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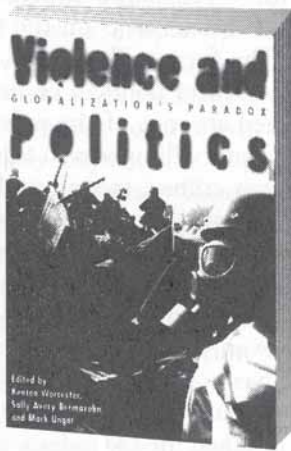
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On Liberal & Left Responses To Bush's War on Democracy

Julius Jacobson

CANDLES NO LONGER FLICKER ON STOOPS; neighbors no longer gather to mourn and seek solace at silent vigils. In a wide peripheral area, the stench of smoldering fires and death no longer assaults nostrils. Residents have largely returned to homes made uninhabitable for months by thick accumulations of pollutants that covered floors, walls, furnishings, a coating with a grisly gray hue suggesting the presence of human bone reduced to ash. Streets closed to pedestrians and traffic are now open. Mass transit, still a problem, is much improved. Vibrant commercial and cultural neighborhoods battered by 9/11 are showing signs of revival, though some enterprises could not survive the shock.

In nine months, 1.6 million tons of debris had been carted off to Fresh Kills where, in sifting the wreckage, more than 4100 body parts were retrieved. Finally, on May 30th, in a most touching ceremony, the last girder was removed. The fiery, jagged landscape of Armageddon is now a level gaping wound that will eventually be covered by a shrine memorializing the slain while realtors, architects and construction firms will likely make a pretty profit, filling most of the area with commercial structures.

Other changes giving at least a surface appearance of a return to normalcy are less salutary. In the immediate aftermath of 9/11 there was a near universal spontaneous display of support and solidarity for the victims and the bereaved; thousands came from near and far, including volunteers for the physically and emotionally exhausting task of clearing the site, searching for possible survivors and recovering human remains. Today, visitors to Ground Zero come

more as tourists, some out of morbid curiosity, and the once hallowed ground is now profaned by America's notorious entrepreneurial spirit: a guide leads tours for \$15 a head, a guidebook is yours for \$12, and toilet paper with images of bin Laden is available at a fair market price. This, too, represents a return (i.e., a backward step) to normalcy.

The spontaneous proliferation of American flags was initially more than a defiant display of patriotism; it also carried a message of respect for the dead and solidarity with their families. Today's flag-waving is saturated with jingoism and *révanchism*.

DESPITE SURFACE INDICATIONS of life as usual, the nation remains haunted by the ineradicable memory of 9/11, many still suffering psychological distress, and almost all fearful of another terrorist blitzkrieg on the scale of 9/11, perhaps even more deadly.

President Bush's personal declaration of war, coinciding with the threat of a terrorist-induced anthrax epidemic, sustained the level of stress, while the defeat of the Taliban and al Qaeda armies provided little, if any, relief since the Bush administration made it clear from the beginning that a victory in Afghanistan would be only the first stage in a protracted global war; a war that could not be won without American battlefield losses; a war that will last as long as the forces of (anti-American) terrorism exist, which means a war without end. It is hardly a calming prospect.

Anxiety is also fed by the ominous, escalating threat to attack Iraq. The Administration has leaked news that it is contemplating mobilizing 250,000 U.S. troops, which, despite its imposing size, would be more vulnerable than U.S. forces were during the Gulf War, given the likely absence of significant military assistance from shaky

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allies that look askance on the Bush administration's fixation on forcibly deposing Saddam Hussein and his regime. Vice President Cheney's blunt call to arms on August 26 was not calculated to calm a nation that is nervous despite the customary public display of bravado. (Should the U.S. make good on its threat, the first report of substantial American casualties would have a profoundly unsettling effect on the people.)

The aggressive posture vis-à-vis "the axis of evil," and the threat of using tactical nuclear weapons in a preemptive first strike against nations led by "evildoers" also serve to keep nerves taut.

Then there is the demoralizing loss of confidence in the legendary FBI and CIA. Enough information was available to them so that if they had met their minimal responsibilities, they could have realized that they were not merely looking at a number of floating dots but a virtual diagram of a monstrous plot that could have been prevented. Even FBI Director Robert S. Muller, III admitted as much.

Apprehensiveness is intentionally exacerbated by an Administration that, for reasons of political self-interest, resorts to a form of psychological terrorism by repeatedly frightening the nation with rumors of a possible imminent and massive terrorist attack without any evidence to justify such unsettling alarms. Clearly, Bush, Ashcroft, Cheney, et al, want to keep the nation on edge in order to create a siege mentality where love thy neighbor gives way to watch thy neighbor; an atmosphere is created conducive to winning popular support for an unrelenting assault on basic democratic liberties and to neutralizing opposition to their rightwing agenda on all social questions.

Perhaps most stressful is the realization that the U.S. is no longer an impregnable fortress. For the past century at least, Americans believed that national security was guaranteed by vast bodies of water separating the country from Europe to the east and Asia to the west, friendly Canada to the north and non-threatening Mexico south of the border, and as a powerful deterrent back-up to the advantages of geography was America's military might. That all changed on September 11 when American defenses were breached for the first time

in nearly 200 years; not by massive waves of conventional armed forces but by a handful of terrorists manipulated by fundamentalist clerics with a growing mass base who have at their disposal an apparently bottomless reservoir of "martyrs" ready, even eager, to sacrifice their lives for the sake of retribution and for the glory of Islam as they see it.

Who could have imagined before 9/11 that the American colossus could suffer so much human carnage, destruction of property, economic dislocation and social disarray in so short a period of time at the hands of so few?

The new scale, scope and capacity of terrorism acts as a leveling military phenomenon. Consider that the catastrophic toll taken on September 11 required no more than a handful of suicide bombers whose training cost a mere pittance and whose armaments consisted of 19 box cutters and 19 penknives.

In stark contrast, to inflict comparable military and economic damage to a hypothetical enemy by conventional military means, the U.S. military might require weeks of preparation by mechanized units and infantry divisions with air and naval support, all costing huge amounts of money and a heavy price paid in human casualties. And while the Star Wars program was always fanciful it might have provided some comfort to more naïve sections of the public. But 9/11 has reduced the program to an absurdity, a multibillion-dollar boondoggle. The threat from fundamentalist terrorists is not of launching missiles at American targets, but of launching "martyrs" armed with explosives, possibly nuclear devices, perhaps biological means of mass destruction, and last but not least, box cutters and penknives.

Finally, Americans are staggered and angered by their sudden awareness of how fierce, widespread and menacing is the hatred of so many (and not only Muslims) for everything American: its political/social system, its culture, and its inhabitants. Americans cannot understand this and their perplexed President appears no more comprehending of why such a large percentage of the world's population not only does not love Americans but wants to exterminate them.

Thus President Bush, with his usual eloquence, whines:

You know, I'm asked all the time — I ask myself a question: how do I respond — it's an old trick — how do I respond when I see that in some Islamic countries there is vitriolic hatred for America. I'll tell you how I respond: I'm amazed. I'm amazed that there's such misunderstanding of what our country is about that people would hate us. I am, like most Americans, I just can't believe it. Because I know how good we are.

I think it would be giving Bush more credit than is warranted if this amazing confession of ignorance and display of stupidity are just a matter of guile.

TO AN IGNORANT AND UNREFLECTIVE President, the 19 hijackers are “not martyrs, just killers.”* I agree that martyr is hardly a fitting description. But to refer to them as “just killers” is preposterous. “Just killers” are not in the habit of morphing jets into guided missiles for the purpose of destroying what they see as symbols of a hated social system and to indiscriminately kill as many Americans as possible, all as part of a suicidal divine mission.

Perhaps one day a novelist with the psychological insights, social awareness and literary skills of a Dostoevsky will dramatically lay bare the social and psychological impulses of so-called martyrs who apparently found salvation and honor, even bliss,

*In truth, the 19 hijackers were not martyrs at all. Historically, “martyr” has been a term of respect for those slain for questioning or challenging the authority of repressive powers-that-be in a religious order or political institution. Martyrs were generally perceived as victims, not victimizers. As Jesus was nailed to the cross, he did not call on his disciples to avenge him, to murder all Romans, not to mention the Jews. In our own time, when the working class martyr, Joe Hill, was executed by the ruling class, his last wish was not to “Kill! Kill! Kill!” but “Don't Mourn, Organize!”

Martyrs were not necessarily pacifists. During the French resistance, for example, some risked and lost their lives on special assignments that involved assassinating civilian collaborators or military functionaries in the occupying Nazi army. However, their assignment was not to work their way through enemy lines in order to blow up German beer halls filled with civilians, and their permanent mission in life was not to liquidate the German population.

in sacrificing their lives to avenge injustices inflicted on their families and compatriots, and for the glory of Allah. But one need not probe deeply to realize that the demons and furies which tormented and possessed the “martyrs” were fed by their sense of humiliation as victims of arrogant and predatory western powers, above all the United States; by Israel's brutal and unrestrained war against the Palestinian people; by lethal U.S. sanctions on Iraq; and by oppressive and corrupt sheiks and princes who are beneficiaries of American imperialism's largesse, the quid pro quo for serving the economic and strategic interests of the U.S. imperium, a working relationship unaffected by petty questions of democracy, dictatorship, rule by terror.

It is small wonder, then, that in the absence of significant socialist and other progressive secular movements that might have served to channel mass anger into a democratic resistance, millions succumbed to the militant, anti-Western rhetoric of the most bigoted, intolerant, socially and culturally repressive strains in the Islamic world.

There is nothing exculpatory in the fact that the 19 fundamentalist hijackers were fired by deeply rooted hatred of American imperialism. It was a depraved act of ultimate cruelty. It would be morally, politically and ideologically indefensible for any democratic socialist to either pull back from or restrain criticism of Islamic fundamentalism on the grounds, as several in the left have suggested in a post-modernist argot, that such criticism has to be “contextualized.” Of course it must be contextualized. That is the case with any serious political or historical discussion; but “contextualization” is not to be used as a methodological device to minimize or rationalize the crimes of fundamentalism. The Bush administration's War on Terror (more accurately, a War on Democracy), which has the support of the overwhelming majority of the American people, must also be reviewed “in the context” of the horrific massacre of 9/11, but it would be inexcusable to use such “contextualization” to minimize or rationalize the reactionary imperialist nature of the U.S. response.

To illustrate my point by way of histori-

cal analogy: there were many ideologically committed Nazi torturers and killers, some of whom were ready to sacrifice their lives for their *Führer* and the Third Reich. Any serious analysis of Nazi brutality would also have had to place the barbarous impulses of Naziism “in context,” one that would give appropriate emphasis to, and draw lessons from the fact that many Nazis who became mass murderers were initially attracted to Hitlerism in reaction to the nationally humiliating and economically oppressive terms imposed on the German nation by the Versailles Treaty. It would have been unthinkable for anyone in the German left to suggest that this was cause to show critical restraint in our political and moral judgment of Nazi barbarism.

While the hijackers were neither martyrs nor “just killers,” they were highly motivated assassins on an assignment that reflected the genocidal and totalitarian impulses of their al Qaeda manipulators. Although al Qaeda and similar terrorist networks condemn the depredations of Western imperialism there is nothing in that movement that can even remotely be described as “socially progressive” or “anti-imperialist.” There is a difference between anti-imperialism and opposition to *American* imperialism. Although al Qaeda and parallel terrorist movements excoriate *American* imperialism they are neither anti-imperialist nor a force for national liberation nor do they represent the poor and oppressed in the Islamic world. Not even volumes of fundamentalist demagoguery can change the reality of a grotesquely violent totalitarian movement whose ultimate objective is to reduce all of Islam to a bloc of barbaric theocratic states.

It behooves the U.S. and international left to combat fundamentalism ideologically as the social abomination it is; not to ignore the subject or, in effect, to reduce its importance by just devoting a few critical lines about the terrorists, and not to temper the criticisms by “contextualizing” this unrelievedly reactionary phenomenon.

This obligatory commitment to democratic struggle against fundamentalism requires a no less unequivocal rejection of America’s mislabeled War on Terror; a war that carries with it no democratic and po-

litical alternative that could shatter the dynamic of fundamentalism’s mass appeal but proposes a military solution in an endless series of futile wars that would only increase the prestige and influence of fundamentalist terrorism. Uri Avnery, the Israeli peace activist, summed it up:

Not only Israel, but the whole world is now full of gibberish about “fighting terrorism.” Politicians, “experts on terrorism” and their likes propose to hit, destroy, annihilate etc., as well as to allocate more billions to the “intelligence community.” They make brilliant suggestions.

But nothing of this kind will help the threatened nations, much as nothing of this kind has helped Israel. There is no patent remedy for terrorism. The only remedy is to remove its causes. One can kill a million mosquitoes, and millions more will take their place. In order to get rid of them, one has to dry the swamp that breeds them. And the swamp is always political.

No matter how smart the bombs dropped by American bombers in Afghanistan today or Iraq tomorrow, they will never dry the swamp but only roil the muddied waters and Avnery’s metaphorical mosquitoes will multiply exponentially.

IT WAS THE RESPONSIBILITY of what there is of an American left, in response to the war in Afghanistan, to wage its own political war on two fronts. First, to reveal all that is unjust and self-defeating in Washington’s war without end. At the same time, the left was under a no less firm moral and political obligation to be uncompromising in its opposition to both the terrorist means and anti-social ends of religious fundamentalism. Such a war on two fronts is not only morally and politically mandatory, but is the only approach that can have a positive influence on a public grown embittered and anxious by 9/11 and whose support for military retaliation can never be shaken by anti-war propaganda that does not simultaneously condemn, in the strongest terms, fundamentalism’s theocratic ambitions.

Unfortunately, much of the left has failed miserably; some, reeling and disoriented by the horror of 9/11, joined pro-war liberals in contributing their intellectual skills to justifying the war in Afghanistan.

On the other hand, many resisted a war of imperial design but failed to meet their elementary moral and political obligations to resoundingly condemn the hijackers and their fundamentalist mentors and trainers, to prove to the nation that they, too, mourn the victims and are in solidarity with the bereaved.

Below, I detail my grievances against a flawed *section* of the anti-war left. It is certainly not intended as a sweeping disparagement of the anti-war movement of which I am a part.* I have no similar argument with organizations such as the War Resisters League and Peace Action, whose opposition to the war in Afghanistan did not inhibit them from writing movingly about the massacre and did not mince words in their repudiation of terrorism. My critical focus is on individuals who are influential in the left and whose disgraceful response has done considerable harm to the left and to the anti-war movement. In its failure to unambiguously repudiate Islamic fundamentalism and to respond sensitively and compassionately to that horrific day, they have provided ammunition to liberal and conservative supporters of the war who have been able to point to those I criticize to smear the anti-war movement as a whole. Thus, my criticism of Alexander Cockburn, Ed Herman and others, from a socialist and anti-war perspective is, I hope, a modest political contribution to building an effective opposition to an imperialist war. This is followed by a more detailed criticism of liberals in the pro-war camp.



TO SET THE STAGE FOR MY CRITICISM, just a

*If my article had the wider purpose of discussing the anti-war left as a whole, it would have also reviewed some of the first-rate anti-war articles that have appeared in various publications, e.g., a succession of articles co-authored by Stephen R. Shalom and Michael Albert that appeared in *Z*, several powerful and eloquent articles by Edward Said to be found in the online publication *Counterpunch* (to which its co-editor, Alexander Cockburn, should have paid more heed), a gem of an article by Rosalind Petchesky published in *The Women's Review of Books*, and contributions by Thomas Harrison, Stephen R. Shalom, Michael Hirsch, Betty Reid Mandell, and Mark Dow published in *New Politics*.

brief review of the surreal, grotesque spectacle of 9/11 when two hijacked jets, tanks filled with highly combustible fuel, plunged into two of New York City's most imposing skyscrapers. Within an hour, both structures crumbled, thousands crushed, dismembered, immolated in the collapsing crematoria that had been the fabled Twin Towers. Of 2,800 killed, 1,700 vanished as if vaporized. Approximately 16 acres were laid waste, but not leveled, as mounds of molten and twisted girders stood one hundred feet high. A third hijacked jet plowed into the Pentagon: 184 dead; a fourth crashed in a field in Pennsylvania killing all aboard.

Under clouds of smoke covering much of lower Manhattan, families of the missing were lining up in the streets circling Ground Zero with photos of children or parents, hoping against hope that their loved ones would be recognized by someone as having escaped the inferno.

Despite this background of surreal horror, a number of left journalists responded dispassionately and evasively in a more or less uniform pattern: an opening sentence decrying September 11th as a tragedy and, then, rushed headlong into a vigorous denunciation of American imperialism for having committed an even greater number of crimes against humanity; providing readers with a detailed review of how the U.S. collaborated with, sponsored, even trained terrorists in all parts of the globe, reminding the left that the U.S. ruling class has been complicitous, directly or surreptitiously, in the massacre of millions of oppressed peoples, above all in the Third World.

Alexander Cockburn, an icon to many leftists, did not follow this political format. He did react with shock and outrage in an article co-authored by Jeffrey St. Clair that appeared the following day in the online publication *Counterpunch*, with a rewritten version appearing a short time later in Cockburn's bi-weekly column in *The Nation*. The problem here is that his fury is not vent on the mass assassins — about whom there is not a critical word in his column — but is directed at President George Bush! Why is Cockburn furious? It turns out that our “mini-President,” as Cockburn calls him, on learning of the catastrophe, denounced the

hijackers as “faceless cowards.” Cockburn would have none of this! “Faceless,” perhaps, but “cowards”? Most certainly not. Alex counters Dubya with a rhetorical question: “Were the Japanese aviators who surprised on Pearl Harbor December 7, 1941 cowards? I don’t think so, and they at least had the hope of returning to their aircraft carriers.” They were most certainly not cowards, but men of “courage,” a term invoked by Cockburn (and St. Clair) to describe the hijackers.

What an appalling response to the horror of 9/11! Innocent people who arrived at work just an hour earlier were jumping out of windows, others engulfed by flames; the whole gruesome spectacle could have been viewed from the building in downtown Manhattan housing the *Nation* offices and yet here is our passionate Alex slicing up a mini-President for having the gall to call the hijackers cowards. Of what possible relevance is the question of whether or not the hijackers were men of courage? Given the circumstances, why should Cockburn or anyone else care? Courage in and of itself is not a moral virtue. Surely, there were Nazi fanatics who would have sacrificed their lives on behalf of the *Führer* and the Third Reich. Courageous? Possibly. Therefore, what?

Not only does Cockburn feel strongly about acknowledging their courage but he wants it to be known that: “From the point of view of the assailants, the attacks were miracles of logistical calculation, timing, audacity in execution, devastation, inflicted on the targets.” The lesser problem I have with this is that the first half of the assessment is not true: the attacks, far from being logistical miracles, were most unprofessional and slipshod. The only reason for its success is that U.S. intelligence agencies were even more inept than the hijackers. (If they were in fact logistical miracles, it could not be only from the point-of-view of the hijackers, but of anyone who looks at it objectively.)

But again, my major problem is with Cockburn’s moral and political indecency, his cold-blooded objectivity, saying, in effect: “let’s give credit where credit is due for a job well done.”

Midway in his column, I am struck by his complaint that:

Tuesday’s eyewitness reports of the collapse of the two Trade Center buildings were not inspired, at least for those who have heard the famous eyewitness radio reportage of the crash of the Hindenburg zeppelin in Lakehurst, New Jersey, in 1937. Radio and T.V. reporters these days seem incapable of narrating an ongoing event with any sense of vivid language or dramatic emotive power.

What is one to make of this? Against the background of a terrorist attack, when six or seven thousand were believed murdered (a number that Cockburn accepted), with the fires still burning, and the city and nation in mourning, Cockburn does not lose his cool, and finds it quite appropriate to score points against today’s professional commentators who, in his considered opinion, are not up to the standard set by the media in reporting the crash of the Hindenburg in 1937. It is like zeroing in on a journalist’s lack of skill in revealing the Holocaust for the first time without taking notice of the horror exposed.*

In his penultimate paragraph — still not even an obscure reference to the mass slaughter of innocents and still no condemnation of the assassins — we are reminded of America’s immoral sanctions against Iraq and the cruise missile destruction of Sudanese factories.

Perhaps Cockburn was reserving his feelings of compassion for the slain for a final emotive paragraph, a powerful grand finalé that vividly sums up the pathos of

*Even on this relatively trivial point Cockburn is mistaken. The Hindenburg voyage in 1937 was an important and well-publicized international event that naturally drew large numbers of media personalities to the site of the zeppelin’s scheduled arrival. Instead of a triumphal landing, the zeppelin crashed in flames unnerving press and radio reporters who had a front-row center view of the disaster. As Cockburn and St. Clair note in *Counterpunch*, one overwrought reporter cried out, “Oh, humanity! Oh, humanity!” This was indeed a touching human response, but hardly great reportage.

On the other hand, al Qaeda did not send out press releases informing the press and the world of its plans for 9/11. There were not and could not have eyewitness accounts of the catastrophe by an absent media. However, Cockburn notwithstanding, there were many powerful press accounts.

September 11. It is not to be. Instead, there is a continuing exposé of George Bush and the Defense Department, and a self-satisfied concluding sentence: "That about sums it up, three planes are successfully steered into three of America's most conspicuous buildings and the U.S. response is to put more money into missile defense as a way of bolstering the economy."

WHERE ALEXANDER COCKBURN MANAGES to write an initial response to 9/11 without discussing the specific events or their human consequences, the equally prolific Edward Herman cannot be faulted for overlooking the carnage; he simply dilutes the horror. His basic argument is that, while 9/11 was tragic, it pales in comparison to the crimes of U.S. imperialism. In an early response, an exegesis with the subtitle "Retail vs. Wholesale Terror," he writes: "Really large-scale killing and torture to terrorize — 'wholesale' terrorism — has been implemented by states, not by non-state terrorists." State terrorism is "serious terrorism," as exemplified by the sanctions against Iraq which are responsible for "killing more children per month than the total casualty figure for the September 11th terrorist attacks"

My argument is less with the accuracy of the distinction he makes between state-organized terrorism, and "retail" terrorism of non-governmental, illegal and secretive organizations, than its tone and timing. From a human and political point of view, what possible purpose can it serve to place special emphasis on the obvious, that the attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki were infinitely more destructive than 9/11, at a time when the acrid smoke was still belching from the ruins of the WTC?

It would have been helpful if Herman provided at least an approximation of the number of casualties that divide "wholesale" terrorism from its minor league "retail" species. Remember that, initially, Herman, along with others, accepted the figure of 7,000 deaths. Obviously, then, to qualify as wholesale terrorism 7,000 is not yet the benchmark. Had the Twin Towers fallen horizontally, thousands more would have been killed. It is clear from Herman's argument that even this would not have quali-

fied as wholesale terrorism.

Herman insists the "real danger to world peace and security arising out of the events of September 11th lies in responsive wholesale terrorism that will result — and already is resulting [where?] — from the insurgent aggressiveness of the United States"

Does this mean that destroying the World Trade Center was not a threat to world peace and security, and intended as such? Don't the powerful forces of fundamentalism, operating in many countries, and as an international network with a mass base, also endanger global peace? Was the recent nuclear brinkmanship in Kashmir solely the result of the "insurgent aggressiveness of the United States," or does one have to examine the role of conflicting fundamentalisms? The fact is that the United States, for reasons that have nothing to do with pacific intent, sought to reduce tensions between India and Pakistan while the fundamentalists sought to inflame them.

If Herman is absorbed with basic distinctions between serious, wholesale mayhem, and it's more modest, retail version, should he not also be concerned about the great disparity within the wholesale category? Why not make a similar distinction between the terrorism under Chile's Pinochet and the Argentine generals, where perhaps ten thousand lives were destroyed, and the terrorism of the Khmer Rouge, which destroyed a minimum of one million Cambodians (estimates generally run higher)?* Why not compare, and compartmentalize, the different levels of terrorism under U.S. auspices, and that of Stalinist Russia? The U.S. is to be condemned for its direct and indirect involvement in global terrorism and the death toll that adds up to millions, but still does not nearly measure up to the tens of millions killed off by a Stalinist terrorist state, by way of forced famine, the gulag, and executions.

Moreover, state organized terrorism is defined not only by murder rates, but also

The fact is that Herman did spend considerable energy assessing Khmer Rouge terrorism. His purpose was to downsize the extent of the horror, a courtesy not extended to any terrorist societies in the American camp.

by the internal methods of class domination. In the United States, we have a “bourgeois” democracy and it would require a special kind of wackiness to describe the social domination of the U.S. ruling class, domestically, as terrorism, just as it would require a certain type of apologetics to deny that in Stalinist Russia, the Communist party-state maintained its power by terrorizing the entire Soviet population of over 200 million.

One of the fundamental political lessons of September 11th that Herman conveniently overlooks is the extent to which the distinction between retail and wholesale forms of terrorism is narrowing the ability of non-state terrorists to shrink the gap between the scale of violence that they can inflict, and the scale of violence that the world’s most powerful states can generate.

JAMES PETRAS IS ANOTHER EXPONENT of the notion that American capitalism is the root of all evil. His excesses are truly formidable but are shared by a minority of the anti-war left. In his article “A Nation of Informers: The Friendly Face of Fascism,” that appeared in the on-line publication *Rebelión* (11/27/01), he tells his readers right off the bat:

In the U.S. signs of a police state are evident everywhere. The country has become a nation of informers. Tens of thousands of U.S. citizens of Middle Eastern descent have been arrested without charges, and the exercise of their right to criticize U.S. policy in the Middle East has been branded as support of terrorism.

Signs of a police state everywhere? A nation of informers? Tens of thousands arrested without charges? (Isn’t 1,500 bad enough?)

Petras is relentless in his recklessness and his outrage peaks with his revelation of “the current period of friendly fascism” in the United States. To speak of “friendly fascism” makes as much sense as speaking of “painless torture.” In developing the theme of friendly fascism, Petras suggests that U.S. “civil society has turned into a network of secret police and informers.” Elsewhere: “People refrain from the mildest criticisms of the war or even the government for fear that they will be labeled as terror-

ist sympathizers, be reported to the government and lose their jobs.” Does Petras truly believe all this?

Stalinist-type ranting permeates his articles, as when he pummels “New York intellectuals” as

cultural totalitarians who listen to Bach and praise the B-52s, who edited glossy cultural journals and smirked at Kabul in rubble, who praise the Israeli Symphony Orchestra and ignored the 6000 Palestinian children maimed in this most recent year of repression. Their vision is and will always be a cultural totalitarianism.

Where the Taliban regime is concerned, we have Petras’s word that it

... has never been proven to have been involved in a terrorist incident in the U.S. and has been willing to consider a judicial resolution of the suspect in its territory. The Bush administration’s use of state terror is immoral. The Taliban’s proposal of diplomatic negotiations over judicial evidence was a civilized and humane approach to inter-state conflicts.

Again from *Rebelión*, his article, “September 11th, Beyond the Human Tragedy: The Other World Trade Center/Pentagon,” (11/4/01) is the closest I have seen to not merely rationalizing, but justifying, the hijackers and their al Qaeda trainers.

- In the case of the attack in Washington, the political target, the Pentagon, is directly involved in the planning and implementation of U.S. military strategy to overthrow nationalist and socialist regimes, to strengthen Washington’s global hegemony and to protect U.S. financial and investment networks. . . .
- Housing the CIA and the Secret Service in a nominally civilian building (WTC) provided a “protective cover” for its activities in New York City, but placed the WTC occupants directly in the line of fire of the numerous adversaries of the CIA. . . .
- Some of the victims in the WTC are known swindlers. Shortly after September 11, the directors of First Equity Enterprises, which had offices in the WTC, used the terrorist attacks to abscond with \$100 million in fraudulent funds. . . .
- Moreover, the timing of the attack coincided with the deepening recession and served to accelerate the economic crisis. In

October, over 450,000 workers lost their jobs, the highest monthly figure in recent history. Clearly the terrorists' decision was not an act of vengeance based on religious criteria, but based on strategic economic understanding of the spatial and economic location of their target and the timing in the economic cycle. Both timing and location were selected to maximize the strategic effects on the U.S. economy and not to inflict the greatest amount of human casualties. . . .

• What I am suggesting is that September 11 was a complex act in which human tragedy and strategic political issues were intertwined. The exploitation, distortions and cover-up by the government and the mass media do not lessen the human tragedy. But it also suggests that, given the strategic nature of the target, that the terrorists acted with rational forethought: if the intention was to challenge the empire, they chose a significant target although the 'collateral damage' to civilians was excruciating.

What can one say? It is truly to weep.

WHERE PETRAS BELIEVES THAT 9/11 provided the impetus for turning the United States almost overnight from a bourgeois democracy into a state of friendly fascism, Michael Parenti believes that "very little has changed." Of the approximately 280 million people who inhabit the United States, I suspect that Parenti is only one of a handful who claims that post-9/11 "feels very much like September 10th to me." As he sees it:

What the terrorist attacks of September 11th gave the opinion makers is an issue of compelling centrality, equal to any of the ones they have suppressed, but one that could be selectively treated with *conservative effect*, an issue that rallies everyone around the flag and points a finger at a fanatical Islamic sect rather than at corporate America or the U.S. National Security State.

It is as if Parenti does not realize or cannot admit that people have 10 fingers, including a second index finger with which to point at the responsibility of Islamic fundamentalism as an autonomous and retrograde force without for a moment relaxing the other finger that points at the criminal policies of U.S. imperialism which have been grist to the terrorist propaganda mill.

"To be sure," Parenti writes, "we must not dismiss or make light of individual acts of terror." But that is precisely what he does. By suggesting that the huge massacre belongs to the category of "individual [!] acts of terror" he is indeed making light of 9/11.

TARIQ ALI, WHO LIVES IN BRITAIN but is widely published in the United States, has also analyzed 9/11 from a yankophobe perspective. He was offended, for example, by Christopher Hitchens' description of the Muslim fundamentalists as being "fascist with an Islamic face." Ali objects that this phraseology can only "help whip up a war frenzy but it solves nothing apart from being a wrongheaded analogy." But even if the analogy is misused by Hitchens and others to support an unjust war in Afghanistan that does not mean it is wrong.

Ali also insists that prewar fascism was based on "both mass and corporate support." Presumably this is in contrast to modern-day theocratic fundamentalism. On the issue of mass support, Ali is factually wrong, since the fundamentalists do have a large and expanding popular base. There is, indeed, a sociological distinction that would have to be made in a historical and theoretical essay on the nature of fascism, but in the context of our discussion of 9/11, this is more of academic interest and should not interfere with making political comparisons. At the very least, in terms of rule by terror, suppression of all democratic, human and civil rights, there is at least a parallel between the fundamentalist and fascist regimes, a parallel that is more exact with the Nazi variety of fascist dictatorship.

As Tariq Ali certainly knows, Leon Trotsky also drew a parallel between fascism and what he called the "totalitarian abomination" of Stalinism even though he believed (wrongly, in my opinion) that the Soviet Union was a "workers' state," albeit a degenerated one. Not only did he find parallels in the rule by terror of two contradictory social systems, but, if memory serves me correctly, he judged Stalinism to have been even more brutal than its fascist counterparts. Obviously, in the world of Stalinism or its apologists this could only confirm that Trotsky and his ilk were feeding the flames of "anti-Sovietism." In au-

thentic socialist circles no one was distressed by Trotsky's parallel and neither, today, should any socialist or democrat reflexively recoil from the parallels made between the totalitarian abominations of Islamic fundamentalism and fascism, or that even to link them is to "whip up a war frenzy."

Needless to say, we never hear from the same sources a similar concern that one should show restraint in exposing the crimes of U.S. foreign policy because that might help whip up a "war frenzy" against the U.S. Ali notwithstanding, it is the responsibility of socialists to speak the truth and not allow themselves to be blackmailed by demagogic cries that to do so is helping the enemy.

Ali writes that those who carried out the attacks on September 11th remind him of another tradition: "They are propagandists of the deed." This formulation is extremely misleading. The phrase "propaganda of the deed" is most often associated with the advocacy of individual terror by the Bakuninite wing of the anarchist movement, as well as the individual violence advocated by the peasant-based Russian Populists in 19th and early 20th century Russia. Ali's formulation adds a gloss to the Islamic fundamentalist movement by linking it with movements that were socially progressive and had much in common with the socialist movement. And it is wrong in fact because the anarchist and revolutionary propagandists of the deed believed in the efficacy of *individual* terror, not indiscriminate mass murder. They assassinated kings and princes, politicians and demagogues, aristocratic nobles and corporate barons. They were morally and politically incapable of setting aflame a large public gathering or torching a peasant village or any other equivalent of turning skyscrapers into crematoria.

THE SIMPLISTIC NOTION that all the world's evils, above all in the Islamic world, have their malignant source in the piranha-like global appetite of American imperialism is to view Islam condescendingly. In effect, it denies that the nations and peoples of Islam have a unique culture and a long history of internal political and social struggles.

The abuse of women under Islamic regimes, for example, has little if anything to do with the crimes of U.S. imperialism.* American sanctions against Iraq and Israeli terrorist attacks on the Palestinian people were not responsible for the slaughter of thousands of religious and political dissidents in Syria in 1982. The medievalist Muslim Brotherhood was founded in Egypt in 1928, years before American imperialism was a significant factor in the region. And Saudi Arabia was a fiercely repressive feudalistic theocracy, long before Franklin Delano Roosevelt sought an economic and political beachhead there. More generally, the economic and political underdevelopment that is almost universal in Islam reflects the failures of democratic and secular movements and revolutions earlier in the last century.

It is refreshing to sample the writings of Israeli and Arab militant socialists who were published in an extraordinary volume, *Forbidden Agendas: Intolerance and Defiance in the Middle East* (Al Saqi Books, London, 1984).

In his essay, "Why the Reversion to Islamic Archaism?," Lafif Lakhdar notes that:

For lack of a bourgeois revolution, the Arab state, although bourgeois in its social and anti-proletarian role, has not been able to attain its true development into a self-sufficient modern state which does not need to lean on the crutches of Islam. Its denominational character, since Islam is proclaimed the state religion, has so far prevented it from creating a true national cohesion. This could only be carried out in a non-denominational state that would result from a fusion and recasting of all the present components of its national bourgeoisie. Since they have not succeeded in this

*It is the Koran, not American imperialism, that ordains: "Men have authority over women because Allah has made the one superior to the other, and because they spend their wealth to maintain them. Good women are obedient. They guard their unseen parts because Allah has guarded them. As for those for whom you fear disobedience, admonish them and send them to beds apart and beat them . . ." Moreover: "If any of your women commit fornication, call in four witnesses from among yourselves against them; if they testify to their guilt confine them to their houses till death overtakes them or till Allah finds another way for them."

respect, each Arab state is a mosaic of particularisms of all sorts, whose creeds, ethnic loyalties, dialects, and mental outlooks are different and contradictory. Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon are dramatic examples of this. This explains why at times of crisis regional, tribal, ethnic, or confessional bonds often blunt the edge of social interests and the horizontal division of Arab-Islamic society, which is unconsciously experienced as a juxtaposition of clannish partisanships (*asabiyat*) rather than as a society of open class struggle . . . The present leaders of the Arab bourgeoisie are in this respect faithful to their predecessors. Qadhafi recently stated that 'Arab nationalism is part of Islam It is not normal that there be in the Arab homeland an Arab who is not a Muslim. The Christian Arab has no right to belong to the Arab nation, whose religion is not his own.' Just as the fully-fledged subject in medieval Europe was a Christian, the true 'citizen' in the Arab world is a Muslim. (279-280)

Further on, Lakhdar writes of:

The double failure of the first rising of the modern Egyptian bourgeoisie in 1919, which achieved neither independence nor a constitutional government; Atatürk's abolition of the Islamic caliphate in 1923; the rise of fascism in Italy, which impressed the majority of the average traditionalist Muslim intelligentsia; the rise of Stalinist intellectuals, who were also fascinated by the impotent cult of power; finally the grimness of the inter-war period, dominated by the general feeling of defeat of Western civilization, with its basis in that favoured the irruption of the irrational into the contemporary history.

These excerpts are models of an analysis required today as an antidote to the facile and untenable assumption that American imperialism has not only been a major factor but *the* sole source of the world's ills.

This reticence to fully recognize and critically review the extent to which the defeat of democracy and secularism were developments *within* the Arab world is a continuation of the Third Worldism which afflicted and hobbled so much of the left in the sixties and seventies when any criticism of underdeveloped nations, no matter how savagely repressive, was frowned upon as ethnocentric moralizing that gave aid and

comfort to Western imperialism.

IN THE POST-WAR DECADES, the anti-Stalinist left was attacked from within by a political virus, Stalinophobia, that reached epidemic proportions in the sixties. In the thirties, awareness of Stalinism's crimes did not lead us to understate or weaken our resistance to the crimes of the West. We were reasonably confident that militant democratic movements would emerge in opposition to both Stalinism and capitalism. But as it became increasingly apparent that large organized manifestations of what we called a Third Camp was not on the immediate horizon, substantial numbers of anti-Stalinist socialists grew demoralized, their commitment to socialism weakened and they looked with increasing favor on existing bourgeois institutions. As prospects for socialism grew ever dimmer, democratic capitalism evolved from a lesser evil to a positive good. Any number decided to "choose the West," and a few became advisers to right wing politicians.

The problem was not that anti-Stalinist ex-revolutionaries grew too intense in their opposition to Stalinism — no one with a democratic consciousness could be excessive in her or his hatred for the gulag or Nazi death camps — but that *all* of politics was viewed through the prism of anti-Stalinism.

But Stalinophobia always had its counterpart: Americaphobia, whereby opposition to American imperialism became the prism through which all politics were viewed, leading many in the left to accept as a guiding principle for making political and moral choices the pernicious doctrine that the enemy of my enemy is my friend (even if the phrase itself was not widely used). This translated into apologies and sometimes overt support for the imperialist Soviet Union and to look with favor on almost any movement or country in the Third World, no matter how brutal and reactionary, as long as it resisted Western capitalism. With the collapse of the Communist world, historical apologies for Communism and Third World dictators abated but have not disappeared. There is at least a residue of this notion that my enemy's enemy is my friend. This contributes to the failure of many on the left to recognize that the struggle

against all forms of imperialism does not oblige us to minimize our opposition to anti-democratic tendencies and forces in the Third World. The extent to which this Third Worldism, so alien to democracy and to socialism, still exists can be measured by the political irresponsibility shown by some of the left's most prolific authors, whose instinctive reaction to 9/11 was to strike the assassins with no more than a glancing blow (in Cockburn's case, no blow at all, and with Petras, an apologia) and directing virtually all their firepower on American imperialism.



SECTARIANISM IS GENERALLY DIAGNOSED by purveyors of liberal *realpolitik* (tr. accommodation) as a political disorder endemic to the left. But in my admittedly biased view, dogmatic indifference to political realities has been far more characteristic of liberalism than of the maligned left. This is certainly the case with many liberals who fantasized about the initial Afghan phase of the War on Terror. As if quartered in an Ivory Tower, far removed from the real world, they constructed apologies for the war and dashed off fierce polemics reproving and ridiculing those on the left who opposed it.

The following scenario was scripted: on September 11, the forces of medieval barbarism, organized by terrorist networks, with their strongest base in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan, struck a hideous and devastating blow against the U.S., and all humanity. Since every nation has a right to defend itself, the U.S. was justified in initiating its war in Afghanistan on October 7, with a large-scale aerial assault. In just a matter of months, the armies of both al Qaeda and its cruel governing host, the Taliban, were defeated. End of war. Now, the indispensable rebuilding of the Afghan's battered infrastructure and creating a civil society, all requiring the protection, technical and financial assistance from the U.S., must begin. End of script.

However, this war was an invention of a liberal imagination and had little to do with the war that President Bush had in mind, and initiated. And, for better or worse, Bush is the Commander-in-Chief. In the real war, the President, from the very beginning,

leveled with the American people: an attack on Afghanistan would be just the first phase of a war against global terror, a war without a predictable end. In his speech to Congress and the country-at-large on September 20, nearly three weeks before he personally declared war on the Taliban regime, he put the entire world on notice: "From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the U.S. as a hostile regime." And once terrorist forces in Afghanistan are routed, the war will continue, "... until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped, and defeated." In effect then, utopian liberals notwithstanding, what Bush promised us was not a large-scale police action followed by nation-building in Afghanistan, but a global war in permanence.

PERHAPS THE PRESIDENT'S VOICE could not reach the upper levels of the Ivory Tower where Marc Cooper, a respected liberal journalist and contributing editor of *The Nation*, insisted on *his* version of a war that *he* enthusiastically endorsed. Thus, he rebukes those in the anti-war left who allegedly failed to

... recognize that these forces [the "atavistic, religious fascists"] cannot be neutralized by nonviolent moral suasion or international law alone. As some on the left have argued, the WTC attacks demand a "just response." That includes *limited*, targeted and effective military action aimed at *lessening* the threat of future terrorist attacks and restoring a sense of domestic security. For those who are squeamish about taking out Osama bin Laden's network and its Taliban defenders, let them reflect on just how much further American politics will slide to the right if there are half a dozen more major terrorist attacks here at home. (emphasis added)

Unfortunately for humanity, Cooper's war was never of a "limited" nature and as should have been clear at the time, and is well established by all that has happened since his article appeared in the October 14 issue of *In These Times*. Neither has there been a "lessening threat of future terrorist attacks," nor is there evidence of "restoring a sense of domestic security." On the contrary, al Qaeda, even if weakened by the war,

has by no means been destroyed, but still has pockets of resistance in Afghanistan, and remains a potent force in Pakistan and elsewhere, and Osama bin Laden has achieved the status of a folk hero in much of the Islamic world, and beyond.

Even though the Taliban has been “taken out” and Osama bin Laden’s terrorist legions defeated in Afghanistan, U.S. military successes increased the extent and intensity of anti-American sentiment, the global threat of terrorism has multiplied several-fold, and the human condition on planet Earth made meaner and more miserable. And a dramatic shift to the right in America does not have to wait for “a half dozen more major terrorist attacks at home”; that shift began the day after 9/11, was accelerated by the war in Afghanistan and, as this is written almost a year later, the shift to the right has reached frightening dimensions.

On behalf of his war in Afghanistan, Cooper zeroed in on an anti-war demonstration: it was “a self-caricature of the American left that has struggled unsuccessfully since the attacks to find its proper national voice and posture.” The protest rally is ridiculed because, in his opinion, nothing concrete was said about what America should do after 9/11, “other than to flagellate itself for a sordid list of foreign policy sins and transgressions. It was a great missed opportunity.” I am not sure that I can decipher the precise meaning of this, and I doubt that Cooper can. Why should his self-flagellating left inflict painful welts on itself? It would be modestly interesting to learn from Cooper the reasons for this exotic and neurotic behavior by a masochistic left.

Cooper sarcastically downplays the “sordid list of foreign policy sins and transgressions” of an American establishment that the left despises. Does Cooper believe that these “sins and transgressions,” past and ongoing, are either exaggerated or irrelevant to an analysis of current foreign policy, and provides no clue on the nature of the War on Terror (Bush’s War remember, not Cooper’s fictional Military Mission of Mercy)? Neither am I sure what he finds was a “great missed opportunity,” although he does suggest what the anti-war demonstrators might have done if they were re-

ally serious about building “an effective and mature political left”:

Watching that march and rally, it occurred to me how powerful an image could have been created if each demonstrator carried an American flag and, perhaps, a black cardboard silhouette representing those who had perished in the attacks.

Now there’s an off-the-wall image! Each demonstrator would have had his or her hands full given that you need one hand to hold Cooper’s cherished flag and the second to carry the symbolic black cardboard silhouette. Since evolution stopped short of providing *Homo sapiens* with a third hand, Cooper would deprive demonstrators the opportunity to hold aloft a placard revealing its distinctive message. Perhaps Cooper would have been touched by a live performance of his proposed patriotic spectacular. I suspect that most onlookers would have found the sea of flags and black silhouettes bizarre, and taken, by some, as a march of right-wing loonies.

TODD GITLIN IS ONE of the better-known and more capable left-leaning intellectuals who enthusiastically embraced the initial Afghan phase of Bush’s fraudulent War on Terrorism, enthusiastically and without qualms. The emotional force of 9/11 generated an exuberant and cloyingly sentimental tribute to all that is presumably noble in America, past and present. In the worst of the maudlin super-patriotism of the basically reactionary Popular Front philistinism that afflicted so many “progressives” in the thirties and forties, Gitlin has wrapped himself in the American flag, finding it an emblem of so much that is positive and beautiful in American life, transforming a symbol of class domination and imperialism into that of freedom and true patriotism. The American Legion has a far better historical appreciation than Professor Gitlin of what the fluttering stars and stripes stand for.

For the sake of his newfound patriotism Gitlin understates the historical lessons of U.S. imperial and military involvement in foreign affairs during most of the 20th Century; no meaningful lessons to be drawn from America’s direct or covert intervention

in Guatemala, Vietnam, Iran, Indonesia, Cuba, Nicaragua, Angola, in most of Africa and throughout the Middle East. For Gitlin, this history is dismissed as an “old story.” He faults today’s anti-war activists because as he sees it:

Faced with the uniquely murderous challenge of Al Qaeda, they see the old story of Vietnam, of Nicaragua, of Guatemalan peasants seeking higher pay in the coffee fields. The United States represents a frozen imperialism that values only unbridled power in the service of untrammelled capital. It is congenitally, genocidally, irremediably racist. Why complicate matters by facing up to America’s self contradictions, its on-again, off-again interest in extending rights. It’s clumsy egalitarianism coupled with ignorant arrogance. (*Mother Jones*, Jan-Feb 2002)

Such pompous claptrap: “America’s self contradictions,” “on again, off again interest in extending rights,” “clumsy egalitarianism coupled with ignorant arrogance.” There are, indeed, many contradictions (not “self contradictions”) in American history: contradictions between workers and capitalists; between social activists and sweatshop owners using child labor; between suffragists and those who would have denied women the right to vote; between those who struggled for black liberation and those who fought tooth and nail against it; between those who demonstrated against the dirty war in Vietnam and those who organized it; between civil libertarians and the FDR administration that set up concentration camps for 120,000 Japanese Americans; between progressive social movements from below that fought for elementary bourgeois democratic rights and the ruling class that resisted it . . . the list of such economic, social and political contradictions could go on for pages, but only one more need be mentioned here and that is the contradiction between anti-imperialists and those who seek to minimize the crimes of the American imperium.

The lessons of history then, undoubtedly an “old story” to Gitlin, is that extending rights and what there is of egalitarianism were not the benefits of some abstract America but were invariably achieved in long, bitter and often violent struggles from

below against the social and political and economic forces which dominate American society.

Note also the indiscriminate condemnation of the left that, in Gitlin’s judgment, considers the United States to be, “congenitally, genocidally, irremediably racist.” I am sure that there are some on the left who really believe this to be the case but why condemn the entire anti-war left for the sectarian madness of a few?

Most offensive is his callous dismissal as an “old story” of the tragic plight of “Guatemalan peasants seeking higher pay in the coffee fields.” Gitlin knows better than most that the “old story” is not merely of a struggle for higher pay in the coffee fields (though it is certainly that, too) but of the cold-blooded slaughter of tens of thousands of Guatemalan peasants and workers, students and intellectuals, by uniformed cutthroats armed, financed, and manipulated by the U.S. This may be discounted as an “old story” by new liberal accommodationists but for the left it is a horror tale not to be forgotten and with profound lessons that provide considerable insight into the capacity of America, for all it’s “self contradictions,” to conduct a socially progressive and just war. And what Gitlin describes as an “old story” is actually an ongoing saga of imperialist interventionism as in Colombia, Venezuela and elsewhere.

One further point: if the sordid history of America’s role in Guatemala and in dozens of other countries on all continents is now an “old story” with little to teach us, does Gitlin and his many similars believe that studying and sustaining the memory of the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps and the Stalinist gulags are academic exercises, details of an “old story.”

Gitlin scolds some recalcitrant liberals because, “If American policy is — in their minds — forever motivated by nothing but imperial overreach, forever guilty of napalm and death squads, then all American wars must be opposed with an absolute ‘No.’” How many wars and military interventions and violent coups masterminded by the CIA did Gitlin find to support with an absolute or tentative “Yes”? Even the support that Gitlin gave to the war in Bosnia was hardly enthusiastic since he recognizes that it had

"dreadful consequences." It would be nice to know which of them enthused Gitlin.

When it comes to civil liberties, Gitlin is a hardnosed realist:

To claim moral authority and political trustworthiness now, we liberals must break up our frozen, encrusted dogmas. When civil liberties concerns confront security concerns, both have to be taken seriously.

"To be taken seriously," implies that the country should make some adjustment to the Bush administration's war against civil liberties presumably for the sake of protecting America against terrorist attacks. To write as Gitlin does of a principled commitment to civil liberties as one of liberalism's "frozen and crusted dogmas" suggests that Gitlin was prepared to sacrifice much that has been won over the decades.

EARLIER IN THE YEAR, Cooper's and Gitlin's ardor for the first phase of the war, in Afghanistan, clearly cooled. Each grew increasingly critical of the attack on civil liberties and from their current writings it is not crystal clear whether they would support a war to depose the Hussein regime. But they have a moral and political responsibility to let their readers know whether their current critical stance is indicative of a felt need in the light of all that is happening to reconsider their support of the war. It is unclear why they should be so upset by anti-democratic positions and actions today when this assault on civil liberties was set in place immediately after 9/11, e.g., the U.S.A. Patriot Act, the call for military tribunals, the illegal rounding up of 1,200-1,500 foreigners and immigrants, etc.

In an op-ed in the *New York Times* (September 5, 2002), all the ambiguities in Gitlin's position today are revealed. He is still very big with the American flag as he embraces a "liberal patriotism that is unapologetic and uncowed." But he is terribly disappointed by what he finds to be an aggressive and jingoist turn by President Bush who also disappoints Gitlin by his apparent readiness to go it alone. But, as I have shown above, there was no turn on Bush's part, but amazing consistency, having made it clear from the beginning that countries not with him are against him and that he is

willing to go it alone.

Gitlin is also disturbed by the "administration's push toward a war in Iraq," but this push, too, was evident from the time the war in Afghan began. Of course, there are many politicians in both parties who also disapprove of a preemptive strike against Iraq. However, we all know that if and when the war is actually underway all these politicians, Republicans and Democrats alike, will do their patriotic duty, giving unqualified support to an imperialist adventure. What will be Gitlin's position, and that of his liberal co-thinkers in the event of a preemptive strike? Will he support the war or protest it? He studiously avoids the question but I would give odds that his patriotism would get the better of his liberalism.

IN ONE OF HIS *NATION* COLUMNS (December 17, 2001), Christopher Hitchens, with his typical polemical bite and sense of irony, brings his readers the extraordinarily good news that:

The United States of America has just succeeded in bombing a country back out of the Stone Age. This deserves to be recognized as an achievement, even by those who want to hasten past the moment and resume their customary tasks (worrying about the spotty human rights record of the Northern Alliance is the latest thing).

Just one of the problems here is that we are told what Afghanistan was bombed out of, but not what it was bombed into. One would never gather, in spite of his glad tidings, that in post-Stone Age Afghanistan, whenever the Neanderthals were driven from power, the pre-Taliban warlords immediately moved in and just as quickly returned to their old habits: looting, stealing, and, as yet on a small scale, killing. Perhaps life was even more difficult under the terrorist rule of the Taliban, but that is little consolation to starving Afghans who have food stolen from them by marauding militias of the re-entrenched warlords.

Hitchens mocks those on the left who insist on "... worrying about the spotty human rights record of the Northern Alliance" He dismisses this concern as if it were just another example of left chic, what he

sneeringly refers to as “the latest thing.” In the reams of articles I have read in the liberal and left (and conventional) press, I cannot recall anything more disgusting than referring to the incredibly brutal history of the Northern Alliance as a “spotty human rights record.” Hitchens’ cynicism is monumental since he knows as well as I and the vast majority of Afghans that the spots marring the history of the Northern Alliance in power (and even out of power) were deep and wide pools of blood. The Northern Alliance’s “spotty record” is a history of torture, savaging women, assassination, and massacres. It leveled much of Kabul, killing roughly 30,000 people. The populace had such a “thing” about the Northern Alliance that many welcomed what soon proved to be the even more pathologically cruel Taliban.

While Hitchens was having a hell of a good time ridiculing the left for making an issue of the Northern Alliance’s “spotty human rights record” the Northern Alliance was having an even better time massacring large, but as yet an undetermined number of Taliban soldiers taken captive. After one battle alone more than 7,500 prisoners were taken (in November 2001) of whom only half could later be accounted for. The number of prisoners killed by way of suffocation and thirst when packed into airless vans and by torture and execution varies from 1,000-4,000 and buried in mass graves. The massacre was reportedly carried out in the presence of at least 30-40 U.S. soldiers.

But why quibble with Hitchens, who is an old socialist, about a few more spots that can always be covered up by an apologist’s clever use of irony?

In the same spirit as his touched-up snapshot of the Northern Alliance is his commendation to the American liberators for destroying the Taliban “accomplished with no serious loss of human life and with an almost pedantic policy of avoiding ‘collateral damage.’”

As I understand the term, a “pedant” is a stickler for the rules and to be pedantic is to be rigorously rule abiding. This means that to be *almost* pedantic is to be *almost* overly concerned with avoiding collateral damage. The truth of the matter, as I discuss below in my comments on Michael

Walzer, is that far from being almost too careful the military was only too indifferent to the welfare of civilians living near selected targets, and not pedantic enough to check out whether the sites marked for obliteration were actually military targets or weddings or friendly convoys, civilian homes or enemy compounds. The number of those killed and wounded by our almost pedants is in dispute. But, as of this writing, there is solid evidence that at least a thousand civilians have been killed, and many more injured, leaving tens of thousands bereaved and entire villages “disappeared” by our almost pedantically cautious bombardiers.

Elsewhere, Hitchens ridicules the left for its

... toxic version of an old story [sic] whereby former clients like Noriega and Saddam Hussein and Slobodan Milosevic and the Taliban cease to be our monsters and become monstrous in their own right. At such a point, a moral and political crisis occurs. Do “our” past crimes and sins make it impossible to expiate the offense by determined action? Those of us who were not consulted about, and are not bound by, the previous covert compromises have a special responsibility to say a decisive “no” to this.

Hitchens’ use of the pronoun “our” (the quotation marks are his) is misleading. Former U.S. clients such as Noriega, Hussein, and the Taliban never received my endorsement and never met with Hitchens’ approval. So neither of us shares any guilt for past crimes and sins of supporting such tyrants and terrorists and, therefore, have committed no offense to “expiate.” The sins Hitchens refers to have all been committed by the U.S. ruling class and its two political parties that supported such dictators, shoring up their brutal regimes with financial, political and military assistance. What Hitchens is (or should be) asking, then, is not whether an editorial “we” can atone for “our” past crimes but whether the Bush administration and the class it represents and the Democratic Party “opposition,” no less culpable than the Republican right, have the capacity “to expiate the offense” of having supported particular dictators in the past. The notion is absurd on the face of it. That this arch-reactionary Administration

with a Neolithic President as its commander-in-chief who courts the support of the world's most oppressive and corrupt regimes, has even a theoretical capacity to atone for past sins of the ruling class (and "by determined action," no less) is hardly to be taken seriously.

I don't want to pull the bow too far. Above all, women have received a degree of freedom unthinkable under the Taliban. They are allowed schooling and no longer legally bound by state law to wear the veil. But this improvement must not be exaggerated. Life remains particularly harsh for women. In many provinces the old dress code is enforced, women are subjected to violence, and in some areas mistreatment of Afghan and foreign women working in various assistance programs has been so widespread and brutal that a number of humanitarian agencies have closed their operations, and more are expected to do so.

Politically, life is less oppressive than under the Taliban. The *loya jirga* is a phenomenon that could not have occurred during Taliban rule. But it is essential to note that the government is extremely fragile, even in Kabul, and with little power beyond the capitol. The regime is actually dominated by powerful warlords, and President Hamid Karzai so isolated and fearful for his life that he has appealed to and received a substantial contingent of American Special Forces to replace unreliable Afghan bodyguards. (These Special Forces bodyguards are to be replaced by other American security guards wearing less conspicuous uniforms.)

MICHAEL WALZER IS THE WELL-RESPECTED co-editor of *Dissent* that recently published two of his articles relevant to our discussion: "Five Questions on Terrorism" (Winter, 2002), followed by "Can There Be a Decent Left?", (Spring, 2002), each giving support to the War on Terror, castigating the American left for opposition he finds so egregious that it might have foreclosed the possibilities of transforming the American left, driven by "self-hate," into "a decent left."

Perhaps it is because Walzer supported the war and his opposition and criticism of all those he finds indecent on the left are so intense that his internal censor fails him

as he flails away at the left with accusations that are irrational and politically libelous. In his "Five Questions on Terrorism," he attributes the following as the anti-war left's response to 9/11:

The September 11 attacks were wrong; they ought to be condemned; but — a very big "but" — after all we deserved it; we had it coming.

The response of many in the left was terribly weak, in some instances shameful. But nowhere in my extensive reading of the left-wing press did I find anything approaching the attitude that "We deserved it; we had it coming." Several months later, in his holier-than-thou polemic, he escalates the charges: now, it seems that the indecent elements in the left reacted to 9/11 with "Barely concealed glee that the imperial state had finally gotten what it deserved." No documentation, no quotations, not a scintilla of evidence to support this extraordinary, libelous charge that the slaughter of more than 3,000 innocents was greeted with "glee," that America got its just lumps.

Walzer's two articles tell us nothing about the political and social landscape in the wake of the defeat of the Taliban government and the more limited victory over the al Qaeda militia. He tells us nothing about the political and social consequences of the war in the United States, and the same must be noted of his failure to take into account the war's effect on the moods, consciousness and physical well-being of peoples in the Muslim world or in Western Europe for that matter. There is no assessment of what our President hails as the "coalition of civilized nations."

Walzer is pleased to announce that:

Leftist opposition to the war in Afghanistan faded in November and December of last year, not only because of the success of the war but also because of the enthusiasm with which so many Afghans greeted that success. The pictures of women showing their smiling faces to the world, of men shaving their beards, of girls in school, of boys playing soccer in shorts: all this was no doubt a slap in the face to leftist theories of American imperialism, but also politically disarming. There was (and is) still a lot to worry about: refugees, hunger, minimal law and order.

I am not as confident as Walzer of fading opposition to the war in the left. And neither am I as confident as Walzer about the “success” of the war; its success was of a military nature, and even here not total, but politically, I would hardly call it a success. And while it is true that many Afghans greeted that success, as Walzer sees it, with enthusiasm, there were many, also opponents of the Taliban and al Qaeda, who did not share the celebration in November and December. By the time Walzer dashed off his polemic, it was clear to anyone who really wanted to look at reality that enthusiasm among all strata of Afghan society was rapidly waning and resentment rapidly increasing. A poll taken in early July of this year also indicates that most Americans do not believe the war in Afghanistan has been a success.

Walzer’s “pictures of women showing their smiling faces, of men shaving their beards, of girls in school, of boys playing soccer in shorts . . .” is a bit much. There is, of course, a kernel of truth to this, but only a kernel, and even that is drying out. What comes across is a relatively idyllic picture that belies the pervasive, nasty and dangerous realities of life in post-Taliban Afghanistan. That conditions are more relaxed is not questioned, but the limits of that relaxation and the social misery of life in that beleaguered country seems lost on Walzer. He recognizes that there remains an ongoing problem of “minimal law and order” but this is only a minimal acknowledgement of how miserable life remains, even for smiling women, men shorn of beards, children at play.

A far more accurate picture would have to review life under the warlords who have not only returned, but are as powerful as they ever were in the pre-Taliban era. They are estimated to have 175,000 armed men in their local armies and militias. And with their return, it needs to be repeated, there is widespread looting, extortion, beatings, even killings, and far fewer smiling women than Walzer discovers. Instead, mistreatment of women remains widespread, frequent victims of physical violence, including rape. The most prominent women’s spokesperson, Dr. Sima Samar, slated for the post of Minister of Women’s Affairs, was

forced to withdraw her candidacy in the face of threats from Northern Alliance fundamentalists that if she took the position, she would be treated as an Afghan Salman Rushdie i.e., placed on a death list. How can one talk about a just war without at least taking all this into account? Yet, for all this, the smiling faces, schoolgirls, etc. are, for Walzer, “no doubt a slap in the face to leftist theories of American imperialism, but also politically disarming . . .” I can’t fathom why he believes that the defeat of the Taliban torpedoed “leftist theories of American imperialism” any more than a defeat of American forces would have vindicated whatever leftist theories Walzer might have in mind.

Walzer is so carried away by his imaginary success story that America’s “just war” is promoted to “(almost) like a war of liberation, a humanitarian intervention.” In the wake of this almost successful war of liberation, one cabinet member of the first interim government was murdered, and the same fate befell the recently elected (in a manner of speaking) Vice President Haji Abdul Qadir, a warlord and businessman (also in a manner of speaking) cut down on July 6th, after one day at his new job. And on September 5th, President Karzai narrowly missed death at the hands of an assassin.

The results of the war against global terrorism, nearly one year later, are hardly a success story. In the last ten months, the social base of terrorist networks in the Islamic world has grown stronger and the ability of the terrorists to strike has been tragically demonstrated in India, Pakistan, Kashmir, Tunisia; and that they retain the capabilities to inflict massive damage comparable to 9/11, even more horrific, is also recognized and advertised by the Bush administration.

WALZER MAKES THE SWEEPING CHARGE that most leftists “were prepared to oppose it [the war] without regard to its causes or character and without any visible concern about preventing future terrorist attacks.” Not true. Of course the left, all of it, is deeply concerned with the causes and character of the war and preventing future terrorist attacks. One might not agree with what they

have to say on these questions, but to accuse most leftists of ignoring them is far-fetched. What is ironical is that the indifference to these causes and concerns that he attributes to most of the left can fairly be attributed to Walzer himself; at least in this shallow polemic under review in which there is no probing of root causes of the war or its character and no prescription is offered about preventing future terrorist attacks.

He sees "in the realities of terrorism itself and the idea of a Holy War against the Infidel" a religious dimension to the Jihad. However, terrorist networks require a mass base and that support cannot be achieved on the basis of religious dogma, but by growth opportunities provided to terrorist organizations by America's negative foreign policies, its pitiless sanctions on Iraq and its support of Israel's bloody war against the Palestinian people which so enrages the vast majority of the world's 1.2 billion Muslims.

WALZER DERIDES, "left academics [who] have tried to figure out how many civilians actually died in Afghanistan." He is convinced that "most of the numbers are propaganda" and that "there is no reliable accounting." But he is offended by the notion that the number of civilians killed should influence the left's characterization of the war. It is worth quoting him more fully:

It denies one of the most basic and best understood moral distinctions between premeditated murder and unintended killing. And the denial isn't accidental as if the people making it just forgot about, or didn't know about the everyday moral world. The denial is willful: unintended killing by Americans in Afghanistan counts as murder. This can't be true anywhere else, for anybody else.

Given the absence of empirical evidence for any arguments in either of his two articles, I doubt that Walzer is qualified to hand down the verdict that "most of the numbers are propaganda." Most outrageous is his misuse of the legitimate moral distinction he makes between "premeditated murder" and "unintended killing," in order to deny the criminal nature of the "unintended killing" in Afghanistan. The distinction between murder and collateral killing

is not the issue. What is criminal about the "unintended killing" of Afghan citizens is that the specific circumstances of so much of the killing reveals a cruel and *criminal indifference* to human life.

Of course there is a moral distinction between "premeditated murder" and "unintended killing." I don't think many people on the left deny that. And I don't believe that most on the left hold to the view that the American military were under orders to knowingly target civilian quarters, hospitals, or wedding parties. The distinction between "premeditated murder" and "unintended killing" is not the issue. If Walzer bothered to examine the circumstances of these terrible tragedies, he might realize that in most cases it was not a matter of collateral damage, but of a reckless disregard for human life. The whole *modus operandi* of the bombings has been that if you suspect that Taliban or al Qaeda forces are holed up in a particular compound, you don't investigate first; instead, it is shoot now, double-check later. If you think a convoy en route to Kabul includes terrorist enemies, don't bother checking out your suspicions, but kill them all and if it turns out that the convoy was carrying anti-Taliban Afghans to Kabul to honor President Karzai, that, too, is covered up as unintended collateral damage.

If a small group is spotted behaving peculiarly, and one of them is tall and gaunt as is Osama bin Laden, and perhaps a million other Afghan men, then you don't take a chance, you kill them all, and when it turns out that they were poor farmers, including the Osama bin Laden look-alike, then that, too, is treated as collateral damage by the military and, I am afraid, by the distinguished editor of *Dissent*. And when rumor has it that Taliban supporters are storing arms in a depot, don't try to confirm the rumor — that would be too pedantic — but kill first, take survivors prisoner and, for good measure, beat them. When it turns out that the so-called Taliban enemy were mostly anti-Taliban fighters, no apologies are made for not having bothered to investigate the misinformation that provided the excuse for the attack. Instead, American soldiers who carried out the lethal and criminal raid were commended for their ef-

ficiency and discipline.

When shots are fired in the air by celebrants at a wedding party, as is the custom, it is taken as anti-aircraft fire — at least it was so explained — and within minutes and without any further checking, the wedding party was exterminated, surrounding villages bombed, leaving at the latest count 54 killed and 120 wounded.

No one to my knowledge accused American soldiers of wiping out the wedding party for the sheer pleasure of killing. It was not premeditated murder, but the failure to check out the possible targets was criminal.

If I see someone going through my trashcan and I fear that he might be an armed prowler, and rather than take any chances, I blow him to pieces with a grenade, I hardly think that a court of law would allow me to escape punishment on the ground that I didn't intend to kill an innocent person. Yet that is precisely what Walzer implies with his category, "unintended killing." It may not be murder in the first degree, but clearly enough we are dealing with manslaughter at the very least.

WALZER'S GRIEVANCES ARE AT TIMES mean-spirited and silly as when he derides the anti-war left for raising the slogan, "Stop the Bombing." This, he complains, "wasn't a slogan that summarized a coherent view of the bombing — or of the alternatives to it."

By definition, a slogan is a tightly stated demand intended to have a positive political and psychological impact on bystanders and the public. What more can a slogan do? When we demonstrated for racial justice, and held placards aloft with the slogan, "Stop Jim Crow," were the demonstrators to be faulted for not presenting a coherent summary of the origins or evils of racism, not to mention the shortcomings of a slogan that fails to summarize what an "alternative" society, freed of racism, would look like?

Perhaps, if Walzer publishes a sequel or epilogue to his polemic on behalf of building "a decent left," he will provide his audience with a slogan that is not only punchy, as any good slogan must be, but will give a coherent summary of why we should support the war, why it was wrong to call for an end to the bombing, at the same time as his

slogan of choice will provide us with insights into a coherent alternative.

IN THE ISSUE OF *Dissent* that carries Walzer's polemic, there are a number of comments, some critical, followed by Walzer's reply. One such letter by John Sanbonmatsu was particularly effective and Walzer's (non) response was particularly flippant. For example, Walzer asks, aggressively, why Sanbonmatsu believes "that the war in Afghanistan is sure to breed more terrorists." And a few lines later, with a sleight of hand, he again asks of his critic, "How can he be so sure that we are 'breeding' Afghan terrorists now? This is ideology, not knowledge."

I'm afraid that Walzer's (non)response is ideology, certainly not knowledge. Note that at first Walzer correctly attributes to his critic the view that the war in Afghanistan will breed more terrorists, but then he misinterprets this to make it appear that his critic's position is that the war has been breeding *Afghan* terrorists. Sanbonmatsu's claim about the war breeding more terrorists cannot be fairly challenged. Anyone who reads the newspapers, even casually, knows that the war has served to strengthen the appeal of fundamentalism among the masses of every nation in Islam, expanding and deepening the reservoir of terrorist recruits. If it were possible (which it is not) to hold a truly democratic election in Pakistan, a country of critical importance in Bush's coalition, a slate of Islamic fundamentalists (who revere Osama bin Laden) would make a powerful showing. This is true as well of Egypt.

Incidentally, there is reason to believe that Afghan terrorism might revive, much of it directed against American forces, and not necessarily under the auspices of the remnants of the Taliban or al Qaeda.

A LENGTHY QUOTE FROM WALZER is again in order:

Blaming America first. Not everything that goes badly in the world goes badly because of us. The United States is not omnipotent, and its leaders should not be taken as co-conspirators in every human disaster. The left has little difficulty understanding the need for distributive justice with regard

to resources, but we have been practically clueless about the just distribution of praise and blame. To take the obvious example: in the second half of the twentieth century, the United States fought both just and unjust wars, undertook both just and unjust interventions. It would be a useful exercise to work through the lists and test our capacity to make distinctions — to recognize, say, that the U.S. was wrong in Guatemala in 1954 and right in Kosovo in 1999. Why can't we accept an ambivalent relation to American power, acknowledging that it has had good and bad effects in the world? But shouldn't an internationalist left demand a more egalitarian distribution of power? Well, yes, in principle; but any actual redistribution will have to be judged by the quality of the states that would be empowered by it. Faced with states like, say, Saddam Hussein's Iraq, I don't think we have to support a global redistribution of political power.

It all sounds so reasonable, does it not? Why blame America for all the world's ills? No fair person could believe that the United States is omnipotent and certainly "its leaders should not be taken as co-conspirators in every human disaster." Fair enough, not co-conspirators in every human disaster, but in an awful lot of them, more than Walzer wants to remember. His plea is for "the just distribution of praise and blame"; to recognize that in the last half of the past century, "the United States fought both just and unjust wars." He suggests that a useful assignment would be to check the lists of wars and interventions that in some cases our country was wrong and other times right. Thus, it "was wrong in Guatemala in 1954 and right in Kosovo in 1999."

The real question is how often wrong and how often right? I, for one, do not believe that the U.S. was right in Kosovo in 1999, but let's say it was. That means one for the U.S. But in the more than half century since the end of World War II, without checking it out in the stacks, I would make a fast calculation of 30 or 40 wars and interventions involving direct military engagements, training, equipping and financing foreign armies, directly or surreptitiously. But Walzer makes it very easy for himself by just giving us two examples, one war (Kosovo, in his opinion) belonging in

Column A, Good; the other war (in Guatemala) in Column B, Bad. But it would not have been too much to ask that he take the two minutes required—no more than that—to give us a more meaningful sampling. Vietnam, Iran, Iraq, Guatemala, El Salvador, Cuba, Panama, Grenada, Indonesia, Libya, Nicaragua. Now there's a statistically meaningful sampling, and it only took about 10 seconds to do. Another 90 seconds and I could probably come up with another dozen or so examples. It would be nice to learn from Michael Walzer and his co-thinkers what the "proper distribution of praise and blame" should be in my short random sampling. How many in Column A, how many in B? The question deserves to be taken as rhetorical since it is clear enough, at least to myself, that the American role in foreign affairs in the past 50 years has been a pattern of systematic imperialism, support to dictators, terrorists, corrupt, cynical and sinister movements and personalities, nothing even close to what Walzer suggests with his two-country sampling. There is certainly nothing in the past that gives even an ounce of credibility to Walzer's notion that in Afghanistan the U.S. has been fighting an (almost) war of liberation, or humanitarian intervention.

Walzer concedes that "[T]here is much to criticize in the policies of every U.S. government since World War II," but is aghast, however, at the excesses of, "a pervasive leftist view of the United States as a global bully, rich, privileged, selfish, hedonistic, and corrupt beyond remedy." For Walzer this is overly strident opposition to American capitalism, evidence that "[T]he left has lost its bearings." If anything the phrases he finds to be agitational epithets are understatements. To call the United States a "global bully" is all too mild; anyone with the faintest familiarity of U.S. foreign policy since the time of the Spanish American War, and the crude manner in which it continues to threaten, penalize and sometimes undermine sovereign nations to achieve a foreign policy goal knows that we are not only confronted by a bully, but an imperialist and dangerous bully. How can anyone find it offensive to refer to the U.S. as "rich" and "privileged"? And if Walzer doesn't agree that those forces which control our lives are

selfish then he might want to give some examples of the more charitable preoccupations of American capitalism. Whether or not the American ruling class is “hedonistic” I’ll leave others to decide. That corporate America is “corrupt beyond remedy” is in my opinion correct beyond doubt.

IN THE SAME SPIRIT OF MINIMIZING the evil of America’s past wars and interventions, and apparently shy about evaluating our evil coalition partners, he points to the obligation of the anti-war left to denounce “the authoritarianism of third world governments.” “It is only when we do that we will find our true comrades — the local opponents of the maximal leaders and military juntas, who are often waiting for our recognition and support.” Which maximal leaders and military juntas are the left advised to denounce? Is it only Maximum Leader Castro and the anti-American military juntas that are to be repudiated or does it also include dictators and terrorists in the American war camp?

Walzer argues that “there are no terrorists coming from Vietnam, Latin America, and Iraq.” This suggests to him that:

Misery and inequality just don’t work for the explanation of any of the nationalist terrorist movements and certainly not for Islamic terror.

Several problems here. First of all, his argument falsely assumes that those he is criticizing believe that “misery and inequality” are sufficient to explain the growing support for fundamentalist terrorism in the Islamic world. There are other political, historical, social and religious factors which must be taken into consideration in order to explain fundamentalist terrorism, and its growing support in the Islamic world.

Second, Walzer’s argument reveals that he is not aware that Vietnam has normalized relations with Washington, making it foolish to even ask why Vietnam is not organizing terrorist attacks; Iraq does engage in terrorism, against its own population, and by its political support of Hamas and substantial financial aid to families left behind by Palestinian suicide bombers, but Hussein would have to be an idiot to sponsor a terrorist assault on the U.S. that would pro-

voke an immediate and overwhelming military response; in a number of countries in Latin America, there have been (and are) many insurgencies which do operate as terrorist networks even if they lack the incentive or capabilities of assaulting the U.S. on the scale of 9/11.

Walzer does not deny that misery and inequality are used to promote terrorist networks, but that at least in the case of Islam they are relatively minor considerations. He believes that it is, “. . . theological radicalism that inspires the terrorist networks. Jihad is a response not only to modernity, but also to the radical failure of the Islamic world to modernize itself.” This exaggerated emphasis on religion and culture as the sources of terrorism is reminiscent of the notorious notion that terrorism reflects a “clash of civilizations,” a theory that lends itself to apologies for American imperialism since it understates, at best, the fury of the Islamic masses toward the U.S. because of its vital support of Israel’s brutal repression of Palestinians, their outrage over sanctions against Iraq that have taken the lives of hundreds of thousands of innocent people, mainly children. And not to recognize the extent to which hatred for the U.S. is generated by its support of retrograde, corrupt and cruel regimes in the Islamic world is to ignore reality for the sake of an apologia.

If it is true that it is theological radicalism that inspires terrorists who are enraged by modernity, then why is America singled out for attack? There are millions of infidels in modern Western Europe far more vulnerable than the U.S. to terrorist attacks by fundamentalists driven by theological and cultural bigotry. This suggests that when the distant U.S. is selected as the main target, the great Satan, it is less a matter of theological radicalism than a deadly response to America’s secular foreign policies.

MANY LIBERALS WHO ENDORSED THE WAR have been disillusioned by the Administration’s relentless assault on basic democratic rights. As a result, some have muted their support of the War on Terror. Not Michael Walzer. He is a more consistent apologist for American imperialism than, say, someone like Todd Gitlin or Marc Cooper. Here

is what he has to say on the question:

Police work is the first priority, and that raises questions, not about justice, but about civil liberties. Liberals and libertarians leap to the defense of liberty, and they are right to leap; but when they (we) do that, we have to accept the new burden of proof: we have to be able to make the case that the necessary police work can be done, and can be done effectively, within whatever constraints we think are required for the sake of American freedom. If we can't make that case, then we have to be ready to consider modifying the constraints. It isn't a betrayal of liberal or American values to do that; it is in fact the right thing to do, because the first obligation of the state is to protect the lives of its citizens (that's what states are for), and American lives are now visibly and certainly at risk. Again, prevention is crucial. Think of what will happen to our civil liberties if there are more successful terrorist attacks.

If we cannot protect liberty properly within the constraints imposed by civil rights, then "we have to be ready to consider modifying the constraints." What we really have to consider, and what Walzer disingenuously refuses to do, is to evaluate the "modifications" of the constraints that might tie the hands of the police doing their duty and interfere with the "first obligation of the state . . . to protect the lives of its citizens."

"Modifications," of course, is a euphemism for a frontal assault on democratic rights, more extreme than anything we have witnessed during peacetime or in time of war. Walzer may not be as familiar as he should be, given his judgmental self-assurance about what is happening in Afghanistan or the Islamic world, but he can hardly be unaware of the specific acts and proposals of the Bush administration which threaten to destroy the most basic rights of bourgeois democracy. Yet, he barely comments about them; and that, in my opinion, is not merely an oversight. He ends his evasive ruminations with the rhetorical question, "What will happen to our civil liberties if there are more successful terrorist attacks"? I interpret this only as a scare tactic designed to soften resistance to the Administration's non-hypothetical attack on civil liberties even before a second terrorist attack.

But I do not want to be unfair. At one point, Walzer does seem to pat the anti-war left on the back for its "spirited defense of civil liberties," however, it is made immediately clear that this is less a pat on the back than a blow with a fist as Walzer immediately denounces the anti-war left because

this defense [of civil liberties] displayed a certain willful irresponsibility and ineffectiveness, because so many leftists rush to the defense of civil liberties while refusing to acknowledge that the country faced real dangers — as if there was no need at all to balance security and freedom.

WALZER GETS DOWN TO BASIC VALUES

[The] encounter with Islamic radicalism, and with other versions of politicized religion, should help us understand that high among our interests are our values: secular enlightenment, human rights, and democratic government. *Left politics starts with the defense of these three.*" (Emphasis added.)

It is a pleasure to find something in Walzer's polemic that I wholeheartedly agree with. But it does raise a contentious problem: if Left politics starts with a defense of these three values, then how can he possibly support the Administration's War on Terror when the direct consequences of the war has predictably been a series of crushing blows to enlightenment values, to secularism, to human rights, and to democracy?

Since Walzer relates his defense of the War on Terror to his commitment to the three basic values, let's take a little closer look at the war itself: who is leading it, who are its beneficiaries, and above all, what are its predictable political and social consequences?

One of the great hoaxes of the war, largely perpetrated by the media, is that our President who, before September 11th, was notorious for mauling the English language and, as a man of a few dozen words, perennially stumbling for an elusive, appropriate word or phrase when circumstances demanded a spontaneous comment, was transformed by the tragedy on 9/11. On September 20, the day after Bush delivered his scripted and well-rehearsed address to a Joint Session of Congress, the editorialists breathed a sigh of relief that Bush did not trip over his lines. Never mind that the talk

was both banal and menacing; that the text he recited was suggestive of a sheriff organizing a posse to hunt down varmints “until there is no place to run or hide or rest.” For all that, Bush was lauded in the press as meeting his new historic responsibilities maturely, revealing previously hidden talents not evidenced in the early shaky months of his tenure. An editorial in the *Times* editorial reassured a troubled nation that its president and commander-in-chief had proved his mettle:

He seemed more confident, determined and sure of his purpose and was in full command of a complex array of political and military challenges that he faces in the wake of the terrible terrorist attacks of September 11th . . . he seemed to be a leader whom the nation could follow in these difficult times.

Anyone who has followed Bush’s speeches and the ineptitude of his performances at press conferences, particularly in foreign countries, knows that this is a media and public relations-created myth, though a more candid portrait occasionally appears such as the revelation by a *Times* analyst that, “People at the White House say that focusing on a single topic plays to his [Bush’s] strength, because he is not especially adept at juggling several issues at a time.” (How can the lack of an intellectual capacity to concentrate on more than one issue at a time be a show of “strength”?)

But if Bush is short on intellect and knowledge, it is not to say that he doesn’t know what he likes and dislikes. On the contrary, he has unshakable commitments: he is committed to guard family values while being, of course, more solicitous of the welfare of an unwanted fetus than of a destitute and desperate pregnant woman; he is determined to bloat the military budget, to protect corporate America from the scourge of muckrakers. He is dedicated to slashing social programs and despoiling the environment at home and globally. As a born-again Christian, he is devoted to undermining the secular doctrine of separation of church and state. He is firmly committed to the death penalty (for four years he was the Lord High Executioner of the State of Texas). He is both a Robin Hood in-reverse and a philanthropist, cutting down on aid for the poor and

donating billions to the very wealthy, even when they don’t press for it. Of course, he loves the bomb.

President Bush also knows who and what he scorns. A small sampling would include environmentalists, feminists, unions, affirmative action, regulations protecting workers on the job, and he decidedly doesn’t appreciate people who contradict him.

Our President is as vain and arrogant as he is shallow and ignorant. With September 11th providing the opportunity to make his mark in history, his arrogance has swollen to messianic proportions as he repeatedly tells the world what *I* will do and that he “expects” other nations to follow his lead. In one particularly megalomaniacal moment, he replied to critics of his proposal to create special military tribunals that would give him the right (among other powers) to make life and death decisions concerning foreigners accused of terrorism that in a war “against the most evil kinds of people, I need to have an extraordinary option at my fingertips.”

Bush is not alone. He has a cabinet and advisors. For one, there is our reclusive Vice President, Dick Cheney, whose occasional public appearance is to present a superhawkish line more coherently and forcefully, in a manner beyond his boss’s capabilities. (Enmeshed in corporate scandal, he may yet appear on television pleading to the nation that “I am not a crook.”) The Bush cabinet includes Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, mean-spirited, officious and unflinchingly reactionary, who cannot disguise his preference for killing rather than capturing the enemy. (As a friend of mine observes, give Rumsfeld a monocle and he could audition for a Hollywood role as an S.S. General.) There is Attorney General John Ashcroft, a born-again bigot, who comes as close to being a fascist as any cabinet member of any administration I can think of. Theoretically and laughably, he is supposed to protect our constitutional and legislative assurances of civil liberties and civil rights. The nation is saddled with the Secretary of the Treasury, Paul O’Neill, whose perverse sense of economic justice is reflected in his summary of the Enron debacle: “Companies come and go. It’s part of

the genius of capitalism.” Larry Lindsey, Bush’s leading economist, echoed the same sentiment: the Enron scandal is a “tribute to American capitalism;” the Secretary of the Army, Thomas E. White, who is even more deeply embroiled in crooked but most profitable shenanigans in Enron. Not to be overlooked are such notorious flame-throwers as Paul D. Wolfowitz, Deputy Secretary of Defense, and advisor Richard Pearl. And the list could continue, but there is no need to. There is not a single member of Bush’s cabinet or his advisors of whom it could be said, “Here is someone who is supportive of even one progressive social program, be it the environment, gender equality, racial justice, social welfare, positive educational reform.” There is not even a faint voice to be heard from within the Bush camp in defense of civil liberties and democratic rights. Yet there are pro-war liberals who would have us believe that these men and women of power, to whom democracy and social justice are so alien, have even a theoretical capacity to lead a just war in Afghanistan, and to destroy the “evildoers” internationally on behalf of freedom.

The unrelenting assault on social programs, social movements and democratic liberties is intrinsic to what is called the War on Terror. The war is used as a pretext to justify the war against the poor, the environment, etc., but the point I am most anxious to underscore here is the war against democracy at home is a *function* of the “War on Terrorism.” And since this is a war in permanence, the ever-intensifying war against democracy becomes a permanent feature of American life. Therefore, a consistent struggle to defend democracy implies unqualified opposition to the war.

THE DRIVE AGAINST CIVIL LIBERTIES is often compared to the McCarthyist plague that took a terrible human toll on American society after World War II. McCarthyism devastated the personal lives and careers of tens of thousands, victimizing primarily real and alleged Communists and fellow travelers, but its net was spread wide enough to trap a broader political spectrum of radicals, non-conformists, and liberals. There are obvious similarities between McCarthyism and the current cabal spearheaded by the

Attorney General; there are also significant differences that are instructive and unnerving.

Thus far, the Bush administration’s drive to undermine democracy has not equaled the personal damage inflicted by McCarthyism. Today, the rights of several thousand immigrants and aliens have been grossly violated; many illegally detained, held incommunicado and made to endure abuses based on unsubstantiated accusations. On the other hand, while the personal pain is not yet as extensive as in the 50s, the current War on Democracy is more ominous than McCarthyism. At the epicenter of McCarthyism, there was the Wisconsin Senator, a number of bizarre hired-hands, a network of informers and, of course, Congressional inquisitors cashing in on the witch hunt atmosphere. But when McCarthy decided to take on the Army, he overreached, and President (and General) Eisenhower made short shrift of the man from Wisconsin. In contrast, today’s offensive is under the auspices of a President and his entire administration, supported by men and women of great wealth and power, and in the background there is a Democratic Party that has been more collaborative than critical, that voted overwhelmingly in support for some of the ugliest, anti-democratic legislation introduced by the Republican administration. Thus, unlike the 1950s witch-hunt, the War on Democracy is recognizably *a war by the ruling class and its State*.

Another difference: McCarthyism was not concerned with social programs and never sought the permanent status of a social movement. This is in sharp contrast with the current War on Democracy, it is indeed an ideological movement with a strong Right-Wing orientation on all social questions, with close spiritual (if that’s the right word) and political ties to the Christian Right.

Then there is the relentless drive of the Administration, the Executive Branch in our government, to encroach on traditional areas of authority of the Legislature and the Judiciary. When the Courts make decisions conflicting with the political interests of the Bush administration, Court orders are often defied, its authority denied as being il-

legitimate.

All in all, this unrelenting campaign to undermine democracy pollutes the social atmosphere with the pungent and odious whiff of fascism.

If my analysis is essentially on target, it demands that a “decent Left” dedicated to secular enlightenment values, to human rights, and to democratic government, repudiate a war that Walzer justifies.

WE TURN OUR ATTENTION BRIEFLY to what President Bush hails as “the grand Coalition of civilized nations.” We need not argue at any length the absurdity of this Coalition being either civilized or enraged by terrorist networks. To expose the fraud we need only mention a representative handful: Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China, Israel, Egypt, Indonesia, Malaysia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen . . . the list could go on, but why bother? Now, I do not know how Michael Walzer feels about this Coalition, but the list I have just rattled off is just a partial roll call of the world’s most notorious violent, and terroristic dictatorships (Israel of course can not be described accurately as a dictatorship internally, but it is engaged in a savage terrorist use of force against the Palestinian people, with no end in sight. Neither can Russia be labeled a dictatorship, but its use of state terror in what appears to be a war of annihilation against the Chechnyan people is unsurpassed in its cruelty.) And, at the risk of upsetting pro-war liberals bored with an “old story,” it is essential to recognize America’s historic and ongoing role in aiding and abetting terrorism on a massive scale and on all continents.

Reminder to the reader: President Bush even expressed interest in recruiting Syria to this terrorist conglomerate of civilized nations. Syria did not accept the invitation. That country’s status reverted to that of a dangerous ally of the “axis of evil” and candidate for a preemptive military strike.

How is it possible for the United States to lead a war on terrorism when the majority of the world’s dictatorial and terrorist societies are our allies? The answer is really quite simple: it is not possible at all.

The very act of welcoming the dictatorships and societies relying on terror into the

Coalition of civilized nations means that the Bush administration is abetting terrorism in Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Chechnya, Palestine, Indonesia, Malaysia, China and in other countries of this grand Coalition. And since the war on terrorism cannot be won and can only be fought in a manner that will rouse ever-greater hatred for the U.S. in the Islamic world and elsewhere, Bush’s war can only stimulate fundamentalist terrorism.

WALZER’S ARTICLES REFLECT a more general and profound retreat from even the most modest expressions of a radical temperament and politics. He actually admits to this:

Why shouldn’t the American story be like these two, with long years of healthy oppositionist politics, and only episodic resentment? Wasn’t America a beacon of light to the old world, a city on a hill, an unprecedented experiment in democratic politics? I grew up with the Americanism of the Popular Front in the 1930s and 1940s; I look back on it now and think that the Communist Party’s effort to create a leftist pop culture, in an instant, as the party line turned, was kitschy and manipulative—and also politically very smart. Paul Robeson’s “Ballad for Americans,” whatever the quality of the music, provides at least a sense of what an unalienated American radicalism might be like. The days after September 11 would not have been a bad time for a Popular Front. What had happened that made anything like that unthinkable?

Walzer is not alone in this nostalgic look on the alleged glory days of the Popular Front; nostalgia for what was a front for unsavory sources and indeed popular with liberals and progressives despite its basically conservative politics covered with a transparent veneer of pseudo-patriotic, pseudo-populist, and tawdry sentimentalism; paying tribute, above all, to the instinctive wisdom and inherent nobility of the People. Ironically, the liberal love affair was with the Popular Front that did not even have its origins in America. (For that we would have to get into “the Russian question.”) More to the point here is that the Popular Front was specifically designed to short-circuit any possibility of the militant class struggles that racked the country in the early-to-mid-30s from maturing into

mass movements of political and social protest. It aimed to reign in and conservatize the working class, and this it did to the satisfaction of its chief native promoters and, most important, to its foreign architects (predictably the Popular Front ground to a halt in September 1939 and was instantly revived on June 22, 1941). But for Walzer and so many others, the class collaborationism and conservatism was "politically very smart." But smart for whom and for what?

And the wartime version of the Popular Front (revived only after Hitler broke his pact with Stalin) sank to a level of conservatism and chauvinism that was both obscene and comical.

Then there was Paul Robeson's famous "Ballad for Americans," insufferable for its fraudulent, saccharin sentimentality and dishonesty about America the Beautiful that made Popular Fronters misty-eyed and, sad to admit, still does.

What does Walzer have in mind when he pleads for an "unalienated American radicalism," an oxymoron since radical organizations and militant social movements are, by definition, alienated from the nation's dominant social, political and economic forces; no less true than for cultural modernism confronted by pervasive forces of traditionalism and intellectual conservatism. But to realize that American radicalism can-

not but be alienated from American society does not mean that there is no radical tradition and culture in America with which the left can identify; a tradition and culture that existed *in* but was not *of* a society dominated by an alien and hostile ruling class. It was based on enlightened dissent, resistance, social class and struggle. We can find spiritual sustenance in the history of Transcendentalism and the failed Utopias, and inspiration in the abolitionist movement; we look with pride on the early socialist, anarchist and trade union movements; we identify with all the historic struggles of the working class, of the suffragists, of those who resisted America's entry into the First World War, of those who fought the establishment in the 60s and 70s in the battle for racial justice and against the war in Vietnam . . . the list of the component elements of a long, fascinating and instructive tradition and culture completely at odds with the syrupy lyrics and spiritual emptiness of the "Ballad for Americans" that might better serve as doggerel for ex-leftists beating a hasty retreat from radical traditions and politics as they wave the American flag, write briefs extolling the virtues of their newly discovered patriotism and diligently devote their intellectual energies to the patriotic mission of convincing as many who will listen that an imperialist war is a just war.

Anatomy of the Israeli Assault

Adam Keller

AT THE END OF A TENSE CABINET MEETING in March 2002, precisely a year after Ariel Sharon took power in the State of Israel, Foreign Minister Shimon Peres told the press: "Had I known things would come to this, I would not have joined the government." He made this comment in a time of runaway escalation, dozens upon dozens of daily casualties on both sides, and the Israeli army mounting against Palestinians the biggest military operation it had undertaken since 1982 — plus a tottering economy and steadily increasing unemployment, with public morale deteriorating as well. In fact, there had been no difficulty in predicting that if elected, Sharon would lead Israel in such a direction. The Labor Party itself predicted precisely that in its campaign propaganda of January 2001, though the party leaders seemed to forget these predictions on the very day after the elections, when they rushed to the winner's bandwagon. Moreover, the future policy of the Sharon Government was set out clearly and comprehensively as early as November 2000, in a policy paper published by Meir Dagan, a retired brigadier general and confidential adviser to then-opposition leader Sharon. Dagan did not keep it secret. On the contrary, it was widely circulated to the press, but did not get very much attention at the time. Only a year later was the forgotten paper unearthed and published anew in *Yediot Aharonot*. The analysis found considerable correspondence between the policy

that Dagan had outlined in advance and what was actually implemented by Sharon.

Just as the Dagan paper had recommended, Sharon's actual policy was aimed at progressively eroding the structures created by the Oslo Agreements, in particular, gaining "a complete freedom of operational movement" for Israeli military forces in the "A" areas in which Oslo gave the Palestinians a semi-sovereign status. To succeed, the paper stipulated, this should be done without officially denouncing the Oslo Agreements, while keeping the support of Israeli public opinion and of the Americans, and also without evoking more than verbal protests from either the Europeans or the Arab states. Given Sharon's earlier failure in Lebanon, where his 1982 invasion swiftly alienated the entire world as well as large parts of Israeli society, and ended with Sharon's own downfall and with the country mired in a decades-long guerrilla war, such a plan would have been dismissed as extremely implausible; that, indeed, was the original response when Dagan published his paper. Yet Sharon as Prime Minister was to prove eminently successful in implementing exactly that plan, to the wonder and horror of his opponents.

On his very first day in power, Sharon enacted a "strangling closure" of Ramallah. Faced with international and domestic protests, he announced the canceling of the measure. Yet within a few weeks the outrageous innovation had become a new routine, all Palestinian towns and villages were enmeshed in tightening closures and sieges, and an ever-increasing number of military checkpoints and roadblocks made traveling on West Bank roads a prolonged, dangerous and humiliating adventure. This was officially justified by the need to block suicide bombers, though it was not particularly effective in this; only many months later did

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high military officers half-admit that the true purpose was “to pressure the population so that they will pressure Arafat to stop the Intifada” (which did not happen, either).

So it was with the other oppressive measures. By imperceptible steps, they all became part of the new daily routine: the bombing of Palestinian cities by helicopter gunships and later by F-16 fighter planes with their heavier load of bombs; the practice of assassinating Palestinians suspected of terrorism (“targeted killings” or “liquidations” or “extra-judicial executions”); the “incursions” into Palestinian territory, with their steadily increasing extent of military force and duration, finally making them full-scale invasions and re-occupations of areas evacuated under Oslo. Sharon could not have gotten away with so much for so long, but for the pernicious legacy left him by Ehud Barak. Sharon’s predecessor had presented himself as leader of the peace camp and aroused enormous hopes — only to completely dash them, declare peace to be impossible and place the responsibility squarely upon the Palestinians.

That paved the way for Sharon’s election victory. In an atmosphere where the option of peace was thoroughly discredited, the peace movement was reduced to a handful, and the Israeli public got into the mindset of using brute force against the Palestinians. It then seemed logical to vote for Sharon, the personification of such an approach. The dispirited and discredited Labor Party leaders were quick to scramble for portfolios in Sharon’s cabinet, making it “a government of national unity.” Binyamin Ben-Eliezer got the defense portfolio, thus being responsible for the daily conduct of the offensive against the Palestinians. Nobel Peace Laureate Peres took up the foreign ministry, i.e. he became Sharon’s international propagandist. In exchange, he got the PM’s permission to conduct a variety of diplomatic initiatives, though whenever one of them seemed to have any chance of success, Sharon took immediate and personal care to foil it.

True, never during his year in power did Sharon express an open rejection of a peace plan. And there were many: the creative schemes thought up by Sharon’s own Foreign Minister, the Mitchell Commission report which became the new shibboleth of

Middle Eastern diplomacy, the Tenet Plan which aimed at implementing Mitchell, the Zinni plan and other ideas and schemes aimed at implementing Tenet, the proposals of the ever-present European envoys, and later the far-reaching plan of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah. To all, Sharon developed a standard response: acceptance in principle while attaching impossible conditions in practice. His favorite ploy was to demand “seven days of total quiet” before negotiations could begin, at the same time conducting an aggressive military policy ensuring that these seven days would never start. In this, Sharon had the full cooperation of Army Chief of Staff Mofaz and his deputy Moshe Ya’alon; the generals had been eagerly implementing an ever more aggressive policy, and were actively promoting that policy in frequent direct addresses to the media and political system, which more than once seemed to strain the limits placed upon the role of the military in a democratic state.

At the very hour when Peres and Arafat were meeting in the Gaza Strip on August 26, to try and work out a cease-fire, Israeli military units killed six Palestinians during an incursion into the town of Rafah, just a few kilometers away, provoking a cycle of retaliations and counter-retaliations and ensuring that the ceasefire be stillborn. At another point, the effort of CIA Director George Tenet to set up a system of “security cooperation” between Israeli and Palestinian security services was met by Israeli helicopters shooting a very precise missile into a specific Ramallah office, instantly killing Abu-Ali Mustapha, head of the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) and member of the PLO Executive Committee — in the Palestinian hierarchy, just one rung below Arafat himself. This assassination of a ministerial-level Palestinian leader was soon followed by the revenge assassination of the Israeli Minister of Tourism Rehav’am Ze’evi. Minister Ze’evi had long been the advocate of “population transfer” (i.e. wholesale expulsion) of the Palestinians. The shock over the assassination of an Israeli government minister gave Ze’evi’s racist ideology a legitimacy it did not have before, as well as providing Sharon with an ideal pretext to launch a prolonged invasion of six West Bank cities, and foreclosing for

a considerable time the possibility of “security cooperation” or cease-fire. However, Sharon and his ministers did not approve any further assassinations of ministerial-level Palestinians.

The September 11th Factor

AT FIRST, WASHINGTON WAS FAR FROM HAPPY with Israeli military forces invading the “A” areas, where the Oslo Agreements gave the Palestinians a semi-sovereign status (though no territorial continuity or free access to the outside world). This limited sovereignty — the embryo from which full Palestinian statehood was expected to develop — was, obviously, the very bedrock of the Oslo structure. For that very reason, Sharon was determined to undermine and destroy it.

In Sharon’s first months, the most he found the Americans willing to tolerate were limited incursions by Israeli forces into the margins of Palestinian-held territory, which could be explained away as “hot pursuit” and which were terminated within a few hours, without Washington needing to take official notice. On one occasion, which in retrospect seems highly innocent, Israeli forces penetrated two kilometers into Palestinian-held territory at the north Gaza Strip and took up positions in uninhabited fields outside the town of Beit Hanoun. Since they were still there by the time of the daily State Department press briefing, awkward questions were asked by several journalists, resulting in Secretary of State Powell’s phoning and tongue-lashing Sharon, which led in turn to immediate removal of the forces. (At that time it had not yet become obvious to Sharon that Powell did not enjoy the full confidence and backing of his President.)

Sharon, for the moment, had to accept the “A” areas as being beyond his reach and to content himself with grabbing Orient House, the Palestinian headquarters in East Jerusalem which had enjoyed a de-facto extra-territorial status since the 1991 Madrid Conference and whose occupation could be claimed to be the province of the police. The big breakthrough, from the PM’s point of view, was provided by the unexpected and cataclysmic events of September 11, throwing America into the frenzy of the “War on Terrorism.” By the time Sharon launched the “Ze’evi Invasion,” sending

tanks to occupy portions of six West Bank cities, with considerable loss of Palestinian life and damage to property (particularly in Bethlehem), America itself was already deeply sunk in the mindset of trampling upon civilian lives and international conventions in its “new” cause.

Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, ruthlessly conducting the campaign in Afghanistan, revealed himself to be Sharon’s soulmate and unreserved supporter. At the same time, however, Secretary of State Powell was absorbed in efforts to mobilize diplomatic support in the Arab and Muslim world, for which an American gesture towards the long-suffering Palestinians seemed indicated. As a result of the conflicting pressures, the administration expressed a lukewarm disapproval of Sharon’s occupation of the six cities, asking him to remove his forces but giving him several weeks in which to conduct the operation — a pattern which was to repeat itself again and again in the Bush-Sharon relationship. President Bush rejected proposals by the Arab states to meet with Arafat during the deliberations of the UN General Assembly, but did approve a policy speech by Secretary Powell at Louisville, Kentucky, in which several points seemed designed to appeal to Palestinian sensibilities: a “balanced” condemnation of the Israeli occupation as well as of Palestinian terrorism, a definite American commitment to the creation of an independent Palestinian state (though without defining the exact border), and the appointment of a new American mediator for the Middle East, former Marine General Anthony Zinni. Meanwhile, however, the unexpectedly swift collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan had the effect of generating in Washington an euphoria of arrogance, and Powell’s efforts to mollify the Arab regimes and public opinion by gestures to the Palestinians suddenly looked redundant. The change in American attitudes was clinched by a highly effective new provocation undertaken by Sharon.

Sharon’s Season

ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 27, Envoy Zinni was due to arrive in the region. Four days earlier, Israeli helicopters shot missiles that hit a Palestinian car near Nablus, instantly killing a man named Mahmud Abu Hunud, a

prominent Hamas leader, highly popular among the Palestinian masses, especially due to his having escaped several previous assassination attempts. In short, Abu Hunud was a man for whose assassination retribution was certain to come.

The implications were laid out two days later in a remarkable critical article by security commentator Alex Fishman, published prominently on the front page of *Yediot Aharonot*, Israel's largest mass circulation daily, and which apparently reflected the opinion of dissident elements within the army and security services:

Whoever gave a green light to this act of liquidation knew full well that he is thereby shattering in one blow the gentleman's agreement between Hamas and the Palestinian Authority. Under that agreement, Hamas was to avoid in the near future suicide bombings inside the Green Line, having come to the understanding that it would be better not to play into Israel's hands by mass attacks on its population centers. This understanding was, however, shattered by the assassination the day before yesterday, and whoever decided upon the liquidation of Abu Hunud knew in advance that that would be the price. The subject had been extensively discussed both by the military and the political echelon, before it was decided to carry out the liquidation. (*Yediot Aharonot*, Nov. 25, 2001)

The retribution came on schedule, just as Zinni was making his preliminary diplomatic efforts: on December 1, two Hamas suicide bombers exploded themselves, at Jerusalem and Haifa respectively, with a total death toll of 26 Israeli civilians. In Israel there was an atmosphere of public shock and outrage, with no mention of the warning given a week before by Fishman and others (even Fishman himself made no mention of it in his later articles).

It certainly played brilliantly into the hands of Sharon, who bypassed Zinni, went directly to the White House and conducted a visit resembling a triumphal procession. American officials, right up to President Bush himself, vied with each other in public denunciations of Arafat and the Palestinians, now castigated as "bad guys" in the cosmic struggle against terrorism. Sharon was given a virtually free hand for military action against the Palestinians, the only exception

being "not to kill Arafat or completely dismantle the Palestinian Authority." With that kind of backing from the President of the United States, Sharon could afford to adopt an openly contemptuous attitude to his Foreign Minister and ram through the cabinet what amounted to a declaration of war against the "terrorist-supporting" Palestinian Authority, ruling out Arafat as a partner for any future negotiations. As Sharon expected, Peres and the other Labor ministers did not dare resign, contenting themselves with powerless and futile protests.

The tanks went back into the Palestinian cities that they had vacated just a few weeks before, this time with an official American blessing, dubbing it "an act of self-defense." At the same time, an intensive bombing campaign was launched. Installations of the Palestinian police and security services — the same police and security services which Arafat was supposed to deploy against terrorism — were systematically destroyed. So were symbols of the budding Palestinian sovereignty: Israeli tanks and bulldozers invaded and destroyed the Gaza International Airport, ceremoniously inaugurated three years earlier by President Bill Clinton in person; helicopters and commando units destroyed the antennas and studios of the Voice of Palestine and Palestinian TV (which, however, managed to continue broadcasting from alternative premises).

Most heavily targeted were any locations having something to do with Yasser Arafat personally: the offices kept for his use in various Palestinian cities were destroyed, as were his helicopters and cars, and later his Gaza residence; another bombing raid left Arafat's personal cook dead from a direct hit; and while the American directive was adhered to and all these raids stopped short of the Ramallah office where Arafat actually was, Israeli tanks approached within sight of that office and directed their guns straight at Arafat's window. "Arafat is not to leave Ramallah until further notice; first he must prove his determination to fight terrorism by arresting the killers of Minister Ze'evi," announced Sharon. Israeli soldiers at the roadblocks tightly surrounding Ramallah were instructed to thoroughly check Palestinian cars, "lest Arafat try to smuggle himself out

of the city,” and the military instruction was gloatingly released to the media.

The siege of Arafat was accompanied by a massive campaign of vilification and demonization. Getting rid of Arafat became a fashionable idea. Respectable commentators, in Israel and abroad, wrote numerous articles based on the premise that Arafat’s career had come to an end, and started speculating on the shape of the “post-Arafat period”; such ideas as the imposition of a puppet regime, the breaking up of the Palestinian Authority into isolated “cantons” ruled by suppliant “warlords” or the re-imposition of direct Israeli military rule began to circulate as legitimate scenarios on which to base concrete political and military action. The anti-Arafat campaign had the notable international success of getting the European Union, hitherto the Palestinians’ main base of support on the international arena, to make tough demands on Arafat to “fight terrorism,” accompanied by barely-concealed threats of withdrawing Europe’s diplomatic and financial support. This, more than anything else, highlighted the Palestinians’ severe predicament.

Arafat’s Acrobatics

CONTRARY TO SOME well-circulated descriptions of his character, Yasser Arafat is a leader quite capable of perceiving hard realities and making tough decisions in response. In this particular impasse, Arafat decided on December 16 to bite the bullet and make a speech calling upon his people to observe a complete cease-fire. It must have been an extremely difficult decision to call a cease-fire under such conditions: with no achievement whatsoever to show his people after more than a year of terrible deprivations and daily casualties, without even any assurance that a cease-fire would at least involve removal of the threatening Israeli tanks under Arafat’s own window. Still, he did it, and it made a difference. Palestinians listened attentively to their leader’s call, in their towns and villages and refugee camps, and Israelis did, too, despite all the government’s talk that Arafat had become “irrelevant.” (The speech was broadcast live, with a simultaneous translation, on Israeli radio.) And though government speakers did all they could to belittle it, the

hope for an end to the fear and bloodshed could not quite be extinguished.

In the following days, it became obvious that Arafat’s speech had been more than just empty words. The number of confrontations and incidents reported by the army dropped sharply, and kept dropping day after day. The Palestinian police and security services worked diligently to enforce the truce upon all factions and militias. To the surprise of some observers, so did the independently-minded Tanzim militia of Arafat’s Fatah Party. Whatever their private reservations, the Tanzim leaders in the various towns — who had borne a major part in the previous months’ fighting — took an active role in following their supreme chief’s instructions for a cease-fire. As might have been expected, Hamas was more difficult to convince. There were armed confrontations when the Palestinian Police entered the Hamas strongholds in Gaza, and six Palestinians were killed in internecine struggle. But the Hamas leadership, too, was sensitive to the difficult situation which followed their falling into Sharon’s trap, and did not wish to add to it by presenting Sharon with the spectacle of a full-scale Palestinian civil war. After two days of confrontations in Gaza, reconciliation talks between the Hamas leadership and the Palestinian Authority resulted in a formal Hamas undertaking to suspend any further suicide bombings.

In the bloody times which were to follow, it sometimes seemed incredible to realize that we had so recently lived through such a period. For nearly a month, in late December and early January, there had been hardly any Israeli casualties, with the notable exception of four hapless soldiers killed in a guerrilla raid on an isolated outpost in the Gaza Strip, the one conspicuous cease-fire violation on the Palestinian side. (The Palestinians killed by Israeli fire in various incidents while the cease-fire was in force were more numerous, and received much less media attention.) Most important from the average Israeli’s point of view, it was a time with no suicide bombings at all, a time when daily life on the streets of every city seemed safer. Sharon could have taken credit for it. He could have claimed to have broken the Intifada, to have proven

that the determined use of military force can and does bring results. It would have been difficult to refute him. But he did nothing of the kind.

From day one, the Prime Minister was visibly unhappy with the cease-fire, sneering at it, exaggerating any minor infraction and incident, doing all he could to discredit and eventually destroy it. Of course, Sharon had his reasons. For one thing, acknowledging that a cease-fire had indeed taken hold would oblige him to enter seriously upon the path of negotiations. It would have meant implementing the Mitchell recommendations, among them the obligation to completely freeze any construction of settlements, and this would mean a head-on collision with his coalition partners on the extreme right. It would also go against the grain of Sharon's own basic ideology and decades-long career. And that would just be the prelude to more far-reaching concessions, in which Sharon evidently had no intention of getting involved. Beyond all such rational considerations, however, Sharon seems to have entered into a vendetta with Arafat, the hated foe who eluded his grasp in 1982 and whom he was unwilling to let escape again. Having brought the Americans this far, it seemed to Sharon entirely realistic to expect that one more push, one more provocation, would gain for him Washington's permission to land a smashing coup de grace. "At last Arik got Arafat's neck into the guillotine; he will not let him take it out again," an unnamed Sharon aide said, according to *Yediot Aharonot*.

And so, Sharon flatly refused to relax the siege upon Arafat in Ramallah, even when a good face-saving formula presented itself. At Christmas, Arafat is traditionally invited by the Christian authorities to come to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Rejecting calls from the Vatican, the Europeans, the Labor ministers, and even Israel's own President Moshe Katzav, Sharon would not let Arafat take the brief trek from Ramallah to Bethlehem. TV cameras from around the globe broadcasting the solemnities of Mass in Bethlehem concentrated on the empty chair bearing the inscription "Yasser Arafat, President of Palestine." Sharon persisted in claiming that besieging Arafat in Ramallah was a good way of weakening the Palestin-

ian leader. Actually, it enormously increased Arafat's popularity among his own people. Surely, a people suffering daily deprivations from severe restrictions on their freedom of movement can find no better rallying point than a leader whose own freedom of movement is curtailed, and who faces that situation with proud defiance.

Arafat's besieged headquarters in Ramallah became the scene of daily visits by Palestinians, holding emotional rallies in the hall from whose windows the tanks were visible. The place was also visited by quite a few international delegations, and to Sharon's chagrin, by Israeli peace activists as well. On February 2, three hundred peace activists came at the call of the Jewish-Arab Ta'ayush group, successfully circumvented the army roadblocks and arrived in Ramallah. After an hour-long meeting with the Palestinian leader, the large group advanced towards the tanks, shouting (in Hebrew) "Soldiers, go home!" They were showered with tear gas. "When you are not here, they shoot live bullets," a young Palestinian commented.

After another visit, veteran Israeli peace activist and journalist Uri Avnery gave the following account: "The Palestinian leader was calm, more so than I have seen him for a long time. The trembling of his limbs has disappeared, and so had the tired look. I was reminded of our first meeting — in the middle of another siege, at Beirut in July 1982. . . . In a jovial mood he led us to the window and pointed out the Israeli tanks stationed a hundred meters away, their cannons on target Even those Palestinians who used to criticize Arafat's style of management admit there is nobody like him in an existential crisis — the personification of Palestinian determination to defend the national existence." (*Ma'ariv*, Jan. 26, 2002)

Hudna Denied

THE CEASE-FIRE SPIRIT TOOK HOLD of a quite unexpected person: Israel's president Moshe Katzav, who until being elevated to his present (purely titular) eminence used to be an average hawkish politician, but who seems to have developed a desire to leave a more significant mark than presiding at banquets. Katzav got a chance through a creative initiative of the maverick journalist/

businessman/peace activist Eyal Ehrlich. While on a business trip to Jordan, Ehrlich had the chance to observe first-hand the proceedings of a Hudna — the way of resolving feuds in traditional Islamic societies, in which reconciliation visits by clan elders play a key part. Inspired to try and adapt the Hudna format to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Ehrlich came to the idea of having the President of Israel address the Palestinian Legislative Council in Ramallah with a conciliatory speech — which would lead to a formal proclamation of a year's truce of a kind held sacrosanct in Muslim tradition and which should create an atmosphere conducive to renewed peace negotiations. Ehrlich approached both Katzav and Arafat through various mediators and got a positive response; but as soon as the idea leaked into the media, Sharon was quick to express his total opposition. Though formally Israel's Head of State, the President — like a constitutional monarch — is bound by the elected government's policies, and Katzav saw no choice but to yield to the PM's veto.

Before the controversy over the Katzav Affair had time to die out, a completely different sensation was offered to the public: regular radio and TV broadcasts were disrupted by a special press conference, featuring Prime Minister Sharon surrounded by generals and admirals. A dramatic announcement was made: Israel's Naval Commandos had just intercepted a Palestinian ship in the Red Sea, a ship loaded to the gunwales with munitions. The brave commandos, it was told, had saved their country from grave danger, since the arms could have given the Palestinians "a strategic advantage." The attempt to smuggle the munitions into the Gaza Strip was, so it was said, yet another proof of the perfidy and treachery of the Palestinians in general and of Arafat in particular. Still, an iconoclastic article by writer David Grossman in *Ha'aretz* reminded readers that the pre-'48 Jewish militias resorted to precisely that kind of gun running, and pointed out that a single IDF armory contains far more munitions than that entire ship — not to mention of the firepower of an F-16 fighter. Grossman was followed by quite a few other dissident voices in the media, and some in the political system as well. The interna-

tional media was not exactly excited by the affair, either. Nevertheless, Sharon did succeed in getting the U.S. administration, after some initial reluctance, to take up the issue. Israeli intelligence officers were flown into Washington to present evidence that the Palestinian contraband had originated in Iran, part of President Bush's infamous "Axis of Evil." There followed a new wave of American recriminations and threats upon the Palestinians, and Envoy Zinni's second visit to the region was as dismal a failure as the first one. Meanwhile, the army made what became a widely-publicized incursion into the Rafah Refugee Camp in the Gaza Strip, destroying some sixty or seventy Palestinian homes in a single night (the exact number remains disputed). The photos of children scrabbling in the rubble of their destroyed homes touched the conscience of Israel as few things did in the past year. The government found itself the target of scathing criticism in the press, including from columnists who had hitherto kept their silence and some who previously supported Sharon. The army's explanations that the destroyed houses had been "uninhabited" and that their destruction had been "an operational necessity" found few takers outside the hard-core right-wing. After three days of this, Sharon was forced to issue a vaguely-worded apology and a promise not to do it again. On the same day — Monday, January 14 — he also decisively terminated the cease-fire with the Palestinians.

An Assassination Too Far

IN THE FAR GONE DAYS of three years ago, when an Israeli-Palestinian peace accord seemed imminent, a meeting was held at a resort north of Tel-Aviv between the younger members of Israel's then-ruling Labor Party and their opposite numbers from the Fatah Party, Yasser Arafat's main base of support. By some accounts, later hotly denied, there was among the Palestinian delegation a young man from Tul Karm named Ra'ed Karmi. At the time, this name had no special significance, and if he had really been there he made no special impression on his Israeli interlocutors. In the turbulent times after the Intifada outbreak, repeated "targeted killings" by the Israeli army and security services in Tul Karm created some vacancies at

the top of the local leadership. Karmi was revealed to have considerable military talent and charisma, and within a year was the unquestioned leader of the local militia. By then, he also figured prominently on the Israeli army's "most wanted" list, accused of involvement in the killing of nine Israelis, some of them random civilians killed in retribution for the assassination of Palestinian militants. In the last months of 2001, Ra'ed Karmi survived several Israeli assassination attempts, which — as in the case of Abu Hunud — only added to his reputation.

He was well aware of living on borrowed time. An Israeli TV crew, which entered Tul Karm under his personal safe-conduct, filmed him walking openly through the city's main street, rifle in hand. In an interview shown that night in Israeli living rooms, he said: "I am not afraid of being assassinated. My fate is in God's hands. If I fall, my comrades will take revenge for me, as I avenged those who came before me." According to Palestinian sources, Ra'ed Karmi fully supported Arafat's decision to declare a cease-fire, and helped implement it in his area of command. Israel's security services say that on the morning of January 14, when he was killed by an Israeli-laid booby trap, Karmi was involved in planning terrorist operations — the same claim as was made in earlier assassinations, and as in the other cases accompanied by no proof. Certainly, Ra'ed Karmi was much less of an innocent victim than many of the other Palestinians and Israelis killed in a year and half of escalating violence. Just as certainly, there could have been no doubt that killing him would immediately shatter the cease-fire and unleash a whirlwind of revenge and bloodshed. It was a repetition of the Abu-Hunud assassination and its consequences, but with some significant differences. For one, the outburst of Palestinian retribution started not after a week, but literally within hours of the assassination. And this time it was not the militants of Hamas who were at the forefront of the attacks, but the Tanzim militiamen, Arafat's own followers.

Most important, the gambit had been used one time too many, and this time it stood fully exposed to the public gaze. "Assassinations breed suicide bombers" chanted the Peace Now youths in emergency vigils out-

side the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv and the Prime Ministry's residence in Jerusalem. The same message was repeated in official statements by all sections of the peace movements — no longer only in the ads of Gush Shalom. It came up in Knesset speeches and media appearances of Yossi Sarid, official head of the opposition; in numerous press articles and media commentaries; and even (though in a less explicit form) in the utterances of Foreign Minister Peres. It made a great deal of difference. Unlike the other cycles of violence into which the region is regularly plunged ever since Sharon's arrival at the seat of power, Israeli society entered this one without the conviction that blame was attached to the Palestinians and to the Palestinians alone. In October 2000, Israelis were told — and nearly all believed — that Barak had made generous offers to the Palestinians and that they responded with rejection and violence; now, in December 2001, many of the same people could plainly see that Arafat had made a cease-fire and that it was Sharon who broke it.

Time of Dissent

AS LATER EVENTS WERE TO SHOW, it was to be no more than a temporary respite; within a few months, further cycles of unprecedented bloodshed and violence dwarfing all that went before were to wipe the December ceasefire from the collective memory of both sides. Yet for a few months, the Israeli peace movement got a chance to break out of the marginalization which it suffered since the Intifada outbreak. Some of its gains were to prove enduring, and many of the new adherents were to prove steadfast even under incredibly worse conditions. From the end of December, peace vigils and rallies became bigger and bigger, and new peace groups mushroomed. The refusal of soldiers and officers to serve the occupation took center stage. The "Courage to Refuse" letter, signed by 56 reserve soldiers and officers and eventually gaining the adherence of more than 400 others, got enormous public attention — and opinion polls indicated an astonishing 25 percent in support of the refuseniks. Also, after an unexpectedly successful public meeting held by Gush Shalom in Tel-Aviv, it was for a time actually possible to suggest in the mainstream media the taboo idea that "our"

soldiers may be involved in war crimes, and to point out that practices daily undertaken by the army of occupation bear an uncomfortable resemblance to the acts which the Geneva convention defines as utterly forbidden. It reached its peak in two peace rallies, held for two consecutive weeks — February 9, February 16 — at the Plaza in front of the Tel-Aviv Museum, giving for a time a sense of hope and of a forward move — a sense which was all too soon drowned in the mad spiral of violence and bloodshed, yet of which some memory remained to sustain the participants in the despair of the months which lay ahead.

Those of us who had carried on the struggle in the past year and half, who more than once reached the edge of despair in lonely vigils of a few dozen which were so woefully inadequate for what we were protesting against, felt a bit delirious. A large and heterogeneous crowd — outspoken gays and lesbians from cosmopolitan Tel-Aviv, side by side with villagers from rather conservative Arab communities; the moment of silence, with hundreds of black flags of mourning held aloft; and except for that moment, the continuous chanting, sometimes rising to drown out the speaker “*Fuad, Fuad Sar Habitachon — Kama Yeladim Haragta Ad Hayom?*” (Fuad Minister of Defense, how many children have you killed so far?); the catcalls and whistles which greeted any mention of Foreign Minister Shimon Peres, once the darling of dovish crowds; the voice of well-known singer Ahinoam Nini repeating Lennon’s words “You may say I’m a dreamer, but I’m not the only one”; Uri Avnery thundering, “Once we thought that there are war crimes perpetrated in the occupation — now we see that the occupation is a war crime!”; Shulamit Aloni reciting Nathan Alterman’s poem denouncing the killing of civilians by the army in 1948 — a classic of modern Hebrew poetry — and adding “If Alterman had written it today, Army Chief of Staff Mofaz would have started investigating him as a leftist agitator”; Yasser Arafat’s greeting, sent out of besieged Ramallah: “Only the peace of the brave will ensure our children and yours a future without violence and bloodshed”; writer Sami Michael’s observation: “We must all free ourselves of the occupation, the Palestinians from occupation by the army, we

from occupation by the angel of death; Abed Anabtawi of the Arab Monitoring Committee: “The occupation does not distinguish between Jewish blood and Arab blood; we all stand to be its victims, we all must fight it — together!”; writer Ronit Matalon: “Sharon’s train is taking us to total war and total destruction. We must derail it — and the refusers’ letter is a good start”; Jamal Zahalka: “A specter is haunting this country’s political and military leadership — the specter of soldiers’ refusal, a specter which refuses to be exorcised however much they try”; Yehuda Shenhav: “The occupation is financed by our tax money. The tanks, the helicopter gunships, the bulldozers, the war crimes are all financed by our tax money. This money should go elsewhere — to the poor, to the disabled, to the creation of a just society!”; the cheering and wild clapping which punctuated each and every speech.

None of the speakers had been officially designated keynote speaker. The one who may have come closest to that description was Yishai Rosen-Tzvi — not because of superior rhetorical skill, but because of the recent intense experience which was clearly still fresh in his mind.

I want to tell of how people come to take this act of refusal. In the past year, since I was in prison, I met many people who stand on the very threshold, people who — above anything else — feel terribly cheated. A soldier gets to the Territories and is confronted with a terrible situation, thousands upon thousands of people sunk in deep misery, poverty, humiliation. And then you get your orders and find out what your job is. Your job is to push these people deeper into misery and poverty and humiliation, to keep them caged in towns and villages, not to let them get out, not to let them earn a living, not to let them live a normal life. And then two things happen. First you look around in disbelief, you take your head into your hands and ask: God, can this be true, is this really what I am supposed to do, how did I get here, how did I come to get such orders, to be asked to do such things? And the second thing which happens is that you cry out ‘I’ve been cheated!’ All the propaganda arguments collapse — that we are a peace-loving people, that the war was imposed on us, that we do what we must in order to fight terrorism. Everything collapses, all these

specious arguments, collapse like a house of cards. And then you are faced with the reality, the cruel reality. Fighting terrorism — what a joke! They are maintaining a hot-house of misery and poverty and hopelessness, our army does, a hothouse where the plants of terrorism have the ideal conditions for growth. The government policy is keeping the terrorism hothouse going and flourishing. And the conclusion is very simple. There are things which a decent person just does not do. A decent person does not starve people, and does not humiliate people, and does not treat people as if they were dirt. A decent person just does not do that. Not under any circumstance. And there are more decent people in this country than we thought. And every day more people discover that they are decent, and start behaving as decent people should. And when there are enough of them, then the occupation will just come to an end.

All of this had ramifications inside the Labor Party, the coalition partner which Sharon was treating with increasing contempt. The principled minority which all along called for leaving the cabinet became increasingly active and vocal, and its campaign also influenced the party's more opportunistic elements. Defense Minister Ben Eliezer, recently elected party leader in hotly contested internal elections held among Laborites throughout the country, started an effort to appear slightly more dovish — at least in nuances, such as the duration of military offensives against the Palestinians and the amount of military forces used in them. For his part, Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg, Ben Eliezer's great rival — a man who started his political career as a Peace Now activist, but who later considerably mellowed his tone — now took an outspoken anti-occupation line. Burg also took up where President Katzav left off, declaring his intention to address the Palestinian Parliament in Ramallah — which aroused great anger on the right and correspondingly gained Burg considerable kudos in his own constituency. Burg found, however, various pretexts to avoid actually going to Ramallah — until his game was overtaken by events and the army went there instead.

Further towards the political center, the solid support which Prime Minister Sharon had enjoyed since being elected in Febru-

ary 2001 was fast eroding. The general public was less and less confident that the PM really knew what he was doing, and the atmosphere of “national unity” which prevailed throughout 2001 was fast dissipating, to be replaced by dissent and often acrimonious debate. An attempt by the Prime Minister to hold a televised “address to the nation” — with his main theme being “The security and economic situation are both bad, the struggle to improve them will be long, but we must be patient and steadfast and united and in the end we will win” — was greeted with derision and a further slide in his popularity ratings. People were increasingly ready for radical solutions of different kinds. Opinion polls indicated half, in some cases more than half of the public supporting the kind of solutions long proposed by the peace movement — withdrawal to 1967 borders, dismantling of most or all settlements, division of Jerusalem; but there was a correspondingly increased support for the proposals of the extreme right — for wholesale invasion of the Palestinian territories, for extreme repressive measures, even for “transfer” and wholesale ethnic cleansing. Strange as it may seem, for some people there was no necessary contradiction: “First we go in, clean out the terrorists and teach the Arabs who's boss; then we go out and slam the door behind us with a big bang, erect a high wall between them and us, and let them go to hell their own way” was how a taxi driver put it in a casual conversation. Respectable social scientists and former generals in highly-funded think tanks formulated essentially the same program in long, elaborate position papers.

Downward Spiral

IN FACT, PUBLIC DISSATISFACTION with Sharon's performance started in relation to the economic sphere, only later spreading to his handling of the security situation as well. In later 2001, the deterioration of the economy became highly evident. Unemployment reached new records, with more and more factories and enterprises closing down, and economists predicted little or no economic growth in 2002. The weeks of cease-fire allowed public attention to focus, for some time, on socioeconomic issues. In the absence of shooting incidents, the headlines

were captured by workers bitterly protesting the loss of their jobs. A militant struggle by the disabled got much public sympathy, as in their wheelchairs they held a months-long sit-in strike in front of the finance ministry, demanding an increase in their allowances. The government budget for 2002 was approved far behind schedule, in February rather than December. Its passage required considerable wrangling and sometimes sordid deals between Sharon and his numerous coalition partners. The budget finally cobbled together held no glimmer of hope for the poorer Israelis who are the main electoral base of Sharon's Likud Party.

In many ways, the economic crisis could be traced to the ongoing conflict. Since the Intifada outbreak, tourism — one of the Israeli economy's mainstays — has been all but completely ruined. Israel has become far less attractive to foreign investors, many of whom nowadays hesitate even to come for a short visit — much less, to put their money into such a dangerous country. Apprehension about suicide bombings drove many Israelis to avoid the city centers, leading to the collapse of shops, cafes and restaurants — particularly in downtown Jerusalem.

Also the terrible blow dealt by Israel to the Palestinian economy, virtually shattered by the Israeli army's imposition of closures, sieges and travel restrictions, recoiled back upon Israel itself. With the general impoverishment of the Palestinian population and its severe loss of purchasing power, the Israeli firms dependent upon exports to the Palestinian market started to suffer, some of them to the point of collapse. Altogether, in the beginning of 2002 government economists published an estimate putting the direct and indirect economic losses to Israel from the ongoing confrontation with the Palestinians at five billion dollars. Soon, Sharon's active promotion of an ever more massive use of military force would push that cost even higher.

Sitting Ducks

IMMEDIATELY UPON THE ASSASSINATION of Ra'ed Karmi, a Palestinian gunman crossed into the Israeli town of Hadera, and in an indiscriminate shooting spree at a family celebration killed six random Israeli civilians. In the weeks which followed, however, the

leadership of the Fatah-Tanzim militia seemed to have taken a decision to concentrate upon guerrilla attacks against soldiers and settlers in the Occupied Territories themselves. The other Palestinian organizations mostly followed suit. That, too, made a difference for the public atmosphere in Israel. Israelis certainly mourned the soldiers killed in the territories, but such Palestinian actions did not carry the same moral repugnance and aversion aroused by attacks on Israel's population centers. Indeed, in some cases Israeli military officers expressed a grudging admiration for the "professionalism and courage" of the guerrillas they were facing. Palestinian fighters evidently imbibed the classical guerrilla maxim — avoid your enemy where he is strong and alert, strike unexpectedly at his weak spots — and in particular, the lessons and methods of the Hizbullah's campaign against the Israeli occupation of South Lebanon.

In the Gaza Strip, guerrillas minutely observed the path daily taken by Israeli convoys to the settlement of Netzarim, an armed enclave directly south of Gaza City itself. A well-laid explosive charge destroyed an Israeli tank which headed the convoy, a "Merkava" type which until that day had the reputation of being "the world's best protected tank." Alarmed commanders promised a thorough reexamination and change in the routines which made such a fatal result possible. But the continuing maintenance of a nationalist-religious Israeli settler group in the heart of Gaza is at the core of this government's policy, not open to question by the military echelon; the isolated settlement remained in place, with only a single road linking it to Israeli territory, which did not leave much room for varying the routine. Precisely a month later, the guerrillas made a second attack, again at a convoy passing the same route and almost on the same spot, destroying a second Merkava tank.

In the West Bank, the guerrillas found the numerous roadblocks and checkpoints to be the IDF's weakest point — as well as being the aspect of the occupation most resented by the general Palestinian population. Located so as to control Palestinian traffic, these roadblocks involved small military detachments placed in isolated positions, occasionally located at the bottom of canyons

(where the roads run) and — in contradiction of elementary military principles — without securing the commanding heights on the flanks. Moreover, with the regular army stretched to its very limits, the road-blocks were often manned by rear-echelon troops with little combat training. The results were fatal — 17 soldiers killed within two weeks, in a series of guerrilla attacks on road-blocks. In the most deadly incident a single Palestinian sniper, armed with an old but still serviceable WW II carbine, went on shooting for half an hour, killed seven soldiers and three of the settlers they were supposed to be protecting, and calmly walked away before reinforcements could arrive. (The place where this happened is known in Arabic as Wadi Haramiya, the Canyon of the Robbers, a name reminiscent of earlier practitioners of such tactics in Ottoman times.) “You have abandoned us, we have been made into sitting ducks!” reacted surviving soldiers when senior officers arrived on the spot a few hours later for what was supposed to be a morale-raising visit. Media reports spread the story further, noting that the Haramiya Checkpoint had been established due to the pressure of settlers from nearby settlements, against the professional opinion of the officers in charge. “If the settlers want to risk their own lives, that is their affair — but why did my son have to die?” asked the mother of David Demlin, one of the ten killed soldiers, who told the press that her son had seriously considered signing the refusers’ letter.

Peace Proposals & Broken Promises

CONCURRENTLY WITH HIS PLUMMETING domestic popularity, Sharon could feel the climate in Washington starting to change. True, the Americans continued to give public backing to Sharon’s ongoing campaign of bombings and invasions of Palestinian cities, which were called “self-defense” in official U.S. communiqués. However, the administration politely but firmly rejected Sharon’s proposals about ousting Arafat and seeking some elusive “alternative Palestinian leadership.” Since he had already tried almost everything else, without breaking the Palestinian resolve, the continuing American backing to his military actions was of little avail to Sharon. Adding to his predicament

was the sudden peace initiative offered by the Saudi Crown Prince, publicized through the mediation of the *New York Times*’ Thomas Friedman. On public offer was full peace between Israel and the entire Arab world, in return for full withdrawal to the 1967 borders. A clarification, delivered through Henry Siegman of the American Jewish Congress, indicated the Saudis were willing to accept Israeli retention of the Jewish Quarter in the Old City of Jerusalem, in line with some proposals made at the last stage of negotiations under Barak.

The proposal made quite an impression on war-weary Israeli society. The past year-and-a-half made Israelis highly suspicious of the Palestinians, and doubtful of any promise made or agreement signed by a Palestinian leader (a feeling amply reciprocated on the Palestinian side). An agreement backed by the entire Arab world and brokered by one of its most prestigious and powerful states, a state which hitherto stayed on the sidelines, seemed to offer a more solid assurance for the future; opinion polls indicated about half of the Israeli public (48 percent in one poll, 54 percent in another) willing to accept the Saudi proposal. Past experience indicates that, should the government accept the proposal, this could quickly mount to a solid majority. Sharon, however, had no intention of accepting the 1967 borders or anything like them, regardless of what was offered in return. Of course, he did not announce his rejection of the Saudi offer. Instead, he made a series of proposals — an offer to meet personally with the Saudis, later expanded to inviting them to join “a regional peace conference” — all designed to get the normalization and diplomatic recognition offered by the Saudis without paying the required territorial price.

Saudi efforts were, meanwhile, concentrated on gathering the support of key Arab states for their initiative — with a view to officially presenting it for approval at the Arab Summit, due to meet in Beirut at the end of March. But to achieve that, the presence of Arafat at the summit was declared vital — thus directly linking the Saudi proposal with the issue of the continuing siege of Arafat’s Ramallah. For his part, Sharon made the end of the siege dependent upon the Palestinian police arresting the militia-

men held responsible for the assassination of Minister Ze'evi. Yet the PM did not seem entirely happy when the Palestinians — in the very midst of the string of successful guerrilla operations — obliged him and announced the arrest of the required persons. For a moment, the possibility of resuming “security cooperation” between the Israeli and Palestinian security services — the first step in all the blueprints which Washington repeatedly tried to implement in its mediation efforts over the past year — seemed real. But rapprochement with the Palestinians was the very last thing Sharon wanted. Instead of lifting the siege on Arafat — which Labor's Ben Eliezer, intent at the moment on creating a dovish image, firmly supported — Sharon pushed through a “compromise”: the tanks withdrew a few hundred meters from the immediate vicinity of Arafat's headquarters, and the cabinet announced Arafat to be “free to move within Ramallah” but “needing to ask Sharon's permission for going anywhere else.”

The Israeli cabinet's decision was seen by the Palestinians as the deliberate insult it was. No “security cooperation” was established, and instead there was on the following day a new series of deadly Palestinian attacks. “I told you so” Ben Eliezer was quoted as saying. But of course he did not resign, and all too soon he was implementing on Sharon's behalf a new offensive against the Palestinians — the largest, by far, since the confrontation started.

Dress Rehearsal for War

IN EARLY 1982, THE IDEA of the Israeli army invading so deep into Lebanon as to reach and conquer Beirut itself would have seemed preposterous. Yet within a few months Defense Minister Sharon was to do just that. With this kind of precedent, more attention should have been given in early 2002 to an increasing stream of leaks from the army and government, telling of plans for widespread invasion of the Palestinian areas. Perhaps the most blatant hint was included in the article published on January 25 by the well-informed military correspondent of *Ha'aretz*, Amir Oren: “In order to prepare properly for the next campaign, one of the Israeli officers in the territories said not long ago, it's justified and in fact essential to learn from every

possible source. If the mission will be to seize a densely populated refugee camp, or take over the Casbah in Nablus, and if the commander's obligation is to try to execute the mission without casualties on either side, then he must first analyze and internalize the lessons of earlier battles — even, however shocking it may sound, even how the German army fought in the Warsaw Ghetto.”

The IDF never bothered to deny that one of its senior officers did indeed say these words, and the publication created surprisingly little stir in Israel, where less explicit references to the Holocaust often result in major scandals. Settler and extreme right leaders had always called for a “solution” to the Palestinian problem through the use of sheer brute force — but since about January 2002 their speeches and pronouncements on the subject assumed an increasingly coherent detail. They were talking of a major military operation, involving reoccupation of all Palestinian territories, house-to-house searches for munitions, and mass arrests or outright shooting down of all “terrorists,” with the term extended to include any Palestinian found in possession of arms — to be followed by breaking up the Palestinian Authority and its leadership, assumption of permanent Israeli rule and the conducting of “negotiations” with the cowed remnant on severely-limited autonomy.

At the time, such detailed descriptions were often attributed to the fertile imagination of such demagogues as Avigdor Lieberman of the National Unity Party, at that time Minister of Infrastructure. In hindsight, Lieberman and his fellows clearly had access to the concrete military plans being prepared by the general staff. It is now known that as early as January the army followed a plan whose full implementation required a wide-scale mobilization of reserves, to ensure enough troops for a simultaneous invasion and reoccupation of all Palestinian cities. But at the time Israeli public opinion was not yet ready to accept such measures; in particular, the army's high command was apprehensive that mobilizing the reserves would encounter widespread refusals. Nor were the Americans, at the time, ready to let Sharon go quite that far, and the Palestinians had not yet provided a suitable pretext. Thus, Sharon and the generals opted

in late February and early March for a more limited version of the general staff's plan (which, not knowing what was to follow, at the time seemed to us grand and monstrous enough by itself). The reserves were not mobilized, but most of the combat strength of the regular army (about 20,000 soldiers, according to several press reports) was concentrated for a direct attack on the Palestinian refugee camps, which had been the focal points of both the first Intifada and the present one and which the army had hitherto avoided entering.

Even with training stopped and all available units pressed into the operation, there were not enough troops to attack all camps at once. Instead, a sweep was planned, going roughly north to south, with the units continually leapfrogging from one refugee camp to the next. In between, the Air Force was to carry out massive bombings in the places not invaded at the moment, and with the Navy to take part by shelling targets on the Gaza shore, and its elite commandos borrowed for operations far inland. Before the Second Intifada broke out, the army estimated that invading the Palestinian areas in general and the refugee camps in particular would involve a prohibitive number of Israeli casualties. Since October 2000, however, the best military minds were drafted to develop specific tactics and strategies which would keep casualties to the bare minimum. Under the new doctrine, an invasion would always be carried out under cover of darkness; the soldiers would come in overwhelming strength — battalions in the early invasions, later increased to brigades or even full divisions; infantry would always be accompanied by numerous tanks and helicopter gunships, ready to use their firepower to intimidate and crush all opposition; infantry soldiers would swiftly seize strategically located buildings and transform them into military positions, with Palestinian inhabitants of such structures either expelled or restricted to a single room; thereupon, soldiers would mostly stay inside these positions, with patrolling and any other necessary movement through the streets taking place almost invariably inside armored vehicles; the conquered city as a whole would be subjected to curfew, lasting as long as the troops remained there, with the population restricted to their homes and

any Palestinians found on the street treated as enemies; and withdrawal from the city carried out again at night and inside armored vehicles. For operations at refugee camps, with their narrow alleys and closely-packed huts where armored vehicles cannot pass, the specific tactic was devised of soldiers breaking down the common walls and moving from one house to its neighbor without going into the street and exposing themselves to sniper fire. And in case of this failing, house-destroying armored bulldozers were held ready.

The plan was carried out, more or less on schedule. The 20,000 soldiers assigned carried out their grim tasks, and conquest of the refugee camps was accomplished at the cost to the Israeli side of more or less one dead Israeli soldier per camp — truly minimal losses, to everybody but the particular soldier's family. Palestinian losses were staggering, more than 200 in one week, nearly fifty of them on a single day — March 8, "Red Friday." TV screens were filled with the images of hundreds of Palestinian men taken captive, their hands tied behind their backs with plastic handcuffs and their eyes covered with rags, led under guard through the streets. The practice of writing numbers on the prisoners' wrists, apparently invented independently by efficiency-loving junior officers, aroused a storm of protests, even from middle-of-the-road Knesset Members, who were reminded that the Nazis used a similar method in keeping track of concentration camp inmates. Meanwhile, it soon turned out that most of the "heavy terrorists" which the army wanted were not among these captives. Rather than stay and fight to the death against impossible odds, they slipped away to deliver heavy blows in less well-guarded spots, and come back unscathed once the army vacated their homes and went on to another camp. Colonel Aviv Kochavi, in command of conquering Balata Refugee camp in Nablus, gloated on Israeli radio: "We were told there were tigers here, but we found only kittens." Within a few hours he had to eat his words, as some of the "kittens" launched both a lethal suicide bombing in Jerusalem and a withering attack on an army checkpoint. In the heat of the struggle, the distinctions between different Palestinian groups blurred, militants of the Tanzim, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and

the Marxist factions fighting together. The idea of restricting the struggle to guerrilla attacks targeting soldiers was lost in the popular anger among Palestinians at the widespread killings and destruction and the clamor for instant retribution.

No longer were suicide bombers restricted to the Islamic organizations alone; an increasing number of them came from the ranks of Fatah. It was a confusing time for Israelis. The hundreds of Palestinian casualties provided no consolation for the dozens of Israeli ones. Every morning the radio announced the conquest of yet another Palestinian town or refugee camp; every afternoon came news of yet another deadly Palestinian raid into an Israeli town. And in addition, an attack attributed to infiltrators from across the Lebanese border left six Israelis dead in an area which had been quiet since the withdrawal from Lebanon two years ago, raising the specter of a full-blown second front.

The Wobbling Bush (1)

BELATEDLY, PRESIDENT BUSH REALIZED that the fire which he had let Sharon set was endangering his own agenda. Specifically, the escalation between Israel and the Palestinians threatened to completely derail Vice President Cheney's long-planned visit to the region and foil the effort to create an anti-Saddam front, to which the administration decided to give its first priority. In a dramatic press conference, the president announced that he was sending Zinni back to the region and called upon the parties to the conflict "to reach a cease fire by themselves, even ahead of Zinni's arrival." But Bush's firm words failed — as was to be repeated again and again — to carry quite the real clout which they implied. Zinni's arrival in the region was delayed for a full week, for reasons which were never clarified but which left room for considerable additional carnage.

Immediately upon the Bush pronouncement, Sharon made a seemingly conciliatory gesture — announcing that he was giving up his demand of "seven days of complete quiet" as a precondition for negotiations. This was, however, coupled with intensification of the ongoing military campaign, whose aim was bluntly defined by the Prime Minister as "increasing the number of Pal-

estinian casualties." In another move of the simultaneous game, Sharon passed through the cabinet a decision to allow Arafat movement from Ramallah to other locations in Palestinian territory, but not abroad — a decision which infuriated the extreme-right Liebermann to the point of bolting the government, but which left the Palestinian leader himself less than overjoyed. In fact, Arafat smelled a rat and refrained from leaving Ramallah at a time that large-scale Israeli forces were visibly converging on the city. Arafat had good reasons to suspect that, after three months of keeping him bottled up, Sharon suddenly wanted him out of the way in order to smooth the way for an invasion. Meanwhile, tens of thousands of settlers and their supporters were bused into Tel-Aviv where they held a turbulent rally in Rabin Square, their speakers calling upon Sharon "to finish off the evil Palestinian Authority, once and for all." Just as they boarded the bulletproof buses back to their settlements, massive military forces started moving into Ramallah.

In what that day's papers hailed as "the biggest Israeli military operation since 1982" but which seems in retrospect no more than a dress rehearsal, a full infantry division accompanied by hundreds of tanks was deployed in order to conquer a single Palestinian city defended by lightly-armed militiamen. "Resistance was scattered, the operation was carried out on schedule," announced the army spokesman, belittling the killing of a dozen young Palestinians which the smooth operation took. "The army swung a mighty fist, and landed it on the air," remarked the well-informed Nachum Barn'ea of *Yediot Aharonot*. To his frustration, at this juncture Sharon had to defer to the Americans and to his Labor Party coalition partners and keep the army out of the sector around Arafat's headquarters, with the generals complaining that the unconquered enclave was "providing a refuge to wanted Palestinians." In the rest of the city, their operations were hampered by the intensive presence of international media, abundantly present in this most cosmopolitan of Palestinian cities. The footage of tanks crushing Palestinian ambulances and Israeli soldiers invading living rooms of Palestinian families and throwing clothes out of the cup-

boards, followed by the news that the popular Italian journalist Raffaele Ciriello was shot to death by Israeli soldiers in Ramallah and several other journalists wounded, made Israeli diplomats around the world cry out about a "PR disaster." Geraldo Rivera, commentator for Fox Television, told his listeners: "All my life I have been a Zionist. But after what I saw in Ramallah, I have become a Palestinian. Using tanks and F-16 fighter planes against a city population, that is not 'fighting terrorism.' It is terrorism." (*Yediot Aharonot*, March 17.)

Even Israel's own TV proved "not patriotic enough" for Sharon's taste. On the night of March 15, the Second Channel TV News showed on prime time the footage taken by its correspondent who followed the fighting forces in Ramallah: the soldiers approaching the door of a Palestinian house, knocking and at getting no response blowing up the door; a girl crying near the body of her mother, severely wounded in the explosion; the Palestinian family huddled in their living room, closely guarded by armed soldiers; a bespectacled soldier, sitting on the Palestinians' sofa, saying to the camera: "What are we doing here? I have no idea. A Hebrew boy so far from the Homeland..." (His name, as *Ma'ariv* found out, Uri Yaniv. The army's conclusion from the affair was to forbid TV crews from accompanying its actions anymore.)

Three days after the army moved into Ramallah, President Bush made another dramatic TV address, accusing Sharon of being "far from helpful to the success of Zinni's mission" and ordering him in no uncertain words to terminate the operation forthwith. From the point of view of Sharon and the generals, it was all a big failure. No "deterrence" had been established towards the Palestinians, and Sharon's rating in the opinion polls remained low. Both the army and the PM were determined to have another go at the Palestinians, as soon as possible.

Lighting the Fuse

SHARON MADE A SHOW of fully cooperating with the mediator Zinni, swiftly withdrawing all Israeli forces from the Palestinian areas ahead of cease-fire talks. He also went as far as conspicuously refraining from military retaliation at two suicide bombings which happened while the cease-fire talks went on. In this way,

the PM was steadily building up credit points with the Americans and Israeli public opinion, to justify the launching of the major attack of which the plans were already laid, waiting for a suitable pretext — which Hamas was soon to provide.

It would have been wise for the Palestinians to swiftly conclude a cease-fire, under what were relatively advantageous conditions from their point of view. That, however, may have meant taking up a campaign of arrests against the militants of all stripes, at a time when the Palestinian police and security services had hardly any premises or prisons left, so thorough had the Israeli bombardments been. And more important than the destruction of physical assets, the campaign of the past months clearly changed the internal balance of forces in Palestinian society, weakening the Palestinian Authority and its apparatus, and greatly enhancing the prestige and support enjoyed by the various militant groups. For their part, the militias felt little inclination to suspend their armed struggle and establish a lasting ceasefire without any indication of Sharon willing to move meaningfully towards terminating the occupation, and in fact giving many indications to the contrary. Having just withstood a very heavy Israeli attack, the militiamen were overconfident, not fully appreciating that a still far heavier attack was in the making.

The sticking point over which the cease-fire negotiations failed was Sharon's unwillingness to end the closures and sieges of Palestinian cities and towns, which in the past year and half made daily life hell — even though the Tenet plan called for Israeli forces to be removed to where they were on September 28, 2000, before the sieges had been imposed. The Zinni compromise paper, which was supposed to lay down the route to implementing Tenet and from there to the Mitchell Report recommendations, was closer to the Israeli position on this key issue — with the result that it was accepted by Sharon and not by Arafat, further helping the PM lay the ground for his proposed attack. It well suited Sharon that no cease-fire was signed, and that unlike what happened in December, Arafat issued no call upon Hamas to refrain from suicide bombings.

From the Bush Administration's point of

view, the Zinni mission was in fact a side-show, with the main effort being Vice President Cheney's trip through the Arab capitals, aimed at getting support for the intended attack on Iraq. But in meetings with one Arab leader after another, Cheney found he had underestimated the importance of the Palestinian issue, its influence on the Arab masses, and specifically the destabilizing effect on pro-American Arab regimes of Israeli attacks on the Palestinians. Things came to a head when Cheney arrived in Jerusalem. His meeting with Sharon was taken for granted as part of "consultations with the regional leaders"; a meeting with Arafat was at first ruled out altogether, and then made into a special favor which the Palestinian leader needed to "earn" by "good behavior" — to start with, accepting the unpalatable Zinni paper. The affair ended with mutual recriminations between Americans and Palestinians, no meeting held between Arafat and Cheney and no ceasefire signed — and with Sharon noting with satisfaction the atmosphere getting murkier and murkier.

The Explosion

MARCH 27, 2002, WAS THE DATE defined months in advance for the Arab Summit in Beirut. The fact that it coincided with the Jewish holiday of Passover was most probably accidental. The Beirut summit assumed greater importance as a result of the peace initiative launched by Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah which — as already noted — offered Israel full peace with the entire Arab world in return for full withdrawal from the Occupied Territories. It also placed urgently on the agenda Sharon's continuing restriction of Arafat's movements, putting in question the Palestinian leader's ability to meet his Arab colleagues and being able to participate in discussions of prime importance for the Palestinian's future. Sharon was unwilling to let Arafat go to Beirut — or rather, the PM would have been overjoyed to let Arafat go there, provided that he would not come back.

After some hesitations and debates, the cabinet voted to deny Arafat the possibility of a "two-way ticket to Beirut," but the Palestinian leader forestalled them by announcing in advance that he was not going. On the morning of March 27, banner headlines car-

ried the warning from the Defense Minister, who had been outvoted in the cabinet: "Ben Eliezer: Forbidding Arafat travel a mistake, will lead to escalation." (The warning was to come true all too soon, and as usual the Labor Party leader would forget his own warning and jump headfirst into carrying out his part in the escalation.) On the evening of March 27, the prime time evening news on all channels of Israeli TV was concentrated on the Beirut summit, to the virtual exclusion of all other news. Commentators analyzed the power struggles evident among the Arab leaders, and screened Crown Prince Abdullah carefully-phrased address to the Israeli people, calling upon them to take the offered hand extended in peace and forego the path of brute force. There were some speculations on how Sharon would react, and predictions of a possible fierce debate polarizing Israeli society and possibly bringing down the Sharon government — considering that in all polls, a persistent half of the public showed itself in favor of the Saudi proposal. An hour later, the broadcasts were interrupted for emergency bulletins: a Hamas suicide bomber had just blown himself up at the resort of Netanya, in a hall where mostly elderly Israelis had gathered to celebrate Passover. The explosion of a large amount of explosives inside a constricted space led to 21 people being killed — the largest number of fatalities in any single suicide bombing — with the death toll eventually rising to 29.

As far as the Israeli media was concerned, the Beirut Summit ceased to exist at that moment, replaced by photos of horror from the scene in Netanya, and rising tide of calls for revenge by politicians from nearly the entire spectrum. Later that night, a statement was drawn up in hasty consultations among activists of Gush Shalom, the Israeli Peace Bloc. Throughout the night it was sent out, in Hebrew and English, by fax and email, to journalists, activists, anybody who might possibly be expected to listen: "On one and the same evening, the State of Israel got two diametrically opposed offers. Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia offers Israel a full peace with the entire Arab world in exchange for ending the occupation and withdrawing to the 1967 borders. One hour later, the suicide bomber who ar-

rived in Netanya made to Israel, on behalf of Hamas, a counter-offer — an offer of eternal war and indiscriminate mutual killing. By all indications it seems that the Sharon Government is about to reject the peace offer and accept the war offer....” There were some positive responses from abroad and from our fellow peace activists. But it did not reach the mainstream of Israeli society, and not a single paper published the press release; in fact, we did not really expect them to. As the storm of anger gathered, composed of clearly genuine popular anger which was just as clearly manipulated and channeled in a specific direction by the state-controlled media, one could not do much more than watch helplessly, as a trapped traveler in the mountains watches a gathering avalanche.

War and Two Sieges

BY MANY STANDARDS, the entire 54-year history of Israel can be considered a single unbroken war. Still, Israelis in general perceive of their history as including specific “wars” — the War of Independence of 1947-49, the Sinai War of 1956, the Six Day War of 1967 and so on — punctuated by periods of at least relative calm. The distinction between “war” and “calm” is not watertight, and the definition and duration of some wars, especially the later ones, is highly controversial. (Was “the Lebanon War” a period of about three months in the summer of 1982, or the whole period — more than two decades — when Israeli troops occupied larger or smaller portions of Lebanese soil and fought against a changing cast of militias and guerrillas?) In general, a military operation needs to fulfill some criteria to be called a “war.” It is a time when reserves are called up, to augment the regular army, a time when large military forces are visibly moving about, conquering new territory or (when the action goes less well) falling back. It is customary to launch a war at a dramatic cabinet meeting, usually held at a late night hour; thereupon, the government and the media make calls for national unity behind Our Boys at The Front, and those who insist on continuing the kind of dissent acceptable in calm periods could be berated for their lack of patriotism. Professional military officers add the criteria that a war,

as distinct from an ordinary military operation, should effect a significant strategic change in the situation that prevailed before it broke out. The case had also been made that Israel and the Palestinians had been, for all intents and purposes, at war since September 2000. Sharon was at great pains to impose a different scheme: what happened for the previous year and half was something else, a kind of preliminary fumbling; the real war started on the night of March 28, when the government officially declared to the people the launching of “Operation Defensive Shield” which would at last put an end to the threat of terrorism — or so at least some ministers were moved to promise in the heat of the moment.

Secretary of State Powell, who phoned Sharon while the cabinet meeting was going on, made one stipulation only — that Arafat not be physically harmed — thereby effectively authorizing Sharon to do anything else to all other Palestinians. Still, the stipulation was important. Sharon had fully intended to instruct the army to “expel Arafat from the territories.” The attempt to do that would have likely ended with Arafat’s death: because the Palestinian leader, his pistol always at hand, had no intention to let himself be captured alive, and because Arafat’s death seems to be Sharon’s true — if undeclared — aim. At issue was, of course, more than the personal fate of a single man named Yasser Arafat. Sharon was forced to keep alive — even if hanging by a very thin thread indeed — the option of an eventual resumption of a political process and negotiations.

In the meantime, Arafat was placed under a tight siege, compared to which his conditions in the past months seemed sheer luxury: the Palestinian leader, his bodyguards and some of his advisers were squeezed into part of a single building, with elite Israeli commandos establishing their headquarters “just across the wall from Arafat’s bedroom” as a boasting article in *Yediot Aharonot* put it, and with Israeli forces completely controlling all access to him. Yet far from Arafat being “cut off and completely isolated, to render him helpless” — as the cabinet resolution put it — the tight siege enhanced Arafat’s popularity among Palestinians and in the entire Arab world to un-

precedented heights, and completely swept off the board any idea of replacing him. The footage of Arafat being interviewed by candlelight, talking on a small mobile phone, flashed on TV screens around the globe. "He did it deliberately for effect, exactly on that day we have resumed his electricity supply," complained an Israeli general. To add to the army's embarrassment, dozens of international peace activists — Americans, French, Danish and also Israeli — managed to elude the supposedly hermetic military closure of Arafat's headquarters, get in and stay in as "human shields" for the full duration of the siege; their presence made a difference when Sharon later had second thoughts about the compromise he agreed to and began seriously contemplating sending in his commandos.

The siege around Arafat's compound was the first major hitch for "Operation Defensive Shield," and it could not be resolved by military means. Soon was added the siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, into which more than two hundred Palestinians fled for refuge when Israeli tanks rolled into the city. Some of them were leading militants wanted by the Israeli security services and expecting to be shot on sight or be taken for painful interrogation followed by decades-long imprisonment. Others were ordinary civilians, including dozens of boys, obeying the natural instinct to seek a place of safety when faced by a hostile invading army. All of them were to endure a prolonged ordeal. Two years almost to the day after it was ceremoniously visited by the pope, a bit more than three years after the festive visit of Bill and Hillary Clinton, the Church of the Nativity and Bethlehem's Manger Square around it had become a battlefield. Tourist guides describe the Church of the Nativity — erected in Byzantine times on the site which Christian tradition identifies as Jesus Christ's birthplace — as "fortress-like": thick walls, narrow windows, a single extremely small door. That is no coincidence: in its nearly two thousand years of existence, the Church of the Nativity had seen many turbulent periods when its people tried to find refuge in it against unruly invaders. Against medieval weapons, it is almost impregnable; modern heavy arms could have breached the walls without too much trouble, but at the prohibitive

cost of causing incalculable harm to Christianity's most holy site. Even with the army ruling out any idea of breaking in by force, the Bethlehem siege earned Sharon's Israel widespread condemnation throughout the Christian world, including such unlikely quarters as Ulster Unionists and even from the Christian Phalange of Lebanon, a militia notorious for its rabid hatred of Palestinians and which had been Sharon's ally in 1982. Rather than break in, the army settled in for the medieval form of warfare, trying to starve out the besieged. The amount of food allowed into the church was only sufficient for a few dozen priests and monks trapped inside; for the extra two hundred hungry mouths not a scrap of food was provided. And the grim siege went on...

The Reality Behind the Rumors

EXCEPT FOR THESE TWO TROUBLE SPOTS, in the first days the Israeli forces encountered no serious hitches in their relentless march of conquest. The army used the same methods as those developed in the earlier rounds, but on a far wider scale — everywhere at once, or nearly at once, with the abundance of troops and tanks now at the army's disposal. As a lesson from the earlier invasion, the army made a considerable effort to impose a media blackout, authorizing no journalists to travel with its own troops (not even those who had a long record of loyally reporting verbatim the army's version) and attempting to locate and expel the journalists already on the scene. (On at least one occasion tear gas grenades were lobbed at a CNN camera crew by overzealous soldiers.) The curfew was enforced strictly and brutally. The first thing which peace and human rights activists heard upon telephoning contacts in the invaded cities was usually panicked reports of wild shooting in the streets. In most cases Palestinian residents could factually tell only of what happened in their own street; happenings further away depended only on terrible rumors which were magnified in the telling.

What was reported often from all cities, and soon substantiated beyond all doubt, was the widespread habit of tanks to deliberately roll over and crush civilian cars. Private soldiers' vandalism tolerated by commanding officers or a deliberate policy to further cow

and demoralize the population? Reports of widespread looting and wanton destruction of Palestinian property turned out, when the area became more accessible, to be all too true. Some blatant cases were later admitted by the military authorities, which promised to punish the culprits — though they seem to represent only a minor fraction of the whole. And of darker issues — for example, several rumored cases of extra-judicial executions of Palestinian police officers, soon after the army entered Ramallah — some gained substance through examination of the bodies by human rights doctors, while others turned out, also according to Palestinian sources, to be baseless rumors.

The operational plan worked out by the army and Shabak security services soon became plain: secure control of a city, and then begin a systematic sweep for weapons, explosives and “wanted terrorists.” That was implemented through the twin channels of “pinpoint raids” on specific locations, to search for specific persons known to the Shabak, and the routine searches intended to touch all the houses of a particular city. The army estimated that four weeks would be required to “do the job”; in the time the army had, at least half the houses of Ramallah and Nablus seem to have been searched by soldiers. There seem to have been considerable individual differences in the behavior of soldiers, even in the same street or house: Palestinians reported one squad behaving with wanton destructiveness while the squad searching the neighboring house was polite and respectful. Still, the total number of cases of looting and destruction of property during such searches seems to have been enormous; never before, in all the 35 years of Israeli rule, had so many Palestinians experienced the occupation in such a personal and humiliating way, leaving behind a new legacy of anger and hatred whose effects may be felt for years to come.

The systematic house-to-house searches were often accompanied by mass arrests of all men (and boys) of a particular age range; these were held for several days at improvised detention centers, often under very difficult conditions, with most of the random prisoners being set free after a few days, to get home by foot in the dangerous conditions of a city under curfew. Rumors filtered out of

the Ofer Camp outside Ramallah where many of the “suspected terrorists” were taken, of systematic torture of prisoners, apparently in order to get them to implicate others who could then be detained in turn. The use of brute force in interrogations seems to have been especially motivated by the Shabak’s haste to get more information quickly, before international pressure forced withdrawal from the territory and rendered it less accessible to operatives.

Human rights organizations tried to appeal to the Supreme Court about the tortures at Ofer Camp. The Supreme Court had forbidden the use of torture at Shabak interrogations, but that was at a different time with a different public atmosphere. Now, the judges just refused to acknowledge that their previous verdict was being systematically flouted, saying they could not refer to the matter without an affidavit of a witness to the torture. An affidavit could not be produced. The human rights organizations had gotten the tip from a soldier, who had taken a great risk just leaking anonymously what could well be termed classified information. The detainees subjected to torture could have signed an affidavit if they had been able to meet their lawyers — but such meetings were forbidden by the army through a new military decree, which the Supreme Court upheld “in view of the exceptional circumstances.” The torture at Ofer continued, undisturbed by the law.

Hell in Jenin

THERE WAS ONE PLACE where the army predicted strong military resistance from the Palestinians: the Casbah (Old City) of Nablus, with its narrow winding alleys where Israeli soldiers conducted futile chases after Palestinian stone-throwers long before the first Intifada. The army earmarked several of its best infantry brigades for the long-prepared Battle of the Casbah. The bulldozers were also prepared in advance, making way for the tanks by destroying many of the beautiful old structures, and leaving civilians buried under the ruins. The consideration shown to the Church of the Nativity was not extended to a thousand-year old mosque which UNESCO had been about to declare part of the cultural heritage of humanity; the mosque happened to

be in the tanks' and bulldozers' way, and that was that. Altogether, the army conquered the Casbah in a shorter period, and at the cost of fewer casualties, than the high command had predicted.

Where the generals obviously miscalculated was with regard to Jenin — a name which the entire world would soon get to know, but which any expert should have recognized as a center of defiant Palestinian nationalism dating all the way back to the Palestinian uprising against the British in the 1930s. Sharon's own propaganda machine had long before emphasized the disproportionate number of Palestinian suicide bombers originating in the Jenin Refugee Camp — which should have given somebody in the army the idea that the inhabitants might be very persistent in the defense of their own homes. Apparently, nobody got it. Back in February, the IDF had already made two incursions into the Jenin Refugee Camp, during which local militants had a chance to closely observe the army's tactics, in particular the soldiers' way of breaking down the walls of closely-packed refugee huts and moving from one house into the next. The army then withdrew, leaving the militants some two months in which to prepare for its return. The time was well used.

When the soldiers did come back, in the first week of April, they found large portions of the camp booby-trapped, and had to struggle hard for every inch. Altogether, twenty-three Israeli soldiers were killed in the conquest of Jenin, thirteen of them in a single explosion of a set of interlinked bombs which left little chance of survival for those who entered a particular innocent-seeming courtyard between refugee huts. With amazing persistence, no more than about eighty lightly armed militiamen — though having the sympathy of, and some logistical support from, their 15,000 fellow refugees — were able to hold off for nine days several Israeli brigades with their accompanying tanks and helicopter gunships. "It is the Palestinian Massada," a soldier told *Ma'ariv*, referring to the stronghold where Jewish rebels held out against Roman rule in 70 A.D. — a story well-known to anyone who had gone through the Israeli school system.

"Jenin was hell," another soldier said. It was hell indeed for the soldiers, but in

their determination to break the militants they made far worse hell for the hapless inhabitants of the refugee camp. Loudspeakers called upon the inhabitants to leave their homes and clear the way for the army, — but many of the refugees failed to heed, having literally nowhere to go and deeply remembering the earlier homes from which they or their parents lost to the victorious Israeli army in 1948. The bulldozers came then, on a wider scale than in Nablus, clearing the way for the tanks into the camp center by indiscriminately destroying everything in their way. Some inhabitants were able to scramble out of their collapsing homes at the last moment, but others — especially the aged and handicapped — were left trapped under the ruins. Some lay dying for days, with rescue teams forbidden to come near. The army's own rescue teams, often dispatched to the scene of earthquakes around the world, were kept away; a general who thought of bringing them was overruled on the grounds that the place was "too dangerous." When international humanitarian organizations were finally allowed in, more than a week later, it was far too late for most of these trapped inhabitants.

Does all that merit the term "massacre"? Did worse happen, some of which may never become fully known, now that the UN investigation had been blocked? Such questions will probably reverberate through the coming years and decades, arousing controversy and bitterness between the two peoples for as long as the basic conflict is not resolved.

Sundered Perceptions

IN APRIL, MOST OF THE ISRAELI public opinion passed over in silence — or with active approval — the action of army bulldozers destroying refugee dwellings with the inhabitants still inside. A sad irony, considering the enormous public outcry just three months earlier, when refugee dwellings had been demolished with the inhabitants at least given a chance to escape alive. The difference can be attributed to the unprecedented number of suicide bombings in the intervening period, to the very genuine fear and loathing which they aroused in the general Israeli population and to the successful manipulation of that fear and loathing

by Sharon — altogether leading to a very noticeable lowering in the sensitivity to Palestinian suffering.

At least one of the Israeli reservists killed in Jenin is known to have been a firm supporter of withdrawal from the Occupied Territories and dismantling of the settlements. And still — as his father told, who spoke with him on the phone two hours before his death, and who shares the same opinions — he fought at Jenin, believing that the war was just, that invading and destroying the Jenin Refugee Camp was necessary in order to stop suicide bombings emanating from that camp. Most likely, he was not alone among the 29 soldiers killed in “Operation Defensive Shield.” And there is no doubt that a considerable number of Israeli citizens who in principle believe that Israel should quit the Palestinian territories answered the emergency call-up orders and took part in penetrating deeper into these territories. The Netanya bombing (or “The Passover Massacre” as official propaganda called it, though the term never really caught on in daily conversations), coming in the wake of a full month of constant Palestinian assaults all over the country, unified the great majority of Jewish Israelis, including many who would in other circumstances have opposed Sharon.

For most of the world, the images of destruction from Jenin — after those from other West Bank cities subjected to the relentless march of the tanks — were evidence of a terrible juggernaut crushing down a helpless civilian population. For most Israelis, it was morally justified by the suicide bombings which preceded it, and the practical efficacy was proven by the undeniable fact that the number of bombings sharply decreased once the army took over all the West Bank cities. Though the bombings did not entirely cease even when the re-occupation was at its peak, and even though the army's own generals and experts warned that the respite was only temporary, Sharon has regained his earlier high rating in the polls. At least for the moment, he seemed to have proven his point: “Force does work, if you use enough of it.” Indeed, quite a few people argued, in all seriousness, that the army had been “too humane” in Jenin, and that the camp should have been subjected

to carpet bombing by F-16's in order to prevent casualties among the Israeli soldiers.

For those of us committed to opposing Sharon and his war, it was a time of isolation. A time of turning in disgust from daily newspapers which became little more than war propaganda rags and seeking a moment of relative sanity by watching BBC or CNN or diving into the internet; a time of feeling terribly alienated from our country, walking in streets where a profusion of national flags fluttered from balconies and cars and where patriotic signs and bumper stickers sprouted on all sides: “United we march forward”; “Raise our flag, Blue and White”; “I am a patriot”; “From the depth of the heart, thanks to the IDF”; “Give donations for the victims of terrorism.” (In addition to the national colors, many of the signs bore the logos of large corporations, which apparently decided that a show of patriotism was good for business.) For all the gung-ho triumphalism pumped on the airwaves by the hour, however, there was very low attendance at the Independence Day celebrations held in the flag-bedecked main streets. The presence of the army, holding down the Palestinian cities by force, was not enough to convince ordinary Israelis that the threat of suicide bombers was over — nor was it. No wonder that people still preferred to play safe and avoid public gatherings, and that the shops in the city centers continued to wither.

Yet in the midst of all this, we dissenters still managed to hold sizeable protest actions. There were thousands of Israelis who came to the A-Ram Checkpoint north of Jerusalem, attempting to accompany the supply convoy which tried to make its way to occupied Ramallah, and were dispersed by the police's tear gas canisters; and thousands also came to accompany the Jenin convoy, which did get through; and there were the two marches and rallies in Tel-Aviv, by Peace Now and the “February 9 coalition” — not quite as big as the February events, held under much more favorable conditions, but still each drawing between 5,000 and 10,000 participants; and there was the Alternative Independence Day ceremony of Yesh Gvul, in which the officially-approved values were inverted, and the imprisoned refusers proclaimed to be the true heroes of the ongoing war. Some Israelis even managed to slip into

Ramallah and hold protest vigils in its curfew-bound streets, and there were those who joined the band of courageous international peaceniks active in the occupied cities, who used their privileged status as holders of Western passports to break the curfew and help maintain some modicum of medical services for the Palestinian population.

In the first days, when the media created the image of a total, glorious “victory over terrorism,” the protests and dissenting voices were largely ignored — sometimes not reported at all in the media, sometimes registered briefly and without a reaction. 25 Knesset Members, nearly a quarter of Israel’s parliamentarians and including among their number Speaker Burg himself, defied the government which wanted to keep the parliament in recess and called an emergency session in which quite sharp things were said about the war; yet the media reported tersely on the speech of Opposition Leader Yossi Sarid, and returned to its glorification of the army. The movement of soldiers’ refusal reached unprecedented proportions: more than forty conscripts and reservists simultaneously imprisoned for refusal to take part in the attack on the Palestinians, far more than at any time in the Lebanon War or the First Intifada; four soldiers of a single unit refusing to be guards over Palestinian prisoners, preferring to be prisoners themselves (until now, a refuser was usually a single individual isolated in his unit); a Lieutenant-Colonel declaring refusal to command his battalion into the Palestinian territories; the pilot of a helicopter gunship refusing to fire a missile at a house in the Palestinian town of Dura, for fear of hitting civilians.

Some of this was duly reported in the media, some ignored — but in the public mind it was largely discounted as against the fact that the army did successfully mobilize about 30,000 reservists for its conquest of the West Bank cities. The refusal movement had not been in any way widespread enough to seriously disrupt the mobilization — which some of the generals seriously feared before April, and which might have happened in a different climate. For the time being, the refuseniks had been reduced, from the army’s point of view, from a strategic threat to a nuisance — and the

army’s many volunteer spokespersons in the media gloatingly pointed it out, again and again. The attitude of contemptuous tolerance towards dissent changed in the second and third weeks, with the country increasingly confronted with the rising tide of international criticism, especially in Europe; with the de-facto embargo on military supplies to Israel by countries such as Britain and Germany; and with the intense pressure for international investigation of what happened in Jenin.

The widespread response — part gut-reaction, part a calculated massive media campaign — was to blame it all on anti-Semitism and evoke the memory of the Holocaust. Every incident of a synagogue attacked or Jewish cemetery vandalized was reported extensively, together with reports of mass demonstrations in the European capitals, and presented as being one and the same. The role of Jewish dissidents in more than one of these protest demonstrations was kept almost completely secret from the Israeli public.

The Norwegian Terje Larsen, UN representative in the Middle East and one of the architects of the Oslo peace process — a man with unmatched sensitivity and understanding, completely devoted to the achievement of peace between the two peoples — was castigated as “an anti-Semite” for having visited the ruins of Jenin Refugee camp and expressing his shock at what he saw there. The “former leftist” demagogue Saul Tzadka went so far as to read out Larsen’s private phone number on prime time TV, calling upon the public to harass him. This was followed by a McCarthyite campaign whose like none of us can remember in the past decades, aimed at delegitimizing all dissent. In the state-controlled radio and TV, journalists were told in no uncertain terms to avoid any “unpatriotic” questioning of the army’s aims and its announced successes, and in some channels directives were published defining for news readers the list of patriotic terms to be used and that of non-patriotic ones to be avoided.

A similar campaign was undertaken in the privately-owned *Ma’ariv* newspaper by the newly-appointed editor Amnon Dankner, another “former leftist.” The liberal *Ha’aretz*, the one paper which does give

its readers a (limited) amount of news on the suffering of the Palestinians, was subjected to castigation, and calls for its subscribers to cancel. In one university, extreme right students called for expulsion of lecturers who support the refusing soldiers, a call openly supported by Education Minister Livnat; in another university, right-wing professors tried to prevent a lecture by the Yossi Beilin, leader of the Labor doves.

The epitome of the campaign was the concentrated abuse poured upon the 76-year-old singer Yaffa Yarkoni — one of Israel's cultural icons, a woman who never before involved herself in political controversy, and in fact in previous wars had the reputation of going to the front and singing before the soldiers. It was in the present crisis that she chose to speak out very sharply about the situation: "I can't bear to see the soldiers driving the handcuffed Palestinians before them and writing numbers on their hands. We are a people that lived through the Holocaust. How can we be capable of such things? The refusers are right; they have the right to do what their conscience tells them. We should go out of these territories, let the Palestinians have their state." The fury which broke out was astonishing and frightening. After a career of more than 50 years at the warm center of the national consensus, Yaffa Yarkoni found herself banished to the margins — thousands of hate letters, hostility from bypassers in the street, and performances cancelled. A long-planned granting of a lifetime award by the Israeli Artists' Association was cancelled as well.

The psychosis which seems to have gripped a large part of the Israeli public may be compared to what was reported from Serbia during the Kosovo War. Israelis in April 2002, like Serbians a few years earlier, seemed concentrated on their victimhood — targets of aerial bombardments in one case, of suicide bombings in the other, which was in both cases mixed up with bitter memories of Nazi persecution — as to be insensitive to what their army was doing to Kosovars/Palestinians; and in both cases, international criticism was angrily rejected, internal criticism muted or denounced as treason and the position of a ruthless nationalist leader but-

tressed. (In the case of Serbia it proved temporary, as evident in Milosevic's present whereabouts; but Milosevic, unlike Sharon, had no powerful friends in Washington.)

Most of the people and groups targeted were not materially harmed. Yossi Beilin did have his lecture at Be'er Sheva University, in spite of the right-wingers; none of the 56 pro-refusenik professors was harmed in their tenure, and in fact some 200 additional professors joined them; Yaffa Yarkoni found many of her fans and fellow artists still loyal in preparing an alternative gala evening in her honor, to replace the one cancelled by the feckless Artists' Association. So far, the right-wing can fulminate and create a nasty atmosphere, but not seriously harm "unpatriotic" members of the Jewish-Israeli liberal elite — but the delegitimation of dissent had itself been made legitimate, and the matter might be taken up and pushed further during a new round of escalation with the Palestinians. Moreover, very concrete steps seem already in the offing against Israel's Arab citizens and their political leadership, a group far more vulnerable than the Jewish liberals, which had been under constant attack since the Intifada outbreak in October 2000 and which often did not get the appropriate amount of solidarity from the Liberals. A piece of legislation already introduced before the latest events and now almost certain of passage would prohibit "a party or candidate who supports armed struggle against Israel" from running in future Knesset elections. Once enacted, this law — if used to the full — could prevent virtually all Arabs from running; all the Arab Knesset Members — reflecting the prevailing mood in their constituency — expressed outright support for the Intifada. Such a ban would definitely establish Israel as an apartheid state, having an "ethnically cleansed" parliament with a built-in right-wing majority — a grave threat to democracy which is getting far too little attention.

The Wobbling Bush (2)

IN THE FIRST DAYS after the Netanyahu bombing, President Bush gave Sharon a free hand to take "self-defense measures" in the Palestinian territories, with the single, already mentioned, proviso that Arafat not be physi-

cally harmed. The Americans apparently did not ask for exact details of what Sharon intended to do, not wanting to be too directly implicated. As some accounts have it, Sharon seems to have given Bush the impression that the intended invasion would last a few days or a week at the most; the administration was apparently a bit embarrassed at the Israeli announcements — made after the tanks were already deep on their way — that “at least four weeks, and preferably eight, would be needed for the task of uprooting the terrorist infrastructure.”¹

On the third day of the invasion, the UN Security Council voted to call upon Israel to withdraw its forces from “Palestinian cities including Ramallah”; at that time, the tanks had not yet come near to Jenin. The United States voted in favor, together with everybody else — which seemed pretty conclusive, except it turned out that the resolution omitted to call for “immediate” withdrawal, which the Americans interpreted as giving Sharon “a few more days.” In fact, Israel’s PM used these days to invade Jenin, followed by Nablus, starting the most bloody and destructive days of the whole campaign. Then the council convened again, and adopted a new text which still omitted putting “immediate” before “withdrawal” and thus still permitted the U.S. some complicated interpretation, though the acrobatics needed of U.S. officials became more and more arduous.

After a week, the protest from America’s European allies became shrill; the SOS calls increased from the pro-American Arab regimes, faced with growing ferment among their own population at the footage broadcast day and night over Al-Jazeera; the cross-border shooting by Hizbullah over the Israeli-Lebanese border became bolder by the day; altogether, Bush was faced with a daily more concrete specter of a regional war, and of the collapse of regimes, and of the rise of oil prices, and of a total disruption of any chance to topple Saddam Hussein. So the U.S. finally joined with the rest of the world in passing a resolution containing the “I” word. Moreover, President Bush emphasized it by repeated TV appearances, wagging his finger and declaring, “When I say immediate, I do mean immediate!” It should have been clear enough, but somehow it wasn’t. Secretary Powell, dis-

patched to the region, dawdled just as Zinni did a month earlier, and on the ground Sharon continued his offensive, seemingly unperturbed. And just a day before Powell finally made it to Israel, the ultra-conservatives in the Republican Party made a concerted show of force, berating the president for having strayed from the straight and narrow course of the “war on terror.”

Upon Powell’s arrival in Jerusalem there was a suicide bombing in the city, the first in quite a while, in perfect time for Israeli officials to show to the visiting diplomats and journalists and proclaim with satisfaction: “See? See? This is what our army is fighting to prevent” (but not always succeeding, even when in occupation of all the Palestinian cities — they did not add). So Powell spent a few frustrating days, obtaining no Israeli withdrawal nor a Palestinian agreement for cease-fire talks (The Secretary of State did seem to find some logic in Arafat’s refusal to talk of a cease-fire while being completely surrounded by Israeli troops.) It was left to watchers to decide whether the president of the world’s sole remaining superpower was unable, or merely unwilling, to bring to heel a small state which is totally dependent on the U.S. Powell’s arrival did, it seems, nip in the bud a full-scale invasion of Gaza, for which the plans were already laid and the forces poised to strike. And in a brief visit to Syria he did achieve a calming of the Israeli-Lebanese border, for the time being pushing away the danger of a second front opening the gates of regional war — which was the Americans’ paramount concern.

For the rest, the Israeli troops’ withdrawal from the cities was anything but immediate, nor has it been in any way completed up to the time of writing. The army did at last leave Jenin, whose isolation from the outside world encouraged rumors exaggerating an all-too-terrible reality; international relief crews arrived, days too late for most of the wounded who could have been saved. And Nablus was evacuated, which suffered nearly as much damage as Jenin and got much less of the world’s attention. Sharon was allowed to maintain his forces in Ramallah and Bethlehem (and the curfew over tens of thousands of inhabitants) pending the solution of the two ongoing

sieges. Many smaller towns and villages, whose names are not known to most Israelis and certainly not to the Americans and their president, remained under occupation and curfew for weeks upon weeks, their invasion and continued occupation going unnoticed by the world. "We have no ancient church to make us a media attraction," an inhabitant of Dura bitterly told the writer over the phone, in the third week of the curfew imposed on his town.

Bush no longer mentioned the word "immediate," and the UN resolution containing that word joined many previous ones on the dust heap. But Bush did stipulate that the two sieges were to be ended "non-violently." The stipulation was not made in vain — Sharon and his generals did dream up a complete plan for commando units to invade Arafat's compound, officially in order to "snatch" the killers of minister Ze'evi, but which may well have ended with Arafat being killed in "a regrettable accident during the crossfire." As for Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity, Sharon did instruct his army not to contemplate any frontal assault that might have damaged the venerable stones of Christ's birthplace. The besieging forces contented themselves with slowly starving the 200 Palestinians trapped inside (a practice ruled legal by Israel's Supreme Court, in a verdict exceptional for its legal casuistry), and IDF snipers stationed on the high buildings around Manger Square were instructed to shoot at the besieged Palestinians, whenever it could be done without damaging the building itself. Fully twenty-one of the Palestinians who sought to gain refuge at the Church of the Nativity found there their eternal rest — several of them in the unheroic attempt to get to the toilet across an open courtyard. (The survivors were forced to less sanitary expedients in answering the call of nature.)

The city of Hebron further to the south — the only major West Bank population center to escape reoccupation in the first phase of the invasion — finally got the tanks smashing through its streets two weeks after Bush announced that he had "gotten from Sharon a time-line for withdrawal." Officially it was a retaliation for an attack upon a nearby Israeli settlement, in which four settlers were killed, among them a five-

year-old child. The picture of the dead girl, taken at a birthday party a few weeks before, appeared on the front pages of Israeli papers — as the photos of dead Palestinian children never do — together with fiery editorials designed to re-ignite the flames of popular anger and indignation. In fact, it seems that the invasion of Hebron had been prepared before the child was killed, and that some of the generals were just unwilling to terminate the invasion without getting this trophy as well. Official announcements at the time declared the invasion of Hebron to be "a brief affair, to last no more than two or three days." Three days later, withdrawal from Hebron was duly announced, and an outward-bound armored column seen on the world's TV screens. Those who call a Hebronite on the phone and mention that televised scene are likely to hear cynical laughter and get invited to listen over the phone to the treads of Israeli tanks still roaming the city streets more than a week later.

The New Occupation

IT WAS THE VISIT of Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah to President Bush's Texas ranch which seemed to move things slightly out of the rut. At this meeting — in which there were reportedly sharp exchanges, despite the smiles and handshakes in front of the cameras — the president was moved to show his ability to move Sharon, at least to the extent of getting the siege of Arafat lifted, at last and at once. Bush made three consecutive phone calls to Sharon, refusing to take no for an answer or accept any further delay — and getting Sharon to push the appropriate resolution through his reluctant cabinet in a manner of hours.

Sharon did exact a price from both Arafat and Bush. As the price of his freedom, the Palestinian leader had to let British prison wardens oversee the imprisonment of the alleged killers of Ze'evi in the Palestinian prison at Jericho — a public humiliation, but a minor one compared to what Arafat would have suffered had he complied with Sharon's original demand that the killers be handed over to Israel. By some stretch of the imagination, the force of ten British wardens arriving in Jericho could be considered as the harbinger of the international

protection force for whose arrival the Palestinians have clamored since the beginning of the Intifada — which did not especially endear them to the Palestinian public.

Of the Americans, Sharon received effective cooperation in foiling the UN investigation of what happened in Jenin — an investigation to which Sharon originally agreed, but which aroused a panicked reaction from the generals, who seemed genuinely afraid that it would lead some of them to war crime trials at the Hague. After a stormy cabinet session — with ministers complaining that Chief of Staff Mofaz seemed to dictate terms to the government rather than putting himself under its orders — the government refused the UN team entry into Israeli territory. Another country might have paid a high price for brazenly defying the UN Security Council — but with the United States exerting its full influence, Israel did not have to worry. And so Arafat emerged from yet another siege, to claim as much of a victory as the Palestinians could expect in such an unequal contest. On the Israeli side, Arafat's emergence a free man was felt indeed to be a victory — as evident in the subdued mood of the soldiers who evacuated the premises, and in the evaporation of the last of the triumphalist mood in the general Israeli public.

Yet there were no celebrations, and no reason for any, on the Palestinian side. Arafat emerged into a war-scarred city, to take charge of a heavily crippled Palestinian Authority. During its weeks of occupation, the Israeli army had gone through the Palestinian ministries, systematically confiscating or destroying the computers and archives on which any governmental structure depends: records of teachers' salaries and matriculation examinations at the ministry of education, accounts of vaccination campaigns at the ministry of health, the details of car registration at the ministry of transportation were all gone. So were the computers of banks and private corporations, NGOs and human rights associations and private radio stations — all taken away to the Israeli Security Service headquarters. "The terrorist infrastructure" for whose destruction Israel supposedly went to war turned out to have a wide meaning indeed.

The civil organizations, working openly from public offices and premises, suffered the most. So did the Palestinian Police whose barracks and camps were never concealed; it was from its armories — established formally and officially under the Oslo Agreement — that the army obtained most of the "captured terrorist guns" which were later displayed to credulous visiting U.S. senators. Also, most of the thousands of militiamen, taken off to incarceration under harsh conditions in the Negev Desert, were members of Arafat's own Tanzim militia. Of all parts of the Palestinian spectrum it was Hamas, already much more adapted to working clandestinely, which was the least damaged by Sharon's "anti-terrorist sweep"; quite a few of its militants managed to avoid capture, and upon the army's departure set to work trying to renew the suicide bombing campaign. In Ramallah and Nablus, Palestinians set out feverishly and defiantly to repair the damage — all the while aware that a new, possibly even more destructive invasion, may come within a few months. For the tanks had not withdrawn very far, continuing to ring each and every city in steel, disrupting passage even to the nearer suburbs.

Further, the Israeli forces also arrogated to themselves the right of sweeping back into the recently evacuated cities, at any time the army chooses, for "pin-point searches." In effect, Palestinian sovereignty had been abolished — replaced, not by a restoration of the pre-Oslo occupation, but by something in many ways worse: a situation in which Israel keeps the power of sending in its forces, arresting any Palestinian at any time and place and severely disrupting Palestinian daily life in any way it chooses, while declining any responsibility for the Palestinians' conditions and handing that responsibility to a Palestinian Authority which has been rendered nearly powerless. Obviously, such a situation could not endure long. It is no wonder that some of Israel's own military experts, not exactly doves, reiterate that in the absence of a significant diplomatic move a new upsurge of terrorism and suicide bombings could be expected within two months. The army, they warned, could not be expected to keep the lid on indefinitely.

A Cloudy Future

SHARON PAID FOR HIS GROSS AGGRESSION by making the international community aware, as never before, of the urgent need to tackle the Palestinian problem; by making international public opinion (with the highly-significant exception of the U.S.) more hostile to Israel than it ever was, with Israel's vital trading links in Europe threatened by various grassroots boycotts; and by having the whole world, including the U.S., take up the two-state solution as the one and only way forward. Inside Israel, the dark tide of patriotic McCarthyism seems to have receded, at least for the moment, and the atmosphere of "national unity" shattered by the realization of the war's heavy economic price — to be borne, as usual, mainly by the poor via new cuts in the welfare budgets and increase of VAT and other regressive taxation.

As this is being written, Sharon is expected to meet Bush in the White House, where he will be expected to present some "serious ideas" about the way forward, and to be told that — distasteful as Arafat is to the American president, who makes no secret of his attitude — there is no other Palestinian partner to talk to. Hovering in the wings is the Saudi foreign minister, representing a regime which considers its own stability and chances for long-term survival to be at stake, with all that this might imply for America's oil interests; on the other side stand the powerful Israeli lobby, reinforced by the Christian Fundamentalists in the Republican Party — who together just provided Sharon's policies with a powerful and uncritical endorsement from both houses of the U.S. Congress, such as the PM could never have hoped to get from Israel's own parliament even in its present enfeebled condition.

So what next? The coming month seems to be a time of intensive diplomatic activity, centered around a peace conference apparently due to take place in Turkey — a conference whose composition and guidelines are yet to be determined. Even the most determined optimist can entertain few hopes of Sharon making any real concessions in such a framework. But he will be expected to make at least some cosmetic ones, especially to make a clear declaration

of adherence to the idea of a Palestinian state and join the international consensus on this point. Sharon personally seems ready to oblige — as long as he does not have to commit himself with regard to borders, and as long as the concrete negotiations remain bogged down in some indefinite "interim solution." But even such a vague commitment seems to be far too much for the hard-liners inside Sharon's Likud Party (not to mention his allies on the extreme right). Egged on by Sharon's great rival Netanyahu, the Likud conference seems likely to convene and adopt a resolution ruling out the possibility of Palestinian statehood in whatever borders, making it far more difficult for the Prime Minister to dissimulate and present a moderate image in the international diplomatic arena.

Twice before, a peace conference proved the downfall of an Israeli right-wing minister: Shamir went to Madrid and made promises he did not mean to keep, but which made the extreme right bolt his government and deprive him of a parliamentary majority. Virtually the same thing happened when Netanyahu went to Wye. Is the same going to happen to Sharon? And if so, would the Israeli Labor Party, in its present decrepit condition, be able to take advantage of the opportunity? But when cornered, Sharon is likely to react in his typical way — a new provocation leading to new war, something which was not Shamir's forte and not really Netanyahu's, either. The pretext could be manufactured easily enough, or some Palestinian faction might save Sharon the trouble and provide it of its own initiative. There is not much more left to be done militarily which the army did not yet do, but Sharon could think of a few things. For one, the army could go into the Gaza Strip which was left intact in the April invasion. Conquering the refugee camps around Gaza, with their large population and concentration of militants, is likely to be a repetition of Jenin on a much larger scale. A tough proposition — but given enough ruthlessness, plus at least a tacit American OK, it may well come to pass in the not too distant future.

Another possibility which Sharon would love to try is going again after Arafat, this time seeking not to besiege but to kill or exile him — possibly followed by formal dis-

solution of the Palestinian Authority and the reimposition of direct Israeli rule. Militarily this would not present any great obstacles — in fact, most of the work was already done — but the political implications and repercussions would be enormous, which should make the Americans wary of approving such a scheme. There is no assurance that Bush would always block Sharon, either.

But even reimposition of full Israeli rule would only revive the question which has faced Israel since June 1967. Vital statistics point out that within ten years or so, the number of Arabs living between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River will exceed that of Jews. If by then the territory is still a single political unit, many Palestinians may find it attractive to drop the call for an independent state and replace it by demanding democratic majority rule, modeled on the struggle of the South African Blacks. On the right side of the Israeli spectrum, awareness of this possibility has increased the popularity of the idea of “Population Transfer,” i.e. ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. In some opinion polls, a frightening 44 percent were found favoring that “solution.” Sharon has never openly talked of such things — but the late Minister Ze’evi, whom the PM is so determined to avenge, made his political career out of it. And the latest adherent to the Sharon Cabinet — the sinister Effie Eitam of the National Religious Party, former senior military officer and “Born Again” Orthodox Jew who believes himself to be “appointed by God to lead the Jewish People to True Glory,” has openly spoken of “a war at whose end the number of Arabs west of the Jordan will be considerably less.” There can be little doubt that Ariel Sharon, whose formative experience as a young soldier in 1948 was a war in which the Israeli army did just that, would have few moral scruples about such a step. Considering the record of the past year, it would be a capital mistake to underestimate what Sharon is capable of. Still, could he really expect to get away with something on this scale, in a world where the smallest incident in the Middle East becomes “Breaking News” within minutes on CNN?

Paradoxically, should “transfer” prove to be impossible, a large part of these notori-

ous 44 percent of the Israeli public could be expected to swing right around and join a large majority in support of withdrawal from most or all the Occupied Territories. Not out of any high principles, but out of the same desire to “get rid of the Arabs,” a desire great enough to make the sacrifice of also giving up the land on which the Arabs are living. It would not be the first time in world history that bad motives lead to more or less positive results.²

All over the country, signs are coming up with variations on the slogan “Get out of the Territories”; “Get out of the Territories and back to ourselves”; “Get out of the Territories and back to negotiations”; “Get out of the Territories, to heal the economy”; and, largest and most conspicuous of all, the slogan saying simply “Get out of the Territories — for the sake of Israel.” The last one was colored, not by chance, in patriotic blue and white. It is the intention of the Peace Now leadership to go beyond the determined minority which opposed Sharon’s War all along. Their hope is to mobilize many of those who a month ago supported “the struggle against terrorism” but who now feel the need to restart a peace process and give the Palestinians new hope, before the bombings start again in earnest.

On the level of party politics, the success of a May peace rally in Tel Aviv could further the efforts of KM Haim Ramon, the new contender for the Labor Party leadership against the listless Ben-Eliezer. A dove of sorts though capable of unscrupulous and cynical maneuvers, Ramon has identified himself with the option of “unilateral separation from the Territories.” And he is enough of a demagogue to have a chance of selling this idea to the voters and of winning an elections campaign against Netanyahu, who will probably lead the Likud. Many of us have strong reservations about Ramon and his program, both because of having a preference for a negotiated agreement with the Palestinians and because his projected unilateral withdrawal includes most — but by no means all — of the territories. Still, considering the alternatives, we may in the near future follow Ramon’s path to power with a mixture of disgust and fervent hope.

In the meantime, many Israelis who are

neither monarchists nor religious find themselves regularly praying for the life and good health of Crown Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia.

ON MAY 24th, THE ISRAELI ARMY INVADED, occupied and placed under curfew the Palestinian town of Tul Karm and its adjacent refugee camp. In a Palestinian ambush an Israeli soldier was killed and two wounded; eight Palestinians, including a four-year-old girl, were wounded by a shell shot at their house from an Israeli tank.

The renewed occupation of Tul Karm is no longer big news, as it would have been a few months ago. In fact, the media takes it mostly as weary routine, given that Israeli forces have regularly been going in and out of Tul Karm and other Palestinian towns, and that even the town's own inhabitants have probably lost count of the number of times their town has been reoccupied.

In fact, since the beginning of April, all West Bank Palestinians have been living under an effectively restored direct military occupation, manifested in the Israeli Army and security services, ability to sweep in, at any time or place, to arrest whomever they want. It doesn't make too much difference whether the military is actually present in a particular town or village, or just outside, imposing a tight closure and siege and subjecting passage to the next town to selectively granted permits. The Palestinian semi-sovereignty over several enclaves across the West Bank, which had been the heart of the Oslo process and which was supposed to widen and extend into complete statehood, has been effectively abolished with the tacit consent of the international community. In its place, a regime has been installed in many ways worse than the pre-1993 military government, which at least did not deny the Palestinians freedom of movement within the West Bank and which regarded itself as responsible for the maintenance of the Palestinian inhabitants' daily lives. Its present-day successor shrugs off all such responsibility, throwing it upon a crippled Palestinian Authority which is systematically deprived of the ability to act, simultaneously under a constant shrill demand to "reform" itself.

IN THEORY, THE ISRAELI ARMY'S self-granted powers of moving at will into Palestinian territory and arresting whoever it wants should have put an end to the practice of assassinating Palestinian leaders by missiles shot from a distance. In the past, the government justified this practice by the assertion that it had no other recourse but assassination for "terrorists hiding out in Palestinian-controlled territory where we can't reach and arrest them."

Nowadays, that argument is no longer valid; nevertheless, on May 22, Israeli forces in the Nablus area chose to kill by missile fire three senior members of Arafat's own Tanzim organization, although they could have been captured alive easily enough.

The only possible motive for that assassination was to provoke the kind of retribution Palestinian organizations habitually take when their senior members are assassinated. In fact, the expected retribution came within a few hours of the provocation: a 16-year-old Palestinian (the youngest suicide bomber to date) blew himself up at the town of Rishon LeTzion, taking with him an Israeli boy of his own age as well as a 65-year-old pensioner. The swiftness with which this attack followed upon the provocation proved once again that the tight siege of Palestinian towns — while severely disrupting the daily life of the general population — does not seriously hamper the movement of determined individuals and small bands.

ASIDE FROM BEING MORALLY REPREHENSIBLE, suicide bombings targeting random Israelis are severely damaging to the Palestinian cause itself. This is realized — and more and more often stated explicitly — by an increasingly large part of the Palestinian leadership. Yet in the absence of any hope for an end to the occupation, young Palestinian militants are again and again tempted to react in the depth of Israeli cities to what happens in their own cities. Even when their raids may play into Sharon's hands. Alex Fishman, whose articles in *Yediot Aharonot* reflect the views of dissident elements within the army's high command, formulated it as follows:

We are again entering into a bloody game of ping-pong: Israel uses the best of its ac-

cumulated intelligence to strike into the Palestinian towns and villages on the West Bank; the Palestinians — to the best of their ability — blow themselves up at Israeli population centers; a situation which Israel could not indefinitely tolerate. In fact, we are paying the price for the fact that “Operation Defensive Shield” was followed by no political process of the kind which could have diminished the motivation of Palestinian Terrorism to send out these “Human Bombs.” No inducement was offered to make the Palestinian Authority reduce, even in a minor way, the volume of terrorism. The only sphere in which Israel is nowadays active is that of military initiatives, which do hurt the terrorist organizations’ ability but which in the absence of a political process is an invitation for continuation of the bloody ping-pong. (*Yediot Aharonot*, May 23)

A FEW HOURS AFTER those words were published in Israel’s main mass-circulation paper, a major escalation was barely avoided. A bomb exploded within the major Israeli fuel depot at Pi Giliot, which is located in a thickly inhabited area of Tel-Aviv’s northern suburbs.

Fortunately, the targeted tanker happened to carry fuel of a kind which is not quickly ignited; in only slightly different circumstances, nearby tanks of fuel and cooking gas could have caught fire, resulting in an inferno of fire and incalculable damage and loss of life.

So far, nobody was apprehended in connection with this bomb, and no organization claimed responsibility for the attempt; the media takes for granted that it is the work of some Palestinian faction. Doubtlessly, had some of the doomsday scenarios appearing in the newspapers materialized, Sharon would have accused the Palestinians and resorted to proportionally terrible acts of retribution upon them.

There is still respite before some other major suicide bombing provides Sharon with the pretext he needs to launch the invasion of the Gaza Strip, which was already in advanced stages of preparation two weeks ago, and which the army at the time said was delayed rather than cancelled. Given the number of militants in the crowded refugee camps of Gaza and the amount of explosives in their possession, an invasion there will be reminiscent of what happened in Jenin,

though much larger in scope.

MEANWHILE, CIA CHIEF GEORGE TENET is expected in the region for the second time, after several weeks in which the Bush Administration lost interest. Tenet’s brief — to offer some “suggestions” for “reform” to the Palestinians and set up “security cooperation” between the Israeli and Palestinian security services, seems too meager to stop the ongoing escalation. All the more so, considering the statements by General Moshe Ya’alon, Deputy Chief-of-Staff of the Israeli armed forces, due to take over command in July, who arrogantly declared last week, “We no longer need any security cooperation with the Palestinians, we take care of all security matters by ourselves.”

What is needed is an international intervention of a much wider scope and breadth, including the stationing of an intervention force as envisaged some months ago by UN Secretary-General Annan and a real pressure for an end to the occupation — a step which Sharon, for all his recent pretenses to “moderation” has no intention of taking.

The international community may eventually take such steps, when the present countdown has run its course and terrible images from this region once again flood the screens of every TV set on earth.

— May 24, 2002

NOTES

1. For old-time Sharon watchers, this had a very familiar sound, reminiscent of Sharon’s relationships with earlier bosses at various stages of his career: for example, the extremely broad interpretation which Defense Minister Sharon made in 1982 of the Begin government’s vaguely-worded instruction to send the army into Lebanon so as to “remove the threat of Katyusha missiles,” and which he interpreted as authorization to send the armored columns as far as Beirut. Some former comrades-in-arms still harbor bitter memories of the Battle of the Mitleh in the 1956 war, when Lieutenant-Colonel Ariel Sharon was instructed to send forward “a reconnaissance patrol,” which he interpreted as authorizing an advance by his entire battalion — directly, as it turned out, into the withering fire of a well-laid Egyptian ambush.

2. Students of American history could recall that many of Abraham Lincoln’s arguments against slavery were frankly racist, such as those concerning competition of Black slave labor with that of free whites.

Palestinian Elections Now

Edward W. Said

SIX DISTINCT CALLS for Palestinian reform and elections are being uttered now: five of them are, for Palestinian purposes, both useless and irrelevant. Sharon wants reform as a way of further disabling Palestinian national life, that is, as an extension of his failed policy of constant intervention and destruction. He wants to be rid of Yasser Arafat, cut up the West Bank into fenced-in cantons, re-install an occupation authority — preferably with some Palestinians helping out — carry on with settlement activity, and maintain Israeli security the way he's been doing it. He is too blinded by his own ideological hallucinations and obsessions to see that this will neither bring peace nor security, and will certainly not bring the "quiet" he keeps prattling on about. Palestinian elections in the Sharonian scheme are quite unimportant.

Second, the United States wants reform principally as a way of combating "terrorism," a panacea of a word that takes no account of history, context, society or anything else. George Bush has a visceral dislike for Arafat, and no understanding at all of the Palestinian situation. To say that he and his disheveled administration "want" anything is to dignify a series of spurts, fits, starts, retractions, denunciations, totally contradictory statements, sterile missions by various officials of his administration, and about-faces, with the status of an over-all desire, which of course doesn't exist.

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Incoherent, except when it comes to the pressures and agendas of the Israeli lobby and the Christian Right whose spiritual head he now is, Bush's policy consists in reality of calls for Arafat to end terrorism, and (when he wants to placate the Arabs) for someone somewhere somehow to produce a Palestinian state and a big conference, and finally, for Israel to go on getting full and unconditional U.S. support including most probably ending Arafat's career. Beyond that, U.S. policy waits to be formulated, by someone, somewhere, somehow. One should always keep in mind though that the Middle East is a domestic, not a foreign, policy issue in America and subject to dynamics within the society that are difficult to predict.

All this perfectly suits the Israeli demand, which wants nothing more than to make Palestinian life collectively more miserable and more unlivable, whether by military incursions or by impossible political conditions that suit Sharon's frenzied obsession with stamping out Palestinians forever. Of course there are other Israelis who want co-existence with a Palestinian state, as there are American Jews who want similar things, but neither group has any determining power now. Sharon and the Bush administration run the show.

Third, is the Arab leaders' demand which as far as I can tell is a combination of several different elements, none of them directly helpful to the Palestinians themselves. First is fear of their own populations who have been witnessing Israel's mass and essentially unopposed destruction of the Palestinian territories without any serious Arab interference or attempt at deterrence. The Beirut summit peace plan offers Israel precisely what Sharon has refused, which is land for peace, and it is a proposal without any teeth, much less one with a timetable. While it may be a good thing to have it on record as a counter-weight to Israel's

naked belligerence, we should have no illusions about its real intention which, like the calls for Palestinian reform, are really tokens offered to seething Arab populations who are thoroughly sick with the mediocre inaction of their rulers. Second, of course, is the sheer exasperation of most of the Arab regimes with the whole Palestinian problem. They seem to have no ideological problem with Israel as a Jewish state without any declared boundaries, which has been in illegal military occupation of Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank for 35 years, or with Israel's dispossession of the Palestinian people. They are prepared to accommodate nicely those terrible injustices if only Arafat and his people would simply either behave or quietly go away. Third, of course, is the long-standing desire of Arab leaders to ingratiate themselves with the U.S. and, among themselves, to vie for the title of most important U.S. ally. Perhaps they are simply unaware of how contemptuous most Americans are of them, and how little understood or regarded is their cultural and political status in the U.S.

Fourth, in the chorus of reform are the Europeans. But they only scurry around sending emissaries to see Sharon and Arafat, they make ringing declarations in Brussels, they fund a few projects and more or less leave it at that, so great is the shadow of the U.S. over them.

FIFTH, IS YASSER ARAFAT and his circle of associates who have suddenly discovered the virtues (theoretically at least) of democracy and reform. I know that I speak at a great distance from the field of struggle, and I also know all the arguments about the besieged Arafat as a potent symbol of Palestinian resistance against Israeli aggression, but I have come to a point where I think none of that has any meaning anymore. Arafat is simply interested in saving himself. He has had almost ten years of freedom to run a petty kingdom and has succeeded essentially in bringing opprobrium and scorn on himself and most of his team; the Authority became a byword for brutality, autocracy and unimaginable corruption. Why anyone for a moment believes that at this stage he is capable of anything different, or that his new streamlined cabinet

(dominated by the same old faces of defeat and incompetence) is going to produce actual reform, defies reason. He is the leader of a long suffering people, whom in the past year he has exposed to unacceptable pain and hardship, all of it based on a combination of his absence of a strategic plan and his unforgivable reliance on the tender mercies of Israel and the U.S. via Oslo. Leaders of independence and liberation movements have no business exposing their unarmed people to the savagery of war criminals like Sharon, against whom there was no real defense or advance preparation. Why then provoke a war whose victims would be mostly innocent people when you have neither the military capacity to fight one nor the diplomatic leverage to end it? Having done this now three times (Jordan, Lebanon, West Bank) Arafat should not be given a chance to bring on a fourth disaster.

He has announced that elections will take place in early 2003, but his real concentration is to reorganize the security services. I have long pointed out in these columns that Arafat's security apparatus was always designed principally to serve him and Israel, since the Oslo accords were based on his having made a deal with Israel's military occupation. Israel cared only about its security, for which it held Arafat responsible (a position, by the way, he willingly accepted as early as 1992). In the meantime Arafat used the 15 or 19 or whatever the right number of groups was to play each off against the other, a tactic he perfected in Fakahani, and which is patently stupid so far as the general good is concerned. He never really reined in Hamas and Islamic Jihad which suited Israel perfectly: it would have a ready-made excuse to use the so-called martyr's (mindless) suicide bombings to further diminish and punish the whole people. If there is one thing along with Arafat's ruinous regime that has done us more harm as a cause it is this calamitous policy of killing Israeli civilians, which further proves to the world that we are indeed terrorists and an immoral movement. For what gain no one has been able to say.

Having therefore made a deal with the occupation through Oslo, Arafat was never really in a position to lead a movement to

end it. And ironically, he is trying to make another deal now, both to save himself and prove to the U.S., Israel and the other Arabs that he deserves another chance. I myself don't care a whit for what Bush, or the Arab leaders, or Sharon says: I am interested in what we as a people think of our leader, and there I believe we must be absolutely clear in rejecting his entire program of reform, elections, reorganizing the government and security services. His record of failure is too dismal and his capacities as a leader too enfeebled and incompetent for him to try yet again to save himself for another try.

Sixth, finally, is the Palestinian people who are now justifiably clamoring both for reform and elections. As far as I am concerned, this clamor is the only legitimate one of the six I have outlined here. It's important to point out that Arafat's present administration as well as the Legislative Council have overstayed their original term, which should have ended with a new round of elections in 1999. Moreover, the whole basis of the 1996 elections were the Oslo accords, which in effect simply licensed Arafat and his people to run bits of the West Bank and Gaza for the Israelis, without true sovereignty or security, since Israel retained control of the borders, security, land (on which it doubled and even tripled the settlements), water and air. In other words, the old basis for elections and reform, which had been Oslo, is now null and void. Any attempt to go forward on that kind of platform is simply a wasteful ploy and will produce neither reform nor real elections. Hence the current confusion which causes every Palestinian everywhere to feel chagrin and bitter frustration.

WHAT THEN IS TO BE DONE if the old basis of Palestinian legitimacy no longer really exists? Certainly there can be no return to Oslo, anymore than there can be to Jordanian or Israeli law. As a student of periods of important historical change, I should like to point out that when a major rupture with the past occurred (as during the period after the fall of the monarchy because of the French Revolution, or with the demise of apartheid in South Africa before the elections of 1994 took place), a new basis of le-

gitimacy has to be created by the only and ultimate source of authority, namely, the people itself. The major interests in Palestinian society, those that have kept life going, from the trade unions, to health workers, teachers, farmers, lawyers, doctors, in addition to all the many NGOs must now become the basis on which Palestinian reform — despite Israel's incursions and the occupation — is to be constructed. It seems to me useless to wait for Arafat, or Europe, or the U.S., or the Arabs to do this: it must absolutely be done by Palestinians themselves by way of a Constituent Assembly that contains in it all the major elements of Palestinian society. Only such a group, constructed by the people themselves and not by the remnants of the Oslo dispensation, certainly not by the shabby fragments of Arafat's discredited Authority, can hope to succeed in re-organizing society from the ruinous, indeed catastrophically incoherent condition in which it is to be found. The basic job for such an Assembly is to construct an emergency system of order that has two purposes. One, to keep Palestinian life going in an orderly way with full participation for all concerned. Two, to choose an emergency executive committee whose mandate is to end the occupation, not negotiate with it. It is quite obvious that militarily we are no match for Israel. Kalishnikoffs are not effective weapons when the balance of power is so lopsided. What is needed is a creative method of struggle that mobilizes all the human resources at our disposal to highlight, isolate and gradually make untenable the main aspects of Israeli occupation e.g., settlements, settlement roads, roadblocks and house demolitions. The present group around Arafat is hopelessly incapable of thinking of, much less implementing, such a strategy: it is too bankrupt, too bound up in corrupt selfish practices, too burdened with the failures of the past.

For such a Palestinian strategy to work there has to be an Israeli component made up of individuals and groups with whom a common basis of struggle against occupation can and indeed must be established. This is the great lesson of the South African struggle: that it proposed the vision of a multi-racial society from which neither

individuals nor groups and leaders were ever deflected. The only vision coming out of Israel today is violence, forcible separation and the continued subordination of Palestinians to an idea of Jewish supremacy. Not every Israeli believes in these things of course, but it must be up to us to project the idea of co-existence in two states that have natural relations with each other on the basis of sovereignty and equality. Mainstream Zionism has still not been able to produce such a vision, so it must come from the Palestinian people and their new leaders whose new legitimacy has to be constructed now, at a moment when everything is crashing down and everyone is anxious to re-make Palestine in his own image and according to his own ideas.

We have never faced a worse, or at the same time, a more seminal moment. The Arab order is in total disarray; the U.S. administration is effectively controlled by the Christian Right and the Israeli lobby (within 24 hours, everything that George Bush seems to have agreed with President Mubarak was

reversed by Sharon's visit); and our society has been nearly wrecked by poor leadership and the insanity of thinking that suicide bombing will lead directly to an Islamic Palestinian state. There is always hope for the future, but one has to be able to look for it and find it in the right place. It is quite clear that in the absence of any serious Palestinian or Arab information policy in the United States (especially in the Congress) we cannot for a moment delude ourselves that Powell and Bush are about to set a real agenda for Palestinian rehabilitation. That's why I keep saying that the effort must come from us, by us, for us. I'm at least trying to suggest a different avenue of approach. Who else but the Palestinian people can construct the legitimacy they need to rule themselves and fight the occupation with weapons that don't kill innocents and lose us more support than ever before? A just cause can easily be subverted by evil or inadequate or corrupt means. The sooner this is realized the better the chance we have to lead ourselves out of the present impasse.

No Symmetry: Notes From Israel & “Palestine”

Mark Dow

For a subject people, independent statehood is a vital necessity and an advance; but once such a people has reached the stage of independence nothing can be more retrograde for it than to fix its mind on that stage and to refuse to look beyond it. The nationalism of a sovereign people cannot claim for itself the justification claimed by the nationalism of an oppressed people.

Isaac Deutscher, 1958¹

THIS ESSAY IS LARGELY THE RESULT of a trip I took in March 2002 to Israel and — and where? The occupied territories? But not, capitalized, “Occupied Territories,” which then becomes a “proper” noun. Or I could just say “the West Bank,” or I could be more precise: “Areas A and B, as defined by the Oslo Accords, under varying combinations of administration by Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. . . .” In some contexts, to make a political point, I would say “Palestine.” My point, of course, is that Palestine does not exist. The idea, yes; the state, no. This is not to say that I endorse the idea of the state as some higher good, or even that I have an absolute position on a one-state or two-state solution (I lean toward the latter).

My point is rather a more personal one. I would hazard to guess that most of us have opinions and positions which depend on concepts that we have not defined: What is a state? What is sovereignty? What is a right? Even I am fairly certain that I am alive, though scientists admit there is no clear definition between living and non-living matter. I am a Jew, though I cannot tell you

what a Jew is; that’s how life is. I do know that I am not interested in any notion of allegiance based on a label such as “Jewish” or “American.” More important, I am uneasy with using my Jewish identity as a kind of credential to make a political point. I cringed when I went to enter my name on a website to offer support to Israeli military refuseniks and was faced with a box that said “Yes, I am Jewish.” But I have had to re-examine that discomfort this spring as the e-mails started coming in, asking me to sign various petitions from American Jews speaking out about the current situation — one of these from a Pakistani Muslim friend. Another arrived via someone connected with the Arab-American Anti-Discrimination Committee who, a couple of years before September 11 and the war in Afghanistan, accused me of anti-Arab racism for forwarding a petition in support of women persecuted by the Taliban; the subject line of her message passing along a petition from Jews declaring that Sharon is not their spokesman said: “Please distribute immed to every Jew you know.”

In private, I am a Jew for reasons I need not define. In public, unarticulated definitions and undefined borders begin to appear. One afternoon in Miami I paused when a supermarket cashier, assuming I was not Jewish, started making anti-Semitic remarks to me about the cheap Jews who usually shop at her store. At first, I just listened. It seemed like a rare opportunity to eavesdrop. Then I told her I was Jewish. She paused briefly, seemingly realized in an instant that this information did not change her feeling or opinion, and continued her rant as if I had said nothing. For her, I could not be Jewish in that moment; perhaps she could have explained to me how anti-Semitism continued to flourish in Poland even after the Jews there

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had been exterminated.

I had hoped to write about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without getting bogged down in these questions. That seems impossible at the moment. I will not resolve the cluster of experiences described here into easy categorization. They are a version of the complexity in Jerusalem, and by extension, the wider region, as Meron Benvenisti describes it:

The Jerusalem situation involves more than the sum of its parts that are amenable to rational analysis. Indeed, despite the existence of real and measurable conflicts of political, economic, and other interests, the problem is irrational at its core. When it is presented in rational and objective terms (in order to fit it to a rational solution), one can categorically state that it is insoluble. It might also be said that the preoccupation with theoretical solutions is aimed not at facilitating real political progress, but rather at nurturing the hope that a solution is indeed attainable and that salvation lies right around the corner.

The conflict over and within Jerusalem is not so much a problem as it is a condition. This is the typical case with intercommunal conflict, which arises from the daily friction between two ethnic groups living in intimate proximity and competing for urban spaces, public resources, and the preservation of their respective ways of life. To this local-municipal aspect of the conflict are added national frictions over the fulfillment of competing aspirations for self-determination, independence, and sovereignty. This conflict is not purely political but pervades every level of private and collective life; it is organic in essence, endemic, and resistant to political "solutions."²

I have opened with personal reflections which might turn out to be political. But politically, I really have only one point to make. In the current conflict, only one side is under occupation. During my trip, I met a number of thoughtful and generous people who convey a living balance between, on the one hand, recognizing the irrational complexities articulated by Benvenisti and, on the other, taking a clear stand. To put it another way, I found some reason for hope in my meetings with activists willing to respect borders and imaginatively or literally cross them at the same time.

Nationalism, Terror, & Grief

I DECIDED TO GO TO GIL BEDIHI'S FUNERAL because, even though I did not know him, I felt tenuously but unmistakably connected to him in the fabric of everyday life's little realities. I was visiting my brother, sister-in-law, and their young daughters in the Israeli community of Nataf, just west of Jerusalem (inside the Green Line). One morning, I videotaped my niece's fourth birthday party at her nursery school nearby. Of all the children who paraded across the camera lens, for some reason I was struck by the face of one little boy as he played a plastic trumpet in a classroom parade. Less than a week later, my sister-in-law told me that the trumpet player's older brother had just been killed. The two families didn't know each other, but they lived within shouting distance.

My sister-in-law was furious at me when I told her that I had attended Gil Bedihi's funeral. This was in early March, when tensions in the region were at a breaking point for all. My sister-in-law — she is also my friend — and I had already had many difficult conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, tending to get stuck on our differing versions of Jewish identity and national/ethnic sovereignty. But now her anger was not about such abstractions. She felt, I would say, that I had trespassed on her community and its grief. She reminded me that when she told me about the young man's death, my first reaction had been to ask: Was he a soldier? It is true that I had a political filter in front of my grief so that a civilian death would not register the same way that a soldier's death would. To join my sister-in-law in her sadness about the Israeli man's death without knowing the circumstances would have been an ideological risk.

Gil Bedihi was a soldier, and he was killed when the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) rolled into the West Bank town of Ramallah in March. (The IDF would withdraw a few days later, and then enter again near the end of the month.) At his funeral procession, neighbors joined with military formations in the slow walk to the graveyard in the hills. Even my minimal Hebrew was sufficient to recognize the fusion of personal grief and nationalist sentiment. This was a

soldier's funeral, after all, no matter the country. A column in the Israeli newspaper *Ha'aretz* went so far as to connect the family's grief with the Zionist enterprise and Arab riots:

When the soldiers who had returned from Ramallah wept at the grave of their friend Gil Bedihi in Nataf, the sound of singing was suddenly heard amid the grief and the pain. In a trembling but confident voice, the bereaved mother, Yael, sang on the fresh grave of her son. The song she sang was written by David Shimoni and sung after the Arab riots in Palestine in 1929. "And nevertheless, and in spite of everything, Eretz Yisrael. And as long as [the Jewish prayer of faith in God] 'Shema Yisrael' is heard in the world, and as long as the heart of Israel beats in the world, Shema Yisrael, Shema Yisrael, you are Eretz Yisrael." . . . The war being waged for our home here is a war both for survival and for justice. If we weren't in the right, there would be no point to fighting and gritting our teeth. And security, which we certainly cannot do without, is the instrument by means of which we are fulfilling our destiny here, a destiny that the bereaved mother, Yael Bedihi from Nataf, described so well in her grief.³

I wrote to columnist Nadav Shragai, asking him to explain to me the connection between Gil Bedihi's death in Ramallah and Israeli security; he did not reply.

Several days before the IDF got Gil Bedihi killed in Ramallah, I was there looking at the posters all over town memorializing what in English are called Palestinian "martyrs." I put the word in quotation marks not only because it is translated from a language I do not know, but also because it is not a term in my vocabulary. It is a term with obvious nationalistic, sometimes religious connotations. It is a version of the word "hero," I suppose. But I also put the word in quotation marks because, to my understanding, it combines two distinct groups of people. One group is those Palestinians killed by Israelis in the latter's enforcement of its occupation. (I leave aside whether those killed are armed or not.) The second group of "martyrs" — the ones we hear more about these days — are the suicide bombers who usually target Israeli civilians.

A recent article in the monthly *Between the Lines* summarizes the previous month's

successes of the Palestinian resistance. Toufic Haddad rightly criticizes the media cliché about "cycles of violence" which implies that there are no victims and no aggressors, that both sides equally play both roles, that being "fair" means finding symmetry. Then Haddad proceeds to mirror the other side's tally of successful killings. His list is careful to include casualties only of Israeli soldiers and settlers. This crude calculus is offensive, too. Does my reaction contradict my earlier impulse to ask my sister-in-law that very question: soldier or civilian? Yes and no. Haddad's care in his listing is tainted by this sentence later in the article when the mask of the distinction seems to slip:

The Palestinian retaliatory attack for Sharon's heavy fist in the camps [of Jenin and Balata in late February 2002] witnessed in the 2 March attack upon a synagogue in West Jerusalem killing ten people, as well as the 3 March attack upon a military checkpoint near Ofra settlement killing 10 settlers and soldiers at the hands of a lone Palestinian sniper, intended to send the unequivocal message that Palestinian resistance would not tolerate brazen slaughter within their camps without Israeli military and civilians paying a price as well.⁴

Fair enough, when viewed as analysis, but Haddad's careful language is too careful. When we are talking about targeting civilians, "the unequivocal message" is that "brazen slaughter" will be answered with "brazen slaughter." Haddad criticizes Sharon for using a tactic with no "military objective" per se but intended rather "to send a message of terror to the civilian population." But if the tactic is wrong in and of itself, then it is wrong no matter who uses it. For Haddad, "brazen slaughter" on one side brings "paying the price" on the other. Word-tinkering aside, this is the cycle of violence again. It doesn't matter who is "right": that's the whole basis of the clichéd cycle. In previous issues of *Between the Lines*, Haddad rightly condemns Israeli killings of civilians, seeming to make a distinction between the killing of combatants and civilians; but when it comes to Palestinian operations, the distinction is blurred, almost to the point of erasure, and Palestinian attacks on Israeli civilians are viewed solely

through a tactical lens.

At this point, I think we need to be explicit about this. We must support Palestinian resistance without celebrating individual combatant deaths, and while unequivocally condemning the targeting of civilians. Period. There is too much sense of a “yes, but” in some of the left’s condemnation of suicide bombers. This includes the common assertion following a condemnation, that suicide bombings only strengthen Sharon’s hand. That is not good enough. Here, instead, is Hanan Ashrawi:

Why and when did we allow a few from our midst to interpret Israeli military attacks on innocent Palestinian lives as license to do the same to their civilians? Where are those voices and forces that should have stood up for the sanctity of innocent lives (ours and theirs), instead of allowing the horror of our own suffering to silence us?⁵

Israel Shahak once told me that as much as he grieved for the innocent victims of these bombings, they do not constitute a threat to the state of Israel. That was in 1995, and perhaps there wasn’t much more that had to be said. But precisely because now the killing of Israeli civilians is openly discussed among Palestinians as a tactical question, and not as an aberration, criticism of it must be clear. That does not mean succumbing to the mainstream stereotypes which have equated all Palestinian resistance with terrorism; on the contrary. Consider this from Israeli journalist Amira Hass:

In order to succeed in a military and political campaign, one has to know the enemy: his weaknesses and his strength, his defects and his capabilities, his pain and his happiness. Instead, the enemy is presented only as a one-dimensional mass, ignorant and lacking feelings and thoughts. Perhaps the lies being disseminated about the Palestinians during these days of war actually express the contempt of the Israeli authorities toward the Israeli public, and an implicit assumption that it will continue to swallow them. That it will always make do with intelligence analyses, and will avoid sociological, historical and political ones, and therefore will not ask why so many Palestinians want to blow themselves up and take others with them, and how hun-

dreds of thousands of Palestinians are holding out in intolerable conditions of shelling and continuing curfew, without water, electricity and food?⁶

A longtime Fatah activist I know watched with dismay as the TV showed the aftermath of a bus bombing in northern Israel. We were sitting in his living room in Ramallah. He told me that after the suicide bombing of the Moment Café, near the Prime Minister’s residence in West Jerusalem, he was afraid to listen to the news. Why? He feared hearing confirmation of rumors that among the victims were Israelis who had just returned from a rally against the occupation. In this view, there are no civilians. This man believes that it is a legitimate tactic of resistance to frighten — and kill — Israelis by bringing into their homes and communities the fear and terror which Palestinians have experienced for so long in theirs. Unless his dismay at the carnage on television was an act for my benefit — a possibility — his emotional reaction and his political beliefs are at odds. When he was out of the room, his wife quietly told me that she doesn’t like to talk politics with him, but wanted me to know she disagrees with him about suicide bombers. She is against them.

Here we can find symmetry. An Israeli soldier told Israeli women peace activists with the group Machsom Watch monitoring checkpoints that he wished they had been killed by Palestinian terrorists.⁷ Maya Rosenfeld of this group, while unambiguously opposing the occupation, told me she doesn’t even like the term “intifada” for the current situation. On the Israeli side, she said, there is “state terror,” and on the Palestinian side there is “another [form of] terror” with “elements of national resistance.” Yes, there is terror on both sides. Rosenfeld can say this without compromising another truth: there is not symmetry here. Only one side is occupying the other. In the PBS Frontline documentary “Battle for the Holy Land,” a grieving mother tells the camera that if she had known her son was on his way to blow himself up in Israel, she would have turned him in to the Israeli authorities. She says, in effect, “mothers are all mothers,” and she holds in front of her a

framed photo of her dead son with his raised weapon. Contradictory? Yes. Another soldier's funeral. At Gil Bedihi's funeral, it occurred to me that as long as neither "side" can mourn the deaths of the other, then there will never be peace. That does not require symmetry so much as imagination.

Checkpoint Watch

THE MILITARY CHECKPOINT SCENARIOS have all the complexity of any international border crossing: control, accommodation, arbitrary power, improvisation. At Kalandia checkpoint between Jerusalem and Ramallah to the north, Palestinians (workers, schoolgirls, men in ties, women with bundles on their heads) wind their way around the checkpoint on a rocky, sandy path, in full view of the Israeli Defense Forces observation posts. Food vendors and drink stands are set up. A boy selling cigarettes displays his merchandise on a pile of flat stones, an improvised store counter. A Palestinian contact in Ramallah had explained that I would be able to get a taxi here to return to Jerusalem. But the rules had changed, and no taxis were being allowed through the new border. As I negotiated my own passage with the soldiers, a taxi driver losing a day's work shouted at me in broken English: You're not Jewish, you're not Christian, you're American. Just show the soldier your American passport, he continued, seething with resentment, then reminded me that Bush is giving Israelis the money to do what they are doing. I managed to hitch a ride with an Israeli Arab, who had to talk his way through the checkpoints as a citizen of Israel, and defend himself as an Arab to the taxi driver who was now shouting at him. At yet another new checkpoint down the road, the Israeli Arab, who was on his way to work at a factory in northern Jerusalem, would have been turned back if it wasn't for my press credential and, yes, American passport. Even then, after a quick search of my backpack and the car, there was one final question for me from the soldier: "Are you Jewish?" I said yes. I didn't ask him what he meant by "Jew."

The checkpoints between Jerusalem and nearby West Bank Palestinian areas have been seams where fear and mutual ignorance crackle at the surface. In early

March, almost a dozen Israeli soldiers at a checkpoint north of Ramallah were killed by sniper fire. An IDF spokesperson impatiently suggested that I refrain from judging soldiers at the Kalandia checkpoint, and he has a point. The young men with automatic weapons are obviously afraid. There is terror from both sides every day. But only one side is occupying the other. Why is the idea of "buffer zones" almost always discussed as if only the Israelis need protection from Palestinians crossing the border — and not vice versa? Where's a little symmetry when you need it? Language tells the story: even when speaking Arabic, Palestinians use the Hebrew word "Machsom" for checkpoint. In a place that should be bilingual but is psychologically divided against itself, a few groups make it their business to cross over the invisible lines. Machsom Watch is an organization of Israeli women formed since the outbreak of the second intifada who take turns gathering twice every day at the Kalandia checkpoint north of Jerusalem, and at the calmer checkpoint south of the city on the way to Bethlehem (and less regularly at several others). It's no accident that when you phone the principal author of Machsom Watch's recent report, you will hear a bilingual outgoing message. These women are re-drawing what Benvenisti calls the "geography of fear," delineated in the "tribal maps" which Jerusalemites of all ethnicities carry in their heads.⁸

When we talk about checkpoints, we are not talking about the inconvenience of a traffic jam on your way to work. A man in the Deheisha refugee camp near Bethlehem, after a long discussion about the differences between Israeli, Zionist, and Jew once tried to tell me what it is like, psychologically, to live under military occupation. When you bite into a sandwich, he said, you even taste the occupation there. It's almost impossible to convey what something tastes like. Presumably one of George W. Bush's handlers learned that these inconveniences are something much deeper, because Bush referred explicitly to checkpoint humiliations in his April 5th comments to reporters. Maybe he had seen Charles Glass's moving report:

Palestinians cannot go more than five miles

in any direction within the Occupied Territories before coming up against an Israeli checkpoint, beyond which most of them cannot travel. Some checkpoints are worse than others, but all of them have the authority to prevent Palestinians from going to their places of work, to the houses of their extended families, to schools, hospitals, farms, or anywhere outside their own villages and towns. The most public humiliation of Palestinians occurs at these checkpoints. I have seen soldiers beat and teargas civilians and I have read in Israeli newspapers of groups of soldiers forcing young men to undress and cross a checkpoint in the Gaza Strip wearing only their underpants, or dividing Palestinian women into two queues — those they judged to be pretty on one side, ugly on the other — before allowing them to pass.⁹

The hypothetical, sympathetic handler should also read Machsom Watch's recent report,¹⁰ documenting a year of checkpoint observations and "interventions." Though it is in some ways already an historical document, as one of the Machsom activists remarked, it also provides essential background. Even before Israel's recent invasion, the checkpoints were not simple border crossings. A thorough history of the checkpoint becomes a history of the occupation itself, and as such is beyond my ability. But the report observes that the checkpoints have always constituted "part of a deliberate siege of the Palestinian population." One goal of Machsom Watch's activities, says the report, has been to challenge "the prevailing militarism so entrenched in Israeli society," and to demand that the military itself "not take refuge behind a smokescreen of security issues." Israel has real security issues, but the repression enacted at checkpoints does not serve them. After September 2000, according to Machsom Watch, the closure and control of civilian movement and livelihoods were tightened even though this is "contrary to international law, is inhumane, immoral and ineffective in preventing terror attacks." The "noose" is for preventing sick people from getting to doctors, teachers and students from getting to schools, and families from getting together. When Machsom Watch activists challenged soldiers about keeping Palestinian workers detained for so long after their identities had been checked, they were told that "if

we give them back the documents earlier, the workers will infiltrate again.' . . . In other words the job of the soldiers was to ensure that the labourers would lose a day's work, and they knew it." The report covers the situation up until January, providing essential context for the more recent, extreme humiliations and violations that have been reported.

MAYA ROSENFELD IS THE PRINCIPAL AUTHOR of the report. The topography of the occupation has changed dramatically since the recent events, so I asked Rosenfeld, who is also the author of the forthcoming *Facing the Occupation* (Stanford), for some clarifications. First I asked her for an overview of the often-discussed checkpoints¹¹:

I do not know how many permanent or semi-permanent checkpoints were 'operating' before the last invasion, but I assume the number is somewhere between 150 and 250. These can be divided into two main types: First, checkpoints located at the crossing between the West Bank and Israel proper — that is, either along the 'green line' or at the various entrances to the municipal territory of Jerusalem (we are talking of 'greater Jerusalem,' including all the Arab neighborhoods and villages which were annexed to the municipality and the lands expropriated). Second, checkpoints that were erected inside the West Bank by the IDF and/or border police during the period between September 29, 2000, (after the outbreak of the second so-called intifada) and today. These are scattered everywhere, mainly on the major and minor roads between villages, towns, cities, and refugee camps, and also at the entrances to or outskirts of many villages.

The 'logic' is as follows. As you know, the majority of West Bank territory remained under Israeli military control, either as Zone B or Zone C (Zone A encompasses approximately 28 percent of the territory, maybe even less). So the checkpoints were erected on the 'junctions' or crossings where Zone A meets with Zone B or C, or else, inside Zone B and Zone C. This way the West Bank was not only divided into cantons but actually was split into hundreds of isolated or semi-isolated Palestinian settlements. So Palestinians became prisoners in their own villages or towns. At times no vehicles whatsoever were allowed

to move through checkpoints, and all passengers had to either cross by foot (after a security check), through the fields, dirt, and heaps of obstacles that the military piled there, or they were forced to stay home.

We at Machsom Watch focused almost only on those checkpoints that initially served as border crossings between the Palestinian Territories and Israel (even these were not final but awaiting further negotiations). It is at those checkpoints that Palestinians' entrance was conditioned upon holding work permits or travel permits that were issued in the past by the Civil Administration and [military commander].

That description is now background. Since the invasion, checkpoint functioning "changed completely," writes Rosenfeld. The checkpoints at Kalandia and Bethlehem became military bases. "Today the entire Territory [sic] is under complete siege. The Palestinians are now in need of a rescue operation. The Israelis, on the other hand, are at the peak of their destruction mission. These ends do not converge."

Recent news reports have mentioned various ideas resurfacing of "fortifications," "buffer zones" etc. What do such possibilities mean concretely for Israelis and Palestinians?

This requires an essay, not a brief response. I can only say that the buffer zones etc. are full of shit. The idea is Israeli-made of course, and it is based on seizing (stealing) more Palestinian land. As you well know, they don't think for one minute of creating a zone to the west of the green line, only to the east — that is, at the expense of the West Bank. One may think that this no longer matters, now that they have bulldozed the entire Palestinian space, but this is not so. What this boils down to is that Israel may go ahead and create this zone by force, in the same way it does everything. But this will distance it even more from any beginning of a solution.

Unlike many human rights groups, Machsom Watch, in its activities as well as its report, is very much concerned with linking personal consciousness with political action: "It is our hope that this report will be added to the testimonies that will help them [i.e. Israelis] to cross the threshold between knowing, [and] acting on that knowledge by raising their voices in pro-

test." I asked Rosenfeld about the group's efforts to cross borders geographically as well as psychically so that Israelis can recognize in a more deeply-felt way that their country is occupying Palestinian lives.

I can only say that I crossed this border many, many years ago. In fact, I have spent most of my adult life, including the major part of my academic life, trespassing or transcending (or whatever you want to call it) national, state-made borders and boundaries. But to be a little more specific: The issue you raise here is that of denial, this extraordinary ability of human beings to be untouched by (or distance themselves from) the suffering and pain of others, even when this pain and suffering are the consequence of their direct or less direct doing, i.e. the policy of their government or action of their army, which includes their sons, husbands, brothers and so on. Of course, one can expand forever regarding this unique human capacity, its psychological dimensions, etc., but I think that things here demand an even more complicated explanation.

Most Israelis do not suffer from lack of knowledge and information, and there is not a single person who does not know what happens when hundreds of missiles are fired at a refugee neighborhood, and the majority know exactly where Jenin and Ramallah are located (as well as knowing people from Ramallah and Jenin). I also think that if you would have told an average Israeli three years ago that Israel will bombard the West Bank, he would have never believed you. The point is that once the impossible has become a fact on the ground, most people tend to defend it ('it' being the IDF's actions) probably because they fear that otherwise their entire world will be completely destabilized. The threshold that has to be crossed by most people is quite huge, considering their high level of 'integration' in the society/nation/state and the fear of losing the sense of belonging. . . .

Mind Monitors & Border Crossers

"SO MANY ISRAELIS CANNOT THINK LOGICALLY about this situation because there's so much hatred," Nava Elyashar tells me, her scarf whipping in the chilly, early morning wind. Elyashar is another member of Machsom Watch; we met when I accompanied a group of watchers to the Jerusalem-Bethlehem checkpoint, before the invasion. Born in

Haifa to German and Austrian parents, Nava Elyashar is married to the son of Iraqi Jews, a man held as a prisoner of war by Egypt in the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Many of their friends now consider them traitors, he tells me, for their opinions in the midst of horrific, almost daily attacks by suicide bombers on Israeli civilians. But Nava, a computer systems analyst, overcomes the artificial divides by monitoring more than checkpoints. "I'm able to monitor my mind as if I'm somebody else . . . as if I was the other side." Back home in Gilo, after we share a breakfast, which her husband learned to cook in the army, she finishes addressing invitations to her youngest son's bar mitzvah.

On that calm March morning just north of Bethlehem, Nava Elyashar watched as a soldier turned away a Palestinian woman who said she had a doctor's appointment in Jerusalem. The soldier told her to have the doctor come to the checkpoint to sign something. "Obviously," Nava says matter-of-factly, "it will not happen." A lot of the checkpoint traffic here is the result of Jerusalem and ethnic demographics. That is, Nava explains, after 1967, many Arab families from East Jerusalem were refused building permits by the Israeli authorities to accommodate their growing families. Reasons good enough for "us, the Jewish people," to build were not applied equally; "the same logic doesn't work for the Palestinians." When more equitable building laws were passed, implementation of them remained spotty at best. So when the house got too small, some family members would move to nearby villages. One result is their separation from the city by Israeli checkpoints. All because, Nava, says, "they had to live with dignity." Later in the morning, Nava offers her cell phone to an elderly woman trying to get to the American Consulate in Jerusalem. The young soldier, wearing a knit cap — he probably wasn't twenty — looked for a few moments at the papers the woman handed him, protected in a plastic page-cover. The woman was trying to get her visa for a trip to Mission Viejo, California. From there she hoped to go visit her son in Arizona. For the moment, she was turned back toward the village of Beit Sahour, where she lives.

Nava and her husband Shlomo have

three sons. The older two are in the army. One was recently stationed at a Jewish settlement near the West Bank city of Nablus. "He's watching . . . that the settlers have their easy life. It's very dangerous, it's very, very dangerous. They are very nervous. They are afraid, yes." I ask her if she speaks with her son about serving in the occupied areas. "He knows that I would be very happy if he will leave the army and refuses to go to the territories. But he is twenty-one. I cannot tell him what to do. My husband and me, we gave him our way of life. But from his friends, he has some other ideas getting into his head. And he must go and choose his way alone. I cannot tell him what to do. . . ." It would be redundant of me to analyze the way Nava speaks about her family, about the difficulty of being a parent who believes in freedom, all in the same context in which she reaches out to strangers whose humanity and dignity she recognizes across the border. She can speak for herself. Her clarity sometimes seems hopeful, sometimes dark; either way, her courage is inspiring:

Most of the Israelis close their eyes and don't see what's really happen[ing]. Many of the soldiers come here hating Arabs, or distrusting Arabs, or not knowing what really is going on. Some of them will have other thoughts after being here. Some of them will be much more aggressive toward the Arabs, and will say, "we were at the checkpoints and we know how bad the Arabs are, how ugly they are, how they behave, how they are trying to go to kill us." But some of them will get [that] the whole situation is bad and the Arabs are human beings like the others. And it happens all the time. Most of the officers who wrote the refusal letter, they served here. They were here at first at the checkpoints, in the streets of Gaza, in the streets of Beit Lechem, in the streets of Hebron, and after seeing what really happens, they change their minds.

The refusal letter she mentions is Seruv's "Courage to Refuse."¹² There are more than 1000 Israeli "refuseniks" — reserve officers and soldiers who, since September, have refused to serve in the occupied territories. Over 400 of these belong to Seruv ("Refuse"), a group whose open letter declares that, while they will "continue serving in the Israel Defense Forces in any mission that serves Israel's defense," they will

not “continue to fight beyond the 1967 borders in order to dominate, expel, starve, and humiliate an entire people.” In March, *Ha’aretz* columnist Israel Harel dismissed “the tiny refusal-to-serve movement, which the media inflates beyond any reasonable proportion to its true significance”—a sure sign of the group’s growing influence. Knesset member Yossi Sarid of the leftist Meretz party recently decided that it would be political suicide to give official support to Seruv, but some Meretz members have publicly expressed their sympathy with the movement, according to *Ha’aretz*. Meanwhile, the IDF is taking a harder line: As of April 13, Seruv reports that 39 officers and soldiers were in Israeli prisons for their refusal, more than the number jailed at the height of the Lebanon war, when the refusal movement began with the group Yesh Gvul.

OFER BEIT HALACHMI IS ONE of those who signed Seruv’s open letter. I was late for my meeting with him because I suddenly found myself at the remains of Jerusalem’s Moment Café where a suicide bomber had attacked days before. This is the attack in which the Fatah activist worried that Israeli peace activists might have died alongside Israeli civilians whose deaths were tactically desirable. As workers cleared the rubble, Peace Now held a vigil across the street in front of the Prime Minister’s residence, keeping a tally of combined casualties — Israeli and Palestinian. A month later, as his troops were reportedly opening fire at close range against Palestinian civilians (according to B’Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization), Sharon’s horror of mixing Jewish blood and Arab blood would seep through his rhetoric; speaking about the suicide bombing at an Arab-owned restaurant inside Israel, he told the Knesset: “Victims of coexistence, those whose worlds fell apart while eating at an Arab restaurant in Haifa, their blood mixing with the blood of Israeli Arabs who were sitting beside them.”¹³ The Peace Now banner at Sharon’s residence read (in Hebrew): “Get Out of the Territories: Return to Ourselves.” My first reaction was to be cynical about the simplistic slogan. But speaking with Ofer was a reminder that “separation” can be on the racist, blood terms of a Sharon — and

imposed by the powerful, as Rosenfeld noted above — or on the terms of those bordering each other in mutual recognition and dignity.

Ofer is a rabbinical student at Jerusalem’s Hebrew Union College, where we met. He is a third-generation Israeli, born two years before the Six Day War. His grandparents were Polish, and his parents taught him about his “right to the land,” and about their wish for Jews to come to Israel. “This was the vision,” Ofer explains quietly in a lounge at the college. Growing up there, Ofer would take walks, and though there was now a post-1967 “Green Line,” he “didn’t feel there was a border . . . [it] was not mentioned and was not visible.” Then came the Lebanon war and what Ofer calls the “first crack.” He entered the army in 1984, going into Lebanon as part of the occupying Israeli army after the principal fighting was done. He was stationed near the Syrian border. Two things happened that winter, both of which have resonance almost twenty years later. First, he realized that nothing he was doing in Lebanon was related to defending Israel. “I was across the border without any real meaning,” he says. Then the first known suicide bomber struck — against a bus of Israeli soldiers. After that, “I found myself defending myself and not defending my country.” Such a distinction threatened to break open the vision his parents had instilled, the one in which individual, military, and state are all one; Israel itself was supposed to be a family. (Simplistic notions of family and nation are hardly unique to Israel.)

In 1984 Israel announced its withdrawal from Lebanon. “We decided — ‘we’” — here Ofer shrugs at his own usage, then he revises it — “The government decided” to withdraw, but of course to remain in the so-called security zone created in southern Lebanon. The withdrawal “was simply a lie,” as Ofer sees it. Even as he recognized this, Ofer entered his fourth year of army service to begin officer training. In 1985, he was sent to Ramallah and Nablus (he calls the latter by its Hebrew name, Shechem). Two years later, he went to Khan Yunis in the Gaza Strip. “I found myself without any visible threat, walking through the streets” of these towns, “stop[p]ing what I saw as in-

nocent people” to check their papers. He would “interrupt their everyday simple life,” and he would wonder why he was doing it. He remembers standing on a rooftop in Hebron with his weapon, watching people — Palestinian people — in the market. “I felt that I’m doing something wrong,” he tells me. Why, he wondered, was he aiming a weapon at people who were only trying to live their lives? “It put a split in my soul.” Should he simply obey orders and assume that his superiors knew what they were doing, or should he act on his own sense that what he was doing was immoral? The dialogue Ofer describes was internal, so I asked if he ever spoke to friends or fellow soldiers about his dilemma. “There was an unwritten rule,” he responds. “If you are talking like that, you are joining the enemy . . . to put a knife in the back of your friends.” And the first intifada was still two years away.

He tells me that the refuseniks have a variety of political views but that they share that “same split inside themselves” — and share an understanding that the split is unnecessary. That is, his refusal to serve in the occupied territories is “not an act against my state and my people.” On the contrary, he is strengthening his right to shoot when necessary. “If I have borders, then I have the moral right to defend our borders.” *Ha’aretz* columnist Akiva Eldar recently assessed the cost of borderlessness in these pragmatic terms:

On Israel’s 54th birthday, the most prominent characteristic of the state is the moral, political and economic price being paid for being a state without borders. In exchange, its citizens don’t even get hope for improvement in their personal safety. And that’s not all. By rejecting the proposal to turn the Green Line into the international border, which for the first time this year was formally recognized by the Arab League, Israel could be losing a strategic asset of invaluable proportions: The Sharon government is daily eroding the credibility of the U.S. In simple terms, Israel is shooting at its own deterrent capability.¹⁴

When Ofer and I spoke, Seruv was only six weeks old, and the large-scale invasion of the West Bank was still two weeks away. He wanted to emphasize to me that “We are not a political movement. We don’t have the

answer for everything.” He has his own opinions of course, but Seruv does not have a position about Arafat or settlements or negotiations. “We all know” — including the political right — that there is no future in “the idea that we can with force make the Arabs” do what we might want them to do. At the same time, the left has been saying to negotiate, but “We all know we have no one to talk with.”

“Israel must negotiate with itself,” Ofer says, perhaps returning us by a more nuanced path to that Peace Now slogan. “When you don’t have a [geographical] border, you don’t have a moral border.” Then he adds: “We took on the right for ourselves” to rule the territories, but “instead of helping” the people in them, we have made their lives worse, making sure that the Palestinians cannot “build a living country.” Ofer — who lives in Katzir, the town that would become newsworthy in 2000 when the Israeli Supreme Court ruled in favor of an Israeli Arab family challenging the Land Authority’s policy against selling land to non-Jews — believes the Israeli repression of Palestinian nation-building in the West Bank is no accident, for “I was raised to be blind to human rights of non-Jews.” He writes in an open letter posted on the Seruv website: “The deterioration of the current situation is not a new development but rather it is the logical continuation of a long process . . . the beginning of which is an immoral and unjust rule of another people.” And before running off to class, he ventures even further into this dialectical minefield: “Actually, what I feel is, we created our enemies.”

Analysis Under Curfew

IT’S POSSIBLE OFER ONCE STOOD GUARD AS GZ’s family shopped at the Hebron market. GZ is a Palestinian journalist in Hebron who also tries hard to undo the secular and religious tangles of this whole situation, though the very words he must use betray the confusion at the heart of defining identity. “When I talk about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, I don’t talk about a religious conflict. This is the mistake of the Israelis, or the Jews. They believe the conflict is between Judaism and Islam. It is not so. We got absolutely no problem with Judaism or Christianity.” GZ says “we” because he is

Muslim, though he himself is not religious. He continues: "The conflict is a political conflict. There is an occupation. . . . done in 1948 and 1967. They bring Russians because this Russian is a Jewish guy, and he can easily come and live in Haifa and in Hebron, while the original citizens who used to live here thousands of years are driven out and they cannot come back. And this is the idea of Zionism, this racism. . . . The conflict is not a religious conflict. . . . I respect his religion, but his religion should not be on my account." He believes that stereotypes of Arabs as peasants who ride donkeys and live in tents make it possible for the media and politicians to talk about "giving back" places that are under military occupation, terminology which offends him. (In October, Senator John McCain appeared on the David Letterman show, joking that after the Afghan war the locals could go back to selling camels. He got laughs and applause.) The mention of donkeys seems to remind GZ of Orwell's *Animal Farm*, to which he refers several times. The Palestinian Authority sacrifices those whom it exploits, he says, referring to Arafat's political exploitation of those who die for the Palestinian cause.

To get to Hebron, I take a taxi van south from East Jerusalem. The dozen passengers, all men, are smoking cigarettes. After a while, almost as an afterthought, someone cracks a window. Curtains are pulled over the windows, though the passenger next to me opens ours a little because he understands that I want to see what's outside. He gazes out the window, looks back to me and says "Ein Mazel." No luck. In general, he means, for the Palestinians. He is from Jordan and lives in Hebron. "This fucking," he says. Ungrammatical and without subtlety, but in the lingua franca his bottom line is clear enough. The taxi stops at a little town north of Hebron. Some of the passengers continue on foot, others change taxis. At the "junction," a group of men prunes a knotty tree. There are food kiosks. A man with a briefcase and a tie. A young guy holding an orange pamphlet called "Compiled Material for English." Kids with multi-colored backpacks; it's a school day. I share a smaller taxi with a half dozen passengers, and this one drops me in the Palestinian-controlled part of Hebron, which is not under curfew.

But the friend I am going to meet lives in an area that is under curfew. I dial his number and he tells me to hand my cell phone to one of the drivers nearby looking for a fare. They arrange the last leg, and this driver takes me through the quiet streets.

When I called information from inside Israel to get a phone number in Hebron, the operator told me the city doesn't "belong to us anymore." Actually, Post-Oslo Hebron is divided into areas known as H1 and H2. Some 80,000 Palestinians live in H1, which is under Palestinian control. Some 40,000 Palestinians and 400 Jewish settlers live in H2, which includes Old Hebron, the disputed holy sites, and the Palestinian marketplace. Another estimated 5600 Jewish settlers live in and around Hebron; perhaps the best-known settlement there is Kiryat Arba. H2 is the area subject to the curfews ordered by the local Israeli military commanders. That is, the curfew affects the mixed Israeli-Palestinian areas of the city — and applies only to the Palestinians in those areas.

GZ is 30 years old, but like many Palestinians I meet, he looks older than he is. His grandfather is from West Jerusalem. He himself was born here in Hebron. "I am a human being. . . . I cannot accept somebody to impose his will on me." That, he explains, is what an occupation is all about. In a rare rhetorical flourish, GZ does say that "the Israelis even control the oxygen." He is chain-smoking Marlboros, boycotting Israeli cigarettes, a tactic he acknowledges is indirect. After all, "Americans support Israel. There is no difference between American and Israeli policy, but I prefer to have American cigarettes and not Israeli cigarettes." Then the click of his lighter is audible on the tape.

"The feeling of oppression makes you crazy," he says, with some impatience. This curfew will last about a week. Palestinians are forbidden to leave their homes, open shops, attend school. Some defy the restrictions, of course, but this is risky even when there is no overt military activity. They risk getting shot, in other words. "Forget the money [i.e. economic losses] and the casualties," GZ says. "Imagine yourself in New York stuck for eight days, you cannot go out of your home, somebody is controlling your

freedom. You would really need a psychologist. In the meantime, this curfew is imposed only on the Palestinians, although in this part of the town, which is under curfew, you have Jews and Arabs. Jews can freely move. . . . So it is a sort of punishment for civilians. Certain results are predictable. "It doesn't really help the Israelis. It makes people more angry. When you impose your will on me, when you decide to imprison me for a week — it's a prison in fact, it's a prison — what do you expect from me? You create more hostility. . . . So when the curfew is lifted . . . [there will be] resistance."

Did GZ always consider himself political? During the first intifada, what he calls the "popular intifada," he was a teenager. "I was just a boy. I knew nothing about politics. I just knew one thing: this soldier is my enemy. Because he has a gun. And this man who has a gun comes and beat up my father, beat up my friend, he makes curfew. Even a boy can understand that this guy holding a machine gun is the one who is my enemy. . . . If I want to go somewhere, he gives me permission. And he controls water, he cuts [off] water in the camp¹⁵ — he controls my life, you know. So I took part, like so many Palestinians." He joined other young people throwing stones at Israeli patrols. He joined others in acts of civil disobedience. The "popular revolution" involved painting slogans on walls, demonstrating, boycotting. He was jailed three times by the Israelis

"Revolution is good," he continues, "but [only] if you have a clean leadership." Rich and poor took part in the first uprising. The rich may not have given their lives, but they financed popular activities; even paint costs money. But "basically only poor people go to fight. It's like *Animal Farm*." Now GZ sees himself as a journalist, a talker, and an analyst. The first time we met he told me that he was a Palestinian who was suffering and became a journalist to write about that suffering. Now he says: "I will never ever take part again in any intifada because of the first intifada — because I felt that I was just used, like so many people." He explains: "When you are fighting as a boy, even when you throw stones, you could get shot. You could get killed . . . We were sacrificing, and

the leadership comes and gives concessions. The leadership comes and talks about political solution. We are not against political solution. [But] we also feel that we were neglected. . . . The first intifada was spontaneously done and many people took part. But this intifada is a programmed one. The aim beyond this intifada is not to achieve our national goals. It is to help Arafat. Arafat makes use of people to improve the conditions of negotiations. And then eventually he comes as the hero. But in fact Arafat is not the one who is suffering. He is not the one who is fighting on the ground."

GZ articulates the dilemma shared by other Palestinians with whom I spoke. "I mean, nevertheless, I am not against the intifada. I have my criticism. Because I don't want people to be used as cats' paws, as victims, for a political game played by Arafat and his group. Why doesn't Arafat send his daughter or his son? The Palestinian leaders and ministers: why do their sons not go and take part in the fight? Why only poor people should die?" The "leadership" must have sensed the not-so-rhetorical question in the air, because just a couple of weeks later, Arafat's wife would announce that she would gladly send her son to die — though she has only a daughter. GZ, by the way, does not support suicide bombings. Nor does he feel that the siege of Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah changes anything. In May, he told me by phone, "Arafat is trying to make himself a hero," but the deal he made to end the standoff at Bethlehem means he has given his stamp of approval to a policy of deportation. Not only is Arafat not a hero, he says, but "Sharon is still in need of Arafat."

Back in 1995, GZ was already critical of Arafat for negotiating autonomy without securing an end to the occupation. "They give you autonomy and they keep on confiscating." Land, that is. A day after the Hamas faction had won student elections at Hebron University, GZ was saying: We had the Turkish occupation, then the British, then the Jordanian, then the Israeli, "now we have the Palestinian Authority." Seven years later, I ask if he would say the same thing today. "We have a problem, you see. On one hand, we want to get rid of the occupation. On the other hand, we want to

achieve a democratic state. I don't want to get rid of the occupation and then live in a state which is controlled by a dictator, or controlled by five or ten people who possess the economy and possess the fate of the millions. But despite our criticism of the PA, we think that all efforts should be focused on fighting the occupation. . . . I cannot really change all these things now. . . . We have a split between the people and Arafat, Arafat's policies, I mean, but it's not the right time to fight [that], because what the Israelis want is to have civil war among the Palestinian community and we don't want that." What does he think will happen after Arafat dies? "Arafat is just a person. Nothing will happen. When I tell you 'Arafat,' I don't mean Arafat as a person. I don't give a fuck about Arafat as a person. I am talking about Arafat's policies, the political direction of Arafat."

"We are not against negotiations in principle. . . . [But] he failed, Arafat and his men. He wants to revive the streets, revive actions and revolution so as to use it as something that could be [an] influence in the negotiation, you see? So he is using his own people, which is not acceptable. If you use your people to liberate, if you have a political program — liberation — no problem. I will be the first one to go. But if you want to use me as a victim, and then get [nothing but] redeployment here or there . . . I will not accept that. If Arafat stands up now and says, 'Oslo is over, we want to fight so as to achieve a state in the West Bank and Gaza, according to [the UN resolutions], and we will not give any more concessions,' everybody will fight. Everybody will be for the intifada, and everybody will sacrifice. But now Arafat is still sticking to Oslo." And why is Oslo not an acceptable framework? "Because the essence of the conflict is land, land occupied by a foreign force, by the Israelis. Oslo talks [as if] there is problem or a dispute between Palestinians and Israelis. No. There is a land occupied. . . . Oslo talks about transition periods, [for example] redeployment from Hebron. No. We don't want the Israelis to get out [only] from the center of Hebron. We want the Israelis to completely put an end to their occupation from the whole West Bank cities. In the city center [of Hebron], you are liberated in some way,

or you have autonomy. But outside, like my house, which is five minutes from the center, it's occupied. . . . Oslo is a partial solution. . . . It will take one thousand years to finish Oslo."

In 1995, when I asked how I should identify him, he replied, "Say, 'the boy who wants to go to America.'" Since then, he has tried unsuccessfully to get to the U.S. As we said good-bye, he talked about how much he envies Israeli culture. Like Americans, he told me, they know how to enjoy life. They are always having picnics and birthday parties for their kids, he said. Back in H1, while I'm having a falafel sandwich on the street, a forty-two-year-old Palestinian sports instructor wearing a black and yellow sweat suit walks up to me and asks if I am American. Yes. "The plane Apache is from America," he says (referring to the helicopter), "and it kill the Palestinian people every day." After passing through a no-man's land and an Israeli checkpoint into H2, I waited at a bus stop to return via Kiryat Arba to Jerusalem. A young Israeli Jew in civilian clothes with an automatic weapon stopped to ask me who I was. Then he told me he lived in Hebron to attend the yeshiva here. Yes, there are good yeshivas in Jerusalem, he said, but it takes a special kind of Jew to live here. Special in what way, I asked. "*Sh'lo yesh ko'ach*": he has strength. The armed settler was not subject to the curfew, but I think his mind is not as free as my imprisoned friend's.

"They always ask us to understand them," GZ says. "I am not the one who oppressed you. Go to Germany and ask for compensation. When you ask me to understand you, you also have to understand me." The day before we met, a Palestinian had been killed at a Hebron checkpoint under disputed circumstances.¹⁶ "The victims [on both sides] are the civilians," GZ says repeatedly. This does not mean there is no right and wrong. Al Jazeera is reporting on a gunfight here in Hebron the previous night; in response to the checkpoint incident, armed Palestinians had attacked IDF positions in the city. We wrapped up our interview, because, despite the curfew, GZ was planning to attend the funeral of the young man killed at the checkpoint. I asked if I might join him. He said it was not a good

idea. He knew I was Jewish, and the funeral was likely to be a religious one.

Fighter & Father

MY VISIT TO RAMALLAH was delayed when the IDF shot out my Palestinian driver's tire, then delayed again when my driver insisted that we go to his home for a glass of hot tea. I said I preferred a whiskey but he told me that because he was Muslim he did not drink. Then I met my friend in Ramallah. Here's another signal of asymmetry: no Israelis asked me to hide their names. "JT," who disagrees with his wife about suicide bombings, sees the asymmetry like this: one side wants liberation, the other side wants to stop them. When I first met him, JT was a Fatah activist in the first intifada. In the mid 90s, the second time I met him, he had a job through the Palestinian Authority with an "international organization." Today, in his mid-40s, the father of three, his daily routine has changed — he has to pick up his kids from school, for example, which leaves less time to walk the streets of West Bank towns, introducing a visiting American Jew to fellow fighters, or taking the visitor to see the wounded at an East Jerusalem hospital. But his anger still snaps, and his anger seems to give him a certain pleasure. He sees the future getting bloodier before it gets better, but there is no turning back because "behind [us] is a wreck."

JT still calls Arafat "the Chairman," a kind of respect which he maintains even when he criticizes him. He blames the corruption of the PA not on Arafat himself but on those around him. As he sees it, the Chairman holds all the strings but cannot afford to stop suicide bombers and other violent resistance unless he wants to end his own political life. JT's anger remains. He supports suicide bombers as a political principle, but he also insists that day-to-day life must be improved for Palestinians if anything is to change. He is a fighter, but he speaks as a father now, too: "If the economic situation is upgraded, who will send his son to throw a stone?" He recalls that his own grandfather, a Jerusalemite, used to say that he would give up his life for his Jewish neighbors. But that mentality is lost now. JT himself is just a few years older than the occupation. He was raised under the Is-

raeli occupation. He has been tortured in Israeli jails, and he doesn't want his own young sons to know that experience. A generation needs to be trained for peace, he says, if there is going to be peace.

The "suicide bombers" must be seen in this context, he tells me. "These are the ones you prevented from living a normal life. . . . Who should I hate? The Palestinians who did not make peace, or the Israelis who did not need peace?" Since Oslo and the creation of Palestinian security forces, young stone-throwers of the first intifada, trying to survive in a strangled economy, can receive a salary for taking a gun. We are in JT's living room. He, too, is chain-smoking Marlboros; when I first met him years ago I offered him an Israeli cigarette, and he told me about boycotting Israeli goods. A small symbolic act, considering how the Palestinian economy has depended on Israel. The television is on, CNN reporting another attack inside Israel, this one a bus bombing near Tel Aviv. The sound is muted, so JT provides commentary. "[Israel is] driving not only the neutral but even the peaceful [Palestinians] into resistance," he says. What about the general media impression that suicide bombers are guided by religious fanaticism? "Bullshit," he says. The mosques are filled with worshippers old enough to die but who are not going out detonating themselves. We are not the Taliban, he says; "half the city sells alcohol, the other half drinks it." JT is perceptive and cocky. He is opinionated but sometimes contradicts himself. He is worth listening to because he has been around, he is thoughtful and honest — and he'll surprise you sometimes. He is a person, balancing ideology with daily life. So I give this picture of him without trying to make it coherent or palatable.

How do the Palestinians fight both PA's corruption and the Israeli occupation? "We know they are thieves. We know even the names of the thieves. . . . [but] someone is shooting at both of us," so we fight against our common enemy. "After we finish with them, I'll turn at you and I'll fuck you day and night," he says, referring to his Palestinian enemies. What about the thieves whose names you know? He quotes "the Chairman": "These are the shoes that we are going through the mud with. You can-

not wear your best shoes to go through the mud. This is a transition period." No one can predict what will happen next, he says, just as no one predicted the current crisis. As for Sharon's invasion of Ramallah and the West Bank: "It's hard to tell you this, [but] it serves us in the long run." How? "The last general of the old generation" believes he "can bring [the Israelis] peace by force." JT is a darkly optimistic dialectician. This will cost the Palestinians, he explains, but it will also serve them by showing the Israelis that Sharon's is an unattainable goal.

Like other Palestinians I have met, JT knows more about Israeli society than most Israelis I have met seem to know of Palestinian society. This is "natural" since, one group usually crosses the border to work for the other, and the other, when it crosses, usually does so to dominate, repress, or confiscate. JT also led Israeli-Palestinian youth dialogue groups in the 90s, inside the Green Line. "I spoke to them as an old fighter." He learned something as well. "The Israelis," he tells me, not "the Arab countries," "taught me that the human being is the most precious thing." This doesn't mean he accepts the Israeli version of its army's beneficence. In the occupied territories, he continues, the Israelis don't need to kill us. (This was before the re-occupation.) But do not doubt, he continued, that Israel would kill without hesitation if the threat was inside the Green Line. (A few weeks later, the *New York Times* ran a front-page photo of Israeli police beating Israeli peace activists.) I asked JT his thoughts on my sense of the schizophrenia inside the Green Line — that most Israelis have no real sense of what goes on in the occupied territories. He replied that I had just explained the suicide bombings without realizing it. "To make the Israelis inside to know what's happening here." It is no longer enough, he said, to sit in a café "being neutral" and wanting to know nothing about what's happening in Ramallah. That's when he tells me about the rumors that circulated after a suicide bomber hit the Moment Café in Jerusalem. I didn't ask him if he would send his children to do such killing.

But I did ask about being middle-aged and watching the younger generation taking over the fight. "These are the kids who

used to watch us in the old intifada," he says, then pauses a long time. They see that "this stone cannot achieve much." It's not complicated to see why this is a "more bloody intifada," he says, just as his kids walk in the door from nursery and elementary school. He asks me how I would have felt a few hours before when the IDF soldier shot at me, if I had had a gun in my hand instead of a camera. He tells me his kids used to be afraid of the sound of gunfire. The youngest has just handed me a chocolate, though JT explains this was a ruse so that he could eat one himself before dinner. But now they go to the window to watch, and they run to see the Israeli tanks. Just fifteen days ago his nine-year-old daughter (she's wearing a light blue Gap sweatshirt) would still "piss on herself" when she heard shots. She would wet her bed and wake up when there was shelling nearby. Now she sleeps through the night while Apache helicopters above the neighborhood fire missiles. "What are they planting, and what do they intend to harvest?" JT asks me. By "they" he means all of them — I think. Or maybe all of us.

Many of the hospitable Palestinian men I met during my short visit kept their wives hidden.¹⁷ JT's family doesn't work that way. We ate together (KFC with all the fixin's and Ramallah's version of Chinese food.) Then his wife — the one who quietly opposes suicide bombings — refuses to let me leave without having a piece of blueberry cheesecake, the first she's ever made. We're forced to eat too quickly, because the sun is setting and I am nervous about getting "back." Outside on the driveway, a half dozen neighborhood kids are playing with toy guns while an older boy skips rope. They often play checkpoint inspection, JT tells me, then drives me to the real checkpoint. I cross on foot, showing my American passport, and ask a dark-skinned Israeli soldier, perhaps an Ethiopian immigrant, where he's from; "Israel," he says with a wry smile, and allows me to snap a quick photo. Then I watch another soldier fire a few shots toward a nearby car. Most of the Palestinians queued up don't even flinch. For the twenty-minute trip back to Jerusalem I will take three different taxis. In one taxi van, an English-speaking doctor who was recently forced by

checkpoint soldiers to dump out his medicine on the ground tells me that his mother was shot by rubber-coated bullets the previous night. The driver is watching us in the rear-view mirror and says something in Arabic. The doctor translates: the driver is saying they shot at his car near the checkpoint last night. "Everyone has to expect to be shot now," the doctor explains.

All of that was just before things got really bad this spring. Indeed JT did not predict what would happen next: Sharon's sustained effort to make the Palestinian idea of a state into an unattainable goal. "The wanton destruction on the West Bank of basic infrastructure, of civilian ministries, of equipment and documents, including school records, that have no security value — these are acts of revenge having little to do with security and everything to do with humiliating and seeking to break the will of the Palestinians for self-governance."¹⁸

There are wrongs on both "sides," but there is no symmetry because only one side is occupying the other. And the way out of our false belief in symmetry is not to give up seeing right and wrong, but to overcome our conditioned notions of us and them. One of those petitions I received opposing the occupation also expressed concern for Israel's long-term security. Political language can be so coded and loaded that I actually had to pause and turn those words over in my mind. Within seconds the words dissolved and instead I saw my two young Israeli nieces.

This is Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish:

And they searched his chest
But could only find his heart
And they searched his heart
But could only find his people
And they searched his voice
But could only find his grief
And they searched his grief
But could only find his prison
And they searched his prison
But could only see themselves in chains.¹⁹

NOTES

1. "Israel's Tenth Birthday," in *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays* (Oxford, 1968), pp. 124-25. Deutscher continues: "This is no matter of abstract principle only. The future of Israel may well depend on whether the Israelis are on guard against nationalist conceit and are able to find a common language with the peoples around them. Will they find it in the second decade of their statehood? There is nothing that a friend of the people of Israel can wish them more ardently."

2. Benvenisti, *City of Stone: The Hidden History of Jerusalem*, trans. Maxine Kaufman Nunn, (Univ. of California, 1996), pp. 222-23.

3. Nadav Shragai, "Our Justice," *Ha'aretz* (English edition), March 26, 2002.

4. Haddad, "When Push Comes To Shove: Achieving the Dialectic of Resistance," *Between the Lines*, March 2002, p. 6.

5. Ashrawi, "Where We Went Wrong," *The Progressive*, February 2002, p. 22.

6. Hass, "Profound Contempt," *Ha'aretz* (English edition), April 15, 2002.

7. Machsom Watch, *First Annual Report (August 2001 — January 2002), Part I: The Bethlehem Checkpoint*, pp. 8, 17. Available from y_k1@netvision.net.il

8. Benvenisti, *City of Stone*, pp. 224, 226.

9. Glass, "Diary," *London Review of Books*, Feb. 21, 2002, p. 36

10. See note 7.

11. What follows is an edited version of an interview conducted by email in April 2002.

12. <http://www.seruv.org.il/>

13. "In Sharon's Words: Arafat Is Terror's 'Dispatcher,'" *New York Times*, April 9, 2002, p. A10.

14. Eldar, "And if we strip the emperor naked," April 15, 2002.

15. See for example, B'Tselem's "Not Even a Drop: The Water Crisis in Palestinian Villages Without a Water Network," (July 2001) for accounts of Israeli military destruction of Palestinian reservoirs and drinking sources.

16. "Mohammed Da'ana, 26, was killed Saturday in the West Bank city of Hebron. Da'ana's family claimed that the soldiers shot him at a checkpoint, whereas the IDF said he was killed while driving his car in an Israeli-controlled section of the city while it was under curfew." Amos Harel and Mazal Muallem, "IDF troops shoot dead 4 Palestinians, arrest Jihad activist," *Ha'aretz* (English edition) March 16, 2002.

17. Meanwhile, as I'm writing, a woman in Jordan has divorced her husband — a first in that country. Until a January court ruling, only men had the right to divorce there, according to the Associated Press ("Jordan: A Milestone for Women," *New York Times*, May 15, 2002, A6).

18. Robert Malley and Hussein Agha, "A Reply to Ehud Barak," *New York Review of Books*, June 13, 2002, p. 49.

19. "Earth Poem," in *Modern Poetry of the Arab World*, trans. and ed., Abdullah al-Udhari (Penguin, 1986). The poem was first published in Beirut, 1972.

The Privatization of Everything

Betty Reid Mandell

SELLING UNCLE SAM IS THE TITLE OF A BOOK on how to do just that, for entrepreneurs eager to make some money off of Uncle Sam. Sitting close to it on the library shelf is a book sponsored by the World Bank and the Fleming Bank, advising corporations worldwide on how to make money by privatizing their government's various ventures. Both the World Bank and the Fleming Bank fund privatization ventures throughout the world. In their analysis of what has already been accomplished through privatization, they like most of what they see.

For the past two decades, businesses have been eager to take over every government function that shows promise of making a profit. They are even taking over and selling the water that people drink. As a child, I would not have thought in my wildest imagination that the pure water that I drank from a stream in the Rockies or from the well at my home would one day be bottled and sold at an exorbitant price as "designer water." Nor could I have dreamed that corporations would one day own water and sell it. "Water is the last infrastructure frontier for private investors," says Johan Bastin of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. If corporations thought they could make a profit off of bottling and selling the air that we breathe, they would probably do it.

Corporations are increasingly taking over basic services such as hospitals, crime prevention, and sanitation. Libraries are starting to be privatized, while more city parks are operated by private services. Businesses are even making a profit from selling skin, bones and organs. Those selling skin for cosmetic purposes have monopolized the supply, so severe burn patients are

often unable to obtain help, while some of this skin has even been found to be diseased.

Over the same period, both neo-liberals and neo-conservatives have been trashing government while exalting the beauty of the free market, touting it as more efficient, productive, higher quality and cost effective than government because it is competitive. In contrast, government is described as monopolistic, bureaucratic, inefficient, and staffed with overpaid featherbedding functionaries. The solution, they say, is to farm government services out to private businesses.

"Privatization" implies an adversarial relationship between government and business. A more commonly used term now is "public-private partnerships," which posits government and business as cooperative partners focusing on efficient management techniques. Stephen Linder suggests that the Labor government in Britain preferred to use the term "partnership" in order to distance themselves from the worst excesses of privatization under the Thatcher government.

The Blair government refers to the partnership idea as central to what they call the "New Public Management." The rationale of partnerships is that the joint-venture between government and business will stabilize volatile markets and mitigate competitive pressures. The "Third Way" of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton aimed to bring the discipline of the market to the government. These partnerships presumably would make better, more competitive, managers out of stodgy public bureaucrats by bringing the expertise of business managers to government functions. The National Council for Public-Private Partnerships in the United States and the Canadian Council for Public-Private Partnerships both have official government sanction. Linder describes their functioning as "networks of prospects awaiting partners, databases of experienced exemplars, corporate underwriters, fee-for-service consultation, a speakers bureau,

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workshops, conventions, and of course, membership fees.”

International Approaches to Privatization

PRIVATIZATION CAN TAKE VARIOUS FORMS. One is to sell government industry and services outright to private corporations, with very little government regulation. Under Margaret Thatcher, the British government engaged in large-scale privatization of government industries and services, selling British Telecom, British Gas, Britain’s railways, and the power and water industries to private corporations.

New Zealand followed soon after, first corporatizing state enterprises by forcing them to operate according to commercial principles, then selling them to private corporations.

Chile was one of the first developing countries to privatize, following the overthrow of Salvador Allende. The World Bank is fulsome in its praise of Chile’s “innovative” privatization of pension funds:

This move created a sizable and stable base of institutional investors for Chile’s equity market, allowing a number of large privatizations to be absorbed domestically. Pension funds acquired some 23 percent of the shares in divested state enterprises. Chile’s move toward private management of pensions has been emulated by other Latin American countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Mexico, and Peru.

The World Bank doesn’t mention that since privatizing its pension funds, administrative costs in Chile ran to over 15 percent of the funds, as compared to 0.8 percent for administrative costs of Social Security in the United States. Fifteen percent would be over 1500 percent increase over less than 1 percent. With banks currently paying about 4 percent interest on safe CDs, the 15 percent administrative costs would be impossible to overcome. Privatizing Social Security would be an enormous windfall for stockbrokers and a disaster for nearly everyone else.

Mexico has become the proving ground of neo-liberal economic reforms “as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank used the leverage of foreign debt to require massive changes in economic priorities de-

signed to encourage foreign investment.” State industries put up for sale included airlines, ports, railroads, banks, the phone system, and sections of other industries.

Russia’s approach to privatization after the demise of the USSR looked like an egalitarian plan at first, but eventually turned into a corrupt looting of the economy. Paul Klebnikov, who has studied Russia extensively, described the process as follows:

The initial plan was to give every citizen an equal piece of state assets through vouchers on the grounds that “the vast majority of industrial assets in Russia were state-owned and hence every citizen had an equal piece of those assets.” However, reformers in the Yeltsin government made the mistake of putting too much of Russia’s state-owned industrial and natural resource wealth onto the market at once. They decided to sell it quickly in order to “break the back” of the power of the “red directors” who controlled the state-owned enterprises. While some of those old industrial managers were incompetent, others were not.

Selling so much wealth all at once was a fundamental mistake “that could be predicted by anyone with even a minimal understanding of how a market works. If you throw a huge quantity of products onto the market at once, your price is going to be very low because there’s not that much demand for it at that point.” Consequently, the value of the vouchers was low, equivalent to about \$7 in U.S. money — enough to buy two bottles of cheap vodka. The value of the enterprises shrank to “almost meaningless amounts.” The insiders and financial operators then bought up the vouchers at a fraction of their market value. Most of them ended up in the hands of the directors themselves, the very thing that Yeltsin’s reformers were trying to avoid. About a third of Russia’s industrial and natural resource wealth was privatized through vouchers.

The next phase of privatization was a

...much more cynical type of privatization than the voucher auctions. It didn’t even pretend to have a noble concept underlying it. Anatoly Chubais, who by 1995 was the privatization czar effectively running the Russian economy under Boris Yeltsin, decided to take the top 12 export-oriented companies in Russia — mostly oil and gas pro-

ducers and metal exporters — and privatize the controlling stakes.

Chubais gathered together six to eight top Russian financiers, “the crony capitalists” who later would be called the “oligarchs.” They agreed among themselves who would bid for which company and at what price. No foreigners were allowed to bid, and the oligarchs paid prices “from 10 to 30 times less than the price at which these companies were selling on the market in the mid-1990s.”

Some of the theft in Russia was carried out by “simple-minded crooks.” Some involved complicated illegal financial dealings. One of the oligarchs, Boris Berezovsky, called the first stage of privatization the “privatization of profits” of an enterprise. He got control of Aeroflot, the former Soviet airline, and other companies and had the managers sign various corrupt deals that resulted in most of the cash revenues being drained into his own pocket and the pockets of the managers. As a result, the company went bankrupt and Berezovsky ended up wealthy. He is now wanted on fraud and embezzlement charges, and a number of his top managers are awaiting trial.

The Russian economy suffered its worst decline since the Nazi invasion of 1941, a 42 percent decline in GDP. In August 1998, the ruble collapsed and the government defaulted on its debts. The population was impoverished. Mortality rates skyrocketed. “Essentially the government had declared bankruptcy. This disaster was partly the result of all of these misguided privatization policies.” This disaster was partly the result of misguided advice from the American government, from Harvard University’s Jeffrey Sachs, and from the IMF, who told Yeltsin, “You’ve got to do shock therapy. You’ve got to do it quickly; you’ve got to do it radically.” Unfortunately, the Russians slavishly followed their advice.

There was a groundswell of outrage in the Russian population, and President Putin let the oligarchs know that they would have to change their ways. Putin said he wouldn’t look into the criminal way in which the oligarchs acquired the companies, but from now on the oligarchs would have to pay taxes and reinvest their profits into the Russian economy. Most of the financiers

agreed. The few who did not went abroad to live. To date, not a single major Russian industrialist or financier has been put on trial for any significant misdeed or criminal act.

How Different Is the United States?

THE RUSSIAN STATE sold large industries and natural wealth to private individuals. In the United States, however, the public sector has always been limited in scope. Here the government has been contracting out government services to private entities for a long time. Privatization in this country generally refers to expanding this practice, especially on the state and local levels. Contracting out complex services requires a long-term contract, with mutually enforceable terms clearly specified.

When an organization decides to buy rather than to make a product, it can buy from either a spot market or a contract market. Spot markets are usually used to acquire products that the company doesn’t make itself. They are sufficiently standardized for commercial companies to routinely maintain inventories, such as office supplies or automobiles. Spot markets can also include services that companies could do for themselves but prefer not to, such as preparing a payroll or maintaining a subscription list.

Another form of privatizing involves government giving individuals coupons to pay for goods or services. The government pays for the scrip, but private businesses get the money. Examples include vouchers given to parents which can be paid to private schools; food stamps used to buy groceries; and housing vouchers or certificates that individuals can use to rent an apartment (subsidized housing).

Finally, government can be privatized simply by withdrawing government funds from a service, as has been done with welfare, Medicare and Medicaid, the National Endowment for the Arts, and National Public Radio. When government funds are withdrawn, people are forced to pay for goods and services from private sources, or rely on private charity. This form of privatization is closely related to the conservative push for voluntarism and charitable choice.

Globalization

AS CAPITAL SEARCHES for investment opportunities, privatization has become globalized, and no country is exempt. Some of the rules of the process are imposed by the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), as negotiated by the World Trade Organization (WTO). GATS requires various service sectors to open up their services to the competitive market. Ruth Rikowski warns that many, if not all, public services, "including libraries, will fall under the GATS in due course. This is because the GATS agreement commits WTO members to progressive liberalization." The WTO compact that affects information provision is called the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement. Information that has up to now been considered public domain could be privatized and sold. Rikowski says that private corporations are already making inroads in providing library services in Britain and there are signs that library services will become increasingly commodified. Examples are the sale of products in libraries, and beginning efforts to charge for transactions on the Internet. Professional standards of various professions, including librarians, may be eroded because of the global standardization that the WTO requires.

For the past twenty years, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have effectively taken control of the economies of scores of nations in the Global South which are heavily in debt. The Bank and the IMF have been requiring these countries to accept "structural readjustment," which includes opening markets to foreign firms and privatizing state enterprises, including utilities.

There is a much stronger tradition of state ownership and management in Europe than in the U.S. There was not much privatization there during the 1980s except in France, where a right of center government privatized 14 large industrial, banking and financial trusts between November 1986 and January 1988. During the 1990s, there was much more privatization activity in Europe.

Privatization was driven partly by ideology. The Socialist government in France

put a halt to privatization in 1988, but the right of center government which was re-elected in 1993 expanded it, slating 21 enterprises for privatization. The election of a Socialist government in 1997 only slowed the pace.

Italy began a privatization program in 1993 despite political opposition. By 1996 some 300 state companies had been involved in corporatization and share sales. However, continuing opposition and frequent changes of government slowed the privatization program.

In 1985, West Germany outlined a privatization program affecting 13 firms, but they were met with protests from the trade unions and the government reduced the number of firms to five. After the absorption of the former Communist East Germany, the Federal government sold nine former West German enterprises entirely and three partially, "thereby almost ending the Federal government's shareholdings in the industrial sector." However, the regional governments continue to have major shareholdings in public services.

Sweden developed one of the largest welfare states in Europe after 1945, but had few state owned industries, relying on large taxes on the private sector to fund welfare provisions. However, in the 1970s the state rescued a number of failing companies and by the mid-1980s the state sector was fairly large. However, the defeat of the Social Democrats in 1991 led to a major change in policy. A privatization commission recommended a plan to sell 34 state firms. Between 1991 and 1994 the government sold shares in 20 companies, but the reelection of a Socialist government led to reassessing the program and many planned sales were shelved.

European Union

IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-WAR PERIOD, the European Union was neutral on the ownership of industry, accepting the mix of state and private sector industry across Europe. Then most European countries believed that state monopolies were necessary in the public utility sectors to ensure universal service and network economies. Yet the Treaty of Rome, which governs the European Union, emphasized the importance of free trade. Competitive markets are now favored, but

"EU policy intervenes only when government policies are seen to be in conflict with free and fair trade within the EU."

The Single European Act of 1986 aimed to remove the remaining non-tariff barriers to free trade within the EU by the end of 1992. This had implications for public utilities, which were generally protected from competition. Utilities remain governed by national legislation and regulatory rules, "but following the Single Market Agreement, the European Commission has applied pressure on member states for utility markets to be opened up to competition." Member states are reluctant to give up their autonomy, and as a result of some national opposition, the European Commission has not yet proposed EU-wide regulation. The EU directive regarding opening up railways to competition met with fierce resistance from the railway unions, especially in France.

At a Barcelona meeting of the EU in March 2002, France said that it would accept a partial privatization of energy markets in line with the EU goal to become the world's most "dynamic economy" by 2010. But its agreement was conditional on keeping traditional public services off-limits to free enterprise. Prime Minister Jospin and President Chirac said they would agree to open gas and electricity markets across Europe to competition by 2004 for businesses, but not for private citizens. They sought guarantees that governments would retain control over some services.

Some governments have sold some or all of their stakes in national airlines and power and telecommunications companies. The European Commission is pushing for more privatization. Their 1995 White Paper said that

...progress is required in the areas of insurance, intellectual and industrial property, public procurement, new technologies and services and freedom of movement. Moreover, progress has been slow in the extension of the single market to telecommunications and energy, while the internal market in transport remains incomplete. Furthermore, additional progress is necessary in reinforcing competition rules, reducing State aid and reducing the role of the public sector. Privatization, to the extent that Member states judge it compatible with

their objectives, could further the progress already made in this direction.

Competitiveness, Efficiency, and Cost Savings

BUT DOES THE FREE MARKET really increase competition? Is it more efficient than government, and can it produce goods more cheaply? Those are key questions to ask when evaluating the claims of the proponents of privatization. There are other important questions that free market proponents tend not to ask: Does the free market serve the basic needs of people better? Does it promote equity? Is it more democratic? Is it more accountable to consumers?

Eliot Sclar, a Columbia University sociologist and privatization critic, argues that the free markets inevitably collapse into monopolies. The theory of the free market is based on a concept of each individual buyer and seller pursuing his or her own gain independent of the others. All buyers and sellers presumably have equal knowledge (or ignorance) about product quality and prices in the market. Buyers need only seek out the lowest priced seller. On the production side, sellers adopt production methods that keep costs as low as possible. All producers presumably have all the technical possibilities for producing the goods and each chooses the least costly means to do so. Under these conditions, the market is said to be competitive. Profit maximizing for each producer and satisfaction-maximizing for each consumer are highly predictable.

The complexities, uncertainties, and ambiguities of imperfect information, inadequate distribution of existing information, barriers to market entry, and product differentiation are all assumed to be either nonexistent or trivial.

This model is labeled a "Pareto optimum" after Vilfredo Pareto, who claimed to follow the teachings of Adam Smith. It implies that

...not only will a competitive market society enhance material wealth, but that as each individual acts in pursuit of his or her own gain, everyone is in fact helping to create the optimal possible amount of material satisfaction for everyone else in society.

This market model has nothing to say about the fairness of any Pareto optimal outcome. The Nobel Prize-winning economist Amartya Sen commented, “A society or an economy can be Pareto optimal and still be perfectly disgusting.”

The problem with this model, according to Sclar, is that the barriers to market entry for additional sellers are often high and purchasers often don’t have access to good information on which to base their decisions to buy. The real economy is not a level playing field, but a “mountainous terrain that includes several high peaks from which well-endowed corporate and individual warriors swoop down to seize targets of opportunity.” There is some real competition, mostly between small businesses, but the tendency is to try to monopolize the market in order to maximize profits. Small businesses generally don’t have the capital to handle large contracts over a long period of time.

There is another reason, in addition to Sclar’s, disproving the idea that privatization follows the Pareto principle. Privatization begins with getting government money. How is the Pareto principle followed when prisoners are forced to be in private prisons? And how is the Pareto principle followed when the government gives private corporations money to build and run those prisons? There is no buyer and seller. And since private schools depend on government money in the form of vouchers, there is no free enterprise commerce. If someone starts a private school and competes with public schools on an equal basis, that is free market competition, but the use of vouchers (government money) destroys that.

Even though privatization doesn’t follow the classic Pareto principle, it does help to accomplish a goal that conservatives hold dear — downsizing government — and Sclar sees privatization as a back door to downsizing government. Precisely because the public supports public services, it is more easily convinced that the size of government should be diminished than that its responsibilities be curtailed, so contracting out public services to private businesses becomes an ideological Trojan horse. The next step is convincing the public that private firms can provide equal or better services at an equal or lower cost. If contract-

ing out doesn’t achieve this, then the rationale for privatizing becomes weak and the public is likely to lose confidence in it.

The staunchest advocates of privatization would like to get rid of government entirely and give all of its functions to private businesses. In his 1980 book *Cutting Back City Hall*, Robert Poole, founder of the libertarian Reason Foundation, envisioned a city run entirely by contracting out government services to many private providers. Milton and Rose Friedman would prefer ending all public financing of primary and secondary education, except in hardship cases, but propose vouchers as a more acceptable first step. Stuart Butler argues for breaking up “public spending coalitions” to bring about a permanent reduction in the base of political support for government growth.

These and other staunch advocates of privatization base their arguments on an assumption that contracting takes place in a competitive market environment. Sclar points out, however, that “only in a highly constrained set of conditions is it possible to sustain competitive contracting.”

Does Privatization Increase Competition?

STUDIES OF PRIVATIZATION SHOW THAT, while bidding for a contract may be competitive, the larger corporations generally win the bid and eventually monopolize the service. The process generally results in an oligopoly. Two of Sclar’s case examples illustrate this — public transportation in Denver, and school busing in New York City. In Denver, 20 percent of public transportation was put up for bidding in 1988. Small firms entered the bidding initially, but a handful of national firms consistently won the major contracts. They had the expertise to write expert proposals, lobby legislators regulating the industry and gain easy access to the necessary bonding, insurance, and financing. These firms engaged in the typical strategy of capturing a new market quickly and driving out small competitors by submitting an extremely low initial bid. “Once the Denver market became established, there was scarcely a whiff of competition.” Two of the firms even merged in 1995. The legislature had been told that the efficiency brought about by competitive privatization would

reduce operating costs by 40 percent. But the opposite happened. Between 1988 and 1990, operating costs had gone up from \$100 million to \$112.3 million.

New York City, with 1.1 million students, is the largest school district in the United States and has the most expensive municipal school-busing system in the country. Sclar says that it is so expensive mainly because it is privatized but not competitively contracted. Although the city wanted to encourage competition, the realities of the situation made it impossible. Frequent changes of providers in a system of 3,800 routes carried too many risks of disrupted school schedules and child safety. "Continually changing drivers, bus monitors, and dispatchers creates confusion and unacceptable risk to children."

Because of a bitter strike by employees, the school board agreed to pay its contractors enough so they could peg their wages to the settlement arrived at by the New York City Transit Authority with its bus operators. Since public-transit wages are far higher than those usually paid to private school-bus drivers, costs went up beyond what the city would have paid if they had their own bus fleet. Sclar reports that the present system runs smoothly. High wages ensure low labor turnover and, therefore, a good safety record. "The contractors have no incentive to keep a lid on salaries because they are paid what amounts to a management fee that is proportionate to operating costs. The higher the costs, the higher the fee. Thus, everything in this arrangement conspires to drive up its costs."

In the spring of 1995, Mayor Giuliani announced his plan to return to competitive contracting. He failed, but he did obtain a substantial cut in the costs of the next contract and persuaded the vendors and their unions to uncouple their wages from those of the NYCTA. However, "the noncompetitive structure of the market remained in place. Even if competition could have been re-instituted, given the nature of the service, the market would more than likely evolve once again in exactly the same manner."

Does Privatization Cut Costs?

LABOR UNIONS ALMOST ALWAYS oppose

privatization. It can lead to lost jobs, hiring less than full-time workers, and reducing or eliminating benefits. Low wages lead to a high rate of labor turnover. That often results in higher training costs, more inexperienced workers, higher accident rates, inferior service to the public, and even law suits. After the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transportation Authority (SEPTA) was privatized, the entire operator labor force turned over, on average, between 2.4 and 3.6 times in one year during the mid-1990s. This led to a high rate of passenger complaints.

It is hard to compare the cost of a publicly provided service with one that is contracted out. The measures that one chooses for comparison involve judgment and choice and, as Sclar points out, "there can be no formulaic objective analysis." Studies done so far show that the cost difference between contracting out and direct service provision is small, regardless of the direction of the savings, "typically measured in single digit percentages." A survey of contracting practices in eight states concluded "that the cost advantage generally favors in-house, not contracting out transportation service."

Sclar points out that the only way to obtain meaningful savings is by cutting personnel costs. A study by HUD showed that 71 percent of all direct, municipal, public service operating costs are labor. Proponents of privatization argue that public employees are significantly overpaid and describe them as a "protected class." One study showed that wages of public sector employees rose 14.6 percent between 1980 and 1989 while private-sector wages rose only 3.4 percent. However, this study did not control for education, skill level, and job tenure. When those variables were controlled, studies showed that public-sector employees are paid 4 to 5 percent less than their private-sector counterparts.

Public-sector workers are also better educated, with 44 percent having some college education, as compared to about 20 percent of private-sector workers. It is only among the lowest skilled and lowest paid occupations that public employees have a significant wage advantage over private-sector workers. The HUD study found that the two lowest skilled categories of public

workers received wages and fringe benefits far exceeding those of their private-sector counterparts. Publicly employed janitors received a compensation package that was almost 70 percent higher than their private-sector counterparts. For turf-maintenance workers, the differential was 52 percent. However, at the higher end of the pay scale, public compensation lags behind private compensation. Lawyers in the public sector, for example, earn significantly less than their private counterparts.

One of the top priorities of privatization advocates is to break the back of unions, and especially the public unions, which have been gaining strength even as unions in the private sector decline. Closely related to this priority is their desire to lower wages for all workers. The relatively high wages for public workers at the lower end of the wage scale have been eroded by welfare reform, which has forced millions of welfare recipients into the low wage labor market and lowered wages for workers in the lowest third of the pay scale.

When the economics of the decision to privatize is in question, the decision is often based on politics. The politically motivated decision by Governor William Weld of Massachusetts to privatize the state highway maintenance program is a prime example. While Weld claimed that this was a pilot project, a 1994 study by the state Legislature named it the beginning of a strategy to take it statewide. The Legislature found that there was an overly chummy relationship between the contractor and the government official in charge of supervising the contractor's work (a not uncommon occurrence in privatization contracts). Furthermore, the terms of the contract itself made the nature of oversight vague, permitting the contractor to set priorities, resulting in poor highway and bridge maintenance. The state auditor estimated that the department actually lost approximately \$1.4 million. The Weld Administration challenged these findings, saying it actually saved \$2.5 million. The discrepancy between the two estimates involved different ways of computing personnel costs. About a third of the work was still done by state workers, and these costs weren't reflected in the contractor's estimates. Also, much maintenance

was deferred, passing the cost on to another administration.

Advocates of privatization often think of it in terms of a "spot market" rather than in terms of the complex transaction costs involved in public-private partnerships. Those costs involve specifying the product, negotiating prices, closely monitoring the quality, and anticipating unforeseen contingencies. Obtaining all the relevant information can require considerable time and money. Spot markets, on the other hand, are used to buy products such as office supplies and motor vehicles which companies do not make themselves.

Sometimes using the spot market can save money and be more efficient. Sclar gives an example of sensible outsourcing. When he worked for the federal government, they obtained office supplies from a central government store. An employee had to go "shop" and bring back supplies. In the present day "when large private firms such as Staples and Office Max can ship overnight at low prices, the rationale for using a public agency to store and track a large inventory is difficult to sustain. It is equally difficult to justify using valuable employee time to physically shop for needed items."

Sclar gives a remarkable example of public workers turning privatization to their advantage and actually taking control of the production process. Since the workers get a share of the savings they make, they have no problem with sending work out that could be done less expensively by a private specialist.

Employees who maintain the public transportation service in Indianapolis (the Indianapolis Fleet Service) were threatened with losing their jobs in 1991 because the mayor of Indianapolis, Stephen Goldsmith, announced his plan to privatize the service. Their union, District Council 62 of the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) made it clear that they were prepared to fight privatization efforts in the city to the bitter end. The union virtually ran the campaign of the mayor's opponent. They organized a massive media campaign to make the public aware of the issues. They took the city to court over the privatization of the wastewater treatment plant.

After a particularly bitter round of contract negotiations, the director of the Department of Transportation finally proposed a more conciliatory path of negotiations. He invited the union to compete against private vendors in the bidding for management of the service. The union agreed to enter their bid, but built in protections in the bidding process such as getting training in writing the proposal from the city, the right to submit several practice proposals, and various other protections.

The union won the bid in 1995 because of the savings they were able to make in overhead costs. With the help of a sympathetic mayoral advisor, they removed patronage employees, which helped to gain the trust of the rank-and-file workers. They also got rid of several middle management people and clerical workers. Beyond attrition, no jobs were lost on the shop floor. The shop now runs without any foremen because each worker is trained to do the work.

Is Privatization More Efficient?

IT IS TRUE THAT PUBLIC OPERATIONS are sometimes inefficient. Public bureaucracies, "like sedentary people, tend to accumulate fat around the middle." They often collect more middle level managers than they need, some of whom are political appointees. Sclar points out that the solution to this is not privatization; the solution is reorganization of the public service.

Use of the spot market may lead to more efficiency and cost savings, but the picture is different when complex contracting is involved. There is no evidence that private corporations manage complex services more efficiently than governments. In fact, private corporations often hire managers from the public sector to manage their contracts. The substantive experience of the public managers is crucial to effective service delivery.

The British rail service is a good example of how privatization can break down partly because of the complexity of contracting and supervising the contract. Amid promises of greater efficiency, reliability, and returns from corporate taxes, the British railway was sold to Railtrack, a private corporation. The system was broken up into more than 100 separate businesses, some of which subcontracted parts of their re-

sponsibilities. By October 2000, there were two major collisions, caused by faulty signals, which killed a total of 38 people, while a third crash caused by a broken rail, killed another four. Last year, the number of train cancellations rose to 165,000, nearly three times the 1999 level. In October 2001, the government placed Railtrack in "administration" — in effect, bankrupting it.

The private corporations cut costs by firing workers, which caused problems ranging from cancellations due to few drivers being available to dangerous unstaffed stations. Maintenance companies cut their staff by about a third. Government subsidies to the railways were about three times higher than before privatization. Public opinion polls show large majorities in favor of renationalizing the whole system.

It became impossible to run the system as an integrated whole because there were so many contractors who often did not communicate with each other. The accumulated wisdom of the experienced workers was lost. *The Financial Times* described the

...breakdown of the old comradeship, which used to mean that problems were easily spotted, repairs made, and people could talk to each other. Track workers operated in gangs and knew their stretch of rails like their own back gardens. Instead, workers became nomadic, moving to the next job with little or no local knowledge and instructions not to talk to rival workers except via a supervisor miles away. The second big problem was a growing lack of control over the staff and their work. There have been complaints of subcontractors recruiting workers out of pubs to fill gaps on the night shift.

Regulation and Deregulation

PRIVATIZATION OFTEN LENDS ITSELF to corruption by both private and public officials. Since this is done in secret, it is hard for the public to find out about it. To avoid corruption in contracting, privatization must be placed under strict supervision. Proponents of privatization resist this, as they want less public regulation. In spite of their singing the praises of competition, they are even happier if they can get the contract without bidding for it. More than half of the federal government's purchases last year were done without bidding or with proce-

dures that auditors say are noncompetitive.

Congress passed legislation in 1984 requiring full and open competition for all government purchases except in special cases, such as utilities with only one supplier or weapons systems made by just one company. However, since the 1990s when the Clinton administration and the GOP-controlled Congress streamlined purchasing under its “reinventing government” initiatives, noncompetitive shopping has been on the rise, according to an Associated Press analysis of government contracting records. It accelerated under President Bush last year. In all, the government bought \$123 billion of its \$230 billion in goods and services in 2001 without bids. This resulted in large overcharges for goods.

A Pentagon review found the prices paid for commercially available spare parts bought without competition increased more than twice as fast between 1993 and 2000 as did prices for similar parts bought competitively. Watchdogs have found repeated instances of overpricing. Boeing charged the government \$5 million for parts that were worth \$3.2 million in the competitive market, the Pentagon inspector general found in 1999.

Lockheed has a long history of bribery of public officials, price-fixing, “and the art of defiantly pleading no contest to such charges when they become public.” They were caught twice during the 1980s for using illegal influence with New York City public officials to get a contract to privatize their parking enforcement activities. Mayor Guiliani barred Lockheed from any business dealings with the city for four years. Still Lockheed tried to get a contract from the city by lobbying at the state level to privatize the management information system of public transportation in the city.

Lockheed is now the largest business in the welfare reform market. Its Information Management Services Division had child support contracts in 16 states and contracts in 20 states to convert various welfare benefits to electronic debit cards. After TANF (the Republican-promoted, Clinton-approved Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) was enacted, Lockheed launched a major “welfare reform/self-sufficiency initiative.”

The Welfare Warriors, a welfare rights

group in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, documents the corruption in welfare contracts in Wisconsin, describing it as “Wisconsin’s Bloated Welfare Empire.” Six private, for-profit companies received contracts to administer the city’s TANF case welfare program. Under welfare reform, Wisconsin’s welfare costs increased from \$548 million for 299,700 individuals to \$710 million for less than 20,000 individuals. During the first 2 years of welfare reform these corporations earned \$65.1 million in profits. Some of those earnings were achieved by denying cash to families, sanctioning them, or kicking them off the rolls.

An audit of Wisconsin’s welfare program, called “W-2,” was conducted in April 2001. They found that two of these companies, Goodwill and Maximus, admitted to “improperly spending” a half million dollars each in projects in other states, parties, promotional schemes, meals and concerts. “Neither corporation was prosecuted for felony welfare fraud. Nor did Tommy Thompson, then governor of Wisconsin, terminate their lucrative W2 contracts.”

The Enron collapse reveals the venality of corporations in evading regulation. Enron’s auditor, Arthur Anderson, and four other large accounting firms have waged a war against the Securities and Exchange Commission to avoid government regulation. Arthur Leavitt, Jr., who was the chairman of the Securities and Exchange Commission under President Clinton, told a *New Yorker* reporter that the “Big Five” accounting firms organized themselves into a lobbying force on Capitol Hill that essentially bought the Congress and destroyed the power of the Securities and Exchange Commission to regulate them.

Social Services and the Public Interest

ADVOCATES OF THE FREE MARKET assume that the public interest will be automatically served if each individual follows his or her economic self-interest. It hasn’t worked out that way for the poor and the vulnerable. Private companies have increasingly taken over the social services. In business to make a profit, they prefer to serve clients who will help them do that, which leads to “cream-ing” the clientele. The people whom private organizations find too difficult or intractable

are left for the government to serve directly, if they are served at all.

Social services (e.g., foster care and adoption, counseling, rehabilitation, private charity), have long been dominated by the non-profit sector. Private charity began before public charity, most often under the auspices of religious groups or religious-minded individuals. Catholic Charities, the Federation of Protestant Welfare Organizations, United Jewish Appeal-Federation and the Salvation Army, for example, are large providers of private charity. However, voluntary agencies are not really "private" any more because much of their funding comes from federal, state, and local governments in public-private partnership arrangements. Nonprofit agencies have, in effect, become "paid agents" of the government to an extent that no one in the 19th century would have dreamed possible. They have increased their contracting with both state and federal governments since the 1980s.

Nonprofit agencies are no longer exclusively concerned with the poor; in fact, they have increasingly disengaged from the poor. A study by the Urban Institute in the 1980s showed that over half of nonprofit human service agencies had few or no poor clients and only 27 percent had mostly poor clients. Research shows that

...charity benefits the relatively advantaged rather than disadvantaged groups, well-established organizations rather than new, grassroots activities, community organizing, issue advocacy, or controversial public policy initiatives. Social and class elites are over-represented on boards and have disproportionate power over priorities, though there is more risk taking with younger diverse board membership.

During the 1960s, the government's War on Poverty program encouraged some agencies to pay more attention to the poor, sometimes paying them to do so through lucrative contracts. For the first time, some prestigious private agencies such as Family Service Association and Jewish Family Services hired low-income people from the communities they served, and the government established a human services career ladder for low-income people, subsidizing many human service programs in colleges.

Some people claim that private non-profit agencies are more creative and innovative than government in responding to need, but it was the government during the War on Poverty that established some of the most path breaking programs. The Community Action Program organized poor people to fight unresponsive government bureaucracies. The National Welfare Rights Organization was organized largely by Community Action Programs and VISTA volunteers. Head Start, the government childcare program for poor families, compares favorably with high quality private childcare programs. Users of services were brought in as equal partners in setting policy when the Economic Opportunity Act required the "maximum feasible participation" of a program's beneficiaries. That demand for democratic participation echoed the demand for participatory democracy of the 1960s New Left, and was a radical breakthrough in social services, far beyond anything the nonprofit sector has done. It continues to live on in some programs through statutory requirements for parental involvement in Head Start programs and in planning educational programs for special needs children.

The federal government employed a social services strategy to ending poverty and increased funding of nonprofit agencies in the 1960s. Between 1967 and 1972, federal funds authorized by the 1962 Title XX amendments to the Social Security Act grew from \$242 million to \$1.688 billion. Congress became alarmed by the open-ended nature of funding for social services and in 1972, they put a \$2.5 billion ceiling on it. The federal budget for social services began to decline under the Reagan Administration. Conservatives believed that social programs were actually harmful, and they turned to moral regeneration as an anti-poverty program. The neo-liberals emphasized the moral value of work and individual initiative; neo-conservatives added to that a belief in traditional values, religion, and marriage and the family. They believe in faith-based social services. The libertarian Reason Foundation advocates getting government out of the financing and delivery of services altogether. They would substitute families, churches, neighborhoods, and community groups to meet social needs.

The Reagan Administration turned the federal social service program (Title XX of the Social Security Act) into a block grant, which sharply reduced federal funding levels but also eliminated state matching requirements. It virtually eliminated reporting requirements, and allowed even greater flexibility in the targeting of funds. The conservatives who were now in charge of social service delivery demanded more business-like management and more business involvement. In 1986, for example, child support legislation specifically encouraged the states to contract with private companies for technical activities. By the mid-1990s, for-profit firms accounted for nearly half of all social service agencies and about one-third of social services employment.

Managed care is becoming increasingly popular in several social service fields, including child welfare. For-profit businesses have entered almost every field of the social services — nursing homes, child care, vocational rehabilitation, adoption assistance, family counseling, services for the handicapped, mental health, and others.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (PRWORA), which created the TANF program, allowed state or local agencies to contract out their entire welfare program, including intake, eligibility, and services. As a result, large for-profit companies, including Ross Perot's former company, Electronic Data Systems (EDS), and IBM, have entered the welfare market. The Applied Research Center in Oakland California refers to this phenomenon as U.S. private companies "prospecting among the poor in the welfare reform gold fields." Sandy Felder, public sector coordinator of the Service Employees International Union, claimed that the 1996 welfare reforms permitted "one of the largest corporate grabs in history." A Lehman Brothers analyst estimated the potential market for welfare-related contracts at over \$20 billion a year. He noted that "it's a huge revenue target for the private sector to go after."

These firms claim to save tax dollars while promoting "self-sufficiency."* They speak glowingly of getting people off the rolls into jobs, but they don't mention the approximately 40 percent of people who haven't found jobs or the increase in

homelessness, hunger, and infant mortality. Nor do they mention that most people who got jobs are still poor, earning on average between \$7 and \$9 an hour. Caseload reduction is the main standard specified in their contracts. Performance standards were not established for client wages, benefits, or job retention and so contractors had no incentive to work for those goals. They were, in fact, doing what the government wanted them to do when it passed the welfare law — push people into the low-wage job market as fast as possible, without regard for the consequences.

It would be hard to compare the performance of private contractors with public employees because the public employees have also been told to do the same thing. The calculated cruelty of welfare departments is probably as fierce in a public agency as in a private one. But states that are doing the job with public employees are probably at least saving money because they are not concerned with profits and stock market returns to their investors.

The PRWORA included a charitable choice provision, which allows faith-based organizations to get TANF funding. This has raised constitutional issues about the separation of church and state and the potential for discrimination by faith-based agencies.

An important function of the government is to insure fair and equal treatment to its citizens. When private agencies discriminate, the government should prohibit that. A notorious lawsuit which challenged the discriminatory practices of some private agencies is documented by *New York Times* reporter Nina Bernstein in her book *The Lost Children of Wilder*. The suit, filed in federal court in 1973, named as defendants six state and city officials and seventy-seven voluntary agencies and their directors. It charged that the statutory basis for the provision of child welfare to New York City children was unconstitutional because the agencies sponsored by religious organizations

*The term "self-sufficiency" is an ideologically loaded term, and is widely used when talking about welfare recipients. It implies that welfare recipients have been "dependent" and unmotivated to work for a living. I prefer the term "economic stability." No one is "self-sufficient"; we all need various kinds of support from other people.

discriminated against black children. The suit charged that because these agencies gave preference to children of their own faith, they were violating the First Amendment's proscription against laws that established religion or prohibited the free exercise of religion. It also charged that their practices violated equal protection and due process guarantees of the Fourteenth Amendment. Furthermore, it charged that when those children most in need of care were denied adequate services and instead were sent to institutions where they were subjected to cruel and unusual punishment, this violated the Eighth Amendment.

Directors and trustees of religious agencies, rabbis and priests, city and state officials, and their lawyers all marshaled their forces to fight the suit. The Federation of Jewish Philanthropies feared that they might lose private donations if they were forced to take large numbers of non-Jewish children, and also feared that the suit threatened government funding for nursing homes for Jewish elderly, a larger and more costly part of their functioning.

The suit, known as *Wilder* (the name of the girl who had been in foster care), went on for 14 years. Lawyers often likened the case to *Jarndyce and Jarndyce*, the suit in Dicken's *Bleak House* that dragged on for so long that people forgot what it meant. The *Wilder* suit was settled in 1987, guaranteeing children equal access to the best foster-care services available, regardless of race or religion. It did, however, exempt an Orthodox Jewish agency, which remained all white, pervasively religious, and publicly funded. It also contained compromise language on family planning to make it acceptable to the Catholic Church. Judge Justine Wise Polier, a strong advocate of separation of church and state, was deeply disappointed. She was convinced that the child welfare system's resistance to change was rooted in a sectarian structure that violated the First Amendment and that the settlement abandoned the principle of separation of church and state.

This case points up the dangers inherent in faith-based social services. Prior to the charitable choice provision, agencies that were tax exempt were prohibited from mixing religion with social service provision

when they received government funds. Now they can be openly religious as long as clients have a choice of a comparable non-religious social service. Sometimes such an alternative is not easily available to a client.

The conservative morality and emphasis on faith-based charity and "self-help" has led to diminished support for public services and stigmatization of people who depend on government support. It directs the analysis of problems away from dysfunctional systems to dysfunctional individuals. The Reagan Administration began the call for self-help and internal solutions to black social problems, while at the same time engaging in a massive disinvestment in black communities that increased their poverty. President Bill Clinton advocated personal responsibility among black people. The Million Man March expressed this self-help ideology, too, one that lets government off the hook while increasing people's internalized oppression and weakening their ability to fight back.

For-profit businesses often rely on performance-based and outcome-based contracts, emphasizing an efficiency that may be conservative, but is seldom compassionate. In their welfare-to-work training programs, companies focus almost exclusively on skills that will actually be used on the job, without regard to clients' emotional and cognitive needs or practical difficulties. They want to get people into jobs as fast as possible. The Ohio legislature gave Anderson consulting a million-dollar contract in 1996 to help the state restructure the welfare department based on a "tough love" approach, with strong job incentives and sanctions for failure to work. Many non-profits, on the other hand, are more likely to take a more holistic approach to the welfare-to-work process, helping clients build emotional resilience and offering them a community of supporters to help them through finding and retaining a job. A long-time community worker describes her contacts with private businesses involved in welfare reform:

They hold these meetings to describe the proposal process for new money and we see people in the room who have never worked with poor people before . . . then we hear

that they got big money to make people 'job-ready' . . . pretty soon they call us up asking for help because their clients have too many problems to hold jobs.

In their search for allies, welfare rights activists who oppose the current welfare reform are often disappointed by the absence of human service providers among their ranks. There are some who fight against TANF, but many are afraid to oppose the state for fear of jeopardizing their contracts. Ann Withorn studied how community-based nonprofit agencies are responding to welfare reform. She found that agencies were facing increased demands on their resources because of welfare reform, but feel intimidated about protesting. One community leader said,

We can speak up here, with each other, but it is hard before the legislators — and not because we are afraid for our funding. A strange dynamic happens, they don't want to hear us whine; they want us 'to think outside the box.' So we try to speak so that we won't threaten anybody with how bad it is and our limits in dealing with it.

The Commodification of Care

THE UNITED KINGDOM WHITTLED away at its National Health Service by public funding of a massive expansion of private nursing and residential care. Long-term care for frail elderly people, the chronically ill and the physically and mentally disabled has been almost completely eliminated from NHS and local authority provision. In 1990 the central government devolved responsibility for long-term care to local governments, giving them a block grant to carry this out. However, the grant specified that 85 percent of the money had to go to private sector providers, which effectively prevented local authorities from reverting to providing long-term care directly in-house and making alternative provision in the community virtually impossible.

But reliance on for-profit companies is tricky. If profitability drops in one sector, the company will leave the field, moving on to other, more lucrative markets. Nursing homes in the United States were at one time bringing in big returns on the stock market. However, with government cutbacks in Medi-

care and Medicaid reimbursements, profits are down. Sun Healthcare Group (SGH), one of the largest U.S. nursing home chains (and the holding company of the British chain Ashbourne Group, which operates 149 homes and 8,367 beds nationwide) faced reduced shares of more than 60 percent at the beginning of 1999. Companies such as SGH and Tenet are introducing cost cutting measures such as staff cutbacks, reducing time spent with patients, and using lower-paid professionals to deliver the care. The company has already fired 7,490 employees, including 36 percent of rehabilitation workers.

Profits from residential and nursing home care depends on the use of non-union labor with low wages, minimum guaranteed hours and no sick pay or training opportunities. These dismal working conditions lead to high staff turnover and lower quality of care. In Britain, home-care assistants were among the 10 lowest paid occupations in 1996. The majority of home-care assistants and nursing home aides are women. Many former welfare recipients in the U.S. are working in these low-paid occupations.

A 1993 World Bank report on health care "reinforced the neo-liberal canon of the privatization of health care to turn it into a terrain for capital accumulation." We know how that has played out with health care in the United States. Private insurance companies refuse to serve the sickest, business managers rather than doctors decide what kind of treatment people will get, care is time-limited, and over 40 million people are uninsured. The rich still get premium care from their "boutique doctors," but as states cut back on Medicaid, the poor are denied even basic dental care.

Privatization of mental hospital care has led some hospitals to engage in financial and emotional exploitation of patients. In 1991, a Texas family told a state senator that their 14-year-old son had been apprehended, detained, and treated on an emergency basis by a private psychiatric hospital, without their consent. A Senate committee investigated, and many testified at the hearing that hospitals manipulated diagnoses in order to justify longer admissions and increase insurance benefits. Patients described incidents of forced and inappropriate treatment, which enabled the hospi-

tals to collect payment from the patients' health insurance. Many mentally ill people were forced out of state hospitals due to the deinstitutionalization movement that took place from the 1960s through the 1980s. Those without health insurance often received no treatment at all in the private sector. Private psychiatric hospitals prefer to treat those with money. People joke about the "60 day miracle cure" that occurs when hospitals declare people to be cured when their insurance runs out.

Conservatives want to scale back Social Security and Medicare to cover only the most vulnerable of the aged population — the poor, sick, frail, and incapacitated. This would lessen the role of government and contain expenditures. Proposals have been circulated to partially transform Old Age and Survivors Insurance (OASI) into a defined contribution plan, to issue Medicare vouchers to the old, or to impose an "affluence test" on Social Security and Medicare beneficiaries. Eligibility for full OASI benefits is already scheduled to rise from 65 to 67 by 2027. Raising the eligibility age for Medicare benefits was proposed during the Balanced Budget Act debates in 1997. Raising the eligibility age for services under the Older Americans Act from 60 to 65 or even 70 has also been proposed.

Proponents of these plans argue that since people are living to a longer and healthier old age, they are able to work longer and no longer need so much government assistance. They have "graduated into the private sector." Conservatives want to eliminate programs that "have the effects of bestowing entitlement and/or creating dependency." They would like to turn Social Security into a means tested program without entitlements, as they have already done with TANF.

Privatizing Prisons

PRISONS ARE NOW BIG BUSINESS and they are traded on the stock exchange. Private corporations entered the business in response to the enormous increase in the U.S. prison population over the past 20 years, which placed a strain on state budgets. Private contractors promised to run the prisons more cheaply, although studies on this are inconclusive. When there are cost savings,

they are achieved at the expense of reducing and underpaying staff. Unions have always opposed the privatization of prisons, as have the ACLU and state Bar Associations.

Already 25 states plus Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia have passed laws allowing private contractors to run correctional facilities. Between 1985 and 1995, the number of prison beds under private management grew from 935 to 63,595 — an increase of nearly 7,000 percent. Though this is only a small percentage of all prison beds, one researcher estimates that there will be some 360,000 privately run prison beds by the year 2004.

Many stock analysts have urged their clients to invest in the major corporations in the field, such as Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) and Wackenhut Corrections. The *Wall Street Journal* called Wackenhut a "hot industry." *Forbes* magazine described it as "A Surefire Growth Industry." Some criminologists are concerned about private corporations having a vested interest in having a large incarceration rate. Jeffrey Reiman comments: "I have been pointing out how the rich get richer *while* the poor get prison, but the privatization movement points to a new phase in which the rich get richer *because* the poor get prison!"

CCA is the first and the largest private corporation to run prisons. By 1997 it had become a half-billion-dollar-a-year corporation, with sixty-seven facilities in the United States, Puerto Rico, Australia, and Great Britain. However, by the late 1990s, it faced problems, and, "ultimately, its ability to maintain the double-digit growth rates it had posted throughout the decade." In Youngstown, Ohio, 44 assaults and two fatal stabbings took place within the prison. Also, six inmates escaped from the facility, leading Youngstown residents to demand its closure. An Ohio legislative committee found that over 100 maximum-security prisoners had been sent to the prison, although the contract had specified that only medium-security prisoners could be sent there.

Later four prisoners escaped in another prison in Clinton, Tennessee. Opponents of CCA staged a protest chanting "public safety's not for sale," and claiming that CCA

was sacrificing security by cutting corners. They also accused the firm of getting a free ride from the government, which organized escapee manhunts and financed medical payments for prisoners above CCA caps. The protesters aimed to stop the reintroduction of a bill in the Tennessee legislature that would permit the private management of 70 percent of the state's prison beds. In 1999, CCA named J. Michael Quinlan, a former director of the federal Bureau of Prisons, as president and chief operating officer (yet another example of the revolving door between public and private managers).

On ethical grounds alone, giving private individuals the authority to punish law-breakers raises serious ethical issues. Max Weber argued correctly that since criminal acts violate laws, which are created by representatives of the state, legal punishment must be imposed and administered by state authority.

Privatizing Education

THE SUPREME COURT WILL SOON DECIDE whether it is constitutional to give parents government money to send their children to private schools. Supporters of school vouchers claim that it will give poor children a chance to escape from public schools that are failing them. Opponents charge that it violates the principle of separation of church and state by supporting religious schools and that it doesn't benefit poor children.

The Ohio Legislature set up a voucher plan to give parents \$2,250 per year of state money to send their children to private schools, and Cleveland is implementing the plan. In theory, the voucher program is open to any private school and any suburban public school. However, only 51 private schools enrolled, all but five of them run by the Catholic archdiocese. No suburban schools enrolled because the state will only reimburse those schools at per pupil state basic aid, \$4,000 when the law was passed in 1995. Michael Charney, a union official of the Cleveland Teachers Union asks, in a letter to the editor: "Why would suburban schools sign up, lose thousands of dollars, and then be answerable to property owners during school levy elections?"

The voucher program benefits lower middle-class students already attending

parochial schools. Seventy-nine percent never attended a Cleveland public school. Almost one-third of families using the vouchers earn more than 200 percent of the poverty level, while 88 percent of Cleveland public school elementary students qualify for free and reduced lunches. Ellen Goodman comments that the taxpayers send "nearly \$10 million to schools where students are required to say Mass or, in the case of one Cleveland school, pledge allegiance to the 'Christian flag and to the Savior for whose Kingdom it stands.'"

Private and parochial schools have an advantage over public schools because they can select children. They can refuse children with special needs, learning disabilities, behavioral problems, or language difficulties. Private schools are free of the accountability required of public schools. President Bush filed a brief on behalf of the Ohio program, but he would not apply to voucher schools the same annual testing and standards-based curriculum required of public schools in his new education law.

Another way to privatize public education is for corporations to run the schools themselves. In 1990, Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI) was the first for-profit firm under contract to run a public school, the South Pointe elementary school in Dade County, Florida. The business community has been enthusiastic about the profit making potential of running schools. The Wall Street term-of-art for private companies operating public schools is Education Management Organizations (EMOs). Proponents of EMOs like to compare public education to the healthcare industry of 25 years ago, before the sweep of HMOs. Mary Tanner, managing director of Lehman Brothers, told a 1996 Education Industry Conference, "The emergence of HMOs and hospital management companies created enormous opportunities for investors. We believe the same pattern will occur in education."

But it has been far from clear sailing for private corporations in the education business. EAI soon found it couldn't run public schools for less funding than did the districts with which it contracted; neither could it fulfill its promises of academic improvement. By the spring of 2000 the company was bankrupt.

Despite their failure, other companies are claiming they can improve educational performance while turning a profit. Edison Schools, Inc., now based in New York City, is the largest. It runs 136 schools serving 75,000 students in 22 states and the District of Columbia. But Edison has not made a profit and they admit that they aren't certain when they will make a profit, if at all.

In New York City, parents voted against Edison's managing five New York schools. In Wichita, Kansas, the school board is debating whether to end its contracts with four Edison schools in the district, which each cost \$250,000 more than comparable district schools. In Dallas, the school board forced Edison to renegotiate its five-year contract when it was found that Edison would have otherwise received \$20 million more than the actual cost of running its seven schools. In San Francisco, parents and school board members revoked Edison's charter when test scores showed that the school's performance was the worst among the city schools.

In Philadelphia, Edison attempted to secure a six-year \$101 million consulting contract and a separate deal to run as many as 45 of the district's schools. The state appointed a School Reform Commission with four members appointed by the governor and one by the mayor that has authority to remake the Philadelphia school district in almost any way it chooses. Edison had strong political connections with then governor Tom Ridge (now director of the Office of Homeland Security), and confidently expected their political clout to win them the contract. However, Christopher Whittle, the president and chief executive of Edison Schools Inc., behaved arrogantly toward city officials and failed to build grass-roots support.

Edison ran into stiff community resistance, but the School Reform Commission has hired Edison to be its key advisor on a broad range of issues. In April, they announced plans to hire 12 companies and nonprofit groups to offer advice on how to manage the school system. Opposition to the company has been intense from community members, who criticize Edison's for-profit status and its uneven record in running schools. Barbara Goodman, a spokeswoman for the 21,000 member Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, said, "We don't see any

grand plan that addresses the real issues, like improving graduation and attendance rates and test scores. We have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to improve outcomes for kids, and we are probably blowing it."

Resistance

IS THERE HOPE OF WINNING against the powerful force of globalization? The verdict is still out, but water privatizations, for example, have been backfiring in many countries. Protests have erupted in Ecuador, Estonia, Chile, Indonesia, Pakistan, India, South Africa, Poland, and Hungary.

When Bolivia privatized its water system, the action forced a national crisis. Bolivia signed a lucrative, long-term contract with Aguas del Tunari, a consortium that was dominated by the United States-based Bechtel Corporation, to take over the water supply of the country. In 1999, they took over the water system of the Andean city of Cochabamba. The corporation raised the water rates so much that ordinary workers had water bills which amounted to a quarter of their monthly income.

Some residents of Villa San Miguel, a settlement two miles from Cochabamba, formed a cooperative and dug their own well, with the help of Danish aid workers. It provided plentiful and relatively cheap water to 210 families. The Bolivian government then auctioned the Cochabamba water system, and the company that won the bid installed meters to charge for water on cooperative wells such as Villa San Miguel's. A new water law had been rushed through the Bolivian parliament to legalize these expropriations.

Local engineers and environmentalists began calling public meetings to air their concerns. The government ignored them. Neighborhood associations, water cooperatives, labor unions, and others soon joined the protest, forming a broad coalition called La Coordinadora, the Coordinator for the Defense of Water and Life. When the first water bills arrived, middle-class householders joined the protests. The company's manager responded to the protests by saying that if people didn't pay their water bills their water would be turned off.

A good part of the 800,000 citizens of Cochabamba were in the streets, "battling

police and soldiers in what people had started calling *la guerra del agua* — the Water War.” The national government declared martial law as unrest spread to the rest of the country. The protests expanded and the government sent in troops. The leaders were arrested and some were taken to a jungle prison in the Amazon. Nearly 200 protesters were arrested, and 70 civilians and 51 police officers were wounded. In April 2000 the Army killed a 17-year-old student, Victor Hugo Daza. Dozens of other people were treated for bullet wounds. “By the time Daza had been raised onto his bier and the police and the Army had been repeatedly prevented from seizing his body, there was clearly no future for Aguas del Tunari in Cochabamba.”

The Coordinadora forced the government to pass a new national water law which gave legal recognition to *usos y costumbres* — traditional communal practices — by protecting small independent water systems, guaranteeing public consultation on rates, and giving social needs priority over financial goals. The war seemed to have been won, but the government was slow to implement the law. The old public utility known as SEMAPA, having driven away international capitalists, desperately needs new capital. Service is still poor. The World Bank was not interested in helping. Its representatives have never met with the leaders of the Coordinadora. In recent years, the Bank has been widely accused of not fulfilling (or even seriously pursuing) its self-proclaimed mission of fighting poverty. The new SEMAPA “has not won the hearts of many in Cochabamba — it is, after all, still the water company. But, its supporters point out, at least it is Bolivian.”

Bolivia resisted the Coordinadora so fiercely because it feared that renouncing their contract with the consortium would be a blow to the confidence of foreign investors, which they depended on for financial stability. An auction to sell the La Paz telephone company drew no bidders at all. The United States has been considering labeling the episode an expropriation, which would be a blow to Bolivia’s hopes of attracting foreign investors.

In the United States, the battle against

privatization is being fought by unions, community groups, and some progressive city and state officials. In addition to the successes in Indianapolis and New York (already cited), there’s hope from the city of Paragould, Ark., whose residents fought against a private cable company’s attempt to take over municipal cable service. Mayor Dennis Kucinich fought off a private corporation’s attempts to take over the municipal electric company of Cleveland. In Massachusetts, a law called the Pacheco Act requires that all proposed privatization be subject to a cost analysis. It permits employees who will be affected to submit proposals for work reform which could demonstrate that problems could be solved within the public sector.

Perhaps the most significant resistance to privatization in the U.S. are the living wage campaigns. Nationwide, 83 communities have enacted laws raising wages for thousands of low-paid workers employed by city contractors. These laws undermine the threat of privatization because contractors are less likely to bid for city services when they are required to pay higher wages, and cities are less tempted to seek to save money by privatizing services.

We don’t fight for public rather than private programs because we assume that government programs are necessarily better. A public prison is still a prison. A government that wants welfare recipients to get into the low-wage labor market will force them there whether it pays public employees or private employees to do it. Even when their jobs are alienating, it is understandable that public employees would fight for their jobs whether they are in a prison or in a welfare department.

It is in our interest to fight against privatization because companies are interested in profit, not human needs. Democratic socialists are fighting not just for jobs, but for a humane society. We want nothing less than democratic control of all of society’s institutions. That begins with defending, expanding, improving and — yes — democratizing the public sector, not with capitulating to the parochial needs of property and profit-making.

The Distribution of Wealth And Marxist Humanism

Marvin Mandell

We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal...

Thomas Jefferson,
Declaration of Independence (1776)

From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs.

Karl Marx,
Critique of the Gotha Program (1875)

THE 1952 FRENCH MOVIE *We Are All Murderers* takes us inside death row in a Marseilles prison. The French manner of execution in those days was frightening. In the dead of night, the warden, two jailers, and a priest would walk in stockinged feet down the corridor. They would stop at a cell door, open it, and the jailers would pounce on one of the three inmates and drag him, while the priest is giving him last rites, to the guillotine. During one day an old priest, accompanied by a young one, enters a cell, distributes candy, gum, and cigarettes. "Father," one of the inmates says, "I saw the mobile guillotine enter the gates. One of us will die tonight." "You are mistaken," the priest replies, "that was the laundry van; the guillotine van is at Bordeaux today." He then introduces the men to the young priest, who suddenly grabs a prisoner by the shirt, lifts him slightly, and thrusts him against the wall, leaning over him closely; then he peers at him with his enormous, glistening eyes. "What is your name?" he asks. "Jean-Paul." "Jean-Paul, your soul is immortal and irreplaceable." He releases him and grabs another prisoner and places him against the wall. "What is your name?" "Pierre." "Pierre, your soul is immortal and irreplaceable." He repeats this with the third prisoner and then staggers out of the cell and collapses.

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The old priest leans over him and revives him. "What are you doing? I come here to reassure the men so that they can get some sleep." "Father," the young priest replies, "I did not come here to put them to sleep; I came to awaken them."

IT MAY SEEM ODD to begin a discussion of the distribution of wealth — a field crammed with statistics and graphs — with a decidedly religious incident from a long ago film. But the message conveys what is at the heart of all world religions — the sacredness of the human personality, that is to say, its worth. Feuerbach and Marx tried to strip away the supernatural from religion and to keep the core, human equality in worth.

A hundred years after Jefferson, Marx, in a culmination of Enlightenment thought, proposed the best possible praxis for human equality: you cannot expect everyone to work equally since their abilities differ, and you cannot expect to pay everyone exactly equally since their needs differ. But Marx emphasized: equality as the groundwork of communism is its political justification. Hence Marx's epigram ("From each... To each..." above). It is the basis of Marxist humanism. The Marxist humanist, then, looks not to exact equality, but to equity, that is to say, fairness. And equity tends toward equality.

The Bolsheviks were very conscious of the importance of maintaining equity. Lenin specified that state bureaucrats should earn "payment no higher than that of ordinary workers." (*State and Revolution*, Ch. 6) Whereas the bourgeoisie wanted to abolish class privileges, the proletariat would abolish classes, as Marx stipulated, and therefore Lenin looked to the time "when *all* become 'bureaucrats' for a time, and so no one, therefore, can become a 'bureaucrat.'" (Emphasis Lenin's) Elsewhere in these pages

(*New Politics*, New Series, Volume VIII, No. 2:129) I have shown how the ruling class under Stalin reversed this state of things and created a very unequal distribution of wealth. In fact, Stalin said that *uravnilovka*, or equal pay, was “alien and detrimental to Socialist production” and a crime against the state. (Stalin, *Six Point Speech*, June, 1931)

One of the most extreme, if not *the* most extreme, unequal distributions of wealth in modern times was that of the United Kingdom in the early part of the 20th century. In 1923 the top 1 percent of wealth holders of the UK owned 61 percent of the total wealth. George Bernard Shaw considered himself a socialist, yet he rejected Marx's theory of revolution; he believed that since one third of all workers in the UK were employed as servants to the wealthy and since many others (e.g. tradesmen) were parasitic to the wealthy, their loyalty to their masters could not be broken.¹ That 61 percent holding by the top 1 percent dramatically dropped to 23 percent by 1974, by the way, and it has remained about there since, considerably below the 33 percent currently owned by the top 1 percent of American wealth holders.

Wealth includes bank accounts, stocks and bonds, life insurance savings, mutual fund shares, house(s) — home equity is, by far, the biggest source of personal wealth for most Americans — car(s), appliances minus all debt, including mortgages. Therefore, the inequality of wealth is far greater than that of income, despite CEOs annually paying themselves obscene sums (they also own yachts and mansions). What is remarkable about the top CEOs' salaries, bonuses, and golden parachutes is that not all scored well on the bottom line. Some presided over big losses for their corporations, yet managed to get rewarded handsomely. I am reminded of Karl Marx's observations about certain highly paid unproductive workers. Commenting on Adam Smith's distinction between productive and unproductive workers, a distinction many professionals resented, Marx wrote:

The great mass of so-called 'higher grade' workers... some of whom are not only not productive but in essence destructive, but

who know how to appropriate to themselves a very great part of the 'material' wealth partly through the sale of their 'immaterial' commodities and partly by forcibly imposing the latter on other people — found it not at all pleasant to be relegated *economically* to the same class as clowns and menial servants and to appear merely as people partaking in the consumption, parasites on the actual producers.... (Emphasis Marx's)²

THE GREATEST SPURTS of wealth inequality in the U.S. were in the 1920s and the 1980s (actually beginning in the late 70s). And it has remained high. “The gap between haves and have-nots is greater now — at the start of the 21st century — than at any time since 1929.”³ The 1929 stock market crash signaled the beginning of the slide of wealth inequality, which lasted until the late 70s. Currently the wealth inequality is about where it was in 1920, that is, before the first spurt.

What caused these two spurts of wealth inequality? The reasons are complex, but they must begin with weak labor movements in the 20s and 80s and, of course, the absence of a strong Left party. From 1911 to 1930 the U.S. took in over 9 million immigrants (5 million 1911-20 and 4 million 1921-30). (N.B. Immigration dropped to 328,000 in the 1930s.) These immigrants were, of course, poorly paid. Farmers and unskilled laborers did not partake of the 20s prosperity. (This resulted, by the way, in a greater capacity of production than of consumption — a leading cause of the Depression.) The 20s saw a huge increase in both financial and land speculation, resulting in accumulation of fabulous wealth, at least until 1929. And the general atmosphere was ultra-conservative, with the smashing of the Left (e.g. the Palmer raids), lynchings (including a full scale pogrom against Black people in Tulsa, OK, in 1921, killing over 150 and leaving 11,000 homeless), the Scopes and Sacco-Vanzetti trials, etc. Two statements of Calvin Coolidge exemplify the decade's *zeitgeist*: “There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, any time.” (Letter to Samuel Gompers, September 14, 1919) “The chief business of the American people is business.” (Speech to the American Society of

Newspaper Editors, January 17, 1925)

The spurt of wealth inequality in the 80s was intensified by the booming hi tech information industry, with the enrichment of the few and the impoverishment of the more lowly (e.g. punch press) operators. In addition, the so-called rust belt declined, as our economy shifted from industry to services, as it had once shifted from agriculture to industry. (In the U.S. industry accounted for 50 percent of employment in 1950, but accounts for only 20 percent today.) And the high military budget, especially that for Star Wars, offered little, if anything, to the lowest wage earners. In addition, the 80s saw an increase in outsourcing, poorly paid part-time work, and moving industries abroad for cheap labor. Finally, the 1986 tax legislation, with the support of both President Reagan and the Democratic-controlled Congress, favored the rich, lowering the tax on the top bracket from 50 percent in 1985 to 26 percent, the lowest it had been since 1926. (More of this later.)

Using the amount of total wealth owned by the top 1 percent of wealth holders is a useful way to gauge wealth inequality, but the Gini coefficient, developed by the Italian economist Corrado Gini, summarizes data on both income and wealth. It ranges from 0 (absolute equality) to 1 (one person owns everything). The higher the coefficient, the greater the inequality.

The following table indicates the greater inequality in the U.S. compared to some other industrialized nations⁴:

Comfortable Databases, Net Worth

GINI COEFFICIENT

Germany, 1988.....	69
U.S., 1988	76

Net Worth, Comparable Household Surveys

U.S., 1983	79
Canada, 1983	69
Japan, 1981	58
Japan, 1984	52

As is evident, in the 80s the Gini coefficient for wealth inequality was extremely high by European and Japanese standards—the Japanese, by the way, pay their CEOs an average of 20 times the wages of the average worker in the corporation, whereas top

American CEOs now make over 500 times the salary of their average workers. As high as the coefficient was, it has risen to an astounding .84 in 1998.⁵

When mean income increases but median income decreases or remains the same, you know that distribution of wealth has become more unequal. Median family income was \$1,000 less in '97 than in '89. Yet people were working more hours to get less pay. (The typical couple worked 250 hours more in '97 than in '89.)⁶ In the last twenty years of the twentieth century, the bottom 40 percent of households in wealth experienced a decline of wealth. Moreover, there has been a growing proportion of households with zero or negative worth.⁷

Between '95 and '00 personal and business bankruptcies rose 33 percent from 858,100 to 1,276,900. And there were well over a million bankruptcies in each of the two years previous to '00, as well. Credit card debt has soared. As of 2000 it stood at \$693.2 billion. (*World Almanac*) The recession hit the hi tech companies in the late 90's, and many people, laid off or demoted, may be maxing out their credit cards, paying the credit companies' usurious interest rates. No wonder, then, at the 1 1/4 million bankruptcies.

Of course anyone could have a financial crisis brought on, say, by a job loss or a huge medical bill, and once your credit is down, you are fair game for the loan shark predators circling above, and most often they are not the break-your-legs thugs of the 'hood; they are leading "respectable" banks, and they may *legally* charge 20 to 70 percent interest *per month* in many states. (The top rate thus approaches 1000 percent annual interest!) In 1978 the Supreme Court "permit(ted) out-of-state banks to charge higher interest rates on their credit cards than allowed by the usury laws of the receiving state."⁸ There is a two-tiered structure for financial services in this country—one for the middle and upper classes, another for lower income people, as Rep. John J. LaFalce, ranking member of the Committee on Banking and Financial Services, has pointed out.⁹ By paying exorbitant interest, the poor are actually subsidizing low cost credit for the middle and upper classes.

In the bottom tenth of income distribution, only 10 percent receive paid vacations and holidays; only 10 percent get employee-funded pensions; and only 26 percent are covered by health insurance. At least 40 million Americans are without health insurance.

THE ENORMOUS ACCUMULATION OF WEALTH by the upper 1 percent, together with the impoverishment of the lowest quintile, reminds me of Kurt Vonnegut's novel *Jailbird*: RAMJAC Corporation owned almost everything, including the State of New Jersey, and was so rich and so hated that its majority stockholder had to live like a bag lady always on the move to avoid being killed.

Does sharply unequal distribution of wealth affect economic growth? The nineteenth century economist Henry George was convinced that:

... it impedes development. . . . Unemployment and underemployment of labor means that energy and intelligence go untapped. . . . In short, an unjust system of privileges and entitlements tends to cause misallocation of resources, macroeconomic instability and stagnation, political corruption, and social conflict that ultimately may threaten whole civilizations.¹⁰

This analysis has been reinforced by some later economists. "Countries with relatively equal distribution of income have achieved higher rates of economic growth than those with considerable economic inequality."¹¹ Although George's contention is debatable, one would think that in the 21st century, an educated work force, with health care and other benefits, would be more productive than one that is beset by constant angst.

The possibility of social unrest owing to a huge gap between rich and poor? Why hasn't there been the kind of social unrest that we saw in the 60s, with the burning down of cities like Detroit, Newark, and Rochester? For one thing, there are over 1.3 million in prison and many others in some form of protective custody. At least half of these nearly two million are there because of non-violent drug offenses. Nixon did run on law and order platforms in both '68 and '72. Could it be that the \$40 billion drug war, which everyone knows is hopeless, is really a response to the 60s in that many of those

who might cause social disturbance are locked up? After all, in 1998, Dr. David Satcher, then the Surgeon General, estimated the annual number of deaths due to tobacco-related diseases to be 400,000. In 1996, according to the National Safety Council, a public-policy group, the total number of deaths in this country caused by opiates and other narcotics was 2,075. Thus politicians cannot be seriously worried about the hazards of drug use. There must be another reason for locking up so many people — disproportionately Black and Hispanic.

Clearly, the ruling class is worried about the possibility of social unrest. The number of private security guards has now surpassed the number of police: over one million security guards as against 637,551 police (plus 261,567 civilian employees of the police). When you add in the number of prison guards — almost 350,000 — and the number of people in the armed forces, 1,439,000, the U.S. is looking more and more like a police state. Perhaps Jay Gould was making a prescient statement for the ruling class when he said, with refreshing candor, before the 1886 strike, "I can hire half the working class to kill the other half."

A decade ago the UN published lists of the richest countries. In terms of per person gross domestic product, the U.S. was the richest. But when the UN Human Development Index adjusted for life expectancy, literacy, and sexual equality, the U.S. fell to tenth behind Finland, Sweden, Denmark, France, Norway, Australia, Austria, (the former) Czechoslovakia, and Canada in that order. (*New York Times*, March 8, 1992) Iceland would have headed the list, but its small size (1/4 million population) precluded consideration. Today Iceland's per capita income of \$30,575 is higher than the U.S.'s (\$30,069), and that is not even taking into consideration the higher longevity, better distribution of wealth, higher literacy rate, and lower rates of unemployment and infant mortality than the U.S.'s. (*2000 Iceland Bureau of Statistics and Statistical Abstract for the U.S.*, 2001)

One way to mitigate the effects of unequal distribution of wealth is through taxation. It is interesting that the taxation of the top income bracket seems to be corre-

lated, in certain ways, with the distribution of wealth. Following are income tax rate figures for the top bracket during selected years:

1913	7%
1917	67%
1926	25%
1936	79%
1943	88%
1951	91%
1964	70%
1985	50%
1986	28%
2000	39.6%
2001	39.1%

The cut-off for the highest tax rate varies: often \$200,000 or \$400,000, currently \$297,350. (Needless to say, the entire amount of a rich person's taxes is not taxed at this rate, only the amount over a certain point.) Clearly the two World Wars were responsible for the relatively high rates of taxation (67 percent in '17 and 88 percent in '43). During the great spurts of inequality — in the 20s and the 80s — the rates on the richest incomes dropped precipitously, due, of course, to the conservative atmosphere. Liberals often blame Reagan for the tax cut of 1986, but a Democratic-controlled Congress, spearheaded by the Republican Packwood and Democrats Moynihan, Bradley, and Rostenkowski, made the cut, with Reagan's blessing, of course. It should be noted that, in order to avoid paying the full 90 or 91 percent on the top bracket in the 50s, the rich hired an army of tax lawyers to find loopholes. Yet the effective rates of tax on the top bracket were still high:

Effective Rate		
<u>1950</u>	<u>1951</u>	<u>1954</u>
80.7%	82.2 %	80.5%

Statistical Abstracts (1960)

IT SHOULD ALSO BE NOTED THAT John F. Kennedy promised during his campaign to lower the tax on the top bracket. Once elected, he prodded Congress to act, and the tax act bringing down the 90 percent considerably was passed after his death. What I also find interesting is that the high WWII rate held fairly steady for two decades after the war, even during the conservative

Eisenhower years. It paid off the huge deficit incurred by both the Depression and World War II, and it also paid for the G.I. Bill and the FHA and VA financing for housing loans, and thereby helped build a middle class. In my view, the 1862 Homestead Act and the 1944 G.I. Bill were the two most progressive acts, in terms of mitigating the unequal distribution of wealth, ever passed by the U.S. Congress. (Personal disclosure: My wife's father received land because of the Homestead Act and I received a college education through the G.I. Bill.)

One rationale for lowering taxes on the top bracket is that that would help the economy. Giving the poor money, the argument runs, would be a waste, since they wouldn't save it — their needs are too pressing. The rich would invest any windfall they receive in the stock market, which would jump-start the economy and provide jobs. The problem with this trickle down doctrine is that 90 percent of money invested in Wall Street does not go into plants and equipment or into research and development; it becomes negotiable paper shuffled back and forth — sheer speculation. (Investment does, however, indirectly affect the value of companies' ratings.) When it does reach the corporation, it is often used to pay off corporate debt after leveraged buyouts or to finance mergers and acquisitions and huge salaries for top management.¹²

Other legislation, beyond taxation, that could affect distribution of wealth would include the minimum wage law. Like many pundits on the Right, Martin Feldstein thinks that the poor are crooked (they don't report earning from underground economy), or stupid ("low cognitive skills"), or alcoholic, or drugged, or poorly educated, or lacking in training in skills. And the reason for their lack of training? The minimum wage law, of course. The \$5.15 hourly minimum prevents employers from apprenticing the poor, as they do in Germany.¹³ The Right used to claim that raising the minimum wage caused unemployment, but that was shown to be false. The *Wall Street Journal* headlined a report on this: "Fears over raising the minimum wage appear unfounded."¹⁴ Hence the Right now switches to a more sophisticated argument against the law. By the way, if the minimum wage had grown

at the same rate as CEO pay between 1990 and 1998, it would be \$22.08 an hour, over four times the current minimum. Not a word from Feldstein about outsourcing, merging, reducing to part-time, or going abroad for cheap labor. Or about companies like Walmart or McDonalds not paying workers living wages. Feldstein's exasperated observations about the poor remind me of those of the British Lord John Russell discussing, in 1848, the potato famine in Ireland in which two million died of starvation: "We have ... subscribed, worked, visited, clothed the Irish millions of money, years of debate, etc., etc. — the only return is calumny and rebellion."¹⁵ And of Norman Mailer's wonderful observation about the delegates to the 1968 Republican convention:

[T]here was the muted tragedy of the Wasp — they were not on earth to enjoy or even perhaps to love so very much, they were here to serve and serve they had in public functions and public charities (while recipients of their charity might vomit in rage or laugh in scorn...)¹⁶

Another worry about raising the minimum wage — and this worry is not confined to right-wing thinkers — is that it would cause prices to rise and end up in an upward inflationary spiral with the dollar eventually becoming worthless, as the German mark was in the 1920s. But Norway has among the highest labor costs in the world — second only to Germany's in 2001 and first in the world in 1990. (See *World Competitiveness Reports of 1990 and 2001*) Since World War II, Norway's Constitution guarantees full employment. Yet Norway's inflation was only 3.1 percent in 2000, less than the U.S.'s in that year, and its unemployment rate of 3.4 percent was also less than the U.S.'s. (*OECD Economic Survey*) Norway's high wages and nearly full employment have been achieved without price controls (except for drugs). So much for that inflation myth.

Many on the Right believe that a large army of unemployed would keep down labor costs. Wall Street gets nervous whenever the unemployed rate falls. A *Boston Globe* headline: "Jobless Rate Falls to 6.4 percent, Stirs Jitters on Inflation." (May 7, 1994) Interestingly, the jobless rate has

dropped to 5.7 percent in the eight years since that headline appeared (*Bureau of Labor Statistics*), yet the recently released figure for inflation for the past twelve months is only 1.5 percent. (*CPI Index*, March, 2002) It is clear that the inflation of the 70s was due to skyrocketing oil prices, not to wage rises. In fact, President Nixon's Economic Stabilization Program froze both wages and prices for a time (1971-73). *If currency is strong and if productivity is high, neither high wages nor low unemployment will cause inflation*, as has been proven in countries like Norway. Another myth blowing like a wisp — a milkweed spore — in the wind.

Other factors that might mitigate the unequal distribution of wealth would be the education and the health care that the government sponsors. The fact that you can get a (mostly) free college education in most European countries certainly does mitigate it. One American state, Georgia, also has had a similar program since 1993. The Georgia Hope Scholarship program offers all academically qualified Georgia students, regardless of need, full tuition and most fees (e.g. health and student activity fees) and \$150 book allowance per semester to public Georgia colleges. It also offers between \$3,000 and \$4,100 toward tuition at private Georgia colleges. This program has paid out over \$1 billion for 500,000 Georgia students since 1993. A problem with both the European and the Georgia plans is the financing. The mostly regressive Value Added Tax and the very regressive gasoline tax help finance education in Europe. Curiously, policy wonks almost always seem to ignore these taxes. A typical example: "In a European-style system, the wealthy and the middle class are subject to heavy taxation to pay for universal entitlements."¹⁷ But the VAT and the gasoline tax are real and very oppressive for the poor. Georgia's Hope Scholarship is funded by the state lottery, another regressive measure since mostly the poor play it. An argument could be made that the poor should not have to pay for programs that benefit the middle and upper classes as well as them. But, even though a progressive tax would be preferable, I think that universal programs, like Social Security and Medicare as well as this one, are

worth it. The alternative would be means testing, but as the late Richard Titmuss said, "Programs for the poor are poor programs."

ASIDE FROM the Georgia Hope Scholarship program, the U.S. has little to offer its citizens in the way of education, health care, and welfare, at least by comparison to other advanced nations. When you have economic growth without the kind of job gain that we had when the economy was mostly industry-based, you can hire the unemployed in state enterprises. The Scandinavian countries have done so, mainly in health, education, and welfare fields, on the premise that the dole is more costly — in every sense — than productive work. "Today (1990) the Danish and Swedish wel-

fare states employ about 30 percent of the labor force." ¹⁸ (Unfortunately, this has been reduced in the past decade, although the Labor Attache at the Swedish Embassy maintains that, in Sweden's case, the privatization put into effect in the 90s still includes State involvement.) Even if the political will were there, it would be difficult for the U.S. to hire the unemployed in Health, Education, and Welfare because of military expenditures. The U.S. ranks third in the world — after Kuwait and Israel — in per capita military spending. Here is a 1994 comparison of several nations in terms of per capita spending in three areas: military, education, and health. Included is the percentage of the total of the three for each. Values are expressed in cur-

1994 Per Capita Public Expenditures¹⁹

<u>Country</u>	<u>Military</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Education</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Health</u>	<u>%</u>
U.S.	\$ 1,106	28	\$1,328	34	\$1,504	38
Canada	327	11	1,374	44	1,395	45
Iceland	0	0	1,253	44	1,603	56
Belgium	391	13	1,074	36	1,539	51
Denmark	526	14	1,896	49	1,458	37
France	769	21	1,250	35	1,584	44
Netherlands	464	15	1,173	39	1,369	46
Norway	783	17	1,968	43	1,837	40
U.K.	586	25	844	35	955	40
Finland	344	13	1,184	44	1,152	43
Austria	218	7	1,336	45	1,423	48
Germany	448	16	998	35	1,430	50
Italy	356	15	890	38	1,081	46
Switzerland	619	13	1,910	40	2,252	47
Ireland	172	11	740	46	693	43
Spain	188	13	566	39	694	48
Sweden	607	17	1,651	46	1,331	37
Russian Fed.	241	52	127	27	96	21
Luxembourg	314	8	1,475	39	1,993	53
Costa Rica	12	5	104	45	113	49
Argentina	138	25	246	44	174	31
Brazil	39	16	127	52	79	32
Egypt	32	43	35	47	7	10
Nigeria	2	14	10	71	2	14
South Africa	71	19	196	53	105	28
Israel	1,216	55	768	34	240	11
India	8	38	10	48	3	14
China	14	42	9	27	10	30
Japan	364	10	1,626	43	1,767	47

rent (1994) dollars.

The above comparison of military and social expenditures is relevant to a discussion of the distribution of wealth if only because countries, such as the Scandinavian, by keeping their military budget below 17 percent of the total Military-Education-Health total, are able both to provide jobs and to offer valuable social services for their citizens. Ireland, too, has kept its military budget low both in the above 1994 study and in a 1978 one, and this must at least be a factor in the spectacular growth of the Irish economy mostly due to its well educated hi tech graduates; in fact, the nation is advertising for the young people who had emigrated to come home. Japan's spending very little on arms and nearly 50 percent on health is reflected in the fact that Japan leads the world in longevity of its citizens. Iceland's zero military expenditure surely has something to do with its outstanding performance mentioned above. And Luxembourg, with only 8 percent military spending leads the world in literacy (100 percent!). By contrast, both health and education are rapidly deteriorating in the Russian Federation, which is following the former USSR in spending more than half on armaments (59 percent in '78). We know where that path led.

The 2002 U.S. war budget (misnamed "defense budget") has risen to \$348 billion, that is, \$1,214 per capita, an almost 10 percent rise over the 1994 figure. We have been on a war budget since 1939, the start of Lend Lease, a mobilization of American industry to aid the Allied war effort, effectively ending the Depression. Is it endemic to 21st century capitalism or will it break it, as it at least helped break the USSR? (Of course, it could be both endemic and self-destructive.) So-called mixed economies like those of Scandinavia have done well to date without reliance on huge war budgets, but are they viable in the long run? In the last few years Denmark has already veered somewhat to the Right, as well as other European countries (e.g. Spain, Austria, Italy), and there is pressure from the Right throughout the continent to jettison the gains of the mixed economies. I have focused on the U.S. war budget because I am convinced that as long as it remains large — and growing — an equitable distribution of wealth will be impossible. As I have indi-

cated, it offers little to the lowest stratum of wage earners, it prevents the government from hiring the jobless, and it curtails health, education, and welfare benefits that might mitigate a poor distribution of wealth.

What Is To Be Done

IN GERMANY, the I. G. Metall metalworkers' union has launched a national campaign for a fairer distribution of wealth. In addition to struggling for better working conditions and better pay within their own plant, the union has broadened the struggle to appeal to all sectors of society for a public debate on the distribution of wealth — between East and West Germany, between blue and white collar, between men and women — and on poverty. In the U.S. Chuck Collins has also fought for a more equitable distribution of wealth. A grandson of meat packer Oscar Mayer, he gave away all his millions to foundations in 1996, and he co-founded two organizations — United for a Fair Economy²⁰ and Responsible Wealth, both of which are dedicated to a fairer distribution of wealth.

The economist Edward Wolff recommends, in addition to our current income tax, a direct wealth tax. It is now in place in eleven of the OECD countries (the usual suspects: Scandinavia, the Netherlands, Austria, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland). The tax rate is usually less than 1 percent. Interestingly, Bill Gates supports the direct wealth tax, even though his company, Microsoft, has fought every attempt to tax the internet. The bottom line of one's personal life, it would seem, is different from the bottom line of one's business.

Any attack on military expenditures (which should be accompanied by a plan to retool), any attempt to raise the minimum wage or to change taxation either by raising the tax on the top bracket or by making the Social Security-Medicare payroll taxes progressive or by removing the cap on income taxed by Social Security or by imposing a direct wealth tax — any of these can be won only after a long struggle led by trade unions and a real left party, as Gosta Esping-Andersen has concluded in his study of what causes movement toward an equitable distribution of wealth.²¹

AN EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF WEALTH is a

sine qua non for respect for the absolute worth of each person, that is, for human dignity. But despite glimmers of hope from Iceland and other Scandinavian countries, from the State of Georgia, from a German union, and from people like Chuck Collins, it is going to be a long road to establish an equitable distribution of wealth in the U.S., let alone the world. There is no short cut. Labor and community organizing must intensify and, with them, the building of a strong progressive party. The capitalist class, especially in the United States, seems to be careening, hell bent, toward destruction of the planet, either through war or pollution. During the Spanish Civil War the Canadian journalist Pierre Van Passen told Buenaventura Durruti, the anarchist leader whose forces made the only real advance against the fascists, "You will be sitting on top of a pile of ruins if you are victorious." Durruti replied:

We have always lived in slums and holes in the wall. We will know how to accommodate ourselves for a time. For, you must not forget, we can also build. It is we who built these palaces and cities here in Spain and in America and everywhere. We, the workers, we can build others to take their place. And better ones. We are not in the least afraid of ruins. We are going to inherit the earth. There is not the slightest doubt about that. The bourgeoisie may blast and ruin its own world before it leaves the stage of history. We carry a new world, here, in our hearts. That world is growing this minute.²²

NOTES

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5. *Ibid.*, p. 39.
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Two Cheers for Glenn Loury – Or Maybe One

Stephen Steinberg

IN 1998 DERRICK BELL WROTE a highly critical review in *New Politics* of Randall Kennedy's *Race, Crime, and the Law*. He minced no words in reproving Kennedy for straying far from the “stunning models of racial advocacy” that marked his early work when he joined the faculty of Harvard Law School in 1986, following a wave of student protests demanding the hiring of black faculty. In his review Bell scored Kennedy for his equivocal and apologetic positions on racial issues, observing that the media will accord “special celebrity status...to any black willing to speak for whites.” Bell ended his review with an unexpected and disarming personal appeal: “Come home, Randy! We advocates of racial justice need you on our side, not in our way.”¹

No doubt, Kennedy took umbrage at Bell's insinuation that intellectual dissent was tantamount to racial betrayal. Kennedy perhaps identified with black conservatives who defiantly assert their right to deviate from the “civil rights orthodoxy” and to hew an independent line without being subjected to racial excommunication. No one has been more vociferous on this point than Glenn Loury, who once assailed black leaders for being caught in a “loyalty trap.” He continued:

They are fearful of engaging in a candid, critical appraisal of the condition of our

people because they do not want to appear to be disloyal to the race. But this rhetorical reticence has serious negative consequences for the ability of blacks as a group to grapple with the real problems that confront us. Moreover, it represents a failure of nerve in the face of adversity that may be more accurately characterized as intellectual treason than racial fealty. After all, what more important obligation can the privileged class of black elites have than to tell the truth to their own people?²

It should come as no surprise that, in the aftermath of his much-publicized break with the political right, Loury's words would be used against him. In a 1999 article in the *National Review*, Norman Podhoretz, the editor of *Commentary* who published Loury's early essays, wrote that Loury had “fallen, or perhaps deliberately leaped, into ‘the loyalty trap’ he once worked so hard to escape.”³ Podhoretz allows that “everyone has a right to change his mind,” citing his own about-face when he defected from liberalism and emerged as one of the founders of the neoconservative movement. What Podhoretz does *not* say is that his political flip-flop was motivated entirely by ethnic loyalty, as he made clear in a 1972 article in *Commentary* entitled “Is It Good for the Jews?” Podhoretz traced his disenchantment with liberalism to a growing realization that liberals were moving in directions — diminished support for Israel in the wake of the 1967 war and support for “compensatory programs” (the embryo for affirmative action) — that were antithetical to Jewish interests. In the case of Glenn Loury, his political shift grew out of a similar realization that his ideological bedfellows were gravitating to positions that he could not countenance. Loury was a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute in 1994 when his fellow fellows Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray published *The Bell Curve*,

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followed a year later by the publication of Dinesh D'Sousa's *The End of Racism*. With considerable public fanfare, Loury resigned from the American Enterprise Institute in 1995. Clearly, his loyalty to the conservative cause had been stretched to its racial limits.

LOURY'S REHABILITATION INTO RESPECTABLE liberal circles came in 2000 when he was invited by Henry Louis Gates Jr. to deliver the W. E. B. Du Bois Lectures at Harvard. The lectures have now been published by Harvard University Press under the title *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, replete with exuberant blurbs from Orlando Patterson, Charles Tilly, Michael Walzer, and William Julius Wilson, among others. Unfortunately, Loury passed up the opportunity to use the lectures and the book they spawned to revisit his earlier positions on race and race policy. I do not mean to suggest that Loury should have written an intellectual mea culpa. As Podhoretz reminds us, everybody has a right to change his mind. However, Loury was no ordinary person or obscure professor. With his elite credentials and his affiliation with conservative journals and think tanks, he had emerged as one of the nation's leading pundits on race, appearing frequently on television and op-ed pages, testifying before Congressional committees, and otherwise influencing public debate and the formation of public policy. Public discourse on race might have been enriched had Loury taken pains to explain exactly what positions he now renounces, why he does so, what his current positions are concerning America's festering racial problems, and where he stands now on key public policy issues.

These very issues form the subtext for *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, but they are camouflaged behind a dizzying array of theoretical abstractions and turgid prose. It is as though Loury would have us think that he arrived at truths that previously eluded him through rigorous application of economic models. Never mind that the ideas that he propounds in his lectures are commonplace in the vast literature on race. Having wiped his internal slate clean, and renounced his previous affiliation with right-wing organizations, Glenn Loury now

resorts to a dubious solipsism, and pretends that he must begin, well, at the beginning. As he writes, "I rely heavily in this book on the elementary observation that, in the first instance, 'race' is a mode of perceptual categorization people use to navigate their way through a murky, uncertain social world."⁴ [Great, Glenn Loury has discovered race, or rather that people habitually think in terms of racial categories.] Next, as he wades through the theoretical thicket, he stumbles on "racism," a previously unknown entity, leading him to ask: "Exactly what is the nature of racism? What is its mechanism?" For emphasis he places his answer in italics: "*I want to suggest with the stigma idea that a withholding of the presumption of equal humanity is the ultimate mechanism of racism in American public life.*" (88) Once created, this "stigma idea" creates the facts that are its own justification, reflected in "wide disparities in some indicia of behavior across racial groups." (78) [Where would we be without those "indicia"? Presumably living in an epistemological void.]

Having discovered the existence of race and racism, Loury arrives at his most important revelation: that race history has some bearing on the condition of blacks in contemporary American society. For this we can be grateful, given the breathtaking ahistoricism of Loury's earlier work and of the conservative racial paradigm in general. This is the same man who wrote in 1990 that blacks "must let go of the past and take responsibility for our future." (*One by One*, 16) Now he concedes that "the conservative line on race is...ahistorical." As he explains: "Contemporary American society has inherited a racial hierarchy — the remnant of a system of racial domination that had been supported by an array of symbols and meanings deleterious to the reputation and self-image of blacks." (106) Again, we can be grateful that Loury acknowledges the existence of "a system of racial domination," but note the reductionism in his formulation. The crux of the problem is not the institutionalized inequalities between blacks and whites, but rather the "array of symbols and meanings deleterious to the reputation and self-image of blacks." Is the struggle against racism merely a matter of repairing "the reputation and self-image of

blacks”? Is Loury still part of the chorus of black conservatives who oppose affirmative action because it sullies the reputation and undermines the self-image of blacks?

Impatient to find out where Loury’s theoretical mishmash leads, I flipped to the concluding chapter. It begins as follows: “By now the reader knows that I take a constructivist position in regard to the ontological status of ‘race’: A field of human subjects characterized by morphological variability comes through concrete historical experience to be partitioned into subgroups defined by some cluster of physical markers.” (157) [Yo, man, that’s you!] What was Loury thinking when he embarked on this mistaken journey into obscurantism? This is all the more puzzling because Loury’s previous work is marked by clear and cogent prose. Is it that he wrote with crystal clarity when he spouted the conservative line that he now abjures, but cloaks his liberalism in unintelligible prose? Or is it that he felt compelled to reach for profundity on the occasion of Harvard’s W.E.B. Du Bois lectures? His audience must have been writhing in their seats (and Du Bois tossing in his grave) as he plunged deeper into the miasma of unnecessary erudition. Thus, I felt a sense of relief when I encountered the following paragraph in his concluding chapter:

Faced with manifestations of extreme marginality and dysfunction among some of the racially marked, will the citizenry indignantly cry out, “What manner of people are *they*, who languish in that way?” Or will they be moved, perhaps after overcoming an instinctual revulsion, to ask reflectively and reflexively, “What manner of people are *we* who accept such degradation in our midst?” I have argued that the attainment of racial justice depends crucially on which narrative is settled upon. Reform becomes possible only when this second question is posed. (159)

Here, alas, Loury becomes intelligible and replaces soulless jargon with poignant imagery of a reified citizenry crying out for racial justice. He also blurts out, in this brief interlude, the major point of dissension with his erstwhile fellows on the right who have invoked a spurious agency to suggest that responsibility for America’s race problems

resides with blacks themselves.

Indeed, this is the line that Loury spouted for two decades, making him the darling of the conservative movement. In 1995, the same year of his break with the American Enterprise Institute, Loury published a compilation of his writings in a book entitled *One by One from the Inside Out*. The title encapsulated his main argument: that change has to come from within, and that black uplift would occur, not through race-based public policy, but by individuals clawing their way out of poverty, one by one. Here is a sampling of his victim-blaming allegations:

- “The bottom stratum of the black community has compelling problems that can no longer be blamed solely on white racism, that will not yield to protest marches or court orders, and that force us to confront fundamental failures in lower-class black urban society.” (16)
- “Characterizing the problem of the ghetto poor as due to white racism is one variant of this argument that ‘society’ has caused the problem. It overlooks the extent to which values and behaviors of inner-city black youths are implicated in the difficulty.” (18)
- “I have spoken of the difference between the ‘enemy without’ — racism — and the ‘enemy within’ the black community — those dysfunctional behaviors of youth blacks that perpetuate poverty and dependency.” (21)
- “Whatever *fault* may be placed upon racism in America, the *responsibility* for the behavior of black youngsters lies squarely on the shoulders of the black community itself.” (37)
- “Finally, self-help is critical to securing the sympathetic support of the rest of the political community... This is why the movement toward welfare reform that focuses on placing some onus of responsibility on recipients does not threaten blacks. On the contrary, *such developments are a god-send*, for they help to diffuse a potentially damaging stigma associated with the disproportionate dependency of blacks on state-funded transfers.” (80) (*italics added*)

This last excerpt exposes the political dan-

gers of Loury's reduction of racism to "stigma." To avoid inflaming white opinion and to shed the stigma of "welfare," Loury is willing to deprive destitute mothers and their children of the meager subsidies that barely provided shelter and food. And when a black economist from Harvard and a born-again Christian declares that the gutting of welfare is "a godsend," this provides the anti-welfare crusaders with precisely the cover that they need to camouflage their racist and immoral agenda.

This agenda included an assault on what was contemptuously called "the civil rights establishment," and Loury was a willing accomplice. In 1990 he testified before Congress in opposition to civil rights legislation that sought to strengthen legal protections against employment discrimination. Even though the legislation did not purport to address the problems of the "underclass," Loury illogically linked the two, arguing that antidiscrimination legislation would have little impact on "the real problem" which has to do with "drugs, criminal violence, educational failure, homelessness, and family instability." (134) He proudly included his testimony in his 1995 anthology, along with a review that he published in *The Public Interest* of John DiIulio's book *America's Black Crime Gap—and How to Close It*. Loury responded warmly to DiIulio's proposal for longer incarceration of violent and career criminals, adding his cold-blooded cost-benefit analysis: "Keeping known bad guys in prison for a longer period of time would repay society far more than it would cost, with the poorest among us benefiting the most." (299)

Has Glenn Loury renounced these retrograde positions? What message does he now have for the droves of welfare mothers thrown onto the low-wage market, and their children who are deprived of the proverbial safety net? And to the multitude of black men and women who have been relegated to spend unconscionable years in prison, often for non-violent crimes? Perhaps this is why Loury has taken refuge in high-flown theory and obscure terminology: they allow him to avert the human consequences of his extended embrace of right-wing ideology and his implication in its repressive policy regime.

HOW FAR DOES LOURY'S TRUMPETED "political conversion" go? Judging from *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality*, not very far. His most trenchant attack on his erstwhile bedfellows is as follows [fasten your cognitive safety belts]: "The 'conservative line' on race in America today is simplistic.... [S]uch 'pathological' behavior by these most marginal of Americans is deeply rooted in American history." (105) Loury explains: "[W]hile there may be a grain of truth in the insistence by conservatives that cultural differences lie at the root of racial disparity in the United States, the deeper truth is that, for some three centuries now, political, social, and economic institutions that by any measure must be seen as racially oppressive have distorted the communal experience of the slaves and their descendants." (104) Note the unmistakable parallels to Moynihan's screed on the black family. Like many liberals, Loury is willing to blame "history" for distorting the "communal experience" of blacks, but has little to say about racism as a force in contemporary American society. And in an obvious paraphrase of William Julius Wilson, he writes that "the unfair treatment of persons based on race in formal economic transactions is no longer the most significant barrier to the full participation of blacks in American life." (168) In effect, Loury argues that we are still paying the price of the original sin of racism — slavery — and that we are today suffering "the tragedy of the vicious circle" and those self-reproducing "causal feedback loops" that "perpetuate racial inequality from one generation to the next." (10)

Still, Loury's concession that history has something to do with present-day patterns of racial inequality brings him to the threshold of racial liberalism. Time and again, however, he balks at crossing the forbidden line. For example, Loury repudiates liberal individualism, which insists on the autonomy of the individual, with this broadside: "I cannot abide the imposition of abstract strictures of neutrality upon a game in which systematically nonneutral practices have left so many raced and stigmatized outsiders with so few good cards to play." (122) Translation: the playing field between blacks and whites is far from level,

precisely the logic behind affirmative action policy. But what do we hear from our convert to liberalism? In the very next sentence, Loury writes: "This is not some over-theorized discourse in defense of affirmative action policies. I desperately want to avoid having the far-reaching implications of my argument projected onto the narrow and partisan ground of the debate over racial preferences. I am not motivated here by a desire to preserve special treatment for blacks, or to keep someone's child from being admitted to a prestigious college." (122) Loury grants that his "raced and stigmatized outsiders" may have "few good cards to play," but he is not inclined to shuffle the deck.

In a section on "Historical Causation and Social Justice," Loury backs himself into yet another corner. He acknowledges the existence of "historically engendered economic differences between racial groups" and further allows that "as a matter of social ethics, policies should be undertaken to mitigate the economic marginality of an historically stigmatized racial group like black Americans." Again he hastens to add, in the very next sentence: "This is not an argument for reparations... ." (130)

If not affirmative action and reparations, what antiracist policies warrant the support of our supposed convert to liberalism? With bated breath, I approached the section under the heading "Some Thoughts on the Possibility of Racial Reform." Now gobbledygook is carried to the rhetorical equivalent of a volcanic eruption. The reader is presented with a torrent of murky distinctions—between "racial stigma" and "racial stereotyping," between "racial discrimination" and "racial stigma," between external and non-external structures, and finally — the mother of all distinctions — race-blindness (bad!) and race-egalitarianism (good!). This last concept — race egalitarianism — envisions reducing inequalities of wealth and power between racial groups. At first blush, it might appear that Loury has taken the plunge into radical thought, and is prepared to confront the massive inequalities of wealth and power between whites and blacks. However, on closer examination, Loury means only that we need to "attend to the race-mediated patterns of

social intercourse that characterize interpersonal relations." (113) Let me explain. Because of terrible and tragic things that happened in the distant past, perpetuated by those insidious causal feedback loops, blacks still lack access to social resources through "informal, culturally mediated, race-influenced social intercourse." (168) For readers already worn down with mental fatigue, let me put it in plain language: it all depends on who you know, and few blacks are in a position to know the right people.

Alas, this was the revelation that Loury had as a doctoral student in economics at MIT, where he received his Ph.D. in 1976. Needless to say, Loury translated this nugget of folk wisdom — "it's who you know" — into respectable academic jargon, arguing that blacks suffered from a lack of "social capital."⁵ This notion may be trite but it is not politically innocent. By making lack of social capital the analytical focal point, Loury subtly shifted the focus of blame away from societal institutions onto an alleged deficiency among blacks themselves (however much this lack of social capital was a product of past racism). The "brilliant" black economist from MIT quickly received the attention of publishers and other powerbrokers within the conservative establishment, and by 1982, barely six years out of graduate school, Loury was a tenured full professor at Harvard.

Glenn Loury would probably deny that he ever "left home," in the sense that all along he considered himself "a race man" in the tradition of Booker T. Washington. Like Washington, he advocated self-help and economic development from within the black community, and like Washington, he was bitterly attacked by blacks who, in the tradition of W.E.B. Du Bois, favored a frontal assault against white racism. However, not all the fire directed against Loury came from people whom he could dismiss as ideological enemies. The family he left behind on Chicago's South Side also accused him as "selling out to the white man," as Loury divulged in interviews with Adam Shatz.⁶ Perhaps his break with the political right was his way of "coming home."

NOTWITHSTANDING THE RIDICULE heaped on him by conservatives, Loury has nothing to

fear from “the loyalty trap.” The solidarities that bind African Americans together as a people were forged through oppression, and the struggle for racial justice is anchored in both morality and truth. Loury has distanced himself from conservatives who trounced morality and truth in their relentless crusade against affirmative action and other policies designed to attack institutional racism. He has belatedly adopted some liberal stances on race, but he has yet to walk the walk, and to speak with clarity and force on behalf of policies that would liberate this nation, blacks and whites alike, from the bane of its past. Which is more to be feared — the political enemy whose ideological proclivities are transparent or the convert who subverts his newfound allies with equivocation and sophistry? Derrick Bell’s evocation still holds: “Come home, Glenn. We advocates of racial justice need

you on our side, not in our way.”

NOTES

1. Derrick Bell, “The Strange Career of Randall Kennedy,” *New Politics*, Vol. VII (Summer 1998), p. 66.

2. Glenn C. Loury, “Leadership Failure and the Loyalty Trap,” in *One by One from the Inside Out* (New York: The Free Press, 1995), p. 190.

3. Norman Podhoretz, “The Loyalty Trap,” *National Review* (January 25, 1999), p. 10 (ProQuest version).

4. Glenn C. Loury, *The Anatomy of Racial Inequality* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 17. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations come from this text.

5. In Loury’s own words: “I formalized the observation that family and community backgrounds can play an important role, alongside factors like individual ability and human capital investments, in determining individual achievement,” *Ibid.*, p. 102.

6. Adam Shatz, “About Face,” *New York Times Magazine* (January 20, 2002) pp. 5 and 8 (ProQuest Version).

Democratic Worker Cooperatives: **An Organizational Strategy Reconsidered for the 21st Century**

John W. Lawrence

The task for a modern industrial society is to achieve what is now technically realizable, namely, a society which is really based on free voluntary participation of people who produce and create, live their lives freely within institutions they control, and with limited hierarchical structures, possibly none at all.

Noam Chomsky, *Language and Politics*

DURING THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION in the United States, labor organizations such as the National Trades' Union, the National Labor Union and the Knights of Labor endorsed the development of democratic worker-controlled enterprise as a strategy for fighting "wage slavery" and developing a democratic economy. A stated goal of the Knights of Labor was "to establish cooperative institutions such as will tend to supersede the wage-system, by the introduction of a cooperative industrial system." However, the creation of democratic worker cooperatives (DWCs) in a capitalist context proved exceedingly difficult. Capitalists attacked union coops, sometimes violently, but most often denied investment capital and limited access to markets. Repeated coop failures, conservative labor leaders' acceptance of capitalist control over production and the Marxist-Leninist emphasis on state control as the means to power led labor to drop worker cooperative development as an organizing strategy.¹

At present, worker cooperatives are much more common in Europe than in the United States. In some areas of Europe, one response to chronic unemployment has

been worker coop development. There are more than 60,000 small- and medium-sized worker-controlled enterprises employing some 1.8 million workers. Moreover, some coop advocates point to several large worker coop networks such as the Mondragon in Spain and legacoop in Italy as models of a possible "third way" alternative for organizing the economy instead of corporate/state capitalism or state socialism. They argue that democratically organized work is a moral, sustainable and life-f fulfilling alternative to the capitalist monopoly of ownership and control of production.²

I RECENTLY VISITED a number of coops in Europe to gage the strategic potential of DWC development in the struggle for economic democracy in the United States in the 21st Century. I describe three of these coops herein, with the goal of answering the following questions:

- How can DWCs not only survive but also thrive and grow in a capitalist context?
- How does the capitalist context influence the structural organization, work processes and worker roles in these coops? What strategies can DWCs use to uphold democratic values in a capitalist context?
- Can DWCs make a valuable contribution to the current movement against global capital? What organizational characteristics maximize the value of worker coops to the movement?

A Textile Coop

FIRST, I VISITED A TEXTILE COOP outside Santiago de Compostela in the lush province of Galicia, Spain. Within the cooperative movement in Spain, Galicia is noted for the success of its textile cooperatives. Maria del Mar Peruai, the director of the

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regional cooperative development association, Union de Cooperativas de Trabajo Asociado, arranged the visit to one cooperative, Val de Barcalla.

Eight women own and operate Val de Barcalla. In addition, three women are wage-workers who have not yet decided to join the coop. The president of Val de Barcalla, Teresa Quintana Rial, stated that the enterprise is organized democratically and the women have regular meetings to discuss all aspects of business. There is a manager who was not present the day of my visit. She handles the day-to-day business operations of the Val de Barcalla such as negotiations with buyers and vendors. Production is organized in an assembly line. The customer provides precut fabric and each person in the line sews a specific stitch or facet such as a button or zipper to create the garment. The coop is paid piecework for each completed garment. Teresa stated that there is wage solidarity, earnings are split equally among the workers, and the manager makes "a little more money."

The women expressed pride in their coop. Although it takes more effort than working for someone else, they enjoy the control they have over their work. In contrast to a privately owned textile manufacturer I visited in the same region, Val de Barcalla appeared to have a more amiable work environment despite the fact that both organized production in similar assembly lines.

One great limitation of Val de Barcalla is that it has only one customer, Zara, a women's apparel retail chain that can be found throughout Western Europe. In fact, Zara is the sole contractor for most of the textile coops and private firms in Galicia. Thus, the coop's opportunity to participate in the creative aspects of making clothes, such as design, is nonexistent. Also, since the corporate buyer controls the most lucrative aspect of the clothing business, retail sales, the coop's potential income is limited. Thus, the women earn about the equivalent to minimum wage in the United States. In addition, the piece rate pay forces the coop to put great emphasis on time efficiency, which hinders the workers' ability to experiment with production organization.

Machinist Coop

IN OVIEDO, SPAIN, in the province of Astoria, I visited the machinist coop, Sociedad Cooperativa Ovetense de Mecanización y Maquinaria (COVEMYM). Holm-Detlev Kohler, a labor and cooperative researcher, arranged the visit. COVEMYM started 20 years ago when members bought the firm from their former employer as he was going out of business. Their business consists of making custom-designed machine parts for large corporate manufacturers. COVEMYM relies on the expertise and artistry of its coop members to out-compete high tech corporations (which make fabricated machine parts) in the customized parts market. Currently, there are a dozen worker-owners and four younger non-owner workers.

Historically, COVEMYM's struggle to survive shaped its internal organization. Agustín E. González Prado and Luis F. Alonso Ibañez, the current and former managers of COVEMYM stated that originally they had difficulties generating business because the corporations they tried to solicit were suspicious of COVEMYM. They assumed coops were unreliable and could not make a quality product. Also, COVEMYM's non-hierarchical structure made it difficult for the coop to interact with hierarchical corporations. Business transactions are often based on personal relationships between people at the top of the hierarchies who speak for the entire organization. Due to this external demand, a management structure that specialized in the business of the coop gradually evolved. Luis stated that this painful process met great internal resistance but was necessary for survival.

COVEMYM is now financially successful and is currently focusing on how it will survive the retirement of the original members. It is bringing on younger men as waged workers, and there is an internal debate about the matriculation of these younger people into the coop as members. The older members are trying to develop a plan to integrate the younger people into COVEMYM and permit access to some of the equity in the business for their retire-

ment pensions.

The Mondragon

LAST, I VISITED A COOP within the Mondragon Corporacion Cooperativa (MCC) in the Basque region of Spain. Many coop researchers regard the MCC as *the* model of cooperative network development and self-management. The MCC is an organization of more than 170 cooperatives, which employs over 40,000 people. This in itself is quite an accomplishment in a region with chronic high unemployment. The MCC started quietly as a manufacturer of small appliances in the wake of the devastating Spanish Civil War. The original coop of the MCC was quite successful and used its capital to finance other cooperative ventures. A critical step in the development of the MCC was the creation of a cooperative bank, the Caja Laboral Popular. The bank made funds and expertise available for new cooperative development and sparked the creation of the cooperative network.

While retaining cooperative rhetoric, the MCC has made many changes in the last 20 years making it an odd hybrid corporate conglomerate/cooperative network. Proponents claim that the MCC had to make these changes to survive greater competition in the European Union and the global market. In an interview with Baleren Bakaikoa, director of the cooperative research institution Gezki, Instituto de Derecho Cooperativo y Economia Social, he stated that although the MCC maintains a representative democratic process, *de facto* power in the MCC has become centralized and the MCC relies on technocratic business managers to manage its money and make major decisions. Many of the changes instituted by the MCC leadership violate coop principles. For example, 75 percent of capital of the Caja Laboral bank is now invested in noncooperative ventures. MCC cooperatives are entering into partnerships with transnational corporations and have opened non-cooperative factories in Third World nations. Also, the pay differential between managers and workers has steadily increased over the years.³

I was unable to arrange an interview with the leadership of the MCC but I did shop at an Eroski hypermercado. Eroski is

a retail grocery store, and it embodies many of the contradictions between MCC's corporate and coop values. Retail sales is the fastest growing sector of the MCC. There are now approximately 300 Eroski stores in Spain. They sell groceries and other consumer goods. Internally, Eroski stores looked like any other retail chain with no indication that they were organized as cooperatives. For example, there was no information distinguishing products made by cooperatives from others. There was no evidence of solidarity with other liberation movements. In fact, when I discussed the MCC with union and peace activists in Spain, not one person knew that Eroski or MCC were cooperatives. Eroski employees number almost 20,000 people but more than half are waged workers. It is difficult to imagine that the high number of non-coop members and the top-down organization inherent in chain stores would not limit democratic governance.

As pointed out by Dr. Bakaikoa, the accomplishments of the MCC are great. They are now the largest private employer in a region plagued by unemployment for 50 years. There are still differences between the MCC and typical corporations. The MCC maintains a democratic process, and the discrepancy between the wages of management and workers is much less in comparison to a typical U.S. corporation. In addition, there is evidence that management takes social goals into consideration. Unlike capitalist corporations in the region, for instance, the MCC did not lay off workers during the recession of the 1980s. However, in regard to social priorities, the MCC appeared to give higher priority to regional Basque capital development than to modeling and propagating worker control.

Lessons for Democratic Coop Activists

AS I ATTEMPTED TO HIGHLIGHT ABOVE, worker coops are realizing some of the norms of democratic work. In particular, all the coops I visited had a democratic decision making body, varying degrees of wage solidarity, an emphasis on job security, and higher morale than typical corporate firms do. On the other hand, to optimize the political and economic value of work coops to

an anti-capitalist movement, there are five important issues coop activist must address.

1. Creating a Niche Market for DWC Goods

BOTH THE TEXTILE AND MECHANIC COOPS described above are parts of production chains ultimately controlled by much larger corporations. The structure and working norms of the coops were shaped by their relationship with the corporations. Though both coops created “democratic islands” in the production chain, their ability to experiment with alternative working norms, control surplus value (profits), and spawn other coops is limited by their ultimate dependence on corporate customers.

To achieve independence from capitalists, DWCs must emphasize direct sales to individuals sympathetic to the cause. Humane democratic production is the distinguishing feature of the product. Thus, “marketing” can be a way to educate people about democratic work and challenge current marketing norms that divorce consumer goods from the workers who create them. The goal is to create a moral market following the example of the “fair trade” movement. A niche democratic market would encourage the spontaneous development of democratic coops and create “productive space” in which to start to build a democratic economy. The Internet can be used to help facilitate the democratic market.

The realistic possibility for creating a niche market for democratically produced goods makes DWC development a more viable and potent organizing strategy than in previous eras. The historical moment to start to build such a market may be now. There is already a multibillion-dollar conscientious consumer market for environmentally safe goods, fair trade products, and organic food. These consumers have decided that how a product is made is an important consideration when buying goods. Second, in the last five years an extensive activist network opposing corporate globalization and sweatshop manufacturing has burgeoned. These activists are not only potential consumers but also pro-

motors of DWC goods. DWCs can be a powerful rebuttal to “there is no alternative to capitalist production.”

2. Manager Control vs. Worker Control

ALTHOUGH THE COOPS I VISITED had democratic voting processes, they were manager-controlled, not worker-controlled. That is, a class structure existed that distinguished white-collar work from blue-collar work. Managers did most of the conceptual and organizational work and made most decisions. In addition, managers earned more money, and in the Mondragon’s case the wage differentials have grown over time. As explicitly described by the manager of COVEMYM, the capitalist context puts pressure on coops to adopt a managerial structure. In addition, de facto power in each coop was centered in management. Democratic oversight of management appeared particularly weak in the very large MCC.

The cooperative development literature often emphasizes that strong management with entrepreneurial skills is an essential survival tactic for coops. One coop I visited was on the brink of bankruptcy before hiring a new manager who instituted drastic changes including temporary layoffs. These changes saved the coop.

Coops are thus faced with the paradox of the necessity of accepting class-based divisions of labor in order to realize equitable democratic work. Resolution of this paradox is essential if cooperative development is to be an effective strategy for challenging the corporate work organization. Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, authors of *Looking Forward*, which presents a model of a decentralized democratic economy, assert, “It will not accomplish much to proclaim the virtues of equity and participation while establishing ‘progressive’ institutions that embody hierarchical divisions of labor.”

The class structure embodied in the hierarchical division of work evolves out of a long process of class socialization. Products of radically different educational systems, white and blue-collar workers are prepared for radically different types of work. By design, white-collar managers are given the knowledge and connections to ensure them

a monopoly on the process of organizing work.

Auto-socialization inside coops to counter class-based division of work cuts to the heart of developing a new society. In order to create coops that are really going to challenge the organizational norms of capitalist corporations, coop activists will have to make detailed plans on how to resist class roles. Strategies for countering hierarchy include pay solidarity based on effort (equal pay for number of hours worked), participatory decision-making, continual education on all aspects of the business, and the equitable distribution of intellectually stimulating tasks and drudgework.⁴

Developing strategies for auto-socializing for non-hierarchical working norms is a very important goal, which warrants extensive experimentation. According to Robin Hahnel, there are now several worker coops self-consciously experimenting with "participatory working norms" including South End Press, a progressive publisher in the Boston area, and a network of collectives in Winnipeg, Canada. This network includes the Mondragon Bookstore & Coffee House, a bookstore and vegetarian restaurant, Arbeiter Ring Publishing, publisher of more than 10 titles, The G-7 Welcoming Committee, a recording collective that has released more than a dozen CDs/Tapes/Vinyl recordings, and Natural Cycle, a bicycle repair and courier company. A vital step in making experiments generalizable will be providing forums for DWCs to communicate with each other. As a start, existing DWCs could publish their business plans and commentaries on how they have met the challenge of creating a non-hierarchical organizational process and structure.

Tacit acceptance of a hierarchical class structure with the assumption that the managerial class can be held accountable by representative democratic procedures could be the Achilles' heel of a cooperative movement. If a cooperative network were to get off the ground in the United States, the organizational structure and process would become more complex over time. Knowledge of the structure and process would accrue disproportionately to the

managerial class. The centralization of knowledge would lead to the centralization of decision-making. The decisions of such a cooperative network would likely reflect the interests of the managerial class.

3. Maintaining Democratic Norms in a Capitalist Society

IN THE CAPITALIST ECONOMY, a coop is forced to allocate its products via the market, which creates numerous challenges that threaten the cooperative ethos. A recurrent criticism of DWCs as a progressive organizing strategy is that the struggle to survive by making a profit will undermine the coop's value consciousness and solidarity with other workers. In the end, cooperative activists will develop a petit-bourgeois consciousness.

However, the problem of capitalism stratifying workers and undermining solidarity and egalitarianism is not unique to cooperatives. Relatively highly paid suburban transnational corporate workers in First World countries have little in common with service workers making minimum wage, no less 15-year-old girls working in a maquiladora. Until recently, traditional industrial unions in the United States have showed little interest in organizing low-paid service workers. Like unions, to be a value to a progressive movement DWCs will have to self-consciously refuse to compromise on core values and make strategic choices to limit the influence of the capitalist economy. For example, the distribution of cooperative goods through capitalist companies exposes the coop to a high level of influence by capitalist norms. A DWC and the movement would be better off if the coop marketed and distributed goods through joint ventures with other progressive organizations. In the end, DWCs will have to develop within a larger movement with a participatory democratic ethos.

4. An Organic Synergistic Relationship with Other Groups in the Anti-Capitalist Movement

OF THE COOPS I VISITED, there were few coop members involved in other types of activism, and institutional connections to labor and activist organizations were non-exis-

tent. In the past, many coops have chosen to be “neutral” on political and social issues. Given their history, this policy has been a survival tactic. However, if the DWCs market their products as a moral alternative to capitalist production it will be impossible to be neutral. Moreover, cooperatives will need political support to thrive. For example, the extensive cooperative development in the Emilia-Romagna region of Italy developed while the Democratic Party of Left (formally the Communist Party) dominated local politics.⁵

The choice between being a coop activist and grassroots or union activist is a false dichotomy. Coop activism can complement other types of activism. It is easy to imagine DWCs being a sanctuary for activists. How many activists limit or stop their activism because surviving in capitalist job market is so time-consuming and spiritually draining? The ways DWCs could work with other grassroots organizations seems endless.

5. Access to Capital and DWC Formation

A GREAT BARRIER to cooperative development and experimentation is lack of capital. The MCC overcame this problem through the pooling of “profits” from various cooperatives into a bank, which in turn capitalized new coop ventures. A limitation to this strategy is that conventional capitalist financial practices encourage centralization of decision-making regarding investments into the hands of lawyers and bank managers. We need participatory norms for managing capital to develop truly democratic cooperative networks. Suggestions on how to do so from readers are welcomed.

In the meantime, cooperative activists need to focus on developing DWCs in industries with low entry costs and products that can be sold directly to conscientious consumers. For example, currently there is an undeveloped niche market for democratically produced clothing on an international scale. Given the fair trade, sweatshop, and anti-globalization movements, millions of people are aware of the horrendous working conditions in the apparel industry. People want a moral alternative to sweatshop clothes. In addition, there are a

number of structural characteristics of the apparel industry that optimize the possibility of success of an apparel cooperative. These include relatively low entry costs, the possibility of selling directly to conscientious consumers, and a competitive rather than an oligopolistic market. Furthermore, a new labor organizing strategy is desperately needed in the apparel industry. Transnational corporate retailers’ ability to move manufacturing contracts from one country to another, almost on a whim, has undermined the traditional labor-organizing strategy of creating union shops in the United States. *The Apparel Strategist*, an industry newsletter, stated that employment in the apparel and textile industries in the United States has “plunged” more than 50 percent in the last 25 years. The newsletter predicts that apparel and textile manufacturing will be “virtually nonexistent” in the United States in the next 50 to 100 years.⁶

Coincidentally, just before this article went to press a new “worker-owned and unionized garment factory” opened its doors. The cooperative, TeamX, appears to be implementing many of the ideas outlined above.⁷ TeamX manufactures and sells SweatX Clothes with a Conscience™. The clothing is casual ware primarily marketed to college students looking for alternatives to sweatshop clothing. “Business visionaries at Hot Fudge Social Venture Fund including Ben Cohen and other Directors at Ben and Jerry’s Ice Cream” founded the cooperative. TeamX boasts a state-of-the-art manufacturing plant in Los Angeles. TeamX is not only a democratic cooperative based on the Mondragon model but also a union shop organized by the Union of Needletrades, Industrial, and Textile Employees (UNITE). At their website, TeamX describes working closely with sweatshop activists. In addition, a primary goal of their marketing is to educate consumers about sweatshops. Perhaps, TeamX is the harbinger of worker cooperative and global justice activism synergy.

Conclusion

THE CHALLENGE FOR COOP ACTIVISTS is to create cooperatives that not only provide a de-

cent living standard for their members and survive in a capitalist economy but also realize egalitarian and participatory values, serve as a catalyst for the development of cooperative networks, and link with and galvanize a broader progressive movement. The question whether DWC development can achieve these goals is as yet unresolved. In the context of the currently developing global anti-capitalist movement, experimentation is warranted. The pedagogic value of real-life examples of participatory workplaces could be enormous especially if they create a niche market for democratically produced goods. Only real life experiments will make the future realization of nonhierarchical democratic values a possibility.⁸

NOTES

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2. For examples of this literature from various perspectives see Albert, M. & Hahnel, R. (1991). *Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century*. Boston, MA: South End Press; Bowman, E. A. & Stone, B. (1993). *Worker Ownership on the Mondragon Model: Prospects for Global Workplace Democracy*. [article on-line] [http://](http://workersnet.org/bowman_stone_monograph.htm)

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3. Huet, T. (1998). New from Mondragon. [article on-line] <http://www.geonewsletter.org/huet.htm>

4. For a more detailed description of egalitarian work norms refer to the works of Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel.

5. Fitch, R. (May 13, 1996). The cooperative economics of Italy's Emilia-Romagna holds a lesson for the U.S. *The Nation*, 18-21.

6. Black, P. (Oct. 1999). *Focal Point. The Apparel Strategist*, 1.

7. <http://www.sweatx.net>

8. An excellent resource on coop development is the: *Grassroots Economic Organizing (GEO) Newsletter* <http://www.geonewsletter.org> RR1 Box 124A Stillwater, PA 17878.

Party Building, Movement Building And a Critique of the U.S. Greens

Howard Ryan

The Democratic Party has been the graveyard of every democratic social movement for more than a century.

GPUSA National Green Program Draft¹

THE ELECTORAL QUESTION that perennially divides the American left — shall we support the less evil of the two major parties, or shall we support a progressive (if marginal) third-party alternative — took on new intensity in the 2000 presidential race owing to the Green Party candidacy of Ralph Nader. In the election's aftermath, the apparent role of the Nader campaign in tipping the election from Democrat Al Gore to Republican George W. Bush fueled accusation and counter-accusation in left and progressive quarters. The question will no doubt be revisited in the 2002 elections and beyond. In this essay, through a critique of the U.S. Greens and "third-party left," I stake my position in the continuing left debate. At the same time, I take the debate to theoretical and strategic ground that has heretofore been neglected. If my contribution does no more than "move the discussion forward," then my purposes will be happily met.

Establishing an independent alternative to the corporate-dominated parties is a legitimate long-term goal for the U.S. left. But the pursuit of electoral independence has become a starting, middle, and end point for many Greens and third-party activists. The Democratic Party is seen as the pivotal historical barrier to advancement of the progressive agenda. The imperative to "break from the Democrats" has assumed an urgency that overshadows, and comes into

conflict with, other left objectives — notably the building of mass movements outside the electoral arena.

This essay argues that genuine political independence can only be achieved through a mass movement base; that the Green prioritization of party building over movement building reflects a model of social change based on "change from above"; that the Nader presidential bids and similar Green campaigns at the state level have been sectarian projects that alienate potential movement allies; and that, by making a break from the Democrats their strategic paradigm, Green thinkers misapprehend the problems facing U.S. movements today and historically. I also propose that leftists of all persuasions must consistently frame our electoral positions within a wider strategy of social change from below.

Defining the Problem

FOR HOWIE HAWKINS, longtime Green leader and theorist, what ails the left is its relationship to the Democrats: American labor since the 1930s, and the new social movements since the 1960s, have "muffled their independent voice and power by entering the Democratic Party."² Hawkins proposes a Green organizing strategy to correct this historic error:

The challenge for the Greens is to go underneath the liberal leadership to the base of these [movement] organizations and win the ranks over to independent politics. The Greens will need to join the base in issue-oriented campaigns that build relationships, trust, and the sense that the Greens are fighting on their side. On that foundation, Greens can make the case that more will be gained on these issues from an independent challenge to both corporate parties than from another round of generic corporate govern-

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ment wrapped in the Democratic instead of the Republican brand label.³

Were Hawkins' diagnosis accurate, then his prescribed solution — for Greens to enter the movements and seek to win the ranks over to independent politics — might hold merit. But his diagnosis is skewed and takes the wrong starting point. We cannot assess the progressive movements by regarding only their electoral positions or their relationship to the Democrats, or by separating electoral politics from other dynamics and issues within the movements.

The central problem of the American left, today and historically, is the prevalence of a top-down model of social change. The labor movement, our largest progressive constituency, has always been controlled at the top, with a few democratic unions the historical exceptions. Even when labor enjoyed its peak of militancy and rank-and-file participation — during the dramatic sitdown strikes of 1936-37 which unionized major industries under the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) — John L. Lewis and other top leaders ruled with an iron hand immediately after the companies recognized the new unions. Jeremy Brecher in *Strike!* tells of how General Motors workers, following their victorious sitdown at Flint, Michigan, continued relying on sitdown tactics in GM plants during spring 1937. "Every time a dispute came up the fellows would have a tendency to sit down and just stop working," one worker recalled. Top union leaders responded with a vigorous campaign to clamp down on strikes that were not authorized by international officers. Lewis declared, "A CIO contract is adequate protection against sit-downs, lie-downs, or any other kind of strike."⁴ With the union joining the employer in pressuring sitdowners back to work, the rank and file were effectively discouraged from taking initiative on the shop floor.

The black movement has similarly suffered containment by moderate top leaders. One of the defining moments of the black civil rights movement was the August 1963 march on Washington, in which Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech to a crowd of 250,000. Manning Marable in *Black American Politics* describes how march organizers, at the urg-

ing of NAACP president Roy Wilkins, ruled out civil disobedience or other militant tactics and worked to detooth sharp criticisms of the Kennedy administration. John Lewis, the militant chairman of SNCC (Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee), was forced to rewrite his speech, removing his hottest remarks, before the march committee would allow him to the podium. The Kennedy administration was consulted at every stage of march planning. Even with these limitations, the 1963 march was a huge success, accelerating passage of landmark civil rights legislation at national and state levels. But the march also exemplified the tendency of black leadership to contain mass movements while relying on friendly relations with people in power.⁵ The black movement's demise in the 1970s coincided with the wide entry of black leaders into elected office, and elections came to replace mobilization as the dominant political activity in the black community.

The top-down orientation of labor, black, and other movements includes a problematic reliance on the Democratic Party. Yet, such reliance reflects a more fundamental pattern in which movement leaders seek change by appealing to those above rather than empowering those below. The pattern exists not as a result of endorsing Democrats, but because movement top leaders who enjoy six-figure incomes and control over much larger resources fear mobilizing the ranks and creating upstart new leaders who would vie for voice and power in the organization. Only a handful of today's movement organizations — among them, some of the more mobilization-oriented unions — recognize the difference between endorsing Democrats and relying upon them. Reform efforts *within* the movements will be essential to effectuating such distinctions and to building movements that rely on mobilization and rank-and-file empowerment.

Neither a Nader presidential bid, nor a Green party-building program, nor a campaign of third-party advocacy inside the movements address the need to transform labor, civil rights, women, gay, environmental, and other constituencies to a bottom-up orientation. Rather, the top-down politics and organizational models within the movements must be challenged on their own terms. Turn-

ing the movements in a proper direction, and helping them achieve their mass potentials, will require a long-term commitment to doing work that is primarily *non-electoral* in nature. Moreover, as I will later discuss, the Green program for independent electoral politics lacks strategic timing and is frequently out of synch with the immediate legislative needs of the movements. Thus, in more ways than one, the priority question that widely plagues the Greens — party building versus movement building — comes to the fore. My proposal is for the Greens and the U.S. left to make movement building — of a bottom-up kind — our focus and priority. Our electoral choices must be shaped according to the needs of the movements that we are building.

A Model for Change From Below

THE ESSENCE OF “CHANGE FROM ABOVE,” as we define it here, is its reliance on the activity of top leaders and their good relations with people in power. “Change from below,” on the other hand, relies on mass participation and mass empowerment in order to alter fundamental relations between rulers and ruled. A typical feature of “change from above” is its *electoralism* — i.e., an overreliance on the electoral arena. Electoralists may rally for either a mainstream candidate or a progressive third-party candidate, but the modality is the same: reliance on the ballot box as the key avenue for social change. My proposed change-from-below model combines electoral and non-electoral work, but with an emphasis and foundation in the non-electoral movements.

In a from-below framework, *movement activity holds strategic primacy over electoral activity*. (Movement activity is defined here as the pursuit of demands by exerting organized pressure upon bosses or elected officials; electoral activity, as the pursuit of demands by electing people into office. “Strategic primacy” means that movement activity generally precedes, and provides the foundation for, electoral activity.) For a left that seeks a society characterized by democratic accountability, there are many reasons for regarding movement work as primary:

- An organization whose primary purpose is pursuing demands through group action is better equipped to keep politicians — be

they mainstream or third-party — accountable, than is an organization geared primarily to electing politicians. Movement activity teaches the “streetfighting” skills needed to confront and challenge those in power.

- Because of its emphasis on group mobilization, movement activity is more likely to promote collective forms of consciousness conducive to deeper social change in the long term; in the electoral arena, by contrast, people exercise their power more individually and privately in the polling booth.

- Because movement work engages people in direct confrontation with authority, it is more likely to promote working-class self-esteem and political self-reliance, whereas electoral work, even in a progressive context, tends to reinforce a certain passivity, a belief that the leaders will do it for us.

- Issue-based movements are more likely than electoral organizations to develop the mass base of activists essential for left success in the electoral arena.

The foregoing is not to minimize the importance of electoral activity within a movement-based framework. Electoral activity can reap legislative gains for the movements or, at its progressive best, can unite the diversity of movements behind a shared platform. But I want to suggest why the building of movements must be considered foundational. Instructive along these lines is the performance of left parties in Europe, such as the British Labour Party or the French Socialist Party.⁶ Unchecked by mass movements, the tendency of left parties is to fall under control by political careerists who accommodate to the capitalist status quo. The German Greens have moved in a similar direction as the broad movements that launched the world's first Green party in the early 1980s have receded.⁷

Building the movements per se, however, is not enough, for we have seen how the movements widely embrace top-down models, minimize mobilization, and turn toward electoralism. We need standards for building movements from below, and we need to organize and fight for these standards within the movements. To construct a set of movement standards, we need first an end goal, a vision for the movements. For purposes here, our end goal will be the Green Party Platform 2000, posted at

www.gp.org. The 55-page platform sets forth a fine progressive vision for a better society based on participatory democracy, social justice, and an economy committed to meeting human needs and sustaining the planet. One might quibble over various details in the platform, but its essence is comparable to other visionary documents of the left. Hence, our overriding standard for a movement from below will be: *Does the movement build in the direction of social transformation à la the Green Party Platform 2000?*

Our movements will more often take tiny steps than giant strides in the road to transformation. Nevertheless, even with tiny steps, we can shape organizing models that are conducive to long-run deeper change; they will be the same models that maximize our power in the short term as well. In the

table below, the items in the left column have greater value in moving us toward the Green vision, while those in the right column have lesser value. We identify the left column with social change from below, and the right column with social change from above.

We are not saying with these guidelines, of course, that movements should never write letters or circulate petitions or recruit members though the internet. But the quiet methods alone have limited capacity to inspire political engagement, develop new leaders, or move forward a progressive agenda. It is unfortunate that today's progressive organizations — labor, women, gay, civil rights, environment, etc. — are heavily characterized by the features in the right column and gear to strategies for change from above.

Change From Below: Standards Within Movement Work

ACTIVITIES WITH HIGHER VALUE	ACTIVITIES WITH LOWER VALUE
reliance on the power of mass numbers and mass participation	reliance on movement leaders' relationships with people in power
reliance on actions carried out collectively, with participants <i>physically</i> and <i>publicly</i> acting together (rallies, marches, sit-ins, strikes, en masse lobbying)	reliance on actions carried out individually and privately (writing to legislators, signing petitions, lobbying by professional lobbyists)
membership recruitment relies on one-to-one, face-to-face contact (i.e., building personal relationships)	membership recruitment relies on mass mailings or internet
movement decisions made democratically	movement decisions made autocratically
rank and file encouraged to accept increasing responsibilities	rank and file expected to fill passive roles
commitment to teaching leadership skills	control by entrenched leaders, no leadership development program
commitment to teaching organizing skills	higher-skill tasks handled exclusively by staff or core activists; non-core activists limited to lower-skill tasks
commitment to teaching political analysis	analyses and strategies are the domain of staff or core activists
strong commitment to diversity (awareness and inclusion across race, gender, class, sexual orientation, etc.)	weak commitment to diversity
broad social critique encouraged	broad social critique discouraged in favor of narrow "common denominator," i.e., that which most people already agree upon
alliance building; reaching across organizations, issues, movements	reliance on single-issue organizing

There are counter-processes at work, however. The AFL-CIO experienced a sea change in 1995, when a new slate of top officers headed by federation president John Sweeney greatly expanded labor's commitment to organizing the unorganized and political rejuvenation. The new organizing under Sweeney has been carried out in a traditional manner with close control from the top. Nevertheless, the turn toward organizing opens many opportunities for from-below initiatives within the labor movement.⁸ Jeff Crosby, president of a Massachusetts electrical workers' union (IUE-CWA Local 201), gives a flavor for both the potentials and problems. The AFL-CIO is reassigning scores of staff to become "issues coordinators" in key congressional districts, as part of a program leading up to the 2002 congressional elections. Crosby comments:

Devoting scores of staff and millions of dollars to the "issues coordinators" will threaten the AFL-CIO's more grassroots and long-range projects — projects that are the Federation's best contributions to the future of the movement. The Union cities program to rebuild the central labor councils, the Voice at Work campaign, the "2000 in 2000" effort to elect union members to local office, Labor in the Pulpit, and the Street Heat mobilization are all at risk.⁹

In some of the major unions, rank-and-file activists have organized reform caucuses both to fight for internal democracy and to breathe into the unions a culture of activism and mobilization. The oldest and largest of these is the 10,000-member Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which since 1976 has waged a democracy battle inside the 1.4 million-member Teamsters. In 1989, TDU was helped by the U.S. Justice Department, which forced the union to adopt a package of anti-corruption measures. The package included a requirement, recommended by TDU, that elections be held for top officers based on direct vote of the members, rather than the traditional method of electing officers by delegates at national conventions. In the first such election, in 1991, TDU-backed candidate Ron Carey was elected general president. Carey proceeded to organize vigorous contract campaigns based on rank-and-file involvement, while taking measures to mitigate the power of

Teamsters old-guard officials at the regional and local levels. The new model culminated in the country's biggest labor action of the 1990s, a dramatic and successful strike of 185,000 Teamsters at United Parcel Service (UPS) in 1997.¹⁰ That same year, however, the union's democracy movement took a major blow when Carey was forced out of office for his alleged collusion in illegal campaign contributions during his 1996 reelection. The union subsequently returned to many of its traditional ways under the leadership of Jimmy Hoffa, Jr. There was no post-strike follow-up organizing at UPS (other than that carried out by TDU committees, where they existed) to enforce the new contract and wage other campaigns to improve conditions on the job. Hoffa has demobilized and squelched rank-and-file initiative, while seeking to end the union's government-supervised status under the Justice Department. TDU, meanwhile, organizes against Hoffa and continues the democracy battle.

The UPS strike was a fruit of TDU's two decades of union democracy work. Mobilization capacity inside the Teamsters, and in hundreds of other labor and movement organizations, is integrally linked to the level of internal democracy. This does not mean that the rank and file of our movements are always willing and ready to hit the streets or take leadership and committee responsibilities when the horn is sounded. It does mean that a democratic organization is more likely to be committed to the needs of the members, and therefore to carry out the kinds of internal organizing that laid the basis for success at UPS.

The years of focus required for a TDU-type reform project within established organizations — or, alternatively, to build a new movement along from-below lines — must be carefully noted by Green activists in weighing their political commitments. Hawkins, for example, commendably advises Greens to enter the movements to undertake from-below initiatives:

The possibilities for action are enormous because the Lib-Lob [liberal lobby] leadership is more focused on their elite access to the power structure than on mass action that builds popular power. Greens should forget about the Gloria Steinems [i.e., main-

stream feminist leaders] and Carl Popes [mainstream environmental leaders] and focus on building a united front from below. We should work with the grassroots leadership of the progressive movements, meeting with them, locality by locality, to develop issue-driven campaigns.¹¹

But Hawkins does not discuss how such a turn toward the movements might impact Green party-building work, which is also a top priority for Hawkins. Activists are in relatively short supply in today's movement-quiet period. If Green activists and resources are stretched now to meet the demands of the various local/state/national Green electoral campaigns (along with all the infrastructural demands in developing a young party), is it realistic to expect those same activists to simultaneously build "a united front from below" within the non-electoral movements? Like many Greens, Hawkins has big eyes and overestimates what is possible within a set of circumstances. Here are more realistic options given current political conditions:

1. Set aside party building until a mass movement base better justifies a third-party departure, and focus instead on building movements from the bottom up.
2. Fuse third-party work and movement work with focus on the local level. This is a realistic option in small cities, especially where a strong progressive base already exists — e.g., university towns such as Madison, Wisconsin; Ann Arbor, Michigan; Berkeley and Santa Cruz, California.
3. Continue the existing Green practice of launching electoral campaigns at all levels, alienating other left constituencies who endorse Democrats, and leaving the movement building for those other left constituencies to handle.

I would urge the Greens toward options #1 or #2. Option #3, party building in the absence of a movement base, would be inconsistent with a strategy of social change from below.

Green Party and Electoral Strategy

UNDER PREVAILING THEORY, the path to the Green vision lies primarily through building the Green Party or similar third-party alternatives. While Green chapters and af-

filiates do work in non-electoral issue campaigns to varied degree, a review of Green websites nationally shows electoral work as the overriding priority — as one would expect for a political party. The concept is to run candidates who, even where their prospects for winning are marginal, can use the election as a public forum for left social critique, exposing the limitations of politics-as-usual under the duopoly of the corporate parties. Such candidacies serve to attract people to the Greens, promoting the party's growth for the long term. Charismatic candidates such as Nader can also give inspiration to the issue-based movements. The Greens, in turn, can recruit party activists from those same movements, with party and movement growing together in synergy.

The theoretical scenario faces several problems. First, since the majority of today's movement activists work within a milieu that endorses Democrats, Green campaigns alienate many movement activists by working against their electoral goals. The Nader 2000 campaign, with its spoiler effect on Gore's presidential bid, provoked movement resentment more so than any prior Green campaign, but many other state and local Green candidacies have been similarly divisive. The bulk of movement activists are focused on the immediate needs of their organizations. Even while recognizing the limitations of the major parties, they still see continuing differences between Democrats and Republicans. Since Green candidacies threaten Democrats by splitting the liberal vote, they operate not only against the Democrats but also against the immediate issue-based needs of the movements. Greens may argue that the movements are better off in the long term by rejecting the lesser of two evils and supporting an independent left alternative. But the Greens have little alternative to offer at this point, their party's viability lying somewhere in the vague far future. Meanwhile, the major progressive organizations contribute members' dues money and organize volunteers to support Democrats. The Green strategy of running oppositional candidates is not a productive way to build alliances with these constituencies or to make a persuasive case for long-term political independence.

The more sophisticated Greens and

third-party adA strategy for change from below must takevocate do recognize differences between the major parties, and the greater dangers of a far-right Republican administration. As Ellen Willis explains, however, we must be willing to take short-term risks to achieve long-term greater gains:

The two parties are not the same — one is a center-right party, the other a far-right party. And like [Todd] Gitlin and [Sean] Wilentz, I'd rather live under the center-right party....Why then was I willing to risk a Bush victory? Why, for instance, risk the appointment of Supreme Court justices who might overturn *Roe v. Wade*, among other things?

Willis answers that, without taking such risks, we cannot escape the current trap in which both major parties drift perpetually to the right and things only get worse — faster under the Republicans, slower under the Democrats, but worse in either case. Nader and the Greens widen public debate and open the door to political alternatives.¹²

Willis is correct in a sense: breaking from the Democrats to establish an independent progressive party *will* require risks, including the risk of Republican victories. But one question we must ask is, *When shall the risks be taken?* Shall we risk a third party when the movements are weak, ill equipped to fend against a far-right administration, and with little mobilized capacity to support a third party's success? Or shall we launch our party when the movements are strong? I would hold that the latter circumstance, but not the former, would justify the risks. Third partyists, however, neglect to ask the question, do not assess the state of the movements or engage other strategic criteria before endorsing the risks.

Another question we must ask is, *Who decides when the risks are taken?* If labor, women, gays, people of color, environmentalists, seniors, and other organized constituencies face increased risks under a Republican administration, should not these constituencies be included in a decision to launch a third-party campaign that places them at risk? The methodology of the Greens raises questions not only about how to build left alliances, but about the meaning of democracy within a left community.

The Green vision is based on the concept that people should have a voice in decisions that affect their lives. Because of the potentially wide impact of Green electoral campaigns, it is incumbent upon the Greens to establish a broad base of support *before* launching such campaigns.

A further problem in Green theory involves the relationship of party building to movement building: Greens and other third partyists widely overestimate the contribution of third-party campaigns to building the movements. Michael Albert of *Z Magazine* theorized prior to the 2000 election that “the most important impact of the Nader campaign will be changing the political climate in the country by energizing the left....” Even if Nader ends up triggering a Bush victory, Albert reasoned, this will be counteracted by our increased movement clout:

Take the cases most often bandied about: Supreme Court Justices, taxes, police violence, abortion, and interventionism. The issue isn't can we plausibly predict that Bush's preferred personal agenda for each of these policy areas would be sufficiently worse than Gore's to adversely impact many suffering people. Of course it would. The issue is, if lots of people throughout the country support and vote for Nader, thereby awakening not only hope but also organizational clout and commitment, will either Gore or Bush be as able as otherwise to pursue their full agendas on these issues?¹³

There are certainly contexts in which a left party, riding the waves of mass protest, can further energize the movements and give them political cohesion and direction. One of the most dramatic examples of such is the Brazilian Workers Party, which was formed in 1980, initially as an outgrowth of a militant labor movement spearheaded by metal workers in São Paulo, Brazil. Through the eighties, the Workers Party was built into a powerful national voice, driven by a series of popular movements for whom it became the political/electoral expression. These included a pro-democracy movement fighting to break the political power of the Brazilian military; Catholic Church-inspired movements for agrarian and urban reform; and an upsurge of strikes and mobilizations against an austerity program imposed by the International Monetary

Fund. The Workers Party has since won government power in São Paulo and other cities, and runs the state government of Rio Grande. At the same time, the fortunes of the Workers Party — including its commitment to left principles — depend on the level of independent movement activity, which has declined in recent years.¹⁴

The distinction between the Workers Party's context and ours is obvious. Under Albert's theory, the Nader campaign would be expected to jumpstart the left but without benefit of an already mobilized popular base like that which made the Workers Party a viable project. Moreover, Nader would have to energize the left without participation of the major left constituencies, who were widely hostile to the Nader campaign. This was a very tall order.

The campaign did have some positive results, primarily in terms of building the Green Party but also, within that, of developing thousands more activists who identify with a broad progressive agenda represented by the Green platform and who will likely apply their new commitments in issue campaigns as well as party building. Campus Greens chapters were established at more than a hundred college campuses during or after the campaign. New state affiliates and city chapters were formed, while existing ones were strengthened. The 2000 campaign organized a series of giant fundraising rallies with Nader at the podium. Perhaps as many as 200,000 people in total attended these, to hear in person a thoroughgoing social critique by one of today's most articulate left intellectuals. No doubt many attendees were moved into activism of all kinds, inspired by the Nader/Green vision.

On the other hand, the imagined role of the Nader campaign in catalyzing and broadening the anti-globalization movement, an outcome predicted by a number of left observers, did not materialize. The organized constituencies in which the Greens lacked a base — labor, blacks, Latinos, women, gays — saw little, if any, derivative boost from the Nader campaign that would help them battle increased attacks under the Bush administration.

Movements that are weak, which describes virtually all the movements in the

U.S. today, require every legislative advantage and every progressive victory that can be had under the circumstances. While neither of the two corporate parties deserve our trust or reliance, and both have drifted to the right in recent decades, it is still the case that Republican politicians are more hostile than their Democratic counterparts to the progressive movements and the issues they represent. The degree of party difference is often greater at the state or local level than at the national level, though even the Gore-Bush contest reflected important differences on such issues as reproductive rights, gay-lesbian rights, union rights, school vouchers, and tax policy. In my own recent experience as a staff organizer for a public employee union in California, I observed that Democratic state legislators were consistently more accessible than Republicans when we sought support in our contract campaigns, fights against privatization, labor law reform, as well as with broader state issues such as immigrant rights, affirmative action, and school funding. Third-party advocates often neglect or downplay such differences, and they consequently underestimate what is at stake for the movements in the major-party races.

A strategy for change from below must look for the intersect between our long-term goals (i.e., the Green Party Platform 2000) and the immediate needs of the movements. We immerse ourselves within the struggle for immediate needs, guiding the movements along lines of the from-below organizing model, hoping that the immediate victories will inspire greater confidence and enable wider goals. Our electoral stance should not, as the Green Party does, counterpoise long-term goals against immediate needs, sacrificing the short term for the long term, but rather should be consistent with our support for the immediate struggles. In most instances, a Democratic lesser-evil vote is more relevant to the movements' immediate needs than is a vote for a marginal third party. At the same time, a bottom-up strategy must challenge the widespread movement *reliance* on the Democrats, must push for mobilizing strategies over electoralist ones, and must work within the movements for internal democratic reform against elite leadership. Only through such

groundwork can we lay a genuine basis for independent left parties.

Third Parties and Political Responsibility

AN HISTORICAL ISSUE regarding the Nader 2000 campaign deserves mention here. The prevailing Green interpretation of the election results reflects a rather disconcerting denial of political responsibility: the Greens and other third-party leftists widely deny that Nader helped elect Bush. “Smash the Nader Backlash!” fumed an indignant Marc Cooper in a *Mother Jones* article published during the ballot-counting battle in Florida.

The liberals and lefties bashing Nader for (apparently) costing Gore the election are just wrong, not to mention counterproductive. . . . A week after this bizarre election, I am blue in the face from arguing that Al Gore's predicament is exclusively his own fault.¹⁵

Contrary to Cooper's assertion, Nader did indeed make a difference in the Bush-Gore contest, especially in the crucial Florida race where just 193 votes separated the major candidates in the final Supreme Court-stamped tally. Nader drew 97,000 Florida votes. Exit polls suggest that, had Nader not been on the ballot, Gore would have drawn about twice as many votes as Bush among the Nader voters.¹⁶ Without the Nader campaign, Gore would have taken Florida and hence the election. Naderites, however, point out that many larger factors bore upon the election results — Gore's spinelessness, fake populism, and overall weak campaign; Florida's disenfranchisement of thousands of black voters, who were wrongly purged from voter registration lists; a host of other Florida election irregularities, capped by the U.S. Supreme Court decision stopping the ballot recounts. “In the hierarchy of reasons explaining Gore's ‘defeat,’ Nader ranks quite low,” concludes Patrick Barrett.¹⁷

It is certainly true that Gore's dismal campaign contributed much more to his own loss than did Nader, and Gore staff were dishonest in diverting blame elsewhere. At the same time, this does not forestall the impact of the Nader campaign. What makes the Nader impact critical, from a *left* standpoint, is that it represents *our* contribution

to the election. As activists attempting to make a difference in the world, we must be concerned, first and foremost, with what we do. What Gore did, or what the Supreme Court did, were “objective factors” beyond our immediate control. What lay under our control and influence was the Nader campaign — for Greens, the decision to run Nader; for leftists outside the Greens, the decision to support Nader. We cannot think strategically or critically if we cannot see, or accept responsibility for, the consequences of our political actions.

Ellen Willis and Patrick Barrett both apply an odd logic in avoiding Nader/Green responsibility. Each argues for taking of risks via the Nader campaign. But when those risks contribute to a far-right electoral win, each minimizes the role of the Nader campaign — essentially, denying that a real risk was taken. Nader shouldn't be singled out as “*the culprit*,” says Willis. “In an election so freakily close, one can second-guess all sorts of decisions that led to small shifts in voting.”¹⁸

Mainstream-party campaigns will *always* fall short in one fashion or another — in their platforms, their strategies, their candidates' personalities. Consequently, third parties that play a spoiler role, triggering the win of greater-evil candidates, will always have explanations available to deny the third party's responsibility. At what point will Cooper, Willis, Barrett, Nader, the Greens, and other third partyists acknowledge political responsibility? Again, this is not to oppose our taking of risks through third parties. My concern is with the strategic timing of risks, and how such decisions are made within a left community.

Conclusion

MANY LEFTISTS DO SEE the movements as primary, and may hold no illusions about what is accomplished in Green electoral campaigns, but nonetheless supported Nader because he spoke our truth and spoke it well. As Willis writes:

I don't see electoral politics as the only, or even the primary, arena for movement-building. But in the absence of forceful opposition to the repressively narrow boundaries of what passes for mainstream campaign “debate,” those boundaries are seen

as defining politics itself: the idea that nothing is possible beyond the most trivial gestures toward dealing with our social problems becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Someone has to get up and loudly, publicly insist that declarations of the end of history are premature, and this time the one with the megaphone was Ralph Nader.¹⁹

I confess that I too am inspired when I hear a national figure publicly articulate my convictions, breaking the silence imposed by the Democrats and Republicans. I know that the lesser-evil road that I propose will limit the left's ability, in the short term, to use the electoral arena as a platform for promoting a left vision. We can still forward a critique — i.e., “vote Democrat without illusions” — but such has not the same impact as an oppositional candidacy.

On the other hand, the megaphone approach that Willis supports is rather like a gesture. A premature third-party campaign does not organize the movements needed to move us toward our vision, while it can interfere with left alliance building. The U.S. left needs to resist our impulse for the quick fix. While movement building is admittedly a slow grind, a from-below orientation — based on internal democracy, mobilization, non-reliance on the Democrats, leadership development, political analysis — can speed it along. When we have done our movement work well, then we can bring our visions to the electoral arena in a more substantial and effective way.

NOTES

1. “GPUSA National Green Program Draft,” www.greenparty.org/program.html.

2. Howie Hawkins, “Post-Election Organizing: Winning Over Grassroots Progressives,” *Synthesis/Regeneration* 24 (winter 2001); www.greens.org/s-r/24/24-01.html.

3. Howie Hawkins, “Blame the Democrats, Not the Greens,” *New Politics* 8:3 New Series, Whole No. 31 (Summer 2001); www.wpunj.edu/newpol/issue31/hawkin31.htm.

4. Quotes from Jeremy Brecher, *Strike!* (San Francisco: Straight Arrow Books, 1972) p. 203, 205.

5. Manning Marable, *Black American Politics: From the Washington Marches to Jesse Jackson* (London: Verso: 1985) p. 90-97.

6. See Ian Birchall, *Bailing out the System: Reformist Socialism in Western Europe 1944-1985* (London: Bookmarks, 1986), as well as the various critiques

of the Tony Blair government available from Bookmarks at www.bookmarks.uk.com.

7. See Margit Mayer and John Ely, eds., *The German Greens: Paradox Between Movement and Party* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1998); and Paul Hockenes, “Letter from Berlin,” *The Nation* (October 29, 2001): 20-22.

8. The labor movement's contradictory trends and possibilities are helpfully explored in Ray M. Tillman and Michael S. Cummings, eds., *The Transformation of U.S. Unions: Voices, Visions, and Strategies from the Grassroots* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999).

9. Jeff Crosby, “The AFL-CIO: Short-Term Fix, or Long-Term, Grassroots Strategy?” *Labor Notes* (Sep 2001): 11; www.labornotes.org/archives/2001/0901/0901vp.html.

10. *Rank and File Power at UPS: Fighting for a Strong Union and Respect on the Job* (Detroit, MI: TRF, 2000).

11. Hawkins, “Post-Election Organizing.”

12. Ellen Willis, “Ellen Willis Responds to Todd Gitlin's and Sean Wilentz's Memo,” *Dissent* (spring 2001); www.dissentmagazine.org/archive/sp01/willis.shtml.

13. Michael Albert, “Lesser Evil?”; www.zmag.org/lesser_evil.htm.

14. My perspective on the Brazilian Workers Party benefits from the kind input of Jim Green, history professor at California State University-Long Beach. Also helpful was Emir Sader and Ken Silverstein, *Without Fear of Being Happy: Lula, the Workers Party and Brazil* (New York: Verso, 1991).

15. Marc Cooper, “Smash the Nader Backlash,” *Mother Jones* (November 15, 2000); www.motherjones.com/reality_check/nader_backlash.html.

16. Associated Press national exit polls found that “half of Nader voters would have supported Vice President Al Gore had Nader not been on the ticket. Thirty percent said they would not have voted and the rest would have gone for Bush.” The Associated Press, “Nader's Effect on Gore,” (December 30, 2000); www.ap.org.

17. Patrick S. Barrett, “Strategic Lessons of the 2000 Presidential Election: A Pro-Nader Perspective,” *Constellations* 8:3 (September 2001): 348-63; www.greenpartyus.org/articles/barrett_09_2001.html.

18. Willis, “Ellen Willis Responds.”

19. Ibid.

Editors' Note: Howard Ryan's article is part of an ongoing discussion concerning the prospects for third party politics. For other contributions, see the articles by Barry Finger, Howie Hawkins, Joanne Landy, Jason Schulman, and others on Ralph Nader, the Greens, and the Democratic Party in *New Politics*, issues 31 and 32.

On Labor's Political Strategy

Dorothee Benz

ONE OF MY COMMITMENTS as a union editor is to make our union newspaper a forum of discussion and debate, and not just a glorified press release. At CWA Local 1180, we include a regular "Sound Off" feature in our publication, the *Communique*. The idea is throw out a provocative topic that is a source of debate within the labor movement and ask members to respond. A frequent subject on our "Sound Off" page is the labor movement's political strategy. Two questions in particular come to mind on the subject of labor's recent overtures to Republicans.

The first is from July 2000:

How do we make our voices heard and our votes count?

A few months ago, when the Clinton administration and Congressional Republicans were campaigning for the China trade bill, the *New York Times* ran an article about Al Gore's role in the controversial legislative battle. Organized labor strongly opposed the bill, which is a boon to corporations at the expense of workers in both China and the U.S. Gore's presidential bid is backed by the AFL-CIO, despite his support for the China trade bill and his general support for so-called "free trade" policies. White House officials urged Gore to "strengthen his support" for the bill, "even if it means angering unions," the *Times* reported. "Where's the AFL-CIO going to run?" one cabinet member said. "To George Bush?"

That anecdote captures in a nutshell the dilemma labor activists face when they participate in political campaigns. We want to be practical and help the best available

candidate win...but we don't want to be taken for granted and have our issues ignored. What do we do?

The second is from May 2002, and requires a brief introduction for those who do not live in New York State. Local 1199, now affiliated with SEIU, has long been a progressive, left-leaning union, and has an enviable "get-out-the-vote" political operation. New York's Republican governor, George Pataki, is the beneficiary of post-September 11 popularity and is headed for almost certain re-election this fall. The intricate details of this story are interesting, but not necessary to get the flavor of the dilemma they pose:

Delivering the goods, or abandoning the class?

SEIU Local 1199's recent endorsement of Governor George Pataki created a flurry of debate and controversy within the labor movement. It was widely perceived as a political payoff for Pataki's support for state legislation that provided raises for 1199 members. Criticism of 1199 has focused on two issues: first, that the legislation they secured came at the expense of broader healthcare reform legislation that would have helped far more working families, and second, that while Pataki may have helped 1199 members in this instance, his overall record is anti-worker and supporting him is essentially a setback for the working class (including 1199 members). On the other hand, the deal did win 1199 members concrete and substantial improvements, and in that way 1199 leaders can be seen as good stewards of their union. How should unions strike a balance between delivering gains for their individual members and working for broader changes and solutions that will help all working people more in the long run?

As the editor of the *Communique*, I get to ask such questions, but I never have to answer them. There are no simple answers; at least no simple *good* answers, however, I want to offer a few observations about the

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consequences of how labor responds to such questions.

I HAVE LONG THOUGHT that labor's involvement with the Democratic Party is essentially a co-dependent role in an abusive relationship. But I am not sure that leaving the Democratic fold for Republican liaisons is really any smarter than leaving Mike Tyson for O.J. Simpson.

The truth is that Democrats take us for granted, and a part of the reason is that we have not presented a credible threat of exit. We may grouse some, but when election time comes around, we always fall in line with the "lesser evil" logic. Labor alliances with Republicans represent a break in this history, and one could argue that it might get the Democrats to sit up and take notice, and take our issues seriously again. And in the meantime, we can get a few concrete gains from our new friends in the GOP like raises for healthcare workers or tariff protection from steel imports like the Steelworkers recently won from "President" Bush.

This makes some sense. But it's crucial to ask what this strategy says about the vision of the labor movement, and about its long-term interests, it is premised on an insider, interest-group kind of politics, and therefore one that accepts the political calculus of the legislative and electoral peculiarities of our one-and-a-half party system. It is a strategy that places a premium on things like the power of incumbents in a seniority-based legislature, and one that is invested in the existing campaign finance system. Critically, it is also a strategy that relies on relationships in Washington instead of relationships on the shop floor.

Here's what it is not. It is not a strategy that reflects a broad-based class politics that seeks to mobilize labor's base as the primary source of its power. Rather, it relies on playing the political game on the terms set by the major players; and in that way, it forfeits reliance on the one source of power we in labor have in abundance that the corporate and political elite do not have: people power.

Several important consequences flow from this strategy. First, it limits outcomes. We win small gains here and there, but never the kind of fundamental change we

really need. And along the way, labor's image as a "special interest" is reinforced. When we win raises for one group of healthcare workers instead of fighting for affordable healthcare for all workers, when we win tariff protection for one industry instead of fighting to end the free trade bonanza for multinational corporations, we increase the impression that we are just another lobbying group. That costs us allies and potential allies, and it weakens the ability to build a grassroots movement against the fundamental injustices of our economic system. Most importantly, this strategy destroys labor unity and strengthens the hands of our enemies, to the direct detriment of working-class interests.

As evidence in support of this last point, I offer a recent *Washington Post* article entitled "Bush Courts Unions to Split Off Votes" (March 31, 2002):

President Bush is aggressively wooing several key unions in hopes of splitting apart organized labor, a heavily Democratic constituency that has been largely hostile to the Republican agenda. The divide-and-conquer strategy is aimed at the "he-man unions" or "hard hats".... Bush strategists have calculated that if he could increase his share of white union members' votes to 50% in 2004, he could pick up Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin, all of which went Democratic last time.

In other words, in exchange for some pension provisions in an anti-worker tax bill, a few tariff changes, some assistance money for workers who have lost their jobs to free trade policies and the feeling of "having access," some union leaders are willing to take us down a path that not only confers legitimacy on a man who quite literally stole the last election but promises to return him to office for a second term!

When those of us who supported Ralph Nader were vilified for allegedly costing Gore the 2000 election there was no discussion about the merits of the strategy of not automatically giving the Democrats our votes. But now that labor is lurching to the right, this same strategy is advanced as a reasonable response to the Democrats' failures. The difference is that Ralph Nader has a solid pro-union record whereas George Bush's first actions in office were a series of

anti-union, anti-worker executive orders and, let's not forget, the trashing of the hard-won ergonomics standard.

The other difference, to be fair, is that Ralph Nader is never going to be President and George Bush *is* President, however illegitimately he got there. When labor makes alliances to the right of the Democratic Party, it's making deals with people in power, and doing so with the goal of getting concrete returns on the relationship. The 1199-Pataki deal is a good example. The union *got* something for its endorsement, something tangible for its members. Should 1199 leaders have foregone the wage legislation in pursuit of a purer, more principled politics? When posed this way, the easy answer is no, they did what they could to help their members. But as the "Sound Off" question hints at, raises for 1199 members aside, re-electing George Pataki is *not* in their interests. There's a short-term logic here, the infinite regression which gets us exactly where we are today (because, make no mistake, this deal-making with Republicans is just an extension of the same deal-making labor does with the Democrats). There's a folk definition of insanity that is useful here: insanity is repeating the same actions over and over and expecting different results.

The choice is not who can we make the best deals with in Washington (or Albany or other state capitals). The choice is do we pursue our political goals with backroom deals and PAC checks, or do we pursue them by raising hell in the streets? This is not a romantic armchair radical's advocacy for "worker militancy," rather it's a reminder that the power of the labor movement is the power of the workers it represents and that we need to mobilize and engage and deploy that base if we want to escape the meager choices we seem to have today. Our political deals need to be analyzed not only for the goods they deliver today, but for the union power they help build for tomorrow.

AGAINST THAT BACKDROP, a few observations about the post-September 11 world and how these issues have played out since then. The labor movement's support for the military campaign in Afghanistan and the broader so-called "war on terrorism" is in many ways an example of the perils of this inside-the-

Beltway strategy of cozying up to Republicans (or Democrats, since especially on this issue there seems to be precious little distinction).

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the country was awash in working-class chic. Firefighters, cops, construction workers—all the hard-working manual laborers who worked around the clock in the rescue effort were celebrated everywhere. But talk, as they say, is cheap. And what we've gotten in exchange for our loyal support for the Bush administration is layoffs, corporate bailouts, infringement of our rights and attacks on the immigrant workers who are the hope of the labor movement.

The AFL-CIO has tried to walk a line between supporting Bush's military adventures and opposing his domestic policies. At the AFL convention in December, John Sweeney praised Bush, saying, "President Bush and his administration are doing an excellent job of waging war on the terrorists and we commend them for that." He went on to decry the war on terrorism's domestic front. But it's foolhardy to think that we can prop up and oppose two sides of the same policy at the same time. Every resolution of support for military action abroad legitimizes the very discourse of the "war on terrorism" and lends credibility to John Ashcroft's assault on the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. To think that we can support one half of this policy while opposing the other is an illusion.

And the consequences, once again, are stark.

One of the first things the AFL did after September 11 was to pull out of the planned protests against the IMF in Washington DC at the end of September, leaving our allies in the global justice movement high and dry and—not without justification—with a bitter taste in their mouths. Yet the "Teamsters and turtles" coalition so many have labored so hard to build is critical to the future of American working people, and the setback the AFL's action in this case caused is considerable.

Support for the war on terrorism also undercuts the labor movement's claim to be internationalist. Every trade unionist agrees that in this age of global and mobile capital, we are doomed unless we build a

genuinely international movement. But what kind of message do we send to workers in other countries with our enthusiastic support for an open-ended war that promises to roam the globe and wreak havoc on a whole list of third-world countries? We have clearly sold out international solidarity for nationalist interests. And while workers all over the world will pay for this betrayal with their lives, workers here will also pay with the continuing erosion of wages, rights and living standards that come from the inevitable decline of our own labor movement as a result of its weakened international ties. (And on the subject of international solidarity or lack thereof, the AFL's disgraceful support for the State Department's role in encouraging the coup attempt against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela is a troubling return to a politics of nationalist support for U.S. foreign policy, and needless to say, it is a blow to the federation's claim to support the rights of workers abroad.)

FINALLY, A COMMENT ABOUT THE ASSAULT ON immigrants. The great hope for the future of the American labor movement has been the growing ranks of immigrant workers, who have brought new energy and commitment to our institutions, and who have started the urgently needed task of organizing the low-wage sectors of our economy. These same workers are now under attack

in the name of the war on terrorism. Some are being rounded up and detained, as if we were living in some Latin American dictatorship; others have been fired or discriminated against or assaulted. The AFL and others have condemned these developments, but the failure to challenge the political framework through which these attacks are justified makes these protests ring fairly hollow.

The fruit of all this is the recent *Hoffman Plastics* decision by the Supreme Court. Undocumented workers who are illegally fired for union activity are now no longer entitled to backpay. This decision is a huge blow to workers' rights, to union rights and to immigrants' rights. It is also the direct outcome of the political climate created by the war on terrorism, a climate supported by labor's failure to dissent from the Washington consensus.

What all this should make clear is that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," as Audre Lorde put it—nor strengthen our own, if the foundations of our dwelling are fundamentally different, as I believe they are.

The question is: How can we forge our own tools to be as powerful as they need to be? The answers are not simple, but they must start with an assessment of our source of power: the workingwomen and men that make up the ranks of the labor movement.

France at the Crossroads

Vincent Pr sumey

IN FRANCE, BETWEEN THE EVENING of Sunday, April 21, 2002 (first round of the presidential elections) and the evening of Sunday, May 5 (second round), it has been a slightly crazy fortnight, very tiring and trying, often inspiring too.

The presence of Jean-Marie Le Pen in the second round of those elections, which are the heart of French political life in the system of the Fifth Republic as it has operated for four decades, has literally sparked a mass uprising of the people a-typically national phenomenon that has deep roots reaching back to the Revolution. It began on the evening of April 21, and, from the following morning, high school students, sometimes only 12 or 13 years old, and university students struck and demonstrated all over the country. In Paris, the schools were on holiday, but the mobilization of young people was still powerful. And, to start with, totally spontaneous. The teachers followed the students. Then, finally, their parents, that is, the great majority of wage-workers, blue and white collar, together with pensioners and people of all sorts, of all conditions, and, of course, of all colors, came out on May Day, transforming the trade union rallies into gigantic multicolored forums. There were at least two million people on those streets that day.

The paradox of those days was the following: there was reckoned to be a fascist danger. High school students photocopied leaflets full of spelling mistakes explaining that in 1933 the Nazis had first come for the Jews, then the communists, then everyone, and that when those who had been passive were taken in their turn to the concentration camps, there was no longer anyone to defend them; and that there was a danger of the same thing happening in France, all at once, on the night of May 5! Yet during those two crazy weeks, anyone out and

about in our country saw anti-fascists everywhere, usually young people, cheered on by older people at their windows, and no fascists. The fascists, without presenting themselves as such, gathered, under heavy police protection and in a woeful sort of way, in numbers of about 20,000 for their own May Day march and then for one single failed meeting, in Marseilles and that's all.

The Le Pen Phenomenon

LE PEN'S VOTERS, HOWEVER, EXIST. Together with his rival Bruno M gret, who can be placed to his right, he got five million votes on April 21, and he got about as many on May 5. But most of those voters are not fascists and do not come onto the streets. Only the stewarding squad of Le Pen's National Front (NF), the "Department of Protection and Security" (DPS), made up of a few hundred thugs, looks anything like a fascist militia or storm troopers; but the main concern of the DPS, at the two National Front rallies between the two rounds, was to prevent any excesses by skinheads so much did they fear a provocation that would be turned against them. The DPS is, besides, a den of mercenaries very much linked to the murkiest activities in Africa of the various presidents who have succeeded each other in France since the creation of the National Front in 1972, including the Socialist Francois Mitterrand.

It was in fact under Mitterrand, in the 1980s, that the NF, a fragile federation of neo-Nazi groups, old fighters to "keep Algeria French," fundamentalist Catholics, and networks of small shopkeepers and business people, became a political force, winning between 10 and 20 percent of the vote at elections. The disillusionment created among working people by the policies of the Left in power; the social setbacks which, though smaller than what happened at the same time under Reagan and Thatcher in the Anglo-Saxon countries, were nevertheless very serious; and, as immediate trig-

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ger, the crisis of the Right after its defeat in the elections of 1981, set the scene for the rise of a party whose favorite theme was denouncing Muslim immigration, using the living memories of France's colonial war in Algeria, in which Le Pen himself fought. The NF has never got as far as going over to action in the fascist sense of the term, that is, to forming combat groups: a few isolated attacks, and its May Day rallies, have been the only moves in that direction.

The party would never have developed without having gained from a constant stream of local elected officials, organizers, and intellectuals coming over from the mainstream Right-Gaullist (Jacques Chirac's RPR), Christian Democrat (the UDF, Union for French Democracy, a federation of parties which ran Francois Bayrou in the presidential elections), and liberal (DL, Liberal Democracy, the party of Alain Madelin, who is himself a former member of the groups which founded the NF). In 1998, those party activists, after electoral successes in the regional councils following several alliances with the mainstream Right (which have continued since then), "rebelled" against Le Pen, whose personal self-promotion and refusal to have too many alliances with the Right seemed to condemn them to political impotence. There was a split, and the majority of the apparatus and the activists of the NF went over to the National Republic Movement (MNR) of Bruno Mégret. Mégret got 2.3 percent of the vote on April 21, most but not all of which transferred to Le Pen on the second round. Ideologically to the right of the NF by virtue of the "racialist" and "differentialist" ideas of its intellectuals, the MNR has a grass-roots base comparable to the NF and can serve as an intermediary between it and the mainstream Right.

The electoral base of the NF, remote from these debates and battles, remained faithful to the person of the Leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who, however, found himself with a very much weakened party (and it still is such) on the level of organization and finances (he himself, a very wealthy man, has become its main financier). This electorate, voters who keep quiet and often are a bit ashamed of voting Le Pen, is mostly made up of "small people," shopkeepers and

trade workers, farmers, and wage-workers in small non-union workplaces who vote like their bosses whom they are side by side with every day. A significant minority are former Left, especially Communist, voters. Between 1995 and 2002, the workers and the under-25s among them (including Mégret's voters) have diminished in number and in proportion. Le Pen has however made gains among the older and rural sections of the population, who are dissatisfied with their situation and made anxious by the campaign carried on for months, and started by Jacques Chirac, on the theme of "law and order," that is, of the dangers caused by the gangs of young people of Arab origin living in the poorest districts. But if we take into account the fact that, in the April 21 vote, Le Pen gained from the absence of two leaders of the "hard-line" orthodox Right, De Villiers (Catholic conservative) and Pasqua (anti-European Gaullist), it is clear that Le Pen achieved no breakthrough that day. The total of his votes and Mégret's was lower than the total of his 1995 votes and De Villiers'.

Such are the facts, contradicted by the panic-mongering we have had about "the workers voting for Le Pen," but which remain facts.

The actual absence of any fascist breakthrough was confirmed by the vote on May 5, when Le Pen made almost no gains. That was, for him, a serious political setback.

What Is at Stake?

WHY THEN WAS THERE such a powerful mobilization? In revulsion against Le Pen and all he represents, of course, but also because the fact of having Le Pen and Chirac in the second round was seen, rightly, by millions of young people and workers as a scandal and an insult. That situation was due not to a significant breakthrough by Le Pen, but to the collapse of the traditional parties of the Left, with the Socialist Party (SP) down to 16 percent where its "potential" score was around 25 percent, and the Communist Party (CP) down to 3 percent, crushed behind two Trotskyist candidates. That collapse, in fact, went together with a very strong shift to the left. The three Trotskyist candidates got 10.5 percent between them which is a real shift, a real breakthrough.

The majority of the abstainers (27 percent of the electoral roll) were people of the Left, disillusioned and saying so, and many of the votes of the three other candidates who came from the Left government coalition but presented themselves as more or less breaking from it, the “republican” Chevènement, the ecologist Mamère and the former campaigner for the independence of French Guyana, Taubira, were also critical left-wing votes. That an election shaped by such a radicalization, such a shift to the left, should lead to a veritable confiscation of the votes, with a choice reduced to the outgoing president, whom many hoped to see beaten and brought to justice for corruption, Chirac, and a fascist, produced a gale of rebellion.

At stake here is the undemocratic character of French institutions, born from a coup d'état in 1958. Indeed, what has just happened has much in common, in many ways, with the events of May 1958, of which the younger generation has only a very vague idea. It was a military coup by the far right in Algiers, which produced the “appeal” to General De Gaulle, presented as the savior of the nation, and immediately supported by a section of the Left. Even those who did not back him in 1958 later supported him against the military conspiracies of the same type, but aimed against him, of the partisans of “French Algeria.” In some ways, the confiscation of democracy which was the result of the vote of April 21 rang like a coup d'état, and led to a huge rallying to voting Chirac from the overwhelming majority of the Left parties and the unions, in the name of a fascist danger represented by Le Pen, the heir of the putschists of 1958. The result may be to put the Fifth Republic and its re-elected president Jacques Chirac — up until then the weakest, the most illegitimate, the most despised, that it had — back in the saddle.

That rallying also drew in a large section of young people and rank-and-file workers, who voted Chirac with rage in their hearts and who reckoned that, to compensate for it, it was all the more necessary for them to demonstrate in the streets. As they said, they preferred the “super-crook” to the “super-fascist.” But it must be said that, except from some high-school students, first-

time voters regretting their own abstentions on April 21, in the rallies and the demonstrations there was no conflict between people about how they would vote on May 5, because all valued the sense of unity and strength that they felt. It was only the leaders of the Left, especially the CP, very much weakened and correspondingly more vehement, who tried to denounce the abstentionists and get them booed, without success. Often the husband voted Chirac and the wife cast a blank ballot (or vice versa), and in the upshot, though Chirac had 82 percent of the valid votes, he only had about 61 percent of the electorate, because the abstentions and the blank or spoiled votes, very much on the Left in their majority, reached 25 percent, still a very high rate.

The New Government

THE LEADERS OF THE LEFT, and of the far left too, made light of the new government formed by Jacques Chirac following the second round, saying that it was only there to look after the “transition” to the Legislative Assembly elections scheduled in June.

They are comforting themselves with empty words. This government, led by an eminent mediocrity, Mr. Raffarin (from the Liberal Democrat party, the section of the mainstream Right which does not repudiate alliances with the NF), is well-structured, well-conceived, and seems entirely competent and intellectually efficacious to serve the interests of big capital, which is directly represented by the Minister of Finance, Francis Mer.

This government will immediately, without any parliamentary consultation, take far-reaching measures, notably on policing and taxes. The manner in which the ministries are grouped, and their titles, indicates that it plans to accelerate what is called in France “the reform of the state,” something which the leaders of the Left also desire and which led to the big civil service strikes of spring 2000 under Jospin. It is about replacing public services, delivered by state functionaries, by local agencies of all sorts utilizing private contractors. This orientation is found in various forms in all the member states of the European Union.

As conceived, this government is not a government of “transition,” but it stands to

be enlarged after the Legislative elections. Its aim is to have those elections give a majority to the new "president's party" which is in the course of being formed through the merger of the majority of the mainstream Right, and for that majority to be able to "open out" both to the Left, towards the most right-wing sections of the SP, and to the far right. That aim is realistic, since on the Left the continuation of heavy abstention among workers and the worse-off, combined with "tactical voting" which will mostly benefit the SP after the great fright of April, and all in the absence of any new perspectives offered by leaders who are discredited in the eyes of their voters, will weigh heavily.

The problem for the Left is the following: in order to win these new elections, to give itself a new face which really declares that this time it will not govern together with Chirac and the bosses, but against them and for the workers. This new demand was expressed even before May 5, in demonstrations, meetings and rallies all over the country.

Left Organizations and the Workers' Movement

THE SP IS EXPERIENCING A FLOOD of recruits among young people. The rank and file of the party, where it is still organized in the local sections, is strongly demanding a sharp turn to the left. That demand is dimly reflected in the new program, adopted as an emergency measure, which declares, for example, that no more public services should be privatized. Coming so late, after numerous privatizations done by the Jospin government, such a declaration is a bit of a joke, not very credible to the Socialist Party milieu itself. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, the former Minister of Finance, very well regarded in the employers' circles, says that Chirac will have to be different after May 5, thus preparing the course whose announcement will bring defeat for the Left: a new cohabitation, decked out in colors of national unity, between the Left and the Right. Between the desires expressed at rank and file level and this sort of talk, there is a gap that will produce explosions in the SP. The "Socialist Left" tendency wants to avoid that above all, and, hoping to install itself in the center of a once again reconstructed SP, it argues for the absolute ne-

cessity of Left unity and single candidates of the Left for the Legislative elections, while omitting to say what the political mandate of those candidates will be. If it is about carrying forward the same policies once again, they will lose the elections.

A section of the Socialist Party (SP), represented by a young member of parliament, Arnaud Montebourg, who has been joined on this by the presidential candidates Noël Mamère and Christiane Taubira, says correctly that the candidates of the Left should commit themselves, in order to be able to be representatives who actually govern and do what their voters have voted for them to do, to fight to put an end to the Fifth Republic and form a constituent assembly. As early as 6 May, Francois Hollande, the First Secretary of the Party, replied to them, via an interview in the newspaper *Le Monde*, that there could be no question of that. This current is weak, with little social anchorage, but it expresses a democratic demand that is at the heart of France's current problems.

While there is scarcely any doubt that the SP will remain a key party in the coming months, the blow that the Communist Party has received may be decisive. The collapse of this party has not yet produced any currents proposing new perspectives, but it has created a vacuum. In the unions, where it has the bulk of its networks of support and its activists, who still lead decisive organizations (the CGT and, among teachers, the FSU), those trade unionists are being led either to shift to the left, or to become direct partners of the SP, which seems to be the attitude of the leaders of the CGT.

The other organization recruiting heavily today, besides the SP, the unions, and the high school and university student associations, is the LCR (Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire), deluged by such large numbers of applications to join or to make contact that it has difficulty dealing with them all. This is a result of the score, heavily concentrated among youth (almost 14 percent of the votes cast by 18-24-year-olds), of its candidate Oliver Besancenot, an unexpected success for the LCR. But the more that the LCR is able to fit itself to the immediate situation and the mood of the youth at a given moment (for example, in its half-said appeal to vote Chirac on May 5, gar-

nished with a call to demonstrate that same evening), the more it fails to pose in its totality the question of the political way out from the present situation, and seems rather indifferent to the problems of the institutions of the Fifth Republic and of how to win a real victory for the left in the Legislative elections.

Yet the LCR has, among the three Trotskyist parties present in the election, the least sectarian attitude. If, despite their own reluctance, we add up the votes of those three parties, they come to 10.5 percent, a high score. For the present, they do not seem to take account of it and look toward a unification or at least a coalition in the manner of the British Socialist Alliances, something that would demand that each faction goes beyond its own limits.

LO (Lutte Ouvrière), despite Arlette Laguiller's score of over 5 percent, in fact suffered a relative political setback on April 21, ceasing to have the quasi-monopoly of the "far left" vote in national polls. The very denunciatory manner in which it attacked the Chirac vote, declaring that "the Left is prostituting itself," helped its enemies, notably the CP, to isolate it. Refusing to make an agreement with the LCR, LO is preparing to present candidates in every electorate at the Legislative elections. That is regrettable, but this organization, already very isolated, risks turning in on itself even more: its leadership feared a score of 10 percent and the responsibilities it would have brought with it!

The PT (Parti des Travailleurs) should not be dismissed as a political force, even if it holds itself apart and is held apart by almost all the others. Its weak score should not obscure its trade union influence and its activist base which, paradoxically, is numerically superior to those of the LCR and LO.

The very separate place occupied by this organization is explained by the fact that historically this current has a central place in France, in relation to the Trotskyist currents in general and, more widely, in relation to the whole labor movement — the former prime minister Lionel Jospin comes from, for example. Its current marginalization, in part deserved by its haughty disdain for workers' unity (in the FO unions the PT fought where it could to stop people going to the May Day rallies!), cannot last forever.

Beyond the organizations, there is today in France an extraordinary readiness for activity and debate, among the youth and among workers in general, especially in the unions. This effervescence runs up against the dead weight of the parties in place, who are preoccupied above all with their separate electoral existences. At the peak of the state, the events of April 21 to May 5 have, however, not been positive for democracy and for the social movement. The re-elected Chirac has new room to maneuver, and the NF, even if reckoned at its true strength, has also been "relaunched." The coming Legislative elections and the social confrontations which are bound to take place will doubtless decide the course of events for some years at least: a lasting victory for Chirac, and the reinforcement of a renovated Fifth Republic, or a new destabilization of the regime and its president and an aggressive upsurge of strikes, demonstrations, and new political regroupments, based on the rank and file and uniting, in a democratic break with the old politics, all that emerges from the crisis of the existing organizations. France is, more and more, at the crossroads, and the way things go here will also have major international significance.

Translated from the French by Martin Thomas.

Epilogue: After Strange Days, a Strange Defeat

SEVERAL WEEKS AFTER the French presidential elections, the Right makes off with a two-thirds majority of the National Assembly and President Chirac seems to have triumphed. The journalists call this the "blue wave" (according to French tradition, among the colors of the national flag blue, originally the color of Paris, is supposed to sym-

bolize the Republic: but if blue at first opposed white, the color of the monarchy, for a long time it has also opposed the red of the people and of the working class; thus, "blue wave" means a very strong push towards the Right).

Is it possible that in the space of a few weeks, a very strong push towards the *Left*,

with “Trotskyists” winning 10.5 percent of the vote in the first round of the presidential elections on April 21, and then with two million demonstrators on May Day, was re-absorbed, and that it is the Right, Big Business and their newly constituted political party, the UMP — *Union pour la Majorité Présidentielle*, Union for the Presidential Majority — that now actually represents the majority of the country?

Things are evidently more complicated!

A Brief Flashback

IN THE FIRST PART OF THIS ARTICLE, I wrote, just after the presidential election, that the rallying of the majority of the Left and the labor movement in favor of a vote for Chirac could result in putting “the Fifth Republic and its re-elected president Jacques Chirac — up until then the weakest, the most illegitimate, the most despised that it had had — back in the saddle.”

This is indeed what we have witnessed, but it is necessary to go back a little further still in order to better understand the elements of the problem.

Central to this reestablishing of the Fifth Republic, at the current stage, is the fact that the newly elected National Assembly presents itself explicitly, as in 1958, as being the Assembly of the President, holding his mandate and placing itself in his service, like a chamber of peers in a monarchical regime. The government arranges everything to its satisfaction, from top to bottom. First, thanks to the leaders of the Left and the unions, Chirac obtains 82 percent of the votes cast on May 5, while knowing full well that, since the majority of those who voted for him are in reality against him and did so with “death in their hearts,” it remains for him to “convert a free kick into a goal,” as they say in soccer. Chirac then forms a government that is efficient, well conceived and devoted to him: now he has the Assembly at his feet. The rest of the program is to “descend” step by step, through “social dialogue,” the “territorialization” and organization of France “from below” — to recall the slogans of the regime — with the goal of reorganizing social relations in the direction desired by finance and the corporate bosses: abolishing employment security,

undermining public services and the Social Security system.

This reordering depends fundamentally, therefore, on the fact that the legislative elections followed the presidential election. But it would not have been the result of the electoral calendar had the latter not been modified. Today, several Socialist leaders — Henri Emmanuelli, Arnaud Montebourg — deplore this inversion of the calendar. But who was responsible for it? Everyone knows it was Lionel Jospin. It was at the end of 2000, several weeks after the referendum, organized jointly by Chirac and Jospin, on the reduction of the president’s term from seven to five years. As Socialist militants, some of us refused at the time to vote in this referendum, because we said that after the five year term was put in place the electoral calendar would be inverted, so that the legislative would always follow the presidential elections and be dependent on them, thus reinforcing the Fifth Republic and its presidency. The announcement of this decision, moreover, was made by Jospin in a perfectly presidential, “Bonapartist” fashion: he revealed his sovereign decision before an already adjourned congress of the Socialist Party, leaving the delegates with no choice other than to applaud or leave (the author of these lines then left to catch his train!).

For five years, Lionel Jospin was the pillar of the Fifth Republic and saved Chirac. Chirac owes him everything. The logic of his role pushed Jospin to run for the presidency, although he had no enthusiasm for it, with the results we now know . . .

Thus, the National Assembly elected under the conditions of June 9 and 16, 2002, is not, properly speaking, a “national assembly.” It is a “rump” assembly, beholden to the executive and without a popular mandate, as only one important politician — Le Pen, alas! — has said — but he must not be allowed a monopoly on this truth.

The Votes of June 9 and 16

THERE WAS NO ELECTORAL “BLUE WAVE.” Four factors combine to explain the results of the legislative elections, four factors that are linked to the events of the period between the two rounds of the presidential voting. Three concern the Left and one the Right.

In that which concerns the Left, the major fact is the enormous electoral abstention. The majority of workers, youth and “people of the Left” did not vote. It should be noted that the youth who came out in the aftermath of April 21st, many of whom voted for Chirac on May 5th, did not go to the polls this time, despite all the speeches about a “civic” or “republican” “jump-start,” etc. Why did abstentionism on the Left attain its historical zenith precisely in these elections?

Its deep causes are known: the disappointment of those who expected, in good conscience, that the Left in power would govern in favor of the workers, not the bosses like the Right. To this fundamental cause was added the fact that after the appeal of the Left to vote for Chirac and the formation of the Raffarin government, the feeling predominated that results favorable to the Right were a foregone conclusion and that voting would not be worth the trouble. The Right waged a campaign against “cohabitation,” and the Left said, in effect, that what it wanted was a new cohabitation — instead of saying that it rejected this arrangement, that it would not pursue the same policies and that this time its victory would condemn Chirac. The prospect of a François Hollande as Jacques Chirac’s prime minister offered nothing to inspire the enthusiasm of either the young people who had risen up against Le Pen or their parents who had had the experience of the Left in power! The electorate of the Left, on the whole, had no desire to begin again with the same old thing that had been going on for the past five years, and this is understandable.

The second major fact might seem to contradict the first, but it was foreseeable that the two would combine: if around half of the Left and working class electorate and of the youth abstained, then the other half voted for the Socialists (and locally for the Communists where the PS supported the PC or where an incumbent PC candidate was solidly implanted) a little more often in the second round than in the first. The fact that the PC depends on the PS for electoral support, the crushing of the Greens and the liquidation of Jean-Pierre Chevènement’s “Republican Pole,” and the

setback of the Far Left, makes the PS, in a certain manner, the “only party of the Left,” at least on the electoral level.

Besides, there is no opposition between abstentionists and PS voters in the same neighborhoods, even the same families (setting aside the very particular case of the city of Paris, where the Greens and the PS seem to have stabilized a well-off petty bourgeois, even bourgeois, electorate). Those who voted Socialist, in their immense majority, have no more illusions than the abstentionists about what the PS would have done had it won; for them, voting was the first act of resistance to the Chirac-Raffarin government, and it is clear that the only vote that seemed to them useful for this was, once again, a vote for the PS.

There was a consensus among the leaders of the PS that they must not attack each other in the aftermath of the elections. This consensus has not endured because profound forces are at work: in French social relations, whether the PS becomes the only party of the Left or a hegemonic party, it cannot do so as an American-style Democratic Party, a bourgeois party, because that would require it to go after the support of those who did not want to vote for it. Brutally, François Hollande, in seeking to impose a “Blairist,” Laurent Fabius, as party spokesman, has shown that the leadership of the PS is not neutral and wants to keep on course toward the right at any cost. And to refuse at the same time to be the “only party of the Left,” because the liquefaction of the PC has thrown an awful fright into the leaders of the PS. Hollande has thus opened up a crisis among the party’s leadership.

The third striking fact of this election is that the vote for the Far Left fell to 2.7 percent (with the LCR in the lead, followed by the LO, the PT and movements of communist and ecologist origins). Certainly this was not the same sort of election, but the results showed that voting for the Far Left this time did not seem either useful or significant to the majority of those who had done so on April 21st. This is hardly surprising, since the organizations concerned had not grasped the responsibility that flowed from their April 21st voting scores: they remained on the ground of ideological

generalities, did not pose the question of power and did not present themselves as a force wishing to drive out Chirac and impose democracy — and thus failed to call, from their own standpoint, for beating the Right in the legislative elections; to them, concentrating on beating the Right means imitating the politics of the PS . . .

Unquestionably, the results are weakening the wave of recruitment that has been directed above all toward the LCR, and are producing a certain demoralization among the militants, especially those who had been saying for weeks, sometimes after voting for Chirac, that the legislative elections had no importance because everything will be decided in the streets this coming fall!

As far as the Right is concerned, there was no mass popular rallying in its direction, but there was a certain dynamic, born on May 5th, that, notably, carried more than half of Le Pen's (and Mégret's) voters in both rounds of the presidential elections, toward a vote for the UMP. It is this alone, added to the effects of Left abstentionism, that explains the crushing number of seats won by the Right. The Right, which had been billed as the "last defense of the Republic" against the fascist danger of Le Pen, thus received its votes, massively, and the UMP has tapped its strength. It is all the more striking to see former advocates of voting for Chirac on May 5th, from François Hollande to Olivier Besancenot, say that this time there is at least one good thing in the results: the decline of the FN and the fact that it didn't get a single deputy! In fact, the FN (and the MNR) has its place in the political apparatus of Chirac and Raffarin. To treat it as an absolute evil that justifies anything and everything prevents an understanding of its actual role and thus handicaps the struggle against it. Useful to those who seek the restoration and reinforcement of the Fifth Republic, it also acts on this government as a rightwing goad and helps assure it a rump assembly.

And Now?

THE WHOLE FRENCH SITUATION has been dominated for months by the perspective of a major social confrontation, a May '68 doubled by a December '95. That has not changed. But there is now an offensive dynamic from the Right and Big Business and a process, well underway, of reorganizing the state apparatus (for example, the police and the gendarmerie). If Jospin had been elected, the social confrontation would have occurred under much better conditions, not because Jospin would be an ally, but because this rightward dynamic would not be operating, and because a confrontation with a government of the Left would accelerate the reorganization of the workers movement.

The problem does not reside in social combativeness. Workers are firmly decided to resist layoffs and the extension of the workweek, civil servants are prepared to block the threats to their retirement, the youth will be back on the streets as soon as they sense a propitious moment, democratic opinion is outraged at the impunity of the President while the peasant trade unionist José Bové is thrown in prison.

The problem, that the probable confrontation will occur in a complicated manner, is political. The social movement has not kept pace with the reorganization of the state and of the Right, which will attempt to dislocate and defeat it by preventing a movement of the whole, whose meaning can only be political. But the social movement has no political representation (the Far Left, such as it is today, is certainly not this new representation, but rather a means of protest and investigation). How to reconstitute a political representation of the world of labor? — such is the question underlying the whole situation, the solution to which is to be found neither in the Far Left alone nor exclusively in the developments within the PS or elsewhere; it must emerge from all these sources, or it will never be.

194,558 Votes

G rard Filoche

THIS IS THE SMALL NUMBER OF VOTES that moved Le Pen ahead of Jospin. From all the 40 million voters, the difference came down to that. And if Lionel Jospin had passed this hurdle, the paradox is that he would have beaten Chirac. Are there indeed too many scattered voices among the five candidates of the Left and the three of the extreme Right? There are too many polemics against the Socialist Party put forward by the other Left parties, and these have worked as well against their own camp. There are also too many abstentions on the Left, voters waiting for the second round, because they were not sufficiently motivated by the issues. Everyone was confident that Lionel Jospin would be in the second round, and too many voters waited to eliminate Chirac the “super liar,” the “crook,” with the follow-up blow. It is paradoxical that when the Right loses 4 million votes it is Chirac who carries the election. It is paradoxical that the extreme Right (counting both Le Pen and de Villiers) loses 400,000 votes between 1995 and 2002 but that Le Pen wins enough of them (900,000) just barely to get into the second round. It is paradoxical that the Left loses 1.6 million votes, that the extreme Left gains 1.9 million votes, that the center of gravity is thus shifted toward the left — and that the duel of the second round is played out between the Right and the extreme Right.

It is paradoxical that on April 21, the total Left votes (42.96 percent) happened to be superior to the total of Right votes (40.56 percent) yet that the country swings in the opposite direction on May 5, in a sudden burst against Le Pen, to the advantage of Chirac and Raffarin. But it is pointless to search for excuses anywhere else to explain

what happened on April 21: it is precisely Lionel Jospin who lost 10 percent of votes between the first round of 1995 and the first round of 2002.

The decidedly lukewarm balance sheet of Lionel Jospin's five years in office is very much in evidence: it has been the most leftist government of Europe, but not left enough to confront the expectations and social exasperation of French wage earners and the unemployed. It did not repeal the cutbacks imposed by E. Balladur on retirees. It passed a 35-hour workweek, but not well enough or quickly enough for everyone — and it neither carried it through to the end nor defended it sufficiently. It gave the impression of State impotence when confronted with layoffs. It took a series of progressive measures (CMU, Apa, Pacs, parity) but not enough to cure the damages resulting from the depths of the crisis. France was doing well, but not all French people. The striking inequalities born from mass unemployment have not been reduced by the current, but limited, fall in unemployment. The fruits of economic growth have not been shared, as millions of those excluded by that growth, and as millions of poor laborers, had the right to demand. However, Lionel Jospin had succeeded in “holding out” for five years in the uncomfortable situation of *cohabitation* with Chirac: the popularity of the leading socialist had remained extremely high through the long administration. Despite his lukewarm accomplishments, Lionel Jospin would have been able to get away with it in facing a discredited Chirac if his electoral campaign had not been disastrous: a program abandoning any significant proposals for wage earners, a “centrist” position corrected too late, an absence of “fresh air transparency” and of Right-Left polarization. Chirac was able to play on this confusion, the media on the lack of interest of the debates, the security delirium all resulting

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in the checkmate of April 21. It is a catastrophe, but it is reversible. The legislative elections can be a winning second round if the Left draws lessons from this checkmate and if it does not "take the same path and begin again."

Public Outcry

THE LESSON OF APRIL 21, the enfeeblement of the Left, comes from its natural base of wage earners from which it has distanced itself. The "obscure ones, the little ones, the nobodies" the ones forgotten by the economic boom are growing weary. Two million unemployed are without future. Six million people live on welfare or earn less than the poverty line. One wage earner out of two earns less than 8,600 francs (\$1200) per month.

This situation brings about frustrations and legitimate demands, so since the growth has resumed, there has been recovery from the economic crisis, and paradoxically, the Left has introduced better policies. Eight million over-exploited wage earners suffer in businesses with fewer than 50 employees and have never seen anything coming from the Left or indeed from any government. Without a future, without sufficient resources, all the insecurities are hard for them: educational stalemate, poor housing, precarious health, no job tenure, accidents, misery, old age.

Five percent of the population possess 50 percent of wealth, 10 percent possess less than one percent. And 88 percent of the working population, which produces by its labor the essentials of wealth, does not enjoy the benefits it has the right to expect.

To "break the ghettos just outside the city," it is necessary not only to renovate housing, education, provide preventive action against insecurity, facilitate integration and public order, but also see to it that the population has enough money to live decently. There exists no integration, no preventive action better than a good salary and stable employment. Social order depends on full employment, security is social to begin with.

The public outcry which arose suddenly from all quarters, from the marginalized underprivileged classes, like wage earners subjected to stress or occupational diseases,

to over-exploitation; it also arose powerfully from groups who are in a better situation but who refuse to live in a world rotten with inequalities. From both groups the warning is the same: this liberalism, this law of the jungle, this dominant deregulation corrupts the richest societies, and has become insupportable. It nourishes crisis after crisis, damages or revolts the conscience, whips up corporatism, xenophobia, racism, fascism or the struggle for a social revolution.

Despite its riches, because of its riches, France, fourth most powerful industrialized nation in the world, is not stable; it is undermined by the growth of inequalities, which it will not accept. For 20 years, things have been clear: every election condemns any sitting government, which did not act vigorously against these effects of liberalism. And if the Left does not do its work, it is the extreme Right that will grow. We had warned of this as early as the municipal elections in March, 2001. After the spectacular and surprising result on April 21, there is no alternative but to undertake another program: one that would impose in a voluntary manner a new, a thorough redistribution of wealth, a respect for the right to work, a taxation of the colossal profits of capital, and a massive reduction of inequalities.

It Is Not the Republic That Won: Chirac President by Default

MAY 5 IS A VOTE OF REJECTION, not of adhesion. No one won on this day. Le Pen alone has lost. This was a negative vote, not a positive vote. If Chirac obtained 82.5 percent of votes, this is because the Left constituted a majority of those who voted against Le Pen: 10.5 million votes for the Left and the extreme Left as against 8 million votes for the Right, that is the truth of the numbers.

Chirac is not a president elected on a platform, this is a man "re-elected" by voters who, in other circumstances, would have defeated him. This is an "extension," not an approval. He has neither popular nor majority legitimacy, as he might have had previously. All of that has been rendered false. Chirac the Second is the product of a defect, a failure of democracy, whose sole function is to have served, against his will, as an instrument "to close the door on Le Pen."

This Is Not a Victory of the Republic, but a Victory of Republicans

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE is not a vote for, but in spite of, Chirac. Chirac and his friends were even opposed to the demonstration of May 1, which resulted in holding Le Pen to less than 20 percent. Chirac denounced "extremism," but not fascism. Chirac took care not to debate Le Pen, so that he wouldn't compromise his chance of winning voters later from the National Front. Chirac took care to ally himself with Blanc, Millon, Baur, in his meetings, showing that he scarcely credited the popular rejection. Chirac has been so versatile, dishonest and cynical, as is his way, that in a cowardly fashion he congratulated "the young" for their mobilization after May 1.

There is no way we can compare Chirac's victory with a democratic result. This petty government has no legitimacy: does it rest on anything other than the 19 percent of the vote that Chirac received on April 21? In any case, it has no majority. One of the hidden vices of the Fifth Republic is that a government can dominate the media, and appear to be acting in full entitlement without any parliamentary legitimacy.

An Illegitimate Government and the Preserves of Chirac

THERE ARE ONLY FAITHFUL UNDERLINGS of Chirac or Juppé in this minority government. All of them owe their careers to Chirac. Let us fight this government for what it is: short-lived, illegitimate, cliquish. Let us demand that the media, since we are in an electoral campaign, abandon their servility, and find again the opening of a true electoral debate on the basics, and let's show them that there really is a true socialist program now which takes into account the wishes of the public as they were manifested on April 21, May 1, and May 5.

France: It Is Neither April 21, Nor May 5

THERE WAS NOTHING BUT ARROGANCE and blindness in the preparation of the electoral campaign by his advisors and by Lionel Jospin himself. There was a political debate. In this political debate, a thorough elabora-

tion of "Socialist project 2002" from September to December, the Socialist Left made its proposals. And it has continued from January to April without being listened to at the heart of the campaign leadership.

Above all, the Left proposed striking measures for wage earners: an increase in the minimum wage and in the minimum social contract, a return to retirement after 37.5 years for all employees both private and public, (1) to pursue and achieve the 35-hour work week by a better application of profit for all wage earners, a true social democracy (a new parity, elections to the treasury of Social Security, professional elections, a strong labor relations board, union representation, majority principle in business contracts). The Left has not been heeded. It has not even been able to get to the end of the amendments it proposed since the party leadership made it clear that there was no question of including them (especially the retirement pensions though they had been approved by dozens of party federations, and by the majority of militants).

Bad Advisors

IN FACT, IN THE PREPARATION for this campaign, it was above all the rightist voices which made themselves heard. It is not just a matter of errors, or of a bad bottom line on the 35-hour work week plan, neither defended nor come to terms with (they are mentioned only once, page 4, in a single line of the 44 page program of candidate Jospin). The advisors have sometimes refused to take a clear position on retirement, sometimes sidestepped any new progressive social changes in business (such questions as layoffs, job security, of union rights). The DSK book appeared in January (2) and the "notes" of Laurent Fabius have both drawn toward the Right, the contents already toned down from what the candidate seemed to be saying.

The "political advisors" who surround Lionel Jospin have not learned or even guessed what is going on throughout the country: confident of advancing to the second round, this campaign was a second round campaign, neither seeking for nor drawing the Left, nor did it develop the kind of clarity that might accentuate the gap between Left and Right. On the contrary,

he has sought the unattainable Center, the unfathomable height above parties, and has sidestepped debates on security, on the redistribution of wealth. The platform was pages of indigestible catalogue, full of fishbones. Too technical, unreadable, it proposed an unemployment figure of at least 900,000 — why not more? Why not the goal of “full employment, good employment”? Why not the struggle for reduction of work hours? Why not a redistribution of wealth?

In three months the candidate did not speak of wage earners. There was no question of the rights of those laid off while those layoffs continued in full force, nor of the Constitutional council of the Right that had canceled the first article on this point of the law of social modernization. There was no question of the 35-hour work week when 9 million wage earners (one out of two) discovered the 35-hour week only at the beginning of January, 2002. There was hardly any debate with the Medef, (3) even less with the liberals and their worldview, and their admiration for Reagan and Thatcher.

They have not even promoted what was positive in our reckoning, no doubt out of fear of being obliged to emphasize and to amplify what we had done. There has been no ideological debate, and no confrontation on what each measure signified as opposed to each of those defended by Chirac: they sought consensus and moderation.

More Furious Day by Day

EACH WEEK IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH, at the National Bureau of the Socialist Party, by notes, by written arguments, the Socialist Left multiplied its interventions to alert everyone to the inadequate social issues of the campaign, on the failure of the campaign to mobilize the 20 million wage earners of the country. Our various comrades have tried to present arguments on social security, school, and housing as well as on societal problems: at meetings we shed light on the sense of a true choice between Left and Right, a choice of society, a deep involvement, a fundamental issue between liberals and socialists. We did not skimp on our efforts, nearly 100 national meetings presented by our officials, dozens of articles, position papers, engagement in debates wherever possible.

With all our strength, we wished, we believed in the possible victory of Lionel Jospin. Even if we were angry at not being heeded more, of not feeling the “breath of air” in the Left mobilization. Why is it that it is this disgusting Le Pen who dares to speak to “the obscure, those nobodies, the metal workers, the laid off workers?” Why didn’t we give ourselves the political means to gather together the people of the Left for the first round?

The Real France is a Left Majority

FRANCE BELONGS TO THE LEFT. Sociologically it belongs to the Left, and it will only demand to be there politically if the leaders of the Left represent the fullness of its aspirations. That has not been the case. Certainly, there was the surprise effect, misunderstood, an exceptional combination of circumstances, an absence of dramatization, of prior warning, a resulting “thunderclap,” which ought to have been avoidable: but why did it happen? Because the candidate’s advisors did not want to respond above all to the social concerns of the most exploited, of the most impoverished? They turned toward the “average households” — but these do not constitute an electorate sufficient for victory. They proposed a “reduction of taxes” rather than the safeguarding and expansion of public services. In March at Barcelona while the campaign was going full blast, they let themselves sign an unacceptable text on the right to retire — at 63. (4) They refused to fight for a clear democracy in Europe, against the liberal partisans of deregulation in every respect.

Despite these “defects,” the paradox is that the Left would probably still have won if it had come to the second round: then the choice would have been “for or against Chirac,” and Lionel Jospin’s honesty would have placed him unquestionably in the lead. In that scenario the Left voters would have resigned themselves to it, and despite the shortcomings of a platform that did not arouse any enthusiasm, they would have chosen “their” camp. But, left to themselves by a campaign that skipped the first round and did not persuade them, they gave free rein to their bad temper on April 21 with the well known result. We know all those who “bit their nails” because they didn’t vote

correctly. They are hundreds of thousands who would have “made the difference...” but if they acted thus it’s due to the reasons given above.

So we shouldn’t try to blame the people, to accuse those who abstained, to invoke “the others” (Chevènement, Taubira, Laguillier, Besancenot, Mamère, Hue...). It’s been said that Christiane Taubira had offered to withdraw her candidacy three weeks before the first round, both because her campaign was not taking hold, and because the Radical Party was not supporting her: she asked only for some compensatory help to balance her budget; but she was supposedly told it was better to go right to the end, “because they needed her votes in the second round.” But she had four times the number of votes Jospin needed to pass Le Pen.

We are the ones, the Socialist Party campaign, that must be taken to task for what was not done or done badly from 1997 to the present. But not right away: the big debates are for tomorrow. First of all, we must win the “return match,” the “true second round,” the “deciding match” of June.

That’s All Reversible

THE RAPID ANALYSIS OF THE CAUSES of this catastrophe gives certain keys to rectify the situation. France is Left, and that is seen in the extraordinary civic and social explosion, which followed. It is thus possible to remobilize and unite the Left again, provided we come to a clear agreement on a program of transformation of society. Our country can and ought to find its true face again, that of the great strikes of May 1968, December 1986, and November-December 1995, that of refusal of liberalism, that of better social protection for all, that of the great dynamic upsurge of the Left.

On June 9 and 16, we must side together in the general elections in order to correct what happened in April. We do not want to divide or polemicize, only to see clearly. We do not want to “cleave” or to denounce by name the faults of certain people or the errors of others, that is not conclusive. What is necessary is to see clearly enough to re-establish a program that we should never have abandoned, the very one that permitted victory in June, 1997: the one that pro-

posed the “35 hours without loss of wages” for all, the “administrative control of layoffs,” the repeal of the Pasqua laws, a social welfare program (adopted by the Socialist Party in our three conventions of 1996) capable of “making a difference,” of mobilizing. Now is not the time to “unpack everything”; what is necessary is a balance sheet, no more, just what is needed for correction, for a change to rediscover our victorious voice. We have less than a month to succeed in that. All together, in having notice of the meaning of the people’s message which has been transmitted to us in such a brutal manner.

Addendum: No to Presidentialism!

THE PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEM of the Fifth Republic is decidedly not democratic. Nothing should count more than the legislative elections, a national assembly that proportionately respects the true political opinions prevailing in the country. To personalize politics is to depoliticize people. Thus we have a “President” elected with 19 percent of votes in the first round, and with more votes from his adversaries than from his partisans in the second round. Great results from an election that was supposed to create order and that polarized the political life of the two camps under one man. It is nothing but an absolute, risky proportional representation, and there is not even the possibility of a three-way election on the second round, as in the legislative elections, in order to make up for a “disaster.”

Desecrating the very nature of the presidential elections? Fewer voters? Distorted issues? We have no right to complain — we have the most archaic election that there is. We are the only ones in Europe to have this Republican-Monarchist system, whereby we get together 40 million voters to choose one man on the strength of his appearance, his neckties, his look, and with a brief sugar-coated summary of his ideas. This is like a Zulu rite, a mediatized High Mass; it is a system incapable of the least truth; it is depoliticizing; it profoundly weakens discussion; it keeps citizens from showing their opinions; it obliterates all nuance; above all it feeds the leading apprentices of the Presidential stables; and finally it ends up with everything contrary

to everything that was intended: instead of polarizing the main forces of the Right and of the Left, it allowed 0.5 percent of the voters in the contest, to choose a false and a dangerous way.

And so the worst of presidents, because of this unspeakable system, has been re-elected triumphantly when he should have had to answer his judges.

But why then has Lionel Jospin “turned back” the calendar? Why not straighten out democratically the electoral constituencies after the 1999 census? Why not introduce proportional representation, if only in part?

Now the French rightly think, with 70 percent of the people polled, that the main election is the parliamentary election. They are right, after five years of experience in which the Prime Minister of the Left never missed an occasion to explain himself to the deputies. Let us draw, then, some conclusions: it is the parliamentary regime, which is democratic. Let us reinforce it. We shouldn't be afraid that Chirac will try again to make trouble after June 16; a Prime Minister of the Left will be able to act without risk that Monsieur 19 percent, having cheated his judges, would be able to prevent him from responding to the will of the French people. No to presidentialism, yes

to parliamentarianism!



TRANSLATORS' NOTES

1. In the private sector, 40 annual contributions are necessary to obtain the full retirement plan, but only 37.5 in the public sector, thanks to the strikes of Nov.-Dec., 1995, which prevented Alain Juppé, Chirac's Rightist prime minister from joining the public and private sector into 40 for all.

2. DSK — the book of former Minister of the Economy under Jospin, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, a member of the Socialist Party's right wing. Entitled *The Flame and the Ash*, the book sets forth a social-liberal agenda.

3. Medef — mouvement de défense des entreprises francais, main capitalist organization, similar to the U.S. National Association of Manufacturers.

4. An unacceptable text signed by Chirac and Jospin in Barcelona March 13, 2002. This agreement aims to prolong by five years the retirement age throughout all Europe.

Translated from the French by Marvin and Charlotte Mandell.

EDITORS' NOTE: Gérard Filoche's article was written shortly before the legislative elections.

Hatred vs. Humanity in Gujarat

Justin Podur

There is very real grievance here. And the fascists didn't create it. But they have seized upon it, upturned it and forged from it a hideous, bogus sense of pride. They have mobilized human beings using the lowest common denominator—religion. People who have lost control over their lives, people who have been uprooted from their homes and communities who have lost their culture and their language, are being made to feel proud of something. Not something they have striven for and achieved, not something they can count as a personal accomplishment, but something they just happen to be. Or, more accurately, something they happen not to be.

Arundhati Roy¹

THE RIOTS THAT STARTED in February 2002 and raged for over a month in Gujarat, India, abated by April. They claimed hundreds, perhaps thousands of lives. Tens of thousands have been displaced. The terms in the newspapers, “Hindu-Muslim violence,” and “communal riots,” offer an explanation that is easy² — different religions, ancient hatreds, flaring up once again in murderous riots — but there was more going on here than two distrustful communities and their hatred for one another.

The Incident

THE INCIDENT THAT STARTED THE VIOLENCE took place on February 27, 2002.³ A train, the Sabarmati Express, pulled into the Godhra train station. Among the passengers were a large group of *karsevaks*.

Karseva means “service,”⁴ and the *karsevaks* were people traveling to Ayodhya to build a temple to a Hindu god, Ram. In 1992, thousands of *karsevaks* had journeyed from various parts of India and destroyed a Muslim mosque in Ayodhya, the Babri Masjid. The *karsevak* movement, led by two right-wing Hindu organizations, the Vishwa

Hindu Parishad (VHP) and the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), claimed that the mosque was built, hundreds of years before, on top of the exact birthplace of Ram. They claimed that they therefore had the right to destroy the mosque and build a temple to Ram on the site.

Godhra is a city of 150,000, almost evenly split between Hindus and Muslims, and quite segregated by religion.⁵ At the Godhra train station, the tea and snacks stall was owned by an old bearded Muslim man. The *karsevaks* started a quarrel with him and roughed him up. His 16-year-old daughter intervened. She was taken to train car S-6 by the *karsevaks*, who locked the door behind them. A group of Muslims gathered at the train station and pounded on the doors of the compartment. *Karsevaks* from adjacent compartments attacked the crowd. Members of the crowd collected gasoline from nearby vehicles, and set fire to the compartment, killing 58 people on the train.

From the Burning to Ethnic Cleansing

WHAT FOLLOWED THIS HORRIBLE INCIDENT was a highly systematic, calculated, unilateral massacre of Muslims in the city of Ahmedabad, led by VHP activists. Immediately after the burning of the train, VHP militants living nearby started torching garages in a Muslim neighborhood and burned down a mosque.⁶

We have a report on these events from a fact-finding team sponsored by the “Safdar Hashimi Memorial Trust” or Sahmat, a credible group of artists and intellectuals who have been active against communalism over the past 13 years:

At the outset it is important to underline the fact that the events in Ahmedabad do not fit into any conceivable definition of a communal riot. All evidence suggests that what happened there was a completely one sided and targeted carnage of innocent Muslims, something much closer to a pogrom or an ethnic cleansing.

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Moreover, the selective violence that was perpetrated was done with remarkable precision, suggesting meticulous planning and collation of information over a protracted period, rather than the spontaneous mob frenzy characteristic of a communal riot. It also clearly indicates collusion and not merely indulgence of the state machinery and the ruling political establishment. The condemnable Godhra massacre was of course the trigger in this case. But the point is that it could have been anything else: any provocative act on the part of any Muslim individual or group, possibly even of a lesser magnitude, would have led to similar consequences. The ground for this communal genocide was cleared in Gujarat much prior to the Godhra massacre. It is noteworthy that the attacks on the Muslims in Ahmedabad and the rest of Gujarat started a day after the Godhra tragedy, further indicating that this was no merely spontaneous reaction, but one connected to the Vishva Hindu Parishad [VHP] Gujarat Bandh [a combination of a general strike and a demonstration] call on 28th February.⁷

The report states that there were two principal forms of violence: “pogroms led by local-level VHP and Bajrang Dal [the VHP youth wing] activists” and “police firing on unarmed Muslims.” Often the two were coordinated, as in this example:

[A] major organized attack was carried out on a Muslim settlement at Sundaramnagar near the Bapunagar locality. A visit to the affected area, disclosed a similar pattern of attack, from the eyewitness accounts. A local *madrassa* situated near the boundary of the settlement was attacked by a mob of nearly 15,000 accompanied by the police who fired at the Muslims who tried to offer resistance. Truckloads of LPG [liquefied propane gas] cylinders were brought and used to cause explosions inside the buildings. Trucks were also used to batter down the boundary wall to create a breach for the rioters to enter. A pitched battle was fought here between the Muslim inhabitants and the rioters who had surrounded them from three sides, for nearly 36 hours. During this period fresh batches of rioters were reportedly brought in luxury buses and fatigued ones taken away. Finally the resistance collapsed and the Muslim dwellers had to run away for their lives. The rioters entered into the settlement from all sides and carried

out loot and arson on a large scale using petrol bombs and gas cylinders. Most of the dwellings in the settlement as well as private vehicles like scooters, bicycles or auto rickshaws were burnt completely. Even metallic furniture and ceiling fans had melted under the impact of the explosions.

The graffiti left behind by the rioters on the charred walls of the completely burnt madarassa at *Sundaramnagar* boasted of the police support:

Yeh andar ki bat hai

Police hamarey saath hai.

[This is inside information, the police is with us].

Jaan se mar dengey

Bajrang Dal zindabad

Narendra Modi zindabad.

[We will kill. Long live the Bajrang Dal, long live Narendra Modi.]⁸

Narendra Modi, incidentally, is the governor of Gujarat state. According to the report, Sundaramnagar was not the only place that suffered such terror. The attacking mobs were frequently huge, with core groups who acted as if they were highly trained and prepared for the job. They knew exactly which places to attack: “In instance after instance, we saw Muslim shops, workshops, and flats burnt and looted while the neighboring Hindu owned properties were untouched.” They were led by known activists from the VHP and the Bajrang Dal, who committed these crimes in the open, not fearing arrest. The idea was obviously “to kill and brutalize a particular community, irrevocably damage its economic interests, and force it out of earlier settlements to existing Muslim ghettos.” “Ethnic cleansing” is therefore a more apt term than “communal rioting” for what happened in Gujarat.

There are perhaps 70,000 Muslims who have been rendered homeless by the riots, staying in 20-odd relief camps around Ahmedabad. There were also Hindu victims of the riots who have also been rendered homeless, and “while a Deputy Collector is in charge of the government run relief camp at *Kankaria* for the Hindu victims, the larger camps run for the Muslims have virtually no official support. No senior official or politician had visited the larger Muslim

camps till as late as 11th March.”⁹ The camps are being run by independent NGOs and community leaders with little government help. The rations are inadequate. One camp has a single toilet to serve 9,000 people. There are reports that VHP activists are playing audio cassettes near the camps to terrorize the refugees even further.

The Ideology and Model

THE EVIDENCE SUGGESTS that the ‘rioting’ was a highly systematic, organized campaign of ethnic cleansing, terror, and murder. Any such campaign is motivated by ideology and by organizational methods and models. The RSS, VHP, and their electoral counterpart, the Bharatiya Janata Party or BJP (the party that forms the government of Gujarat and leads the national governing coalition as well), are definitely acting according to a model.

A demonstration of the model comes from an anonymous pamphlet (actually signed “a true Hindu Patriot”) that is being circulated, a translation of which is produced in the Sahmat report:

Economic boycott is the only solution! The anti-national elements use the money earned from the Hindus to destroy us! They buy arms! They molest our sisters and daughters! The way to break the back-bone of these elements is: An economic non-cooperation movement...

From now on I will not buy anything from a Muslim shopkeeper! I will not sell anything from my shop to such elements! Neither shall I use the hotels of these anti-nationals, nor their garages! I shall give my vehicles only to Hindu garages!; From a needle to gold, I shall not buy anything made by Muslims, neither shall we sell them things made by us! Boycott wholeheartedly films in which Muslim hero-heroines act! Throw out films produced by these anti-nationals! Never work in offices of Muslims! Do not hire them! Do not let them buy offices in our business premises, nor sell or hire out houses to them in our housing societies, colonies or communities. I shall certainly vote, but only for him who will protect the Hindu nation. I shall be alert to ensure that our sisters-daughters do not fall into the ‘love-trap’ of Muslim boys at school-college-workplace! I shall not receive any education or training from a Muslim teacher!¹⁰

The pamphlet is a succinct summary of the tactics and the ideology of this movement. And if it looks familiar to a student of European history, that’s because it was consciously designed that way, from the Hindu Right’s very inception. Indeed, Marzia Casolari reports:

The existence of direct contacts between the representatives of the (Italian) fascist regime, including Mussolini, and Hindu nationalists demonstrates that Hindu nationalism had much more than an abstract interest in the ideology and practice of fascism. The interest of Indian Hindu nationalists in fascism and Mussolini must not be considered as dictated by an occasional curiosity, confined to a few individuals; rather, it should be considered as the culminating result of the attention that Hindu nationalists, especially in [the state of] Maharashtra, focussed on Italian dictatorship and its leader. To them, fascism appeared to be an example of conservative revolution. This concept was discussed at length by the Marathi press right from the early phase of the Italian regime.¹¹

Thus, in the diaries of Moonje, one of the founders of the RSS, one can find passages about his visit to Italy in 1931 like this: “Italians, by nature, appear ease-loving and non-martial, like the Indians generally. They have cultivated, like Indians, the work of peace and neglected the cultivation of the art of war. Mussolini saw the essential weakness of his country and conceived the idea of the Balilla organization... The idea of fascism vividly brings out the conception of unity amongst people . . . India and particularly Hindu Indians need some such institution.”¹²

Madhav Sadashiv Golwalkar, another early RSS intellectual, wrote a book in 1938 called *We or Our Nationhood Defined*. That book, sometimes called the RSS’s Bible, is also a good window into the ideology underlying the movement. In another example of how the movement borrowed from the worst of the European tradition: “To keep up the purity of the Race and its culture, Germany shocked the world by her [sic] purging the country of the Semitic Races — the Jews. Race pride at its highest has been manifested here. Germany has also shown how well nigh impossible it is for Races and

cultures, having differences going to the root, to be assimilated into one united whole, a good lesson for us in Hindusthan to learn and profit by.”¹³

The model, then, comes out of the pages of the European fascist organizations of the 1930s. In Moonje’s own words, “In fact, leaders should imitate the youth movements of Germany and the Balilla and Fascist organizations of Italy. I think they are eminently suited for introduction in India, adapting them to suit the special conditions.”¹⁴

So who is adapting them to India’s ‘special conditions’? And how does Indian fascism work?

Hindutva: The Answer to India’s ‘Special Conditions’

AT A MORE GENERAL LEVEL THAN FASCISM, the Hindu Right’s project is an “effort to convert Hindus into a ‘proper’ modern nation and a conventional ethnic majority and it has as its underside the story... of corresponding efforts to turn the other faiths of the subcontinent into proper ethnic minorities and well-behaved nationalities.”¹⁵

The motivation to do this is easy enough to understand by looking at the demographics of the movement. “Communalism is an urban phenomenon, whose roots may be traced to the middle and lower classes; peasants, workers, and upper class elites are seldom afflicted by communalism.” The groups who agitate on communal lines come from a class that is looking for power disproportionate to its numbers, and developing an ideology to justify that power. A government, or a movement, can claim legitimacy if it can claim to be addressing and solving social problems. Instead of addressing such problems — and in India they are grave — the Hindu Right substitutes violence and scapegoating to mobilize people to their program.

The problem they face is that the lived reality of India isn’t like that: “The Pranami sect in Gujarat is in many ways closer to Islam than it is to many other sects within Hinduism; likewise, most versions of Sindhi Hinduism look terribly Islamic to South Indian Hindus and many Muslim communities in Rajasthan, Gujarat, and Bengal look disturbingly Hindu to Muslims in other parts of India,” and “earlier in Indian soci-

ety everyone was in a ‘minority’ and no one’s status as a member of a minority was ‘fixed’; in that one was invariably a member of more than one community.”¹⁶

The solution then is to use violence and terror and build up a history of atrocities that can make ordinary people who are living the fluidity and syncretism of South Asian history feel like they are committing a betrayal. Memories and images of Hindus murdering Muslim children, or Muslims burning trains filled with Hindus, of *karsevaks* destroying mosques, will eventually create the distrust that the movement needs. Their best weapon then becomes the organization of such incidents.

Another weapon is the reorganization of Hinduism itself. The formulators of Hindutva, the ideology of Hindu nationalism, were not in much contact with the diverse traditions of Hinduism in South Asia. They were, however, in touch with European imperialist scholarship about the subcontinent. If they built their political organizations on the fascist models of Germany and Italy, they built their Hinduism out of English orientalist scholarship on India.

Their use of Hinduism is entirely cynical. Indeed, the *karsevak* movement has nothing to do with devotion to Ram:

The choice of Ram as a symbol in the 1990s was determined by political strategy and cost calculation, not by religious fervour or theology or by any attempt to return to the fundamentals of the faith. It was a perfectly instrumental, hard-headed, secular choice made possible in an environment where the dispassionate, cynical use of the faith of others has acquired a certain political legitimacy.

The little-known story of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi’s sole visit to an RSS office is worth recapitulating here. Seeing on the wall pictures of the martial Hindu leaders of the past, Gandhi, a life-long devotee of Ram, had reportedly asked why a picture of Ram was not there. The elders of the RSS present there explained for his benefit that Ram was too effeminate a figure to serve their purpose.¹⁷

Some Scenarios

GUJARAT IS A STATE IN INDIA that is controlled by the BJP under Narendra Modi. India, meanwhile, is ruled by the BJP as part of a

coalition government. The Prime Minister of India, Atal Behari Vajpayee, is a man who has benefited immensely from the karsevak movement and the mobilizations of the RSS and the VHP. Both the federal and the state governments have been complicit in the ethnic cleansing that has gone on. They come, after all, from the electoral wing of the Hindutva movement and share activists, resources, and cadres. In their dealings with these issues as in their dealings with Pakistan, they have tried to paint all Muslims as terrorists and ride the anti-Muslim and 'War on Terror' currents that are flowing from Washington.

Their plans are obvious from their propaganda. The true believers truly want a unified, Hindu South Asia, and short of that, want all of India's 150+ million Muslims to move to Pakistan or convert to Hinduism. To put it briefly, it is a program of ethnic cleansing on a massive scale. The cynical leaders simply want to exploit the activists to put themselves into power, and use the activist muscle to stay in power. They know that by using demonization and polarization they may be able to win enough support to keep themselves in power. They hope that the international environment is also anti-Muslim enough to sit back while it happens, and perhaps they even hope that their counterparts in the Taliban, the Jemat e-Islami, and other Muslim fundamentalist groups (including such groups who operate in India and who are truly the Muslim counterparts to the VHP) will continue to use all the same weapons and techniques that they use, to make their job of demonization that much easier.

If they attempt a 'final solution', like their intellectual forefathers in Germany or their counterparts in Hutu Power in Rwanda, they could easily precipitate the South Asian nuclear war that analysts have feared for so long. There are hundreds of millions of Muslims in South Asia, and Pakistan would go to war if what happened in Gujarat were to happen on the massive scale that the VHP probably fantasizes about. Even short of this, we know that oppressed groups turn to terror when political options are closed. What would happen if the Muslim communities in India turned to terror, supported by Pakistan, in the face

of the Hindu Right's onslaught?

The spark, when it comes, may not even come from India. Because just as India is becoming 'saffronized' by the Hindu Right,¹⁸ Pakistan is suffering "talibanization," as has been discussed by Pervez Hoodbhoy, Tariq Ali, and others. The Muslim fundamentalists are in some ways the mirror image of the Hindu Right, and deploy their ideology and their terror in similar ways. The latest innovation that both have adopted is attempting to saffronize (talibanize) the Indian (Pakistani) army. That, too, could very easily precipitate the worst-case scenario.

The Only Alternative

AS THE HINDU RIGHT takes to the streets and acts from its positions of power to scapegoat, demonize, polarize, murder, and destroy, real people's movements are acting to actually solve the social problems and dislocations that make it possible for the RSS to recruit young men. As the National Alliance of People's Movements put it: "When the people and the country are facing the challenges of poverty, illiteracy and neo-imperialism, such acts by VHP and its cohorts are diverting the attention and energies of our people towards non-issues." These social movements are in a race, then, to offer real solutions to the problems the VHP exploits — and creates.

People's movements have many obstacles in their way. But people's basic humanity and decency are on their side. That humanity remains, even in the worst carnage the Hindu Right has been capable of wreaking. Attached to every story of a riot are stories of Hindus protecting Muslims and vice versa. The latest riots are no exception. A Hindu couple sheltered many Muslims in Ahmedabad. A group of Hindus protected a mosque in Bihar. A Muslim woman sheltered a Hindu film crew.¹⁹

In April 2002 a group of exemplary secular activists, including Medha Patkar from the Narmada Bachao Andolan, went to the Sabarmati Ashram in Gujarat to try to develop a strategy for dealing with communalism. As if confirming the nature of the violence, they were attacked by goons from the Hindu Right, while the police, for the most part, concentrated on harassing the activists and leaving the goons alone. The response from the National Alliance of People's Move-

ments, from Medha herself, was to call for the removal of Chief Minister Modi:

The Sabarmati episode should not be looked at in isolation. It is the continuation of what the communalists under various denominations of Sangha Parivar have started as a part of the Gujarat Pogrom. All this could not happen without the overt or tacit connivance of the state government led by Narendra Modi. It is imperative that Modi must be removed, in order to start the process of restoring sanity in Gujarat. The Prime Minister Vajpayee and the Bharatiya Janata Party must act. They should remove Modi as an initial mark of their respect for democracy and rule of law.²⁰

The short-term prospects are grim, and the battle is an uphill one. Still, the recent elections in Uttar Pradesh, in which the BJP did not win a majority, show that people do not invariably vote their communal identities, nor do they, for the most part, engage in communal homicide.²¹ Given the chance, the people and their movements could prevent the nightmare future that the communalists and fundamentalists of South Asia have planned. In Arundhati Roy's words:

Fascism itself can only be turned away if all those who are outraged by it show a commitment to social justice that equals the intensity of their indignation. Are we ready to get off our starting blocks? Are we ready, many millions of us, to rally not just on the streets, but at work and in schools and in our homes, in every decision we take, and every choice we make?

Or not just yet . . .

If not, then years from now, when the rest of the world has shunned us (as it should), like the ordinary citizens of Hitler's Germany, we too will learn to recognize revulsion in the gaze of our fellow human beings. We too will find ourselves unable to look our own children in the eye, for the shame of what we did and did not do. For the shame of what we allowed to happen.²²

NOTES

1. Arundhati Roy, "Democracy: Who is she when she's at home?" *Outlook India*, April 28, 2002. <http://www.zmag.org/content/SouthAsia/roy-gujarat-democracy.cfm>.

2. For one of the few reasonably nuanced accounts in the western mainstream media, see Nick Meo in the UK Independent, March 1, 2002. http://www.zmag.org/content/SouthAsia/meo_ahmedabad-riots.cfm.

3. This account, "Untold Story on Godhra Train Burning," March 4, 2002, has been printed in some Kerala newspapers. It is by Mukundan Menon, a journalist from Kerala, and sourced from Anil and Neelam Soni, reporters from *Gujarat Samachar*. Contact information can be provided on request.

4. Quoting Ashis Nandy et al., "Creating a Nationality": "Karsevaks are those who offer karseva, worship through work. There is no tradition of karseva in Hinduism. No Hindu temple has ever been built through karseva. In much of Hindu India, the word did not even make any sense till recently. The idea and the term have been borrowed from Sikhism and, as a result, have meaning only for north Indians." In Ashis Nandy, *Exiled at Home: comprising, At the edge of psychology, The intimate enemy, Creating a Nationality*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998, p. 6n.

5. Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Provocation Preceded Indian Train Fire," *Washington Post* March 6, 2002.

6. Menon, "Untold Story on Godhra Train Burning."

7. Dr. Kamal Mitra Chenoy, Vishnu Nagar, Prasenjit Bose, Vijoo Krishnan. "Ethnic Cleansing in Ahmedabad: A Preliminary Report." March 10-11, 2002. <http://www.mnet.fr/aiindex/sahmatreport032002.html>.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Excerpted from Marzia Casolari, "Hindutva's Foreign Tie-up in the in the 1930s — Archival Evidence," *Economic and Political Weekly*, January 22, 2000. The excerpt is available at <http://www.sabrang.com/cc/comold/mar00/document.htm>.

12. Ibid.

13. Excerpt from A. G. Noorani's, *The RSS and the BJP: A Division of Labour*, pp. 18-39} Leftword Books. Online at <http://www.sabrang.com/gujarat/rssible.htm>.

14. Casolari, "Hindutva's Foreign tie-up."

15. Nandy et al., "Creating a Nationality."

16. Ibid.

17. Ibid.

18. Saffron is the color of the RSS "uniform," that features khaki shorts and wooden sticks, imitating the colonial police.

19. ZNet, "Stories of Humanity in Godhra," collected by Raja Harish Swamy, 2002. http://www.zmag.org/content/SouthAsia/godhra_humanity.cfm.

20. NAPM statement on the Sabarmati Ashram Incident, 2002, posted on ZNet, http://www.zmag.org/content/SouthAsia/patkar_april7-2002.cfm.

21. Prof. Milton Israel, University of Toronto, personal communication with author.

22. Roy, "Democracy: Who is she when she's at home?"

Argentina: From Crisis to Collapse

Pablo A. Pozzi

A POPULAR JOKE IN ARGENTINA GOES LIKE THIS: At an international rowing match, the Argentine team lost to the Japanese, coming in an hour after their rivals. Analyzing this unforeseen result, the Argentine Rowing Committee's exhaustive analysis discovered that the problem was the team's formation. The Japanese had used ten rowers and a coxswain, while the Argentines had ten coxswains and a rower. They decided to totally revamp the team for the next year. Unfortunately, in spite of the revamping, the Argentines arrived two hours behind the Japanese. The next evaluation showed that this time the Argentine team had been composed of one coxswain, two assistant coxswains, seven section heads, and one rower, while the Japanese had shown up with the same team as the previous year. This time the Rowing Committee decided to really reorganize the team by introducing novel modifications that would result in increased efficiency levels so as to humiliate even Peter Drucker (a world renowned rower). However, this time the Japanese came in three hours ahead of the Argentines. The new analysis revealed chilling conclusions. The Japanese had disconcerted the Argentines by showing up, once again, with ten rowers and one coxswain. The Argentines had used an innovative vanguard formation including: one empowerment adviser, one downsizing supervisor, one procedures analyst, one technology expert, one controller, one time keeper, one coxswain, two section heads, and one rower. After several days of intensive discussions, the Committee decided to punish the rower by withdrawing all bonuses and incentives. In addition, the following year a new rower would be hired through outsourcing so as not to be ham-

pered by labor unions and inefficient labor contracts. Finally, the Committee concluded that there were four morals to this story:

- There is no justice in rowing matches;
- The Japanese use steroids;
- The rower was reactive instead of proactive, he was lazy, and did not stick to the vision, objectives, strategy, and tactics of the new system, and what is more he was not a team worker; and
- Because of people like the rower our nation does not progress.

The joke reveals popular perceptions in terms of the causes of the ongoing Argentine crisis that has resulted in economic collapse and default on the national debt. The average Argentine feels that the nation has collapsed, and that it is all the fault of the political and business leadership. This has led to a series of massive struggles, including a myriad of strikes by different labor sectors, and an electoral crisis. While the jury is still out as to what the immediate result will be, it is clear that the case of Argentina, which enthusiastically adopted IMF economic policies, demonstrates the failure of the neo-liberal model.

The data revealing the crisis is chilling enough. Argentina's foreign debt runs to about U.S.\$7,000 per inhabitant (\$230 billion), while the average yearly wage for a household of five is \$3,600. Almost 85 percent of wage earners do not reach subsistence levels. Consumer sales have collapsed, while small and medium business bankruptcies have increased 500 percent over the year 2000. According to official statistics, unemployment has climbed to 23 percent, with most of the industrial areas in the Greater Buenos Aires region admitting at least 43 percent, and the Northeastern provinces claiming close to 70 percent. National and provincial governments are unable to meet their payrolls. Investment fell 50 percent

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compared to the already low year of 1999. Most of the wealthy evade taxes. Foreign exports have dropped from 26 percent of GNP in 1998 to 3 percent in 2001.

On the other hand, transnational corporations have been making record profits. Argentine telephone lines are owned by France's Telecom, and by *Telefónica* of Spain. In 2001 Telecom's profit rate in Argentina was 15 percent a year, while in France it was only 5 percent; *Telefónica* earned 18 percent and only 3.89 percent in Spain. Repsol, the Spanish petroleum corporation, has increased its profit margin in Argentina four times since 1996, earning a billion dollars in profits in the first trimester of 2001. Pharmaceutical companies have increased their prices 308 percent over the past two years. Argentina's Central Bank calculates that local businesspersons have overseas deposits of over \$300 billion. While most productive investment gives, at best, an 8 percent profit rate, government bonds have a 16 percent rate of return; local capitalists own 40 percent, while the remaining 60 percent have been placed overseas. The net result of this is that there is almost no productive investment, while most industries move to Brazil.

Clearly the local bourgeoisie and foreign capital have taken a speculative characteristic. There is no sector of the bourgeoisie willing, or able, to stop the economic downswing. In addition, the national state is so weak that it is a captive of financial capital. Thus, it is unable to take any positive measures in terms of reactivating the economy. Most mainstream politicians took advantage of this situation by becoming corrupt, seeking to enrich themselves before the collapse at the end of 2001. Throughout 2001, then President Fernando de la Rúa's government was hoping that the United States would step in to avert a default, and impose an economic restructuring on local financial capital. In the meantime, it passed a law, called Deficit Zero that committed the meager national budget to paying off foreign creditors.

I.

POPULAR RESPONSE TO THIS SITUATION has been drastic. Over the past three years a sizeable unemployed movement has arisen

with thousands of members. This movement has organized barter clubs, has mobilized to stop housing evictions, and has struggled to obtain government aid and jobs. The movement's main tactic has been to blockade national highways and cities: there were 514 blockades in 2000, and 638 in the first half of 2001. In addition, labor carried out 414 strikes in the first six months of that year including four general strikes, ten national strikes by teachers, and eight by transportation workers. University students struck three times in 2001, occupying faculties and schools in defense of the university budget (assigned by the national government), and against the imposition of tuition (national universities are free in Argentina). There have been popular riots in townships such as General Mosconi and Tartagal. In these townships Repsol has large refineries that, rather than employ local oil workers, either import foreigners or bring people in from other provinces.

Government reaction to these popular struggles has been to increase the levels of repression. For instance, many route blockades degenerated into pitched battles with police forces. And, in Tartagal and General Mosconi, two thousand *Gendarmes* (Militarized Police) battled for a week against townspeople armed with slings and stones. Local and foreign corporations have set up private armies to deal with unrest by their workers, while the Army has expressed its willingness to deal with protesters, claiming that foreigners are trying to set up a local guerrilla organization (both the Colombian FARC and the Brazilian *Movimento Sem Terra* have been accused without any concrete proof).

Popular anger came together in the October 14, 2001, by-elections. Twenty-five percent of those registered to vote did not do so, while 27 percent voted blank or annulled their vote by placing slogans, messages, and even prophylactics in the ballot box. In the city of Rosario thousands cast their vote with a ballot with the picture of Osama bin Laden dressed in the local football team's shirt (polls show that 82 percent of Argentines share the grief of the WTC victims, but believe that either the U.S. government did it, or else that the attack was provoked by U.S. actions overseas). In several provinces

the blank ballots (an option meaning “none of the above”) came in either first or second. The Left, for the first time since the 1970s, gathered 12 percent of the vote, electing five congresspersons, in spite of the fact that it went to the polls divided into five different options. The United Left (*Izquierda Unida*), an alliance of the Communist Party and the Trotskyist Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores (MST), was the most voted option on the Left with over 6 percent of the vote. The Alliance governing party (UCR and FREPASO) lost close to two million votes, while the Peronists saw their tally reduced by 1.3 million in relation to the national elections of 1999.

The electoral results were telling, and still merit a more in-depth analysis. First of all, it sent a strong message to the government that the vast majority of the population repudiated its policies. In addition, it demonstrated that, in spite of the crisis, most people were willing to participate and make their voices heard. On the other hand, it also showed that most people expected the situation to be improved within the political system. This was one of the lessons derived from the fact that though the Left’s tally increased significantly, millions more did not choose this option. Clearly, though most Argentines repudiated speculative capitalism, they still believed in the capitalist system.

The De la Rúa government was not surprised by the results, as most polls indicated that this would happen. Those who were most surprised were the political parties on the Left. Most of their voters indicated that they chose this option in spite of the fact that these parties did not offer concrete solutions beyond “struggle slogans” (*consignas luchistas*). In addition, though these voters considered themselves “on the left” they did not adhere to any particular party or tendency, expressing strong criticisms of most of them. The challenge to the Left was now to generate options and forms of organization that would capitalize on this vote and channel the different struggles into an alternative to capitalism.

In spite of the electoral results, the government declared itself firm in its decision to continue with neo-liberal economic policies. Thus, it guaranteed continued chaos

and immediate economic collapse. At the same time the think tanks of the bourgeoisie considered the replacement of Fernando de la Rúa (considered a weak and indecisive executive) by a stronger president willing to do “what is necessary.” This seemed to imply a Fujimori-type government: strong and repressive, with an electoral façade, willing to carry out their program in the face of popular upheaval. They believe that they can rely on the heavily controlled media to generate support amongst two social sectors. First, on all those who have benefited from the trans-nationalized, speculative economy: the business class and its attendant consultants and professionals. And second, on the middle sectors desperate at their economic decline, their loss of status, afraid of social conflict, and confused by the dearth of viable systemic alternatives. These would be the social basis for an authoritarian state.

IN EARLY DECEMBER 2001, the Argentine economy and society entered into a technical default. In November, provincial governments issued millions in letters of credit in effect creating a third currency. This currency amounted to devaluation as many businesses accept it only for a percentage of each purchase. Also, then Economic Minister Domingo Cavallo decided to exchange Argentine debt bonds held by local banks for a new, lower rate, insured-against-default issue. By protecting local bondholders Cavallo made public the fact that a large percentage of Argentina’s “foreign debt” was not foreign at all. At the same time, bondholders overseas began taking legal measures to insure their investments. A battle ensued between Argentine officials, local and foreign banks, the World Bank, the IMF, and the U.S. Treasury whereas some recommended a default in order to restructure, others wanted to *dollar-ize* (phase out the peso and replace it with U.S. dollars as legal tender), and others wanted to devalue Argentina’s currency. In the struggle between different sectors of the bourgeoisie the average citizen became daily more aware that the risk of economic collapse was imminent. The middle class massively withdrew bank deposits and bought U.S. dollars beginning a run on bank deposits. On De-

ember 3, the government passed a law preventing depositors from withdrawing more than \$250 a week from their bank accounts. The result was panic and collapse of the chain of payments in small and middle-sized businesses. By saving the banks, the government had driven the last nail into the middle class' coffin. At the same time, the IMF decided not to free \$1.2 billion in the pipeline earmarked for Argentina, putting a stop to similar loans by the World Bank. Desperate, President De la Rúa accepted new IMF terms including a 10 to 15 percent reduction in the 2002 national budget amounting to \$4 billion, increases in taxes, and further layoffs in state employees.

The political establishment was at a loss in terms of what to do. A large sector of Peronism called for De la Rúa to resign, and his replacement by the President of the Senate, Peronist Senator Ramón Puerta. In the meantime, the UCR governing party collapsed into several fractious sectors, while the Argentine President openly called on the Armed Forces "to save the Nation, as they have done throughout history." Though the officer corps did not respond, most analysts believed that both the Peronists' and De la Rúa's statements constitute preconditions for a repressive coup d'état, returning Argentina to its pre-1983 era where military interventions were a common occurrence in political life.

In spite of the fact that the collapse was a foregone conclusion, most people initially reacted with shock, anger, and anomie. The middle class and small businesspeople had no solutions. The working class, hard hit over the past several years, remained relatively indifferent to the plight of other social sectors. The three labor federations (CGT, CTA, and MTA) called for a general strike on December 14, ten days after the new measures were announced. The Left remained strangely inactive while, in the midst of the collapse, sending a large delegation to the São Paulo Forum in Havana. Part of the problem of the Left and the progressive movement is that they believed that the October electoral results constituted a victory that changed the political panorama generating preconditions for sustained leftist electoral growth. Thus, on the one hand Argentines are faced with the

paradox that self-proclaimed revolutionaries are the main upholders of the electoral road. On the other hand, the cooperative movement and the bank *Credicoop*, which is owned by the Communist Party (PCA), are also Argentine debt bondholders and thus have a stake in guaranteeing the continuity of neo-liberal policies. The PCA's main political action was to call for a plebiscite "against poverty" in mid-December which, unsurprisingly, had little echo amongst the population at large, and even less capacity to channel people's anger.

II.

AND THEN, ON DECEMBER 19, the government announced the new budget with a \$6 billion cutback, over 50 percent more than the original announcement. It included massive layoffs, wage reductions, rollbacks in pensions, and cutbacks in teacher incomes. Thousands of people turned out to demonstrate, and demanded food from local supermarkets. In Cordoba City, municipal workers attacked City Hall and literally wrecked it. In Mendoza, Buenos Aires, Tucumán, Rosario, Corrientes, and Neuquén, people sacked supermarkets and battled the police. By the end of the day there were several dead, over a hundred wounded, and hundreds arrested. The government declared a state of siege. In spite of it, that evening the middle class turned out in force, banging pots and pans, to demand the resignation of the Minister of the Economy. On December 20, Cavallo resigned and was prevented from fleeing the country for Miami, eventually landing in jail. The demonstrations went on with thousands fighting the security forces in front of the Presidential Palace. By late afternoon the toll of dead and wounded had doubled, and President de la Rúa, finding himself isolated and repudiated by the population at large, presented his resignation.

The government claimed that activists and some politicians had worked to destabilize it. Reality is more complex. Though it is undoubtedly true that activists of all colors contributed to the mobilization, it is also true that the population had had enough. Many of the demonstrators were unemployed workers and youth from shantytowns. However, in Cordoba teachers, mu-

nicipal employees and Light and Power workers, in Rosario meat workers, in La Plata shipyard workers, and in Buenos Aires bus drivers were in the forefront of the demonstrations. But the majority were spontaneous demonstrators going outside their organizations. The main issue for concern is that, besides the Left, the extreme nationalist Right, linked to Colonel Mohammed Ali Seineldin, was very active.

III.

THE NEXT FIVE MONTHS saw a deepening of the crisis. Ramón Puerta gave way to Alfonso Rodríguez Súa as President, chosen by a Legislative Assembly composed of both congressional chambers. Rodríguez Súa was then the right-wing Peronist governor of small San Luis province, and his main asset was that he had few enemies amongst the legislators. He lasted a week. After a series of populist speeches, in which he insisted that Argentina would repudiate its foreign debt, he was forced to resign. Eduardo Caamaño, the President of the Chamber of Deputies succeeded him for two days, and then resigned in turn. The new Legislative Assembly chose Peronist Senator Eduardo Duhalde, the strongman of Buenos Aires province, as the new President. Though Duhalde has been accused of involvement with narcotrafficking, he relied on a relatively wide spectrum of political support: he was granted a blank check not only by a large sector of his own Peronist party, but also by most of the former governing alliance (UCR and FREPASO), afraid of the consequences of the crisis. The new President initially proposed a wide series of populist measures, including policies to reactivate the economy, freezing the dollar exchange rate, fostering exports, and technically defaulting on a large chunk of the foreign debt. His advisors were hoping that they could stabilize the situation while unblocking IMF and World Bank loans that were already in the pipeline. Ideally these funds would permit the new government to decompress the situation and reactivate the economy. Events proved very different.

The IMF demanded that the exchange rate be floated, that financial institutions be protected, and that the government guarantee juridical protection for businesses. In

order to unblock promised IMF funds the government heeded these demands. This meant that the rate of exchange of the peso quickly dropped 300 percent, so that one dollar was now worth approximately three pesos, while bank deposits remained frozen, and pressure was applied to judges to ignore business corruption. In spite of these measures, Duhalde received no funds from the IMF, which now demanded more belt-tightening measures, including the layoff of half a million state employees. On March 14, 2002, at a meeting of international banking representatives in Fortaleza, Brazil, the political attaché from the U.S. Embassy in Buenos Aires, Michael Matera, explained that "Argentina is well known for its crisis, but this is by far the worst.... [I]t is worst than Russia's. The main issue is hunger." And then he went on to specify that: "The worst thing that the international community can do is give Argentina more money. The U.S. Embassy is convinced that that they should not receive any money until they come up with a sustainable program... [However, the main problem is that] international economic thinking is incompatible with the Argentine mentality." The IMF now demanded that, for the Argentine government to receive foreign aid, 600,000 public employees (50 percent of the total) should be laid off. In addition, it strongly suggested that the Law of Economic Subversion be rescinded. This law is currently being applied to about twenty bankers and international businesspersons accused of embezzlement, committing fraud, and violating currency regulations. Specifically they are accused of sending billions in their depositors' money to their home offices, effectively threatening bankruptcy if they are forced to return this money to their clients.

At the same time, business contributed to destabilizing the situation by increasing prices in accordance with the dollar exchange rate, while laying off thousands, and maintaining salaries at the previous levels, in effect reducing real family incomes by 70 percent compared to 2000. For instance, though supermarkets have reported a 15.4 percent drop in sales over the past four months, they also indicated that revenues had increased 2.2 percent, mostly due to an average 20.9 percent monthly increase in

prices. In addition, most corporations increased capital flight with billions leaving Argentina from December 2001 to March 2002. Though the government attempted to increase tax revenues it failed to make business comply, while the population at large, faced with income reduction, began to massively evade. A good example of this is the agricultural sector. In March and April 2002, Argentina had a record harvest in soy, peanuts, wheat and grains, largely produced by small and middle farmers. These, in turn, sell their produce to large exporting corporations, such as Cargill and Bunge y Born. These corporations have refused, up to now, to pay into government coffers the tax dollars derived from exports. At the same time, they have bought the harvest paying the producers with 180-day checks in pesos. The producers, in order to plant the new harvest, have to buy things such as seed and fertilizer, payable immediately in dollars. The net result has been a huge windfall for these corporations, the impoverishment of the agricultural sector, and a loss of income for the government.

IV.

WHILE BUSINESS AND THE IMF were tightening the screws, and insisting on neo-liberal economic policies, the Argentine people continued to struggle. Immediately after De la Rúa resigned, most townships and city neighborhoods saw the emergence of *asambleas populares*. These are meetings where neighbors gather to protest, do politics, and try to deal with the crisis. Thousands of people turn out weekly in what is perhaps the best example of popular democracy in Argentine history. The main task of these *asambleas* is to guarantee people's survival; thus they organize barter clubs, soup kitchens, community purchases, and even small-scale wheat milling for flour. They also petition and demonstrate, under the common slogan "*que se vayan*" (that all politicians should go away). Since the *asambleas* are a relatively spontaneous phenomenon, they are also a very heterogeneous one. Some, such as the ones in the Buenos Aires neighborhoods of Almagro and Villa Crespo, gather hundreds of people who meet in the street, effectively blocking all traffic. These *asambleas* are well organized

in different committees, and carry out extensive neighborhood action. Other *asambleas* are relatively small, not surpassing a few dozen persons. In addition, their concerns are also varied, responding almost mechanically to their class composition. For instance, the *asambleas* in the Greater Buenos Aires area are mostly working class and thus concerned with unemployment and poverty. On the other hand, those in the affluent north side of Buenos Aires or in the Cerro de las Rosas in Córdoba city, are mostly concerned with actions to recover bank deposits. Over the past four months, the *asambleas* have formed regional coordinating bodies. For instance, the *asambleas* in the Buenos Aires area meet on a weekly basis in Parque Centenario. Representatives from 57 *asambleas*, representing thousands, come together weekly to air thoughts, exchange ideas, and attempt to coordinate action.

The Left participates extensively in the *asambleas*. Many participants are former militants and activists, but also there is a strong presence of the organized Left such as the three Trotskyist groups *Partido Obrero* (PO), *Movimiento al Socialismo*, *Partido de los Trabajadores Socialistas*, and *Movimiento Socialista de los Trabajadores* (MST), as well as the Communist Party, and nationalist left groups such as *Corriente Patria Libre*. In addition, the nationalist right also has a strong presence: Colonel Mohammed Ali Seineldin's group has cells in at least 24 *asambleas* in Buenos Aires city.

The Left's contribution to the *asambleas* gets mixed reviews from the average neighbor. On the one hand, everyone recognizes the importance of leftists in organizing the *barrios* and keeping the *asambleas* going. On the other hand, most neighbors seem tired of the endless bickering and undemocratic attitudes of the different leftist parties. According to Sergio, an activist in the *asamblea* of Liniers (Buenos Aires): "We are undergoing a crisis caused by two parties (PO and MST) who try to control the *asambleas* with their apparatus, and thus bring the struggle between apparatuses into the meetings. The result has been that common neighbors are not coming to the meetings any more.... [I]n the last meeting in

Parque Centenario they even came to blows over where we should all commemorate May first. Imagine 15 *asambleas* wanted to go with PO, 18 with MST, and 24 repudiated them both.” To try and revert this situation the *asambleas* have decided that only people actually living in the neighborhood can participate, and that only representatives with a mandate from an *asamblea* can speak and vote in the regional coordinating bodies.

In addition to the *asambleas*, popular struggle in Argentina has included many different movements. The best known is the *movimiento piquetero* who organizes amongst the unemployed in order to obtain government aid. Their favorite tactics are blockading highways, and massive mobilizations in front of supermarkets forcing them to hand out food. This movement is currently split into two factions: el *Bloque Piquetero*, that includes organizations headed by the PCA, PO, and independents; and the alliance of the organizations headed by the Maoist PCR (Revolutionary Communist Party) and by the center-left CTA Peronist labor federation.

A LARGE SECTOR OF THE LEFT believes that Argentina is in a pre-revolutionary situation. They compare the *asambleas* to the 1917 soviets and are convinced that people's anger over the economic situation is giving way to an anti-capitalist consciousness. They feel their analysis to be confirmed by the spectacular growth in left party affiliation over the past ten months. The unusual thing is that their political line is to call for elections now supposing that there is a good chance for the Left and center left to win. Unfortunately this analysis does not seem to bear closer scrutiny. The popular movement in Argentina remains fragmented, and though highly combative it has not yet given rise to alternatives that are accepted as viable by a sizeable sector of the population. The working class is mostly quiet, while the middle class seems mostly concerned with maintaining their standard of living, not with overthrowing capitalism. The unemployed seem to be the most combative sector, and yet their main concern is dealing with immediate hunger and poverty, rarely making the linkages between daily misery and unbridled capitalism. The organized

Left has grown significantly, but mostly through recovering those militants it had lost over the past ten years. Though the state is in crisis, and the government is clearly not in control of the situation, the bourgeoisie is still very much able to impose its will in terms of economic policy. The challenge that the bourgeoisie feels comes from a chaotic situation where the state clearly does not function and politicians seem relatively afraid of popular mobilization. Perhaps we could say, in Gramscian terms, that Argentina is facing an organic crisis.

Unlike the Left, who seem to have no tactical line beyond strategic slogans, the bourgeoisie has a proposal and a plan authored by the IMF and the World Bank. Their main idea is more of the same. Instead of concluding that Argentina's collapse implied the failure of neo-liberalism (after all, the IMF considered the Argentines their best students), the IMF is convinced that the changes did not go deep enough. As such, its idea is to reorganize the economy completely, reducing the size of the state sector even further, lowering costs of production (mainly salaries and wages), and increasing the rate of profit beyond the already high 15 percent on average investment. The problem is that to be able to do this, the political system has to be reorganized to contemplate the new reality, and to be insulated from social protests. MIT economists Rudiger Dornbusch and Ricardo Cavallero have the solution to this problem. Their idea is derived from the European and Japanese reconstruction governments after World War II. The Argentine government should be handed over to a tripartite team of specialists appointed by the World Bank, the IMF, and Argentina's creditors. Ideally, this government would include representatives of the Argentine Armed Forces and of the business community (fundamentalist neo-liberal economist Ricardo López Murphy has been mentioned). Should this proposal prove unviable, they suggest that the Argentine government hand over the Ministries of Economics, Justice, and Education to IMF-appointed specialists. These “ministers” would carry out policy, and have veto power over any legislation passed by Congress. Since all these variants imply the

danger of civil strife, the main idea is to buttress the new government with, on the one hand, a right wing political coalition including most of the Peronist Party and a good chunk of the UCR, and, on the other, with a "strong participation of the Armed Forces in the maintenance of order." The next few months will tell how these proposals develop. In the meantime the bourgeoisie goes on lobbying the military to intervene, while forming paramilitary "self-defense" groups ("to protect ourselves from violence").

Clearly time has run out for Argentina, and though those above cannot rule, those below have no possibility to take over power. Without clear alternatives for the people, and with the economy daily worsening, Argentina is open to Bonapartist solutions. In the meantime, popular struggles become more and more desperate and violent, and are met with increased levels of repression.

ON A POPULAR LEVEL THE MAIN ISSUE IS: has electoral democracy failed? Argentina has had elected governments for the past 18 years, after half a century of military dictatorships. However, most Argentines feel that the *demos* have little or no influence on those who govern. The October 2001 election results show that most people have not turned their backs on electoral democracy, and that the vote combines with popular struggle in an attempt to generate alternatives. Though this faith in elections has not yet ended, the *asambleas* show that there is a new development in Argentine democracy. Will it have the necessary time to consolidate into a viable popular alternative? Is the bourgeoisie planning a "preventive" *coup d'état*? In the meantime, as the bourgeoisie shows no signs of becoming responsive to social demands, the tendency in the near future is clearly in the direction of more and more violent protests, and increased repression.

Dubious Sources:

How Project Censored Joined The Whitewash of Serb Atrocities

David Walls

FOR 25 YEARS, PROJECT CENSORED has scanned the alternative press for hot stories that the mainstream media fail to cover. Each year it designates 10 top “censored” stories (along with the next 15 runners up), drawing on the work of Sonoma State University students and faculty, community volunteers, and a national panel of media judges to review the stories for relevance and accuracy. For many, these awards have become “Alternative Pulitzers,” commendations for excellence in independent reporting. At its best, the project has provided a vital corrective to bias and complacency in the corporate-dominated media.

I had been on friendly terms for several years with Project Censored’s founder, Carl Jensen, and, more recently, the current director, Peter Phillips. As manager of Sonoma State University’s foundation for a time, I cheered with Jensen when he brought in the first modest checks from that limited circle of progressive foundations and philanthropists willing to fund critical media projects. After watching Jensen run Project Censored out of his hip pocket, I thought it a wonder that he managed, with these small grants and an enthusiastic group of undergraduate students, to turn out an annual book with a commercial publisher since 1993, plus a 20th anniversary collection in 1997.¹ As Jensen made plans to retire in 1997, few sympathizers thought the project would survive for long. That Jensen could defy “founder’s syndrome” and turn his baby over to someone else was another small miracle.

When the highly improbable comes to

pass, you want to cut it a little slack. And Phillips, his anointed successor, is, like me, a leftist sociologist. When I had disagreements with Project Censored’s selections over the years, I shelved them, rationalizing that the media are not my field and I was busy enough with my own work. So when I surveyed the *Censored 2000* volume, I was surprised by my reaction to its treatment of Kosovo. Project Censored had given this single topic an unprecedented five story awards plus a commentary by Michael Parenti, who has served on Project Censored’s national panel of judges for several years. Even more troubling, for two years in a row Project Censored had whitewashed human rights atrocities committed by Serbs in the former Yugoslavia: *Censored 1999* denies gruesome crimes at the Omarska camp in Bosnia in 1992 and *Censored 2000* denies a massacre of civilians at Racak in Kosovo in 1999.

Reliance on dubious sources and a lack of rigorous research and fact-checking have tarnished the project’s reputation as a media watchdog. On the subject of the former Yugoslavia, Project Censored, I sadly concluded, had departed the terrain of the democratic Left for a netherworld of conspiracy theorists, Marxist-Leninist sects, and apologists for authoritarian regimes.

Pipelines and Lead Mines

ODDLY ENOUGH, *Censored 2000*’s top-ranked story on Kosovo is the least substantial: story #6, “NATO Defends Private Economic Interests in the Balkans.” Of the three articles cited, two are about oil from the Caspian Sea region, arguing that a pipeline has to be built through the Balkans because shipping oil across the Black Sea and through the Bosphorus would be too environmentally risky. There is legitimate concern

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over an excessive number of tankers passing the narrow waterway near Istanbul, but the remedy given most serious consideration is a pipeline through Turkey to the Mediterranean. Although a Balkan pipeline route has been the subject of a modest feasibility study, the U.S. government continues to support a pipeline proposed by BP Amoco and Chevron from Baku in Azerbaijan to the Turkish port of Ceyhan on the Mediterranean. That puts the pipeline through the Caucasus, nearly a thousand miles east of the Balkans.²

The third article cited in story #6 is by Sara Flounders, "Kosovo: It's About the Mines," originally from a July 1998 issue of *Workers World*, the publication of the Workers World Party (WWP), a Leninist sect formed by the late Sam Marcy in 1959. Marcy had left the Trotskyist Socialist Workers Party to give public support to the USSR for crushing the Hungarian revolt of 1956. The WWP went on to support the Kim Il Sung regime in North Korea, the Warsaw Pact suppression of "socialism with a human face" in Czechoslovakia in 1968, and the Chinese crackdown on the Tiananmen Square democracy movement in 1989. Flounders is co-director of the International Action Center, a WWP front group for which one-time U.S. Attorney General Ramsey Clark serves as figurehead.³

Flounders argues the Serbian-controlled Trepca mining complex in Kosovo is coveted by U.S. and European capitalists for its reserves of lead, zinc, copper, cadmium, gold and silver. Well, the prices of these minerals have been steady or declining for the last ten years. There's no world shortage of any of them; for most there's a glut. The fate of global capitalism hardly hangs on a polluted lead mine in Kosovo. Ironically for those who saw Slobodan Milosevic as the last defender of socialism, it was the Milosevic regime which attempted to privatize the Trepca complex and sell it to a Greek company, while it is the Kosovar Albanians who claim it is still state property.⁴ *Censored 2000's* story #6 amounts to little more than a conspiratorial fantasy.

Atrocious History

RECENT REPORTS HAVE UNDERCUT the credibility of *Censored 2000's* story #12: "Evidence Indicates No Pre-war Genocide in

Kosovo and Possible U.S./KLA Plot to Create Disinformation." On January 16, 1999, the bodies of some 45 victims were found at Racak, Kosovo, and documented at the sites where they were found by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Some 23 of the bodies had been found together in a gully, victims of an apparent massacre. U.S. diplomat William Walker led a group of reporters to the site and charged that Serbian police had killed the 45 Kosovars. Serb officials countered that a battle scene had been rearranged by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to look like an atrocity. Walker has an unsavory reputation from his days in El Salvador, but there is no evidence that he had anything to do with staging an atrocity. As a European Union Forensic Expert Team was already conducting investigations in Kosovo, its Finnish Director, Dr. Helena Ranta, was asked by the OSCE to help perform autopsies on 40 of the victims who had been moved to Pristina. Her initial report on the autopsies by the team was completed on March 17, 1999 and noted that there was "no indication of the people being other than unarmed civilians."⁵ Some skepticism about the Racak event may have been warranted at this time, but Project Censored should have reserved judgment until the forensic research was completed.

Dr. Ranta's EU Forensic Expert Team returned to Racak in November 1999 and March 2000 to recover additional evidence at the gully where the 23 bodies were found. *Newsweek* broke a story in its April 24, 2000 issue that the team had discovered bullets in the gully, confirming that the killing was indeed a massacre as earlier reported.⁶ Dr. Ranta presented the final report of the team to the EU's Western Balkans Working Group in Brussels on June 21, 2000. The report was sealed and delivered to the ICTY in the Hague, where it became part of the evidence leading to an indictment of Milosevic. Serb officials and their allies continued attempting to spin the interpretation of the Racak killings as a hoax, arguing that the autopsies produced no definitive evidence of a massacre.

As three colleagues of Dr. Ranta's in Helsinki prepared to publish an article in the journal *Forensic Science International* on the Racak victim autopsies, the *Berliner*

Zeitung repeated the claim that the autopsies showed no evidence of a massacre and that this was the final report on the matter. In fact, the *FSI* article, based only on the early 1999 autopsies, made no judgment about whether a massacre had occurred or not. This story was then repeated in the U.S. by the organization Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), by Martin Lee in the *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, and others.⁷

Under pressure in Europe to counter these interpretations, the Council of the EU declassified the Executive Summary of the final report of the EU Forensic Expert Team in Kosovo in February 2001. The summary notes that bullets and bullet fragments had been found in the gully where photographs taken at the time showed the bodies to be positioned, and that DNA evidence on the bullets connected them to the bodies autopsied. In a separate interview, Dr. Ranta estimated the bodies had been shot from a distance of a couple of meters. The evidence confirmed that an atrocity had been committed.⁸

Project Censored also highlighted three additional stories on Kosovo in *Censored 2000*: #10, #20, and #22, which variously blame the war over Kosovo on the U.S., NATO, the IMF, the World Bank, and U.S. and German arms dealers. Sources for these stories include two of the most prolific apologists for Serbia: Paris-based writer Diana Johnstone (#10) and University of Ottawa economics professor Michel Chossudovsky (#s 20 and 22). Johnstone, once the respected European correspondent for *In These Times*, was also a source for the dubious Balkan oil pipeline tale in story #6.

What these three stories and Michael Parenti's commentary (ch. 6) lack is a balanced historical perspective on the last decade of war in the former Yugoslavia. Two points should be highlighted. First, and most importantly, the unraveling of Tito's multi-ethnic and politically balanced Yugoslavia was begun by Milosevic when he moved to end the autonomy of Kosovo and Vojvodina provinces in 1989. Kosovo's Albanians lost their legislature, their Albanian-language schools and employment opportunities, and became second class citizens in a region where they were a 90 percent majority. Milosevic refused for a decade to deal with Ibrahim Rugova, the leader of a popular

nonviolent movement to restore rights for Kosovo's Albanians. These actions were interpreted by the other republics of Yugoslavia as an attempt by Milosevic to establish Serbian domination of the entire country. Although there are villains on all sides of the Yugoslavian wars, Milosevic had the most power within the confederation and the greatest responsibility for its collapse.

Second, NATO intervention in Kosovo followed a brutal war in Bosnia, which reached its nadir in Srebrenica, a UN-protected "safe area," in July 1995. Some 300 lightly armed Dutch troops in the UN force were pushed aside by heavily armed Bosnian Serb forces, and 7,000 unarmed Bosnian Muslim men and boys were marched off and killed. Some 4,500 bodies were recovered by mid-2001.⁹ This event is widely acknowledged to be the largest atrocity to occur in Europe since the end of World War II. Bosnian Serb general Radislav Krstic was tried by the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the Hague, and was convicted of genocide in August 2001 for his responsibility for this slaughter.¹⁰

In light of the centrality of the Srebrenica atrocity, it shows breathtaking audacity for Michael Parenti in his *Censored 2000* commentary to refer to Srebrenica only to mention killings by Bosnian Muslims in the area in 1992, three years before the infamous massacre. In his comments appearing as chapter 6, "The Media and their Atrocities," Parenti writes disparagingly about accounts of atrocities in Bosnia: "Hyperbolic labeling takes the place of evidence: 'genocide,' 'mass atrocities,' 'systematic rapes,' and even 'rape camps'—camps which no one has ever located." (p. 208) Parenti continues this denial in his recent book, *To Kill a Nation*.¹¹

To the contrary, solid evidence of systematic rape was presented in the recent trial of Serb army commander Dragoljub Kunarac and two paramilitary leaders who were charged with presiding over the rape, torture, and sexual enslavement of dozens of women during 1992 and 1993 in the southeastern Bosnian town of Foca.¹² Sixteen brave Bosnian women had testified against Kunarac and his colleagues. Women's groups and human rights advocates around the world hailed the guilty

verdict by the ICTY, delivered in the Hague on February 22, 2001. For the first time, an international court ruled that the systematic rape of women in wartime must be considered a war crime and a crime against humanity. People on the Left ought to be equally enthusiastic about this precedent.

Interestingly, for someone with such strong views about contemporary Yugoslavia, Parenti has almost nothing to say in his several related articles and books about its principal post-WWII leader, Marshall Tito (Josip Broz). Tito led the first Communist country to break with Stalin in 1948, was a leader of the non-aligned movement, and supported interesting experiments in worker self-management. Perhaps Parenti's silence on Tito is explained by his greater sympathy for the Soviet Union, as evidenced in the chapter "Stalin's Fingers" in his *Blackshirts & Reds*, which attempts to belittle the crimes of Stalin.¹³

Practicing Denial

SHOULD I HAVE SEEN THIS COMING? *Censored 1999* selected as its #17 censored story, "U.S. Media Provides Biased Coverage of Bosnia." The primary article concerned the visit by British Independent Television News (ITN) in August 1992 to Bosnian Serb detention camps at Omarska and Trnopolje. The issue revolved around whether a widely-publicized photo of an emaciated Muslim man leaning against a barbed-wire fence presented a misleading picture of the camps. On August 5, 1992, the ITN team of Penny Marshall and Ian Williams, accompanied by reporter Ed Vulliamy of *The Guardian*, visited and filmed at the Omarska and Trnopolje camps, reporting that grim things were happening to Bosnian Muslims at the hands of the Bosnian Serbs running the camps. A still shot from ITN video of an emaciated Bosnian Muslim man standing behind barbed wire was picked up by numerous media around the world and used to illustrate various news stories on ethnic cleansing and brutality by the Serbs. The emaciated man was Fikret Alic, who had been transferred to Trnopolje from the Keraterm camp, where, according to an interview with Vulliamy, he had been ordered to help dispose of the nearly 200 bodies of men killed in the massacre in Room 3 on July 24, 1992.¹⁴

Omarska, Trnopolje, and Keraterm

were three notorious detention centers operated in 1992 by Bosnian Serbs near the municipality of Prijedor. Although Trnopolje had been cited by the ICTY as a place of systematic rape of women, in its description of its #17 story Project Censored commented, "American journalists who repeated unconfirmed stories of Serbian atrocities could count on getting published. On the other hand, there was no market for stories by a journalist who discovered that Serbian 'rape camps' did not exist." (p. 73) The ICTY indictment of the former mayor of Prijedor, Milomir Stakic, includes the following excerpts from descriptions of the camps:

The conditions in the Omarska, Keraterm and Trnopolje camps were abject and brutal. Bosnian Serb military and police personnel in charge of these facilities, their staff, and other persons who visited the camps, all of whom were subject to the authority and control of the Crisis Staff, killed, sexually assaulted, tortured, and otherwise physically and psychologically abused the detainees in the camps. . . .

At Omarska, prisoners were crowded together with little or no facilities for personal hygiene. They were fed starvation rations once a day and given only a few minutes to go to the canteen area, eat and then leave. The little water they received was often foul. Prisoners had no changes of clothing and no bedding. They received no medical care.

Killings and severe beatings of prisoners were commonplace. The camp guards, who were both police and military personnel, and others who came to the camp and physically abused the prisoners, used all manner of weapons during these beatings, including wooden batons, metal rods and tools, lengths of thick industrial cable, rifle butts and knives. Both female and male prisoners were beaten, raped, sexually assaulted, tortured and humiliated. Hundreds of the detainees, whose identities are known and unknown, did not survive the camp. . . .

Keraterm camp was located at a former ceramics factory in Prijedor. Conditions for prisoners were similar to those in Omarska camp. . . . Many detainees were executed in the camp. On one night in July, 1992, more than 150 military-aged men from the "Brdo" region were executed.

Trnopolje camp was established at the site of a former school and adjacent buildings in Trnopolje village. It was the largest camp and the location to which Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat women, children, and the elderly were taken. The hygiene fa-

cilities were grossly inadequate. Minimal rations were provided on a sporadic basis, with female detainees eventually being allowed to leave the camp to forage for food in the surrounding village. The camp served as the staging point for the mass deportation of all those who survived the initial attacks and camp regime. It also served a much more sinister purpose: the sexual assault, rape, and torture of many of the women detained there by camp personnel, who were both police and military personnel, and by other military units from the area who came to the camp for that specific purpose. In many instances, the women and girls were taken from the camp and raped, tortured, or sexually abused at other locations. In addition, many prisoners both male and female were killed, beaten and otherwise physically and psychologically maltreated by the camp personnel and other Serbs and Bosnian Serbs who were allowed into the camp.¹⁵

The ICTY trial of Keraterm camp security commander Dusko Sikirica ended with a guilty plea agreement in November 2001, and in March 2001 former Prijedor mayor Milomir Stakic was arrested in Belgrade and transferred to the Hague to stand trial for crimes committed at the three camps under his jurisdiction.

Weaving a Fabric of Deceit

SUPPORTERS OF THE MILOSEVIC REGIME and apologists for the Bosnian Serbs began a long propaganda campaign in the mid-1990s to obscure what really happened at the camps near Prijedor. Unraveling this fabric of deceit takes us along the fringes of the Stalinoid Left, and reveals how Project Censored got caught up in the whitewash. The impetus for the cover-up began with the trial of Dusko Tadic, the first case completed through conviction and sentencing by the ICTY.

Tadic was the former owner of a café in Kozarac, a town near Prijedor, and a member of the reserve traffic police. He was arrested in Munich, Germany, in February 1994 and brought to the Hague to stand trial for numerous heinous crimes, including the beating and torture of several men at the Omarska camp on various dates between June 18 and July 27 of 1992—the last of which took place within 10 days of the visit to Omarska by the ITN crew. The Tadic trial began in May 1996 and lasted through October.

The final witness for Tadic's defense was German freelance writer Thomas Deichmann, who appeared as a media expert, presenting an argument that witnesses against Tadic could identify him only because numerous news stories on German television had made Tadic's image well known. After a long string of prosecution witnesses had claimed to have known Tadic for years, Deichmann's testimony was evidently not persuasive, as the court issued a guilty verdict in May 1997 and a sentence in July 1997. Among the many offenses cited in the sentencing judgment for which Tadic was found guilty "beyond a reasonable doubt" was a particularly horrendous sexual mutilation of a man at Omarska.¹⁶

After the Tadic trial, Deichmann visited Trnopolje in December 1996 and talked with Bosnian Serb officials about the camp, which had been closed down shortly after the ITN visit in August 1992. He wrote an article for the German magazine *Novo*, which was then translated and published in the British journal *Living Marxism* in February 1997 under the title "The Picture that Fooled the World," claiming that the famous ITN photo of Fikret Alic had been staged to falsely portray the facilities as concentration camps and the Serbs as modern-day Nazis. Deichmann pointed out that the ITN news team was shooting from within a barbed-wire enclosure at men who had come to the fence to talk with them.

Living Marxism (later renamed *LM*) was started in 1988 by members of a British Trotskyist splinter, the Revolutionary Communist Party. In an article titled "Living Marxism—Festering Fascism?" British journalist George Monbiot described *LM*'s curious ties to right-wing writers and think tanks.¹⁷ Deichmann's article "The Picture that Fooled the World" is also reprinted in the IAC book *NATO in the Balkans*, along with chapters by Michel Chossudovsky, Lenora Foerstel, and IAC associates Ramsey Clark, Sara Flounders, and Richard Becker, and Workers World Party founder Sam Marcy.¹⁸

ITN filed a libel suit against *LM* for the charges in the Deichmann article, and in March 2000 a British court found that *LM* had presented no credible evidence to support its charges that ITN had set out to deceive its viewing public. The court awarded ITN a large

financial judgment of £375,000, bankrupting *LM*. Deichmann's well-traveled article next appeared in modified form—with a summary of his Bosnia story and general commentary on the impact of media on political leaders—in the magazine *Covert Action Quarterly* (CAQ), following an unusual set of events.

Terry J. Allen, the respected 9-year editor of CAQ, and her two assistants were fired in May 1998 by CAQ's corporate officers Louis Wolf, Ellen Ray, and Bill Schaap. Allen says she was fired because she "refused to be bullied by Wolf, Ray, and Schaap into publishing whacko-conspiracy theories and articles that served their agenda but failed to distinguish between facts and political fairy tales." Among the "inferior or polemical material" proposed by the publishers was "a story presenting Serbia as the blameless victim of Bosnian aggression."¹⁹ Under editorial direction from the publishers, CAQ then published Deichmann's modified article as "Misinformation: TV Coverage of a Bosnian Camp" in its Fall 1998 issue, along with an article by Diana Johnstone, "Seeing Yugoslavia Through a Dark Glass."²⁰

Meanwhile, Project Censored director Peter Phillips was invited to present a paper in Athens, Greece, in May 1998, at a conference which brought together a group of radical journalists, most of whom were anti-NATO and pro-Serb. Alternatively titled "The Media's Dark Age: a 21st Century Dialogue" or the "International Conference on the Ownership and Control of the Media," the meeting was co-hosted by the Andreas Papandreou Foundation and Women for Mutual Security (WMS), directed by Margaret Papandreou. The WMS affiliate in the United States is represented by Lenora Foerstel, an International Action Center activist. Other IAC speakers at the conference included Ramsey Clark and Sara Flounders, whose conference papers were published in *Censored 1999*, along with those of two other participants. Phillips met Deichmann on this trip and apparently accepted the credibility of his story on the Bosnian camps. Project Censored selected the Deichmann and Johnstone stories from the Fall 1998 CAQ for its #17 story for *Censored 1999*.

After *LM* was bankrupted by the ITN libel suit, the only place to find Deichmann's original article, with photos, has been Jared

Israel's website, *Emperor's Clothes*.²¹ Jared Israel also produced a 30-minute video, "Judgment," on the ITN visit to Omarska and Trnopolje camps, in cooperation with Deichmann and the Milosevic-controlled Serbian television station RTS. A military escort and an RTS video crew accompanied the ITN team, and RTS appears to have spent most of its time filming ITN filming the inhabitants of the camps. "Judgment" describes Omarska as a "detention center for POWs" and Trnopolje as "a refugee camp." Keep in mind that as a witness in the Tadic trial, Deichmann knew very well what the evidence was about atrocities at Omarska. Aging New Lefties may recall Jared Israel's earlier notoriety for helping destroy Students for a Democratic Society in 1969 as a member of the Maoist Progressive Labor Party.²²

WHAT SHOULD PROJECT CENSORED have known, and when should they have known it? Project Censored had ample opportunity to learn about the horrors at Ormarska, Trnopolje, and Keraterm camps. The Dusko Tadic trial outcome had been posted at the ICTY website since the announcement of the guilty verdict on May 7, 1997 and the sentencing judgment on July 14, 1997. Numerous articles and book reviews covering war crimes in Bosnia appeared in both the mainstream and the alternative press.²³ CAQ's firing of Terry Allen in May 1998 was well known among the alternative press and should have been taken as a warning signal by Project Censored. All this information was readily available long before *Censored 1999* went to press in late 1998 with its credulous acceptance of Deichmann's sectarian viewpoint.

Once committed to defending Deichmann's story on the alleged distortion of the Bosnian detention camps' benign character by the Western media, it was a small step for Project Censored to accept the interpretation of the January 1999 Racak atrocity in Kosovo as a hoax. In June 1999, well before Project Censored's judges had chosen the top censored stories for that year, Peter Phillips issued an op-ed piece titled "Disinformation and Serbia: U.S. Media Bias," in which he linked Omarska and Racak as examples of "demonize-the-Serb stories."²⁴

In my view, Project Censored needs to recover its grasp of a working distinction between

facts and ideology, between reporting and propaganda. I hope those associated with the project can review its mission and methodology and get it back on track to becoming a fresh, exciting, and serious source of criticism of the contemporary media scene.²⁵ If Project Censored chooses to oppose intervention in the Balkans, it can find grounds for doing so without falsifying history and denying war crimes.

NOTES

1. *Censored 1999*, *Censored 2000*, and *Censored 2001* are all published by Seven Stories Press in New York (www.sevenstories.com/); the 20th anniversary volume is titled *20 Years of Censored News* (Seven Stories, 1995). Project Censored's website is at www.projectcensored.org.

2. See "The Busy Bosphorus Is Likely to Get Even Busier," *New York Times*, January 28, 2001; and "Caspian's Oil, Chevron's Sweat: A Saga," *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2001, p. A14.

3. A. Belden Fields, *Trotskyism and Maoism: Theory and Practice in France and the United States* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1988), pp. 148-150; on Clark and the International Action Center, see Ian Williams, "Ramsey Clark, the War Criminal's Best Friend," *Salon*, June 21, 1999 (www.salon.com/news/feature/1999/06/21/clark/index.html) and John B. Judis, "The Strange Case of Ramsey Clark," *The New Republic*, April 22, 1991, pp. 23-29.

4. See the report of the International Crisis Group, "Trepca: Making Sense of the Labyrinth," at www.intl-crisis-group.org/projects/showreport.cfm?reportid=9.

5. See Dr. Helena Ranta's report on the autopsies at www.ess.uwe.ac.uk/kosovo/Kosovo-Massacres2.htm.

6. Joshua Hammer, "Unearthing the Truth," *Newsweek*, April 24, 2000, p. 49.

7. J. Rainio, K. Lalu, and A. Penttilä, "Independent Forensic Autopsies in an Armed Conflict: Investigation of the Victims from Racak, Kosovo," *Forensic Science International*, Vol. 116, Issues 2-3 (February 15, 2001), pp. 171-185 (available at <http://worldnews2.homestead.com/files/racakautopsies.htm>; *Berliner Zeitung*, January 17, 2001, available on the web (in German) at www.BerlinOnline.de/aktuelles/berliner_zeitung/politik/.html/1510.htm). For FAIR's statement on Racak, see "Doubts on a Massacre: Media Ignore Questions About Incident That Sparked Kosovo War" (www.fair.org/press-releases/racak.html); also Martin A. Lee, "More Bloodshed in the Balkans: The Bitter Legacy of NATO's 'Humanitarian' War," *San Francisco Bay Guardian*, March 26, 2001 (www.sfbg.com/reality/21.html).

8. The Executive Summary of June 2000 is available, along with related news reports and interviews with Helena Ranta, on the Balkan Witness website (www.glypx.com/BalkanWitness/racak.htm).

9. "Grave Found in Bosnia With 200 Bodies," *New York Times*, July 9, 2001.

10. Marlise Simons, "Tribunal in Hague Finds Bosnia Serb Guilty of Genocide," *New York Times*, August 3, 2001, p. A1 (available at www.nytimes.com/2001/08/03/international/europe/03BOSN.html); the ICTY judgment is available at www.un.org/icty/krstic/TrialC1/judgement/index.htm.

www.un.org/icty/krstic/TrialC1/judgement/index.htm.

11. Michael Parenti, *To Kill a Nation: The Attack on Yugoslavia* (London and New York: Verso, 2000).

12. Marlise Simons, "Bosnian War Trial Focuses on Sex Crimes," *New York Times*, February 18, 2001, p. 4; Marlise Simons, "3 Serbs Convicted in Wartime Rapes," *New York Times*, February 23, 2001, p. A1.

13. Michael Parenti, *Blackshirts and Reds: Rational Fascism and the Overthrow of Communism* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1997), ch. 5, pp. 76-86.

14. Vulliamy's reports on the Bosnian camps and on the ITN/LM libel trial are available on the web at www.guardianunlimited.co.uk/itn/. (Diana Johnstone was also represented in *Censored 1999* with an article supporting the #17 story.)

15. The Milomir Stakic indictment of March 13, 1997 is available at www.un.org/icty/indictment/english/kov-ii97031e.htm. See also Marlise Simons, "3 Ex-Guards at Bosnia Camp Are Sentenced by Hague Panel," *New York Times*, November 14, 2001, p. A6.

16. See the Tadic judgment at: www.un.org/icty/tadic/trialc2/judgement/tad-ts970714e.htm.

17. George Monbiot, "Living Marxism—Festering Fascism?" *Prospect*, November 1998; see also Matthew Price, "Raving Marxism," *Lingua Franca*, April 2000.

18. Ramsey Clark et al., *NATO in the Balkans: Voices of Opposition* (New York: International Action Center, 1998).

19. Amanda Ripley, "Fascist Lefties," *Washington City Paper*, May 22-28, 1998; letters between Allen and CAQ's publishers are available on the web at www.nettime.org/nettime.w3archive/199807/msg00031.html.

20. Johnstone's "Seeing Yugoslavia Through a Dark Glass: Politics, Media, and the Ideology of Globalization" is available online at www.covertaction.org/yugo3.htm.

21. www.emperors-clothes.com/images/bosnia/camp.htm

22. Check the references to Jared Israel in the index to Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974), and Alan Adelson's pro-PL account, *SDS: A Profile* (New York: Scribner, 1972). *Censored 2001* gave an award (#17) to a story by Chossudovsky and Israel; Chossudovsky's sympathy for Maoism is apparent in his book *Towards Capitalist Restoration? Chinese Socialism After Mao* (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), that concludes with hopes for a second cultural revolution. (p. 221)

23. See, for example, Mark Danner, "America and the Bosnia Genocide," *The New York Review of Books*, December 4, 1997, pp. 55-65—a review of books by Roy Gutman, Ed Vulliamy, Omarska camp survivor Rezak Hukanovic, and others (available at www.nybooks.com/nyrev/WWWarchdisplay.cgi?19971204055F); "The Evil at Omarska"—an excerpt on Hukanovic's experience—in *The New Republic*, February 12, 1996, pp. 24-29; and Eric Alterman, "Bosnian Camps: A Barbed Tale," *The Nation*, August 4, 1997, pp. 18-20—an article about the ITN libel suit against LM which challenged the substance of Deichmann's article.

24. Peter Phillips, "Disinformation and Serbia: U.S. Media Bias" (reproduced at: www.computec-int.com/bsc/war/archives/disinfo1.htm).

25. For links to further discussion in the alternative media of Project Censored's purpose and methodology, see Tim Redmond, "The Censored Debate," on the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* website, April 19, 2000: www.sfbg.com/censored-debate.

Angola and Venezuela: Reflections on the Dirty Work of the AFL-CIO

Paul Buhle

LABOR'S FAVORITE AFRICAN MASS-MURDERER is gone, and no one, not even his erstwhile ardent suppliers in the AFL-CIO, seems willing to express any regrets about his passing.

Jonas Savimbi, killed in February 2002, by government forces in Angola, was not quite a creation of the CIA. Before that nation declared independence in 1976, he led one of the guerilla armies, insisting upon Maoist credentials for his movement. Savimbi took Chinese funds as long as they were offered, but he quickly revealed that his leftwing or egalitarian inclinations — if they had ever existed — had been for show. By 1978, if not before, the AFL-CIO's intelligence apparatus had begun funding him and his army more heavily than anyone else on the continent. They continued doing so until Kirkland's fall from power in 1995, and if the relevant records in the George Meany Center archives are ever opened to scholars — as accountability requires of any democratic institution and decency requires of the labor movement in particular — much will surely be learned about the conspiratorial global behavior of labor's Star Chamber.

Why would Savimbi, now universally acknowledged as an authoritarian brute who never sought more than power for himself, have been described by labor spymaster Irving Brown as a “great fighter for freedom whose concept of democracy comes as close as anyone in Africa to our image of what is a free and democratic society”? It's a good question. Brown, who arranged almost a special 1980s issue of *Free Trade Union News* to rehabilitate Savimbi's unsavory reputation, testified that he'd known and

worked intimately with his client for two decades. Perhaps Brown was inadvertently suggesting that long before Angola's independence and before the guise of Maoism had been dropped, the CIA's man had been set firmly into place.

A more complete version of the AFL-CIO African story would return to an array of secret schemes, including a heavily-funded project of placing the famously corrupt Kenyan union leader, Tom Mboya, for a time regarded as Brown's African protégé, into the presidency of that energy-rich nation. But vastly more important than the rest was South Africa, and the lengthy and dirty struggle against anti-Apartheid activists. The story is decades-long, but the creation of the African American Labor Center in New York in 1985 was especially well suited for purposes shared by Reagan operatives of the sardonically titled National Endowment for Democracy and of the once socialistic, now neo-conservative Freedom House.

From the AFL standpoint, Nelson Mandela's African National Congress was the devil incarnate, its enemies (including the South African government and intelligence services) quietly welcomed as allies if occasionally warned against excesses. Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi, the South African government's favorite (and heavily funded) black opponent to global sanctions against Apartheid, served as favorite “inside” candidate to derail the ANC and COSATU, while Savimbi served as its “outside” candidate to protect South African (white) interests militarily, beyond the nation's borders. If never quite capable of overthrowing the Angolan regime, Savimbi could and did wreck the nation's economy and social services (his well-known specialties included attacks on hospitals and schools), accelerating a downward spiral of

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corruption and tribal rivalries.

Israeli interests deepened these issues without complicating them very much. As ANC leaders openly sympathized with the Palestinians, the South African regime, for its part, quietly established a community of interest with the Israelis (sharing, jointly with the CIA, intelligence and probably a good deal more). It was a sweet deal, and Savimbi swiftly recognized that he gained more leverage to make himself a semi-global player. Insiders used to say that Savimbi was the special favorite of Albert Shanker, who saw him as a sort of African Ariel Sharon, undaunted by the outcry against past and present war crimes. As early as 1976, at any rate, the Israel-obsessed and CIA-heavy tabloid of Social Democrats-USA, *New America*, demanded firmer State Department support for Savimbi. Because post-Watergate congressional concerns with human rights made the rebel Angolan a hard sell, the Reagan administration's "privatization" of foreign policy rendered the AFL-CIO International Department a good tool for African dirty work.

This certainly made for odd bedfellows. Southern Africa was not Eastern Europe, and labor leaders who for decades described themselves as champions of civil rights had a lot of covering up to do. It is unimaginable that Bayard Rustin, chair of SDUSA and among the AFL-CIO's most ardent apologists of any and all Israeli activities, was willfully blind to the brutality of Savimbi and to the hefty back-handed support for Apartheid's continuation. The machiavellian Irving Brown, whose conspiratorial activities stretched back to alliances with the French mafia (and beyond, to the creation of a short-lived lily-white, anti-UAW AFL auto workers union funded by his boss, Jay Lovestone) surely had no trouble with the moral end. Kirkland, a man with no real labor past outside the bureaucracy and in his rise to power essentially a creature of the intelligence agencies, would have had no problem, either. Ethical issues were never more than a smokescreen for his maneuvers. Rustin, whose own civil rights history at least until the middle 1960s had been so entirely different and so courageous, may have winced at the light that his behavior cast

upon his past. If so, he never let on.

One wonders. The death of Savimbi brings a certain closure (even the *New York Times* editorialists commented on it) in the CIA's sponsorship of past unsavory characters — never mind present or future ones — and the prospect of peace to Angola. The ecological harm wrought by the marauding army, the frequent population massacres, the sorry memory of Apartheid's links with American favorites, all this may now find some healing.

BUT PERHAPS ONLY THE LOCATION and the particular targets of AFL-CIA maneuvers have really changed. Recent events in Latin America and Washington, D.C., cast a dark shadow upon the reform of labor leadership. Katherine Hoyt and *Labor Notes* scooped the *New York Times* in revealing that the coup attempt against Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez had been preceded by a February "closed forum," sponsored by the AFL-CIO for the pro-business CTV union federation of Venezuela. It was closed for two good reasons: first, to keep representatives of the competing federation, the FBT, from getting into the room and asking questions; and almost certainly, second, to choreograph AFL-CIO cover for CTV plans to help businessmen overthrow Chavez.

Why would the Solidarity Center, successor to the CIA-dominated and thoroughly discredited AIFLD, return to the old tricks of Meany-Kirkland days? The answer is likely to be found in money and personal contacts. Most of the international funds for Solidarity Center operations come from the NED and its chair, former SDUSA leader Carl Gershman. And some of the heaviest lobbying and most vigorous foreign-policy spending by any union in its own right has been by AFT (guided from its home base, the old Shanker Machine at the UFT). The hawk (or Reagan) section of the AFL-CIO was definitely on the losing side in 1995, and before his death Shanker even threatened to withdraw the AFT from the Federation. But the hawks have their hands on the till.

As expected, voices from the UFT insist that the Venezuelan CTV is just the kind of union that the AFL has a duty to support. Are its leaders intimate allies with

the two pro-business parties of Venezuela, and did the union membership vote two to one for direct election of union leaders (but see that vote overturned by the old guard, which re-elected itself)? Never mind. Did the NED dramatically increase its funding for the Venezuelan opposition, including the business unions, when Chavez threatened to put the squeeze on oil and the White House squawked? Did some of NED's other recipients, yet closer to the oil businessmen, rush in to congratulate the coup plotters when the plan seemed to succeed? Never mind. Shades of Chile, where the AIFLD went all out to prepare the Pinochet overthrow of Salvador Allende. Shades of assorted third world countries across the world map where AFL reps, according to past CIA agents' own accounts, worked hand-in-glove with the Agency, supplying lists of activists for blacklisting, arrest, even torture and assassination.

Has this level of dirty work returned?

We don't know, although the chiefs of NED and AFT have never admitted past wrongdoing or any need to reform even the slightest since the Cold War. Control of population and resources was always the deeper issue behind the Cold Warriors' attacks upon Stalinism, and among some key figures, the logic behind the abandonment of the Third Camp for neocolonialism.

We do know that an AFL-CIO rep from the Andean region sought to stop members of the Nicaraguan Network from picketing the closed forum and thus embarrassing the Solidarity Center leadership. The CTV was corrupt, yes, the reasoning went — but it was going to reform. President Hugo Chavez was the real threat; and besides, competition from a rival Venezuelan labor federation was definitely not going to be accepted. In short: our guys may be corrupt and unrepresentative — but that's our alternative, the best money can buy.

We've heard it all before.

“Change the World Without Taking Power” **How Ridiculous! Or Is It?**

John Holloway

1. The anguish of the world has intensified.

SINCE SEPTEMBER 11, capital has celebrated its orgies, showing a violence and arrogance surpassing anything we have experienced in recent years. More than ever, it seems that the dynamic of capitalism is leading with terrifying speed to the destruction of humanity. More than ever, it is obvious that a radical social transformation is desperately urgent.

And yet, the more urgently social change is needed, the more impossible it seems to be. The terrible power of capital has made itself evident in recent months, both its military power and its power to convince people of its cause through the media. There seems to be no hope.

For many, being on the left becomes a prolonged moan. What else, when capitalism is so awful, when there is no hope, when dreams are dead? Left-wing analysis focuses on criticising capitalism, on telling us how awful it is, as if we didn't know already. We sink easily into left-wing melancholy, comfortable Cassandras predicting the downfall of humanity, knowing that nobody is listening.

But no, it cannot be like that. We see the horrors of capitalism, the bodies being dragged from the rubble of Palestine and Afghanistan, the millions of children living in the streets of the world, the 35,000 children who die each day of curable diseases, the obscenity of a world in which, in 1998, the assets of the 358 richest people were more than the total annual income of 45% of the world's people (over two and a half

billion). We see all that and a scream grows inside us, a scream so intense that there is no option: we cannot abandon hope for a different world. No matter how hopeless the situation, no matter how much we know that our hope is hope against hope, we have no choice: we must try to understand the world through the eyes of hope.

We have no option but to ask: how can we change the world? The horrors of the world force us back to that hoary old question of revolution. Lenin's old question (a hundred years old this year) is still there: what is to be done? Or better, what should we do? Many of us prefer to forget about the issue, or simply to assume that the old answers are valid. But the old answers are not valid, and the question is still there. The fact that we do not have an answer makes it all the more important to discuss the matter.

2. We cannot change the world by taking power. We have a whole century of experience to tell us that it does not work.

FOR MOST OF THE LAST CENTURY, efforts to create a world worthy of humanity were focussed on the state and the winning of state power. The main controversies (between “reformists” and “revolutionaries”) were about *how* to win state power, whether by parliamentary or by extra-parliamentary means. The history of the twentieth century suggests that the question of *how* to win state power was not very important. In all cases, the winning of state power failed to bring about the changes that the militants hoped for. Neither reformist nor revolutionary governments succeeded in radically changing the world.

It is easy to accuse all the leaderships of these movements of “betraying” the movements which they led. So many betrayals suggest, however, that the failure of radical, socialist or communist governments lies much deeper. The reason that the state can-

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not be used to bring about radical change in society is that the state itself is a form of social relations that is embedded in the totality of capitalist social relations. The very existence of the state as an instance separated from society means that, whatever the contents of its policies, it takes part actively in the process of separating people from control of their own lives. Capitalism is simply that: the separating of people from their own doing. A politics that is oriented toward the state inevitably reproduces within itself the same process of separating: separating leaders from led, serious political activity from frivolous personal activity. A politics oriented toward the state, far from bringing about a radical change in society, leads to the progressive subordination of radical opposition to the logic of capitalism.

The idea that the world could be changed through the state was an illusion. But, for many, revolution is so tightly identified with the notion of taking state power that the failure of changing the world through taking power means that there is no longer any possibility of revolution at all. The great merit of the Zapatista uprising — and the reason it has played such a key role in the current upsurge of struggle throughout the world — is that it breaks with that identification. The Zapatistas say that they want to change the world, to make it anew, but they reject the idea of taking power.

But how can we change the world without taking power? The very idea seems ridiculous. Perhaps it is ridiculous, perhaps we should get used to the idea that there is no alternative to capitalism, no hope at all. And yet it is difficult to accept that our children or grandchildren must live through the destruction that that means. We push on, then: how can we hope against hope, how can we think the ridiculous which is so urgently necessary, how can we change the world without taking power?

3. To move forward at all, we need to distinguish between two meanings of “power.”

ANY IDEA OF CHANGING THE WORLD must start from activity, from doing. Doing, in turn, implies that we have the capacity to do, the power-to-do. We often use “power” in this sense, as something good, as when a united

action with others (a demonstration or even a good article) makes us feel “powerful.” Power in this sense is rooted in doing: it is power-to-do.

Power-to-do is always social. Our capacity to do something always depends on the doing of others, no matter how individual our activity appears to us. I sit here at my computer and write this article. It feels like an individual act, yet I know that my doing depends not just on the writing of many others who have influenced my ideas, but on the doing of the people who made my computer, of those who installed the electricity in the house, of those who are generating the electricity, of those who developed the domestic use of electricity and so on, and so on. Doing is always part of a social flow of doing across space and time, in which the doing of others is the means of my doing, and in which my doing receives social validation through its relation to the doing of others.

The question of the social flow of doing is crucial, because power-to is transformed into something very different, power-over, when this flow is broken. This happens with capital. In capitalism, capitalists appropriate what has been done and say “this is mine!” With this, the social flow of doing is broken. By taking from us that which has been done, capital separates us from the means of doing (and therefore from the means of survival). To live, we are now forced to go cap in hand to the capitalist and offer to sell to him our power-to-do (now power-to-labor, labor power). We are individualized, cut off from the sociality that gives meaning to our lives, social validation to our doing.

Power-to is transformed into power-over. Those who have seized the done now control the doing of others. They now appear as the Doers of society, and those whose doing is controlled by others become invisible, without face, without voice. Power-to-do no longer appears to be part of a social flow, but exists in the form of an individual power. For most people the power-to-do things becomes transformed into its opposite, powerlessness, or, at most, the power-to-do things determined by others. For the powerful, power-to-do becomes transformed into power-over, the power to tell others what to do — and therefore also a depen-

dence upon the doing of others.

We can say, then, that in present society, power-to exists in the form of its own negation, as power-over. Power-to exists in the mode of being denied. This does not mean that it ceases to exist. It exists, but it exists as denied, as invisible, in antagonistic tension to its own form of existence as power-over.

Why is this distinction between the two meanings of power important? It explains why we do not want to “take power” — a term that does not make any distinction between their power and ours. But the fact that we do not want to “take power” does not mean that we are “powerless.” It is just that our power is fundamentally different from capitalist power. Capitalist power, power-over, is a movement of separating, of separating the done from the doing, of separating the doers from the sociality of doing, the doers from one another, and so on. Power-to, on the other hand, is the opposite movement, a movement of uniting, a movement of making direct and explicit the connection between our doing and the social flow of doing as a whole. Class struggle, in other words, is crucially a-symmetrical. Our struggle does not match theirs. In this sense, the notion of “class war” is misleading: war suggests a conflict between two armies, one army being more or less the same as the other, more or less the mirror image of the other. But if we think of our struggle as being the mirror image of capital, then we simply reproduce capital within our own struggle. Changing the world is not a question, then, of taking power, but of winning control of the social flow of our doing. For the same reason, it seems to me better not to speak of our power as a counter-power to capital (a term which leaves open the idea of a mirror image), but rather as anti-power, something quite different from their power.

4. What makes it all more difficult is that when capital breaks doing, when it separates the done from the process of doing, it fragments every aspect of our existence. The separation of the done from the doing and from the doers means that people relate to one another no longer as doers, but as owners (or non-owners) of the done (seen now as a

thing divorced from doing). Relations between people exist as relations between things, and people no longer exist as doers but as the passive bearers of things.

THIS IS WHAT MARX REFERS TO as alienation or (later) fetishism, and is variously referred to by other authors as reification (Lukács), discipline (Foucault) or identification (Adorno). All of these terms make it clear that power-over cannot be understood as something external to us, but that it reaches into every aspect of our existence.

Doing is converted into being: this is the core of power-over. Whereas doing means that we are and are not, the breaking of doing means that the “and are not” is torn away. We are left just with “we are”: identification. “We are not” is either forgotten or treated as mere dreaming. Possibility is torn from us. Time is homogenized. Existence is torn from constitution and given a solidity, a duration, as though that which exists (capitalism included) did not depend on its constant re-constitution. We are trapped in a world of duration, a world which simply “is.” The future is now the extension of the present, the past the preparation for the present. All doing, all movement, is contained within the extension of what is. It might be nice to dream of a world worthy of humanity, but that is just a dream: this is the way things are. The rule of power-over is the rule of “that is the way things are,” the rule of identity. The idea of making a radically different world seems absurd. Doesn’t it?

Power-over sinks into the depths of our selves. We, as doers separated from our own doing, re-create our own subordination. As workers we produce the capital that subordinates us. As university teachers, we play an active part in the identification of society, in the transformation of doing into being. When we define, classify or quantify, or when we hold that the aim of science is to understand society as it is, or when we pretend to study society objectively, as though it were an object separate from us, we actively participate in the negation of doing, in the separation of subject and object, in the divorcing of doer from done.

Fetishism screws our anguish to a pitch of unbearable intensity. The concept points

to the way in which capitalism dehumanizes us, so that revolution is desperately urgent, but if we are so dehumanized how can we even think of revolution?

It is not difficult to reach highly pessimistic conclusions about present society. The injustices and the violence and the exploitation scream at us, and yet there seems to be no possible way out. Power-over seems to penetrate every aspect of our lives so deeply that it is hard to imagine the “revolutionary masses” once spoken of with such confidence. In the past, the deep penetration of capitalist domination led many to see the solution in terms of the leadership of a vanguard party, but surely we know by now that this is no solution at all, that it simply replaces one form of power-over with another.

The easiest answer is pessimistic disillusion. The initial scream of rage at the horrors of capitalism is not abandoned, but we learn to live with it. We do not become supporters of capitalism, but we accept that there is nothing that can be done about it. The problem is that disillusion is an acceptance that what is, is, a falling into identification; an active participation, then, in the separation of doing and done, in the reproduction of the power which horrifies us.

5. The only way to break the apparently closed circle of power is by seeing that the transformation of power-to into power-over is a process which necessarily implies the existence of its opposite: fetishization implies anti-fetishization.

MOST DISCUSSIONS OF ALIENATION (fetishism, reification, discipline, identification and so on) treat it as though it were an accomplished fact. They treat the forms of capitalist social relations as though they were established at the dawn of capitalism and will continue until capitalism is replaced by another mode of social organization. In other words, existence is separated from constitution: the constitution of capitalism is located in the historical past, its present existence is assumed to be stable. Such a view can only lead to a deep pessimism.

If, however, we see the separation of doing and done not as an accomplished fact but as a process, then the world begins to change. The very fact that we speak of alienation means that alienation cannot be com-

plete. In the words of Ernst Bloch, “alienation could not even be seen, and condemned of robbing people of their freedom and depriving the world of its soul, if there did not exist some measure of its opposite, of that possible coming-to-oneself, being-with-oneself, against which alienation can be measured.” (Bloch 1964 (2), p. 113)* If separation, alienation (etc) is understood as a process, then this implies that its course is not pre-determined, that the transformation of power-to into power-over is always open, always at issue. A process implies a movement of becoming, implies that that which is in process (alienation) is and is not. Alienation, then, is a movement against its own negation, against anti-alienation. The existence of alienation implies the existence of anti-alienation. The existence of power-over implies the existence of anti-power-over, or, in other words, the movement of emancipation of power-to.

That which exists in the form of its negation, that which exists in the mode of being denied, really exists, in spite of its negation, as the negation of the process of denial. Capitalism is based on the denial of power-to, of humanity, of creativity, of dignity: but that does not mean that these cease to exist. As the Zapatistas have shown us, dignity exists in spite of its own negation. It does not stand on its own, but exists in the only form in which it can exist in this society, as struggle against its own negation. Power-to exists too: not as an island within a sea of power-over, but in the only form in which it can exist, as struggle against its own negation. Freedom too exists, not in the way that liberals present it, as something independent of social antagonisms, but in the only way it can exist in a society characterized by relations of domination, as struggle against that domination.

The real, material existence of that which exists in (and against) the form of its

*Adorno makes the same point (*Negative Dialektik*, 1990, pp. 377-378): “Greyneß could not fill us with despair if our minds did not harbor the concept of different colors, scattered traces of which are not absent from the negative whole.” But he immediately gives the point a pessimistic, reactionary twist quite different from Bloch by adding “The traces always come from the past and our hopes come from that which was or is doomed.” The different colors do not come from the past: they come from present resistance.

own negation, is the basis of hope.

6. The possibility of changing society radically depends, then, on the material force of that which exists in the mode of being denied. But is this all just fancy words, or does it really exist as a real force?

THE MATERIAL FORCE OF THE NEGATED can be seen in a number of ways.

First, it can be seen in the infinite number of struggles which do not aim at winning power-over others, but simply at asserting our own power-to, our own resistance against being dominated by others. These take many different forms, from open rebellion to struggles to gain or defend control over the labor process, or the processes of health or education, to the more fragmented, often silent, assertions of dignity (by children or women) within the home. The struggle for dignity, for that which is denied by existing society, can be seen too in many forms that are not overtly political, in literature, in music, in fairy tales. The struggle against inhumanity is ubiquitous, for it is implicit in our very existence as humans.

Secondly, the force of the negated can be seen in the dependence of power-over upon that which it negates. Those whose power-over lies in their capacity to tell others what to do always depend for their existence on the doing of those others. The whole history of domination can be seen as the struggle of the powerful to liberate themselves from their dependence on the powerless. The transition from feudalism to capitalism can be seen in this light, not just as the struggle of the serfs to free themselves from the lords, but as the struggle of the lords to free themselves from their serfs by converting their power into money and so into capital. The same search for freedom from the workers can be seen in the introduction of machinery, or in the massive conversion of productive capital into money capital, which plays such an important part in contemporary capitalism. In each case, the flight of the powerful from the doers is in vain. There is no way in which power-over can be anything other than the metamorphosis of power-to. There is no way in which the powerful can escape from their

dependence upon the powerless.

This dependence manifests itself, thirdly, in the consequent instability of the powerful, in the tendency of capital to crisis. Capital's flight from labor, through the replacement of labor by machines and by its conversion into money, is confronted by its ultimate dependence upon labor (that is, upon its capacity to convert human doing into abstract value-producing labor) in the form of falling rates of profit. What manifests itself in crisis is the force of that which capital denies, namely non-subordinate power-to-do.

7. Revolution is urgent but uncertain, a question and not an answer.

ORTHODOX-MARXIST THEORIES sought to win certainty over to the side of revolution, arguing that historical development led inevitably to the creation of a communist society. This is fundamentally misconceived, because there can be nothing certain about the creation of a self-determining society. Certainty can only be on the side of domination. Certainty is to be found in the homogenization of time, in the freezing of doing into being. Self-determination is inherently uncertain. The death of the old certainties is to be welcomed as a liberation.

For the same reasons, revolution cannot be understood as an answer, but only as a question. It is a question, but not a silly question. When we open the newspaper, turn on the television, look around us, see the beggars in the streets, we know that it is not a silly question. It is a question, because the only way we can now talk about revolution is to say that we do not know the answer. It is a question too because it can no longer be seen as telling people what to do, but only as asking and listening. As the Zapatistas put it, "Preguntando caminamos." Asking we walk.



Note: My argument is developed much more fully in my book, *Change the World Without Taking Power*, Pluto Press, London, 2002 (ISBN 0745318630 for paperbacks and 0745318649 for hardbacks). To order, visit the Pluto website: www.plutobooks.com

Reference: Bloch Ernst (1964) *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie* (2 Bde) (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp).

“I’m Lost But I’m Making Record Time”: A Successful President Transforms Syracuse University

Ali Shehzad Zaidi

“The Successful President”

IN 1999, THE INFLUENTIAL AMERICAN COUNCIL OF EDUCATION published a primer on university leadership by one of its board directors, Kenneth Shaw, Chancellor of Syracuse University (SU). Dedicated to “academic leaders... who have created the world’s best system of higher education,” *The Successful President* is the linchpin of a buoyant success narrative presenting SU, a private research university in central New York, as a bold experiment in educational innovation. Representing organizational change in a societal vacuum, Shaw’s success narrative is persuasive only to the extent that it conceals the decline of community, the looting of the academy, and such corollaries to the successful president as unsuccessful adjuncts, unsuccessful secretaries, unsuccessful librarians, unsuccessful custodians, and unsuccessful cafeteria workers.

SU, renowned for its top-ranked football and basketball teams, also vaunts five core values: quality, diversity, caring, innovation, and service. Visiting SU in July 2001 to interview Shaw, I researched the militarization, corporatization, and decline of the humanities at SU, developments related to the raw capitalism also transforming the city of Syracuse. Shaw proved to be an able communicator of a vision common to chief executive officers at research universities in the United States.

Before becoming SU Chancellor in 1991,

Shaw had had a long career as university administrator, including a stint as president of the University of Wisconsin system. As he climbed the higher education ladder, Shaw found that his jokes became funnier. This humor is particularly evident in *The Successful President*. Executive profit sharing at research universities comes into sharp relief when Shaw advises prospective university presidents that the time to leave has come when “your board provides a Yugo as your company car.” For those “experiencing the highs and lows of leadership,” Shaw provides a concise definition of class in the words of a song that goes, “sometimes you’re windshield, sometimes you’re the bug.” (17, 117, 120)

Restructuring The University

THE 1990 SEARCH COMMITTEE deliberately sought a sense of humor in the new SU chancellor who would soon carry out a major program of academic restructuring. Radiating earnest cheerfulness upon arrival, Shaw immediately cut several doctoral programs, including Spanish, foreign language teaching, and humanities, and substantially reduced the budgets of several schools, particularly that of the College of Arts and Sciences.

Although SU professors learned that SU had a \$100 million reserve fund (whose existence had been denied to the faculty senate budget committee for years), Shaw informed them that he would not use the fund to ease SU’s budget cuts. About a fifth of SU’s tenured faculty took early retirement, including studio arts professor D. Lee Dussell who commented, “There’s much less idealism at the university now... things are more specialized and job-oriented. This is what they think the consumer is looking for. My leaving is perfect. I haven’t felt a part of the larger effort for a couple of years. Only recently have

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I felt they've tried to muscle me out."¹

The Syracuse dailies, both owned by the Newhouse Corporation, were enthusiastic. "Shaw... announced plans to lay off more staff . . . than his predecessors had in the last 63 years, and still managed to project the image of a competent, likable leader," gushed the *Syracuse Post-Standard*. "Administrators marvel at how fast and decisively the new chancellor went to work. Students admire his aw-shucks demeanor through it all."²

TQM In The Academy

ALONG WITH EXTENSIVE academic restructuring, Shaw introduced a quality improvement initiative called Syracuse University Improving Quality (SUIQ). Described by SU administrators as a "paradigm of transformation" and "a state of mind," SUIQ aims to identify and meet customer needs, foster group communication, and establish effective teamwork. This new environment of openness and candor, "intertwined with lessons in civility," represents, according to Shaw, a hierarchical shift in which "the rigid, bureaucratic organization with the benevolent despot at the top has given way to a far more horizontal structure with many teams and many leaders."³

A 1998 SU administration report notes that although the basic concepts of Total Quality Management (TQM) are carried over to SUIQ, "some of the language and secondary concepts that are important in an industrial setting are not as relevant in the halls of academe."⁴ Shaw concurs, acknowledging the limitations in a university setting of an industrial model that aims at zero defects, since "our products are educated citizens who are, of course, human beings with all the natural imperfections of the species."⁵

It is no coincidence that SUIQ appeared as SU employees were undergoing speed-up, downsizing, part-timing, and restructuring. The introduction of quality circles in the corporate workplace, observes Guillermo Grenier in his study *Inhuman Relations*, brought about innovations that exert control over workers. Grenier shows how the "new American managerial consciousness supposedly characterized by a renewed respect for the worker, a new and needed commitment to quality, and a new-design philosophy for organizing the work environment," is meant

to prevent workers from organizing unions to defend their interests. This "vision of unity, cooperation, purpose, and inspiration, of managerial wisdom operating unfettered in an expanding union-free utopia," thwarts democracy in the workplace.⁶

A recent SU administration report, faithfully reflecting SUIQ measurement and assessment, informs us that "by June 1997, 3,232 employees had spent an average of 34.5 hours in training; 120 trainers had spent an average of 23.5 days in professional development and had invested an average of 25 days in delivering SUIQ training in 625 classes."⁷ This quantification reflects a behaviorism in which, to quote Robert Lichtman, "quality, uniqueness, creativity, and the moral dimension of existence fall before a reductive insistence upon measurement, quantification, and restrictive processes of infinitely tedious and irrelevant observation." The viewpoint which emerges is "ahistorical, atomistic, mechanical, disjunctive, and . . . ostensibly neutral."⁸

The Market Knows Best

THIS SEEMINGLY OBJECTIVE VIEWPOINT facilitates change at U.S. universities, which Shaw sees as driven foremost by the world economy and technology. "Our students and their parents are more market-oriented, the people who give us money are more pointed in what they want," he said during our July 12, 2001 interview. Given this "world market mentality," Shaw wants to create "a culture amenable to change" by strengthening those aspects of SU which are prone to change.

Disciplines that hasten technology transfer to the private sector are flourishing these days at SU. In 2001, SU won a \$15.9 million New York State grant to develop products for indoor air quality technology at its new Environmental Quality Systems Center. Increasingly enmeshed in the system of global finance, SU recently won drilling rights to the bed of Lake Malawi and is seeking financial support from oil companies for its exploration.

The primacy of the market has turned most faculty in the U.S. into adjuncts or non-tenure track lecturers, the academic equivalent of migrant labor. While he believes in hiring part-timers for specialized knowledge, as in business or journalism, Shaw sees uni-

versities using them purely to cut costs. "It's not our finest hour," he acknowledged during our interview, adding that although SU has increased its use of part-timers, the administration was "monitoring it carefully."

Disparities in faculty pay, Shaw believes, are inevitable. "We're driven by the market and it's easy to say we just forget about it and do our thing and create this happy place where each achieve according to their abilities and take according to their wants," he said. An outstanding assistant professor in accounting costs SU over \$100,000 a year, Shaw explained, and if SU were to pay accounting professors what it paid those in the Romance languages, it would be left without accounting professors.

Calling market shifts "the yin and the yang of economic systems," Shaw said, "the pendulum sometimes goes too far one way or the other." The most SU can do, Shaw believes, is to somewhat improve salaries falling below the norm in certain disciplines. "You're kind of tinkering around the edge, because in essence we're not a socialist economy," he said.

SU may not be "tinkering around the edge" enough nowadays in SU humanities departments heavily dependent on cheap labor. In 1998, languages, literatures, and linguistics employed twenty-two adjuncts and twenty-five teaching assistants; visual and performing arts, ninety-two adjuncts and eighty teaching assistants; and regular part-time writing program instructors were paid just \$2,386 to \$3,620 per course, to give just a few examples.⁹ Despite an endowment that rose from \$641 million in June 1999 to \$825 million in June 2000 — a 28.7 percent increase in just a single year — SU lost three full-time philosophy professors whom Rutgers University lured with higher salaries in fall 2001.

For Shaw, the market is the natural order of things and its idiom permeates *The Successful President*, particularly in its behavioral model of "exchanges in human interaction" that Shaw calls "currencies." Nevertheless, Shaw understands the injustices of the market. "I can't explain how a daycare center worker who spends time with my grandchild, who has to be loyal, loving, caring... is making the minimum wage," Shaw said in our interview. "I can't explain that,

but it's market. I don't like it... but if I were running a daycare center, I know I couldn't afford to pay people twice that much which is probably still not enough."

The same market that cheats nurturing teachers and daycare workers, also rewards faithful servants of capital to the point where a CEO in the United States now earns 531 times as much as the average worker. This market necessitates change in the academy, whose pace today, Shaw tells us in *The Successful President*, "is so accelerated that to resist it is akin to standing firm in the face of a hurricane, and just about as effective." (15)

But is change compelling simply because it is happening? If a world economy that wreaks ecological devastation and immiserates billions of people can be an appropriate model for a university, then why does a recent administration report state that "the anti-intellectual and socially damaging forces of society are so strong that the University must actively create a countervailing culture on campus"?¹⁰ Might not such corporate practices being replicated at SU — temping, outsourcing, downsizing, and TQM — be some of those very forces against which the report cautions?

Keeping The Faith

SHAW'S BELIEF IN MARKET-INDUCED CHANGE makes him more of a follower than a leader, much in the tradition of James Roscoe Day, SU Chancellor from 1894 to 1922. Day, a Methodist minister, was a close friend of John Archbold, president of both Standard Oil and the SU trustee board. Day's faith might be summed up in his own words: "I believe in capital. I believe in it fundamentally and thoroughly."¹¹

A relentless foe of anti-trust legislation, Day believed that technological advances and the fortunes of tycoons herald humanity's highest stage. "The magnitudes of the business of the present age are logical events," he declared. "The man who is shouting himself hoarse over trusts and corporations and swollen fortunes will take his place in history with the men who smashed Arkwright's loom and Whitney's cotton gin." Trusting in the understanding of the elect and the preservation of mysteries, Day warned: "Men must not take liberties with business. That

high privilege of large interpretations is the sole prerogative of politicians.”¹²

Like his predecessor Day, Shaw veils the economic relations of his day, as in a recent *New York Times* essay titled “Why College Costs So Much,” and subtitled “And Will Only Get Worse.” Shaw presents an angry parent complaining about soaring tuition which increased 57 percent at a particular private university and 79 percent at public universities in the past ten years while median family income and the Consumer Price Index rose just 38 percent and 27 percent respectively. Citing declining enrollment and a large deficit, Shaw explains how SU cut \$66 million from its budget, eliminated 350 staff positions, and created 170 resignations for faculty between 1990 and 1998, but still needed to increase tuition in order to improve student financial aid and compensation for staff and faculty.¹³

Shaw’s main rationales for tuition increases — student financial aid and faculty pay — are unconvincing. First, universities, like the federal government, moved from grants to loans during the nineties. Loans, which comprised just 41 percent of student aid in 1980, made up 58 percent by 2001.¹⁴ Second, since nearly half the faculty at four-year colleges and 65 percent of the faculty at two-year colleges are now part-timers, and since barely a quarter of full-time professors are tenured, universities are spending considerably less on salaries and benefits.¹⁵ After freezing salaries during the 1991-92 academic year, SU has only increased faculty salaries at the rate of inflation.¹⁶

Nevertheless, tuition continues to outpace inflation to the extent that during the 2000-01 academic year, private college tuition increased 5.5 percent, public college tuition 7.7 percent, and inflation a mere 2.6 percent.¹⁷ SU tuition, having already risen 82 percent since 1990-91, is slated to rise 6 percent for the 2002-03 academic year, an increase more than three times the current inflation rate.¹⁸ During the 2000-01 academic year, Williams College, with tuition and fees at \$31,520 a year, and an endowment that has tripled to \$1 billion in the past decade, became the first elite college in a generation to keep its tuition flat for two consecutive years. The step was so unusual for a top-ranked college that it became a major news story.¹⁹

Shaw suggests that increased enrollment in costly technological disciplines may also be a factor in tuition increases and here he may be at least partly right. SU’s fiscal crisis, like that of other research universities, emerged after the growth of its technology centers in the early eighties. Recipients of corporate largesse such as SU’s Center for Advanced Technology in Computer Applications and Software Engineering grew at the expense of traditional disciplines, and for good reason. After the 1980 Bayh-Dole Act gave corporations exclusive monopoly rights to patents and inventions developed at universities, corporate trustees began diverting money from instruction and student services to sponsored research, resulting in higher tuition.

Shaw is not about to tell where tuition money goes; his explanations explain nothing; elucidation only deepens the mystery, which is perhaps how it is meant to be. Shaw’s salary depends on his discretion, and during the 1999-00 academic year, Shaw earned \$317,298 in pay and benefits.²⁰ Shaw does well in relation to his peers, earning, in 1996-97, 156 percent percent of the median salary of chief executives at doctoral granting institutions.

Although Shaw’s ties to the financial industry might inform his views on university tuition, the *Times* essay identifies Shaw as SU Chancellor, but not as a member of the board of directors of the recently privatized Sallie Mae. This lending institution recently joined several others in a lawsuit to prevent the federal government from reducing interest rates and fees on student loans. The federal government’s direct lending program, which eliminates the role of banks and guarantee agencies in student loans, threatens the guaranteed-loan program that since 1994 has subsidized lenders by reimbursing them for loans in default. The American Council of Education (ACE), home to the Business-Higher Education Forum and on whose board Shaw also sits, recently refused to provide a legal brief to defend the federal government against the lending institutions that provide the ACE with much of its funding.²¹ Lending institutions wield considerable political and financial clout and the individuals who run them are, rather predictably, pursuing profits to the detriment of indebted students. Ac-

cording to a July 31, 2001 Sallie Mae press release, Sallie Mae executives and members of its board of directors have significantly increased their stock ownership in the company in recent months.

As with his explanation for higher tuition, Shaw's SU success story, highlighting improved national rankings, retention rates, and freshmen test scores, is highly suspect. Take, for instance, the Association of Research Libraries index which considers such factors as volumes added, current serials, size of permanent library staff, and operating expenditures of major university libraries in the United States and Canada. SU, ranked 64th in the 1994-95 academic year, dropped to 91st in 1999-00, with the second lowest increase in expenditures among libraries.²² Or take the sixty-six graduate students who transferred from SU in 1998 because the New York State Education Department had neither registered nor approved their family nurse practitioner program. Or that SU has the lowest pass rate among New York's fourteen law schools with just 58 percent of its students passing the July 2000 state bar exam on the first try.²³ Or the steady slide in the reputation of SU's engineering programs since the mid-sixties, hastened by the whopping 40 percent cut in the engineering school budget during the early nineties. Or the dismal 17 percent four-year graduation rate of the men's basketball team that is the pride of SU.²⁴

SU's latest acquisitions include study abroad centers, a shopping mall, and the last privately-owned residence on University Hill, which was finally sold after SU discouraged the owner from applying for landmark status. Indeed, the picture at SU mirrors Shaw's summary of higher education in the words of a pilot over the Atlantic: "I'm lost but I'm making record time."²⁵ With adjunctified instructors, downsized employees, entrepreneurial professors, and the community of scholars becoming an industrial park, SU, like other research universities, can truly said to be making "record time."

Feeding The War Machine

SPEAKING OF WHICH, the growing military presence at SU is spawning numerous high tech "dual use" projects that serve both corporations and the Pentagon. In October '97,

sixty people attended two ceremonies at SU in which "General Pentagon" married "Miss Maxwell" and "Miss Newhouse." The events publicized an \$8.1 million Department of Defense contract with SU's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs to train military personnel in security management, and a \$4 million contract with SU's Newhouse School of Journalism to train military journalists in broadcast journalism and still photography. As human rights journalist Allan Nairn observed at one of the symbolic weddings, "You can't do independent schooling or journalism when you are on the payroll of the Pentagon." The arrival of military officers who mentor SU students during their stay at Maxwell happened to coincide with elimination of SU's undergraduate major in Peace Studies.²⁶

The militarization of Newhouse brings to mind its dedication ceremony on August 5, 1964, when President Lyndon Johnson delivered his infamous Gulf of Tonkin address justifying full-scale U.S. aggression in Vietnam. During the war, SU's student newspaper, the *Daily Orange*, detailed SU's unclassified military research contracts, but could not expose classified research at SU's sister agency, the Syracuse University Research Corporation. One particularly secretive SU project was the East European Language Training Program, whose purpose was classified, as were participants' identities. The *Daily Orange* questioned the benefit of this project, from whose site SU students were restricted, noting that SU was sharing the costs of many military research projects and grants, leading to reduced teaching loads and increased class sizes.

The lead article in Maxwell's summer '01 alumni magazine, titled "Crib Notes for a New World Order," lauds the new \$8.7 million, five year extension of Maxwell's security management program providing "practical and philosophical grounding to defense professionals."²⁷ Asked whether military involvement threatened SU's integrity, Shaw replied, "It doesn't have to be that way." He did not elaborate. With sixty percent of federal funding for research and development now devoted to military research, it is hard to see how it can be any other way.

"SU HAS LONG SEEMED TO ME a kind of ex-

panding empire out of touch with human needs," comments Ed Kinane, a '67 Maxwell School alumnus who portrayed "Mister Pentagon" at the 1997 Maxwell protest. The rise of SU's corporate-military partnership does in fact coincide with the decline of the humanities at SU. Concerned about the consequent loss of a sense of the past, I asked Shaw during our interview whether he would restore the suspended SU graduate program in classics if, for example, SU were given a billion dollar donation. In response, Shaw pointed out that a gift of that magnitude would be improbable, since SU fundraising only nets about \$55 million annually and since large donations are almost invariably restricted.

Assuming, however, for argument's sake, that 30 percent of the hypothetical billion dollar gift was unrestricted, Shaw said that he would fashion the humanities according to SU's mission, needs, strengths, and existing programs. As a change agent, said Shaw, SU ought to fund the humanities in new and different ways, rather than buttress what the humanities were thirty years ago. Shaw takes pride in a new speakers series and interdisciplinary initiatives in the humanities.

In other words, not even three hundred million dollars would revive the classics program. As the classics disappear from SU, the motto on the SU seal, "Suos Cultores Scientia Coronat" ("Knowledge crowns those who seek her"), rings increasingly hollow. SU tried to replace the seal with a corporate logo in 1988, but encountered widespread student opposition because of the logo's resemblance to, among other things, a design for a toilet deodorizer.

Who Runs The University?

BY WHAT RIGHT DO CORPORATE EXECUTIVES decide the fate of entire disciplines and set the wages of university employees? The idea of electing students, faculty, staff employees, and community representatives to university boards does not appeal to Shaw. "I don't think that universities can work that are democratic," he said during our interview, citing a gridlocked federal government, dominated by special interests, to describe how a university should not work.

Shaw firmly believes in the impartiality and disinterestedness of the mostly white

male business executives on university boards. But what brings them there? Is it a deep and abiding interest in the quality of American higher education? Or is it to choose the banks in which universities deposit student tuition, the companies in which universities invest endowment funds, and the sponsored research that universities carry out?

And do university presidents sit on corporate boards as a form of community service, much like sponsoring the Little League or the Girl Scouts? Or is to network, swing deals, and leverage institutions? Why, for instance, would Shaw sit on the board of the Unity Mutual Life Insurance Company when his duties as SU Chancellor surely suffice to keep him busy?

The Leading S.C.R.U.

SHAW RECOGNIZES THAT THE ESSENCE of the leadership process remains elusive.²⁸ This elusiveness is hardly incidental in U.S. research universities where a lofty ideal like democracy might obstruct change.

A centerpiece of change at SU is the vision to become the nation's "leading student-centered research university," for which SU won the 1996 TIAA/CREF Theodore Hesburg Award for the enhancement of undergraduate learning. In a recent article in *Change*, Barbara D. Wright finds that SU has been "brilliantly successful... in creating a consensus for its redefined mission, building an infrastructure to support it, and changing its campus culture." However, Wright also found discomfiture with the administration's most cherished description of SU:

There's some fatigue with the phrase "student-centered research university" on the part of both students and staff. In fact, when I randomly asked people on campus whether they had ever heard it, reactions ranged from "Oh God, yes!" "All the time," or "Please, not again" to an eloquent rolling of the eyes. Recognizing this, the university is trying to use the phrase more sparingly these days and come up with other language. The president himself admits that it has been reduced (in many quarters) to its acronym, SCR.U, or "screw."

With SU planning to more than double sponsored research in the next decade, the question is how research fits into SU's learning environment. "Even as we've cut the

number of faculty... we increased the amount of sponsored research, because in order to be a student-centered research university... we have to be a place where there's a lot of exciting research going on," Shaw explained in our interview. "And what makes our market niche is that we can be that, and still be student focused."

Nevertheless, students seem at a loss as to how research enhances their learning, as Wright, despite her otherwise glowing assessment of SU, discovered:

One student suggested that it meant that it was easy for him to do research from his dorm room via the Internet. Several did mention professors bringing their research into the classroom, but one reasoned that professors gave students projects to work on so that they, the professors, could go off and do their own research. Several students assumed that "research" had nothing to do with them because they weren't majoring in the natural sciences. Another common reaction was to discount the phrase as a mere buzzword, a marketing ploy, an advertising gimmick. "Parents really like it," one said dismissively. A few disagreed with the premise that the university was student-centered at all. The most passionate students I spoke to accused the university of actually being administration-centered and wished students had the power to increase services or decrease tuition. Another student complained, "they collect the money, teach us what we need to know, pump us out, and take in the next class. It's all about money."²⁹

The Larger Picture: Syracuse In Decline

"SHAW AND SU ARE LIKE METAL FILINGS aligned in the magnetic field of globalization and corporate colonization not only of academia, but of our cities," observes Kinane. In *The Successful President*, Shaw ignores the unraveling of community in Syracuse whose population dropped from 250,000 in 1950 to just over 150,000 today. During the nineties, home values in Syracuse dropped 11 percent, despite a 46 percent increase in U.S. home prices; the vacancy rate in Syracuse tripled to nearly one in twenty homes. Notwithstanding the demolition of over three thousand housing units, eleven hundred abandoned homes still remain in New York's fifth largest city.³⁰

In 1998, the year Shaw wrote *The Successful President*, Syracuse's long-term bond ratings fell to their lowest point in sixty years, increasing rates on the city's debt, as Syracuse officials agreed to a settlement with the Federal Securities and Exchange Commission for leading investors to believe that the city budget faced a surplus instead of a \$9.4 million shortfall.³¹ That year, Syracuse's thirty-six public schools, faced with a \$6.7 million budget reduction, laid off 122 teachers and 94 teaching assistants, eliminated art class supplies, and shortened school library hours.³²

Given changes in funding formulas for city and school budgets, the public schools will continue to deteriorate. In 1990, Onondaga County began shifting tax revenue from Syracuse to its suburbs, and in 2000 further weakened city finances when it capped municipal sales tax revenue. Whereas in 1978, Syracuse property owners paid more than two percent of their property value directly to the schools, by 1998 they paid less than one and a quarter percent.³³ Starved for funds, the Syracuse school district receives \$270,000 each year from Pepsi for granting the company exclusive selling rights to its students.

As elsewhere, rewards in Syracuse accrue to the powerful. Timothy Smeeding, director of SU's Center for Policy Research concludes, "The winners increasingly are less interested in public goods that support everybody and more interested in segregating themselves from social problems which they will never experience."³⁴ In a letter to the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, two parents wondered: "What are we to make of a city school budget shaped, in large part, by the efforts of men who choose to send their children to private schools? What tone is set when elected leaders who enjoy a high degree of privilege, exercise that privilege by placing their children into settings beyond the reach of budget decisions like those our city has just been forced to accept?"³⁵

These days, corporate welfare drives public policy in Syracuse, as Shaw, who serves as vice president of the local Metropolitan Development Association, must surely know. A recent *Forbes* article notes that Syracuse doled out \$2 billion in tax breaks and corporate subsidies in the past five years with little to show for it. Sixty

percent of all Syracuse real estate is now tax-exempt or tax-abated, causing the city's property tax rate, which is twice the national average, to fall disproportionately on homeowners and small businesses. In 1997, the city granted \$3.1 million in loan forgiveness and debt deferral for the new headquarters of the Greater Syracuse Chamber of Commerce on whose board sits Shaw.³⁶

Corporate Welfare Exhibit A: Landis

ANOTHER INSTANCE of corporate welfare is that of Landis Plastics, a plastic food container manufacturer that opened a plant in the Syracuse suburb of Solvay in August 1994. The Onondaga County Industrial Development Agency gave Landis \$6.5 million in bonds to finance plant construction and \$300,000 to demolish an old plant on the site. New York State provided Landis \$2.5 million in grants and low-interest loans and the village of Solvay supplied low-cost electricity to the company. In addition, Landis was given a ten-year tax abatement on its new plant.

Plagued with worker injuries from its inception, the Landis plant had an amputation rate nearly 100 times the New York State factory average. In 1996, half the plant's 180 employees received injuries serious enough to warrant medical treatment or time away from work; during one thirteen month period, four Landis employees lost fingers in machinery.³⁷ As a result, Landis employee Kathy Saumier began organizing union meetings through the United Steelworkers of America. In February '97, Landis, whose website boasts "Total Quality Management has been our philosophy from day one,"³⁸ responded by firing Saumier, a 36-year-old single mother of two, for allegedly sexually harassing two male employees, in one case supposedly pulling down the man's pants and groping him. It also fired another pro-union female employee, likewise accusing her of sexually harassing a male employee. The following year, a federal judge reinstated both Saumier and Sullivan, finding that "prior to the union organizing effort, Landis exhibited a pattern of acquiescence with respect to workplace harassment."³⁹ Two months later, an administrative law judge concurred, noting that Landis had treated sexual harassment complaints by female employees with

"disbelief, indifference and antagonism." The judge determined that one of the two allegedly harassed male workers had denied that Saumier had ever harassed him, while the other said that he had always had good relations with Saumier. The judge also found that Landis had illegally interrogated employees about their views on unionization, had threatened to close the factory if workers unionized, had installed a video camera in the room where workers took breaks so as to monitor pro-union activities, and had fired Saumier for her union advocacy.⁴⁰

Hailed as the Norma Rae of Syracuse, Saumier fought back. With the support of the Central New York Labor-Religion Coalition and the United Steelworkers of America, she reported plant injuries to regulatory agencies. Saumier later said that she stood her ground so that her children would not have to someday go through what she did. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) cited Landis for failing to report 64 injuries between January '95 and July '96 and for failing to install necessary machine safety guards. Initially, a Landis official called the citations "the workplace equivalent of old parking tickets," but the company soon agreed to pay a \$425,520 fine, the largest ever issued by the Syracuse OSHA office, and to implement a safety and health program for its employees.⁴¹ Landis also agreed to a \$782,000 settlement with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission for steering women to dangerous, low-paying jobs on the production line. In doing so, Landis denied wrongdoing, claiming that it had settled, as with OSHA, only to avoid litigation.⁴²

Corporate Welfare Exhibit B: Carousel

DESPITE THE DECISIVE INTERVENTION of regulatory agencies and the ensuing publicity, there is still no union at the Landis plant. And corporate welfare persists in Syracuse. For spring '02, city fathers intend a \$1.3 billion expansion of the Carousel Center shopping mall onto land polluted by oil tanks, making it, at 103 acres, the country's largest mega-mall.

The developer of the Carousel mall is Pyramid Companies, whose primary owner, Robert Congel, has, since 1995, donated \$94,900 to the New York State Republican

party and \$15,500 to the campaign of Governor George Pataki. Pyramid recently hired former U.S. Senator Alfonse D'Amato and John F. O'Mara, a top Pataki aide, to lobby the Pataki administration for a \$25 million project to build a high-tech center at the mall. O'Mara also serves as a lobbyist for Niagara Mohawk, a utility that he used to regulate when he served as chairman of the state Public Service Commission, underscoring the need for a law that forbids the hiring of state officials as lobbyists.⁴³

Critics of the Carousel expansion, in which the city would forego \$300 million in taxes for 30 years, expect the mall to create more minimum wage jobs, to fail to attract enough affluent consumers given its location, and to harm other Syracuse malls. At a recent public hearing, supporters of the deal confronted critics with signs that read, "Do you have a better alternative?"

Imagining Alternatives

ONE PERSON WHO IMAGINES civic alternatives to a shopping mall is Craig Schaub, pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church, who sees a race to the bottom in Syracuse, with the social safety net in tatters and people barely subsisting on two or three jobs. With brutal working conditions destroying family and community, the struggle for economic security, Schaub believes, has replaced religion as the structure of peoples' lives. Convinced that people are in need of rest, a time for restoration in which they can live differently and reconnect spiritually, Schaub participates in prayer vigils to support worker organizing. As a member of the Central New York Labor-Religion Coalition, Schaub campaigns for universal health insurance, campaign finance reform, workplace safety, and a living wage ordinance in Syracuse.

Another such individual is Howard Hawkins, Green candidate for Syracuse city councilor in 2001, who would rather invest in schools, libraries, and parks, than in corporate welfare masquerading as community development. Hawkins wants to reverse the steep decline in public services such as that in the Department of Park and Recreation whose employees dwindled from 125 to 25 during the nineties. He notes that the New York Board of Regents recently cited Syra-

cuse for having the lowest school funding among New York's five upstate cities. Barely a third of the students entering Syracuse public high schools will graduate, and in Syracuse's impoverished South Side neighborhood, unemployment can reach 40 percent during recessions.

As sales tax for Syracuse disappears, Hawkins believes that a progressive income tax, consolidated city and county revenue, and a tax on suburban commuters, can provide sorely needed public funds. He would both reduce and make more equitable the property tax, and would eliminate the county sales tax that falls disproportionately on the poor.

Hawkins also wants Syracuse to subsidize locally-owned enterprises instead of national chains such as the South Side KFC franchise which public funds recently helped expand into a KFC/Taco Bell of dubious benefit to Syracuse. Hawkins would create a municipal bank with a business development arm to train employees to run cooperatives that they would eventually purchase from the bank.

A Weighty Responsibility

ALTHOUGH HE OMITTS THE TROUBLES of Syracuse from his book, Shaw does invite SU students to ponder their social responsibilities. In his August 28, 1998 convocation speech to incoming freshmen, Shaw cited a well-known fact, namely that if one could shrink the world into a global village of 100 people, "half of the village's wealth would be in the hands of six people, and all would be from the United States. Seventy of the 100 would not be able to read; 50 would suffer from some form of malnutrition; 80 would live in substandard housing. And out of all these, just one... would have a college education." Shaw then admonished the students, "This is your opportunity, your privilege, and your very weighty responsibility."⁴⁴

Asked in our interview what forms of action students might take in the light of that statement, Shaw replied that each year three thousand SU students do community service: tutoring in schools, mentoring boys and girls clubs, and helping to design parks for community groups. Aware of the limitations of service in remedying injustice, Shaw said that he told some volunteer SU students who were mentoring schoolchildren that the stu-

dents “should be developing some understanding of the conditions that resulted in their being in the place where [the children] need to have mentoring and tutoring.”

WHAT MIGHT BE the SU administration's own “weighty responsibility” to Syracuse given its overuse of temporary employees, insistence on flexibility for outsourcing, and meager wages for library employees and parking attendants? Despite its stated concern for the well-being of Syracuse, the SU administration tried to have the retirement home of former SU Chancellor Melvin Eggers taken off the tax rolls in 1991, claiming that the home was used for educational purposes. SU's downsizing of its faculty, staff, and student body led to business closures and declines in property values in the adjacent Westcott Nation, an integrated neighborhood known for its artists, musicians, and lively counterculture.

Shaw's conscience resembles those of corporate managers who, as Lawrence Mitchell explains, are “increasingly driven by faceless, soulless capital markets... composed of individuals with consciences but creating a collective that lacks one.”⁴⁵ As for SU students, just a handful assume their responsibility for the world by supporting labor struggles. As one undergraduate finance major memorably put it during the September 1998 SU strike, “I'm not paying \$28,000 a year to stand in a picket line.”

The Strike

THAT STRIKE of the SU Service Employees International Union Local 200A was the first major challenge to Shaw. In *The Successful President*, the strike merits just two parenthetical sentences: “(As I write, we are recovering from a week-long strike by our service worker's union, which was followed by a storm packing 75-mile-an-hour winds that downed trees and electrical wires all over the city. I've been credited with both.)” Thus Shaw, with a chuckle, evades responsibility for labor conflict at SU, conflating the strike with the fierce storm that caused \$15 million in damages at SU on Labor Day, the day after the strike concluded.

While the union cited outsourcing as the main point of contention with the administration, Shaw denied that was the reason

for the strike. During our interview, he understandably refused to specify what he believed to be its cause, for conflict defies explanation in his management paradigm. As Grenier explains,

Conflict between the interests of managers and workers is seen as an aberration in a new-design corporation, and so is the idea that workers shall organize into independent labor organizations to protect their interests. Conflict is a type of sickness that individuals bring into the work environment from outside, from their home lives or from union organizers.... It does not grow normally inside the organizational structures of an innovative organization; and when it does appear, as it always does...it is the individual that has to be treated, not the organization.⁴⁶

After the SU administration refused to negotiate its demand that it be given the flexibility to outsource at will, the union informed the university community: “We have been subjected to the kind of sham bargaining and disrespect that the powerful reserve for the weak. Ultimatums and stonewalling, instead of problem solving (the method promoted in SUIQ) are the hallmark of the university's chief negotiator, Vince Scicchitano.”⁴⁷

As a strike loomed, professors urged the administration to reconsider its final offer to the union. “None of us, I believe, would expect the university to engage in uncalled-for extravagance,” wrote anthropology professor Deborah Pellow in a letter to Shaw during the September 1998 strike. “But to balance the university's checkbook at the expense of those who keep it going — the heart and soul of our infrastructure — is simply immoral. Paying our workers a living wage, affording them the respect and dignity due them, negotiating with them in good faith — these elements are not extravagant. They are not privileges — they are rights.” In another letter sent during the strike, law library director M. Louise Lantzy informed Shaw that the seven unionized law library employees were all earning under \$20,000 a year, with one earning just \$12,878. In contrast, SU head football coach Paul Pasqualoni earned \$508,728 in compensation and \$107,211 in benefits during the 1999-00 academic year.⁴⁸

This SU of winners and losers troubled

those who believed that SU staff employees could not be outsourced without tarnishing that carefully cultivated image of family designed to maximize alumni donations. "One cannot hope to create a sense of family in the face of major inequity among its members," wrote Karen Kirkhart, professor of social work, in a letter to Shaw. At a teach-in at SU's Hendricks Chapel in support of the strikers, Cornell English professor Paul Sawyer commented, "A place where some people are making more than \$300,000 and others are hitting the food lines is not a community in any sense of the word."⁴⁹

Threats and Defiance

DURING THE STRIKE, the SU administration used coercion, what Shaw calls "the least effective but, sadly, the most used kind of power."⁵⁰ In an August 25, 1998 memo to SU deans, Gershon Vincow, then Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, warned that "those who do not carry out their responsibilities should expect a reduction in pay" and that staff employees and faculty who refused to cross the picket lines had to notify their supervisors. According to the *Syracuse Post-Standard*, SU Communications Director Kevin Morrow stated that faculty would not be allowed to conduct teach-ins about the strike.⁵¹

An e-mail, which apparently originated within the SU administration, stated that students would not be allowed to distribute pro-union flyers on campus and could only act through recognized student organizations, and only then if the organization as a whole supported union issues.

These threats angered those who believed that free expression defined a university. They also contradicted the administration's stated belief that "debate, even if it is sometimes acrimonious, should characterize an academic institution,"⁵² and Shaw's description of diversity, a core SU value, as "a commitment being to a place where no person's thoughts are deemed inappropriate for expression."⁵³ In a September 2, 1998 letter to Shaw, political science professor Gavin Duffy warned:

As you know, the relationship between the administration and faculty differs from the relationship between employers and employees in typical business enterprises. Strictly speaking, administrators are not

faculty employers and faculty are not administrators' employees. Administrators are faculty members entrusted by their colleagues to act as their agents. For this reason, strikebreaking tactics that have succeeded in the context of private enterprises may well produce unintended consequences when applied within an academic context.

One such consequence was a series of defiant pro-labor actions. Seventy-five students protested at the SU Administration Building, chanting things like "put Shaw part-time" and "student-centered my ass." Several students blocked building entrances, lying down, one undergraduate explained, to remind administrators how they were stepping on employees and students.⁵⁴ Also, fifty professors demonstrated in front of SU's Bird Library, holding picket signs. When Robby Robinson, the head of SU security, informed them that they could not stand on campus with signs, the professors decided to sit down with their signs instead. They refused to budge even after Robinson brought the city police and read them Riot Act. Finally, Robinson informed the professors that he could take action if he so wished but that he chose not to do so.

After a week of bitter charges and countercharges, the strike ended. The union accepted minimal pay raises while the SU administration dropped its insistence on the freedom to outsource and promised not to retaliate against strikers returning to work. In a purportedly conciliatory message to returning staff employees, Shaw recognized that hardship and the need "to reconcile their loyalty to the University with their loyalty to the union" had caused them great stress. The employees, however, saw no conflict between loyalty to the union and loyalty to SU.

Ending his annual address to faculty on September 23, 1998 "on a more solemn note than usual," Shaw said,

During the course of the recent strike, we heard from many students and parents the complaint that the primary purpose in being here — "learning and growing" — was being thwarted by a very small group of faculty and graduate students who refused to teach their classes. I do understand that it was out of a strong conviction that these colleagues acted. I also understand these actions in the context of this country's proud tradition of civil disobedience. The great

teachers of civil disobedience — Gandhi, Thoreau, and Martin Luther King Jr., among others — emphasized both the obligation to resist perceived injustice and the obligation to accept the consequences of that action. It is in this context that I ask those who chose not to meet their classes ... to voluntarily inform their deans of the time missed so that their paychecks can be adjusted accordingly. I am motivated not by a desire to punish, but to ensure that the lesson of civil disobedience is not lost on our students.

He concluded by quoting Hannah Arendt: "Education is the point at which we decide whether we love the world enough to assume responsibility for it and by the same token save it from ruin which, except for the coming of the new and young, would be inevitable."⁵⁵

It is the very measure of his affability that Shaw could threaten to dock the pay of faculty labor supporters and make it appear like a civic lesson. Shaw is likable: faculty address him by his nickname, "Buzz," and a reporter who visited SU found him happily exchanging snowballs with undergraduates, a scene, let it be said, which effectively conceals the excesses of capital. Shaw certainly differs from some of the curmudgeons of yore who served as SU Chancellors, including Day. When, at a faculty meeting, a professor suggested that an industrial magnate, whom Day had chosen for a Doctor of Science degree, be awarded an honorary doctorate instead, Day shouted at him to "sit down and shut up."⁵⁶ Another such chancellor was William Tolley who struck a protester with a cane at SU's 1964 ROTC review, which churlishness was immortalized in a photo splashed on the front page of SU's student newspaper, the *Daily Orange*.

In an e-mail to the pro-labor SU Faculty Support Group, sent on September 24, 1998, shortly after Shaw's speech, law professor Leslie Bender noted that civil disobedience involves violating a law out of moral principle and that refusing to cross a picket line is not illegal. Those professors who refused to cross the picket line not only affirmed the dignity of staff employees who made learning at SU possible, but fulfilled their obligations to their students by teaching classes off campus, creating websites with class material, or conducting instruction by e-mail. They exemplified, at personal

risk, the meaning of caring, a core SU value that Shaw evoked in his inaugural address: "Caring means that we embrace the University community and all the people in it... that we look to the larger world as the final repository of our knowledge."

A Unique University?

UPON BECOMING CHANCELLOR, Shaw promised a SU like no other university. That memorable day, as the combined choirs of the soon-to-be-downsized School of Music sang "O Clap Your Hands," a procession of trustees, administrators, and faculty escorted Shaw to his inaugural address. Wearing the SU blue and orange colors beneath his ceremonial gown, Shaw declared, "I say, let the Big Name University be the Big Name University. Let us be Syracuse University, unique and complete in our own right. Syracuse University has its own values; it would be folly for us to pattern ourselves after someone else." But is SU unique in any meaningful sense of the word? From its academic restructuring and managerial jargon, to its military contracts and big-time sports, SU is actually a typical U.S. research university, as even Shaw himself knows. In fact, in his inaugural address, Shaw undercut his assertion of SU's uniqueness with an anecdote of a candidate for dean who, after touring SU, said to then Chancellor Melvin Eggers, "This place is different — different from any place I've seen." Eggers reportedly answered, "Yes it is, and when you find out how it is different, let me know."⁵⁷

Change at SU, hardly a singular response to student needs, and still less a triumph of executive thinking, is but a script written by big money. Today, universities remain as much under the thumb of the "captains of industry" as in Upton Sinclair's 1923 portrait of higher education, *The Goosestep*. As corporate executives, rife with conflicts of interest, dictate change from on high, turning universities into gigantic biomedical enterprises and manufacturing facilities for weaponry components, a counter-movement is building across the country.

No longer merely seeking a larger slice of the pie nor simply asking for education for citizenship instead of vocational training, many students, faculty and staff now want to determine who runs the university and whose interest the university will serve.

Their efforts herald a great struggle to liberate universities from capitalism. As university communities awaken to the swindle perpetrated in the name of quality and excellence, SU's strike and Labor Day Storm herald academia's coming upheaval.

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The Yeshiva Case And Faculty Unionism

Daniel Rosenberg

THE “CORPORATIZATION” of American universities, which has accelerated over the past twenty years, features the prominence of the very wealthy in academic decision-making and their growing influence upon the character of the academy in society. Brought to bear upon the ideally open atmosphere in academia, the tendency favors hierarchical relationships on campuses, undermining customary faculty input and the curricular reforms induced by popular struggles since the 1960s. Philosophically, advocates of a corporate model in the academy have argued against faculty unionism on the grounds that the organization of professors would rupture the time-honored tradition of “shared governance” by creating adversarial categories of labor and management. In making this contention, the protagonists have invoked long-standing images of the supra-class, if not managerial, position of professional workers. More importantly, they have drawn upon the Supreme Court’s decision (1972) in *National Labor Relations Board v. Yeshiva University*, which found faculty (at private universities at least) ineligible for unionization because they were part of management. So well-known has the Court’s argument become that “Yeshiva” has acquired verb status, as in the attempt of a university to weaken or prevent faculty collective bargaining: to “Yeshiva” a union.

Circulating nationally over the past several decades, the anti-union premise descended with particular intensity in the 1990s upon Adelphi University, a small

school outside New York City. Adelphi, which will be employed as an example in the following article, was the site of a foundation-led, neo-conservative concentration during the late 1980s. Broad administrative violation of encoded decision-making procedures ensued. Enrollment tumbled. Morale deteriorated. Not all of the school’s constituents suffered, however. After reports of unethical behavior by the school’s leaders began to surface, the New York Board of Regents proved conclusively that the university’s president and board had broken non-profit law by enriching themselves, and ordered the removal of the trustees.¹

While the corrupt extremes were exceptional, the arguments marshaled to rationalize them were not. Asserting that the pursuit of private gain and comfort was not at odds with higher ethics, Adelphi spokesmen instead charged the unionized faculty with responsibility for the university’s near demise. Before the dismissal of its trustees by the Regents, the Adelphi board could boast among its ranks one of the foremost challengers to faculty unionism in the United States in the 80s and 90s: John Silber, president of Boston University. Joining the board in 1989, Silber was a well-connected figure on the academic right, having served on key governmental commissions during the Reagan administration. He had successfully pursued the decertification of the local chapter of the American Association of University Professors (which was also the union at Adelphi) in 1984. His disdain for unionized faculty would be reflected in the arrows he aimed at Adelphi personnel: “scoundrels,” “barbarians.”²

Silber was a rather articulate exponent of the argument that faculty in private universities should not be allowed to unionize without making dramatic changes in their relationship to college structures. Silber felt faculty should only join unions if they

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agreed to surrender their input into decision-making. Accordingly, unionized professors could then be treated as employees, without “shared governance” rights.³

Prior to their removal, Adelphi’s leaders also benefited from the contributions of a preeminent national thinker on the future of faculty employment. Within the huge City University of New York in the early 70s, Vice Chancellor David Newton (who considered faculty unions “an insult to the American labor movement” but could tolerate them in a subordinate role) had farsightedly anticipated the phasing out of full-time faculty and the institution of a “teaching force for CUNY composed largely of adjuncts and therefore inexpensive, expendable, and flexible enough to meet the changing needs of the city economy.” Pending the completion of that process, the question facing academia was “no longer whether faculty unionism and collective bargaining are the wave of the future, but rather whether higher education will ride or be engulfed by that wave.” The creation of an elastic labor force within academe remained a tenet of his purview after he joined Adelphi as Vice-Provost for Faculty Relations in the 80s.⁴

THE *YESHIVA* CASE OVERSHADOWS considerations of faculty unionism in general, at private institutions in particular. In *National Labor Relations Board v. Yeshiva University* (444 U.S.672), the Supreme Court had ruled in 1980 that private college professors did not qualify for protection under the National Labor Relations Act: they “exercise authority which in any other context unquestionably would be managerial.” Indeed, their ultimate power in academic decisions “is absolute.” But Justice William Brennan and three other dissenters had countered that faculty were employees. Given certain faculty prerogatives, university structure was nevertheless “hierarchical in nature: Authority is lodged in the administration, and a formal chain of command runs from a lay governing board down through university officers to individual faculty members and students.”⁵

Despite their necessary contribution to decisions, continued Brennan, faculty were not hired “on the condition that their interests will correspond to those of the univer-

sity administration. While administrations held “certain economic and fiduciary responsibilities,” faculty were primarily concerned with the academic end. Brennan warned, “the congruence of interests in this case ought not to be exaggerated.” Moreover, universities increasingly functioned as “big business,” with administrators no less concerned with the need to “cut costs and increase efficiencies” than the operators of “any large industrial organization.” Budget reductions undermined faculty status, leading to a fall-off in hiring, the closing of programs, and other belt-tightening measures. The “idealized model of collegial decision-making” had disappeared: “the university of today bears little resemblance to the ‘community of scholars’ of yesteryear.”⁶

Though the Court majority defined faculty as management, data and circumstance supported Brennan and the three other justices. “The purchasing power of faculty members’ salaries eroded persistently in the 1970s, to the point at which their real salaries were 20.5 percent lower in 1981 than in 1971,” noted one study. A scholarly evaluation of the *Yeshiva* case observed that “collegiality” depends to a great extent on “financial conditions.” When “enrollments and resources” increase, “it is possible for conflict between administrators and faculty to be minimized, thereby increasing at least the appearance of faculty authority and very often the reality of faculty influence.” But when budget cuts “are the reality instead,” faculty’s managerial role “is considerably diminished.” Prominent college administrators agreed, pointing out that “[B]udget cuts and declining enrollments force latent conflicts of interest among campus constituencies out into the open and undermine the spirit of cooperative decision-making,” a factor undoubtedly corresponding to the situation at Adelphi.⁷

Justice Brennan had observed as much in 1980, and his views echoed over the next two decades. New York University’s journalism professor Ellen Willis emphasized that “modern corporations,” not “medieval guilds governed by their members,” serve as the model for academia today. University administrators and trustees increasingly base academic decisions, including the hiring of new faculty — for how long, under what

conditions — on “market” considerations. Michael Yates observed that the corporate ethos is now endemic: universities give credit card companies exclusive rights on campus; entire university systems hand over telecommunications installation and monitoring to private consortia; faculty are hired and assigned in a modicum of corporate efficiency, with maximum use of part-time professors to do more than full-time work, without benefits or other university support, at a fraction of the salary earned by full-timers. Faculty status had taken on new features, beyond the tedium and burn-out that C. Wright Mills had perceived as occupational hazards in higher education after World War II.⁸

Faculty unionism operates in a setting described by Richard Moser, a national representative of the AAUP: “Administrations have abandoned the notion that the university should set an example of good citizenship, ...they have turned away from the pursuit of justice and instead set up the sweatshops of the future for the greedy to imitate.”⁹

THROUGHOUT THE NATION IN THE 1980s, trustees and administrators came to the fore, as at Adelphi, with not only a professional relationship to the corporate world, but an ideological affinity for its free market values. Insofar as they idealized the condition under which businesses operated with a free hand, they viewed university operations in much the same way, giving shorter and shorter shrift to faculty and student voice, with obvious less patience for collective bargaining. A host of other political peeves accompanied academic cost-consciousness in the age of Reagan. It seemed to some, for example, that society had developed an unwarranted bias against great wealth, in conjunction with a tendency to suspect baser motivations in the corporate world. Such prejudice had apparently defiled the curriculum — the “canon” — along with other material which did not belong, such as doubts about the centrality of “the West” or questions about national and social inequalities. Doubts had turned into premises which threatened to close “the American mind,” according to corporate-oriented administrators and academics. Reagan-era

Education Secretary William Bennett charged, for example, that the “liberal elite,” including academics and “the art community” had wreaked havoc on America’s values, denuding college study of “the great works of Western civilization” and producing “a loss of moral and intellectual purpose.”¹⁰

Remedies sought by neo-conservatives included the pumping of hundreds of millions of dollars into programs, professors, and schools promoting more acceptable values of free enterprise through the work of foundations. “(T)here came into being a network of conservative foundations that had no parallel in the liberal camp,” devoted to “laissez-faire economic policies.” The hard right produced the Scaife, Bradley, Coors, and Smith Richardson foundations, which set up scholarly think tanks, endowed chairs, subsidized journals, and sponsored academic conferences. All vociferously opposed unions.¹¹

Foremost among the foundations acting to cleanse the academy was the John M. Olin Foundation, headed by William E. Simon, the Treasury secretary under presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford, and a leader and ideologist of the most conservative wing of the Republican Party. He expressed his sharp conclusions about American capitalism across campuses nationwide during the 80s and 90s. He did not admire attempts to trim the sails of free enterprise in order to relieve burdens induced by that system. He especially detested businessmen who conceded to critics of capitalism by joining environmental, liberal, or other organizations of reform. Business values ought to be proclaimed proudly, and moreover, taught in the universities as the core of Western culture. (At Adelphi, the thesis that money carried more than economic value in education was realized in the criteria for honorary doctorates recommended to the Adelphi board by trustee Hilton Kramer: “Scholars and people of wealth should be considered for academic honors.”) Simon felt that ignoring or minimizing such values in academia represented “moral bankruptcy.” The “wider sickness” in colleges included “the practice of invoking the sacred cow of academic freedom as a cover for hypocrisy and irresponsibility.”¹²

Like William Bennett, Simon believed that the 1960s had eviscerated standards and curricula in higher education. And like John Silber, the nationally known Simon joined the Adelphi University board of trustees in 1989. Eventually, Simon was accompanied on the Adelphi board by Olin Foundation Executive Director James Pierson. Simon's Olin Foundation subsidized "Olin Scholars," programs, institutions, and lecture series on many American campuses to help restore the values of "private enterprise" to their proper place in higher education.¹³

The Olin Foundation compiled a substantial record of contributions to decidedly anti-labor organizations. Among them were the Employment Policy Foundation, the Center for Individual Rights (which attributes educational decline in great part to teachers' unions), the Claremont Institute, and the well-known National Right to Work Legal Defense Foundation (which also targets unions in the education field). The Olin Foundation's vision of "free enterprise" held little place for collective bargaining rights. At Adelphi, for example, several Olin Scholars derided faculty unionism as an unfortunate throwback to the 60s or an outright effort to curtail individual freedom.¹⁴

MEANWHILE, THE ONSET OF the "big business" style and values within higher education took its toll on the security and conditions of faculty. The signal result was the erosion of the full-time work force. By the end of the 90s, nearly 40 percent of the faculty in the massive State University of New York were part-timers. Across the nation, 43 percent of professors fell into the part-time category. Among full-time faculty, nearly 30 percent at present work under non-tenure-track contracts, customarily one year in duration, the prospect of extension always a mystery. As in business, the trend in higher education has been, according to AFL-CIO president John Sweeney, to "phase out secure, full-time jobs." One systematic study indicates that "casualization," (a term traditionally applied to seasonal labor, longshore work, or workers in the tourist industry) now prevails in academia. Insofar as graduate teachers, non-tenure-track full-timers, and adjunct faculty now com-

prise well over half of all faculty, therefore the growing bulk of professors "work for inadequate pay, have little or no benefits and no institutional voice." Women and minority faculty, who are under-represented in the full-time ranks, constitute almost 60 percent of temporary professors. And thus, the study points out, "the academy, like other sectors of the economy, relies on a two-tier workforce."¹⁵

Understandably, a good number of faculty did choose to organize during the 90s, including part-time and full-time teachers at both private and public colleges. It became a genuine trend. While there can be no disputing that the NLRB denied union rights to many faculty applicants after the *Yeshiva* decision, it gave the green light in those instances where it found legitimate faculty input so blocked by administrators and trustees that an employee-employer dichotomy had evolved. The NLRB thus did not classify the professors as managers at Florida Memorial College in 1982, at Bradford College in the same year, or at the University of Great Falls in 1997. The NLRB felt that, despite the operation of shared governance principles on paper, the administrations of these schools totally disregarded faculty participation. To be sure, the NLRB accepted the *Yeshiva* logic in many other cases, in spite of evidence that corporate-bureaucratic approaches and values were being broadly introduced into university life and governance, with deleterious impact upon faculty rights, as Justice Brennan had originally observed in his *Yeshiva* dissent.¹⁶

Still other judgments lend weight to the perception of a less than binding reading of the *Yeshiva* mandate. That the Board has (since 2000) permitted faculty to form unions at Manhattanville and Manhattan Colleges, private institutions, seems to show that it is accepting arguments it used to discard. In view of the emergence of the more explicitly lean and mean corporate university, notes an observer, "the *Yeshiva* decision has less validity." The NLRB more recently upheld the illegality of tenure denial "to a professor who had testified in favor of allowing NYU graduate students to unionize." On the broader labor scene increasingly filled with casual workers and changing

occupational patterns, the NLRB has ruled that union contracts cover temporary workers in the food industry and that "directing nurses" are not supervisors, because they cannot truly use "independent judgment" in day-to-day decisions.¹⁷

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING BY graduate students and adjunct faculty at both public and private colleges constitutes a new development in the academic labor market, as at NYU, Temple, Yale, and the University of Wisconsin. Although several of the traditional unions of educators — the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the AAUP — have shown interest in that regard, unions from outside the university walls have been active as well, notably the United Auto Workers. Additionally, despite the apparent relative security enjoyed by tenured full-time faculty, unionization has been shown to be an effective means of retaining a voice in higher education. Indeed, without collective bargaining, "the academic and public policy matters the courts profess to protect depend increasingly on the decisions of institutional managers who are necessarily more responsive to considerations of cost, politics and administrative control than faculty." Moreover, unionization reduces the discriminatory pay differential between male and female faculty, while raising the remuneration of its constituents by approximately 14 percent over the earnings of non-union faculty.¹⁸

Nonetheless, the National Labor Relations Board has a history of allowing substantial leeway, if not obstruction, by employers in the collective bargaining arena. The Board has been subject as well to influences inimical to organized labor. AFL-CIO president John Sweeney pointed out that the law at one and the same time permits workers the right to choose representatives and employers the liberty to take part in the proceedings; makes it unfair for an employer to penalize employees who favor unions, but allows employers to compel employees to attend company meetings that attack unions; provides workers the opportunity to join in "concerted activity," yet tolerates employer retaliation against employees who participate. Despite union-friendly

moves, the NLRB "has not even come close to peeling back the layers of misconstruction that have led it astray in order to address the fundamental inequities and failures of the law," Sweeney noted.¹⁹

Nevertheless, the NLRB has not applied the *Yeshiva* decision in blanket fashion to the instances of faculty organizing which have come before it. But despite the complexity of the issue, the board and president at Adelphi University held that the decision plainly banned faculty unionism as an open threat to private college life. In fact, declared an Adelphi affidavit repudiating a state subpoena for dubious expense records, the only problem was that "Adelphi is one of a small number of private universities in the country which has a unionized faculty." Indeed, Adelphi's teaching staff "was the first faculty of any private university to unionize," noted a university "White Paper" sent to college administrators and boards throughout New York in December 1996. Surely, as prominent a national opponent of faculty unionism as Adelphi trustee John Silber could not have looked serenely upon the fact that its faculty remained organized long after the *Yeshiva* decision: it was the kind of situation he had liquidated at Boston University.²⁰

Thus when Silber testified before the Board of Regents in 1996 that faculty unions spelled the doom of higher education, he spoke as if there had been no business-driven dynamic in the education "industry" and no consequent ill effect on the teaching profession. After telling the Regents that their investigation was nothing more than "a work project by a union," one designed "to manipulate you and to misguide you with all kinds of things," Silber demanded that organized faculty be excluded from university decision-making: "What do they want? Do they want to be a collegial partner in the administration of Adelphi or do they want to run Adelphi? As long as they want to run Adelphi, they have no right to a union." Silber told the Regents: "If they want to be cooperative members of this community and have a union, then they have to recognize that they are labor and we are management, and management does have rights, that we will negotiate at the bargaining table." Pursuant to a new university at-

tempt to decertify the Adelphi union, Silber confidently predicted that the NLRB would see that the faculty clearly were “not eligible to have a union under the N.L.R.A.”²¹

THAT UNDIFFERENTIATED APPROACH APPALLED the former CUNY Vice-Chancellor David Newton, who was Adelphi’s Vice-Provost for Faculty Relations. More sophisticated than Silber and Diamandopoulos, Newton felt offended by their visceral anti-union feeling and strident neo-conservatism, which undermined “the wave” he wished to ride and the more artful control over unions he wished to assert. Although Newton had been one of the first to consider the academic sweatshop, he was nonetheless driven to conclude: “Whenever you have characters like Diamandopoulos — and there are more of them than you think — unionism is needed.”²²

The Board of Regents investigation into Adelphi produced enough evidence of executive *fiat* and corruption there to suggest that the prevalence of managerial obstruction transcended conditions on campuses where the NLRB had sustained union rights. The Regents branded Adelphi’s administrative transgressions — the failure to allow the faculty a voice in major appointments and to assure faculty input into academic plans, accompanied by blatant expropriation of faculty by trustees — as “a complete breakdown of the principles of governance — which the board of trustees seems to countenance.” Similar findings had produced other NLRB verdicts diverging from the *Yeshiva* decision.²³

Still the rightwing *National Review* (whose publisher, William F. Buckley, was Adelphi’s guest on more than one occasion) gave high marks to the university leaders in its college rankings. It claimed that the ethics hullabaloo — trustees unaccountably and astronomically raised Diamandopoulos’ salary and perks, while funneling university funds to insurance and advertising firms run by members of the board — was really “a labor dispute masquerading as a battle over educational principle.” Diamandopoulos had been set up for investigation because he opposed “the intellectually hollow demands for radical multiculturalism and political correctness.”

Trustee William E. Simon (who would quit the board on the eve of the Board of Regents hearings) opined that Diamandopoulos’ opposition to “the liberal garbage that spews around” was the true reason that trustees came under scrutiny.²⁴

NONE OF THESE POINTS, including the anti-union element, swayed the state Board of Regents. Evidence at the Board of Regents hearings demonstrated a persistent tendency toward political miscalculation on the part of trustees, administrators, and their neo-conservative supporters. They tended to assume that strident anti-unionism was as palpably felt among educational and local constituencies as within their own ranks, which would suffice to obscure documented offenses.

They were wrong, and current evidence suggests that more honest, yet equally corporate-minded, university administrators who consider a union-free environment essential to the academic industry, will not win easy success. Trends suggest that as the corporate university, ideologically and physically, demeans the work and contribution of faculty, the decision to unionize will become more common. And university managers will find it more difficult to fend off their employees with the logic of the *Yeshiva* decision.

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The debate on the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg in our pages was initiated by Stephen E. Bronner's article that appeared in the Summer 2001 issue (Whole Number 31). In Number 32, we featured two responses, one by David Camfield, another by Alan Johnson, followed by Stephen Bronner's reply. In this issue, the debate continues with contributions from Paul Le Blanc, Barry Finger, Michael Thompson, Alan Johnson, and Stephen Bronner. Since the debate revolves around basic conceptions of socialist politics, we believe, it has a significance that merits the space we have allotted to it.

THE EDITORS

Why Should We Care What Rosa Luxemburg Thought?

Paul Le Blanc

ROSA LUXEMBURG — passionate tribune of socialism, penetrating Marxist theorist and educator whose luminous prose has inspired millions, revolutionary activist martyr. What are we to make of her now?

In *The Marxists*, C. Wright Mills wrote that Luxemburg “occupied a peculiar, and powerless, position between the Second and the Third Internationals.” Because she was “passionately for democracy and for freedom in all of the decisive meanings of those terms,” Mills explains, and because this was fused “in her belief in the revolutionary spontaneity of the proletarian masses,” she should be seen as having one foot in the Socialist International, the other foot in the Communist International, “and her head, I am afraid, in the cloudier, more utopian reaches of classic Marxism.” If someone was so disconnected from the hard realities of her own time, why should one care what she might have thought about the complexities of ours?

Hannah Arendt's marvelous essay on Rosa tells us that Luxemburg has been so important to so many because after her death she became “a symbol of nostalgia for the good old times of the movement, when hopes were green, the revolution around the

corner, and, most important, the faith in the capacities of the masses and in the moral integrity of the Socialist or Communist leadership was still intact.” Arendt adds that “it speaks not only for the person of Rosa Luxemburg, but also for the qualities of the older generation of the Left, that the legend — vague, confused, inaccurate in nearly all details — could spread throughout the world and come to life whenever a ‘New Left’ sprang into being.” But she concludes by insisting on the continuing relevance Luxemburg's actual ideas, expressing the hope “that she will finally find her place in the education of political scientists in the countries of the West” (and presumably the East, the North, the South), since — according to Luxemburg's biographer J.P. Nettl, whom she quoted — “her ideas belong wherever the history of political ideas is seriously taught.”

Stephen Eric Bronner, it seems clear, inclines very much toward this view. And he seems admirably determined not to allow what is valid in Luxemburg's thought and life to be lost in the clouds of utopianism or the fog of nostalgia.

I have not read enough of Bronner's writings. His small book on Rosa Luxemburg is not bad, though I differ with some of the interpretation. (But for me, no one has matched Rosa's comrade Paul Frolich's classic biography of her.) I have read Bronner's edition of Rosa Luxemburg's letters, which is incredibly fine, and while Lux-

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emburg may deserve most of the credit for that, I feel genuine gratitude for Bronner's valuable selections, editing, notes, and introductory essay. And I have read his warm and illuminating essay on his teacher Henry Pachter, a very thoughtful one-time follower of Luxemburg who passed through Communism to the Social-Democracy of Irving Howe's *Dissent*.

But after reading his self-defense in response to the criticisms of Alan Johnson and David Camfield, I will certainly want to look at the other works Bronner mentions throughout his footnotes — *Socialism Unbound*, *Moments of Decision*, *Ideas in Action*, etc. First of all, because here is an intelligence that is wonderfully steeped in the Marxist tradition and the history of the socialist movement. But it is also an intelligence so obviously humane, alert, critical, that one is compelled (if the reader is to do justice to himself or herself) to open one's mind in a manner that undermines dogmatic interpretations of valued beliefs. This is so even if one differs with the author's conclusions.

This is why I liked his essay "Red Dreams and the New Millennium: Notes on the Legacy of Rosa Luxemburg." It constituted a genuine challenge for us to consider the contemporary relevance of Luxemburg, and it truly helped to bring her alive. *I think she herself would not have accepted important aspects and assumptions of the argument.* But I liked it. Because what is more important than what Rosa Luxemburg would have thought of Bronner's essay is the extent to which it identifies real issues and real problems facing us. She lived and wrote and acted in a context in which mass working-class movements throughout Europe were animated by socialist ideas and history crackled with revolutionary possibilities. It is silly to allow ourselves the daydream — when we read her words or think about her life — that this defines our own reality. So what *is* Rosa's legacy for us? Good question!

And then in the next issue of *New Politics*, thanks to Johnson and Camfield, there were not one but two critiques — twenty pages of critique to the original six pages of Bronner's talk — defending Luxemburg's revolutionary Marxism against the revision-

ist offender. The critiques were comradely in tone, as Bronner acknowledged in his seventeen-page rejoinder that — in a comradely tone — lambasted his critics.

Why On Earth Would I Be Wandering Into This Debate?

IN PART, the answer is that I want to help these people stop fighting. It seems to me the comrades are — to a certain extent — arguing past each other: too much learning, too much knowledge, too many fine-turned phrases getting in the way of identifying what's really what in the world and how they see the world. It isn't clear to me to what extent — in life, in practical politics — they actually disagree.

In part, the answer is that they are differing over more than the legacy of Rosa Luxemburg. A little bit in his first contribution but somewhat more in his second, Bronner seems to raise issues having to do with the continuing relevance of Marxism and the possibility of socialism. Since so much of my own life has been animated by a belief in such relevance and such a possibility, I find myself drawn to the debate like a moth to a nighttime porch light. Especially since a majority of those who used to think the way I did now seem not to. This is hardly the first time.

Once upon a time, I belonged to a relatively small would-be revolutionary party that was in trouble. It was larger than any would-be revolutionary group existing in the United States today, and the trouble it was in was that — despite some very good work it had done (in part, *because* of some very good work it had done), it was sinking under the weight of its own unrealistic expectations. There was full freedom of discussion in the organization and the right to dissent from the party leadership, but — especially under the circumstances — anyone who seriously made use of those rights risked, at the very least, undermining his or her position as a respected comrade. What's worse, at a certain point the party leadership decided (in a manner neither open nor honest) to replace one set of party dogmas with another set of party dogmas. There were many contradictions, many confusions, many foolish and wrong things being said and done. I would sit in meetings,

wanting to continue making my own modest contributions to the revolutionary party and remain everyone's friend, gritting my teeth, saying to myself: "Don't be a fool, don't say anything, don't go looking for trouble, don't say anything, let it go, don't say anything..." And then like a fool I would open my mouth and disagree with the majority position.

Nor is my problem simply still agreeing with Luxemburg. The majority dogma among radicals today, for example, is certainly what Bronner writes: "Leninism is as dead as a doornail everywhere other than among the sects that are reminiscent of antagonistic amoeba fighting each other to the death in a drop of water." Good heavens! And here I am, still considering myself a Leninist. What an embarrassment. But this may be as good a place as any to explain myself. I still consider myself a Leninist because, in large measure, I consider authentic Leninism to include a commitment to the following propositions:

- capitalism is inherently a vicious, exploitative, oppressive, dehumanizing system which should be replaced with socialism — rule by the people over the economy, the free development of each being the condition for the free development of all;
- in modern capitalist society it is the working class (not simply "factory workers," but all those individuals and their families dependent on the sale of one's ability to work for a pay-check) that is in the process of becoming a majority class and potentially has the power to bring great changes;
- socialism and the working class must be merged if the possibility of the one and the potential of the other, and the triumph of both, are to be realized;
- mass struggles for reforms that advance economic justice and democratic rights are necessary in and of themselves but are also important as the basis for a serious struggle for socialism — both because this is a training-ground for working-class activists capable of making socialism a reality, and because capitalism ultimately is incapable of providing actual economic

justice and genuine democracy;

- under modern-day capitalism, the state — even in the form of the more or less *democratic republic* — necessarily reflects, and is necessarily structured to reflect, the power and the needs of the capitalist economy and of the most powerful sectors of the capitalist class; while partial gains for the workers and oppressed must be fought for and can sometimes be secured within that context, a genuinely democratic republic that truly reflects the needs and power of the working-class majority will require a fundamental restructuring — a radical democratization — of the structure of the state;
- from the very beginning, capitalism was expansive and global — seeking markets, raw materials, and investment opportunities regardless of national and other boundaries — and this aggressive expansionism is intertwined with the policies and structures of the modern-day state, constituting the imperialism of our time: often peaceful when possible, but murderous when necessary, often expressed with the rhetoric and gestures of profound humanitarianism, but always shaped to harmonize with the ability of capitalist power elites to overcome all impediments to the maximization of their profits;
- just as capitalism is a global system, so is the exploitation of those who labor throughout the world an international reality, which means that the workers of all countries and regions, instead of competing against each other, need to work together; such working-class internationalism will mean the mutual strengthening — through shared experiences and insights — of working-class liberation forces in each country, and victories in one sector of the world will, quite substantially and materially, make possible victories in other parts of the world for workers and oppressed people;
- the politically advanced, activist layers of the working class (the vanguard), must organize themselves into a coherent socialist organization, a party that is democratic but also disciplined, that — with its leaflets, newspapers and other

literature, its study circles and mass meetings, its demonstrations and trade union efforts, its reform struggles and election campaigns, and ultimately its mass mobilizations and confrontations with the powers-that-be — will be capable of accumulating and sharing with more and more workers a blend of practical political experience and the knowledge and analyses associated with Marxism, ultimately helping the working class to take political power;

- socialism will, finally, not be brought about simply through the slow and steady gathering together of an electoral and parliamentary majority — in fact a powerful majority capable of establishing working-class political power and the socialist reconstruction of society can only be forged through militant, dynamic, revolutionary struggles that will confront and overcome capitalist power structures in the workplaces, the communities, and the political arena.

There are a couple of points to be made here. One is that this is not just Leninism. There is ample material to demonstrate (including my own books, *From Marx to Gramsci* and *Lenin and the Revolutionary Party* and *Rosa Luxemburg: Reflections and Writings*) that the perspectives outlined above are hardly the exclusive property of Lenin. They were broadly accepted — more or less — by all in the revolutionary Marxist tradition, starting with Marx and Engels themselves, also embracing Trotsky and Gramsci, and certainly including Luxemburg. One could add that Luxemburg's thought also contains vitally important criticisms of Lenin's practice — criticisms that are essential for any revolutionary socialism, including Leninism, which seeks to learn from the mistakes of revolutionary socialists. But Luxemburg and Lenin saw themselves, and they remain, partisans of the same set of commitments.

Yet simply because all the holy names in the revolutionary Marxist pantheon said something is true, does that make it true? Maybe it *was* true once long ago when these people were still alive. Does that make it true now? This is precisely Bronner's challenge to us.

Capitalism, the State and Imperialism

WHICH BRINGS ME TO MY SECOND POINT. We should care what Rosa Luxemburg thought because so much of her thought continues to be relevant to the capitalist realities in which we find ourselves enmeshed. Setting aside this rhetorical flourish and that overly optimistic or pessimistic error, the basic critique of capitalism — economically, socially, politically — still holds up all too well.

That is why I have a problem with some of the key assertions in Bronner's challenge. In his second article he tells us that “a liberal republic” structured along the lines of the United States “must serve as the precondition for socialism.” He asserts that “not the institutional structures of liberal-democratic states, but rather the elites within those states, erect barriers to addressing exploitation, oppression, and ecological destruction.” I am not in favor of our simply turning our backs on the “bourgeois-democratic” state. To the extent that it is democratic, that is a precious acquisition for all of us, and especially for the working class, and we should struggle for reforms within that context. But we should not blind ourselves to the fact that “the Founding Fathers” (and all of the politically powerful “fathers” who have come since) really did — quite consciously — structure the American Republic in order to protect and advance the interests of the market economy and of those who possess great wealth and property. It is wrong for Bronner, in the name of going beyond Marxist dogma, to pretend that this isn't so.

Worse, in his first article he says this: “The only institutions capable of furthering internationalism are now intertwined with capitalist interests and they tend to privilege strong states over their weaker brethren. But I think Luxemburg would have realized that the choice between furthering relatively progressive ends through imperfect institutions and not intervening in order to forestall genocide in Rwanda or Sierra Leone is self-evident.”

It is important to look at the actual history of the world over the past hundred years to avoid making naïve mistakes. There have been many imperialist military interventions which principled socialists have ac-

tively opposed — from the Spanish-American War and the invasion of the Philippines, to World War I, to U.S. intervention in Vietnam, to the various interventions in Central America and the Caribbean, to the bombing of innocents in Afghanistan. On the other hand, it can be argued that there are other military interventions against which it would have been wrong to mobilize. A classic case was the U.S. war effort against Nazi Germany in World War II. One could, perhaps, identify other possible examples in recent times.

But there is a difference between not organizing an anti-war movement and actually mobilizing for war. Should one give political support to interventions by (or advocate interventions to be carried out by) what is essentially an imperialist war machine? Such historians as William Appleman Williams, Gabriel Kolko, Lloyd Gardner, and Walter LaFeber have demonstrated that U.S. foreign policy in 1941-1945 was inseparable from the imperial commitment to “the Open Door Policy” and to establishing “the American Century” at the expense of the world’s peoples. It should be clear that imperialist “humanitarianism” will certainly be a pretext for the primary goal: maintaining an imperialist world order in which, for example, the richest 20 percent of the world’s population receives 82.7 percent of the total world income, the world’s 225 richest people have a combined income which is equal to the combined annual income of the world’s 2.5 billion poorest people, and 40,000 of the world’s children die of malnutrition each day.

Bronner is wrong to speculate that the Rosa Luxemburg we know would have agreed with his support of certain imperialist interventions. It was alien to all that she said, all that she did, all that she was. That hardly settles the matter. It is not important that Rosa Luxemburg would disagree with Stephen Eric Bronner if all that shows us is her inability to transcend her revolutionary socialist “dogmatism.” (Of course, I think she would have been not dogmatic but, simply, right.)

What is most surprising and disheartening about Bronner’s response to his critics is the way that the final paragraphs of his rejoinder seem to rise in a crescendo of

far-reaching innuendo which seems to question not only revolutionary socialism but perhaps socialism as such — and he consigns Johnson and Camfield (representing “a tiny minority ... to whom no one ever listens”) to the junk-heap of history. That’s not very helpful, and it undercuts the genuine contribution that he has to offer.

The Working Class Socialism . . . and Our Struggles for a Better World

IN APPROACHING BRONNER’S genuine contribution, it may be useful to remind ourselves of the two points made earlier about our beloved Rosa: 1) there is a broadly defined revolutionary socialist tradition with Luxemburg gloriously and luminously in the thick of it, and 2) essential aspects of the analysis associated with that revolutionary socialist tradition continue to make sense for our own time. But there is a third point that must be made. And it brings us to what strikes me as the most valid and important aspect of Bronner’s challenge.

If we still lived in the golden age of classical Marxism or the heroic years of revolutionary Communism, with massive workers’ movements characterized by significant levels of class-consciousness, there would be an obvious ways to make the revolutionary Marxist orientation relevant to the political struggles of our time. But those are not our realities, as Bronner brutally insists over and over. “The industrial working class is on the wane, and the labor movement is no longer what it once was. . . . The proletarian internationals of the past have collapsed.” Yes, absolutely true. “The question facing the left is whether to embrace outmoded forms of thinking or provide new meaning for an old vision.” Yes, absolutely true. “Internationalist, socialist, and democratic principles must be adapted to meet new historical conditions without surrendering their bite.” Yes, absolutely true. One might say (Bronner might not, but I would) that the Marxist analysis of capitalism remains powerful, while the perspective of revolutionary working-class struggle for socialism is in a shambles. As Bronner puts it: “the power of capital still rests on the degree of *organizational* and *ideological* disunity among workers.”

So What Is To Be Done?

DESPITE A TONE OF SELF-ASSURANCE that Bronner sometimes employs (a tone that so many of us tend toward, even — or especially — when we are unsure), his suggested paths “forward” seem to go in different and contradictory directions. Some of them seem to demand a relentless honesty and critical-mindedness (in regard to Marxist verities), others seem to suspend critical thinking and indulge in self-deception (in regard to the nature of the state and imperialism). We have seen that some of his thoughts seem to throw into question the revolutionary socialist goal as such. Others take us in the direction of continuing struggle in the spirit of Rosa Luxemburg. In what follows, I want to trace precisely those elements, which one can find in the articles both of Bronner and of his two critics.

“A more radical commitment to social justice must now increasingly seek new forms of alliance between workers and members of the new social movement,” according to Bronner, and Alan Johnson fully agrees, adding that the pre-condition of independent working-class politics involves “the political constitution of the multi-ethnic and gendered working class as a unity-in-difference.”

In the words of David Camfield, we need “a socialist political strategy which takes as its start-point struggles, however small, in which working-class and oppressed people assert their needs against employers, governments and other instances of domination,” emphasizing the need for “unions and community-based workers organizations (including those of women and other oppressed people),” as well as “organizations of peasants, indigenous people, students, and others,” adding up to an inclusiveness that also characterizes the vision of Bronner and Johnson.

“Justice is a river with many tributaries,” Bronner tells us. “Most women and gays, minorities and environmentalists, have a stake in protecting the gains made by labor in the past as surely as labor had a stake in furthering many of their concerns in the future.” Johnson tells us of the need — also explicitly embraced by the others — to “fight to protect threatened welfare benefits and democratic rights from roll-back,

and then to use that resistance as a springboard to fight for further reforms is a key to socialist advance.” All of them identify with the movement for global justice associated with massive international protests in Seattle, Prague, Washington, Genoa, and elsewhere.

These are the kinds of things that we should all work on — in as serious and as organized a manner as possible, with the relatively small socialist groups finding ways to work in alliance rather than sectarian competition. In fact most of the people in the diverse, fragmented, incohesive working-class majority don’t identify with any of the existing groups, and it is most important to reach out to these brothers and sisters who will be new to the struggle and are not about to enlist in one or another ideological group. We cannot afford to pretend that we are living in the glory days of either the Second International or Third International — in many ways our organizational and ideological realities are closer to those preceding the First International. And of course in some ways they are very different from anything that has come before.

It seems to me that the basic elements of the revolutionary socialist tradition still make sense, but there are ways to apply them that would make very little sense. Times are different. Just as aspects of the *Communist Manifesto* made more sense in 1890 and 1930 than they did in 1848, so will aspects of the revolutionary socialist perspective have greater relevance later than they do now (especially if we do the right kinds of things between now and then). We should have respect for our history, but not at the expense of respecting, understanding, and being able to truly affect the present-day realities of which we are part. We need tools, not totems or artifacts.

With modesty and patience, as we help advance the struggles and learn from the experiences associated with these struggles, we may be able to sort through more adequately the divergent notions of Bronner and his critics. And then what Rosa Luxemburg and her comrades thought may take on a greater meaning than we are able to find at this particular moment in history.

Socialist Metaphysics and Luxemburg's Legacy

Michael J. Thompson

THEODOR ADORNO ONCE WROTE that tradition is “unconscious remembrance.”¹ Adorno's claim — wrought in superb dialectical fashion — was intended as a critique of the rigid structures of meaning and thought that were inherited passively from the past. Liberation from such thinking was possible only through a consistently critical stance toward accepted thought, even when the nature of this thought was ostensibly “radical.” We all too often associate this problem of tradition and its constraining character with conservatism. But the debate that has arisen over Stephen Bronner's article “Red Dreams” in a previous issue of *New Politics* has shown that the left is all too prone to this same tendency. The debate currently underway has gone, in my view, far beyond debating the scholastic issues of Rosa Luxemburg's thought and penetrated into the very heart of contemporary socialist thought itself.

I should say from the inception that I am not in opposition to Stephen's argument as outlined in both his first article as well as in his response to David Camfield and Alan Johnson, even though I do have some criticisms of his argument which I will express below. Stephen is an advisory editor of the journal *Logos*, of which I am an editor, and was my teacher in graduate school as well. But this does not mean that my contribution to this debate should be construed as anything other than a defense of the feasibility of socialism and its ideals. I believe that the current irrelevance of socialism and the left more broadly in political thought and public and social affairs is due largely to the self-peripheralization of contemporary socialist thought through an associa-

tion with anachronistic political ideas as well as an unrealistic dependence upon outmoded political strategies and “solutions” to the problems of capitalism. This debate must therefore be seen as a debate over the modern meaning of socialism since the criticisms of Stephen's views have, in my view, serious implications for socialist thought in the early 21st century.

But my entry into the present debate has been prompted not simply by the line of argument on one issue over another but on what I see as the expression of what I will call here a *socialist metaphysics*: the notion held by thinkers aligned with socialist politics that certain political ideas and forms of social organization will guarantee a liberatory course of history and that these ideas and forms of social and political organization that have been held close to the political tradition of socialism throughout the 20th century are ahistorical, and uncritically embraced. They therefore operate metaphysically, as ideas detached from reality and the empirical truths of contemporary society in all its complexities. More importantly, I see this as the one component that has held socialist ideas back and prevented them from properly engaging the problems of modern capitalism and modern liberalism. The reactions to Stephen's argument by Johnson and Camfield seem, in my view, to be prime examples of socialist metaphysics and it is that which I wish to address first before engaging in some remarks on Stephen's argument.

Socialism, Democracy and the State

I WILL START BY ADDRESSING the problem of the relationship between democracy and socialism. The idea of democracy has been one area where socialist metaphysics plays itself out most strongly in this debate. This is most evident in the discussion of workers

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councils as a form of democratic self-organization. Alan Johnson's discussion of workers councils in his response to Stephen harks back to the most historically situated forms of democratic participation that the socialist tradition articulated. It was not at all surprising to me to read a critical account of Stephen's position, but it was shocking indeed to see the idea of workers councils being advocated as late as the early 21st century.

The idea for the workers councils has its roots in the Paris Commune and those romantic associations still persist. But any casual acquaintance with the literature on workers councils paints a picture of them being a road to democratic participation only where parliamentary forms were not historically present. In Russia, after the first soviet formed in 1905 in St. Petersburg, Trotsky wrote that the workers councils "organized the working masses, directed the political strikes and demonstrations, armed the workers, and protected the population against pogroms."² They served a purpose that unions and the workers movement would in nations that already had republican governments. They were the fighting organizations of workers and of peasants in Russia and were progressive with respect to Russian political history and to the Tsarist state, but there was, in general, a refusal to grant the councils that same status in western European nations.

Kautsky, in *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, admitted that workers councils were an impressive phenomenon, but was opposed to them as a replacement of a fully democratic state since the exclusion of the bourgeoisie — at least in western nations — would exclude and thereby disenfranchise a large portion of the public. I see little difference in modern America or Europe in this regard. Karl Renner's argument against the councils is perhaps most relevant here. For Renner, both workers councils (*Arbeiterräte*) and the less ambitious "factory councils" (*Betriebsräte*) or "works councils" were insufficient to produce a fully realized political democracy since they were composed of only one strata of society — the proletariat — and would only be able to represent and handle limited sectional interests.³ Since workers were not a universal

class in all political affairs, workers councils were considered undemocratic from a broader political perspective once they were scrutinized more closely from the standpoint of more advanced political formations, such as the liberal republican state in western Europe.⁴

But even more, the idea of workers councils should be seen as sociologically out of touch with all present political and economic realities once we consider the problem that the "working class" has itself grown increasingly heterogeneous with respect to its interests as well as its relation to capital. Simply saying that the working class — especially in advanced capitalist economies — is defined by its relation to capital as wage/income earners simplifies the true problem that socialist ideas and institutions face. Furthermore, it is no longer the case that workers councils would be able to provide a more progressive form of democracy than the expansion of liberal institutions which presently exist. Democracy and socialism, it seems to me, require the expansion of democracy into the economic sphere. Although this is not something Johnson would deny, he is mistaken in seeing the council system as a remedy to this problem.

At a deeper, more theoretical level, why ought we to assume that workers councils are a more profound realization of democracy than the potentialities of the liberal republican state? The expansion of liberal institutions of accountability seem more "democratic" than a vague conception of workers councils which are (a) theoretically fuzzy with little historical precedent and have *absolutely no appeal* for modern workers of any kind; and (b) simply impede the development of socialist political ideas from truly articulating institutional alternatives to the present. I would add to Stephen's question presented in his reply to show any political force or party that has workers councils on its agenda: "what segment of society has even the slightest desire for such organizations?" In place of a democracy defined in terms of Russian soviets, it may be more fruitful and much more appealing to those who are not socialists, to work toward pushing the liberal republican state to further levels of democratic development.

The decentralized nature of direct

democratic forms are tendencies in socialist and radical thought that hold socialist politics back from evolving democratic institutions more suited for modern problems. The bickering over councils seems more to me to be over an archaic, vestigial piece of history than over a truly realistic and even desirable social alternative to what could be achieved through the expansion of democratic institutions linked to a state bent toward the realization of full political democracy.

This brings me to David Camfield. The problem of the state and democracy in socialist thought is complex, but statements such as the following deserve some discussion:

[T]he liberal state upon which Bronner's perspective ultimately depends is not a reliable vehicle for efforts to limit the power of the market. Mass struggles — such as those in France — have slowed neo-liberalism's dismantling of the social programs provided by the state. But it is increasingly evident that state power is an integral and active dimension of global capitalism's offensive.⁵

The retreat from, and the cynicism toward the state as well as the move toward direct democratic forms of organization is at the same time a retreat from the notions of universalism and accountability that socialism and democracy have always privileged. It is a retreat because these are not institutional forms that can necessarily deal with the other problems of governance beyond that of the workplace. There is no guarantee that the individuals that make up any workers council will, for instance, be inclined to allow homosexuals to marry. What, in other words, makes such non-state, even anti-state, formations more receptive to democratic ideas? Why should they be taken seriously as alternatives to the liberal state? There is no answer, let alone justification given in either Camfield's or Johnson's replies. Socialist ideas such as these are inadequate because they end up reducing all political phenomena to the category of capital itself. To advocate workers councils and to see the state as nothing more than a tool of the interests of capital is to simultaneously emasculate the very power socialism would have at its disposal to work

against the effects and tendencies of capital. It is only through the powerful institutions of the state — those that are democratically accountable — can the force of capital be countered.

We should recall here Marx's critique of Hegel's theory of the state. For Marx, the state was not inherently anti-democratic nor was it the creation and sole vehicle of capital and the bourgeoisie, but its claim to being the representative of the general interest was merely a *pretension*. Economic interests do define much of what the capitalist state does and how it acts, but this does not in any way mean that the state *per se* is the problem and that it should be replaced by romantic social forms promising direct democracy. If anything, it implies the requirement to further privilege the *political* over the *economic*, as Stephen points out, since it is only through this that the state can be moved toward the promotion of the general interest at the expense of particular interest. Indeed, Marx did see the Paris Commune as a significant movement toward a higher form of democracy, one that was superior to that of the bourgeois republican state. But it is essential to point out that this was not Marx's only position since he did admit that universal suffrage granted by the liberal state could become a potent vehicle for working class interests and working class power.⁶ Similarly, Marx also saw that the existence of democratic institutions *within* the liberal state could provide a substitute for violent revolution.⁷

In addition, I am not sure that there have been "mass struggles" in France for the fight against the rolling back of welfare benefits, although I would acknowledge that mass movements have been able to show the state that they are accountable to a large number of people and that their policies ought to reflect this fact. The state should be seen as more than simply the evil twin of capital; it also possesses the power to transform social relations and expand the political protection of the weak and disenfranchised. Yes, the state works by means of coercion at times, but who would deny that the type of repression practiced by the state in the 19th and early 20th centuries in western democracies is a reality of the past and not a definitive aspect of the modern

liberal state?

By defining itself outside of the institutions of the modern state, socialist goals cannot be realized without an anachronistic claim to revolution and a theoretically weak and historically bankrupt reliance on workers councils as some path toward socialist democracy. Only once socialist ideas come to grips with the political and economic realities of the present will socialism be able to take its place as a viable alternative to contemporary social and political life. Only once we see that the outmoded claims to workers councils and the abolition of the state are practical impossibilities and theoretical cul-de-sacs will we see that socialism has yet to come into its own in the 21st century. Illusions as to the strategies of socialist democracy should be dispensed with and a more pragmatic politics needs to be put in its place. Socialism may in fact require the political vision of utopia, but it must prevent utopianism from infecting socialist institutional proposals and tactical politics.

What seems to be missed by both Johnson and Camfield is that — as Marx's critique of Hegel's theory of the state expressed it — socialism was to emerge as the result not of the abolition of the bourgeois state, but as a result of the *Aufhebung des Staats*, not Engels' "withering away" of the state (*der Staat stirb ab*). *Aufhebung* meaning transcendence through preservation and destruction, there seems even less theoretical ground to continue to make such naïve arguments about the state and socialist strategy. The liberal republican state needs to be seen in this context, and the development and enhancement of social freedoms from civil rights to workers rights in the 20th century are testament to this.

Radical Liberalism or Socialism?

THIS LEADS ME TO STEPHEN'S CLAIM of the primacy of politics over economics. Indeed, there is little question that the scientific Marxism of the Second International is completely irrelevant both social scientifically and politically. To accept a teleological argument for political change based upon economic calculation and the collapse of capitalism under its own weight is similarly absurd. But this does not mean a wholesale

privileging of politics over economics. Political judgments alone, even buttressed by the best ethical argumentation, cannot overcome the material problems of scarcity and distribution. Economics is more than a merely descriptive enterprise, as Marx knew full well; it is also a creative problem solver in its own right and it requires a place *beside* politics as a means of overcoming the problems of capitalism and the construction of some satisfactory form of social democracy.

Stephen leads us to believe that politics is now the one domain in which socialist goals can be achieved. Politics is seen as the one area where social critique emanates from and where the radical reformation of society begins and ends. What happens, for instance, once our political convictions lead us to the conclusion that the production process of capitalism is inherently "unethical" according to some socialist moral stance? What happens when we want to actually move ahead with ideas of "economic justice," a fairly vague term today once we consider that there is really no interest to push for even a 35-hour work week, unions are looked at askance, and the problems of the environment are too big and too abstract to mobilize everyday people to actually push for even political attention to such issues? I am not sure that the peripheral existence of social movements privileging a class ideal will get us anywhere in this regard. Even if we were to push for full employment and for a more egalitarian distribution of incomes and raise the quality of life for the poor, this could conceivably still be achieved within the boundaries of political liberalism. Socialism would mean a more profound transformation of economy and society. The problem seems to me to be in the divergence between the "clean hands" of political ideas and ideals and the prescriptions they provide, and the "dirty" ones of social science, economics and actual policy construction, something the socialist tradition has always shied away from due to its exclusion from mainstream politics and to its own detriment.

This has a deeper philosophical valence. Marx, like Hegel before him, saw freedom not as the removal of barriers to one's self-development; surely there are aspects of

freedom that encompass that. More than this, they saw that freedom was the *insight into necessity*; that the overcoming of the material problems that confront humanity requires the scientific analysis of those problems. It is, in this sense, a partner to labor in this sense since it serves to enhance that capacity of humans to transform their environment. Economics is, in this sense, a science of distribution, efficiency and production; it is not simply the vulgar economics of the Second International and the gross positivism of Marxism's "golden age." We must remember that these material problems are often either detached from political ideas (as in the case of Soviet economic planning) or attached to simplified, ahistorical social, psychological and political categories (such as libertarianism or economic liberalism). This means that a new, *critical political economy* is needed just as much as the need to reevaluate socialist political ideals, as Stephen has made pains to point out. A critical political economy that can address the concerns of political and economic democratic values and also find the correct institutional referents for the realization of such ideas. Without these institutions, political ideas can remain only as abstractions. Regulative ideals are important, and a useful Kantian tool for getting out of the Marxian problem of teleology. But there is a limit to political ideas alone, and a real need to overcome the problem of economic constraints. Socialism has this as its primary concern over liberalism which, by and large, has no problem with capitalism as a system, only its inegalitarian effects.

Kant and liberalism both see an *opposition* between the realm of freedom and the realm of necessity. Practical reason and politics are distinct from the material world and need not consider it in its rationale and operation. Hegel and Marx are radical precisely because this metaphysics is defused. Now, I should point out that I see that Stephen's position is not wholly identical to that of Kant and of modern liberalism — at least up to a point. His broader point about the importance of political ideas is well taken as we see from his recent response:

Remembering the real achievements of the

labor movement, the fight for time, and for the dignity of working people, gives socialist theory a hook in reality. It places modern socialists in an anti-totalitarian tradition of radical reformism. It forces young people both to recognize structural constraints and the kind of struggle that was required to introduce what was so often derided as mere "legislation." It creates the possibility of reconnecting theory with practice. And — most important — it raises a meaningful hope for socialist politics.⁸

These are important moments in the legacy of the left and its political push toward enhanced freedoms and new political possibilities. But it is not necessarily *socialist* in nature. To be sure, it can be argued quite persuasively that the labor movement and its gains as well as the civil rights movement were moments of the historical expansion and evolution of liberalism. The 40-hour work week, the rights of blacks to vote and sit on a bus like any other white citizen are important gains, but are they inherently *socialist*? I am not sure that the issues Stephen points to are particularly socialist even as they do point to important moments of the struggle for freedom, recognition and human dignity. If they are not, then there is nothing in the mere idealism of political notions such as freedom from constraint, oppression, exploitation, etc., that cannot be dealt with — at the popular level — by the institutions and ideology of modern liberalism.

It is also important to note that these were political ideas that were, in a sense, permitted by the capitalist economy. Capital certainly fought the existence of organized labor, and it was only through the struggles of the labor movement — both in the courts and on the streets themselves — that modern liberalism was able to take root.⁹ Similarly, the civil rights movement restated the core principles that were inherent in the American Constitution from its inception. What was needed at the time was to fight against pre-liberal institutions and attitudes that still plagued America and prevented a deeper sense of democracy from being realized.

But again, the problem of socialism is not to merely draw a line from these struggles to more grandiose political ideals.

It is also to see that radical political ideas can become concrete only insofar as the liberal capitalist state can accommodate them. The words are important here: insofar as the liberal capitalist state *can* accommodate them, not is *willing* to accommodate them. This is a crucial concern; if socialism has at its base the core principles of human freedom, the expansion of human and civil rights, the elimination of an arbitrary exercise of power and the accountability of economic institutions as well as all political and social ones, then we are faced with the dilemma of how far radical reformism can proceed before we run into the boundary conditions of modern capitalism and the economic constraints it presents us with; a boundary condition that will not be able to inspire revolution, but one that will more likely — due to the impact of reification and the evaporation of class consciousness — lead to a more servile acceptance of the status quo.

We need not accept the vulgar Marxist thesis about “base and superstructure.” I agree with Stephen that socialist theory requires an emphasis on the relative autonomy of political ideas, but the primacy of the political over the scientific aspects of social science does not take us very far. Indeed, I would argue that the more we detach a socialist politics from a critical political economy, the more we lapse into a “radical liberalism,” not a viable socialism. It may be that books on political theory can continue to debate the abstract notions of freedom and the logical implications of such and such a thesis on various political possibilities. But this does not necessarily link theory and practice. It may be that the most realistic relation between theory and practice can manifest itself in the sphere of political-economic policies that can transform social relations as well as those with the natural environment. I would agree that this is largely driven and inspired by political ideas, but this does not get us past the insuperable boundary of the economics of capitalism. When Rosa Luxemburg argued, and Stephen references this, that the power of capital is a positive function of the organizational and ideological disunity of workers, this was not merely a political statement. Luxemburg also argued that the gains

achieved by unionized workers could always be rolled back during a period of economic recession. It is the existence of capital and the way it organizes society around its own logic that needs to be dealt with in the end. In this sense, political ideas and political movements are key; but there is also the essential need to continue to open up capitalism’s “black box,” as Marx did in *Capital*, and not rely on the sphere of politics for all emancipatory solutions.

This is not pessimism but an honest and intense realism. I am not calling into question Stephen’s understanding of socialism, which I agree with in principle and very much in substance as well. I am merely arguing that the problem with privileging political ideas over economic science leaves us at the mercy of capitalism in the end, not in a critical position with respect to it and also that the essence of socialist transformation consists in changes in both political as well as economic spheres, something Rudolf Hilferding knew all too well. What I mean by this is that political ideals need to be linked up to ways of managing concrete economic problems. Thinkers from Aristotle to Smith, Lavoisier, John Stuart Mill and Marx himself have seen this to be the case. Economic justice is, to a certain extent, an issue of politics: redistribution according to more “just” standards and more participation in the workplace for laborers, for example. But this brings us back to a crucial concern: with the expansion of liberalism, there is no longer a desire on the part of laborers or on the part of young people to take up these concerns. The struggles against the World Trade Organization may show some that radical ideas still have an ability to move younger people, but it has also betrayed an ignorance of globalization itself as well as a naïveté with respect to larger political institutions and has reached back to a certain anarchism without purpose.

The separation of economics from politics is an aspect of neo-classical social scientific thinking. In this sense, I wholly agree with Abba Lerner’s insight that economics “has gained the title of the queen of the social sciences by choosing *solved* political problems as its domain.”¹⁰ This applies mainly to the methods of neo-classical thinking. A criti-

cal political economy will be required to solve the problems that capitalism creates and to pose the institutional and policy alternatives that socialist political ideals — such as those that Stephen speaks of — will require for progressive social and political change. Social critique with socialist goals cannot take on the attributes that accompany the bourgeois division of the social sciences. What we must see is that economics, sociology, political science and the speculative moments of ethics, political theory and social philosophy all play a crucial role in the course of social transformation and always have. The highlighting of one of these with respect to any other results in one-sided analyses and an insufficient critique: rigidified technical analysis in the case of economics, and political and social idealism in the case of theory and philosophy.

I do not mean to confine socialist ideas to the sphere of policy construction. I do believe that a crucial dialectic exists between abstract political ideas and their actual translation into practice. This can be done though policy, if such power were to be at hand, but it must also be “on the table” when it comes to social movements as well. The larger institutional context — economic as well as political — needs to be configured into any progressive social movement and not left to theory alone. Indeed, Stephen’s point about linking social movements around the notion of class is a step toward unifying what is today a disparate, fragmented and sectarian left. Economics cannot be the answer to political

problems, but we must also realize that dealing with capitalism and a deeply ingrained liberalism requires deeper critiques and more realizable institutional alternatives.

NOTES

1. *Negative Dialectics*, p. 54, Continuum Press.
2. *Our Political Tasks*, London: New Park.
3. “Democracy and the Council System,” in Bottomore and Goode, eds., *Austro-Marxism*, Oxford University Press, 1978 (1921).
4. Factory councils are perhaps a more promising avenue to reform workshop relations and expand democracy on the shop floor, but this is quite a different thing from them being able to step up to the task of promoting political democracy more broadly.
5. “A Second Reply to Bronner,” p. 144, *New Politics* #32.
6. Marx’s exact words are: “the carrying out of Universal Suffrage in England would, therefore, be a far more socialistic measure than anything which has been honored with that name on the Continent. Its inevitable result, here, is the political supremacy of the working class.” From “The Chartists” in the *New York Daily Tribune*, August 25th, 1852.
7. “We do not deny that there are countries like England and America, and if I am familiar with your institutions, Holland, where labor may attain its goal by peaceful means.” *The First International: Minutes of Hague Congress of 1872*, p. 236. H. Gerth, ed., Madison, 1958.
8. “Rosa Redux,” p. 159. *New Politics*, #32.
9. The argument here is that labor served as a means of pushing liberalism into workplace relations which were previously dominated by pre-liberal notions of work and ownership. See the interesting work of Karen Orren, *Belated Feudalism*, Cambridge University Press, 1991.
10. “The Economics and Politics of Consumer Sovereignty,” p. 259, *American Economic Review*, May 1972 (emphasis in the original).

Rosa Redux Ad Absurdum

Barry Finger

Keep your anachronistic notions of national self-determination and workers' councils. Keep your irrelevant view of 'science.' Keep your insular beliefs. But then when you glance at the world, perhaps you will consider everything as simply 'false consciousness?' Was everyone an idiot except your 'tiny minority,' who still knows everything better, but to whom no one ever listens?

Stephen E. Bronner, 2002

From the traditional perspective these unactualized possibilities and unrealized potentialities for liberation come to be seen as 'irrational.' Consequently, they can be dismissed — but always in the name of the present that has become manifest. In the name of the status quo, the relative validity of unactualized needs and demands that were expressed both in theory and praxis are brushed aside, and termed "impossible to achieve."

Stephen E. Bronner, 1987

For, just as materialism itself originally grew out of the critique of religion, so too must the mystification of capitalist ideology and production relations — the most progressive aspects of which cannot be actualized within capitalist society and the most reactionary of which simply serve to veil the functioning of the given order — be criticized in a concrete manner and in terms of the concrete alternative of workers' control that is, after all, the basis of emancipatory socialism.

Stephen E. Bronner 1977-8

SOMEWHERE IN THE PAST twenty-five years Rosa Luxemburg, once a “revolutionary for our times,” became a liberal. The precise date of that transmogrification is unknown, but its discovery was announced with little advance fanfare, but with much subsequent consternation in the Summer 2001 and Winter 2001-2002 issues of *New Politics*. In making his case Stephen brought to bear, with the typical erudition, clarity of presentation and impish wit that makes his fortu-

nate students the envy of his political audience, the full weight of critical Marxism, the Marxism of Georg Lukács and of Karl Korsch. All of which is even more dazzling, given that the latter are, at least to this untutored mind, more often associated with ultra-leftism than with social democracy. So, in effect, Stephen performed the audacious tandem mental trapeze act of having inverted left and right not only in the person of Rosa Luxemburg, but of the entire socialist analytical continuum as well.

Stephen insists, and not without considerable persuasive force, that his viewpoint cannot be meaningfully merged with that of classical socialist revisionism. To do so would be to repudiate the key insights of critical materialism that rescued Marxism equally from the sterility of “orthodox doctrinalism” as well as from all belief in the genetic inevitability of evolutionary socialism and its corollary “ideology of compromise” through which the future socialist commonwealth might be eased. But that does not absolve Stephen from the whiff of suspicion in having dissolved socialism in an equally corrosive, if altogether different and novel, solution.

In Stephen's words: “*I don't identify socialism with any particular institutional form, including councils, and I view its purposes today less as the pursuit of the utopian 'other' than as the ongoing creation of economic and political conditions in which working people can expand the range of their knowledge, their experiences and their private as well as their public pursuit.*”[my emphasis, BF] This formulation, of course, bears a notable resemblance in tone to Bernstein's famous assertion that “the movement is everything, the goal is nothing.” Stephen, moreover, explicitly confirms that his approach leaves no room for a “final goal.” Nevertheless, too much should not be made of this similarity despite their mutual agreement that socialism is to be equated with the reforms attained under

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capitalism, with the significant caveat that Stephen — unlike the classical school of revisionism — is alarmed at the vulnerability of working class conquests, previously seen as irrevocable, by the resurgent forces of neo-liberalism. For this and for other reasons which will be examined, Stephen is not burdened with an unwavering faith in the transformation of capitalism into socialism, and the purposes of reform as he sees it, or at least as I understand him to see it, are not merely to attenuate the rough edges of capitalism but to raise the ethical necessity of “mitigating the whip of the market through the *state* and abolishing the exercise of arbitrary power *by the state*” as the manifold conditions for furthering democracy.

But what is so striking about this formulation is that, with the exception of the modifier “working,” such aims as Stephen identifies with socialism could be endorsed by the entire spectrum of *democratic* thought from the libertarian right to the green left. His means — of supplanting, where necessary, the market by the state, coupled with the struggle to limit the free scope of bureaucratic power — further differentiates him along the democratic spectrum and places him squarely in line with a long host of social reformers on the left. Yet, Stephen’s party of reform is curiously distinguished exclusively by its social composition and not by any specific attention to workers’ problems and/or class concerns. For that reason, his selection of the working class as the principal agency of this program does not strike me as a *necessary* political or logical deduction from his analysis. There are innumerable abuses of the market and business malpractice from pollution, to price gouging, to concentrations of oligopolistic and monopoly power and influence peddling, to the maldistribution of wealth, to urban renewal and educational reform which have been the traditional domain of middle class reformers and which fully conform to Stephen’s concerns as articulated. What this program retains in common moreover with the traditional parties of middle class reform is its dogged insistence on leaving intact and undisturbed a social horizon and future aims defined solely by the limits of capitalism. Insofar as he of-

fers any justification for “privileging” the working class, to use an infelicitous phrase he seems so fond of, it finds scarce rationalization beyond the “hook in reality” Stephen believes might be gained by appealing to the “real achievements of the labor movement,” the most successful and, in its European Marxist form, most ambitious reform movement in history. A success, it might be added, that bears necessary connection to the very revolutionary *aspirations* for a nonexploitative classless society Stephen appears to cynically dismiss as the baggage of the “utopian other.”

However, the old revolutionary labor movement, as Stephen is at pains to remind us, simply no longer exists. Who then would he be casting his hook to? A labor movement whose militancy and idealism seem so diminished that the very notion of working class power adheres little more than as a distant memory, still less a “regulative ideal”? He surely cannot have “faith” that such a combative labor movement, marred by ideological and organizational disunity, can be reconstituted along socialist lines. For that would seemingly return us to the very teleological metaphysics that Stephen is quite certain critical materialism so neatly disposed of. If capitalism does not create its own “grave-diggers” and if “socialism becomes a contingent enterprise, or putting it in the terms of the time, a purely ‘ethical’ demand or project,” what necessary connection *must* it have with the existing working class?

LET US LEAVE THIS QUESTION in abeyance for the moment and consider the problem from a different angle and ask: what necessary connection does this “ethical demand or project” have with socialism, as Marx or Luxemburg understood it? When it comes down to it, all that is being invoked — stripped of its philosophical finery — is the call for an invigorated mixed-economy against the roll back of the welfare state. Indeed, it is a program that, in spirit, Marx might have celebrated for expanding the scope of the “political economy of the working class.” But such victories as accrue to the “political economy of the working class,” and fulfill the “aims” of socialism as Stephen outlines them, are self-limiting in charac-

ter precisely because they leave undisturbed the overall accumulation structure of capitalism. The abolition of child labor, the eight-hour day, health and safety regulations, social security and old age pensions, trade union rights, unemployment compensation, minimum wage laws, anti-discrimination laws, etc., all restrict the arbitrary tyranny of the individual capitalist entity and may reduce the totality of one's life sacrificed in *direct* servitude to the capitalist class. They may even whet the appetite for social justice on a larger scale. If so, all the better. But a more equitable distribution of the working day or of the social product still leaves a working class forced to accept exploitation as the inescapable condition for securing its livelihood. Whether that disturbs Stephen or not, whether Stephen cares for ultimate aims or not, whether such reforms adapted, intensified, polished and brought up to date are the indisputable embodiment of the socialist spirit, there is no sensible standard by which such proposals — radical as that may be in today's climate — can ever be called a socialist *program*.

It is equally delusional, and the demands of accuracy outweigh civility at having to resort to such terminology, to believe that such reforms, for all their laudable benefits, fortify and broaden the existing democracy. Whatever the claims of capitalism to democratic forms of representation — to a liberal republic, whatever invaluable civil liberties and political freedoms have been attained and maintained through incessant struggle, the fact remains that the existence of class divisions in society makes a genuine democracy impossible. Conversely, it is generally preferable from a ruling class perspective to rule, if feasible, with the consent of the governed than to support the vastly increased cost of suppression needed to rule against their will. But equally under the liberal republic, as under other — authoritarian — state forms, control over the means of production, distribution and communication arms the economically dominant class with power that extends over every aspect of social life. That power may not be absolute, it may be blunted and circumscribed — but within its arc, power is not and cannot be shared. Genuine democracy is unattainable under a bourgeois state, because

the formality of equal rights is neutralized and subverted by the socio-economic inequality preserved by the state between ruler and ruled. Yet, without the democratic direction and control of social policy from below, humanity, even when it is for the moment well-fed and relatively secure, cannot be genuinely free.

What then of Stephen's estimation of the "liberal republic"? I am unclear from the context what Stephen means by "*initially*" in his assertion that "the institutional goal of the revolution initially sought by Luxemburg has, in short, been realized." It may very well mean only that she in common with her entire generation of socialist revolutionaries aspired as their immediate aim to eliminate the systems of monarchies that dominated the continent and to replace them with liberal republics. If so, who could take exception? Indeed, Luxemburg considered as did Marx and Engels the liberal republic to be "the most powerful and indispensable means for carrying on the *class struggle*." But to suggest that the "liberal republic" was coterminous with the "general understanding of a 'dictatorship of the proletariat' in the decades between the fall of the Paris Commune in 1871 and the triumph of the Bolsheviks in 1917" is a genuine flight of fantasy. The liberal republic was considered the most favorable arrangement for the *oppressed* working class, that is the working class still subject to the domination of capital, to gain through mass struggle an awareness of its distinct class interests and for socialists to educate and organize on the basis of that awareness.

No revolutionary socialist of the era believed that the bourgeois-democratic state — the liberal republic, if you will — could ever outgrow or outlive its purpose as an effective bureaucratic instrumentality through which the ruling class might maintain its social legitimacy. Form follows function not only in architecture but in the apparatus of class rule as well. What, after all, is the actual *design* of this democracy? The mass is allowed to vote at set intervals and to petition for redress at all times. It remains a bystander to the passage of legislation; a wallflower to the adoption of laws and their enforcement. The parliament proposes and the executive bureaucracy disposes in its

own fashion even if that requires — especially in times of crises — redefining the very meaning of legality, without any superintendence and guidance from below. The capitalist class exercises its social rule not directly, but through its immediate control of the means of shaping public opinion, its financial control of the political parties, by its direct occupation of the legislatures and by the leverage over independent government officials and the deliberative machinery that its wealth accords. Stephen, in his defense of liberal democracy, affects an entirely arbitrary separation of the liberal republic from the anti-democratic barriers implanted in its institutions by the elites as a necessary aspect of an *indivisible* process of social domination under capitalism. The liberal republic solicits the *consent* of the governed for alternative ruling class agendas so that the *will* of the governed might remain unknown, undeveloped or thwarted and its *needs* either unmet or met in a brokered and fractured fashion. If, on the other hand, the people — the working class and its supporters and allies — are to be, in any real sense, the authors of their own fate, they would face the daunting task of fundamentally reworking the most democratic of liberal republics they might inherit and of pioneering a democracy with a breadth and sweep of active participation unimaginable within the confines of capitalist society and antithetical indeed to capitalism's very survival.

I do not wish to be misunderstood on this matter as being dismissive, sectarian or flippant about bourgeois democracy. The tangible democratic rights that do exist under a liberal democracy, for all their limitations, are cherished and invaluable achievements. They were also great victories extracted or thrust upon the ruling classes in prolonged and bloody battle by the masses from below. In the broad sweep of capitalism it would not be erroneous to maintain that significant reforms were acceded to by the ruling classes to short-circuit the demand for even greater concessions to revolutionary forces. This is true of the eight hour day as it is of the right to vote for the propertyless and for women; the dismantling of American apartheid and the whole host of other concessions that allow

the majority a semi-civilized existence. As such they remain treasured legacies of 19th and 20th century revolutionary movements, that socialists and consistent democrats are duty-bound to vigilantly protect. For these rights remain ever fragile, threatened in the first place by the oh-so democratic ruling classes themselves. There is after all a straight blood line connecting the Alien and Sedition Acts, the Palmer raids, the Dies Committee, HUAC, McCarthyism, Cointelpro and the USA Patriot Act of today.

So, when Stephen advises that his “work endorses experiments with ‘secondary’ or ‘associative’ organizations that might provide a more direct form of democracy and . . . [has] even suggested that the council can be integrated into the liberal republican state” — as if socialism merely requires a democratic tweak here and there to spruce up the existing liberal republic, he betrays the political gulf that has opened not only between himself and Luxemburg, but between himself and the whole revolutionary socialist tradition. Stephen presents a woefully *distorted* neo-Luxemburgian formulation in his assertion that “the future of democracy in the form of a liberal republic must serve as the precondition for socialism, and not the other way around.” For it was Luxemburg who emphasized to the contrary that “. . . we have always distinguished the social kernel from the political form of *bourgeois* democracy; we have always exposed the bitter kernel of social inequality and lack of freedom under the sweet shell of formal equality and freedom — not in order to reject the latter, but to spur the working class not to be satisfied with the shell, but rather to conquer political power and to fill it with a new social content.” That is why Luxemburg, in common with every other revolutionary socialist, but with an uncommon eloquence, could assert that the “fate of democracy was bound up with the socialist movement.” For socialism aims to translate the democratic formalities of the liberal republic into its fullest realization precisely by providing the masses access and control over the very material bases previously monopolized by the capitalist class. It aims, in other words, to translate the paper privileges of the worker-citizen,

into a fully functioning democracy that invests in society's rank and file for the first time the power to regulate social conditions in accordance with the values of freedom and solidarity, rather than the needs of property and profit; a context where a free and equal citizenry can harmonize its interests by means of rational compromise, rather than on the basis of power relations. It therefore holds in its offing the wholesale introduction of civilized values to the common patrimony of humanity and fashions a social environment distinguished by the unique scope for the nourishment of the free and creative aspect of the individual personality that those values make possible.

TWO REJOINDERS ARE OFFERED. Both flow from the internal logic of Stephen's understanding of socialism not as an historical alternative, but as the result of radical modifications to the existing order. One involves the question of immediacy, the other of democratic principle. "Where on the planet, right now" he asks, "is the question of councils or *socialist* revolution on the agenda?" But, even if these demands had living resonance, he also insists that they would nevertheless be devoid of merit. For the sole alternative to the liberal-democratic state is an "authoritarian or totalitarian *party* standing above the rule of law. [my emphasis, BF] There is no reason to believe that the workers' council provides a different solution to this problem or that it can dispense with the need for an independent judiciary or other bureaucratic institutions to safeguard the civil liberties of conservative critics and opponents."

And by extension, revolutionary activity is only justifiable if it returns society threatened by the authoritarian right to the *status quo ante*. In Stephen's words, "My view accepts the need for revolution, *though as a tactic rather than a strategic goal*, when working people are incapable of having their most basic grievances addressed and their democratic rights recognized . . ." That is, it would be indefensible, and Stephen insists for him unsupportable, were revolutionary socialists to exhort workers and their allies to carry the battle beyond the defense of an imperiled bourgeois republic to a higher form of democracy, a workers' democracy,

the latter presumably being, in any case, a snare. Indeed, even Stephen's very devotion to revolutionary tactics — more accurately, *insurrectionary* tactics — divorced from revolutionary goals rings hollow. For how would workers defend an embattled liberal democracy except by creating new, substitute, vehicles of struggle — councils, workplace committees, militias — which, themselves, are embryonic forms of a new revolutionary democracy? Should revolutionary socialists be urged — or even be compelled, perhaps by other workers — to abandon these institutions once the immediate threat is dissolved? I wonder how Stephen might retroactively apply these principles say to the Spanish Civil War or to Germany at the end of the First World War? How does one avoid the conclusion that Stephen has become a liberal captive of his own anti-revolutionary dogma?

This is not an issue of councils as opposed to parliaments posed solely in abstract hypotheticals. What can be said on this subject from the Paris Commune on is that historical experience shows that all revolutions erect organs of popular resistance that are at the same time organs of popular rule and that these organs, usually councils, tend to become the institutions of the new state power. Moreover, in all socialist revolutions witnessed in the past, there have resulted civil wars in which upholding the parliament becomes the rallying cry for the forces of reaction. And this is what should be expected. As revolutionary passions push the center of the democratic consensus to the far left, capitalist and reactionary elements can only appeal to the masses by championing lesser democratic forms that retain historical resonance but are quickly losing their allure to the fuller more extensive democratic order arising in its midst.

Let us look more closely at Stephen's other objection. By raising the issue of immediacy, Stephen insists that his understanding of socialism bears with it an attachment to realism lacking in the woolly and idle speculations of those who seek socialism in a higher, more complete and extensive form of democracy. Historical materialism, he admonishes, "must deal with the situation as it exists." That situation is one

in which the working class is kept in ignorance and confusion of its own social position and innocent of its latent social power to reconstruct society on a socialist footing. Immediacy lacks, in other words, a socialist consciousness, the introduction of which is the specific role of the socialist movement and, where that is absent, of independent socialist intellectuals and activists. Socialist activity means — or has meant — imbuing the exploited and oppressed with an awareness of the fundamental reasons for their subjugation under capitalism, of their class strength and of their need for self-reliance and class independence. It means urging them to organize and assemble in revolutionary parties to free themselves of all class rule by setting up a democratic working class government and to use that government as a scaffolding for socialism. It demands awakening those suffering under the yoke of oppression, exploitation and deprivation to the understanding that the material and intellectual means for constructing a truly free society exists and can be liberated by their own activity. And it insists on measuring the particular actions, tactics and gains of the real movement not by the “gospel” of practical politics — as Luxemburg said — but against the real advances made to class organization, militancy and self-confidence.

The realism celebrated as an alternative by Stephen fixes the given reality, delinks socialist activity from the complexity of the historical process, and treats that reality as the immutable framework of political activity. “Either planetary issues . . . will have the *possibility* of being dealt with in the international arena through existing international institutions with the powers of sanctioning transgressors or they will *assuredly* not be dealt with at all.” Exactly in which existing international institutions does Stephen want us to place our confidence? The UN? NATO? The WTO? The IMF? The World Bank? How are these institutions able to counterbalance a world taking “shape in which wealth and resources are ever more inequitably distributed, political power is ever more surely devolving into the hands of transnational corporations, and petty ideologues are ever more confidently whipping up atavistic passions with

the most barbaric consequences”? Stephen recognizes that these institutions which he deems “capable of furthering internationalism are now intertwined with capitalist interests and tend to privilege strong states over their weaker brethren.” It seems, however, to have escaped his notice that these arrangements float on a sea of international agreements such as GATT and NAFTA that fortify and reassert market forces. These international bureaucratic entities not only aggravate the very ills he wishes to rectify, but do so by *expanding* and *deepening* the power of the executive branch over the legislature. The net affect is the further atrophy of the liberal state as a meaningful focal point for delivering concessions to the oppressed, which is precisely the active *democratic* function Stephen most ardently prizes. Support for these institutions in effect nullifies his above stated purpose of “mitigating the whip of the market through the *state* and abolishing the exercise of arbitrary power *by* the state.”

STEPHEN’S OTHER OBJECTION to socialism as an historical alternative is rooted in the tragedy of actual working class experience, or at least in an implied interpretation of that experience. The question is raised about the lessons of the Russian revolution, a revolution whose libertarian aims were clearly to establish a society free from class domination *and* state authority, but which drifted into repression, authoritarianism and, ultimately — though clearly not seamlessly — plunged into totalitarianism. Curiously, Stephen thinks this question a persistent irritant, but of minor intrinsic importance, since “Leninism is as dead as a doornail everywhere other than among the sects that are reminiscent of antagonistic amoeba fighting each other to death in a drop of water.” Stephen similarly gives no quarter to the “theoretical conquests” of third camp socialists (“ultra-left Bolsheviks”) concerning the Stalinist overthrow of the Russian Revolution, extolling instead the “partisans of social democracy and critical theory.” Thus neither in opposition, nor in power or defeat, neither in practice nor in theory is there anything truly redeemable for Stephen in the Leninist tradition of revolutionary socialism.

This is a harsh judgment. Yet one cannot help speculating as to where these great theoretical conquests of social democracy are documented. Karl Kautsky, long the leading authority of "orthodox" social democracy, characterized the Soviet Union as one of state-slavery, and as of Asiatic Despotism, as Bonapartist and as fascist, and finally as a new form of state despotism, without providing any new insights into the character, historical role or significance of the *Stalinist* bureaucracy. The famous exponent of Austro-Marxism, Otto Bauer, for all his misgivings about the Bolshevik revolution, was Stalinism's lawyer foreseeing the revival of democracy arising from the five year plans. Theodore Dan, prominent left Menshevik, looked forward to the post-war unification of social democracy with Stalinism. Rudolf Hilferding's dissection of the "totalitarian state economy," while a trenchant and withering critique of state capitalism, seems a tad deficient in explicitly denying an *independent* class role to the Stalinist bureaucracy. As to Dan's comrade Rafael Abramovich's post-war characterization of Stalinist society as . . . well, "totalitarian," one would think this hardly worthy of classification as a "theoretical conquest." Prior to the Second World War he and Friedrich Adler, in contrast to Kautsky, asserted the potentially socialist nature of the socio-economic base of Stalinist Russia insisting that it contained the positive germs of socialism. The only social democratic exception to this dismal display is the little known work of Lucien Laurat whose *Marxism and Democracy* touched in introductory but innovative fashion on the confluent themes of bureaucratic collectivism.

As for critical Marxism, one might search in vain for Lukács' unlikely breakthroughs given his contention that one could not criticize Stalin without aiding Hitler. Korsch's equation of Hitlerism with Stalinism as twin forms of state capitalism more or less summarizes the sum total of his vast historical departures. Of his subsequent flirtation with Maoism, the less said the better. Perhaps their intellectual heirs added to our understanding of Stalinism and did so without political compromise with the two camps of class rule and impe-

rialist expansion. If so, it is curious that their contributions have yet to register on any intellectual radar scan.

STEPHEN IS BEING A BIT FACILE, to say the least, in his comprehensive dismissal of Leninist relevancy. The Russian Revolution and its fateful course dominated the twentieth century and alternative historical interpretations of that experience conceal nothing so much as divergent political programs. The program that Stephen identifies with and defends is social democracy. Referring to the interwar period, Stephen admonishes:

Liberalism was disintegrating and communism was becoming increasingly authoritarian . . . With the suppression of the Spartacus Revolt, and the reactionary radicalization of the middle strata and the peasantry, there was not the least *practical* glimmer of hope for introducing councils. Whatever its vacillations and timidity, social democracy was not the principle 'cause' for the victory of fascism. It steadfastly resisted the totalitarianism of both left and right in the name of republican democracy . . .

Stephen understands social democracy as being ultimately doomed to a hopeless rearguard action against overpowering odds, but refuses to accept, much less assess its own culpability for the ignominious downfall that awaited it. But the German revolution and the Russian were the two great contrasting tests of political power, of state and revolution; two historical laboratories whereby the perspective and momentous implications of the divergent political programs of socialism were empirically played out. The social democrats of Germany, and not just Germany, but Austria and Italy — the future locus of fascism, far from directing the working classes to grasp the power that was falling into its hands, instead crushed in servile collaboration with their respective bourgeoisies, socialist revolution in its shell. They did so as the great defenders of liberal democracy, a liberal democracy that, in the case of Germany, was to include, with the consent of the reformist social democrats, a constitution so flawed that it could be set aside by means of its own provisions.

Stephen invokes Luxemburg to indict

Lenin, insisting that what is “*salient for the present* is . . . her insight that terror always produces a dynamic that, once turned on, can’t be shut off like a water faucet.” I’m not sure where — in the present, that is — socialists face the choice of wielding terror either in defense of a liberal republic (or one in the making) *against* the working class, or in defense of its own revolutionary social order. But by raising the issue of “terror” in so one-sided a fashion, with blinders for social democratic terrorism, Stephen is clearly ducking the question of power and class rule, the question of for whom and against whom; the question of fighting for socialism when the opportunity presents itself, or fighting a hopeless rearguard action after having insured that the moment had passed. What is significant and what is just as significantly overlooked is that for Luxemburg *as much as* for Lenin, revolution is the price exacted from humanity to avoid the even more frightful prospects of stagnation and decay that otherwise seizes and convulses society with alarming and foreseeable regularity. I see little in the dismal history of the past century that refutes that proposition. The question of terror, like the question of war, and the resort to violence in general, is a horrific and dreadful political tactic — an option that only socialism can seriously aim to put an end to. But our attitude as socialists to terror as to any given war is conditioned in the first instance by our evaluation of the politics from which the application of violence is an extension. It is always a question of historical relativism, never of moral indifference. This does not mean that as a socialist I feel duty-bound to defend terror, or any other specific policy of the Bolshevik revolution; only that my primary criterion of support is determined by their political *program*.

It may be argued, and Stephen does in effect argue, that Germany and Russia could not be evaluated as the test of two divergent social propositions since the Bolshevik revolution was not and could never have been about socialism. “Whenever a communist party has identified socialism with industrialization, *which is all that it can do when the revolution takes place in an economically underdeveloped nation*, the result (in practice if not in theory) has been either

authoritarianism like in Cuba or totalitarianism like in China.” This marvelously teleological formulation, which seemingly connects Stalinism with Leninism as its progeny rather than as its undertaker, fails as a generalization for two reasons. First, because the Bolsheviks, unlike the Castroites and Maoists, were a genuinely democratic — yes, democratic — revolutionary *workers’* party, which bore nothing in common with the class composition, political aims, internal life or historical forces that shaped Stalinism and the worldwide movement whose allegiance Stalinism attracted. And second, because the Bolshevik revolution unfolded as a specific, functional component within a broader European political and historical context. It cannot be evaluated as a free floating historical archetype algebraically reduced to and equated with disparate national upheavals existing in diametrically opposed contexts, simply by arbitrarily singling out the alleged commonality, overstated in any case, of relative levels of economic development.

My point is simply this. The Bolshevik Party, being of sound mind and stern kidney and having more than a fleeting familiarity with the basic tenets of Marxism, harbored no delusion that socialism could be built in isolation from the shambles of Czarist Russia. But they did come to see, as Rosa had so presciently predicted after the 1905 revolution, that there was a special link between Germany and Russia. “The most backward country, just because it has been so unpardonably late in producing its bourgeois revolution, can show the proletariat ways and means for further class struggle both in Germany and the most advanced capitalist countries.” Even Kautsky as far back as 1902 had stated as much. “The epicenter of revolution,” he proclaimed, “has been moving from the West to the East. In the first half of the nineteenth century it was situated in France, at times in England. In 1848 Germany entered the ranks of the revolutionary nations . . . Now the Slavs . . . join their ranks, and the center of gravity of revolutionary thought and action is shifting . . . to Russia.” “Russia, having taken over so much revolutionary initiative from the West, may now in turn become a source of revolutionary energy for the West.” This was

the common currency of the European Marxist left. In 1909 Kautsky could confidently intone that the working class movement of the West need no longer fear “*premature* revolution.” For in the event that “war should break out, the proletariat is, at the present time, the class that can look forward to its outcome with the greatest confidence.” Against this intellectual and political backdrop, Lenin and his comrades had every right to insist that the revolutionary extraction of Russia from war opened the prospect of revolution in Germany. “(T)hey were the *only* internationalist tactics, because they were based, not on the cowardly fear of world revolution, . . . but on a correct (and before the war, a universally accepted) *estimation* of the revolutionary situation in Europe. These tactics were the only internationalist tactics, because they did the utmost in one country *for* the development, support and awakening of the revolution *in all countries*.” Bolshevik tactics were rationalized on this basis alone and not on the impossible nationalist perspective of socialism in one country, which was a later Stalinist perversion that Stephen has all too hastily misassociated with Leninism. Socialist revolution, consistent revolutionaries maintained, might be initiated by Russia; it could only be sustained and brought to fruition in the West.

To the list of achievements of Western socialism, esteemed by Stephen for having established “republics with socialist majorities in so many nations where none had existed before,” might be appended one ignominious detail. They left the Bolshevik revolution in the lurch, to rot in isolation. Perhaps, too, “[I]t was with these republics that the process of democratic education took its first faltering steps.” But if this meant, as it apparently did in the interwar years, inculcating the belief that the liberal republic could solve their basic problems, the education of the working class was, shall we say, incompetently handled on every level. The connection between social democracy’s abandonment of the early Soviet Republic and its fealty to bourgeois democracy at the expense of revolution, two sides of the same proposition — this “parliamentary cretinism” which Luxemburg condemned for being “yesterday a weakness

. . . today an equivocation . . . tomorrow a betrayal of socialism” — contributed as enormously as all the mistakes of the Bolsheviks combined for the rise of totalitarianism.

STEPHEN PROPOSES TO REDUCE EVENTS played out on a world stage instead to the one-sided deficiencies of Leninist doctrine.

How about instead looking at the institutions introduced by Lenin, the mechanistic transformation of his theory of rule, his inability to imagine [!] the constraints imposed by economic underdevelopment, his substitution of not simply the party for the class, but his identification of the party with the state, and his willingness to unleash a dynamic of terror that began with other parties, extended to other institutions like trade unions, impacted upon anarchists and socialists of good will, and ultimately would end up destroying every critical ‘faction’ within the party itself.

Stephen is motivated by the completely laudable commitment, and one which every socialist should reaffirm, to a socialism where “the freedom of the individual cannot be arbitrarily subordinated to the whims of the state or the exigencies of any institution.” Lenin, too, in his *State and Revolution* conceived of socialism without any oppressive government machinery, without a privileged bureaucracy standing “separated from the people (and) elevated above it.” He drew up a vision of the “proletarian dictatorship” as a semi-state, a state without a standing army and police; a state without a bureaucracy; a state constituted by a “people in arms” progressively dissolving into society and determined to realize its own extinction. Yet the regime that the Bolsheviks gave birth to would rapidly devolve into a sick, bureaucratized state — as Lenin and Trotsky themselves often affirmed. It was not the fulfillment of their conception of what socialism should be or could be.

The Bolshevik regime was ruling by the seat of its pants. Stephen leaves the reader with the inference that Bolshevism had a fundamental commitment to one party rule, that its political appetites were at bottom fundamentally authoritarian and that these unsavory predilections blossomed in the context of economic backwardness. But the

pre-revolutionary history of the Party bears scant evidence for that thesis, nor is such a principle to be found in the Soviet constitution. Pre-revolutionary Bolshevism was hardly monolithic, often riven with internal dissent, rival tendencies and unruly factions. Even during the Civil War, Bukharin's left communists operated as if they were a separate political party. The Lenin who issued the famous *April Thesis* stood virtually as a minority of one within the organization. Unfortunately, the history of controversies that swirled and enveloped internal Bolshevik life, routinely settled — and by democratic deliberation not by frame-ups and political murders — would be too cumbersome to detail. Suffice it to say that the question of the seizure of power, of Brest-Litovsk, of the Polish campaign, of the introduction of the New Economic Policy and the trade union controversy were all decided by party congresses with all conflicting standpoints aired and represented. On the eve of the revolution and soon after it had taken place, the Bolsheviks attempted in vain to enlist the support of the Social-Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. There was no evidence that they wished to or intrigued to govern alone. But the S-Rs and the Mensheviks disqualified themselves by the simple and unambiguous expedient of turning their guns against the revolution. Even the disenfranchisement of the bourgeoisie, which had never been recommended in advance by the Bolsheviks and played no part in their pre-revolutionary programs, arose as well, as Lenin maintained, “spontaneously in the course of the fight.”

In November of 1917 the Central Committee of the Party declared that it is “excluding nobody from the Second All-Russian Soviet Congress and is entirely ready, also now, to admit those who departed and to recognize a coalition *with* them inside the Soviets, that, consequently, the assertions that the Bolsheviks do not want to share the power with anybody are absolutely false.” It followed that decree several days later with the proclamation that “In Russia the Soviet power has been conquered and the transfer of the government from the hands of one Soviet party into the hands of another Soviet party is possible without any revolution, by means of a simple decision of

the Soviets, by means of simple reelection of the Soviets.” As far along as 1921, the regime tolerated the semi-legal existence of those left-Mensheviks, anarchists and Social-Revolutionaries who confined their expression of opposition to non-military means. Several soviets were led by these parties and soviet elections were carried out with multi-party slates. But by this time the ranks of the revolutionary proletariat had been thinned by years of war and the collapse of the economy and demoralized by the social disintegration, chaos and ruin which had set in. Revolutionary relief from abroad was not forthcoming and the regime, which never saw itself as much more than a revolutionary citadel, found itself ever less capable of regeneration from below.

It was this isolation which led to the introduction of the New Economic Policy. But the introduction of state-capitalism, capitalism under the guidance of a workers' state — a retreat and concession to other social forces made necessary by the abandonment of the revolution on the part of the Western working classes — raised the prospect that the Nepman (incipient capitalists) and the peasantry would avail themselves of existing parties, and if that were precluded, of organized factions within the ruling party to overthrow the new social order. At this point, the Bolsheviks attempted to square the circle: to outlaw, as a temporary expedient, parties and factions; while insisting that an active interchange between the masses and state institutions, trade unions and co-operatives was still possible. They reassured themselves that in this *possibility* lay the ultimate guarantor of the social dominance of the working class. They were buying time. But more disastrously, they were creating a political and social vacuum. For the only counterweight to the burgeoning influence of the party's administrative apparatus was precisely the *organized* power of the masses that had, of necessity, found expression primarily in the very party factions but also in the semi-legalized parties now outlawed. By shattering and atomizing this power, by insuring that whatever pressure could be brought to bear against bureaucratic autonomy was diluted and ineffective, the party enfeebled its internal democratic life, disarming both itself and the working class.

The road was paved for its subsequent overthrow by the bureaucracy wresting itself free of control from below, firmly embedded in collectivized property and increasingly structured as a class under the leadership of Stalin. But it was not the mistakes of the Bolsheviks alone that caused the downfall of working class Russia. The revolutionary regime failed to hold on to power in Russia primarily because the working classes failed to take power in the West.

Stephen concludes with a sweeping dismissal of the Bolshevik experience. But it was this experience *alone* that proved, and for all time, that the working class could conquer political power. It proved as well and with horrific consequences that there is no way other than through the consistent application and deepening of democracy that such power, once attained, can be defended. And it is in this context that Luxemburg, the implacable champion of democratic rights and freedoms *and* of revolutionary politics, remains *in concert* with the Russian Revolution a beacon of socialist enlightenment.

THE WORLD, UNTIL RECENTLY, was constituted by a tripartite class struggle in which the conflict between capitalism and Stalinism overshadowed and eclipsed that of independent working class politics. Labor loyalties were largely split between the two major camps of class rule, though predominantly

in favor of capitalism. The welfare state, which came to dominate the scene, was a result of a particular intersection of events: the prolonged post-war boom predicated on the destruction of capital values in the depression and war combined with forced savings extracted from the purchasing power of the working classes. This allowed accumulation to proceed with sufficient fat to make possible a series of concessions needed to retain the loyalty of the Western working masses. As the Communist empire was imploding, the falling rate of profit already in evidence by the late 1960s was intensifying, crushed by unmanageable welfare and military overhead costs. This culminated in the exhaustion of the Western economies. The emerging, yet fragile, economic recovery of the past decade, based on the globalized squeeze of working class living standards needed to ratchet up the rate of exploitation, does not hearken well for the preservation, much less the expansion of the welfare state. Stephen worries about the degeneration of the reformist impulse and warns against “defrosting an institutional vision from the last century.” Yet his vision of the particular liberal republic shaped and conditioned by the unique experiences of the post-war world may prove to be nonreproducible. Perhaps it might do well to heed the traditional Russian saying and not spit into the well from which you may again have to drink.

Moving On:

New Replies to New Critics

Stephen Eric Bronner

I AM, OF COURSE, delighted that my little article on Rosa Luxemburg entitled “Red Dreams” should have generated such controversy concerning the status and meaning of socialism. My previous encounter with David Camfield and Alan Johnson has now inspired a debate with Paul Le Blanc and Barry Finger — important representatives of what might be termed councilist Leninism and valuable contributors to *New Politics* — as well as Michael Thompson who, having published an impressive list of scholarly articles before he began *Logos*, is among the best minds of a younger generation concerned with appropriating the socialist legacy. Again, though there might prove to be a bit of redundancy, I would like to deal with each of them separately: it is, I think, the best way to do justice to their arguments and, through an immanent critique, better develop my own.

I would like to begin with Michael Thompson, not merely because we are basically in political agreement, but because some philosophical disagreements may actually be more semantic than substantive in nature, and derive from a lack of clarity on my part. Before going into what might be seen as a philosophical excursus, however, let me endorse the criticisms introduced by Michael concerning the salience of workers’ councils as an alternative institutional form for the modern era. He is right: councils have traditionally been understood as representative only of workers; limited sectional interests from other strata have rarely been taken into account by theorists of the councils; and even a cursory reading of the historical record does indeed make

clear that councils have only emerged under circumstances in which liberal republics were absent. Michael is also correct, in my opinion, when he suggests that the obsession with councils inhibits the development of socialist ideas and that councils lack any appeal for modern workers. Michael himself, however, should probably have been more specific concerning the alternative institutions he supports for extending democracy into the economic sphere.

But let me turn to something else: it seems that there is a misunderstanding of what I meant by my call to privilege the “political” over the “economic.” That claim only makes sense in tandem with my insistence upon privileging the contingent over the scientific and the ethical over the teleological in what was intended as an immanent critique of Marxism. The purpose was to explode the “teleological suspension of the ethical,” employing the phrase Kierkegaard used against Hegel, and transform the philosophical priorities. There was never any question of dismissing economics or social scientific findings from the analysis. To the contrary: my particular brand of socialist theory was, from the first, intended to link principles with interests. Thus, I don’t quite understand why Michael should think that I want to divorce political ideals from policy construction.

My notion of the class ideal, which seeks to unify the interests of working people in existing social movements and progressive organizations without privileging any in particular, can only be effective when translated into policy proposals. Insofar as my general theory privileges contingency over the certainties associated with the “science” of Marxism, moreover, I harbor no illusions about the translation of theory into practice. There is indeed no reason to believe that radical reforms will be realized by poli-

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tics though there is also no reason to believe that they can be realized by economics: there is no substitute for a movement. The question is the terms in which radical activists will understand the need to confront existing constraints and the “objective” and “scientific” assumptions of classical political economy. Economics can surely provide insights into the constraints of the moment or the structure in which politics must operate. If critical economics provides the diagnosis and policy prescriptions, however, politics remains the surgeon who introduces them into the body politic.

But, still, I applaud Michael’s emphasis upon the need for a critical political economy and I accept the suggestion that the extent to which we detach critical political economy from socialist politics is the extent to which the radicalism of the latter is undermined.

What differentiates critical from classical political economy, however, is the willingness of the former to illuminate the values hidden within the cost-benefit thinking of the latter. Normative assumptions are implicit within any form of economics. Critical political economy, however, should make them explicit: its undertaking is indeed predicated on a set of humanistic norms that were probably elaborated with more force by Kant than by Marx. I don’t think that Michael would disagree with this. It might even be the case that we are saying the same thing in different ways. I don’t wish to deny that freedom is the insight into necessity, which incidentally for Hegel meant precisely the primacy of the political in transforming reality, or that overcoming existing problems requires their scientific analysis. My point was only, in keeping with Hegel and Marx, that politics is the vehicle for translating the innovations of critical economics into forms of social intervention.

What are the parameters for such intervention? The question whether calls for the 40-hour week or enfranchisement of blacks are “socialist in nature” is a red herring: workers during the Russian Revolution of 1905 certainly considered the former to be the case and formal equality among workers is obviously the precondition for any serious notion of class solidarity. The “boundary conditions” of modern capitalism and what reforms the liberal state can or is

willing to accommodate, by the same token, will vary with historical circumstances. Given the collapse of teleology, again, no social theory can simply assume it will “grip the masses.” This indeed is why the defense of reform and liberal democracy must take center stage and why the best slogan for any modern understanding of socialism is not “there is an alternative,” let alone “all power to the soviets,” but *la lotta continua*.



As far as actual life is concerned, the political state especially contains in all its modern forms the demands of reason, even where the political state is not yet conscious of socialistic demands.

Karl Marx

I APPRECIATE VERY MUCH the intelligent comments and generous words of Paul Le Blanc. I also understand his preference for the Luxemburg biography of Paul Frohlich. The first biography of a major figure, especially when the biographer knew the person, is often the most engaging: I’ll confess my favorite biography of Karl Marx, for which Luxemburg wrote the chapters dealing with economics, is still the study by Franz Mehring. More salient to our debate, however, is that Le Blanc recognizes the original intention of my short speech on Rosa Luxemburg. It was not to turn her into Eduard Bernstein or simply invalidate her ideas in the historical context of her time, but to separate what remains salient in her thought from what is tainted by the anachronistic assumptions of an anachronistic method. To this end, in “dialectical” fashion, I attempted to employ the same form of immanent criticism she employed against Marx, and that he employed against figures ranging from Hegel to Proudhon, against her. I completely agree that she herself would probably not have accepted most of the positions that emerged. But that is not the point. Paul Le Blanc is correct when he writes:

[Rosa Luxemburg] lived and wrote and acted in a context in which mass working-class movements throughout Europe were animated by socialist ideas and history crackled with revolutionary possibilities. It is silly to allow ourselves the daydream —

when we read her words or think about her life — that this defines our own reality.

If this is really the case, however, then the implications must be drawn in theory and practice. And here, perhaps in the name of comradely unity, Le Blanc is too quick in dismissing what differentiates my position from that of my critics. The roots of the problem, I think, lie in the justifications he provides for his own “authentic Leninism.” I already discussed the philosophical dangers of employing an ahistorical notion of “authenticity” for dealing with Marx in “Rosa Redux.” The same argument becomes even more pertinent with respect to Lenin: perhaps his thinking need not prove totalitarian, but it has surely been authoritarian in every version in which it has been tried.

What authenticity boils down to under these circumstances is that the “authentic” Lenin, or Marx, becomes the one that the contemporary interpreter likes; the others, even if they have received much more forceful historical expression, are “inauthentic” because he or she doesn’t like them. But I sense that Paul Le Blanc is himself uncomfortable with this kind of sophistry and, thus, he can note that his justifications for Leninism are “hardly the exclusive property of Lenin.” But if that is so, and words have any meaning, what makes this particular form of Leninism “authentic”?

TO DISCUSS LENINISM without making reference to the vanguard party and the party state, Lenin’s understanding of national self-determination and his particular theory of imperialism, his idea of ethics and revolution, is tantamount to not discussing Leninism at all. That is probably why I mostly agree with the sentiments expressed by Paul Le Blanc. But let’s be clear: they are justified neither by the theory of Marx or Lenin nor by any reference to history. This becomes evident in his views on the creation of a “socialist” society by a “militant” and “dynamic” working class majority unconcerned with electoral politics. Given his obvious erudition, in this regard, it bothers me that Le Blanc does not say a word about what social forces are powering the creation of this “militant” and “dynamic” majority; what kind of organization should coordinate its diverse constituents; or what institutions

will protect the minority in the new socialist society and make it more free than the old parliamentary republic. In the same vein: while noting that decisions on foreign affairs should be made on a case by case basis, and fully admitting that humanitarian slogans can be employed for exploitative ends, I did say that the only available institutions capable of furthering internationalism are intertwined with capitalist interests. Paul Le Blanc seems to disagree with my emphasis upon working through them and other existing organizations. But, whatever Luxemburg might have thought, he doesn’t indicate any alternative options. Without confronting issues of this sort unfortunately, we are once again left with a romantic “faith” that leaves the discussion over socialist strategy precisely where it was before this debate began.

THERE SHOULD BE NO MISUNDERSTANDING: I agree that the liberal capitalist state, whether of the American or European variety, privileges capital. I don’t “pretend” it isn’t so. Quite the contrary: I have given my views on capitalist democracy and stated, quite frankly, that the satisfaction of capitalist economic interests in this system is the precondition for the satisfaction of all other interests.¹ I am also aware that the pursuit of economic reforms is becoming ever more difficult in the era of globalization. But the implications generated by the real history of revolutions are unavoidable: I am not willing to countenance the exchange of liberty for what have always been the tawdriest forms of equality. I also have the right to fear such an exchange if my critics refuse to provide any institutional guarantees that such an exchange won’t take place whatever the purity of their intentions in striving for workers councils and an “authentic” socialism.

Saving socialism from the junk-heap of history requires the articulation of historical and political reasons for preserving it. It may have been tactless to suggest that my critics represent a tiny minority of a small minority and that no one ever listens to them. But the question is whether what I said is true — and, in my opinion, why it is true. Paul Le Blanc is surely correct when he notes that the Marxist analysis of “capi-

talism remains powerful, while the perspective of revolutionary working-class struggles is in a shambles.” But, if that is indeed the case, then it is necessary to draw the political consequences. There is much in the economic theory of Marx — especially the theory of the omnivorous commodity form and its fetishism outlined in *Das Kapital* — that retains its salience. With the failure of the old teleology, however, I believe that the idea of “revolution” has been robbed of the strategic privilege it was always given against what were understood as the tactics of “reform” by Luxemburg, Lenin, and the rest of the Left.

Revolution can no longer be considered the ultimate goal, of what Lukács called the “categorical imperative,” of the labor movement. The breakdown of teleology has instead reduced it to just another tactic. With one difference: revolution has never been acceptable to the majority of the working class in nations with a liberal democracy. Could someone please finally tell me why not? Are workers too stupid to know that their interests are subordinate to those of big business? Does the system simply repress their true desires? Or is it instead that the system meets some of their needs and not all — thereby creating a situation in which workers have more to lose than their chains — while the ultra-left ignores the new developments, locks its political imagination into an anachronistic notion of workers’ councils, and underestimates the value of both reform and the freedom offered by liberal democracy?

All of my critics have expressed their willingness to support reform and even liberal democracy even though they wish to go beyond such politics. But how? For my part, I simply don’t see the democratic moment in Lenin: he never thought about placing constraints on the power of the party; he never valued civil liberties or an independent judiciary; and he never treated any actor outside the party other than in terms of pure expediency. His vanguard organization was, from the first, hierarchical and militaristic and his notion of “democratic centralism” always lacked any notion of institutional accountability to those whom the party was to represent. Rosa Luxemburg already underscored all of this in “The Or-

ganizational Questions of Social Democracy.” (1904)

Under any circumstances, however, none of my “Leninist” critics have recognized the crucial insight of Lenin that was also made by Roberto Michels and others: the same organization dedicated to reform will not be able to make a revolution. The bureaucratic and ideological requirements for one are not the same as the other. Under authoritarian or fascist rule, where there is no possibility for a redress of grievances and civil liberties are disregarded, the need for revolution remains. But that is not the situation that pertains in the western states and the last real revolutions we have witnessed, those in Eastern Europe, were undertaken from the first with an eye on a liberal republic. If the decision is to be made to work for reforms in practice then the revolutionary theory with its pathetic slogans must be abandoned; on the other hand, if the revolutionary ideal is to be maintained, then the revolution must be promoted within existing organizations through a cadre or vanguard group. My critics can’t have it both ways: the world, as I put it earlier, was not constructed to meet the demands of your politics.



He wants all or nothing. Often I think, when faced with this choice, the world happily answers: nothing.

Bertolt Brecht

TURNING TO BARRY FINGER, whose piece exhibits both passion and sincerity, there is much with which I disagree and perhaps even more that I don’t understand. My purpose was never to turn Luxemburg into a liberal. It is here a matter of method and the issue is not whether she would have approved of the positions I developed from my immanent critique. My connection with her thinking is in line with the issues she highlighted — internationalism, political liberty, economic equality, and the tension between organization and base — rather than the specific interpretations of these concerns that she advocated in the context of her time. One more time: just as Luxemburg employed the method of Marx against

various positions taken by him, I used the critical method against her. With regard to the question of whether I am a “Luxemburgist,” which Barry apparently considers important, let me ask: was Marx a “Hegelian”?

Barry seems to assume that the critical method always moves “left” as if the question concerning human freedom had been answered before any institutional or political questions were ever raised.³ History can often change what was once “left” into what is now “right” and vice versa. Let me give a concrete example: the demand for a forty-hour week and two-week vacations were already considered part of the reformist agenda by the time Hitler took power. But these reforms instituted by the Popular Front served as the basis for the charge of treason, insofar as they supposedly economically weakened France, against Leon Blum when he was put on trial by the Vichy Government. These tame little reforms suddenly assumed a new symbolic value. Then, too, Margaret Thatcher turned the poll tax into a modern issue. And in the present neoliberal context, the reforms about which Barry is so cavalier — despite the obligatory statement about their “importance” — can be considered in the same way.

Barry, indeed, approaches the matter differently: forget any connection with material reality, it is enough to find the appropriate quotation — from Luxemburg, or Lenin, or myself — and let’s get ready to rumble. This becomes evident in the three quotations which, in keeping with the old model of the Third and Fourth Internationals, were taken from my writings without any sense of the context in which they were written or — far more important — any concern which better applies to the contemporary context. The specter of heresy looms over his entire essay: Barry notes that there is, for example, the “whiff of suspicion” regarding my revisionism. *Mea culpa!* I believe Marx and Luxemburg — and Bernstein — need revision: any other position leads to dogmatism. I have no problem with saying that I learned a great deal from Eduard Bernstein,⁴ who incidentally can legitimately be interpreted as employing the historical method of Marx against the conclusions reached by the master, or

admitting to overlaps in our views beyond what I hope, by now, can be recognized as sharp differences.

IT IS ALSO PERHAPS TIME TO SAY something about the famous line by Eduard Bernstein that “the movement is everything, the goal is nothing.” I have never quite understood the horror with which modern materialists greet this obviously anti-metaphysical statement. If you believed in the Marxian science and its teleology of history more than a century ago then, admittedly, the abhorrence for such revisionism is clear-cut: such are the terms in which Luxemburg engaged her adversary and confronted the challenge he raised. But if you are a modern materialist and you don’t believe in the old scientific teleology — a point about which my critics seem to waffle with incredible nonchalance — then the revolutionary “goal” of socialism can obviously retain nothing more than a contingent status and it must be subjected to historical criticism. Without teleological backing, the goal of socialism becomes anchored in nothing more than ethical commitment, or faith, a development which Luxemburg devoutly feared, but to which Barry seems to subscribe, since he offers no evidence relevant to modern conditions for his belief in workers councils, the revolution, or Marxism.

Indeed, when Barry calls me “cynical,” he gives away the game. Even his wonderful last sentence referring to the resurrection of “genuine” or — dare I say it — “authentic” Leninism is peppered with words like “perhaps,” “might,” and “may.” The sacred “goal” of “revolution,” of “socialism,” thereby becomes little more than an ethical claim. It becomes evident then that “perhaps” the longed for resurrection of Leninism “might” not take place and we “may” have to deal with my liberal republic. It can go one way and another, too. But this only begs the question: which is the better bet? Especially if you are pushing revolution, calling upon workers surely to sacrifice economically and “perhaps” politically in a dramatic way, don’t you think answering that question directly might not be a bad idea? Under circumstances in which the “goal” retains nothing more than a purely ethical status, becomes the object of

what can only be considered metaphysical speculation, should materialists not privilege the actual concerns of the labor movement?

Barry is correct and clever in suggesting that reformist choices made by the old labor movement were once inspired by revolutionary aspirations. But that was because its representatives could show that social democracy was gaining force with each passing day: revolution became tied with reform: socialism with democracy: national parties with international ideals.⁵ This linkage, however, no longer exists. If I must choose between the wish for a revolutionary other and the possibility of reform within a capitalist democracy then, for me, the choice is obvious. And let's not hear the old saw about "socialism or barbarism." Other choices exist in between. History now forces us to choose between support for reform and rejection of it as well as the defense of liberal democracy against neo-liberalism and a rising tide of neo-fascism. I know already that for the ultra-left making such choices involves difficult "decisions" that — even though reforms and liberal democracy are considered "valuable" — must be pondered deeply. Our materialists (sic!), I realize, have their principles! What does it matter that they remain unconnected with any real and pressing interests of working people? After all, for these very important political actors, it is not as if such "decisions" were really between being ever so slightly useful and ever more surely reactionary. Sometimes I really do feel that Max Horkheimer was right when he wrote: *les extremes se touchent*.

Enough of that: there is still the matter of the movement. Barry is right: It is impossible to put humpty-dumpty back together again and create a socialist movement along any of the old lines. But I never advocated that. I argued instead that socialists will have to work within existing reformist organizations and new social movements: what will identify them is less an outmoded rhetoric than their ability to articulate programs and proposals capable of unifying the working class elements in each of these organizations and movements without privileging any. Such is the class ideal: it can, I think, prove useful as a political

corrective under contemporary circumstances when the whole of the left is less than the sum of its parts and socialism still offers, if not an alternative set of political institutions, a project concerned with constraining the arbitrary power of capital no less than the authoritarian tendencies within any state. No more. Whether any of this fits into some prefabricated definition of socialism or some completely abstract conception of "revolution" is, frankly, completely irrelevant to me.

NOW: HERE WE GO AGAIN. Barry states that "without the democratic direction and control of social policy from below, humanity, even when it is for the moment well-fed and relatively secure, cannot be genuinely free." Ignoring for the moment the phrase "well-fed and relatively secure," which is a startling admission, can I ask whether this makes any sense? What choice is Barry actually asking us to make? Is it all or nothing? Good luck! Then, too, what precisely is the meaning of "democratic direction and control of social policy from below"? Or even better there is his call for "the wholesale introduction of civilized values to the common patrimony of humanity and . . . a social environment distinguished by the unique scope for the nourishment of the free and creative aspect of the individual personality that those values make possible."

Barry, what are you talking about? Can't you see that these phrases are just vagaries unless put in institutional terms? Or does such a suggestion rock your faith? In my former response I spoke about the difficulties faced by decentralized institutional arrangements in protecting civil liberties, sustaining production over time, assuring accountability, and ignoring checks and balances. You address none of this: it's as if by offering some incantations, and waving the magic wand of revolutionary democracy. You say that I — not history but I — set up the choice between liberal democracy and authoritarianism. What is the material justification for your third alternative? Or is it that I must *believe* that there is one?

As a Marxist-Leninist, should you not be willing to deal with what is obviously the greatest weakness of your own tradition? Not to acknowledge it is to perpetuate it. In

the same vein, without making any positive proposals of your own, you are quick to condemn the only international organizations that exist for dealing with transnational issues. You also buy into the silliness about these organizations expanding and deepening the power of the executive over the legislature which, given the over-riding commitment to the principle of “subsidiarity,” is certainly not true in the European Union and ludicrous with respect to the power exercised by powerful nation-states over the United Nations. I, too, oppose international organizations like the IMF, which strengthen markets, and I never viewed any international institutions as sacrosanct or other than in need of drastic reform.

Even the best international agencies don’t do “enough”, of course, and the international revolutionary proletariat would undoubtedly do a much better job. But things are as they are and, as things are, I am unwilling simply to dismiss the work of organizations like UNESCO or the United Nations Relief and Works Agency that has been virtually alone in providing support for the Palestinian refugees since 1948. Instead of lumping everything together under the rubric of “bourgeois,” indeed, it might be better to consider the words of Pierre Bourdieu: “One can be against a Europe which . . . would serve as a relay for financial markets, while being for a Europe which, through a concerted policy, blocks the way of the uncontrolled violence of those markets. . . Only a European social state would be capable of countering the disintegratory effects of monetary economics.”⁶

You say that you don’t want to be seen as “dismissive, sectarian, or flippant about bourgeois democracy.” But, Barry, words are cheap. That is exactly what you are in this piece. You can’t have it both ways: express an abstract admiration for what are concrete achievements and then call for its new institutions that you won’t define. By the same token, you misconstrue my position: I have never arbitrarily attempted to separate the liberal state from its capitalist foundations. I understand the constraints. It is merely that the liberal state makes it possible to address the grievances and mitigate, if not eliminate, certain injustices perpetu-

ated by capitalist elites. What is the problem with invigorating the mixed economy and fighting against the roll-back of the welfare state, which you say yourself “in spirit, Marx might have celebrated,” if revolution lacks any materialist foundation and your democracy any serious institutional definition?

OF COURSE, IF YOU SET UP a utopian standard of democracy, all existing forms will prove wanting. But there is nothing particularly radical in that: Hannah Arendt set up a notion of politics derived from an ideal interpretation of the Greek polis and Sheldon Wolin then went on to suggest that neither liberalism, nor fascism, nor Marxism, is “really” political. Fine if you want to argue that way: but don’t confuse this mode of thinking with Marxism or let it infect your reading of history. Under circumstances in which the labor movement languished under autocratic regimes there was no practical interest whatsoever in bringing about a revolution beyond the revolution concerned with instituting a liberal republic. That was — for better or worse — what bothered Marx in “The Gotha Program,” what irritated Luxemburg once she had discovered the mass strike, and what ultimately justified Lenin in calling his people “communists.” The fact is that even the demand for a liberal republic, from fear of the authorities, was not explicitly mentioned in the early “programs” of German and Austrian Social Democracy. The problem with Bernstein, in this regard, was not his support for a bourgeois republic but his belief that socialism could evolve without any political transformation whatsoever. No problem: I am willing to recognize the gulf between my position and the “whole revolutionary socialist tradition.” It doesn’t really matter when “socialist revolution” and “councils” have become nothing more than mantras chanted by a few sectarians that actually help the existing order invalidate any serious commitment to socialist reform among the majority of working people.

You can, undoubtedly, find a few appropriate citations or exhortations for your position. But there was no one with real power in the movement — August Bebel, Wilhelm Liebknecht, Viktor Adler, Camille

Huysmans, Georgii Plekhanov, or Jean Jaurès — seriously concerned with instituting something beyond the liberal-democratic state. I discussed the concrete differences between what was understood as the “socialist” as against the “liberal” republic when the issue became real following World War I. Again, however, you don’t confront the implicit and explicit criticisms of your position: you only consider the problems with my own. I find no need to go through this same business again. But if I had to choose between accepting the present form of a liberal republic and calling upon workers to risk their livelihoods and their lives for a romantic vision of workers councils, which is unwilling to address any of the institutional problems I have raised, I would insist upon supporting the liberal republic in the blink of an eye. People should not be made to suffer for fantasies. With no disrespect meant, it might be appropriate for you to consider the remark of a young Nazi that Ernst Bloch often liked to recount: “One does not die for a program that one understands, one dies for a program that one loves.”⁷

Regarding how my position might have applied to Germany in 1919, I answered the question in the previous discussion. So, let me turn it around: if the majority of the working class opposed the call for soviets,⁸ which it did, would you — Barry — then be willing to impose it upon them by force? After all, you consider the working class “kept in ignorance.” Perhaps, once presented with the “truth” about workers’ councils by you and your merry little band, the majority would come around: but you obviously consider any real evidence for such an assumption unnecessary. I plead guilty to your contention that I have become a liberal captive of my anti-revolutionary dogma. But then, “perhaps,” your argument unwittingly turns you into the authoritarian captive of your own anti-authoritarian dogma? My argument is consistent; it does not turn ends against means. But yours? Well. . .

HERE, I THINK, IT IS NECESSARY to say a word about those socialist thinkers whom Barry castigates. Before criticizing the inability to envision the Stalinist bureaucracy by Kautsky, who was absolutely correct in his basic characterization of the communist fu-

ture, you might want to consider that he wrote his *Dictatorship of the Proletariat* in 1919; you also might want to consider that Leon Blum could already speak about a “moral incompatibility” between social democrats and communists in 1920. As you know, of course, Lukács — a genuine old Bolshevik who (inexplicably!) turned into a Stalinist — made his peace with the regime in 1924 and many of the later political analyses of Korsch, who became mired in sectarian preoccupations with workers’ councils and direct action from below after having been tossed out of the KPD, were thin. Sure Otto Bauer was mistaken in his views though you neglect to mention that they reflected those of only a tiny minority within the movement. Most social democratic critics of the Russian Revolution pointed to the dearth of bourgeois democratic traditions, the paucity of economic development, and the lack of communist commitment to liberal values and institutions. They offered Marxist analyses of the ways in which Marxism was being put to use: that is historical materialism. As for the “independent class role of the Stalinist bureaucracy,”⁹ or “bureaucratic collectivism,” who other than a few Trotskyists ever considered them to be the defining characteristics of totalitarianism?

Had you even browsed the work of Max Weber, who understood bureaucracy as the rationalization of clearly delineated tasks among clearly delineated offices in order to foster administrative efficiency, which is identified with producing maximum output from minimum input, it would immediately have been obvious to you that neither the Stalinist nor the Nazi states were “bureaucratic” in any meaningful sense of the term. Quite the contrary: the totalitarian state is a bureaucratic mess in which, for precisely this reason, the secret police is able to undermine the independence of all intermediate associations in civil society that might deflect the exercise of coercive and ideological power by the *führer*-state against individual citizens. Montesquieu understood the need for intermediate associations as well as checks and balances against the sovereign claiming to incarnate the will of the nation; Hegel described how coupling what we like to call the “cult of the personality”

with a “democracy,” undefined by institutions capable of protecting the minority, produced what he somewhat naively termed the “absolute terror” of the French Revolution.¹⁰ But wait! Barry may be right! What do Montesquieu and Hegel really have to offer? They have not a word to say about Stalinism. The situation is no different for Kautsky and his friends as well as modern theorists of totalitarianism like Hannah Arendt or Franz Borkenau or Richard Lowenthal or Herbert Marcuse or Franz Neumann or Erich Fromm or Karl August Wittfogel or Friedrich Pollock or Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer.¹¹ These are all clearly intellectual lightweights compared to . . . Well, it doesn't matter anyway. These great thinkers would obviously have been better served had they written their books with you in mind.

NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT HISTORY. Regarding the revolutionary possibilities in Europe, I agree that the revolution had a chance — if only a slim chance — in the Germany of 1919 and perhaps also in Italy during the early 1920s. But there is not a serious historian I know who suggests that power was “falling into the hands” of the workers in the Germany of 1933,¹² let alone in the Austria of 1938 whose working class was still languishing from its unsuccessful militancy of 1934. An argument could be made that the SPD and KPD should have been more militant in defense of the republic, which I made myself,¹³ but there is — again — no serious historian I know who argues that the erection of councils was a possibility after 1923 at the very latest. According to Barry, I assume, this means we should end history there.

But isn't it time to get beyond 1923, or is it, 1921, or is it 1918? I also have written about the historical conditions and constraints faced by Lenin. It was understandable for Luxemburg — desperate and broken¹⁴ — to understand the beginnings of Lenin's terror in terms of the lack of support extended by European social democracy to the Russian Revolution. But, the twentieth century has now come to an end. It might be time to consider whether this completely partisan standpoint shifts the blame from those who did nothing to miti-

gate the disaster to those who actually instigated the disaster. There is also the question, rarely asked, why the social democrats, all of whom had been mercilessly and indiscriminately attacked by the communists, should have extended support to a dictatorship whose degeneration they prophesized and whose methods they ethically opposed. Isn't that asking a bit much? Would Lenin have sent help to the social democrats if the situation were reversed? Which also begs the question: what kind of help could social democracy actually have offered? Europe had been destroyed by World War I, the inflation in Germany would quickly prove legendary in its impact, the victorious allies would undoubtedly have interfered with any socialist intervention in the revolution, and — again — there is the minor problem that the majority of the European working class opposed the communist dictatorship.

This latter issue is not exactly what I would call an “ignominious detail.” There are many points on which Barry and I disagree as comrades and friends, and some on which we even agree. But, frankly, I find his discussion of terror appalling. His relativistic argument justifying terror, sanctioned by nothing more than the belief of the true believer that his party is doing what its leaders say that it is doing, is a carbon copy of the murderous and delusional “ethics” offered by any number of old Bolsheviks. All of them were contemptuous of liberal democratic values while they were in power and then invoked them when they were on the dock. But that doesn't seem to bother Barry. His arguments go far toward explaining why the majority of the European working class should have been skeptical about the communist experiment. I was genuinely shocked by the combination of sheer arrogance and teleological rationalization implicit in his belief that “revolution is the price exacted from humanity to avoid the even more frightful prospects of stagnation and decay.” This kind of talk always made my skin crawl.

It is absurd to suggest that Leninism must be deemed democratic because prior to the revolution, and during the civil war, the party was disorganized and somewhat contentious. This was a matter of historical circumstance rather than design. The ques-

tion anyway is how the party treated its enemies, whether its theorists were ever concerned with its institutional accountability to the base, the rule of law, checks and balances, or the civil liberties of its opponents. Justifying such willful blindness in the name of the “revolution,” especially when only one party is allowed to interpret its fate, results in nothing more than dogmatism. Indeed, regarding the matter of coalitions with other parties, I strongly suggest that Barry consider the recollections of Isaac Steinberg who led the only party, the “Left” Social Revolutionaries, with whom Lenin was briefly in alliance.

Barry is concerned that I leave the reader with the “inference” that Leninism seeks one party rule. Inference? Yeah, right! I’m sure it’s purely by accident that Leninism has produced only authoritarianism like in Cuba or totalitarianism like in China: Barry doesn’t agree, which is his right, but isn’t it incumbent upon him to provide a single counterfactual example in response to my position? His arguments about class composition also simply miss the point: there is such a thing as the internal dynamics of an institution beyond the external impact of the circumstances in which the given institution developed: Hegel, again, spoke about this explicitly, Weber built on his insights, and exponents of the “new institutionalism” highlight the notion of “path dependency.” But dealing with non-Marxist theories is apparently irrelevant for the ultra-left: it seems enough to trot out the same old excuses and — in the wonderful phrase of Günter Grass from his novel *The Flounder* — “talk about what would have been the case had the opposite happened.”

More is required than faith that things can be different. The historical record is unambiguous: whatever the usefulness of Lenin’s theory of the party with respect to fostering revolution, it stinks as a theory of rule. Every concrete experience of movements committed to Leninism has produced a one-party state with a varying, if generally horrible, set of authoritarian consequences. Every one! And it really is insufficient to claim that these real experiences of Leninism are irrelevant because the “authentic” Leninist party, which invented the party-state in the first place and introduced

terror as a legitimate political tactic, had different intentions. Please! Isn’t it time to move on? But wait! I almost forgot. We can’t. Why not? Because “for all time” — no reification or idolatry taints this argument! — we must continue to bow down before the Russian Revolution: this event apparently proved that the working class could conquer power even though the real conquerors were communist authoritarians that exercised power undemocratically in its name. No reactionary could have offered a better set of prescriptions for paralyzing the radical spirit. Needless to say, in closing, let me extend my thanks for what has been a terrific lesson in the critical use of historical materialism.



One cannot have socialism. One is a socialist.

Henry Pachter

HISTORY HAS WITHDRAWN the identification of revolution with liberation and exploded the idea that socialism can serve as the absolute other to capitalism. Invoking the image of a workers’ council that no one wants makes as little sense as insisting upon the need for a revolution that has everywhere turned into a nightmare. The debate is no longer between revolution and reform, as I suggested previously, but between those who support the reforms traditionally associated with social democracy and those who do not. The best of the socialist tradition was committed to constraining the arbitrary exercise of institutional power. This indeed is what links the liberal rule of law, with its universal implications for members of all classes and critics of any regime, to the particular demands of workers concerning the accountability of capital.

Where do liberal reforms stop and socialism begin? This is a question with which all the commentators seem concerned. But it can only be answered in the abstract. Sure: it’s possible to say that the reforms achieved in the past have left the accumulation process intact, the dependence of workers on capital in place, that they have been “integrated” into the “system,” and that the ruling class permits this because it is less costly than outright repression. But this

kind of talk is a perfect example of “reification”: it goes nowhere unless the critic can sketch a feasible alternative form of accumulation, maintain that the dependency of workers on capital is the same as it was in the time of Dickens, refuse to consider that perhaps it is not simply the reforms that have been integrated but the system itself that has been changed, and seriously believe that the actual historical struggles undertaken by capital against those reforms was merely for show. Indeed, if you can’t recognize that the combination of all the reforms mentioned in all these essays has qualitatively changed the conditions under which working people live, if you consider it “delusional” to believe that the civil rights and social legislation of the 1960s tended to “fortify and broaden the existing democracy,” then you are living in what Hegel termed “the night in which all cows are black”: such a stance is not “dialectical,” or even radical, merely dogmatic.

The “limits of capitalism” have been shown to be extremely flexible and the old talk about the choice between “socialism” and “barbarism” ignores the various alternatives in between. Those in between are those among which, if we consider ourselves responsible political people, we must choose. All the reforms mentioned by Barry in his lengthy response were sponsored at one time or another by the labor movement. He and Paul and Michael are surely correct to note that some were also sponsored by middle class reformist organizations. But so what? Time to deal with substance rather than slogans: the value of a reform does not lie with who proposes it, but whom it benefits.

Innovative proposals appropriate to diverse historical conditions or what Andre Gorz once termed “non-reformist reforms,” no less than the energy with which they are promulgated, can alone differentiate libertarian socialists from the mainstream. They let radicals put something on the table, and enough evidence from the past suggests that they can have a practical influence. This is not the same as asking for workers’ councils or, in what was a remarkable comment directed against me by a member of the audience during one of my panels at the last Socialist Scholars Conference, a condition

in which “each is responsible for everything.” What a delightful world of meetings that would be! It’s time to understand the difference between demanding utopia and re-inventing an idea of what is feasible, but ignored, under existing circumstances. Identifying this difference, linking the feasible with the ignored, and illuminating the implications of the compromises undertaken by official social democratic parties committed to the “new middle” or the “third way,” are fundamental themes of my last book, *Imagining the Possible: Radical Politics for Conservative Times*.

The pursuit of reforms capable of constraining the arbitrary exercise of economic and political power by the state, and through the state, is — and perhaps always was — the primary purpose of socialism. Does this mean that the idea will essentially become identified with mitigating the whip of the market and expanding the realm of individual choice? I believe so. And so do most people. The idea of transforming the totality was an illusion from the beginning: workers were empowered and enfranchised less by the fantasy of the soviet than the reality of reforms associated with shortening the work week, introducing the right to collective bargaining, and participating in the liberal state. This does not suggest that socialism must somehow “evolve.” The twentieth century has taught us that the welfare state can be rolled back, that liberal democracy is fragile. With the collapse of teleology, moreover, no form of theory can any longer guarantee the translation of its injunctions into practice. Does this mean that the future is bleak and socialists will find themselves on the defensive? Undoubtedly. But that is the real situation in which we find ourselves and which we ignore at our peril.

NOTES

1. Note my essay, “Transforming the State: Reflections on the Structure of Capitalist Democracy” in *Imagining the Possible: Radical Politics for Conservative Times* (New York: Routledge, 2002), pgs. 145ff.

2. Georg Lukács, “Tactics and Ethics” in *Political Writings 1919-1929* ed. Rodney Livingstone and trans. Michael McColgan (London: New Left Books, 1972), pgs. 3ff.

3. Dialectics is not simply meant to confirm the

position dear to its interpreter, but seeks instead "by means of an immanent critique to develop philosophical standpoints beyond themselves and beyond the despotism of a thinking based on [fixed] standpoints." Theodor W. Adorno, *Critical Models: Interventions and Catchwords* trans. Henry W. Pickford (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), pg. 12

4. This point becomes evident in the classic biography that is far superior to what came before, and I am proud to say, has been written by another of my former students. Note the study by Manfred B. Steger, *The Quest for Evolutionary Socialism: Eduard Bernstein and Social Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Pgs. 75ff and passim.

5. Note the discussion in "Karl Kautsky: The Rise and Fall of Orthodox Marxism" in Stephen Eric Bronner, *Socialism Unbound* (2nd Edition: Boulder: Westview, 2001), pgs. 33ff.

6. Pierre Bourdieu, *Acts of Resistance: Against the Tyranny of the Market* trans. Richard Nice (New York: The New Press, 1998), pg. 62.

7. Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1973), pg. 65.

8. The majority "above all wanted peace and stability. I saw Social Democratic demonstrators carrying large signs inscribed: 'Ebert, Get Tough!' When the Communists — at the time called Spartacists — seized the building of the Social Democratic daily *Vorwärts* in Berlin, we were all for law and order, along with Ebert and his mercenaries who quelled the uprising. The idea of occupying newspaper buildings was crazy and had no strategic value whatsoever. Paul Frolich, the biographer of Rosa Luxemburg and at the time a leading member of the Communist Party's leading cadre, told me later that no one had given the order: he was convinced the uprising had been sparked by agents provocateurs. Rosa Luxemburg, too, knew that it was premature and ill-considered. But she could not allow the masses to make their own mistakes without interfering: she had to be with them, like a mother whose children threaten to wade into a treacherous pool." Henry Pachter, *Weimar Etudes* (New York: Columbia Uni-

versity Press, 1982), pgs. 13-14.

9. This was always just a twist on an old theme. Engels had already noted that while the state is "as a rule, the state of most powerful, economically dominant class . . . By way of exception, however, periods occur in which the warring classes balance each other so nearly that the state power, as ostensible mediator, acquires for the moment, a certain degree of independence of both. Such was the absolute monarchy of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which held the balance between the nobility and the class of burghers; such was the Bonapartism of the First, and still more of the Second French Empire, which played off the proletariat against the bourgeoisie and the bourgeoisie against the proletariat. The latest performance of this kind, in which ruler and ruled appear equally ridiculous, is the new German Empire of the Bismarck nation: here capitalists and workers are balanced against each other and equally cheated for the benefit of the impoverished Prussian cabbage junkers." Frederick Engels, "The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State" in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* 3 volumes (Moscow, 1969), 3:328-9.

10. G.W.F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Mind* trans. J.B. Baillie (New York: Harper, 1967), pgs. 599ff.

11. Again let me recommend the fine intellectual history by William David Jones, *The Lost Debate: German Socialist Intellectuals and Totalitarianism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

12. Exactly the opposite position is argued by the dean of left-wing German historians of the Weimar period. See, Arthur Rosenberg, *Geschichte der Weimarer Republik* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1961), pg. 210-11.

13. Stephen Eric Bronner, "Working Class Politics and the Nazi Triumph" in *Moments of Decision: Political History and the Crises of Radicalism* (New York: Routledge, 1992), pgs. 44-55.

14. Alfred Doblin suggests that Luxemburg was actually suffering from nervous collapse in his novel, *Karl and Rosa* (Munich: Deutsche Taschenbuch Verlag, 1978 ed.)

Book Reviews

Whither a New Internationalism?

Reviewed by Mark Engler

UPSIDE DOWN: A PRIMER FOR THE LOOKING-GLASS WORLD by Eduardo Galeano.
New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000.
358 pp. \$24.00.

TODAY'S APOLOGISTS for the U.S. Army's School of the Americas, the infamous training grounds for Latin American soldiers at Fort Benning, Georgia, do not try to deny their past sins. They no longer bother with disavowing their many graduates who went on to lead death squads in the "dirty wars" of the 1970s and 80s. Instead they emphasize how much things have changed since the time when torture techniques were part of the curriculum. They charge skeptics who doubt their newly humanized mission with fixating on a bygone age: "People are focusing on the past," says one General. "We are focusing on the future."

One does not need to take the Pentagon's spin-doctoring at face value to agree that the question of change is important. Few progressives would doubt that criticism of U.S. foreign policy is as important today as in Cold War times. But protesters at the School of the Americas, and dissidents more generally, need to question how thoroughly the analyses that back Left internationalism should change in response to the present world order. In a new "age of terror" this deliberation demands ever more attention: What politics from the past can be retained, and what must be formed anew?

The most recent work from Uruguayan Eduardo Galeano constructs an engaging, though ultimately incomplete, answer. *Upside*

Down: A Primer for the Looking-Glass World draws both from Galeano's significant analysis from the era of the Latin American security state, and from his more recent creative writing. The examples that *Upside Down* uses to illustrate the topsy-turvy logic of today's neo-liberal world are not new to the author. Indeed, Galeano previously outlined the book's worldview in his 1989 *Book of Embraces*, where he laid out the nature of "The System" in a poetic vignette of eleven theses:

Functionaries don't function.
Politicians speak but say nothing.
Voters vote but don't elect.
The information media disinform.
Schools teach ignorance.
Judges punish the victims.
The military makes war against its compatriots.
The police don't fight crime because they are too busy committing it.
Bankruptcies are socialized while profits are privatized.
Money is freer than people are.
People are at the service of things.

In essence these same reversals, fleshed out into chapters (and combined with a compelling section on racism and sexism in an international context), form the core of *Upside Down*.

WHAT MAKES THIS WORK a significant departure for Galeano is that it marks his return to political systematics after decades of more literary invention. *Open Veins of Latin America*, Galeano's last work as a paradigmaticist, was published in 1971. That book sought to provide a unified account of political economy in the Western Hemisphere in the five hundred years since colonialization. Its imposing text carefully evidenced an argument that a generation of "Dependency Theorists" was then elaborating: That "[u]nderdevelopment isn't a stage of development, but its consequence;" that a single prom-

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cess produced both the fabulous wealth of the North and the tremendous poverty of the South. The book earned Galeano considerable celebrity in Latin America. It gained the distinction of being banned by military governments in Uruguay, Chile, and Argentina, and of being selected by Isabel Allende as one of two indispensable volumes to carry with her as she was rushed into exile.

The type of analysis pursued in *Open Veins* is not abandoned in *Upside Down*. Though no longer as fashionable, the old tenets — that the same system treats its “rich kids as if they were money” while simultaneously turning its poor ones “into garbage” — remain intact, if understated. Like Che Guevara, who excused himself by saying “It’s not my fault that reality is Marxist,” Galeano exudes an off-handed confidence in the lasting validity of the theoretical constants underpinning his views. The changes reflected in the new book have more to do with the author’s subsequent work.

Galeano himself faced the fate of exile, and spent the late 1970s and early 80s living in Spain. There he took the same raw material he had unearthed in *Open Veins* and shaped it into a different type of history. Recalling John Dos Passos’s evocative “newsreels” and biographical sketches, Galeano used a series of beautifully-wrought snapshots to piece together an expansive narrative of exploitation and resistance. The series was entitled *Memories of Fire*. In its last volume, devoted to the twentieth century, he marks various years by showing Isadora Duncan dancing with scandalous abandon for the students of Argentina, Pancho Villa reading the *Thousand and One Nights* as respite from revolution in Mexico, and Al Capone demanding that America “remain safe and uncorrupted” against the menace of communism.

The three-book epic remains Galeano’s most accomplished creation. But in the decade and a half since completing it, he continued to make striking turns. He produced a lyrical and surrealistic memoir, a book celebrating the joys of soccer, and a collection of folktales. Each of these broke new ground, and none gave warning that Galeano might return to again evaluate modern-day political structures, as he does in *Upside Down*.

Many writers might hesitate to move

from creative work back to politically engaged nonfiction for fear of criticism condemning them as unnecessarily didactic. With *Upside Down*, Galeano playfully pre-empted this charge by flaunting his role as instructor. Didacticism, in fact, becomes the main literary conceit of the book. But the author then does somersaults with the premise: Galeano may be taking his readers back to school, but his textbook is filled with warped lessons (“Injustice 101”) and dancing skeletons (ink-prints from the early-Twentieth-Century Mexican artist José Guadalupe Posada). This lunatic classroom, he suggests, is the only one appropriate for teaching the “looking glass” tenets of contemporary capitalism.

The faux-academic framing of *Upside Down* serves Galeano well. Promising only the dull conventionalities of a school primer, he does not have to worry when his expressions of outrage about current affairs cannot match the artistry of his major works. Instead, he has positioned his book to be easily the most entertaining of the many scholarly surveys of globalization.

While he includes a now *de rigueur* citation of UNDP statistics (“the ten richest men on the planet own wealth equivalent to the value of the total production of fifty countries”), he then quotes a less well-used source, the anonymous writer of graffiti on a Buenos Aires wall that reads, “Fight hunger and poverty! Eat poor people!” If we get a pedantic description of Gap workers in El Salvador “breaking their backs in sweatshop hell,” we are soon relieved with some sharp sarcasm: “The World Bank calls education ‘an investment in human capital,’ which, from their point of view, is homage.” And when he introduces a sociological term, he riffs on its connotations: “By ‘Brazilianization,’” Galeano reports, “they certainly don’t mean the spread of irrepressible soccer, spectacular carnivals, or music that awakens the dead... rather they’re describing the imposition of a model of progress based on social injustice and racial discrimination.”

Through this, Galeano does not bow to the fashions of contemporary criticism. Given that *Upside Down* sets out to describe international politics at the turn of the millennium, its dogged avoidance of the term “globalization” seems almost as surreal as

Posada's ink-prints. In one of a handful of cases where the word does turn up, the author equates its use with the refusal of polite society in Victorian England to "speak of trousers in the presence of an unmarried woman." Galeano prefers "imperialism."

Nevertheless, the idea that the author is returning to ground he had previously covered exhaustively suggests that he has something new to say. And in fact, when set against *Open Veins of Latin America*, *Upside Down* exhibits important alterations. The Marines appear less. The IMF appears more. Even literary stylings retained from the author's past exploration show a political revision. While in his earlier text he maintained a tight economic focus, Galeano now includes in his analysis an eclectic variety of social, cultural, and political interactions. And this, by implication, opens the door for a wider range of social movements — for the media-savvy Zapatistas and culture jammers now claiming recognition alongside more traditional activist formations.

WHY, THEN, IS *UPSIDE DOWN*'S response to changing times incomplete? Here it is worth stepping back to appreciate how, even if the center of U.S. foreign policy has held over the past thirty years, its mechanisms have matured substantially. How do we deal with the type of diplomacy first crafted by Clinton and Blair, in which the crass trilateralism of the Carter era has been finessed aside by "Third Way" triangulation? Who could be a more potent ally for American interests than Vicente Fox, who can at once champion brute neo-liberalism and become a darling of democracy, charming even the liberals with his new-guard ascendancy? Fox did his executive training not at the School of the Americas, but at Coca-Cola. Why bother with clandestine Panamanian bases when you have Harvard Business School?

Avoiding these questions, keeping the contours of his Marxism implicit, and never entering the vexed debates about which qualities of today's globalization (or modern imperialism, as the author would describe it) are truly unique, *Upside Down* fails to perform the key task of social theory — exposing the thinking that structures the numerous inequalities and humiliations that he documents. It becomes clear that

Galeano's bid is not for theoretical acumen. Judged instead by the standard of moral clarity, he triumphs. His racist politicians and unrepentant Generals rarely fail to provoke outrage. And it is as part of an on-going struggle to motivate action that Galeano can write, as a postscript to his last chapter, "This book was completed in August 1998. Check your local newspaper for an update."

As fate would have it, today's news poses a direct challenge to Galeano's assertion of enduring relevance. "Everything has changed," has been the pundits' mantra since September 11th. Some of the more vivid forecasts of the attacks' lasting impact come from those predicting a new Cold War. Here, the world remains divided into "friends" and "enemies" of terror, a new sense of danger allows for the reemergence of the national security state, and "Free Trade" regimes grow more militaristically regulated.

To the extent that this scenario materializes, the impact that it might have on an insurgent internationalism would be largely determined by whether dissidents affect a similar change — retreating into Cold War postures criticizing the bloodiest excesses of imperial intervention, rather than putting on display their own distinct vision of global relations. Because vision, in the end, is the weight of a shift in systematics: our framework for analysis limits what we dare to imagine when we, too, focus on the future.

Galeano recognizes this in his conclusion. As he turns to conceive an antidote to the grim worldview he has presented in the course of the book, he embarks upon an exercise in dreaming. He conjures a world where cars in the street are run over by dogs, where the Church fixes the typos on Moses's tablets so that the Sixth Commandment exhorts the celebration of the body, and where courts respect "The Right to Rave."

The outlandish tenets themselves are less important than the fact that they express a hope beyond the containment of hegemony, beyond even the disbanding of the CIA. This is the type of wild ambition that abounded not long ago amongst stubborn activists who refused to accept the name "anti-globalization," but that now seems endangered by calls for realism and retrenchment. It is a quirky utopianism, the kind we need least to forget.

Exchange on the Afghan War

To the Editors:

I READ STEPHEN SHALOM'S ARTICLE in the Winter 2002 issue of *New Politics* about the Afghan war and as usual I was impressed with his clear thinking and clear writing. My only criticism of what he says is that he sets such strict criteria for a just war that I cannot imagine any war that he would support. This is equally true for Thomas Harrison.

The classic just war according to many historians, World War II (at least in Europe), cost the lives of millions of German civilians, victims of Allied terror bombings and Soviet massacres. The classic just war according to most leftists, the Spanish Civil War, was accompanied by atrocities committed by both sides. For revolutionary socialists, the civil war following the Bolshevik Revolution is the ultimate just war, but the Red Army did horrible things in suppressing the counterrevolutionaries, at a huge cost of innocent lives. Now, the famine that struck the Soviet Union in 1921-22 — that was a humanitarian catastrophe! And does anyone believe the Soviet policy of War Communism had nothing to do with it?

I hate to make light of the 3,500 Afghan civilian casualties, but sticking just to Afghanistan, if you compare that to the one million casualties caused by the Red Army during its occupation, the 3,500 is a pittance. And the anti-Soviet rebels killed their share of innocents as well. Every war causes a humanitarian crisis, so unless Shalom and Harrison are pacifists, they cannot honestly rely on this argument.

My other criticism of Shalom and Harrison lies in what they do not say. 9/11 was not the first time bin Laden struck. Or the second or the third. He was definitely involved in the 1996 attack on U.S. soldiers in Saudi Arabia, the 1998 bombings of the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania and the bombing of the U.S.S. Cole in 2000. He probably had a role in the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center and the foiled plot to blow up New York City bridges and tun-

nels. My understanding is that in the trial of the 4 men accused of the African embassy bombings, it was revealed that bin Laden was attempting to acquire nuclear and chemical weapons. This was a hell of a track record. If there ever was a person who fit the description of a ruthless fanatic international terrorist it was bin Laden — and he had a protector in the Taliban government.

Diplomatic and police methods, which critics of the war advocate as alternatives, were used against bin Laden and al Qaeda since 1993, but were clearly not sufficient to prevent the 9/11 attacks. After 9/11 something more was required.

It is clear to me that without the use of force, the Taliban had no intention of turning over bin Laden or dismantling the al Qaeda bases. Perhaps the U.S. should have gone to the UN, as Steve Shalom argues, but if the U.S. wanted the UN's authorization, it could have received it, as it did in the Gulf War. It would have just postponed the inevitable.

I know it sticks in the craw of leftists to support any war sponsored by the U.S. government, even retroactively, but the world is a strange place. Now that the ouster of the Taliban is a done deal, we can concentrate our attention a program we can all agree on: Changing U.S. policy in the region to address the legitimate grievances of its people, and in preventing Bush from spreading the war to Iraq, Iran and an ever-expanding list of nations where, under the guise of fighting terrorism, the U.S. military will assist repressive governments to violate the human rights of their citizens.

BENNETT MURASKIN

Thomas Harrison Replies:

BENNETT MURASKIN BEGINS HIS LETTER by noting that even "just wars" can involve civilian casualties and atrocities. True enough. But other than a pacifist, for whom there is no such thing as a just war, who would argue the contrary? Still, there is a problem in the way Muraskin equates World

War II, the Spanish Civil War and the Russian Civil War. All three involved massive civilian deaths, but in only one — the Allied campaign against the Axis powers — did the allegedly just side *deliberately*, as a central part of its strategy for winning the war, kill huge numbers of noncombatants. I would argue that there are additional reasons why the war conducted by Roosevelt/Truman, Stalin and Churchill was not a just war, but my point here is that means and ends are not separable. It's no accident, as they say, that a team made up of two imperialist powers and a pathological mass murderer of Hitlerian dimensions could unhesitatingly and cold-bloodedly inflict terror bombing on German and Japanese cities and — in Truman's case — unleash the most horrific weapon ever known on thousands of innocent and helpless people in Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Part of what makes a just war just is the way it is waged.

Now it must be acknowledged — as I did in my article — that, by the standards of the wars of the past century or so, the U.S. attack on Afghanistan was not exceptionally bloody (as it turned out, that is, because this could not have been foreseen). But Muraskin seems to think that this fact undermines my argument against the war. It would if my argument rested on the casualty figures — which it doesn't. Even from a superficial reading of what I wrote, it ought to be clear that I opposed the war not because of the number of Afghans killed by American bombs and missiles, but because of the imperialist agenda of U.S. war-makers and because the war (and the broader American foreign policy of which it is a part), far from solving the problem of international terrorism, will only make it worse. Even if a much smaller number of Afghans had been killed by "Operation Enduring Freedom," even if by some miracle *no* civilians had been harmed, this war would still have been a counterproductive exercise in Big Power vengeance, muscle-flexing and aggrandizement. Even though the war toppled the Taliban, it also reinforced the repressive status quo throughout the Middle East and Central and South Asia and globally strengthened American political and corporate power. Consequently, the world is not a safer but a more dangerous place, and

progressive forces have suffered a serious setback.

AFTER KNOCKING DOWN THAT STRAW MAN, Muraskin criticizes what I "do not say," by which he seems to mean that I do not take sufficient account of Osama bin Laden's "track record" as a "ruthless fanatic international terrorist." This too is a straw man. Actually, I went on at considerable length about bin Laden's criminality and the immense cruelty of the September 11 attacks. My failure to mention *all* of the terrorist plots in which he is believed to have been involved does not mean that I consider him and al Qaeda to be any less dangerous than Muraskin does. The question of what you do about a network of international terrorists cannot be answered simply by stressing how awful they are.

The answer I suggested is to fight for a democratic foreign policy that strikes at the roots of terrorism — which logically entails opposition to existing policy, including the war, even if that position is very unpopular right now. Muraskin says, support U.S. foreign policy in Afghanistan, and then, once the war has been won, concentrate on preventing wars against Iraq, Iran and the rest of Bush's "Axis of Evil." The trouble is, supporting one intervention makes it that much harder to build opposition to American foreign policy as a whole and prevent future wars. The Afghan war has brought a closing of ranks in this country around what looks like a new imperialist consensus, similar to the one that prevailed from the beginning of the Cold War until the late 1960s. This is a grim state of affairs, and I'm afraid that pro-war Leftists like Muraskin are making a contribution, however small, to its formation.

Muraskin rightly insists on the importance of bin Laden's "track record." However, we shouldn't forget the track record of our government either. Muraskin "cannot imagine any war" by the American government that I would support. Neither can I, not with imaginings, but with hard facts. The track record is clear. Except on rare occasions, when the American public has mobilized massively to affect some aspect of our foreign policy, the world's chief capitalist overlord has always acted on other countries to

promote its rulers' power-political and economic interests, never on behalf of democracy and social justice. Even where it might seem to have acted differently — Haiti and Bosnia, for example — a closer look reveals something else — Haiti is abandoned to further immiseration under a draconian “free market” regime, imposed by international financial institutions and enforced by the tamed and corrupted Aristide government; Bosnia must accept permanent ethnic partition, and the Serb ethnic cleansers are rewarded with their own mini-state. In Afghanistan the Taliban is gone, which is certainly a deliverance for the Afghan people, but what will their future be under the motley collection of drug-dealing warlords now back in control, courtesy of the United States? And of course, the enhancement of American power means that populations around the world will continue to suffer the fates of the Haitians, Bosnians and Afghans.

To support U.S. wars, such as the recent one in Afghanistan, is to abandon the political independence we must maintain if we are to carry on the struggle for a better world.

Stephen R. Shalom Replies

BENNETT MURASKIN ARGUES that my criteria for a just war are so strict that they would make any war impermissible. But my criteria are hardly some obscure, sectarian, ultraleft standard; they are in fact no different from those of conventional just war theory. Just law theory demands that any war meet the criteria of necessity and proportionality. The necessity criterion asks whether there is an alternative to war. In my article I indicated one simple alternative that could have been tried: taking the Taliban up on their offer to turn bin Laden over to a third party for trial — perhaps not meant seriously, but never pursued by Washington.

The proportionality criterion does not bar all harm to civilians. But it does demand, among other things, that the harm to civilians be weighed against any benefits of the war. What is a morally acceptable number of deaths to innocent Afghan civilians? Is it acceptable to kill more civilians than died on September 11? (Michael Walzer tries to dismiss this concern by declaring that it would obviously be foolish to say the war

became unjust at precisely the 3,120th civilian death (*Dissent*, Spring 2002). This would indeed be foolish, but no one says this. What they do say is that September 11 stands out as a particularly heinous crime because of the huge human toll; but if a toll of several thousand is huge in terms of American lives, then it is huge when considering Afghan lives as well.) We don't yet know the final toll from the direct effects of the bombing (and actually the bombing with its “collateral damage” is still going on). Estimates range from 1,000 - 8,000. (see Carl Conetta, *Strange Victory: a Critical Appraisal of Operation Enduring Freedom and the Afghanistan War*, Cambridge, MA: Defense Alternatives Research Monograph #6, Jan. 30, 2002; and Traynor and Borger in the *Guardian*, Feb. 12, 2002) Muraskin says 3,500 Afghan civilian deaths would be far less than the million casualties resulting from the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, as though anything less than the Soviet slaughter becomes acceptable, but surely he doesn't mean this.

In any event, the direct deaths from the bombing were never the chief concern of war critics. The main danger was always the risk of massive death from starvation and disease resulting from the bombing's interference with the flow of relief supplies. War supporters frequently reply that no such deaths took place and therefore the war was just. But this response is wrong on two counts. First, it is not at all clear that there weren't significant numbers of deaths. Medicine Without Frontiers reported a doubling of the child mortality rate between August 2001 and January 2002 (see the MSF report of Feb. 21, 2002, available on ZNet). Michael Finkel reported in the *New York Times Magazine* (Feb. 17, 2002) that in the single Afghan district of Abdulgan out of 15,000 residents, the total number of dead during the war “has to run into the 1,000s.” An estimate in the *Guardian* (Steele, May 20, 2002) puts the indirect death toll at 20,000.

Second of all, as I argued in my original article, the moral question is not the final death toll, but the expected death toll. To have received serious warnings from UN and aid officials of potential humanitarian disaster if the bombing continued and to

have persisted with the bombing anyway, was morally impermissible.

Aren't there some situations where it would be right to put even millions of innocent people at risk? Hypothetically, yes. One can make a plausible argument that the need to defeat Hitler was so great that large numbers of unintended civilian deaths (but never the intentional terror bombing) might have been justified. But whatever the justification in such an extreme situation, the war in Afghanistan surely wasn't such a situation.

Even on the narrow grounds of protecting Americans from terror, the benefits of this war are not likely to be very great. A FBI official testified that even if bin Laden were knocked out and all terrorist bases in Afghanistan eliminated, this would reduce the ability of the al Qaeda network to commit "horrific acts" by only 30 percent which should not be especially surprising, given that terrorist attacks like the September 11 hijackings do not depend on the possession of massive, open air training facilities. (Pincus, *Washington Post*, Dec. 19, 2001, p. A18) They needed flight schools in Florida, not terrorist training camps in Afghanistan.

And against these slight gains must be weighed the harm to U.S. security. What are the implications for the ability of terrorists to recruit volunteers when there are now Afghans like Juma Khan, who lost 15 members of his extended family in a U.S. bombing raid and who now says, "Whoever bombed me is my enemy." (Hugger, *The Independent*, Nov. 27, 2001, p. 5) Or Rukia, a mother who lost her five children to a bombing raid: "I will pray that Bush dies, I will pray that the trouble America made for us will fall on America. We hate Americans." (Bruner, *Atlanta Journal and Constitution*, Dec. 8, 2001, p.11A)

SOME ANALYSTS SUGGEST that the U.S. war in Afghanistan will save lives as a result of overthrowing the Taliban. Nicholas Kristof, for example, estimates that "our invasion of Afghanistan may end up saving one million lives over the next decade," because vaccinations — against measles, for example — are now possible. (*NYT*, Feb. 1, 2002, p. A25) I noted in my original article that the

end of the Taliban may lead to some humanitarian gains, but these should not be exaggerated. The Taliban did not prohibit international organizations from conducting immunization programs. Polio vaccinations, for example, were conducted in September — before the bombing — and then were resumed in November, though some areas "were not accessible during the fighting." (UNICEF Memorandum, Select Committee on International Development, House of Commons, *The Humanitarian Crisis in Afghanistan and the Surrounding Region*, Dec. 17, 2001) And given the U.S. refusal to allow international peacekeepers outside of Kabul, so as not to interfere with Washington's war effort, the benefits of peace and stability may be a long time in coming.

No leftist should want George Bush to be the one to determine what's best for Afghans — just as most of us didn't want the Soviet Union to invade Afghanistan to promote the rights of women or end feudalism. So what do Afghans have to say about the U.S. war? We do have some limited evidence on the matter. At the end of October, at a meeting in Peshawar of some 700 Afghan "tribal elders, Islamic scholars, fractious politicians and former guerrilla commanders," *every speaker* "urged the United States to stop the air raids." (Bearak, *NYT*, Oct. 25, 2001, p. B4) Abdul Haq, a great hope of Washington's before he was killed by the Taliban, also opposed the bombing. (*Guardian*, Nov. 2, 2001) The Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan — which fought the Soviets, the Northern Alliance, and the Taliban — opposed the bombing and warned that current Northern Alliance warlords are every bit as bad as the Taliban. (see RAWA statements of Oct. 11 and Dec. 10, available on ZNet) And former Afghan King Zahir Shah (whom Afghan expert Selig Harrison calls "the country's most respected figure") has termed the war "stupid and useless." (*Christian Science Monitor*, Mar. 12, 2002, p. 9)

This war put huge numbers of civilians at risk, made Americans less secure, and lacked the support of the Afghan people: such a war is unjust.