making than did destroying Hiroshima.

Would They Work?

WOULD A NON-COMBAT DEMONSTRATION OR A WARNING HAVE WORKED, that is, have induced a Japanese surrender? The best answer to this was provided by Under Secretary of the Navy Bard, who said no one really had any sure knowledge of the thinking among Japanese leaders, and therefore the moral thing to do was try (Alperovitz, p. 225). Even if later evidence were to show that Japanese leaders would not have surrendered, the moral argument is unaffected.

Bernstein argues that since we now know that the Japanese military opposed capitulation even after two bombs and the entry of the Soviet Union into the war, it is unlikely — perhaps a 5-10% chance — that a non-combat demonstration would have produced a surrender before November 1 (*DH*, pp. 237-38). The new documentation from the Japanese side, however, suggests the opposite. Bix has shown that within the "peace faction" a major concern was whether a surrender would be seen by an increasingly restive population as confirmation that the country's leaders had irresponsibly led them into a hopeless war. To some of these officials, the bomb was a convenient, face-saving excuse for getting them out of the war without having to admit their domestic weakness. Bix (*DH*, pp. 217-18) quotes one member of the Supreme War Council, Yonai Mitsumasa, as saying on August 12 that the atomic bombs were "gifts from the gods."

> This way we don't have to say that we have quit the war because of domestic circumstances. Why I have long been advocating control of the crisis of the country is neither for fear of an enemy attack nor because of the atomic bombs and the Soviet entry into the war. The main reason is my anxiety over the domestic situation. So, it is rather fortunate that now we can control matters without revealing the domestic situation.[24]

But if the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were a convenient excuse, then so would a bomb detonated over an uninhabited island.

Now, of course, there is no evidence that U.S. policy-makers at the time knew that Japanese leaders were concerned about domestic pressures. (A few individuals in the Foreign Morale Analysis Branch of the U.S. Office of War Information were aware of weakening Japanese morale, but their reports were apparently never read by any policy-maker, at least in part because of the prevailing racist anti-Japanese stereotypes [Dower, 1986, p. 138; Dower, 1993, p. 103].) But without knowing the precise source of Japanese leaders' concern, U.S. officials (who were reading Japanese cable traffic) could see that Japanese leaders were looking for a way out of the war. One well-informed journalist later wrote that Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal believed "that the Japanese were anxiously looking for a face-saving way to surrender" and that to drop "the bomb on a solely military target, or, at least, on a sparsely populated area and then issue a warning" might "be all the face-saving excuse a desperate Japanese Government would need to surrender" (Alperovitz, pp. 369-70).[25]

The Soviet Entry

IN AUGUST 1945 JAPAN WAS FACED WITH ANOTHER POWERFUL SHOCK that might also have provided an excuse for Japanese surrender: the declaration of war by the Soviet Union. Here then was another alternative to using the bomb without the need for the invasion: waiting for Soviet entry into the war.

The military significance of Soviet entry has been much debated, often with an eye to Cold War positions. Thus, the *Daily Worker*, while endorsing the use of the atomic bomb on Japan, considered the Red Army the key to Japanese defeat.[26] Truman, on the other hand, insisted that Soviet participation was wholly irrelevant (Craven & Cate, pp. 712-13).

There are four reasons why the Soviet attack might have induced Japanese surrender. The first and most straight-forward reason was that Soviet forces rapidly defeated Japan's once-mighty Kwangtung army. Second, the defeat of Japanese troops on the mainland may have caused Japanese leaders to reassess the prospects for homeland defense against the even more formidable American military. Third, the Soviet Union might soon land on the Japanese home islands, unleashing pent-up radical sentiments among the population, endangering the Imperial institution and the ruling elite. And even if Soviet troops didn't actually invade the home islands, the longer they participated in the war, the greater a role they would be able to demand in a post-war occupation. And fourth, it was through the Soviet Union that Japanese leaders hoped to arrange a negotiated peace with the Allies. Some Japanese officials hoped to get Moscow on their side, an admitted long-shot, but many Japanese leaders believed that as long as the Soviet Union even remained neutral it would be possible to hold out for better terms. Once the Soviet Union entered the war, however, all these prospects would have disappeared.

Examinations of the Japanese evidence, including post-war interrogations of Japanese officials, have yielded conflicting claims as to the relative importance of the atomic bombs and the Soviet declaration of war as causes of the surrender. Given that the two bombs were dropped three days apart, with the Soviet war declaration in between, it is not surprising that the evidence is murky.[27] That the Soviet declaration of war had a profound effect on Japanese leaders, however, seems indisputable. After the Hiroshima bomb, Prime Minister Suzuki was still waffling. When he heard the news of the Soviet entry, he asked the chief of the cabinet planning board whether Japanese forces could repulse the attack. Told no, Suzuki responded "Then the game is up."[28] On August 13, one of Suzuki's naval aides asked him if he couldn't delay the peace effort as the army suggested. "Impossible," he replied. "If we don't act now, the Russians will penetrate not only Manchuria and Korea but northern Japan as well. If that happens, our country is finished. We must act now, while our chief adversary is still the United States."[29]

Bernstein estimates the chances of the Soviet declaration of war inducing surrender as between 20-30% (*DH*, p. 247). The question, however, as he correctly notes, is not what the actual chances were but what U.S. officials thought they were. One piece of evidence is a statement General Marshall made to Truman on June 18, 1945: Russian entry "may well be the decisive action levering them into capitulation at that time or shortly thereafter if we land in Japan" (*Potsdam*, I:905). Bernstein argues (*DH*, p. 244) that this quote has been misinterpreted, that in fact the quote stresses the importance of Soviet entry "*if* the invasion occurs, *not without* the invasion. A Soviet attack alone was not seen as likely to be decisive." In other words, Bernstein interprets the statement as if the phrase "if we land in Japan" were at the beginning of the sentence, applying to both the "at that time" and the "shortly thereafter" phrases. But this seems to me wrong: the invasion was scheduled for November and Soviet entry was expected before this date (at Yalta Stalin had promised to come in about three months after Germany's defeat). Therefore, the statement seems to be saying that Soviet entry alone might precipitate an immediate Japanese surrender or if not, shortly thereafter when the Kyushu invasion takes place. This doesn't mean that Marshall saw the Soviet declaration of war alone as necessarily leading to surrender, but that it well might. (And even if it didn't, Marshall seemed to be saying that there was then a good chance that surrender would follow the Kyushu landing, without the need for the second invasion of the Tokyo plain.)

In his new book, Alperovitz (p. 124) has cited another piece of evidence bearing on this question: Truman wrote in his memoirs, in a little noticed comment, that he was going to Potsdam to get the Russians in the war as soon as possible because "If the test [of the atomic bomb] should fail, then it would be even more important to us to bring about a surrender before we had to make a physical conquest of Japan." This seems to be a fairly compelling indication that Truman believed that there was an alternative to using the bomb that had some chance of success. Yet he chose to use the bomb.

Of course, many U.S. policy-makers were eager to minimize Soviet influence in post-war Asia. If the Japanese surrender could be obtained before Soviet entry, the United States might even be able to renege on its territorial promises made at Yalta. This perceived need to check the Soviet Union in Asia has become another argument in favor of dropping the bomb: by hastening the end of the war, by compelling surrender before the Red Army got very far, millions in Asia and Japan were spared the prospect of Soviet rule. In Buruma's words (p. 33):

> As subsequent events in China and the Korean peninsula have shown, Truman was right to worry about Soviet power in northeast Asia. It certainly would not have suited U.S. interests, or those of Japan for that matter, if the Japanese archipelago had been divided into different occupation zones, with Stalin's troops ensconced in Hokkaido.

Some of the territories promised Stalin at Yalta had been seized from Russia by Japan, and some were places where the population might have welcomed Soviet rule, but clearly some represented nothing more than a Soviet land grab. Any U.S. objection to this sort of territorial aggrandizement, however, was hardly very principled, given Washington's plans for occupying dozens of Pacific islands and supporting the return of Asian colonies to their European masters.[30] It is not clear what Buruma thinks "Soviet power" did in China that made Truman right to be worried; certainly Soviet neutrality in the Chinese civil war was exemplary compared to Washington's intervention. And in Korea, U.S. interference with local self-determination was at least as serious as Moscow's.

As for Japan itself, had it undergone Germany's fate, that would have been pretty grim. However, it could also have been treated like Austria, from which all occupation troops were withdrawn on condition that the country remain neutral. (Stalin offered the same arrangement on Germany, but Washington, determined to add to NATO strength, refused.) A neutral Japan might have suited the interests of the Japanese people quite well. And if the choice were between a neutral Japan with Hiroshima and Nagasaki intact, or a Japan as a U.S. Cold War ally, with 200,000 fewer people, the choice wouldn't even be close.

U.S. General Douglas MacArthur noted that "Every Russian killed was one less American who had to be" (Sherry, p. 340), which would have been a dubious moral improvement. But by overwhelming the Japanese forces, Soviet entry into the war would have led to lower casualties over-all compared to a solo U.S. invasion of the Japanese home islands. However, although the number of Soviet and Japanese troops killed in combat was small (at least by the Japanese count), there were still many Japanese civilians on the Asian mainland who died in the Soviet attack and its aftermath, and as many as 300,000 Japanese prisoners of war who were never repatriated from the U.S.S.R., presumably dying at forced labor.[31]

Actually, if the Potsdam Declaration had included a warning about the coming Soviet entry into the war, Japan — finding its hopes for a negotiated settlement dashed — might have folded on the spot, obviating the need for military action at all. (This had been Churchill's view: that simply announcing Soviet adherence to the Allies in the Pacific "might be decisive" [Alperovitz, p. 371].) Nevertheless, Truman decided — without consulting Stalin — not to have the Soviet Union sign the Potsdam Declaration, thus not warning Japan of Moscow's impending entry into the war (Alperovitz, pp. 377-81).[32]

Continuing the Conventional War

THE U.S. STRATEGIC BOMBING SURVEY ISSUED A REPORT IN 1946 stating that "in all probability" Japan would have surrendered before November 1, 1945, even if there were no atomic bomb, no declaration of war by the Soviet Union, and no planned invasion. Bernstein (*DH*, pp. 251-52) and others have argued that the report ignored crucial counter-evidence and depended too heavily on interviews with Japanese officials who wanted to affirm their eagerness to surrender. Some of the evidence consisted of economic data showing the abysmal state of Japan's war industries, the exhaustion of its oil reserves, and the destruction of its merchant shipping. Newly mobilized troops were being deployed virtually unarmed. Would these conditions have led to Japanese surrender? The answer isn't clear, and it probably would have depended at least in part on how Japanese leaders viewed the domestic reaction to continuing war-weariness and deprivation. Bix (*DH*, p. 218n63) guesses that continued heavy conventional bombing would have led to surrender. If conventional bombing continued as before, however, there still would have been massive civilian casualties. If the bombing were redirected to support the extremely effective naval blockade in order to induce starvation (perhaps with attacks on rice crops, as the Strategic Bombing Survey recommended) the civilian suffering might have been less — since starvation is gradual, affording the opportunity to surrender — but might well have taken a devastating toll on children and the elderly.

There was a humane alternative: the Navy could have continued its blockade, with its crippling effect on Japan's war industries, while allowing food through. Better yet, the U.S. air force could have confined its bombs to military targets and dropped food on Japanese cities, along with messages saying "You are not our enemies; our enemies are the warlords." This, of course, is not the way World War II had been waged from its inception, but it is the only way consistent with democratic and just war aims. Would it have been right to ask a U.S. pilot to risk his life to feed Japanese civilians? By this time U.S. raids over Japan ran fewer casualties than training missions in the United States, but in any event many pilots were asked to risk their lives dropping propaganda leaflets over Japan (probably a greater contribution to the defeat of Japan than the incendiary raids); food drops would have been the most effective of propaganda missions.

Unconditional Surrender

ALPEROVITZ ARGUES THAT THE FUNDAMENTAL REASON THAT THE BOMB was never the only alternative to invasion was that Washington could — as many policy-makers urged — have clarified its surrender terms, particularly to guarantee the retention of the Japanese throne, and that such clarification, in conjunction with the shock of Soviet entry into the war or maybe even on its own, would have prompted a Japanese surrender. According to Alperovitz, this was the recommendation of every single high-level adviser except Byrnes. That Truman rejected the advice, Alperovitz argues, suggests that he was not looking for a way to end the war before using the bomb.

Why did the United States demand that Japan surrender unconditionally? This policy had a number of sources. One was simple fanaticism, as illustrated by the telegram Senator Richard B. Russell sent to Truman after Hiroshima opposing the acceptance of any conditions on Japanese surrender:

> If we do not have available a sufficient number of atomic bombs with which to finish the job immediately, let us carry on with TNT and fire bombs until we can produce them....Our people have not forgotten that the Japanese struck us the first blow in this war without the slightest warning. They believe that we should continue to strike the Japanese until they are brought groveling to their knees. We should cease our appeals to Japan to sue for peace. The next plea for peace should come from an utterly destroyed Tokyo (quoted in Kecskemeti, p. 165).

Many other arguments for unconditional surrender, however, came not just from the right end of the political spectrum, but also and even predominantly from the left. It was argued that (1) a Japan that was not thoroughly defeated would later emerge to start another war, just as Germany had risen from its World War I defeat, (2) thorough-going democratization of Japan could only take place if there were unconditional surrender, (3) announcing the retention of the emperor would violate the principle of the Atlantic Charter that declared post-war governments must reflect the will of their populations, (4) unconditional surrender was necessary for war crimes trials which were needed for reasons of justice and to allow people — in Japan and elsewhere — to know the truth, and (5) conditional surrender would promote distrust between the United States and the Soviet Union, as the conditional surrender of Italy had done. Each one of these arguments had some validity, but was ultimately based on flawed political reasoning.[33]

A *conditional* surrender could have guaranteed that Japan would not later become a military threat. It is true that the new Japanese constitution promulgated during the U.S. occupation outlawed war, but this is not what has kept Japan from being a significant threat to the peace since 1945. Rather, Japanese militarism has been limited by the sentiment of the Japanese people, despite efforts by Washington to get Japan to repeal the no-war clause from its constitution (see Dower, 1993, pp. 27, 161, 230-31). The United States is not and has not been a pacifist power, and to have expected it to promote pacifism in Japan on any long term basis was naive.

Some important democratic reforms were introduced into Japan during the early years of the U.S. occupation. But — as should have been predictable by those who knew that the U.S. record of concern for democracy was always subordinate to its concern for its imperial interests — as soon as U.S. interests were better served by restoring the old elite and the monopolistic firms, by purging the left and restraining unions, U.S. policy shifted. And whatever the soundness of the arguments for getting rid of the emperor, they can hardly be a compelling reason for Washington's keeping the war going given that the United States ultimately allowed Japan to retain the emperor.

Truth-telling is important. The war-crimes trials following the Pacific War, however, departed from the truth in significant respects: U.S. officials suppressed evidence relating to the emperor's war guilt, to Japanese biological warfare (so that the U.S. military could gain access to Japanese experimental data), and to the war crimes of the Allies. Much data on Japanese atrocities was produced, but its impact on the Japanese public was surely lessened by the fact that the trials represented victors' justice. A few major Japanese war criminals were executed, but many of the guilty were soon back in control.

U.S. exclusion of the Soviet Union from a role in the occupation of Japan (as heavy-handed as Stalin's actions in Romania and Bulgaria) did contribute to worsening relations between Washington and Moscow, and an early peace with Japan might well have made Stalin suspicious that Truman was trying to deny him the territorial concessions promised at Yalta. However, Stalin had not been adamant about unconditional Japanese surrender in earlier discussions with Hopkins (he personally favored it, but understood the short-term benefits of accepting conditional surrender; he proposed telling Japan that its surrender would be conditional and then imposing harsher terms which would eliminate Japan's military potential). In any event, Stalin's real interest was keeping Japan out of a U.S. military alliance; if avoiding tensions with Moscow had been

Washington's aim here, U.S. officials could have declared their intention to neutralize Japan.

Could an early surrender have been obtained by offering to retain the emperor? Bix (*DH*, pp. 222-23) argues that Japanese leaders who are often characterized as wanting only to retain the emperor actually wanted to maintain the national polity, by which they meant the emperor's theocratic rule, the ruling elite, and the existing undemocratic political system. Thus, in Bix's view, an early surrender could have been obtained, but at the cost of leaving authoritarian structures in place, rather more authoritarian than ultimately emerged out of the U.S. occupation.

Democracy *is* an important value, and worth fighting for. But Japan would hardly have been the only place left in the world where dictatorship prevailed. Should the United States also then have gone to war to bring democracy to the Soviet Union, or to colonial Asia, or to the Jim Crow South? It might make sense to fight unconditionally for worldwide democracy, but this was not what the Pacific War nor U.S. foreign policy was about. So while it would be depressing to see war criminals and dictators still in power in Japan, it would have been no more unsettling than seeing them in power in many other countries, often with U.S. complicity.

The main beneficiaries of Japanese democracy would presumably be the Japanese people. It is bizarre then to obliterate two hundred thousand of them, and threaten to obliterate millions more, unless their leaders agreed to surrender so that their subjects could have democracy. As Walzer has argued (pp. 267-68), there may be times when it is right to demand unconditional surrender, but Japan was not so uniquely evil that this was one of those times; if the choice came down to massacring Japanese civilians or accepting a less than unconditional surrender, the United States was morally obliged to accept the latter.

The argument for accepting a conditional surrender is political as well as moral. It is one of the central insights of democratic thought that democracy cannot be imposed from the outside. U.S. State Department officials acknowledged in internal documents (*Potsdam*, I:886) that an attempt from the outside to abolish the institution of the emperor would probably be ineffective unless the Japanese people changed their attitude.

The attitude of the Japanese population *was* changing. The experience of war and the elite's indifference to any except its own interests engendered much popular unrest. Japanese leaders may have over-estimated the degree of popular discontent — I suspect internal upheaval was not imminent[34] — but had the war ended with a conditional surrender, allowing the national polity to remain intact, there is no reason to think that democracy would not have burst forth later, particularly once the artificial unity of wartime was over.

Bix's evidence that Japanese leaders wanted more than just the retention of the emperor doesn't tell us whether they would have accepted this more limited condition had it been offered. The U.S. unconditional surrender demand did not inspire Japanese officials to clarify their thinking regarding conditions. Again, though, the real question is not whether the Japanese would have accepted particular terms but whether U.S. officials thought they would. And many seemed to share the State Department analysis that considered Japanese concern over the fate of the throne "the most serious single obstacle to Japanese unconditional surrender" (*Potsdam*, I:884).[35]

Some U.S. policy-makers worried that offering terms for surrender would be seen by the Japanese military as confirming their view that the longer they held out, the better terms they would get. But Washington did not have to announce that it was offering a first, tentative peace proposal, to be haggled over. If, for example, the United States had included in the Potsdam Declaration conditions for an immediate surrender coupled with a warning that by such and such a date the Soviet Union would enter the war, Japanese leaders might well have concluded that it would be wise to surrender without delay on the proffered terms.[36] And it was this sort of "two-step" process — modified terms plus the threat of Soviet entry — that many U.S. officials urged, as Alperovitz documents. Bernstein (*DH*, pp. 240-41) thinks a guarantee of the throne on its own (without other substantial concessions as well) would have been "quite unlikely" to have produced a surrender before November 1; Bix (*DH*, p. 224) concludes that the guarantee alone would "probably not" have led to prompt surrender. However, Bernstein (*DH*, p. 254) considers it "very likely" that the guarantee of the emperor, plus Soviet entry and the continuing siege would have ended the war.[37]

Atomic Diplomacy

WHY DID WASHINGTON REJECT ALL THE POTENTIAL ALTERNATIVES TO THE BOMB? Maddox argues that considerations relating to the war with Japan were the only relevant factors, but this is not credible. The war with Japan cannot explain why Truman did not have the Soviet Union sign on to the Potsdam Declaration, nor why he couldn't postpone the first bomb until after the Soviet declaration of war, nor why he dropped the second bomb before assessing the impact of Soviet entry. It is well known that Truman delayed the opening of the Potsdam conference to coincide with the test of the bomb at Alamogordo. But this, says Maddox, was "not in order to intimidate the Russians." Rather, Truman wanted an ultimatum to come out of the conference, and "Knowledge of a successful test at the outset of the conference would influence the ultimatum's content and permit its issuance in time for the Japanese to reply before the first bomb was ready for use" (p. 52). This would be a persuasive argument if the Potsdam Declaration had in fact made some reference to the bomb; but it did not, so Maddox's argument makes no sense. And, of course, by delaying the conference, Truman was also *shortening* the amount of time the Japanese would have to contemplate compliance before the bomb was dropped: again, not something that would be done if the goal were only to maximize the chances of Japanese surrender.

Truman was reported to be extremely enthusiastic after receiving news at Potsdam of the successful Alamogordo test, and Maddox says (p. 100) this enthusiasm was simply because he believed the war with Japan would end sooner. This interpretation, however, ignores the contemporaneous accounts of the conference that document the fact that U.S. officials saw the bomb as strengthening their hand vis-a-vis the Soviet Union (Alperovitz, pp. 259-61). And even Maddox acknowledges (p. 117) that Byrnes attributed Soviet acceptance of the U.S. position on reparations to the bomb.[38]

Alperovitz argues that considerations relating to the Soviet Union, and only these considerations, explain the dropping of the bomb. He rejects reasons relating to the war with Japan (which, he says, did not require the use of the bomb, given the consensus of all Truman's top advisers other than Byrnes that a clarification of the surrender terms could end the war); he rejects as well explanations based on momentum, bureaucratic politics, racism, and the like. Moscow could have figured in the decision of U.S. policy-makers to use the bomb in two ways: the bomb could have been dropped (1) to hasten the Japanese surrender before the Soviet Union made too many gains in Asia, or (2) to intimidate the Soviet Union. Or both. There are reasons, however, why these calculations are not likely to have been decisive.

If motive (1) were the only reason for dropping the bomb, then we would have expected U.S. officials to have sought an earlier Japanese surrender by modifying unconditional surrender, and to have responded more quickly and less ambiguously to the Japanese surrender offer of August 10. Alperovitz's effort to explain away these problems is unconvincing.

On June 18, 1945, responding to a suggestion that unconditional surrender be clarified, Truman told aides that he had left the door open to Congress to take action in this regard but that he did not feel that he could do anything to change public opinion on the matter at that time. Alperovitz (pp. 65-66) comments that "something strange" seems to be going on, since Truman's previous public statements reveal no indication that he ever expected Congress to take the lead on this issue, and then Alperovitz suggests that "Possibly, the recording secretary misheard the president." There is no reason, however, to have to wish away evidence. Public opinion *was* strongly in favor of unconditional surrender. Alperovitz makes much of the fact that various Republican leaders were calling for modified terms, but surely Truman, who had recently taken over Roosevelt's oversized mantle, would not have been oblivious to the strong sentiment among liberals, Democrats, and the public at large. (Indeed, FDR had earlier rejected the urgings of his advisers to modify unconditional surrender — before the bomb was a factor.) That Truman might have been open to Congress taking action, while being reluctant to try to change public opinion on his own, seems perfectly understandable. I have argued that to kill large numbers of civilians in an effort to obtain unconditional surrender was immoral, and Alperovitz is surely right that there was enough softness in public opinion for Truman to have been able to follow another course. This is not the same, however, as saying that public opinion didn't matter or that there were no costs to Truman of pursuing a different course if he had wanted to do so. Policy-makers shared with much of public opinion the view that killing civilians was permissible, that the Japanese were treacherous and inferior, and that the United States had the right to do things that were condemnable in others. Indeed, the lies by U.S. policy-makers to disguise many of their actions suggest that in some respects they were more willing than the public at large to engage in such actions.

On August 10, 1945, the Japanese government offered to surrender as long as the prerogatives of the emperor were maintained. U.S. policy-makers met to consider a reply and rejected a draft prepared by Leahy, before agreeing on a message that said the emperor would be subordinate to the Allied Commander. This wording implied the retention of the emperor, but did not say so explicitly. The lack of explicitness caused hesitation in Japan. Again, if Washington were concerned only with minimizing Soviet gains in Asia, then the ambiguity of the message is inexplicable, for it delayed the end of the war by four days. It seems clear that policy-makers really were concerned about avoiding the political "crucifixion" (to use the word of one diarist) that might result from appearing to backtrack from unconditional surrender. Alperovitz (p. 4175) simply says that the U.S. reply "allowed for the Emperor's continued presence" and doesn't acknowledge the ambiguity. Of course, the United States did permit the emperor to remain in fact, but this wasn't clearly known until later, so the public reaction was muted.

Alperovitz is correct that, despite public opinion, many officials, particularly in the military, wanted to clarify the surrender terms. As the State Department argued, however, surrender was a political objective of the war and the military's job was to fight until that objective was reached.[39] Alperovitz says (p. 308) that two vocal State Department opponents of modifying the surrender terms were not very influential. Theirs, however, was the Department's majority view and reflected in policy forums (Villa, p. 77).

If the key goal of U.S. officials was motive (2), to intimidate the Soviet Union in Europe, then another question arises. Why wouldn't a demonstration of the bomb have sufficed to let Moscow know of Washington's newly-acquired power? To be sure, wiping out civilians showed Moscow that the United States not only had the weapon, but was morally capable of using it. (Lifton and Mitchell [p. 220] remind us that during the Carter administration a State Department official declared that "the Soviets know that this terrible weapon has been dropped on human beings twice in history and it was an American president who dropped it both times. Therefore, they have to take this into consideration in their calculus.") On the other hand, when Stimson recommended eliminating Kyoto, a cultural and religious center, from the atomic bomb target list, he noted that "such a wanton act" might make it impossible to reconcile Japan to "us ... rather than to the Russians" (Alperovitz, p. 532). But the same logic applied to other cities as well, so if only considerations related to the Soviet Union were at stake, there was as good an argument for a demonstration as for actual combat use. Likewise, there was no need to drop a second bomb in order to impress Moscow: one would have been sufficiently intimidating. The destruction of Nagasaki, however, was useful for limiting Soviet gains in Asia and for justifying exclusive U.S. occupation of Japan.

It seems clear that the desire to gain advantages vis-a-vis the Soviet Union *alone* cannot explain the dropping of the bomb. If U.S. officials had no war-related motives for sticking with unconditional surrender, why did they approve the Kyushu landing, since an invasion would never have been necessary? On the other hand, Bernstein's claim that without anti-Soviet calculations the bomb would have been used just the same also has problems. Without the desire to block Soviet gains in Asia, there would not have been the same need to keep Moscow from signing the Potsdam Declaration, nor to rush the attack on Hiroshima before seeing the impact of the Soviet declaration of war.

However, Bernstein is right, I think, when he says that U.S. policy-makers, who had been incinerating Japanese civilians without the slightest qualms, didn't agonize over the atomic bomb decision. Nor, it might be added, did they give much thought to how nuclear weapons would transform all subsequent history. For them, it was just more of the same, with added diplomatic benefits vis-a-vis the Soviet Union.

The atomic bomb, however, was not just more of the same. It may have killed as many civilians as conventional weapons, but for the first time it created the possibility of destroying the human race.

NOTES

1. Christopher Thorne, *The Issue of War*, New York: Oxford UP, 1985, p. 33.

2. Herbert Feis, *The Road to Pearl Harbor*, Princeton: Princeton UP, 1950, p. 272n5. On troop numbers, see U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, Japan: 1931-1941*, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1943, vol. 1, p. 430.

3. U.S. Dept. of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1936*, Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, vol. IV, p. 265. See Noam Chomsky, "The Revolutionary Pacifism of A. J. Muste: On the Backgrounds of the Pacific War," in *American Power and the New Mandarins*, New York: Pantheon, 1969.

4. For details, see Stephen R. Shalom, "VJ-Day: Remembering the Pacific War," *Z Magazine*, July-Aug. 1995.

5. "The War Over the Bomb," *New York Review of Books*, Sept. 21, 1995, p. 32.

6. A similar logical confusion is evident in the argument that the atomic bombing was justified because the Japanese were also working on the bomb and would have used it if they had gotten it first (see, for example, Lawrence Freedman and Saki Dockrill, "Hiroshima: A Strategy of Shock," in Saki Dockrill, ed., *From Pearl Harbor to Hiroshima: The Second World War in Asia and the Pacific*, London: Macmillan, 1994, p. 209). By the same reasoning, a Japanese apologist could argue that Japan's use of gas warfare in China was justified because post-war research has shown that U.S. policy-makers were prepared to use gas in conjunction with the invasion of Japan. Incidentally, the Japanese atomic bomb project was far less advanced than some sensationalist claims would suggest. See John Dower, *Japan in War and Peace: Selected Essays*, New York: New Press, 1993, pp. 55-100.

7. James F. Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, New York: Harper & Bros., 1947, p. 264.

8. Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars*, New York: Basic Books, 1977, p. 267.

9. Robert H. Ferrell, ed., *Off the Record: The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*, New York: Penguin, 1980, p. 56. The official log says the meeting began at 10:00 am and ended at 10:35; see U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States: Conference of Berlin (The Potsdam Conference), 1945*, Washington: U.S. GPO, 1960, 2 vols., p. II:20 (hereafter cited as *Potsdam*, with volume and page number).

10. Truman to Cate, Jan. 12, 1953, in Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 5, *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944-August 1945*, Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1953, between pp. 712-13.

11. Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs*, vol. 1, *Years of Decision*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1955, p. 417. Truman's exaggeration, though, is less than that of George Bush who claimed the bombs saved "millions of American lives" (quoted in J. Samuel Walker's article in the *DH* symposium, p. 320).

12. For example: Maddox (p. 126, 185n57) and Allen and Polmar (pp. 292-93, 331n) cite a memorandum from medical officers in turn cited in an undated study apparently written in the 1960s; but when one calculates combat deaths, they are only 50% higher than the mid-June War Department estimate for the Kyushu invasion (31,000 compared to 20,000), and nowhere near Truman's half million deaths figure. Allen & Polmar don't distinguish between combat and non-combat casualties (though the latter figures, according to War Department historian Rudolph Winnacker as quoted by Alperovitz [p. 468*], "are rather deceiving and include anybody admitted to hospitals or quarters even for the treatment of a sore throat"); Allen & Polmar also make a convenient mathematical error. On the date of the study, see Alperovitz, p. 743n44.

Allen and Polmar (pp. 292, 331n) make much of an order — mentioned only in a privately published 1980 manuscript — by the Philadelphia Quartermaster Depot for more than 370,000 Purple Hearts for those who might become invasion casualties; however, there is no indication when the order was put through nor any reason to believe that the Quartermaster had access to better data than the War Department planners. In any event, there is no evidence that Truman or other top officials saw these figures, so they could hardly have played a role in the decision-making.

Maddox (p. 60) states that the War Department casualty estimates for the invasion of Japan excluded "the unpredictable number of casualties kamikazes would inflict on crowded troop transports." The nearest source he cites provides no support for his claim, but it would be bizarre if military planners contemplating an amphibious assault had failed to include losses in landing the invasion force.

Allen & Polmar (p. 208) cite a worst case military analysis (if three separate invasions were needed) that would result in 220,000 battle casualties. To this they add non-battle casualties (accidents and disease), which can be calculated using the ratio of battle to non-battle casualties given in the single invasion scenario. But though the sum comes to 249,411, they state that total casualties "would exceed 250,000 and were climbing toward 500,000."

13. See The Committee for the Compilation of Materials on Damage Caused by the Atomic Bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, *Hiroshima and Nagasaki: The Physical, Medical, and Social Effects of the Atomic Bombings*, New York: Basic Books, 1981.

14. Murray Sayle ("Did the Bomb End the War?" *The New Yorker*, July 31, 1995, p. 53) claims "We now know that Truman had been misinformed about what he was agreeing to." But Sayle, who also believes that Hirohito was a closet pacifist (p. 49; for decisive counter-evidence, see Herbert P. Bix, "The Showa Emperor's 'Monologue' and the Problem of War Responsibility," *Journal of Japanese Studies*, vol. 18, no. 2, Summer 1992, esp. p. 302), seems awfully naive here: we know Truman was aware that the bomb was wiping out "all those kids" (Henry Wallace quoting Truman, quoted in Alperovitz, p. 417).

15. Immediately after Hiroshima, Truman announced: "The Japanese began the war from the air at Pearl Harbor. They have been repaid many fold." And after Nagasaki he declared:

> Having found the bomb we have used it. We have used it against those who attacked us without warning at Pearl Harbor, against those who have starved and beaten and executed American prisoners of war, against those who have abandoned all pretense of obeying international laws of warfare. We have used it in order to shorten the agony of war, in order to save the lives of thousands and thousands of young Americans (cited in Herbert Bix's contribution to the *DH* symposium, p. 207).

Neither comment is suggestive of excessive concern for Japanese civilians.

16. See John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy*, New York: Pantheon, 1986; and Haruko Taya Cook, "The Myth of the Saipan Suicides," *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, vol. 7, no. 3, Spring 1995.

17. The attack on Pearl Harbor obviously added to the U.S. willingness to target Japanese civilians, but that willingness was there before. Three weeks prior to Pearl Harbor, Army Chief of Staff George C. Marshall told reporters in an off-the-record meeting that if war came with Japan "we'll fight mercilessly. Flying fortresses will be dispatched immediately to set the paper cities of Japan on fire." And "There won't be any hesitation about bombing civilians — it will be all-out" (Michael S. Sherry, *The Rise of American Air Power: The Creation of Armageddon*, New Haven: Yale UP, 1987, p. 109). Washington was also far more cavalier about attacks on civilians in occupied Asia (fire-raids in China and Formosa) than in occupied Europe (Sherry, pp. 284-85).

18. James J. Weingartner, "Trophies of War: U.S. Troops and the Mutilation of Japanese War Dead, 1941-1945," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 61, no. 1, Feb. 1992, pp. 53-67; Dower, 1986, esp. pp. 52-55, 64-71.

19. Robert J. C. Butow, *Japan's Decision to Surrender*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1954, p. 138.

20. Sherry, p. 303. The U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey asked people after the war whether they believed defeat was inevitable and what led them to that view. Note that this measure of morale is separate from the question of whether one intended to fight to the death. Terror bombing probably increased defeatism while at the same time encouraging fanatical resistance. Incidentally, the incendiary raids had very little impact on Japanese war potential: the naval blockade had already cut off Japanese resources, so that even unbombed factories were left idle (Robert A. Pape, "Why Japan Surrendered," *International Security*, vol. 18, no. 2, Fall 1993, p. 195).

21. Martin J. Sherwin, *A World Destroyed*, New York: Vintage, 1975, p. 234. On the evidence regarding U.S. POWs killed at Hiroshima, see Alperovitz, pp. 612-13.

22. Father Flaujac, "The Bombing of Tokyo," Bethanie Institution *Bulletin no. 5*, translated by GHQ, Far Eastern Command, Military Intelligence Section, General Staff, Allied Translator and Interpreter Service, Aug. 14, 1948, in *War in Asia and the Pacific, 1937-1949*, ed. Donald S. Detwiler and Charles B. Burdick, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1980, vol. 12, p. 8. Leafleting of cities targeted for conventional bombing began earlier that summer (Sherry, p. 312).

23. Barton J. Bernstein, "Roosevelt, Truman, and the Atomic Bomb, 1941-1945: A Reinterpretation," *Political Science Quarterly*, vol. 90, no. 1, Spring 1975, pp. 52-53n104.

24. In a related comment, cabinet secretary Sakomizu said the bomb was a chance to end the war without having to blame the military or manufacturers (Robert P. Newman, "Ending the War with Japan: Paul Nitze's 'Early Surrender' Counterfactual," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 64, no. 2, May 1995, pp. 185-86).

25. Nor is it the case that it required the destruction of inhabited cities to have a dramatic impact on the Japanese population and thus serve as an excuse for Japanese leaders. In fact, military leaders tightly controlled information and the public did not learn what had really happened at Hiroshima and Nagasaki until after the surrender (Pape, pp. 165-66; Freedman & Dockrill, p. 207).

26. Michael J. Yavenditti, "The American People and the Use of Atomic Bombs on Japan: the 1940s," *The Historian*, vol. 36, no. 2, Feb. 1974, p. 244n76.

27. Despite the contention by some (e.g., Newman, p. 175) that Japanese officials had a vested interest in denying the importance of the bomb in their decision, claiming that they surrendered to the overwhelming power of a superweapon might best preserve their military honor; thus, some of their post-war assertions about the decisive impact of the bomb might well be exaggerated. Indeed, Byrnes was angered by Japanese officials who claimed the bomb was primarily responsible for their defeat, trying to picture their nation as the loser in an essentially unfair fight. He told the press that Japan had been beaten before the bomb (Lifton & Mitchell, p. 240).

28. Quoted in Leon Sigal, *Fighting to a Finish: The Politics of War Termination in the United States and Japan, 1945*, Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988, p. 226.

29. Quoted in Stanley Weintraub, "The Three-week War," *MHQ: The Quarterly Journal of Military History*, vol. 7, no. 3, Spring 1995, p. 93.

30. Stalin told Truman that the Russian people would not support war against Japan unless they could acquire the Kuriles and other territories; Byrnes explained that "For sentimental reasons, the United States will want a trusteeship interest in Okinawa" (Byrnes, p. 225). In 1956, Moscow agreed to return two of the four Kurile islands to Japan if Japan would recognize the Soviet right to the other two (where there was a reasonable Russian claim). Japan was prepared to accept, until Washington declared that if Japan did so, the United States would never give back Okinawa. (Michael A. Barnhart, *Japan and the World Since 1868*, London: Edward Arnold, 1995, pp. 160-61; on the claims, see Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War*, Washington, DC: Brookings, 1994, p. 663n123.)

31. Weintraub, p. 94-95; Dower, 1986, p. 297-99. Perhaps a firm U.S. protest might have helped these POWs, but Japanese prisoners were also being held for a year after war's end as a source of cheap labor in the Philippines, Hawaii, and Okinawa (Arnold

Krammer, "Japanese Prisoners of War in America," *Pacific Historical Review*, vol. 52, no. 1, Feb. 1983, p. 89). By the time they were released, the Cold War had developed to a point where the influence of a U.S. protest on Moscow was negligible.

32. It has been suggested that Stalin shrewdly hoodwinked Washington by stringing along Japanese diplomats so as to prevent their early surrender (Paul Kecskemeti, *Strategic Surrender: The Politics of Victory and Defeat*, Stanford: Stanford UP, 1958, p. 189). But when Stalin told Truman at Potsdam about the Japanese request for mediation and asked whether he should "lull the Japanese to sleep" or give them a definite refusal, Truman recommended the first option (*Potsdam*, II:1588; Byrnes, p. 205). So the Japanese may have been strung along, but Washington, rather than being a victim of this Soviet scheming, was a party to it.

33. And the flawed political reasoning on the left led directly to horrendous moral positions. The liberal press favored unconditional surrender and was willing to sanction conventional obliteration and atomic bombings to achieve this objective (Yavenditti, p. 243). Alperovitz cites a study by Paul Boller which concluded:

> To say that the *Nation*, the *New Republic,* and *PM* supported the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki is to understate the matter. All three publications took for granted, from the beginning, the necessity and desirability of the bombings.

On August 9, 1945, the managing editor of *PM* wrote: "While we are dropping atomic bombs why not drop a few on Tokyo, where there's a chance to run up our batting average on the royal family — and clear the bases for democracy after the war" (Alperovitz, pp. 427-28). The *New Republic* responded to the criticism that the bomb killed thousands of non-combatants by pointing out that the "same objection" applied with "equal force to the strategic bombing of enemy cities" (Takaki, p. 29). Wilfred Burchett wrote "dispatches glorifying the firebombing of Japanese cities" (Lifton & Mitchell, p. 47). There were some noble exceptions: among them Dwight MacDonald, Norman Thomas, the anti-Stalinist socialist left, and the pacifist and religious press.

34. I base my judgment on the fact that although dissent was growing sharply, loyalty to the emperor still seemed widespread, especially in the rural areas. Bix, *DH*, pp. 211-12; Bix, 1992, p. 329; Dower, 1993, pp. 107, 123, 145.

35. Bix writes (*DH*, p. 217n59): "Elliptical statements in Truman's diaries that the emperor was 'asking for peace' should not be misunderstood." The emperor, Bix says, was actually asking to retain his power. But Truman's diary entry tells us what Truman thought, not what the emperor was actually asking.

36. Alternatively, as Butow noted long ago (pp. 133-34), Washington could have declared that the throne could remain if surrender came immediately, but not if there were a delay.

37. Allen & Polmar (p. 294) argue that no negotiations with Japan were possible given Japanese treachery, as evidenced by their attempt to get the Soviet Union on their side. But Japanese behavior here was no more treacherous than that of the United States, which secretly offered Stalin territorial concessions to go to war against Japan, despite the fact that a non-aggression pact between Moscow and Tokyo was still in force.

38. When Truman heard of the destruction of Hiroshima, he said, "This is the greatest thing in history." Maddox (p. 129) criticizes those who find this statement grotesque, arguing that "greatest" could mean "most awesome." It could, but the context makes clear that it did not: Truman was "euphoric" as he told the crew of the *Augusta* that a bomb had been dropped on Japan. According to a reporter, he "was not actually laughing but there was a broad smile on his face." Truman said he had never been happier about any announcement he had ever made (Lifton & Mitchell, pp. 157-58).

39. Brian L. Villa, "The U.S. Army, Unconditional Surrender, and the Potsdam Declaration," *Journal of American History*, vol. 63, no. 1, June 1976, p. 79.

Black Strategies of Resistance

RACE REBELS: CULTURE, POLITICS, AND THE BLACK WORKING CLASS by Robin D.G. Kelley. New York: The Free Press, 1994. 351 pp.

Reviewed by Grant Farred

IT IS A LONG WAY, INTELLECTUALLY AND OTHERWISE, from the grim postindustrial English Midlands city of Birmingham to the sunny, but racially tense, environs of the U.S. South's Birmingham, Alabama. It is, however, a cultural and political journey which Robin D.G. Kelley undertakes with aplomb in his latest work *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class*. As his earlier work *Hammer and Hoe: Alabama Communists During the Great Depression* shows, Robin Kelley is a historian fascinated by black political activity in the U.S. South. It is his theoretical excursion across the Atlantic to Britain, however, that distinguishes *Race Rebels* from Kelley's previous forays into the Deep South. In spite of its congenital greyness, from the late 1960s through the early 1980s the English city played home to the University of Birmingham's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, one of the most invigorating and dynamic intellectual movements of our time. Pioneered by New Leftists Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall, the Centre committed itself to the serious investigation of working class and marginal cultures in Britain. Establishing an intellectual enterprise with little by way of precedent (Hoggart's *The Uses of Literacy*, Raymond Williams's *Culture and Society*, and E.P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* provided the founding texts), much of the early work was groundbreaking, fresh, and richly suggestive. And, given the challenges and uncertainties any new intellectual movement faces, much of the writing on working class political and cultural organizations, music, dress styles, youth culture, and the ways in which these practices encoded resistance to the dominant order, was of necessity also tentative and speculative. Hoggart, Hall, and their students were concerned with opening up uncharted intellectual territories rather than pronouncing definitively on them.

Robin Kelley, besides drawing on the writing of Birmingham graduates such as Paul Willis and Paul Gilroy, conceptualized *Race Rebels* within the explorative spirit in which the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies conducted its work. As a collection of essays, it is therefore not surprising that *Race Rebels's* strength lies only nominally in its breadth, though that too is considerable — spanning African American Communists in the Spanish Civil War to hip-hop culture in postmodern LA, from black working class struggles against the segregation of public transportation in Birmingham, AL to a reading of Malcolm X's zoot suit. The real salience of *Race Rebels* is twofold: (1) its ability to map

GRANT FARRED *teaches English and Comparative Literature at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. He is editor of* Rethinking C.L.R. James, *Blackwell (forthcoming Spring 1996) and has published articles in* New Politics, Social Text *and* Genders.

new intellectual vistas; and, (2) its insistence that historians and cultural studies scholars cast a skeptical and interrogative glance at existing accounts of black resistance. Kelley's investment in this form of scholarly inquiry is clear from the very outset. Discussing unheralded strategies of resistance in the opening essay, "Shiftless of the World Unite!," Kelley writes:

> It is surprising to note how little has been written about workplace theft and sabotage. Given what we know of the pervasiveness of these strategies in other parts of the world, and the fact that sabotage and theft were common practices among slaves as well as rural African Americans in the postbellum period, the almost universal absence of these sorts of clandestine activities among black industrial workers is surprising.(21)

THIS IS A CHALLENGE WHICH *RACE REBELS* ISSUES ITSELF and other works examining this field. Kelley's introductory essay identifies the kind of work that has to be done in black historical scholarship, reconfiguring the workplace as a site of struggle, and he begins to answer the deafening silences that surround these commonplace practices — locating the workplace in relation to other traditions of African American resistance and black resistance more internationally.

In order to read political events both old and new more innovatively, to analyze these historical incidents from different, awkward angles, and to view instances of resistance from within the interstices of the dominant accounts, Kelley recognizes that it is necessary to acquire a new theoretical apparatus. Cultural studies, and one of its most incisive progeny, resistance theory, provide the tools with which he undertakes this task. This is an assignment that, by its very nature, requires Kelley to investigate the complicated and entangled relationship between organized black politics and popular cultural practices. The occasionally measured tone of *Race Rebels*, nowhere more evident than in the essay subtitled "The Politics and Pleasures of Community," reminds us of the intellectual tensions which emerge when these issues are considered in critical conjunction. In one passage tempered by this recognition, Kelley invokes Raymond Williams:

> I am not suggesting that parties, dances, and other leisure pursuits were merely guises for political events, or that cultural practices were clear acts of resistance. Instead, much if not most of African American popular culture can be characterized as, to use Raymond Williams's terminology, "alternative" rather than oppositional.(47)

Although *Race Rebels* deploys "alternative" strategies of reading resistance, the text is infinitely more interested in the "oppositional" nature of black life in the U.S. In the one of the most engaging pieces in the book, "Congested Terrain," Kelley produces an excellent reading of another under-researched black struggle — the battle against racial segregation on public transportation embarked on by African Americans in pre-civil rights Birmingham. Black riders on the Southern city's transport system detested their position at the back of the bus and challenged the segregated seating arrangements in ways that varied from subtle undermining of the code to aggressive contestation, from sly civility to open hostility. While these acts of black commuter protest were occasionally manifested in physical violence (most often in the form of whites expelling blacks from streetcars or busses), black riders were able to convert language into a powerful tool of resistance. Profanity. Kelley points out that "black women's actions were no less violent or profane than men's," (69), and linguistic incur-sion, “No matter how well drivers, conductors, and signs kept bodies separated, black voices could flow easily into the section designated for whites, serving as a constant reminder that racially divided public space was a contested terrain,” (70) were but two forms of conducting this struggle. Black women, as Kelley is at pains to demonstrate in these extracts and indeed throughout the book, were and continue to be central to black resistance. So pivotal were women, that “although the available records are incomplete, it seems that black women outnumbered black men in the number of incidents of resistance on busses and streetcars.” (67)

Kelley’s discussion of gender, however, concentrates both on showing the extent of female involvement and reflecting on how deeply the discourse of masculinity inspired black men’s resistance. “Often the battles were more personal,” Kelley writes,

> Issues of personal autonomy, masculinity, dignity and freedom to transgress the boundaries of accepted behavior — a negation of an assigned “place” as a black “boy” in the Jim Crow South — were the basis for dozens of physical conflicts. (65)

Kelley is astute in the distinction he draws between the different motivations which characterized black men and women’s resistance even as they presented a collective face to the forces of white oppression.

The imperative of Kelley’s argument, however, is to alert us to the ways in which everyday black-white exchanges in the pre-civil rights South constituted an arena of racial conflict. In fact, he goes on to make an even more important point: the civil rights campaign emanated from the local, organizationally unarticulated struggles of black folk against structural white oppression and exploitation in its various forms. The historian Kelley traces this civil rights lineage in a vocabulary derived from the work of the anthropologist James Scott, most notably from the latter’s *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. “One way to think about the emergence of the modern civil rights movement is,” Kelley suggests, “as a public declaration of the hidden transcript; a direct challenge to Jim Crowism by people who had heretofore resisted quietly.” (77) Scott’s definition of the “hidden transcript” as a document in which subjugated peoples resist in evasive and clandestine ways while maintaining their public servility (what *Race Rebels* sometimes labels the “Cult of True Sambohood”) enables Kelley to make “public” the genealogy of Martin Luther King’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference protests to desegregate public space in the 1950s and 1960s. The racial strife that marked (or is that marred?) bus rides in Birmingham constituted the ideological foundation of the civil rights campaign for political enfranchisement and free and open access to parks, theaters and other public venues — reductively put, local struggles spur national campaigns which in turn reconfigure a society’s political formations.

As richly informed by cultural studies as Kelley’s work is, it is a tribute to his critical engagement with that project that *Race Rebels* is not characterized by what detractors and supporters of the discipline alike have called the “resistance is everywhere omnivore.” Reflecting on the struggle around public transport, Kelley writes soberly: “Even when a single, dramatic act captured the imaginations of other black passengers and spurred them to take action, there was no guarantee that it would lead to sustained, collective opposition.” (74)

What is at stake here for Kelley, however, is both the efficacy of a particular struggle and the circumstances under which it is waged. To paraphrase Marx, we most often make history under conditions not of our own choosing. Southern black workers, Kelley recognizes, utilized all their resources in order to mobilize their community. As imaginatively and courageously as they could, black commuters subverted the public transcript and occasionally they even initiated confrontations with the white power structure. All this at a moment when they were fully cognizant of the potential for white retribution in world where "even the smallest act of resistance has its price." (34)

Race Rebels is a creative reading of the African American experience in the U.S., identifying resistance in unexpected sites, mapping the trajectory and expansion of those modes of black opposition. Most importantly, however, Robin Kelley takes seriously the ways in which an oppressed and exploited black community expresses or makes "public" its opposition. *Race Rebels* depicts black politics as a complex, uneven, elusive, hard-to-identify and unpredictable practice. He recognizes the value of formal political structures such as trade unions, but he refuses to privilege one form of black struggle over another. After all, to do so would be to hierarchize strategies of resistance, reduce the scope of the "political," and it would be to impose an artificial understanding of what constitutes "overt collective action."

Kelley is much more committed to historical specificity, reading the political in terms of how it articulates itself rather than rotely applying a preconceived notion of black resistance to any given situation. So trained in attending to the demands of context is Kelley that he does not render organized political formations discrete from informal, loosely organized ones. The two are, in his terms, of an intricate and interconnected piece:

> we cannot presume that trade unions and similar labor institutions were the "real" harbingers of black working-class politics; rather, even for organized black workers they were probably part of an ensemble of formal and informal avenues through which people struggled to improve or transform daily life. (34)

Cultural studies, in its many guises, has long since challenged and extended our notion of the political.

Race Rebels is a historian's astute and assiduous contribution to that expansive way of thinking. *Race Rebels* is, furthermore, not only a provocative and illuminating study of popular strategies of resistance, but it is one in which Birmingham, England refracted Birmingham, AL. In Paul Gilroy's terms, Robin Kelley serviced anew the intellectual transport routes of the Black Atlantic. In the process of this intellectual exchange, one city's intellectual formulations shed a sharp and penetrating light on the political history of the other.