TABLE OF CONTENTS

(contents continued)

Getting Out of Iraq

GILBERT ACHCAR AND STEPHEN R. SHALOM

On John Murtha's Position

THERE IS MUCH OF WHICH TO APPROVE in the recent speech of Rep. John P. Murtha, Democrat of Pennsylvania, on Iraq. The hawkish Murtha had been critical of the Bush administration's handling of the war for some time, but until now his solution had been to call for more troops. On November 17, however, he recognized courageously that U.S. troops "can not accomplish anything further in Iraq militarily. IT IS TIME TO BRING THEM HOME."

Murtha pointed out, as the antiwar movement has been pointing out all along, that the U.S. troops in Iraq, rather than adding to stability, "have become a catalyst for violence." He referred to the acknowledgement made by General George W. Casey, commander of the "multinational force" in Iraq, during a hearing before the Armed Services Committee of the U.S. Senate in September, 2005, that the presence of "the coalition forces as an occupying force" is "one of the elements that fuels the insurgency."

Murtha pointed out that a recent poll indicated that 80 percent of Iraqis want the United States out. This poll, a secret British defense ministry survey conducted in August, 2005 (*Daily Telegraph*, Oct. 23, 2005), is consistent with earlier polls and several facts: the fact that most slates in the January 2005 election — including the United Iraqi Alliance (UIA), which won the election — had in their platform the demand for a timetable for the withdrawal of occupation forces from Iraq; a U.S. military poll in February that found only 23 percent of urban residents supported the presence of coalition troops, compared to 71 percent opposed (reported in the Brookings Institution, *Iraq Index*, Nov. 21, 2005, p. 40); the statement of 126 members of the Iraqi National Assembly, including a majority of the 140 MPs of the majority UIA, demanding "the departure of the occupation force" (cited by Cong. John McDermott in the Congress on June 22, 2005); and the request made repeatedly by the National Sovereignty Committee of the Iraq National Assembly for a withdrawal timetable for "occupation troops" (Nancy Youssef, Knight Ridder, Sept. 14, 2005).

There is no guarantee of what would happen in the event of a U.S. withdrawal, but Murtha noted — as the antiwar movement has argued since the beginning of the occupation — that the U.S. presence makes an agreement between contending Iraqi forces and the peaceful unfolding of the political process more difficult. For example, the Association of Muslim Scholars, the most prominent Sunni organization with ties to the armed resistance, has repeatedly declared that it would call for a cessation of all armed action if the United States and its allies set a timetable for their withdrawal.

Murtha has submitted a resolution to the House (H.J. Res. 73, Nov. 17) calling for the redeployment of U.S. troops from Iraq. That Murtha, a decorated Vietnam combat veteran and one of the most prominent boosters of the military in the Congress, has had it with the war is a telling sign of how badly things are going for the warmongers, and the more representatives who join the 13 cosponsors of his

GILBERT ACHCAR *is the author of* The Clash of Barbarisms and Eastern Cauldron*, both published by Monthly Review Press.* STEPHEN R. SHALOM *is on the editorial board of* New Politics*, and the author of* Imperial Alibis *(South End Press) and* Which Side Are You On? An Introduction to Politics *(Longman).*

EDITORS' NOTE: The article "On John Murtha's Position" is reprinted here from ZNet, Nov. 21, 2005, followed by a postscript written especially for *New Politics*.

resolution, the better. Furthermore, one has to sympathize with Murtha, of course, for the abuse that has been heaped upon him by the Bush administration and right-wing ideologues in Congress and the media.

Nevertheless, the antiwar movement needs to be careful not to confuse Murtha's position with its own.

When Murtha says "redeploy" — instead of withdraw — the troops from Iraq, he makes clear that — despite his rhetoric — he doesn't want to really bring them home, but to station them in the Middle East. As he told Anderson Cooper of CNN on November 18:

> We . . . have united the Iraqis against us. And so I'm convinced, once we redeploy to Kuwait or to the surrounding area, that it will be much safer. They won't be able to unify against the United States. And then, if we have to go back in, we can go back in.

Moreover, Murtha's resolution calls for the United States to create "a quick-reaction U.S. force and an over-the-horizon presence of U.S. Marines" to be "deployed to the region."

WE STRONGLY DISAGREE. The antiwar movement cannot endorse U.S. military intervention in the Middle East, whether over or under the horizon. We don't want U.S. troops remaining in the region and poised to go back into Iraq. They don't belong there, period. Some — though not Murtha — suggest keeping U.S. bases within Iraq, close to the oil fields or in Kurdistan, in order to intervene more or less on the pattern of what U.S. forces are doing in Afghanistan. But this is a recipe for disaster, since the Iraqi view that the United States intends a permanent occupation is one of the main causes inciting the insurgency. Moreover, stationing U.S. forces in Kurdistan could only deepen the already dangerous ethnic animosities among Iraqis. In any event, if U.S. troops continue to be used in Iraq — whether deployed from bases inside the country or from outside — they will inevitably continue to cause civilian casualties, further provoking violence. Having a U.S. interventionary force stationed in Kuwait or in a similar location will continue to inflame the opposition of Iraqis who will know their sovereignty is still subject to U.S. control. As for the impact of keeping U.S. forces anywhere else in the larger region, it should be recalled that their presence was the decisive factor leading to 9-11 and fuels "global terrorism" in the same way that the U.S. military presence in Iraq "fuels the insurgency" there.

Murtha, we need to keep in mind, is not opposed to U.S. imperial designs or U.S. militarism. He criticizes the Bush administration because its Iraq policies have led to cuts in the (non-Iraq) defense budget, threatening the U.S. ability to maintain "military dominance."

Murtha's resolution calls for redeploying U.S. troops from Iraq "at the earliest practicable date" — which is reasonable only if it means that the withdrawal should be started immediately and completed shortly after the December elections, with the exact details to be worked out with the elected Iraqi government. In his press conference, however, Murtha estimated it would take six months to carry out the "redeployment," which seems far longer than the "earliest practicable date." (Recall that U.S. troops were withdrawn from Vietnam in 60 days from the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty.) To set such a long time period for the evacuation of Iraq is all the more worrying given that the decision to withdraw the troops is not even being considered yet by the Bush administration or the bipartisan majority of the U.S. Congress.

Congressional Republicans, in a transparent ploy, offered a one-sentence resolution stating that the deployment of U.S. troops in Iraq be terminated immediately. Murtha called this "a ridiculous resolution" that no Democrat would support (Hardball with Chris Matthews, Nov. 18). In point of fact, the resolution was opposed by all of the prowar Democrats and most of the antiwar Democrats, who (as the Republicans hoped) didn't want to be accused of "cutting and running." But actually the resolution wasn't ridiculous at all understood in the sense we have just explained.

The antiwar movement should and no doubt will relentlessly continue its fight for the immediate, total, and unconditional withdrawal of U.S. troops and their allies from Iraq and the whole region. Its central slogan "Troops Out Now" is more warranted each day and will keep gaining in urgency until victory over the warmongers is achieved.

Postscript: Strategic Redeployment vs. Out Now

WHATEVER THE LIMITATIONS of Rep. Murtha's call to redeploy U.S. troops from Iraq that we have already emphasized, he went much too far for most Democrats or for the Bush administration. Nevertheless, there have been others who have urged the redeploying of *some* of the U.S. forces in Iraq.

In October, Lawrence Korb and Brian Katulis, writing for the Center for American Progress, a liberal organization headed by Clinton's former chief of staff John Podesta, issued a report calling for what they termed "strategic redeployment." (Lawrence J. Korb and Brian Katulis, *Strategic Redeployment: A Progressive Plan for Iraq and the Struggle Against Violent Extremists*, Washington, DC: Center for American Progress, October, 2005.)

Like Murtha, Korb and Katulis (who served in the Reagan and Clinton administrations, respectively) make telling observations. For example, they note that:

> most Iraqis do not want us there and they do not feel our presence makes them safer. One half says they support insurgent attacks on coalition forces and a majority says they feel less safe when foreign troops patrol their neighborhoods, according to polling of Iraqi citizens sponsored by the US government earlier this year.

They conclude, however, that what is needed is a "strategic redeployment," specifically rejecting "calls for an immediate and complete withdrawal." Under their proposal, during 2006, 46,000 National Guard and Reserves would be returned to the United States, 20,000 troops would be sent to other theaters (18,000 to Afghanistan, 1,000 to Southeast Asia, and 1,000 to Africa), and 14,000 troops would be stationed in Kuwait and offshore in the Persian Gulf. The 60,000 U.S. troops remaining in Iraq would be redeployed away from urban areas to minimize inflaming Iraqi opinion. By the end of 2007, most of these troops would be withdrawn (to unspecified locations), leaving only "counterterrorist units."

> This presence, along with the forces in Kuwait and at sea in the Persian Gulf area will be sufficient to conduct strikes coordinated with Iraqi forces against any terrorist camps and enclaves that may emerge and deal with any major external threats to Iraq.

Some analysts (for example, *Slate's* Fred Kaplan) have suggested that Murtha got his plan from Korb and Katulis, though he speeds up their timetable and moves his entire residual force out of Iraq. But the same reasons given in our original essay for why the antiwar movement should avoid confusing Murtha's position with its own apply with even greater force to the Korb-Katulis position. Korb and Katulis wisely point out that to enhance U.S. security President Bush should announce that the United States "will not build permanent military bases in Iraq, counteracting arguments made in recruitment pitches by militants and Iraqi insurgents." But where are the U.S. counterterrorist units in Iraq going to be housed if not at bases? In any event, it's not just designs on military bases that need to be disavowed, but plans to dominate Iraqi oil too, which are proceeding apace. (See Greg Muttitt, *Crude Designs: The Rip-Off of Iraq's Oil Wealth*, London: Platform with Global Policy Forum, Institute for Policy Studies [New Internationalism Project], New Economics Foundation, Oil

Change International and War on Want, November 2005.) And a two-year timetable is unacceptable. As we noted earlier, two to three months is plenty of time to remove all U.S. troops, if that is one's genuine interest. Protracted "timetables" make sense only if one is trying to secure a continuing dominance over Iraqi politics and resources before leaving.

A two-year timetable is unacceptable.

In the *Washington Post* of November 26, Joe Biden of Delaware, the ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and an aspiring presidential candidate, wrote an op-ed column entitled "Time for An Iraq Timetable." Biden declared that in 2006, U.S. troops

> will begin to leave in large numbers. By the end of the year, we will have redeployed about 50,000. In 2007, a significant number of the remaining 100,000 will follow. A small force will stay behind — in Iraq or across the border — to strike at any concentration of terrorists.

Biden's language is interesting — he doesn't quite call for this, but essentially predicts it. His prediction seems to be based on the fact that the Senate by a vote of 79-19 and over the objections of the White House adopted an amendment requiring the President to provide quarterly reports on the progress of U.S. policy and military operations in Iraq. (This vote took place after the Senate defeated a Democratic-sponsored amendment asking the president to prepare an estimated timetable for withdrawal from Iraq.) Given that the successful amendment has no teeth at all, it's hard to see why it presages much of anything.

Nevertheless, Biden's comment is consistent with various hints from the Bush administration itself. Obviously the Republicans don't want to go into the 2006 elections, let alone the 2008 elections, with an increasingly unpopular and seemingly endless occupation of Iraq on display. In part, this leads them to make optimistic comments about how soon Washington will be able to reduce the number of troops in Iraq (glossing over the fact that several thousand troops were added before the October 15 referendum, so a withdrawal of these would indicate no progress at all). During the Vietnam War there were countless optimistic predictions of when the troops would come home, only to have the ;resident send more troops when the situation deteriorated further. And we've been hearing similar optimistic comments from the Bush administration for more than two years; for example, on October 19, 2003, the *Washington Post* reported on its front page:

> There are now 130,000 U.S. troops in Iraq. The plan to cut that number is well advanced.... and has been described in broad outline to Defense Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld but has not yet been approved by him. It would begin to draw down forces next spring, cutting the number of troops to fewer than 100,000 by next summer and then to 50,000 by mid-2005, officers involved in the planning said.

True, in 2003 Iraq was nowhere near the political liability for the Bush administration that it is now, so we shouldn't discount the prospect of a real policy shift. Clearly the Bush administration has scaled back its more grandiose goals in Iraq, but it's unlikely that it would choose to withdraw its forces without being confident that it could secure its more basic goal — domination of the oil resources of the region — unless, of course, this were made untenable.

It is possible that the U.S. will fall back on a strategy of trying to replace its troops with air power, hoping that the reduction in United States casualties will make the war more palatable to the American public. In late August, the head of the air force told the *New York Times* that after any withdrawal of U.S. ground troops, "we will continue with a rotational presence of some type in that area more or less indefinitely," adding "We have interests in that part of the world...." (Eric Schmitt, "U.S. General Says Iraqis Will Need Longtime Support From Air Force," Aug. 30) To support these interests Washington is upgrading 16 different bases in the Middle East and Southwest Asia (*New York Times*, Sept. 18, 2005). According to Seymour Hersh in the Dec. 5 *New Yorker*, plans are being drawn up precisely to replace U.S. ground troops in Iraq with warplanes. Hersh reports that some Pentagon officials are worried about what it would mean to have Iraqis calling in bombing targets to the U.S. Air Force, but no matter who calls in the coordinates, white phosphorus, cluster munitions, and 500-pound bombs are not going to address the problem of the insurgency; indeed, they are going to generate more recruits for both the insurgency and terrorism.

For the antiwar movement, it is critical to insist on the *complete* withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces, from Iraq and from the region, because retaining any of them — whether counterinsurgency units ready to intervene or air power to level further Iraqi cities — will violate Iraqi sovereignty and continue to fuel insurgency and hatred. And the antiwar movement must insist as well on *immediate* withdrawal, because the Bush administration itself will soon be talking of future drawdowns — and indeed it already is.

We should bear in mind that the mere fact that the antiwar movement raises the "Out Now" slogan does not mean that U.S. forces are going to leave Iraq overnight. During the Vietnam War, a much more powerful movement than anything we have seen in the United States in the last few decades demanded that U.S. troops get "Out Now." This did not lead — even when the U.S. power elite reached the conclusion that the war should be terminated — to a "precipitous" withdrawal, but to a withdrawal that was completed only after the Paris accords were concluded with the three main Vietnamese parties involved. Nevertheless, the pressure of the antiwar movement in the United States was decisive in compelling Washington to opt for this withdrawal.

The issue with "Out Now" is therefore not about the logistical details of withdrawal, but about how to be most effective in countering Washington's imperial aims. "Out Now" is a slogan around which one can build a large coalition of forces, from those who only care about "our boys" to those who care about the Iraqi people's freedom, whereas any dilution of the "responsible exit strategy" kind — aside from the fact that it would be extremely difficult even to agree on what the "conditions" for the withdrawal should be — would only provide the Bush administration, along with pro-war Democrats, an argument for justifying the protracted presence of U.S. troops.

We are not calling for a "cut and run" withdrawal, abandoning Iraq to its fate (like in the "selfish" nationalist rhetoric of the isolationist Right). We are perfectly aware that, given what the United States has been doing in Iraq, tragically disrupting the situation in that country, if the U.S. troops were just to leave Iraq suddenly, say in 48 hours, without prior notice, that would definitely create a dangerous chaotic situation. But this is not what we are demanding. The demand for the immediate withdrawal of the troops is, first of all, a demand for an immediate political decision to withdraw the troops. Once the political decision is taken and proclaimed publicly, it becomes possible, in fact indispensable, to prepare the best conditions for its implementation in the shortest possible timeframe, while starting without delay to bring troops back home. To be sure, the modalities through which this should be completed in a way not to harm the Iraqi people must be worked out with their elected representatives.

If Washington were to make clear that it wants to complete the withdrawal of its troops within a timetable stretching over weeks, or very few months, this would provide a very powerful incentive for the Iraqis to reach an agreement among themselves on a way to run their country together peacefully and start to concentrate their efforts on the huge task of its reconstruction. The consensus reached at the recent Cairo conference is an important step in that direction and proves that it is perfectly possible, and much easier indeed, to reach such agreements when U.S. representatives are not there constantly interfering and calling the shots.

Finally, those who accuse the antiwar movement of wanting to "cut and run" and pretend that they care more for the interests of the Iraqis — whereas most of them are actually worried about U.S. imperial interests — would be better advised to demand that the United States respect Iraqi sovereignty over Iraqi natural resources and reconstruction. For our part, we believe that there is a moral obligation for the U.S. government to pay reparations to the Iraqi people for all that they have suffered as a consequence of U.S. criminal policies — from the deliberate destruction of Iraq's infrastructure in the 1991 war to the devastation brought by the present invasion and occupation, through the green light given to the Ba'athist regime to crush the mass insurrections of March 1991 and, above all, the murderous embargo inflicted on the Iraqi population from 1991 to 2003.

The withdrawal of U.S. and coalition forces, the end of U.S. economic domination, and the payment of reparations: this is the way to truly serve the principles of justice, as well as the best interests of the people of both Iraq and the United States.

— November 28, 2005

William Shakespeare on War

(from Henry V, Act IV, Scene 1)

A common soldier, talking to King Henry, who is in disguise:

But if the cause be not good, the king himself hath a heavy reckoning to make, when all those legs and arms and heads, chopt off in battle, shall join together at the latter day, and cry all, "We died at such a place," some swearing; some crying for a surgeon; some, upon their wives left poor behind them; some, upon the debts they owe; some, upon their children rawly left.

Introduction
Martha Stewart and the Idea of Prison

MARK DOW

In September, a CBS "reporter" gushed over actress Cybill Shepherd's devotion to her role as Martha Stewart in the network's TV movie *Martha Behind Bars*. The actress really *lived* it, said the hack, bizarrely comparing Shepherd's real-life battle with cancer to her grueling preparation for the role and emphasizing the prison-like austerity of the prison movie *set*. It's an impressive parable of our simultaneous fascination with and willful ignorance of prison life. Off the bench, Justice Antonin Scalia has smirked about the comforts of "residence in a modern penal institution" and the "nice clean cells with television sets, exercise rooms, meals designed by nutritionists, and conjugal visits" — he should know better, and probably does.

But political orientation doesn't determine who stoops to the sanitized, pseudo-voyeurism of the likes of HBO's *Oz*. A recent booklet, for example, features fashion-shot re-creations of death row inmates' last meals. It's grotesque, really, and if it were not for the anti-death penalty factoids interspersed with the glossy photos, you'd never know this gift-shop souvenir was an abolitionist effort, however misguided, from the folks at Common Courage Press, who have been making valuable contributions for years.

So say what you will about (the real) Martha Stewart, but after getting out she made the only meaningful comment about U.S. prisons I can recall hearing on TV. As a guest on *Late Night* with David Letterman, she spoke with that inscrutable, chipper dignity about her five months at FDC Alderson, the women's penitentiary in West Virginia. She told a little story about calculating that it would take 600 hours at the prison wage of $0.12/day to buy work boots from the commissary; boots were no longer standard issue, she laughed, due to "budget cuts resulting from the war." But she wasn't complaining. "This is pretty much nothing," she said of her five months. (She told *Fortune* magazine that her $25,000 pre-prison consultant didn't really teach her anything.) Then Dave asked her if she had learned anything on the inside.

> The closer you get to the outside, the more eager the jailers are to find a reason to send you back up.

"If you want to get serious about it," she told the late-night comedy viewers, "rehabilitation really is nonexistent for the most part. I worry about that."

Years ago, teaching a GED class at Bay State Correctional Center, a minimum security prison in Norfolk, Massachusetts, I was struck by the deprivation — sensory and mental — that was part of daily life. No great discovery, except for me. My students pounced on a little article from *Newsweek*, hungry for any scrap of intellectual stimulation and for the thinnest chance at engagement and communication. Most of the half-dozen or so students came to the class because there was nothing better to do. There was one, a soft-spoken African-

MARK DOW, *a member of the* New Politics *Editorial Board, is the author of* American Gulag: Inside U.S. Immigration Prisons *(U. of California Press, 2004).*

American man who was always looking downward and always wearing a Pittsburgh Pirates cap, determined to get his high-school equivalency degree after twice failing the exam. He had worked his way down from maximum security; the next step would be a halfway house, then back to the street. He insisted that day-to-day life in the lower security lock-ups was more stressful than it had been in max. Why? Because the closer you get to the outside, he explained, the more eager the jailers are to find a reason to send you back up.

In *A Time to Die*, his account of the Attica uprising and killings, Tom Wicker describes one of his own first impressions. Published in 1975, the book is as much about the education of a white liberal as it is about Attica itself. Wicker describes a moment when he first walked a tier and saw mirrors suddenly appear through the bars of some forty cells; he wouldn't have been able to see the men holding them. It may seem like a stock image by now, but Wicker writes that it was only in that moment that he "understood that these men were caged," and that the inevitable consequence was that their custodians would be "bound to regard [them] as beasts." And a few pages later (referring to himself in the third person):

> In another cell, an overflowing toilet brought an unpleasant phrase of out Wicker's memory — some stricture he could not quite recall on a man who would "shit where he eats." To be forced to shit where he slept, at the head of his bed as it were, was an indignity Wicker resented for the meanest inmate — yet, even as he thought it, he knew that if the idea of prison was accepted *at all* it required such toilet arrangements. You could hardly have the inmates in and out of their cells, back and forth to the urinal, at will. He was seeing more specifically, as he had instinctively when the mirrors popped out from the cages, that the *idea* of prison was wrong.

Thirty years later, as Katrina destroyed New Orleans, correctional officers escaped the already notorious Orleans Parish Prison while inmates, according to Human Rights Watch (HRW), were left without food for up to four days. Many were locked in their cells as water rose to their chests; it remains unclear how many drowned there. Researcher Corinne Carey of HRW told *Democracy Now* that the corrections officers "feel they were abandoned at the jail as well." This is worth noting because those critical of the prison system and its brutalities sometimes condemn COs whole-cloth, forgetting that the prison is often a replacement for the closed, local factory, and that if the workers, through lack of other choices, were on an assembly line instead of a cellblock, some of those who are so quick to label them all as sadists would be standing up for them as the little guys.

The dehumanization in prisons takes place across a spectrum. As we go to press, the United States is on the verge of committing its one-thousandth execution since the 1977 resumption of what Renny Cushing, director of Murder Victims' Families for Human Rights, calls "ritual killings carried out by government employees." Short of state-homicide, removing someone from society is as fundamental a punishment as society can exact. Assuming one supports the idea of democracy, doesn't it follow that we should be able to see what we're doing? Rather than being geographically isolated and shielded from scrutiny, all jails, prisons, and detention centers should be open every day of the week, and not at the whim of those running the place, to human rights groups and journalists, of course, but also to family members and anyone else who wants to drop by to see their tax dollars at work. Until the very idea of prison as we know it has run its course, that is.

In the mean time, we hope the articles that follow open a few new windows onto prisons at home and abroad, onto the *pre*-prison dehumanization that puts some of us inside, and onto the things that a few people are doing about it all.

A Window for Reform

JUDITH GREENE

MASS INCARCERATION IS ONE of most challenging issues facing U.S. advocates for social justice and democracy. The unprecedented explosion in the number of people locked behind jail and prison bars since the beginning of the long incarceration boom in the late 1970s has done little to address the problem of crime, but it has ravaged a generation of poor African-American and Latino youths — and it has moved our country toward what Loïc Wacquant has termed a "hypertropic and hyperactive penal state that constitutes without contest one of the most unforeseen and most cruel experiments of the democratic era."

Downsizing Prisons: How to Reduce Crime and End Mass Incarceration
MICHAEL JACOBSON
New York: New York University Press, 2005

Michael Jacobson, the recently appointed director of the Vera Institute of Justice, comes to his latest job with a toolbox of practical solutions in hand. His new book, *Downsizing Prisons*, is the product of Jacobson's previous multi-faceted career – moving from deputy budget director for New York City, to simultaneous appointments as both Commissioner of the Department of Correction and the Department of Probation, before entering the academy with appointment at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (City University of New York). The book reflects his amazing ability to master a broader span of administrative responsibilities than the typical public official, as well as a deeper understanding of the dynamics of criminal justice policy than the average academic expert.

Jacobson's book provides an incisive deconstruction of the common wisdom about crime and correctional policies. He deftly debunks the claim of the get-tough-on-crime crowd that if we just build enough prisons, the crime problem will be solved. His counterarguments move beyond marshalling theoretical research about deterrence and incapacitation to concrete examples. Jacobson demonstrates how crime declines in New York City have resulted in carceral "downsizing" in New York at the same time that dramatic increases in prison populations have occurred in both California and Texas. Yet those states have experienced *much* more modest declines in their crime rates.

The New York experience functions as Jacobson's beacon light, guiding the reader toward "real world" solutions for our bloated prison and jail systems that he argues are fully achievable. Over the past half-decade, the U.S. prison population has risen by ten percent, while New York's prison population *and* its crime rate have both enjoyed dramatic reductions. The prison population dropped from 72,899 prisoners at the end of 1999, to 63,751 at the end of 2004 — a thirteen percent reduction in numbers and a seventeen percent decline in the incarceration rate. And the city's Rikers Island jail complex now houses fewer than 14,000 people, down from about 21,000 during the 1992 peak of population growth. Yet the number of major crimes in the city fell by seventy-three percent between 1990 and 2004 and continues to decline.

JUDITH GREENE *is a criminal justice policy analyst and founder of Justice Strategies (justicestrategies.net). From 1985 to 1993, she was Director of Court Programs at the Vera Institute of Justice.*

Leaving it to others to analyze precisely why New York City forged ahead to lead the trend in crime reduction for the nation as a whole, Jacobson instead presents fascinating details of the mechanics of law enforcement and incarceration at the city and state level. He points out that given the dramatic decline in jail and prison population, the amazing crime drop simply cannot be attributed to reliance on incarceration for crime control.

The amazing crime drop simply cannot be attributed to reliance on incarceration for crime control.

He also seems to doubt that the city's vaunted zero-tolerance "Compstat" approach deserves much credit. To buttress his argument, he turns to San Diego, which has adopted a law enforcement strategy that lies diametrically opposite Mayor Rudy Giuliani's zero-tolerance juggernaut: problem-solving community policing. *Both* cities saw very significant reductions in the number of people sentenced to prison, while violent crime rates plummeted at virtually equal rates. "Criminologists may argue about how effective either style is for crime-fighting and community empowerment purposes," Jacobson writes; "common to both styles, though, is that they were able to bring about the largest decreases in crime of U.S. cities while making relatively less use of prisons."

TURNING TO SPECIFIC SOLUTIONS that state policymakers should embrace in order to reduce reliance on incarceration, Jacobson identifies imprisonment of people on probation and parole for technical violations of supervision rules as a major driver of prison population growth. To illustrate the problem, he draws mostly from his direct experience providing consulting advice about possible reforms to policymakers in California, Connecticut, and Louisiana. Just one of these states, Connecticut, seems to have taken much benefit from his counsel, however. While 2004 data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics show that prison populations continue to climb in California and Louisiana, Connecticut appears to have turned a corner in an effort to downsize. In 2003, Connecticut's prison population began to decline for the first time since 1990. The state led the nation in prison population reduction that year with a drop of 4.2 percent from 20,720 to 19,846. The turnaround is truly remarkable given that just one year earlier the state saw a 7.9 percent *increase* in its prison population, the third highest growth rate in the nation. By the end of 2004, the population had fallen another 1.8 percent.

A "prison overcrowding" bill introduced by legislators in 2003 reflected ideas Jacobson and his consulting partners had been proposing to Connecticut's correctional officials: requiring earlier parole hearings for prisoners; targeting substance abuse treatment and residential program resources for people at risk of violating probation or failing on parole; and reducing technical probation and parole violations by a target of 20 percent. The bill also included provisions to deal with racial disparity resulting from inequity in Connecticut's mandatory sentencing laws regarding crack and powdered forms of cocaine. Enactment of the measure did not come easily. In fact, the prison overcrowding bill stalled in 2003. Understanding that legislators were not prepared to move a reform agenda on a "do the right thing" basis, Connecticut's community organizers worked hard in 2004 to build a grassroots action network in low-income urban neighborhoods to stimulate the necessary political will. The bill's enactment that year was a major victory for both the consultants and the grassroots activists, but activists were shocked to learn that at the last moment before passage, the bill had been stripped of language that would have dealt with the state's harsh mandatory drug laws.

Having watched their hopes for sentencing reform evaporate in 2004, activists — led by Robert Rooks, the national field organizer for the ACLU's drug law reform project, and Lorenzo Jones, director of the Hartford-based A Better Way Foundation — were determined to spread their organizational base beyond the urban core. They targeted potential white allies in the suburbs in an effort to build a stronger foundation for racial justice and drug policy reform. The 2005 grassroots campaign was focused specifically on elimination of disparity between the weight triggers for crack and powder cocaine. Spurred by an army of activists, Connecticut's lawmakers were forced to acknowledge that with Connecticut ranked number one for racial disparity in state incarceration rates, drug policy reform is a critical issue for those who seek racial justice. They responded by enacting crack/powder equalization.

In the final chapter of his book, Jacobson points out that academic critiques of harsh laws and policies have not sufficed to convince either policymakers or the public to change them. He offers his practical suggestions as a workable blueprint for concrete reforms. And he expresses hope that "pragmatic strategies are even likely to assist, and perhaps contribute to reforming and expanding, the strength of anti-incarceration social movements by rendering those movements' goals more attainable." It's early to tell for sure, but the experience with criminal justice reform in Connecticut could prove to be a bellwether, demonstrating that in the rough-and-tumble of criminal justice politics, a healthy symbiosis between pragmatic criminal justice expertise and grassroots social movements is not only possible, but necessary.

The Death Penalty

America's "Relentless Judicial Machine"

ANDREW HAMMEL

IN EARLY 2000, Jack Lang, a French Socialist parliamentarian and former Minister of Culture, visited Texas. He came not to tout French wine, but to protest the imminent execution of Texas death row inmate Odell Barnes. Barnes, who was then fighting his last legal skirmishes, had become a minor celebrity in France. *Monsieur le Ministre*, as famous for his silken, cunningly-terraced brown hair as for his eventful political career, looked on in evident horror as court after court rejected Barnes' claims of innocence. "There's a feeling that [Barnes] has been crushed by a relentless judicial machine, overpowering and unjust," he intoned. French Prime Minister Lionel Jospin asked then-Governor George W. Bush to grant Barnes clemency in the name of "common values of justice and respect for human dignity and human rights." Texas authorities ignored these worthy sentiments. Barnes' last words were: "I thank [my lawyers] for proving my innocence, although it has not been acknowledged by the courts. May you continue in the struggle and may you change all that's being done here today and in the past." Seething with impotent rage, Lang and other French activists called the execution a "barbaric . . . assassination" and Bush a "serial killer."

The anecdote illustrates the central problem that David R. Dow addresses in his new book *Executed on a Technicality*. "The problem is not Texas' " indifference to French politicians. Proud Frenchmen, like proud Texans, have little time for foreigners who criticize their institutions. (Watch an American trade official lecture French leaders on the need to dismantle their "failed, socialist" welfare states and you will see, to paraphrase P.G. Wodehouse, ice forming on the upper slopes of the audience.)

> Executed on a Technicality: Lethal Injustice on America's Death Row
> DAVID R. DOW
> Boston: Beacon Press, 2005

The worrying thing is, rather, the indifference of the courts to Odell Barnes' claim of innocence. His volunteer attorneys' tireless and largely unpaid efforts had undermined the state's case against him for a ghastly 1989 rape, burglary and murder.[1] However, Barnes had previously convictions for violent crimes, and the case for his innocence was far from airtight. An average citizen would probably have wanted Barnes' new proof carefully evaluated, even if it didn't ultimately carry the day. Those who followed the case in the newspapers probably think Barnes' claims *were* evaluated, since state and federal courts issued many rulings in Barnes' last months. However, these decisions did not address the merits of Barnes' claims; instead, they ruled curtly that Barnes had failed to clear certain procedural hurdles. Dow's book explains how courts hearing death penalty cases became so indifferent to plausible claims of innocence, and what this indifference says about the health of America's legal institutions.

The Road to Indifference

DOW, A LAW PROFESSOR at the University of Houston, has represented death row inmates in

ANDREW HAMMEL *is a writer, translator, and lawyer, and is currently the Lecturer in Anglo-American Law at the University of Düsseldorf in Germany. He received his law degree from the University of Houston and LL.M from Harvard Law School. The principal focus of his law practice has been the representation of indigent death row inmates.*

Texas, Ground Zero of the American death penalty, since 1989. He came to the work not out of opposition to the death penalty, but because he saw that many of those waiting on death row had either poor lawyers or no lawyers at all. His first-hand experience of the damage capital punishment does to the justice system, and to humans, made a death-penalty abolitionist of him.

> Courts hearing death penalty cases became indifferent to plausible claims of innocence.

Judicial indifference to death row inmates' possible innocence started, paradoxically enough, when the United States Supreme Court adopted the death penalty as a pet project. In 1972, the court held that then-existing death penalty laws violated the Eighth Amendment's ban on "cruel and unusual" punishment because they were arbitrary. That is, state laws did not adequately distinguish those criminals who received death sentences from equally blameworthy criminals who did not. "These death sentences are cruel and unusual," Justice Potter Stewart wrote of the cases before the Court, "in the same way that being struck by lightning is cruel and unusual."[2] At first, many thought the *Furman* decision, one of the Court's longest and most complex, had found the death penalty itself inconsistent with the "evolving standards of decency" derived from the Eighth Amendment. Later parsing showed that a majority of Justices had in fact struck a compromise by affirming the constitutionality of capital punishment, but demanding that the states build more order and predictability into the sentencing process.

In the decade after *Furman*, the Supreme Court ordained four basic reforms. First, the death penalty was reserved only for intentional killings, and restricted to the most heinous of these. Second, trials were split into separate guilt-innocence and punishment phases, allowing the jury to concentrate solely on the life-or-death question. Third, state law had to establish objective and specific "aggravating factors" to help the jury decide which killers could be eligible for a possible death penalty. Finally, the defendant was allowed to present any mitigating evidence relevant to the sentence — mental illness, psychological damage from a troubled childhood, or his subordinate role in the killing. Some called these reforms, which incorporated and expanded on the protections required in ordinary criminal trials, a kind of "super due process" for death penalty trials. In the mid-1980s, after most of the work was done, the Court took a step back, brushed the dust off its hands, and pronounced itself satisfied. It had created a modern, fair death-sentencing system.

Dow disagrees. "Lightning," Dow argues, "is still striking in America, and it is striking human beings." Dow's argument focuses mainly on the retrenchment that began in the Supreme Court's jurisprudence in the mid-1980s. Perhaps believing that the "super due process" laws had made death penalty trials much more reliable, the Court began drastically circumscribing appeals courts' ability to review death sentences. The retrenchment has had the most fateful consequences in the federal courts. Because federal judges are more experienced and more insulated from political pressure than state court judges, they were the last, best hope for death row inmates whose constitutional rights had been violated at trial.

Now, Dow writes, those courts have "become an abomination because they have ceased caring about the law." Many no longer publish their "shameful" opinions, and more and more federal judges no longer "endeavor to separate their political inclinations from their analysis of Eighth Amendment doctrinal claims." Harsh words, but not empty ones. Throughout *Ex-*

ecuted on a Technicality, Dow shows us federal courts violating basic rule-of-law tenets, including the injunction to treat like cases alike, grant each side an orderly and thorough hearing, and to provide a clear, public explanation for the court's decision. More fundamentally, federal appeals courts have largely abandoned condemned inmates who maintain their innocence of the crime. This abandonment wasn't easy; it took the courts years of effort and bitter controversy to set up the procedural hurdles that now screen them from this question. To show how the hurdles work, Dow describes several cases in which the courts simply "quit paying attention to the question of whether an innocent man was sentenced to die."

One example is Gary Graham, whose 2000 execution drew reporters from all over the world to Texas. At Graham's 1981 Houston trial for the killing of Bobby Grant Lambert, Graham's lawyers were so inexperienced — or irresponsible, or lazy — that they did almost no independent investigation. They didn't even notice, for instance, that a ballistics report in the police file showed the gun Graham was arrested with was not the murder weapon. The next set of lawyers, appointed by the court to file Graham's state court appeals, did no better. Dow summarizes the state of play after this appeal: "[t]he state of Texas had given Graham several sets of lawyers, and none had done what he or she was supposed to do. Graham may as well have been representing himself." Graham finally reached federal court, and lawyers who thoroughly re-investigated his case and cast his guilt into doubt. Witnesses who were known to Graham's previous lawyers, but who had never been interviewed by them, were adamant that Graham was not the man they saw at the crime scene. However, the crucial trial eyewitness against Graham remained unbowed, and Graham was guilty of a string of violent crimes before and after the Lambert killing. Like Barnes, Graham ended up in the "gray zone" between guilt and innocence.

YOU MIGHT THINK courts were invented precisely to resolve complex legal disputes like those presented by Graham's case. However, no court ever did so. This fact was far more important than the celebrity-studded circus that attended Graham's appeals, but explaining it was too complicated for most media outlets. To understand why the courts never decided the fundamental issue of Graham's innocence, you must understand how the rules governing death penalty appeals work. These rules are driven by fear of drawn-out, "piecemeal" litigation: think death row lawyers rushing from court to court with some new affidavit, argument, or expert analysis, throwing so much sand in the gears that the machine stops grinding completely. To forestall these tactics, courts require lawyers to make all their objections and argument as early as practicable in the trial or appeal. If the inmate's lawyer discovers something later in the game (say, after the case has left state court and entered federal court), he has to show good reason for the delay. If the court finds that a "reasonably diligent" lawyer *could* have made the claim earlier, complex procedural doctrines with sinister-sounding names like "procedural default" and "successor bar" come into play, and prevent the court from even considering the new evidence or legal claim.

The rules may seem harsh and technical, but if you had to run a complex, multilayer judicial system, you'd probably come up with something similar — especially for death penalty cases, since these prisoners have an obvious interest in stretching out their appeals. The problem is not the rules themselves, but the fact that they don't have exceptions. Take an inmate whose state court lawyer did the bare minimum during state-level post-conviction appeals, and missed an important fact or argument. More experienced or committed lawyers join the case during later federal court appeals and discover the fact. The new lawyers cannot point to the inadequate work done by the previous lawyer as an excuse. The rule is simple: if some lawyer could have found out the fact or made the argument in state court, then you cannot bring it up later in federal appeals. The fact that your state court lawyer dropped the ball only because he was overworked or inexperienced doesn't matter. That is the first trap, and it snaps shut on dozens of prisoners — including ones on death row — every day.

The second trap relates to innocence. Let's say our hypothetical prisoner has to admit that his earlier lawyers didn't raise the issue when they should have, causing a "procedural default." However, his new lawyers have found evidence that shows he is probably innocent. Surely, the prisoner asks, you can't cite some dry procedural rule to deny my claim? "Yes we can," the courts have replied in many cases. Vindicating innocence is an important goal of the criminal justice system, but that's what we have *trials* for. The longer you wait after your trial to show us your supposedly vital new evidence, the more likely it is we will not let you into court. If we recognized an exception for every late-comer with some story of his innocence, the exceptions would quickly swallow the rule.

Graham was caught in both traps. His federal court lawyers had to admit that his previous lawyers hadn't been "diligent," creating a procedural default. The reason for their lack of diligence was not important, since Graham, in any event, had no right to a lawyer during these late-stage appeals. Finally, Graham's new lawyers could not use his claims of possible innocence to get around the default. They tried anyway, launching a nearly seven-year performance of procedural kabuki in which Graham bounced back and forth between state and federal courts. When he was finally executed, his appeals had produced reams of densely technical rulings, but no court had ever convened a hearing to sift his claims of innocence. "No court would look at the evidence," Dow summarizes aphoristically, "because the evidence had been there all along."

Dow describes a legal system, in short, in which judicial efficiency can trump plausible claims of innocence. This is a legal system that will surely put an innocent person to death one day. Perhaps it has already done so, as recent investigative reporting from Texas and Missouri suggests.

> "No court would look at the evidence because the evidence had been there all along."

Cracks in the Edifice

THE FACT THAT AN INNOCENT person will inevitably be executed is a convincing and honest argument against the death penalty. However, Dow warns, the simple version of this argument can become a distraction: "How many people on death row are innocent? How many innocent people have been executed? These questions are impossible to answer. What we can say with certainty is that people are convicted on the basis of fallible testimony. And people are sentenced to death on the basis of baseless predictions." Exoneration of innocent inmates — as well as executions in gray-zone cases like Barnes and Graham — should be used to turn attention to underlying structural failings. Barry Scheck and Peter Neufeld, the lawyers behind the original Innocence Project in New York, did just this in their 2000 book *Actual Innocence: Five Days to Execution, and Other Dispatches From the Wrongly Convicted.*

Both Dow and the authors of *Actual Innocence* treat questionable executions and near-miss exonerations as a symptom of an underlying disease. Scheck and Neufeld's diagnosis is a broken criminal justice system, and Dow agrees. Dow goes further, though, to argue that the death penalty itself is doing some of the breaking, by undermining the rule of law. Unlike some of his academic colleagues, Dow still harbors a lawyer's innate belief in the constraining and ennobling force of law. Fundamental to the rule of law is that the state, not aggrieved victims or mobs, has the exclusive right to respond to violent crime. Only when the state exercises this monopoly without fear or favor can there be equal justice before law: "None of us cares equally about all crimes. The state, however, is supposed to." This principle, Dow argues, cannot be squared with decisions like the Supreme Court's 1991 decision in *Payne v. Tennessee*, which permitted murder victims' relatives to testify about the victim during the punishment-phase trial of the convicted killer. A state which explicitly allows a defendant's fate to hang on the availability and eloquence of the victim's relatives, Dow claims, has given up an unqualified claim to the status of impartial arbiter.

Death penalty cases also cause other, less apparent cracks in the edifice of legality, which Dow patiently extracts from incrustations of doctrine and procedure. He describes, for example, a series of cases from South Carolina involving a question of key practical importance: when a jury decides a defendant's punishment, should they be told that if they sentence him to life in prison instead of execution, he will never become eligible for parole? The Supreme Court ruled that due process required the jury to be told this fact, even when state law ordinarily ruled parole issues off-limits to the jury. As Dow details, the South Carolina Supreme Court then openly defied the Supreme Court's decision. Deploying wearisome bits of pettifoggery, the state court somehow exempted every new case from the scope of the Supreme Court's rule. Tired of making its original point over and over, the Supreme Court seems on the verge of simply letting the lower court's interpretation stand, even though the high court should obviously be calling the shots.

This is not to say that lower courts never openly defy higher ones in other legal domains, but they seem to do so regularly in death penalty cases. Liberal courts like the Ninth Circuit stretch precedent in the defendant's favor; more conservative courts, like South Carolina's Supreme Court, stretch it in the opposite direction. Only in death penalty cases, it seems, are judges so tempted to substitute their sense of "what's right" for a rule they don't agree with, and no temptation is more inimical to equal justice before law.

There is, however, little concern about this state of affairs outside the ranks of death-penalty lawyers, for a few reasons. First, the legal context is complex. It takes ages to explain to a non-specialist why all those court opinions that seemed to be addressing Gary Graham's innocence claims never actually did so. Second, the people who stumble during the freakish obstacle-course of death penalty appeals are almost always unpleasant fellows, often guilty killers.

Consider the amazing legal odyssey of Billy Vickers. This is not a story of innocence; Vickers was a Kray-like dynamo of criminal energy. Yet the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals' treatment of Vickers, Dow maintains, shows "indifference, even hostility to the rule of law." After his initial appeals had been denied and his execution was approaching, Vickers returned to court to argue that the drug mixture used to execute Texas inmates would cause him to die in conscious pain while paralyzed and thus unable to vocalize the agony he was enduring. The claim could not be unambiguously proven, for obvious reasons, but was not frivolous. The American Veterinary Association has, for instance, cited these concerns when it recently banned the use of a similar mixture to put down dogs. As Vickers' execution approached, the Supreme Court had closely divided on this issue in other cases. It had also recently agreed to decide a related case that would require it to review the constitutionality of lethal injection procedures. Vickers cited this case law and medical research in an appeal filed with a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals a few days before his scheduled lethal injection.

The court waited until the very day of Vickers' execution, which was to take place shortly after 6 p.m. The court finally decided the appeal at 3:30 p.m. Although it denied the appeal, the panel noted that the Supreme Court was simultaneously considering a similar claim, and that Vickers' evidence was "stronger than that which has supported prior complaints of this nature." This is judicial code for "you may have a point here, but we are bound by our prior decisions. Try your luck in a higher court." Vickers' lawyers instantly appealed the decision to the entire nineteen-member Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, a procedure called *en banc* review that is reserved for questions of special importance.

> The people who stumble during the freakish obstacle-course of death penalty appeals are almost always unpleasant fellows.

Vickers and his lawyers waited for a ruling. Six o'clock came and went. The State of Texas had a valid death warrant for Vickers and was now entitled to execute him at any time. However, as the hours dragged on, the court neither stayed the execution nor decided the appeal. Vickers waited in the holding cell near the execution chamber. Finally, just after eight p.m., a clerk informed the parties that the court would "take no further action" that day. The judges were going home. Vickers had no stay of execution, and wasn't going to get one, because the Fifth Circuit could not be bothered to resolve his case. After tense haggling, the lawyers on both sides and the prison warden agreed not to execute Vickers that night, but Vickers was not informed of this fact until hours later.

But the legal system was not finished demonstrating how little it cared about an orderly resolution of Vickers' claims. Months later, after his execution was rescheduled, Vickers filed another appeal raising not only the same issue as before (since Texas had not changed its execution protocol), but also a new one: whether Vickers' mock-execution should be taken as sufficient prior punishment. "In ordinary English," Dow explains, "the state had intentionally engaged in psychological torture, pretending it was going to execute Vickers, even though it had decided not to go forward with the execution." Because the state had already subjected Vickers to the agonies of a mock-execution, a later, successful execution would violate the double jeopardy clause, which forbids multiple punishments for the same offense. Just as they put the last touches on this new brief, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals faxed a pre-written opinion to Vickers' lawyers denying his "anticipated" arguments. Vickers, Dow notes dryly, "had become the first person to have an execution warrant expire, and he now became the first person to have the Fifth Circuit deny his appeal before that appeal was even filed." He was finally executed on January 28, 2004.

Cases like Vickers', Dow argues, show that judges who are hostile to death row inmates now feel free not to take their appeals particularly seriously. The procedural doctrines described above ushered in this nonchalance. When these rules were still new, lower courts struggled with the fact that they had to punish not only those inmates and lawyers who were trying to game the system, but also inmates like Graham, whose was not responsible for his prior lawyers' lackluster performance, and whose guilt was in doubt. The lower courts had no choice but to chuck these gleaming dolphins into the fearful procedural processor along with the squirming mass of tuna. Conscience-stricken judges wrote opinions dutifully denying relief, but sometimes including a plea to the Supreme Court to craft an exception for this "particularly troubling case."

By and large, though, the Supreme Court did not respond to these pleas. The lower courts began to understand: either the Supreme Court simply didn't care enough to correct the unintended consequences of its procedural rulings, or those consequences actually weren't so unintended. A turning point came with the 1991 Supreme Court decision of *Coleman v. Thompson*,[3] in which the Court threw out death row inmate Roger Keith Coleman's claims on the grounds that his previous lawyers, inexperienced in the niceties of Rule 5:9(a) of the Virginia Supreme Court, had filed Coleman's state court post-conviction appeal one day late.[4] The outrage in Justice Blackmun's dissent smoldered through the legalese: "the Court today continues its crusade to erect petty procedural barriers in the path of any state prisoner seeking review of his federal constitutional claims."

The lower courts had no choice but to chuck these gleaming dolphins into the fearful procedural processor along with the squirming mass of tuna.

Yet it was only a dissent. The majority carried the day, and added yet more "petty procedural barriers" in later rulings. The 1996 passage of the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act not only cemented all the Supreme Court's barriers into law, but also added a few new ones. One of these is the rule, only hinted at in previous Court decisions, that provides that an inmate who can absolutely demonstrate his innocence will be barred from court if his previous lawyers could have brought that proof before the court earlier, but did not do so.

This outcome is no mere theoretical possibility. In perhaps the most powerful chapter of the book, Dow describes how his client Cesar Roberto Fierro landed in this position. At his 1980 El Paso murder trial, Fierro said he had confessed the crime only because he'd been told that the notoriously corrupt Juarez (Mexico) police, acting on the request of El Paso investigators, had arrested his parents. The El Paso detective in charge testified during trial that he knew of no such arrest, and that Fierro's confession was voluntary. The detective was lying. Everyone now agrees that there was a report in the police file that showed not only that the detective knew Fierro's parents had been arrested, but also that he told Fierro this fact. The prosecutor who tried Fierro now says that had he known that Fierro's confession was coerced, he would have dropped the case against him.

Long before any of this was known, Fierro's state court appeals, routine affairs filed by average lawyers, had meandered through the state courts. Fierro finally got a new team of more committed attorneys who understood the importance of the police report. If the report had been found earlier, Fierro would almost certainly be a free man. But the legal landscape had changed in the intervening years. As in the Graham and Barnes cases, the law, as applied to Fierro, declared the crucial issue to be not whether the police report warranted a new trial, but rather whether, back in 1979, Fierro's trial lawyers had an appropriate excuse for not having discovered it. Since the lawyers barely remember the two-decade-old trial, they may never be able to answer this frustratingly abstruse — yet life-or-death — question.

If Fierro loses, he has no chance of judicial review of his possible innocence. Fierro probably doesn't realize this, though, since the twenty-six years he's spent on death row have driven him insane. Dow describes a prison interview in which Fierro rambles nonsensically and, eventually, refuses to speak to his lawyers, instead playing with a piece of paper and occasionally screaming. Dow ended the interview and called for the guards to take Fierro back to his cell. "When the guards came to get him," Dow reports, "they were laughing." The effect of years of filing futile arguments over side issues while your client slips into insanity can be gauged by Dow's conclusion:

> I used to think Fierro would walk out of prison because I thought it was quite likely that he is innocent. Now I hope he is not. I hope I was wrong and that he committed the murder, because the alternative is that he has spent the last twenty-five years of his life going insane in a sixty-square-foot cell for a crime he had nothing to do with.

Where Can Abolitionists Turn?

DOW'S BOOK IS NOT A POLEMIC, but it states a powerful and subtle case against the death penalty. It also contains a lawyer's advice to those working to abolish capital punishment. First, Dow dashes hopes that the Supreme Court will abolish capital punishment wholesale through a court decision (as, for instance, the South African Supreme Court did in 1995). Dow writes of the *Furman* decision that it "exuded an almost haughty sense that the Court had at last dealt a decisive blow to a barbaric punishment." Once American voters grasped that the Supreme Court had not abolished capital punishment, though, they moved from scorn and bewilderment to action. Popular support for capital punishment soared. Legislators in over 30 states revised their death penalty laws to comply with *Furman* faster than you could say "evolving standards of decency."

To Dow, *Furman*'s temporary suspension of the death penalty signaled not the beginning of the end of capital punishment, but rather a wave of retrenchment and reaction. With exceptions like Justice Harry Blackmun, who concluded in 1994 that no amount of further "tinker[ing] with the machinery of death" could fix capital punishment, state and federal judges have now accepted the will of the people. Even judges who personally oppose capital punishment lack either the institutional power or the will to take a step like Blackmun's. Until public opinion changes dramatically, the issue of whether capital punishment itself is constitutional is off limits.

If judges will not take the lead, where else can abolitionists turn? Not to Jack Lang, that much is certain. Lang comes from the Continent, a place where political elites can declare certain policy matters, such as the death penalty, fit only for expert decision. Professor Roger Hood, in his study of the death penalty, observes that "[i]n France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and Canada, abolition of the death penalty took place even though a majority of popular opinion was opposed to [abolition]. These countries have since held steadfastly to the view — despite strong differences of opinion — that popular sentiment alone should not determine penal policy, that task being the responsibility of elected representatives exercising their own judgment."[5] When judges and ministers in these nations quietly disappeared the death penalty as an issue of live public debate, journalists in the quality press went along by avoiding sensationalistic crime reporting and denying a broad forum to pro-death-penalty voices. Of course, there are calls to reintroduce the death penalty in these countries, but they are either ignored or criticized (often with reference to the appalling practices of the Americans), and the proposals never come close to being enacted.

Lang believes American public officials *could* stop the relentless judicial machine, if they only felt strongly enough, but he badly underestimates the extent to which popular opinion influences criminal justice policy in the United States. And he is not alone; in a recent study of French views of the American death penalty, French political scientist Denis Lacorne observed that French commentators, although well-acquainted with the (often luridly sentimentalized) life stories of individual death row inmates, know nothing of the political and social context in which executions take place. Americans, unlike Europeans, can influence criminal-justice policy and want to do so. "The death penalty lives on" in the United States, Lacorne exclaims, "simply because it is the will of the people!"[6] And, as Dow's book shows, the will of the people, while rarely acknowledged, hangs like a brooding omnipresence over death-penalty adjudication.

Thus, abolitionists will just have to wean the people from the needle, one suspicious red-state voter at a time. This is no mean feat. For reasons which might strike a French intellectual as atavistic or nonsensical, most Americans want the state to have the option of executing murderers. Public support for capital punishment in the United States rarely dips below 65 percent, and generally perches in the mid-70s. It's at this point that some abolitionists might, like Brecht, indulge a fleeting wish to "dissolve the people/and elect another." As some abolitionists are quick to note, support for the death penalty drops as low as 45 percent when poll respondents are asked to choose between execution and the alternative punishment of life in prison; or if you require them to assume that innocent people will be executed despite all precautions. These numbers do provide some comfort to abolitionists, as does the fact that recent coverage of death row exonerations has dented support for the death penalty. However, the sort of tectonic public-opinion shift that would open up new maneuvering room for judges and politicians has yet to arrive. A policy supported by a strong core of 45 percent of the people is no-brainer, because capital punishment is actively *opposed* by a much smaller percentage (generally in the high teens). A politician does the math: "If I endorse the death penalty, I reassure two or three people and alienate one; if I oppose it, it's the reverse."

French commentators know nothing of the political and social context in which executions take place.

The death penalty will be with us until this equation changes. Because Dow's lively narrative is interrupted by the technical discussions he needs to make his points, his book won't have much of an effect on mass opinion. It does, however, make a detailed and persuasive argument that the death penalty cannot be administered in accordance with the standards of due process an advanced society should demand. And, perhaps, not-so-advanced societies. In *Rites of Execution: Capital Punishment and the Transformation of American Culture, 1776-1865*, Louis P. Masur traces the glorious careers of American criminal-justice reformers such as Dr. Benjamin Rush, who traveled post-Revolutionary America to argue that the terrors of the guillotine and gallows were best left in the Old World. Back then, progressive Frenchmen admired our reforming zeal. The Duc de Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, a nobleman exiled to Philadelphia in the aftermath of the French Revolution, observed in 1796: "[T]he attempt at an almost entire abolition of the punishment of death, and the substitution of a system of reason and justice, to that of bonds, ill-treatment, and arbitrary punishment, was never made but in America."[7] If America ever reclaims this reforming heritage, it will be because witnesses like Dow kept confronting voters and policymakers with the true moral costs of every execution.

NOTES

1. A thorough history of the case from a standpoint sympathetic to Barnes' claims can be found in Bob Burtman, *Killing Time*, *Houston Press*, January 27, 2000 (www.houstonpress.com/issues/2000-01-27/news/feature.html)

2. *Furman v. Georgia*, 438 U.S. 238, 309 (1972) (Stewart, J., concurring).

3. 501 U.S. 722 (1991).

4. The Supreme Court opinion says Coleman's appeal was three days late, but in his sober and authoritative account of the Coleman case, *May God Have Mercy: A True Story of Crime and Punishment*, John C. Tucker argues the margin was even narrower.

5. Roger Hood, *The Death Penalty: A Worldwide Perspective*, p.234 (3rd ed. 2002).

6. Denis Lacorne, *Anti-Americanism and Americanophobia: A French Perspective* (www.ceri-sciencespo.com/archive/mars05/artdl.pdf), at 12.

7. Louis P. Masur, *Rites of Execution*, p.71 (Oxford Univ. Press. 1989).

Escaping into Prison with Fox

LORNA A. RHODES

In *The Rich Get Richer and the Poor Get Prison*, Jeffrey Reiman asks: "How do we know who the criminals are who so seriously endanger us that we must stop them with force and lock them in prisons?" Fox Television's new series *Prison Break* offers some clues.

> Prison Break
>
> FOX TELEVISION
>
> Created, writte, and produced by
> Paul Scheuring, 2005

Prison Break is an intricately plotted puzzle. At its center is a literal puzzle, the full upper-body tattoo worn by protagonist Michael Scofield (played by Wentworth Miller), who robs a bank in order be sent to prison. An accomplished civil engineer, Scofield was the architect of renovations for the "Fox River Penitentiary" where his brother, Lincoln Burrows (Dominic Purcell), is on death row for a crime he did not commit. In the time between his sentencing and incarceration, Michael has himself tattooed with a coded version of the prison's blueprint (beautifully designed by tattoo artist Tom Berg).

On one level, the tattoo links the fate of Lincoln (whose execution date, needless to say, is imminent) with the motley crew of assorted prison stereotypes (mob boss, burned-out "con") whose help Michael needs so that he and his brother can make their escape. On another, level, however, we could read the tattoo — and the series itself — as an entertaining message about a larger and more serious puzzle. With over two million prisoners, increasingly punitive and militarized operations, and growing roots in rural and suburban communities across the United States, the prison industry looms larger than at any time in our history. *Prison Break* creates Fox River Penitentiary as a fun site for what is primarily a prolonged, fast-paced chase sequence; in one episode, for example, Michael dodges suspicion as he explores the rooftop of the cellblock. But in the series' multiple subplots we see that the prison is reaching far beyond itself, exerting a kind of centrifugal pull on the lives of those outside. The real mystery is not whether the brothers will make it, or even the predictable question of what makes "other" people end up in prison. Instead, the subtext of the series is rooted in more immediate political and economic realities: What does it take to stay *out* of prison? How do we know whom to lock up?

Most of the inmates at Fox River convey an "otherness" that is, unsurprisingly, consistent with Fox news coverage. They are marked by race (the camera lingers on a leering black prisoner as he tries to attack the pretty, white prison doctor), class (greasy long or slicked-back hair), and ethnicity (the mob figures heavily in one subplot). One man, a predatory rapist trailed by an abject eighteen-year-old "punk" (sex slave), is the embodiment of nightmarish predation. In contrast, Michael Scofield is white, clean-cut, and baby-faced, with a haircut that is likely not the work of a prison barber. He speaks standard, jargon-free English, and is described in Fox's online "bio" as an academic star without a blot on his record. His ability to engage man-to-man with the warden, the im-

LORNA A. RHODES *is Professor of Anthropology at the University of Washington and the author of* Total Confinement: Madness and Reason in the Maximum Security Prison *(University of California Press, 2004).*

mediate response he inspires in the prison doctor, and the loyalty of his friends on the outside all signal that he is only temporarily removed from the middle class — and in fact, the other inmates persist in calling him "Fish" (new prisoner) long after the term should have ceased to apply. Never for a moment are we meant to believe that Michael belongs in prison.

BUT THE STORY is not simply that prison marks the line between middle- and lower-class characters. Michael's brother, falsely accused of murdering the vice president and the target of a shady government conspiracy, is no smooth-talking academic success story. His "bio" has him in trouble with the law from an early age, and it seems significant that he does not share Michael's last name. The two may have started in roughly the same place, but it is Michael who has accrued the social capital — the "character" — that enables him to help Lincoln. In contrast to the seedy inmates who give the prison its predictable "color" (one old con may turn out to be legendary skyjacker D. B. Cooper), the main characters portray the middle class as an unstable social location in which early choices (academic diligence, avoiding drugs) determine everything.

Most of the inmates at Fox River convey an "otherness" that is, unsurprisingly, consistent with Fox news coverage.

We can understand Michael's tattoo, then, as a concrete representation of the same thing driving many middle class parents to overschedule their children: the need to "inscribe" them with the value (education) and the "values" (hard work, flexibility) to enable survival in the new social and economic landscapes produced by late capitalism. Unlike the run-of-the-mill prison tattoo, Michael's is a magnificent symbol of education and participation in the economy (for that matter, in the prison-industrial economy itself). While his hapless fellow inmates are stuck, he is literally and visibly inscribed with the information he needs to navigate the maze — to know, in other words, how *not* to be in prison. And in a reverse twist that makes the same point, several middle class characters are more entangled with the criminal justice system than we might suspect from their well-turned-out homes. The message seems to be that it's a slippery slope out there in a world whose hidden logic can only be penetrated by those who work at it.

The "Fox River Penitentiary" is actually Joliet in Illinois, which opened in 1858 and only closed, making filming possible, in 2002. Its crumbling infrastructure undermines the plot's dependence on the notion of a "retrofit." But perhaps the old, romantically dreary buildings and anachronistic inmates are simply meant to give us the backdrop we expect. The real, more-up-to date kicker is in the comment of one prisoner who says of the world "inside" that Darwin, not Einstein, wins here. It seems in *Prison Break* that Darwin may be winning on the outside, too.

The International Friendship House

A Haven for Refugees in Pennsylvania

JAMES HARBISON

"I DON'T NEED TO TRAVEL, I meet the world here," the volunteer Sterling Shower declares as he bursts into the administrative office of the International Friendship House. Sterling greets Harriet Miller, the Resettlement Director of the Friendship House and its resident "mom." She introduces me to Sterling as the reporter who has come to the Friendship House to stay over for the weekend.

Harriet and I had been flipping through an album of photos of the House's former residents. "This woman is a doctor from Iran. This man, Jackson, is from Rwanda. And, this is Moses," Harriet sighs, pointing to a child of three or four years of age attired in his Sunday best. "This is his mom, Kobango. They are from the Congo."

It is Harriet who presides over the day-to-day activities at this unassuming brick house in York, Pennsylvania. As one of America's few alternatives to housing asylum seekers in our nation's prisons, this house can accurately be called an oasis.

The International Friendship House currently provides shelter for ten refugees. There are three women, from China, Ghana and Thailand and seven men, from China, the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Nigeria, Romania and Togo. While the circumstances of each resident may differ, all have independently arrived on American soil and all have made the claim that their life would be in jeopardy if they were returned to their home country. All of the refugees accept the hospitality of the Friendship House for the duration of their court proceedings. Those refugees who are able to establish the likelihood of future persecution if they were to be denied entry to the United States, tend to extend their stay at the Friendship House an additional six months. If their claims for asylum fail, some residents of the Friendship House will be deported.

In detention, asylum seekers are the financial responsibility of the federal government. If they can win parole and are released, asylum seekers, pending the court's decision of their status, are generally not granted legal authorization to work. As their futures and their very lives hang in the balance of upholding the terms of their parole, asylum seekers avoid working illegally. For a select few so stuck, the Friendship House can provide a place to live and food to eat. This relieves the state, or the friends or family of the immigrant, of the burden of care.

"Detention helps create homelessness," said Will Coley, former project coordinator of the Wayfarer House. Coley, who used to run this residence home for recently-freed immigrants in Elizabeth, New Jersey, defined the service as a place of transition from detention. He explained that removing an immigrant from his community deprives him of his ability to create social ties which can be leveraged into favorable employment.

What distinguishes the Friendship House from other residence programs, Coley continued, is its willingness to extend hospitality to refugees on parole. Other programs exclusively haven only those immigrants who have been successful in their claims for asylum. The Friendship House is run like a home. Other well-meaning programs wake immigrants early, locking them out of their buildings until

James Harbison *is a freelance writer whose work often focuses on immigration issues. His writing has appeared in* Afropop Worldwide, Immigrant Rights, the Insight, Loud Paper, Staten Island Register, Stay Free *and the* New York Press.

evening, but at the Friendship House all can come and go as they see fit. Residents cook and eat their meals, too, whenever they wish. Those in high school or attending ESL classes might spend long hours in the public library. In the common rooms, the residents can receive guests.

"They have all just gotten out of detention, for goodness sake," Harriet offers in justification of the improvised, hands-off management style she has adopted as house mom. "I'm not interested in running the House like a military boot camp."

I am not interested in running the House like a military boot camp.

At night, the residents are unsupervised. After spending at least part of every day at the Friendship House, Harriet leaves in the evening for her full-time, paying job as a manager at a house for the mentally ill. If she is able to oversee the efficient distribution of the patients' medicine, she will be able to catch a partial night's sleep. If Harriet is not working, she'll drive to her farm in Seven Valleys, a town outside of York. Harriet's husband, Ray, at sixty-five, still works this farm.

The Residents

SPENDILOVE, A YOUNG WOMAN from Ghana, fled her homeland on January 6, 2001 to avoid being circumcised. Like all undocumented arrivals who announce to authorities that they are seeking asylum, Spendilove was arrested at the airport. On January 7, she was detained at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York. She was to spend the next three and a half years in various detention centers.

I have been to Ghana and its capital, Accra, where Spendilove grew up. I have seen the lines of Ghanaians seeking visas at the American Consulate each day. I asked Spendilove how she could not have known how difficult her move to the United States would be in the absence of a visa. Spendilove was raised in a wealthy Ghanaian family. Such an upbringing would have exposed her to the realities of the world.

Desperation, matched by a naïve faith in the American ideals of justice, she says, fueled her decision to leave. "Before arriving at JFK," Spendilove tells me, "I had only seen a man with a gun in the movies. I had never been in trouble with the law. I thought that the authorities would help me. [That all I had to do was] tell them why I had to immigrate and they would help me."

"All that time in detention," Spendilove said, "I could have used to go to university." Spendilove now wants to go to seminary, to study the Bible. "I wasn't a religious person before," she said, "I found God in prison. It was horrible, but I have a relationship with God." Without the ability to work, and her legal status unresolved, her school plans are suspended. "It's like I'm invisible. I sleep, I watch TV, eat, same thing as prison 'cept I'm out," Spendilove laments, and then adds, "I have to write a book."

The telephone rings for Spendilove. A former resident of the House is calling to check on his old housemates. Tensai, who answers, teased the caller, "So, you want to talk to my wife?" The man I call "Tensai" has left his real fiancée in Ethiopia where he says she is in hiding fearful of government thugs. Spendilove turns on the phone's speaker so everyone can hear and contribute to the conversation.

Tensai and Spendilove are elaborating on the irony of being handcuffed and sometimes compelled to wear leg irons when being transported from one facility to another. "I told the guards," said Tensai, "I don't want to run away. I want to stay in the United States."

Tensai has won asylum and is working at a plant where he loads bottles into boxes. In Ethiopia, he was an agronomist in the Ministry of Agriculture. Finding himself in an untenable, politically explosive conflict with his boss, Tensai left for the United States. Every week that Tensai works brings him closer to realizing his fiancée's rescue. Before she can join him in America, Tensai must establish himself, lease an apartment, and raise the capital to finance her trip. He has just acquired a car, his lawyer's old one. Having this car allows Tensai to drive to work, and he dutifully taxis other residents to their various churches and errands. Tensai drives carefully with far less assurance than does Harriet Miller who is a grandmother.

On the way back from the public library as we pass the bottling plant where he works, Tensai states that he wants to become a nurse's assistant so he can make some real money. "The certification program, it only takes six weeks," he says. Off the road and back in the House, Tensai is bolder. For the sake of the fracas that he knows such a pronouncement will instigate, Tensai, who is at least seven years away from U.S. citizenship, declares, "I am Republican, a member of the party of strength!"

Malik, a Muslim, guffaws the loudest in reply. Malik Jarno left Guinea a teenage orphan. His father was a politically active Imam. Following the police's murder of his brother, Malik's father was arrested and soon after "disappeared." With the presumption that his father had been killed while in custody and that he was scheduled to be eliminated next, Malik was sent to live with an aunt in Paris. The aunt arranged for him to stay with an acquaintance who encouraged Malik to fly to the United States, purchasing his plane ticket and supplying him with counterfeit documents. Upon arrival at Dulles International Airport in Washington, D.C., Malik was promptly taken into custody.

Malik was detained in a number of facilities for close to three years, during which time his lawyer made his name known and elevated his advocacy into a *cause célèbre*. This strategy appears to have borne the desired fruit; in 2003, Malik was granted parole. Malik was then denied asylum in what his attorney asserts was the lengthiest asylum trial in U.S. history. As his case is now in front of the Board of Immigration Appeals, Malik makes his home at the Friendship House.

Without papers that were accepted as legitimate, Malik could not, at the time of his arrest, prove that he was a minor. Therefore, Malik spent much of his confinement in adult prisons where he was severely beaten by both inmates and the guards. He struggles with English in its written form due to a learning disability that has been attributed to a mild retardation. Currently at the age of twenty, he attends a York high school. He shows me his geography textbook. Unlike the majority of his classmates, Malik has already lived on three continents.

Tita, a young woman from Thailand, prepares for Friday night's dinner — pigs' feet set in salt, lime, garlic and hot red peppers.

In Pennsylvania's jails, detainees get pretty tired of watery, scrambled eggs and dull pasta. Detainees, who complain or those who have perhaps broken down at one moment and cried, are sequestered and labeled "unstable." In psych solitary, the detainees are fed what the Friendship House volunteer, Leeann Strine, described as, "this bread thing, supposedly of Dutch origin. It's like they take all of the week's leftovers, mix 'em up and bake them together in the middle of lumps of dough." Needless to say, there's little protest — or the public display of grief — at York County Prison.

After dinner, on the House's DVD player, a few residents watch a film which was set and made in Lagos, Nigeria. It's a maudlin melodrama: spoiled rich kids go bad after returning from a trip to the United States. Everyone seems to get along pretty well with each other at the Friendship House. "Detention does it. They bond while they are detained together" is what Will Coley had said about those immigrants who lived together at his residence program, the Wayfarers House. Tita says, "I never saw black people, white people, living together, so many countries together. People ask us, the residents, when we are out together in town," Tita continues, "'So, how do you guys know each other? How do you happen to be hanging out? Did you guys come to America together?'"

How the Friendship House Came To Be

WHILE HARRIET WAS SHOWING me the House's picture album, Sterling Shower chimed in, pointing over my shoulder to a photo of a group of laughing, teenage women, "These girls, they are more American than Chinese now."

> No one could have imagined that the vigil would meet for 186 Sundays.

The International Friendship House owes its existence to the arrival of an earlier group of Chinese immigrants. In 1993, nearly 300 passengers aboard a smuggler's freighter named the Golden Venture departed from southern China and managed to cross half the globe before running aground off the coastal waters of Rockaway Beach in Queens, New York. Ten passengers drowned, but most managed to swim ashore, where they were arrested. The Immigration and Naturalization Service eventually transferred many of the passengers to York County Prison to await immigration proceedings.

The refugees' indefinite confinement incensed Joan Maruskin, a minister then with a York congregation. In a sermon, she mentioned the plight of the Golden Venture passengers and how someone should do something. Members of her congregation began to ask her about the Golden Venture men, inquiring whether or not anyone had stepped forward to act in their behalf. "At some point," as Harriet tells it, "Joan just felt that if no one else was going to do something, she would. Joan organized a prayer vigil to convene on Sunday evening right outside the prison's gates." The guards, carrying loaded rifles, watched the protesters from a distance. This initial protest made it into the local newspapers. "That's how I heard about it, from the newspaper," Harriet says, "and so one Sunday, I went to check it out." Harriet, initially, did not know anyone else in the group.

The protesters agreed to meet every Sunday until the government took action toward paroling the Golden Venture detainees. No one could have imagined that the vigil would meet for 186 consecutive Sundays. But, as the efforts of advocates to obtain parole for the Golden Venture detainees slowly began to succeed, members of the prayer vigil found themselves offering rooms in their homes to freed individuals. The members of this hodgepodge, non-denominational, protest-prayer group united, creating an advocacy, The Golden Vision. This name that the organization adopted came by modifying the name of the ship which had brought so many refugees from China to York.

Harriet and the other members of The Golden Vision quickly realized that they were running out of space in their own homes. "We need a house!" Harriet recalled.

In 1996, with a $25,000 down payment delivered through a fund managed by Church of the Brethren, the group purchased the building that would become the Friendship House. In serious disrepair, the building went through a series of renovations before it was ready to open in 1999.

The Volunteers

"IT MIGHT BE 20 BELOW when a particular person is released from York [County Prison]," Barb Rosher explains. "Because this same person might have been arrested in the middle of the summer and then subsequently detained, they may have been released from prison wearing open-toe sandals and a short-sleeved shirt." Barb Rosher is the volunteer who takes newly released detainees to Wal-Mart. On these trips, the refugees purchase coats, hats, gloves, boots, t-shirts, and pants to replace the prison uniforms they have worn for months.

In addition, the volunteers help residents plan for the future. Because most of the residents are not allowed to work, the volunteers push the residents to master English. Natalie Rimmer is a teacher who tutors House resident Malik. "I am not an ESL teacher," Natalie admits, "but through tutoring Malik in English, through learning who Malik is, I have learned about his culture and the part of the world from where he has come. I have really learned some humility from Malik. He just appreciates whatever he can get. Malik teaches one how to accept gifts."

Malik has also provided Natalie an understanding of life in America's prisons. "Malik," she says, "is like any American twenty-year old in some ways. In other ways, he has seen so much. So much more than the average American kid. He has gone through the justice system. He is aware." This awareness, passed on to the volunteers of the Friendship House, has morphed into a motivating, moral outrage. "We have to reform the immigration system in this country," declares Harriet's husband, Ray Miller. "If people around the world could know what the American people are willing to do to help — as opposed to what the American government does — maybe they wouldn't hate us quite so much."

Conclusion

IN THE UNITED STATES, jailing non-criminal, asylum-seeking immigrants alongside the convicted is the rule, the norm. The alternative that the Friendship House can offer ten to seventeen refugees at any given time is an extraordinary exception. Across America's Midwest and America's northeastern states, there are only three other prominent organizations whose goals complement the mission of the Friendship House. (In the Bronx, there is a shelter known as the Christ House, in Detroit, there is the Freedom House, and in Buffalo, New York, there is Vive La Casa.)

While immigrants have been journeying for the promise of the United States since its inception, the most obvious reason why there are so few formal mechanisms to assist one type of immigrant, the asylum seeker, is the prohibition of federal money. The organizations that do help asylum seekers are self-supporting islands. In contrast to refugees who have been rescued from a refugee camp, asylum seekers are prohibited by law from receiving any support from the U.S. government. The sad truth is that the global phenomenon of fleeing political refugees — to the degree that is addressed at all — is confronted by overworked Americans at the local level of their communities.

Perhaps central to the strongest argument for the inherent good of the Friendship House is the assertion that asylum seekers like Malik Jarno could never receive a fair trail if he had to stand trial from jail. It is difficult to represent someone in an immigration procedure while he is detained, Malik Jarno's lawyer, Chris Nugent said. "Corners tend to get cut. No one [no advocate] wants to spend all his time in a prison," Chris Nugent continued, "There's always the problem of access. Sometimes you have to speak to a client through a plexiglass divide and you need a guard to deliver documents. The visits are always being compromised. Maybe your client's area will be in lockdown or maybe in the middle of your visit there will be a meal call."

After close to three years in prison, Chris Nugent characterized Malik, as an "emotional wreck." The Friendship House has restored Malik, allowing his lawyer to work with him to direct an effective defense.

Over the long weekend I spent at the Friendship House, the truth of Chris Nugent's words were apparent. Malik appeared to be anything but agitated. Relieved of the challenge of school thanks to the Presidents' Day holiday, Malik spent most of his free Monday placid and horizontal on the common room's most comfortable couch.

Monitoring Women and Children in U.S. Prisons

Bonnie Kerness

I have been working with the American Friends Service Committee as a human rights advocate on behalf of prisoners in the United States for the past 30 years. The relationship between women living in poverty and women being incarcerated is indisputable. There are currently over 950,000 women in criminal justice custody in the United States with thousands of those living under other forms of social control such as parole or probation. Since 1980, the number of women entering prisons in the United States has risen almost 400 percent, double the rate of men. Nearly a quarter of these women are mentally ill, with untold numbers infected with AIDS. Forty percent held no jobs prior to imprisonment; two-thirds of them are women of color, and 60 percent of them are mothers of an estimated 1.3 million minor children. Incarcerated women bear a double burden of punishment: their children "do time" with them. The average age of the women in prison is 29, and 58 percent haven't finished high school. Without any fanfare, the "war on drugs" in this country has become a war on women, and it has clearly contributed to the explosion in the women's prison population. I'd like to share the voices of some of these women.

From New Jersey: "We are forced to sleep on the floor in the middle of winter with bad backs and aching bodies, cold air still blowing from the vents no matter what the temperature was outside. At two o'clock in the morning they wake you up and tell you to clear the room. They go through your personal belongings and then put them in the trash . . . ."

From Texas: "The guard sprayed me with pepper spray because I wouldn't take my clothes off in front of five male guards. Then they carried me to a cell, laid me down on a steel bed and took my clothes off. They left me there in that cell with that pepper spray in my face and nothing to wash my face with. I didn't give them any reason to do that, I just didn't want to take my clothes off."

From Arizona: "The only thing you get in isolation is a peanut butter sandwich in the morning, a cheese sandwich in the afternoon, and for supper, another peanut butter sandwich. If you want a drink here, you have to drink toilet water . . . "

From Missouri: "When I refused to move into a double cell, they came into my cell and dragged me out and threw me on my back. I was beaten about my face and head. One of the guards stuck his finger in my eye deliberately. I was then rolled on my stomach and cuffed on my wrists with leg irons on my ankle. I was made to walk a thousand feet with the leg irons. Then they put me in a device called a restraint chair. When they put you in this chair your hands are cuffed behind your back and tucked under your buttocks. They stripped me naked . . . and kept me there over nine hours until I fouled myself on my hands, which were tucked underneath me through a hole in the chair."

These past years have been full of thousands of calls and complaints of an increasingly disturbing nature from prisoners and their families throughout the United States. The propor-

---

Bonnie Kerness *has been an organizer for the American Friends Service Committee and a human rights advocate since the 1960s, with an emphasis on human rights in prison. This article is based on a talk presented before the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (January 14, 2005). To get involved in the AFSC's Prison Watch Project in New York or New Jersey, contact bkerness@afsc.org.*

tion of those complaints coming from women has risen, with women describing conditions of confinement in which abuse is the norm and which, in some cases, should be considered torture. They suffer from sexual abuse by staff, with one woman saying, "I am tired of being gynecologically examined every time I'm searched." Another prisoner put it, "That was not part of my sentence, to . . . perform oral sex with officers." Women have reported the inappropriate use of restraints on pregnant and sick prisoners, including one woman whose baby was coming at the same time the guard who had shackled her legs was on a break somewhere else in the hospital.

Other abuses include medical "care," which is often so callous that it is life-threatening. We have received reports about a woman who died of pancreatic disease that went undiagnosed, about a mentally ill woman who was confined naked in a filthy cell where she ingested her own bodily waste, about a woman who suffered burns over 54 percent of her body and gradually lost mobility when she was denied the special bandages which would keep her skin from tightening, and from a woman who unsuccessfully begged staff for months to allow her to see a doctor. This particular woman was finally diagnosed with cancer, in enormous pain, and with no pain medication. She died nine months after the diagnosis. I am currently dealing with a young woman with breast cancer at a prison in New Jersey, where every agonizing stage of her medical care from chemotherapy to radiation has been achieved only by a war of calls and letters on her behalf.

Combine all of this with the lack of treatment for substance abuse, lack of counseling services, concerns about the inappropriate use of psychotropic medications, inappropriate use of restraints, and you have an increasingly clear picture of what life is like for women in prison. Add the use of prison labor and the picture of the prison system continues to unfold. If you call to find out about New Jersey tourism, you are likely to talk to a female prisoner — one who is working for .23/hour with no vacations, no union, no way to address working conditions.

LOOK INTO ANY ASPECT of prison or the wider criminal justice system and you are slapped in the face with the racism and white supremacy that prisoners of color endure. If we dig deeper into these practices, the political function they serve is inescapable. Police, the courts, the prison system and the death penalty all serve as social control mechanisms. The economic function they serve is equally as chilling. Every part of the criminal justice system falls most heavily on the poor and people of color, including the fact that the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution abolished slavery and indentured servitude except in prisons. Although prison labor is not my focus here, slavery in prison is real. I work with Black and Latino youth who tell me that the police seem like an occupation army to them, as if inner cities were militarized zones. They feel that the schools and the courts are used as a feeder system to filter young blacks and Latinos into prisons where those bodies are suddenly worth a fortune. I've heard people say that the criminal justice system doesn't work. I've come to believe exactly the opposite — that it works perfectly, as a matter of both economic and political policy.

I don't believe it is an accident that the young adolescent of color worth nothing to this country's economy suddenly generates between 30 and 60 thousand dollars a year once trapped in the criminal justice system. The expansion of prisons, the court, and police systems has been a boon to everyone from architects, plumbers, and electricians to food and medical vendors, all with one thing in common — a paycheck earned by keeping human beings in cages and warehouses. The criminalization of poverty is a lucrative business and we've replaced the social safety net with a dragnet. I doubt that this would be tolerated if we were talking about mostly white folks or mostly rich folks. Not unlike during the U.S. era of chattel slavery, there is a class of people dependent on mostly poor people and bodies of color as a source for income.

In 2002, the AFSC published a pamphlet called "Our Children's House," which contains the testimonies of the very young who have been sentenced to county youth detention facilities. One young woman, who was placed in such a facility when she was 12, said they told her she had no name, that she was now Number 5. When I began those interviews, I was unprepared for youngsters who were so afraid to talk that they wouldn't allow the use of their names. They described being held in isolation and used sexually. They talked of hearing, seeing, and smelling things, about enduring treatment that is inappropriate for anyone, let alone children. As they spoke, it was clear that it was the adults around them who were the lawless. Not only are these children taken from their families, they lose any chance at an equitable future.

I sit on the board of the World Organization For Human Rights/USA. In 1998, we wrote the *Shadow Report on the Status of Compliance by the U.S.Government with the International Convention Against Torture*. We found that the U.S. was not meeting its obligations under that treaty, mentioning the treatment of women in U.S. prisons in particular. Given what has happened at Abu Ghraib, given that the potential Attorney General for the U.S. seems to sanction torture, given that the United Stastes heavily exports its concepts in everything from architecture, use of long term isolation, use of devices of torture, and business philosophies of making money off of poor, bodies of color — it becomes imperative that more long term attention is given to what is happening to women in prison globally. AFSC has become so concerned about the use of isolation, sometimes keeping people in lockdown for years, that we are launching a nationwide effort to stop this practice in U.S. prisons.

The 13th Amendment abolished slavery and indentured servitude — except in prisons.

The increase in the number of women in prisons worldwide certainly has nothing to do with a global increase in the crime rates by women and girls. Each and every one of the practices that the girls and women have testified to are in violation of dozens of international treaties and covenants. These practices violate the United Nations Convention Against Torture, the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, UN Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and a dozen other international and regional laws and standards. We need to alter the core of every system that slavery, racism, and poverty has given birth to, particularly the criminal justice systems. There are many things we can do to push for social change. The need for outside advocates on behalf of our sisters in prisons is acute. Unfortunately, it's been my experience over the 30 years that women do not reach out to advocate on their own behalf. Perhaps we are too used to being the caretakers.

We must stop violations of human rights, particularly those of women and children. We must change the economic and racial profiling of arrest and sentencing practices. We need to decriminalize poverty, mental illness, and in many cases, lesbianism. We must eliminate solitary confinement, torture, and the use of devices of torture. We must support a vigorous monitoring of police, the court, and prison systems with a global review process. We need to ensure enhanced use of international law. We desperately need to redirect the dollars going into prisons that belong in communities, in schools. The links between poverty, race, discrimination, sexual orientation, and prisons cannot be denied.

The AFSC has always recognized the existence and continued expansion of the penal system as a profound spiritual crisis. Many years ago, a Vietnamese sister noted that "when women become massively political, the revolution will have moved to a new level." We need the help of international bodies such as yours to ensure that real, worldwide social change remains a priority. I can think of no surer way than to be fully present and advocate on behalf of those women and girls who are being used in the most calculated of ways.

Each of us needs to be clear on the connectedness between slavery and the criminal justice system, between U.S. domestic policies towards people of color, and U.S. international policies towards countries of color. We need to develop an international sisterhood of concern and say that "not in my name" will these atrocities be committed any longer. Over the years I have found it important to remind myself that the Department of Corrections is more than just a set of institutions — it is also a state of mind.

Poetry in Michigan Prisons
Urgency of the Incarcerated

BUZZ ALEXANDER AND SUZANNE GOTHARD

THE U.S. PRISON POPULATION has increased sixfold since 1970, from 200,000 to 1,421,911. When we include those in jails, we have 2.1 million incarcerated, a higher percentage of our population than in any other country. In Michigan, three prisons in 1970 have become fifty-one in 2005. This experiment in social control through mass incarceration — the largest such experiment in history — is built on a series of laws that have targeted specific minority groups, disenfranchised hundreds of thousands of American citizens, and created the longest sentences in the world: as many as ten percent of our incarcerated could leave prison in coffins. This policy has taken millions of individuals from their homes during their most productive earning and nurturing years, doomed half of their children to prison, and devastated selected neighborhoods and communities. It is a policy so beautifully disguised and justified that most of the bright, eager students who come to the University of Michigan have no idea it exists. We are talking about an invisible crisis.

The work of the Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP), based at the University of Michigan, is a response. In 1990, in answer to an invitation from two lifers at the Florence Crane Women's Facility in Coldwater, Michigan, we initiated our first theater workshop. Within two years we became the Sisters Within Theater Troupe, currently working on its twenty-first play. Since that beginning, participants in our workshops in men's and women's prisons, juvenile facilities, and Detroit high schools have completed nearly 400 original plays. In 2003, we started a poetry workshop at the Scott Correctional Facility; a year later, the participants named themselves SOUL, or Sisters of Unique Lyrics. Their readings and anthologies are among the scores of readings and anthologies produced in our prison workshops. We have also facilitated over 60 art workshops. Our Annual Exhibition of Art by Michigan Prisoners is in its eleventh year. This year it included almost two hundred artists from forty-two prisons — and more than four thousand visitors walked through the gallery. As a result of this exhibition, which is accompanied by a series of talks and panels, the practice of art has spread through Michigan prisons, and many Michigan citizens have abandoned their stereotypes of the incarcerated. Our youth exhibition is in its eighth year. Our Portfolio Project enables incarcerated youth and some adults to create handsome portfolios of their work to present to judges and to employers and teachers back home. Our Linkage Project connects formerly incarcerated artists, writers, and performers with community arts mentors. Our Speakers Bureau brings the voices of the incarcerated, analysis, and discussion to the public.

Because of PCAP, creative spaces exist within the prisons, spaces to which every participant brings his or her own talents. We from

BUZZ ALEXANDER *is the Thurnau Professor of English at the University of Michigan, Founder of the Prison Creative Arts Project, member of the Sisters Within Theater Troupe, and author of Film on the Left: American Documentary Film from 1931-1942. He has just been awarded the Outstanding Doctoral and Research Universities Professor of the Year Award by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the Council for Advancement and Support of Education.* SUZANNE GOTHARD *has been administrator of the Prison Creative Arts Project since 2003. She is a member of the Sisters of Unique Lyrics poetry workshop and was previously a member of the Sisters Within Theater Troupe.*

the outside have the ability to negotiate entrance into the prison, to make arrangements, and to bring an initial focus to the workshop. All of us in the space bring our own histories and needs, our growing talents, our openness to risk, our vulnerability as creators, our effort to work collaboratively, and our eagerness for a sophisticated and significant product based in the life experiences, stories, and imaginations of those who have come together. We are clear on our respect for everyone who enters the space and we are unyielding both in our belief that the process will work and in our trust in the efforts of each participant. We don't enter as teachers with lesson plans: together we all discover what a particular group needs to create. We conclude with a reading or performance that attempts to challenge the audience and that is a celebration.

As many as ten percent of our incarcerated could leave prison in coffins.

The Sisters Within and the Sisters of Unique Lyrics (SOUL), then, are a collaborative response to the U.S. policy of mass incarceration and to all that can be defeating in prison: the humiliation and often the trauma of losing autonomy over one's daily life; the deadly routine; the danger; the arbitrariness; the substandard health care; the painful distance from family, other loved ones, home, and community; the burden of a judging, punitive, prisoner-despising public; the frightening awareness of the new laws and other impediments to a successful return to society; and more. PCAP workshops are an act of resistance. They are alliance, family, and community, they are ownership of our own histories and themes, they are a valuing of the individual, they are achievement and possibility that we bring back to our own lives and relations and that we can draw upon back in the world.

What follows is a statement by Suzanne Gothard, member of PCAP and the Sisters of Unique Lyrics, illustrating the life and group ownership of SOUL and the possibilities of PCAP workshops.

SOUL

We are the Sisters of Unique Lyrics. We are thirteen women who come together one evening a week for two hours to write poetry, take risks, and grow. We are two women who drive from Ann Arbor to Robert Scott Correctional Facility in Plymouth, Michigan, on Tuesdays and eleven who live there. *We are SOUL*.

We are poets. Part of SOUL's weekly ritual is to transform the by-day GED classroom into a space of trust that enables us to write what matters, experiment with new styles and content, give and receive feedback, and develop as writers. We push three tables to the center to form a writing surface for our circle, while shoving other furniture and our daily distractions and limits to the room's edge. We take turns standing behind the makeshift podium, reading twice through the poems we've written for the week, receiving praise and feedback. As in most good writing workshops, our poems are alive with images and we draw from our own experiences. But there is something unique in SOUL, something more pressing, something harder to come by and harder to describe. Our writing is intensely honest and there is an urgent need to be fully present at every moment in the workshop. It is the urgency of stories that are too often kept silent. It is the urgency of the incarcerated.

We are demanding, because there is something at stake. Tanea asks us to spend more time on our writing and offers challenging assignments. Toni praises us when we risk something new and calls us out on the days that we can do better. Lanise asks us poignant questions so that she can better understand how her words are being heard. Barbara focuses on the reader and asks if what she has heard was intended. Melissa points out the images that work. Kinnari asks us to be more creative in our critique, to push harder. Lisa helps us to find rhythm in our writing. Our poems are complex and do not accept hollow answers. And we all offer support in response to the pain, the loss, and the joy that surface when writing about our own lives.

I learn of their fear that their children will age into prison — the place to which our system of mass incarceration intends that they go.

We are mothers. SOUL's assignments rise from group needs. We choose them from a line in one of our poems, from a theme we share, from a moment in the workshop, from a writing goal articulated by a Sister. Once an assignment to write about "saying goodbye without saying goodbye" opened a discussion about the isolation in prison. We knew Courtney as the young woman who hated surprises, whose subtle humor kept us laughing, and whose writing was improving rapidly. We knew her as loving and close to family, but not as a mother. In the poem written for this assignment, Courtney describes her son so vividly that we *know* him and feel the emptiness experienced by women who cannot raise their children and in some cases are unable to have contact with them. I learn of their feelings of helplessness when children struggle or are hurting and of the fear that their children will age into prison — the place to which our system of mass incarceration intends that they go. Toni writes about women who enter prison as teenagers and age there past child-bearing years. Older women mother younger women as they all figure out how to do their time and build community in resistance to the isolation of prison life.

We are survivors. One Tuesday, Kinnari waits longer than usual to rise to the podium. Her voice quivers and stains from her sweaty palms fall on her page. Her second reading brings strength, ownership, and nuanced sensitivity to her words. We are given a gift, a portrait of survival: of ugliness and beauty, of depth, of pieces of her dying, and we hear how she has learned to continue living. The poem resonates in all of us. Women feel pieces of their own survival stories and we all know that it matters deeply. That Kinnari finding the words to tell us matters. That our commitment to living matters. And that we matter.

We are poets. Because it matters, because these workshops are spaces of healing, of humanity, of bearing witness, of finding ourselves, we will continue to write poetry, to demand, to mother, to survive, to take risks and grow. We are two women who drive from Ann Arbor to Robert Scott Correctional Facility in Plymouth, Michigan, on Tuesdays and eleven who live there. *We are SOUL.*

FROM ONE WORKSHOP IN 1990, PCAP has grown into a model arts organization working collaboratively with talented incarcerated Americans on many levels. Everywhere in this country, similar fledgling work constantly springs up in prisons and juvenile facilities, and in many instances profound, sophisticated productions have resulted. This work is urgent, as is all opposition to our national policy of massive incarceration. PCAP is eager to help others who are starting out and to be in touch with our peer organizations. We may be reached at pcapinfo@umich.edu. Our website is www.prisonarts.org.

Thanks to all the women who have been part of SOUL, including current and former facilitators Mica Doctoroff, Rachel Nelson, Alycia Welch, and Sarah Wolfson.

The Hudood Laws of Pakistan
Voices from Prison and a Call for Repeal

Abira Ashfaq

In 1979, there were seventy women in prisons all over Pakistan. By 1988, this figure was six thousand. The reason — the Hudood Ordinances. Promulgated in 1979 by military dictator Zia-ul-Huq in an effort to Islamize the laws of the country, these have been the subject of much controversy and debate. In addition to offenses against person and property — offenses that were already proscribed by the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) — the Hudood Ordinances cover five areas: Zina (non-marital sex) and rape; theft and armed robbery, qazf (i.e., false accusation of Zina); prohibited use of alcohol and narcotics, and the procedure for whipping.

Many feminist/progressive organizations were born during the initial years after the Hudood Ordinances. In 1983, feminists had protested when Zia-ul-Huq introduced the discriminatory evidence laws — their protest memorialized in famous 1983 photographs showing the police beating women protesters in Lahore.[1] However, democratic or military, liberal or moderate — no regime has been able to repeal these discriminatory laws, primarily due to pressure from right-wing religious parties.

"Zina," defined under the Hudood Ordinances as willful sexual intercourse between a man and a woman not validly married to each other, criminalized any and all non-marital sex and conflated rape with sex between consenting adults. Adultery was prosecutable under previous laws which, in a protectionist framework, allowed only for husbands to file charges against other males. Under the Hudood's Zina laws, anyone, including the state, could file such a case and women, too, were now punishable.

The jails filled up fast with poor women, migrants from rural areas to urban centers. In 2004, eighty-eight of the two hundred and forty-six women at the Karachi Central Jail were held under the Hudood Ordinance's Zina laws. Almost all were working class, factory and domestic workers, and almost all were there because of a complaint filed by a family member saying they had committed Zina: a husband claiming he had never divorced an ex-wife who was now married to someone else, a mother complaining her daughter was kidnapped by someone for sex. They were charged under one or more of the five sections of the Zina laws: Zina itself and offenses where Zina may have occurred, such as kidnapping, abducting or inducing a woman to compel her marriage; buying and selling for prostitution; detaining, enticing or taking away a woman for criminal intent; and attempt to commit a crime.[2]

"Hudood" is plural for the word "Hadd," which means "limit" or maximum punishment. Offenses covered under the Hudood Ordinances are punishable by maximum punishment. The Hadd Punishment for Zina is stoning to death. However, it is enforceable only if the accused is a Muslim, he or she confesses, or four, adult, pious, male witnesses testify as to the act of sex. If the evidence falls[1] short, which it usually does, the accused is subject to "tazir" or lesser punishment, which is rigorous imprisonment for a term not less than four years and not more than ten years, and with whipping and a fine.

Yet no one has ever been stoned to death in Pakistan under the Hudood Ordinances. Out

---

Abira Ashfaq *is an attorney living in the Bay Area. She did detention work for four years in New England, defending non-citizens in immigration custody. "Reflections of an Immigration Attorney" appeared in* New Politics *#37 (Summer 2004).*

of a total of twenty-five Hadd sentences in Pakistan, twenty-three were during Zia's martial law regime between 1980 and 1985.[3] Lawyers Asma Jehangir and Hina Jilani argue that superior courts go out of their way to overturn Hadd sentences as they expose the glaring injustices and absurdities of the Hudood laws. Pakistanis would not tolerate such barbaric punishment. According to Jilani and Jehangir, had a Hadd sentence ever been carried out, Zia's Islamization would have faced much more severe resistance.[4] Unfortunately, tazir punishment is itself quite harsh, and these laws *have* survived twenty-six years, and they have overwhelmed the feminist movement as many resources have been expended fighting these laws at the expense of serious issues of poverty, health, education, and violence affecting rural and urban women.

> "Zina" criminalized any and all non-marital sex and conflated rape with sex between consenting adults.

A Feel for the Jail

ACCOMPANIED BY VOLUNTEERS of local organizations, I visited the Karachi Central Jail in March and April of 2004 several times to meet with women accused of Zina under the Hudood Ordinances. Being associated with Zina can be a source of great shame among women in jail. Quickly we caught on to the moral divide in Zina cases; there were those that were "wedding" related and those that were associated with organized prostitution. The former were worthy of compassion; the guards (known as matrons) wanted us to help women with wedding cases. "The other ones get bailed out by the pimps."

Although newspapers claimed that the police vans do not show up to take the detainees to court, most women reported that the police arrive more or less regularly, and women are scheduled for hearings at an average of two hearings a month. The real concern is that not much happens once they are in court. Most cases are continued without matters advancing for two to three months at a time. Excuses vary. At times it is the co-accused (male) who is not brought from the men's jail, the evidence is not produced, the complainant or the lawyer is a no show, or the judge disappears.

When cases drag on, it becomes an additional ordeal for those accused of Zina as such offenses are non-bailable. Under the law, one cannot be released on bail if charged with crimes punishable by death, life imprisonment, or ten years or more in prison. These are punishable under Hadd by stoning to death, and under tazir by up to ten years imprisonment, thirty lashes, and a fine. For such offenses, a bail request may be granted if the defendant is sixteen years old or younger, if the person is aged, if someone has an illness untreatable in prison, or if more investigation is needed on the case. When we visited, only twenty women at the jail had final convictions; the rest were awaiting trial — some for as long as two to three years — and had been denied bail, were unable to post it, or not sure where their bail cases stood. It is well known that most women are ultimately acquitted in Hudood cases on appeal.[5] However, by the time a woman goes through her trial and exhausts her appeals, she may already have spent significant time in jail.[6]

The foreigners at the prison are ineligible for bail as well; many told me they plead the very first time they appear before a judge. About fifty of the prisoners were foreigners. A Malian woman had smuggled 650 grams of drugs she had swallowed in capsules. She was promised a thousand dollars for the mission. She tells me she has three children in Mali; the thousand dollars were appealing. She pled right away so she could commence her three-year sentence, which inflates to three years and nine months if she isn't able to pay a hefty fine.

The jail had an open space in the middle with four living quarters on the sides. The women went about their washing and cooking; their children stayed nearby. A prisoner squatting on the floor counted a two-foot high pile of chapatis (bread) placed on the ground. The jail distributes food to the prisoners, but relatives often bring meat, fruits, vegetables, and soaps for them, treats they otherwise would not have access to. The foreign prisoners receive visits and extra food from their consulates on Fridays. A prisoner who goes by the alias Huma Jaffrey served us tea, biscuits, and chips. Winking at us, she promised to make her very best tea that day. On my third visit to the jail, the matrons and Huma Jaffrey prepared lunch. The matrons were glad to have guests and shared workers' woes. They are paid only Rs. 3,000 ($60) per month with no health benefits or housing. Their male counterparts at the men's prisons are provided living quarters, they complain. To add a smattering of insult, the women pay for their own uniforms. "Why do you work here then?" I asked them. They shrugged. Not all matrons are literate; jobs are not easy to find. A matron with a seventeen-year service sits at her desk with her leg propped up. Her foot was swollen and she seemed to be in pain. "The pension?" I suggest. "Even for that you're given the runaround as if it is a favor," replied the senior matron, her eyes shut tightly as she rested her foot.

Jails may appear communal, a place where women and children reside in a particular harmony, but there is a palpable tension. There are power plays and politics. Women live in constant struggle for resources and privileges and under day-and-night stress of supervision and reprimand. Their letters are opened and read by the matrons, who keep a close check on their correspondences. "Checking the envelopes for smuggled goods should suffice?" I suggest. And they tell me the practice is essential to maintain peace. By reading the letters, they make sure women weren't writing to other women's husbands and planning to secure bail from and run off with them after release. "It's happened before. A girl in Number 1 ran off with Number 2's boy." Goods from the outside are much sought after. An African prisoner looks like she will burst into tears as threads she has asked for by paying a matron Rs. 200 ($4) have not arrived, and she wants to weave them in her hair before her much awaited embassy visit the next day.

A few of the prisoners are held in high regard here. Incidentally they are literate. One, Sumera, the official secretary at the jail, has the face of a fashion model and manages a bit of English. Another, Huma Jaffrey, was a small-time journalist outside and writes feminist poetry in Urdu and tells me she complains directly to the Superintendent, Sheeba Shah, if there is a problem in jail. A third, with short-cropped hair and clad in a masculine shalwar kameez, cruises in and out but gets an earful from the matrons occasionally. Other women remain in their quarters or in the kitchen, in the silent arrangement of an invisible hierarchy. All are locked down just prior to an official "round" by jail authorities, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), or other groups. A prisoner who arrived in jail on my first visit hasn't understood the format. She appears mentally unstable and strolls in, much to the matron's annoyance, and forces me to hear her as I balance a pile of notes in my lap. "I washed corpses in Riyadh for thirty years," she informs me. A matron drives her away and I am grateful.

Although the jail does not conduct literacy classes or rehabilitation sessions for prisoners, there are several NGOs that provide such services on a limited basis. The prisoners themselves run a school for the children at jail, their teacher a young Pakhtun woman charged with kidnapping. In addition, a few charity groups, including the British Women's Association and Jamaat-e-Islami, a major religious-political party in Pakistan, show up regularly with food and clothes. Jamaat-e-Islami women appeared on the first of April, fully veiled, and with an army of workers who brought about forty-to-fifty bags of rice, flour, sugar, lentils, and hygiene items for women who attend Dars or religious lecture. At the end of the roll call, a French prisoner recited the qalma (Quranic verse) and, much to everyone's delight, the dark blonde-haired woman was handed the last bag. Even the matrons, at the end of the school day for inmates, cover their heads and sit with a sipara (section of Quran) before the Jamaat women. They are deferential, and two are barely able to read the Arabic alphabet. "My faith is intact and I don't subscribe to their vision of Islam" says Huma, who isn't impressed with their neatly packaged gifts. They do the same at the men's jail.

The Wedding Cases

We interviewed about fifty women charged under the Hudood Ordinance's Zina provisions. After a couple of meetings, the narratives flowed. Saman, an 18-year-old of the Northern village of Parachinar, told us that she had married a man against her parent's wishes. Her parents had her husband arrested on Zina charges, and she was arrested a few days later. Her parents then produced a fake nikahnama (marriage certificate) and claimed that she had been married before. Therefore, her "new" marriage was allegedly invalid and a crime against the state. Her green eyes and pale skin, typical of her ethnic background, seem paralyzed in fear. Her parents hired a lawyer for her, but she knows they do not have her interest in mind; they show up in jail and in court and pressure her to leave her husband.

More than seventy percent of the women interviewed reported having suffered verbal abuse, and regular or occasional beatings from their husbands, mothers-in-law, or other members of their husbands' families. In addition to beatings, the violence extended to being turned out of the house at odd hours, threatened continually with spontaneous divorce or separation from their children, locked in the house, or prevented from continuing work or maintaining contact with friends and family. A fair number of women reported that their husbands pressured them to sleep with other men for money and threatened to divorce them if they didn't. Many said that their husbands were heroin addicts and did not provide any financial support.

A fair number of women reported that their husbands pressured them to sleep with other men for money and threatened to divorce them if they didn't.

"Women in jail are only a third of the Zina related complaints lodged at police stations," said Ms. Sheeba Shah, Superintendent at the women's jail.[7] Human Rights Watch writes that in "blatant overstepping" of their responsibilities police officers often force parties to a dispute into a settlement (sulahnama).[8] Several women reported that police officers at certain notorious police stations slapped them, cast verbal abuses at them, and threatened to, in one instance, "set rats loose in their clothing," when coercing them to confess or give in to their complainant's demands.

Katherine's husband, Waris, filed a complaint against her, claiming that she had committed Zina with his nephew. She told me he produced sixteen witnesses, most of whom are family members who claim to have known about the affair. Katherine, a Christian by faith, complained that her husband and her stepson beat her regularly. She suffered their beatings for seven years. On one occasion, her husband thrashed her with a metal pipe. She lifted her kameez to a show me a three-inch scar on her side from the beating. "I left one day. I had suffered him long enough. I took refuge at my brother's house in Malir Cantt." She said her husband has a dispute with his nephew concerning money and killed two birds with one stone, getting them both implicated in a Zina case.

Zarina Parveen, a thirty-year-old resident of Benares Colony, lived with her second husband, Falak Sheikh. Her first husband, Hanif, got her arrested on Zina charges, claiming she went into a second marriage without ever obtaining a divorce from him. Her stepbrother had coerced her into marrying Hanif, who was about thirty to forty years older than she was. She suspects he received a payment for the transaction. "Hanif was impotent, and soon after I married him, he begged me to sleep with other men so I could get pregnant. He wanted a child desperately as he had no offspring." She refused to sleep with anyone else. She had other complaints as well. "Money was always an issue. He hardly ever worked, abused drugs, and would beat me when he was in a drug-induced stupor." She complained to her brother about the domestic violence. "But why would he help me? He was the bastard who sold me to this old man," she shrugs. About three years ago, she took matters into her own hands, left her husband and married Falak, a carpenter. She has a daughter with this man, a child she has held onto preciously in jail. Her ex-husband got a police officer involved in the case. "When I appeared before the magistrate I told him everything, how he threatened me, how he abused me. I was still sent into jail custody." She says that each time she sees Falak in court, he threatens her with designs to grab her daughter, as he is still childless. She also states that, in fact, she had legally divorced Falak, but with the help of her brother, he stole her divorce decree. Now she's in a fix as she can't prove divorce from her first husband in court. Her second husband, Hanif, is in Karachi Central Jail on the same Zina charges.

Although it is primarily used as a weapon against women, men too are caught in the whirlwind. For a conviction under Zina, the rule established by the Federal Shariat Court is that it is a joint offense and requires positive identification of a man and a woman, distinctly, both of whom are consenting parties to illicit sex.[9]

Repeal

In 2003, the National Commission on the Status of Women in Pakistan, a statutory body created by the government of Pakistan with only recommendatory powers, reviewed the laws. Writing about the continual resistance to them by women's and other groups, they stated, "instead of remedying social ills, these Ordinances led to an increase in injustice against women, and in fact, became an instrument of oppression against women."[10] A majority of the commission concluded these laws must be repealed. They also found legal defects within the laws. Many argue the Zina laws are not in conformity with Islamic law, stating that that Surah Noor, the main Quranic verse on which Zina law is based, does not mandate jail time (tazir) for adultery at all; and, while it does allow for punishment of a hundred lashes when a case of adultery is proven, the standard of proof is actually much higher (impossible almost), requiring the testimony of four pious, male *eyewitnesses* to the act of Zina, or confession.

A serious criticism of the Hudood Ordinance, one for which it gained worldwide notoriety, is its conflation of Zina with Zina-bil-jabr (rape).[11] When a victim of rape is unable to convince the court of the charge, often her allegation of rape is itself considered as a confession of Zina, and she becomes liable to punishment.[12] Two 1983 cases that, through the media, came to symbolize this injustice, were those of Safia Bibi, a blind, eighteen-year-old female laborer who was raped by the sons of a wealthy landowner, and Jehan Mina, a fifteen-year-old raped by her uncle and cousin. Both women were convicted of Zina. More recently, in 2002, Zafran Bibi, 28, was raped by her brother-in-law and became pregnant. She was convicted and sentenced to stoning to death. But in June 2003, in what was considered a landmark judgment, the Federal Shariat Court acquitted Zafran Bibi, saying that a rape victim should not be considered to have committed a sexual offense and should not be punished.[13]

Not only are the laws discriminatory towards women, and applied in ways that have perverse results (as in the case of Zafran Bibi), such prosecutions are a waste and misallocation of precious government and judicial time and resources. Forces that align themselves with the religious groups like the Jamaat-e-Islami suggest that it is foreign-funded NGOs that complain about the Hudood Ordinances and that their motives are suspect. They argue that the laws do not discriminate against women as qazf laws allow for prosecution of people who falsely accuse others of Zina.[14]

They fail to see that qazf laws are hardly ever used, and that it isn't about a vested agenda but about the welfare of women who are not involved with decision making. Evidently many of the women in jail are victims of domestic violence. Most are from the bottom-most economic wrung of society, and politically and socially disempowered. Resources should be invested in addressing the needs of these women by educating and raising awareness about domestic violence and drug abuse, by building hospitals, homes, and schools. Instead, the state subjects them to further legal and socioeconomic violence by arresting them and prosecuting acts which are wholly private. Although most of these women will be acquitted at some point in the future, the complete breakdown of their families, and the degradation of their lives and those of their children who are forced to live in jail, can never be reversed by an acquittal.

NOTES

1. The Laws of Evidence introduced in 1983 met with significant protest. Under these laws, the testimony of one male would be equal to two females. This never passed, and in 1984 a newer version allowed for such testimony only in hadd or maximum punishment cases. See Asma Jehangir, Hina Jilani, *The Hudood Ordinances: A Divine Sanction* (Sang-e-Meel, 2003), 31.

2. Many of the eighty-eight women charged under Zina laws at the Karachi Jail were charged with multiple offenses.

3. Jehangir & Jilani, 48.

4. Jehangir & Jilani, 67.

5. According to Zia Awan, president of Lawyers for Human Rights and Legal Aid (Karachi), about 93 percent of women were exonerated in Hudood cases. *Dawn*, March 7, 2004, "Hyderabad: Repeal of Hudood Ordinance demanded." Ex-Chief Justice of Pakistan Supreme Court Nasir Aslam Zahid says that "About 150 women out of 200 are ultimately acquitted by the courts." Author interview, March 17, 2004.

6. Zohra Yusuf, (August 8, 2003), "A Time to Repeal," *Dawn Review*. The author argues for reparations for the many women acquitted in Zina cases who have lost a precious period of their life in jail facing trial. She says women's groups have not made this part of their campaign against the Ordinance.

7. Author interview of Superintendent Sheeba Shah, Karachi Central Jail, March 2004.

8. Human Rights Watch: *Crime or Custom, Violence against Women in Pakistan* (1999), 57.

9. *The News*, Sohail A. Warraich, May 5, 2002, "Keep it, Amend it, or Repeal it?" In 1999, out of 76 Zina cases appealed in the Shariat Court, 66 were appeals made by men, and 9 by women. See Amna Bano, *The News*, June 25, 2002, "Distorting the Hudood Ordinance."

10. Report on Hudood Ordinance 1979, 2003, Government of Pakistan, National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW) (2003), 36-39.

11. 40 percent of women interviewed in 1988 from a pool of 82 had been charged with Zina. 20 percent had originally complained of rape. Jehangir & Jilani, 138.

12. Shahnaz Khan, (December 1999), *Mediating the Hudood Ordinance in Pakistan: A Canadian Re-Telling*, 10; see also Brig (Retd) Hayat A.A., (2002), *Women: Victims of Social Evils* (Press Corporation of Pakistan), 18.

13. Amnesty International, AI Report 2003, http://web.amnesty.org/report2003/pak-summary-eng, "In the Name of Honor," Abdul Sami Paracha, *Dawn*, May 23, 2002.

14. See, for example, an Urdu language publication of the conservative, religious organization, Women Aid Trust, *Hudood Ordinances 1979: The Truth about the Problems with the Hudood Ordinance (Aitarazaat ki Haqiqat).*

Religion and Politics

There is Good News and Bad News

HARVEY COX

ONCE UPON A TIME, just a few decades back, culture critics were confidently predicting the demise — or a least the decline — of religion. Technology, literacy, education, science would take their inevitable toll. Religion would survive, perhaps, in small enclaves, family rituals, and folk festivals. But religion would never be a factor in the public sector, the "political realm." The dead would bury the dead.

Has any political-cultural predication ever been so wildly inaccurate? The prediction was freighted with ideology and wishful thinking. A quick check of the front page of the *New York Times* in the past few weeks mirrors what has been appearing there for the last two decades. In Europe, Muslim immigrants are challenging the predominantly secular cultures (as well as the racism and xenophobia) of nearly all the EU member states, while Turkey waits nervously at the threshold. In Japan, Prime Minister Koizumi prays publicly, even ostentatiously at the Yasakuni Shrine, which is staffed by Shinto priests and honors the thousands of Japanese who have "died for the emperor." His visit enraged and dismayed religious minorities — Christians and Buddhists — in Japan. In Iran, the Islamic revolution, which replaced the oppressive shah with an equally repressive theocracy, is now questioned by large numbers of Iranians (even though the recently elected mayor of Tehran speaks with an Islamist rhetoric.)

In India, the Bharata Janata Party, whose program was to "Hinduize" India was turned out of office, but retains a large following of the country's poor. In Pakistan, radical Islamic madrasas multiply while the public school system languishes. In China, the Maoist myth is dead, no longer believed even by Communist Party leaders. Since nature, culture, and politics, all abhor a vacuum, the big question now is what will replace it? The main contenders seem to be either the religion of consumer/capitalism (with its own myths and rituals) or some characteristically Chinese form of Christianity, or maybe a mixture of the two. In Latin America, which lived with and under 500 years of Catholic corporatism, evangelical Protestantism (mainly in its Pentecostal expression) is spreading like a prairie fire. The Catholic Church is hemorrhaging at the rate of tens of thousands per day. In Israel, pioneered by left-leaning, anti-religious Zionists, a growing ultra-orthodox movement, strongly allied with the American religious right, insists on pushing the "Jewish state" (which is actually a multi-religious state with a 20 percent Palestinian Muslim and Christian minority) toward a "Torah state." Inspired by the theology of the late Rabbi Abraham Kook, this "messianic Zionism" insists that Israelis have a divine mandate to cling to every square inch of the *eretz Israel*, and some look forward to the time when the Temple will be rebuilt.

And what can we say about the United States? A new brand of evangelicalism has plunged into a strange alliance with big business, super-patriotism, and anti-gay and anti-feminists forces, and has had some striking victories, but as 2006 begins, appears to be fragmenting and losing some of its clout. The Catholic Church, still reeling from the pedophile scandals has, at least temporarily, lost cred-

HARVEY COX *is Hollis Professor of Divinity, Harvard University. Author of* When Jesus Came to Harvard *(2004), he is best know for his 1965 book* The Secular City, *which has sold a million copies in fifteen languages.*

ibility for the prophetic voice it began to find in the past few decades with the bishops' eloquent statements on nuclear weapons and the economy. The official leadership of the American Jewish community, once a staunch supporter of progressive causes, seems paralyzed by its uncritical alliance with Israel's occupation policies as to be nearly incapable of reclaiming its former progressive role. Alliances have emerged among religious groups that once disdained each other. Conservative Protestants ally with Catholics over reproductive policy and gay rights, but the two groups differ sharply over the death penalty. The Republican strategy of federal support for "faith-based initiatives" has successfully lured some (but still very little) black church leadership away from its traditional loyalty to the Democratic Party.

So, the reader may well be asking, what is the *good* news? To respond to this question it is important to remember a number of things. First, religion by its very nature can kindle emotions for bane or for blessing. It inspires titanic leaders in the struggle for peace and justice like Mahatma Gandhi, the Berrigan brothers, Martin Luther King. Andre Trocme (Protestant pastor and leader of the French resistance in World War II), and Dorothy Day. But it can, and has, also inspired frantic xenophobia, cruelty and — most dangerous of all — false innocence and self-righteousness. American evangelicals led the 19th century struggles for abolition and prison reform. They provided the face and much of the inspiration for the civil rights movement and the opposition to the Vietnam War. Buddhists and Quakers immolated themselves in desperate protest against the American destruction of that small Asian country. In the 1970s, hundreds of churches and synagogues opened their doors to "illegal" refugees from the American wars on El Salvador and Nicaragua. When Bill Clinton submitted his "welfare reform" legislation (actually welfare removal) the most active opposition to it was mounted not by labor unions or left wing groups but by the Catholic bishops.

Second, if we look away from the domestic scene, we can see movements emerging in opposition to many of the regressive ones catalogued in the first paragraphs of this article. In China, for example, religious groups are beginning the long, hard task of rebuilding civic networks after the devastation of years of oppression and the rampant, rising inequality. Thousands of tiny Christian-based communities have come into existence. They are "pre-political" at this point, but represent some of the most marginated groups in the new cruelly-capitalist China. Falun Gong worries the Party leadership not because of its ideology, which seems quite bland, but by its amazing network and its capacity to assemble large numbers of people very quickly, features that worry any authoritarian regime

Christian and Buddhist groups in Japan are fighting to keep Japan's anti-military constitution in the face of American domestic Japanese pressures. The huge Buddhist lay organization, Soka Gokkai, which years ago had certain cult-like qualities, has transformed itself into a vigorous advocate of peace, gender, and cosmopolitan values, and has shed its proselytizing programs.

Developments in the Muslim world are maddeningly complex. Although Islamists sound to Westerners like theocrats (and often are), their main enemies are the ruling elites in Muslim countries whose control of the oil and alliance with Washington undergird their often shaky grip on power. What we are witnessing in the Middle East is a virtual civil war within Islam, even a kind of class struggle, in which the United States and Britain have become involved, but in which the West is viewed by millions of young Muslims only as a secondary enemy, allied to the wrong side. Understanding this lethal struggle within the Muslim world will require American progressives to rethink many of the categories we fondly cherish. The Muslim Brotherhood, which was founded in Egypt in part to oppose Nasser, attacked capitalism (as unfair to the poor), nationalism (as divisive) and communism (as atheistic and tyrannical), and advocated a return to the "Koranic values" of justice and equality.

POLITICAL PROGRESSIVES need to ask themselves a very hard question. Why are most of the religious movements mentioned above supported mainly — not entirely — by the poorer and most marginated segments of the populations? I know full well there is an automatic answer to this question, which left progressives can utter without any effort. It has to do with the famous "opiate of the masses." But the massive misfiring of this oft-repeated bit of Marxist lore requires more. It requires that we ask why it failed so spectacularly to explain what happened in the 20th century,.

Rethinking this question, furthermore, will in no sense necessitate moving outside a analysis that still draws its strength from Marxist thinkers. Two such thinkers in particular come to mind. The first is Antonio Gramsci, founder of the Italian Communist Party. Gramsci never accepted Lenin's wooden, materialist view of history or his peremptory dismissal of religion. A far more subtle thinker, his critique of religion was far more sophisticated. It was based on pragmatic and political grounds, not metaphysical ones. He knew more about the history of religion than Lenin, whose ideas grew from his understandable exasperation with Russian Orthodoxy. Gramsci knew that the long history of religion includes, of course, much evidence of its use by oppressive regimes to bludgeon and subdue their victims. But he also knew that religions also had — albeit less frequently — sparked revolutions. Most importantly he knew that if genuine support for socialism was to emerge from the bottom, religious symbols would inevitably play a role. Just after World War II, a group of left-wing Italian Catholics even tried to form a Catholic Communist Party, "but were forbidden to do so by the Vatican." Nevertheless, until quite recently the CPI attracted very large numbers of Catholic voters, even when the Vatican threatened automatic excommunication for such electoral misbehavior.

The other Marxist thinker who needs to be heeded now if we are to understand our historical moment is, of course, Ernst Bloch. A brilliant historian and theoretician, Bloch also reused to embrace metaphysical atheism. which he considered "bourgeois," and argued that the left must understand the power of myth, ritual and dream. Bloch settled in East Germany after World War II in the fond hope that the kind of humanistic Marxism he advocated might find a home there. It was not an impossible dream. The lower and middle ranks of the SED in the German Democratic Republic were filled with admirers of Bloch. However, after Bloch decamped for Tubingen when he saw, to his dismay, how things were developing in the DDR, his admirers had to bite their lips, at least in public. Then after the Russian and East German destruction of Dubcek's "socialism with a human face" in Czechoslovakia in 1968, Bloch became even more persona non grata and the DDR spiraled even further into Walther Ulbricht's derivative version of Stalinism. Given the demise of other plausible Marxist interpretations of religion, it may be time to retrieve his legacy.

American history offers its own examples of alliances between progressive political movements and religious groups. In each of his campaigns for president, Eugene V. Debs received the largest share of votes in Kanawha County, West Virginia, where United Mine Workers organizers and Pentecostal preachers cooperated in his support. Debs was succeeded in the leadership of the American Socialist Party by Norman Thomas, a Presbyterian minister. An admirer of Thomas, (and one of my teachers) the great Protestant theologian Reinhold Niebuhr ran for New York State Senate on the Socialist line in 1930. I have already mentioned the Civil Rights movement, but its is important to be reminded of the work done for years before Martin Luther King appeared on the scene by Fellowship of Southern Churchmen in helping organize the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and of the Highlander Folk School in Tennessee, founded and run by church people, where Rosa Parks received her training in nonviolent resistance to racism.

> "... when the last king is hanged with the entrails of the last priest."

It is sad that both progressive groups and religious movements in America have largely forgotten this history. The undeniable power of the religious right in the United States today has propelled its leading spokesmen into a position that sometimes enables them to re-write history, including religious history. They would like us to forget there ever was something called "The Social Gospel," which thrived in this country from the late 19th century until World War I (when, because of its bent toward pacifism, it began to decline as American jingoism rose.) Opponents of affirmative action have tried to co-opt Martin Luther King into being on their side. Neoconservatives have tried just as hard to hijack Reinhold Niebuhr, but can never stomach his constant warnings against national pride, and the sin of identifying American interests with what is best for the whole world.

There is much organizing to do. And a lot is happening, albeit not widely reported in an American press charmed by TV evangelists Focus on the Family. The progressive Evangelical, Jim Wallis, heads a national religiously based program to combat poverty, not with charity but with justice. His book, *God's Politics: Why the Right Gets It Wrong and the Left Doesn't Get It* was on the *New York Times* bestseller list for weeks. Wallis draws huge crowds at evangelical colleges all over America, and students and faculty greet his attacks on the religious right with standing ovations.. Rabbi Michael Lerner has assembled over 500 "spiritual progressives" year after year, and has just published a book entitled *The Left Hand of God: Taking Back Our Country From The Religious Right*. In October, 2005, leaders of several religious groups, joined by many lay people, met in Cambridge, MA to organize the "Inter-Religious Network to End the Nuclear Weapons Threat." Jews, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, and Protestants of several different denominations attended. A national program will be launched early next year.

One of the most active and promising of these religious social action coalitions is the Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice, based in Chicago. Supported by a wide range of denominations and groups, the ICWJ is rebuilding the old alliance between religion and labor, and a moment when the labor movement is poised either to burst into a new activism or continue to decline. Young labor leaders realize they need to reach out to new constituencies and that there is no reason whatever why the religious right should be able to mobilize churches, many of whose members need a strong labor movement. The ICWJ is currently fighting to make sure the Gulf Coast reconstruction is done with living wages. It is also continuing its long exposure of the labor practices of Wal-Mart.

This labor-religion front is a promising one. Labor organizers have been very receptive. Given the fact that so many of the workers in the service industries are black, Asian, or Latino, and often more religious than other populations, cooperation seems natural. When the students at Harvard carried out a building occupation, encampment in the Yard, and demonstrations to demand a living wage for the University's employees, the main faculty support came from professors of religion. Representatives from the fields that have often advocated for such causes were embarrassingly absent.

So there is some good news, after all, and one could report on many similar developments, but there is still a serious obstacle. All too frequently progressive religious people are greeted with scorn by considerable numbers of secular radicals and liberals. The old prejudices persist. Some still believe the liberation will only come when "the last king is hanged with the entrails of the last priest." One hopes that when that day comes, they can find a king somewhere who really wields power and that the priest is not Dan Berrigan.

The time has come for a new coming together of religious groups bent on real change and not just charity with secular progressive movements that have often steered away from such alliances for reasons that no should no longer prevent what has been, and could be again, a real solidarity.

Introductory Note to Onfray

Doug Ireland

Michel Onfray, the brightest star among the younger French philosophers, is a brilliant prodigy, a gifted and prolific author who, at the age of only 46, has already written 30 books.

I first encountered Onfray on the page when I read his 1989 book, *Le Ventre Des Philosophes: Critique de la Raison Dietetique* (*The Philosphers' Stomach*), and was completely captivated by his wit, his talented pen, and the prodigious cultural knowledge he displayed. Would Diogenes, Onfray asked, have been an adversary of civilization and its uses absent his obsessive taste for raw octopus? Would the Rousseau of the Social Contract have been such an advocate of frugality if his daily menu had included something more than dairy products? Had not Sartre, whose nightmares were peopled with crabs, suffered his whole life long in his theoretical architecture from his aversion to shellfish? Onfray hooked me with his inventive, amusing, and thought-provoking meditations — and since then, every time Onfray publishes a new book, I pounce! Reading Onfray is a tonic.

The son of a manual agricultural laborer and a cleaning woman, Onfray was a professor of philosophy for two decades, until he resigned from the national education system in 2002 to establish a tuition-free Université Populaire (People's University) at Caen, at which Onfray and a handful of dedicated colleagues teach philosophy and other weighty subjects to working-class and ghetto youth who are not supposed to be interested in such intellectual refinements. Onfray has never forgotten his underclass origins, and his dedication to helping the young of the left-out classes is admirable and inspiring. The Université Populaire, which is open to all who cannot access the state university system, and on principle does not accept any money from the State — Onfray uses the profits from his books to help finance it — has had enormous success. Based on Onfray's book *La Communauté Philosophique*: *Manifeste pour l'Université Populaire* (2004), the original UP now has imitators in Picardie, Arras, Lyon, Narbonne, and at Mans in Belgium, with five more in preparation.

A radically libertarian socialist, a self-described "Nietzschian of the left," Onfray's philosophical project is to define an ethical hedonism, a joyous utilitarianism, and a generalized aesthetic of sensual materialism that explores how to use the brain's and the body's capacities to their fullest extent — while restoring philosophy to a useful role in art, politics, and everyday life and decisions. All this presupposes, in Onfray's philosophy, a militant atheism and the demasking of all false gods.

Onfray is a well-known figure in France — not just through his many books, which avoid academic cant and are rendered in an elegant but accessible, sparkling prose that is admired even by critics who abhor his ideas — but as a frequent guest on French TV's numerous literary and intellectual chat shows. The national public radio network France Culture annually broadcasts his course of lectures to the Universite Populaire on philosophical themes. But Onfray has deliberately rejected the incestuous and corrupt Parisian mediatic-politico-academic microcosm and its seductive but ephemeral blandishments, and insists on living in the small Normandy town of Argentan where

Doug Ireland *is a veteran radical journalist who has been a columnist for the* Paris Daily, Liberation, *the* Village Voice, *the* New York Observer, New York Magazine, *and other publications. He can be reached through his blog, DIRELAND, at direland.typepad.com/direland/.*

he was born, just 57 km. from Caen. Free from the distractions of urban mundanities, Onfray devotes his time exclusively to his intellectual work, which helps explain his astonishing output at such a relatively young age.

In his books, Onfray asks (and answers) the most unexpected questions: in one of my favorites, *Le Désir d'etre un volcan: Journal Hédoniste*, he poses such conundrums as, What do prostitutes have to say to philosophers? What would a philosophy of panache look like? How does one sculpt energy? Can an erection be ancillary to knowledge? Onfray's wide-ranging works have explored the philosophical resonances and components of (and challenges to) science, painting, gastronomy, sex and sensuality, bioethics, wine, and writing. His most ambitious project is his projected six-volume *Counter-history of Philosphy*, of which two tomes have already been published, with two more ready to appear this year.

Onfray's latest book, *Traité d'Athéologie* (Paris, Editions Grasset), became the number one best-selling nonfiction book in France for months when it was published in the Spring of 2005 (the word "atheologie" Onfray borrowed from Georges Bataille). This book has just repeated its popular French success in Italy, where it was published in September 2005 and quickly soared to number one on Italy's bestseller lists. An acerbic, stylish, and erudite polemic against received religions in general and Christianity in particular, Onfray's latest book is a powerful antidote to the tsunami of religious fanaticism that is engulfing the Western world as well as the Islamic countries, and which is rapidly turning the United States into a theocracy. On the occasion of the publication of his *Traité,* Onfray debated on French national TV a panel of Catholic theologians that included the new Cardinal of Paris, Monseigneur Vingt-Trois (and swatted them all down like flies).

ONFRAY'S INFLUENCE is growing, especially among younger readers, all over Europe (where many of his most important works have been translated into German, Italian, Spanish, Dutch, Greek and Portuguese), as well as in South America (particularly Brazil), and is even beginning to make its way in China, Japan, and (South) Korea. But I've long considered it a scandal that not a single one of Onfray's 30 books has as yet appeared in English. Happily, that incomprehensible slight to a superb writer and world-class intellectual will be remedied next year, with the publication, on both sides of the Atlantic, of an English translation of the *Traité d'athéologie*. Hopefully this will be but the first of many of Onfray's delicious and substantive writings to appear in the Anglo-Saxon tongue.

Until then, if you can read French and would like to learn more about Onfray, his many books, and his Université Populaire, visit Onfray's website at http://perso.wanadoo.fr/michel.onfray/ You'll be glad you did.

The essay that follows is from one of the forthcoming tomes of Michel Onfray's projected six-volume *Counter-history of Philosophy*. Onfray's essay is the first major synthesis in modern times by a world-class intellectual of the work and life of the 17th century atheist priest Jean Meslier, who spent his entire adult life as a country priest in a small village in the Champagne region of France. Meslier's three-volume *Mon Testament*, published only after Meslier's death, was a revolutionary socialist and utopian communist call for the leveling of all inequalities, commencing as a categorical imperative with the exposure of religion's lies as the "opium of the people" long before Karl Marx. Meslier went to great lengths to insure his extraordinary manuscript's survival, so it wouldn't be suppressed by the authorities of church and State when he was gone. Having willed all his worldly goods to his poorest parishioners, before his death Meslier resorted to what we would now call samizdat, carefully copying — with a quill pen, by candlelight — four complete versions of his 2000-page manuscript, which he deposed in safe hands. It circulated under the table until Voltaire — who had read it three decades earlier and plagiarized from it — chose the moment of his own greatest battle with the Catholic Church to publish a bowdlerized version of Meslier. Meslier was influential and admired in the French Enlightenment — Diderot also borrowed freely from Meslier while rarely giving him credit. One of the most famous Meslier phrases — that the world's liberation would only be achieved when "the last king is strangled with the entrails of the last priest" — is frequently and erroneously attributed to Diderot. Meslier also became popular among early 19th century liberal Russian intelligentsia, who made French their second language; Pushkin nodded to Meslier when he wrote an 1819 quatrain that says, "with the entrails of the last Pope, we will strangle the last Tsar." (This was one of the poems that got Pushkin sent into administrative exile in South Russia by the Tsarist police.)

Meslier was also much admired by 19th century American free-thinkers — extracts from Meslier's *Testament* were published here in 1833 under the title "Common Sense," and again in 1878 as a book entitled *Superstition in all the Ages*, a version republished many times (both taken, unfortunately, from the bowdlerized Voltaire edition, which had excised much of Meslier's revolutionary politics). Marx much admired Meslier, and quoted him. And when the Bolsheviks came to power, and a stele to the "Heroes of Liberty" was erected on Red Square, Meslier's name was inscribed next to that of Spartacus. The rediscovery of Meslier began with the May 1968 student-worker rebellion in France, which adapted many of Meslier's revolutionary formulations to its own purposes.

Now, with this brilliant essay, Michel Onfray fully restores Meslier to his proper and important place in the history of ideas and the history of the left, and *New Politics* is quite proud to publish it.

Jean Meslier and "The Gentle Inclination of Nature"

MICHEL ONFRAY
TRANSLATED BY MARVIN MANDELL

I. Of a Certain Jean Meslier

HOW ASTONISHING that the prevailing historiography finds no place for an atheist priest in the reign of Louis XIV. More than that, he was a revolutionary communist and internationalist, an avowed materialist, a convinced hedonist, an authentically passionate and vindictively, anti-Christian prophet, but also, and above all, a philosopher in every sense of the word, a philosopher proposing a vision of the world that is coherent, articulated, and defended step by step before the tribunal of the world, without any obligation to conventional Western reasoning.

Jean Meslier under his cassock contained all the dynamite at the core of the 18th century. This priest with no reputation and without any memorial furnishes an ideological arsenal of the thought of the Enlightenment's radical faction, that of the ultras, all of whom, drinking from his fountain, innocently pretend to be ignorant of his very name. A number of his theses earn for his borrowers a reputation only won by usurping his work. Suppressed references prevent the reverence due to him.

His work? Just a single book, but what a book! A monster of more than a thousand manuscript pages, written with a goose quill pen under the glimmer of the fireplace and candles in an Ardennes vicarage between the so-called Great Century and the one following, called the Enlightenment, which he endorsed, by frequent use of the word, the sealed fate of the 18th century. A handwritten book, never published during the lifetime of its author, probably read by no one other than by its conceiver. A book put out of shape, pillaged, travestied, mutilated after his death. A doomed book of a doomed author; a brilliant book by a brilliant thinker . . . .

Jean Meslier was born January 15, 1664, in Mazerny in the Ardennes. This same year Louis XIV is giving fetes at Versailles in the chateau and the gardens. Marvelous and grandiose fetes with sumptuous expenditures, royal arrogance, a European demonstration of power and self-sufficiency. Moliere produces the first three acts of *Tartuffe* there. The father (Louis XIV), has at his disposal a secure wealth: cultivation of the lands and domestic textile industry.

In 1678 a priest in his neighborhood teaches him Latin and, with his parents' agreement, anticipates, by leading the child right up to the seminary, that he might one day take the orders. Jean performs his studies adequately, without much passion, and without allying himself with his fellow students, while finding his true interest in reading Descartes. Unsurprisingly, he climbs the rungs of ecclesiastical ranks: subdeacon March 29, 1687, deacon April 10, 1688, rural vicar, then priest January 7, 1689, at Etrépigny in the Ardennes; he spends forty years in this rectory, in a village of 165 inhabitants.

His superiors note him well. Without too much zeal, he performs the duties of his job, not without distinguishing himself by some unexpected behavior: often he asks no fee for the celebration of a marriage or for a funeral. At the end of the year, once his books were bal-

---

MICHEL ONFRAY *founded the tuition-free Université Populaire. His latest book is* Traité d'Athéologie *(Paris, Editions Grasset).*

anced, he distributes the rest to the poor of the commune. He lives, it seems, reasonably well on the revenue of two parishes and, perhaps, the rent for some plot of soil. Immersed in local life, he does not behave excessively. He likes his parishioners' kind of people — modest peasants, workers worn out by work — but without being unduly demonstrative. Outside the duties of his vicarage, he meditates, thinks, writes, works at his great work and passes a large part of his time studying the great masters in his library: Montaigne, whom he often cites in great detail, (Lucilio) Vanini, (Jean de) La Bruyère, (Etienne) La Boétie, still the major influences, but also other, more recent thinkers with whom he clashes : (Francois) Fénelon, (Blaise) Pascal, (Nicolas) Malebranche. Indeed, he gives equal time to the classic ancients: Seneca, Tacitus, Titus Livius (Livy), Flavius Josephus. And then the literature relevant to his job: the Bible. The Latin patrology [later published as a multi-volume edition by Jacques Migne — tr], the settled decisions of the Church Councils.

II. An Atheist Curé

His biography does not glitter: Neither curé at the court, nor worldly parvenu, nor abbé who frequents salons, nor libertine for marchioness, still less a powdered curé dancing the gavotte with the nobility. True, we do hear of one or two trips to Paris, trips during which he might, indeed, have met Voltaire or some other great person of his epoch — but who would give his time to a dingy curé newly arrived from the Ardennes countryside, a curé without the burning ambition of a Eugene Rastignac [fictional Balzac arrivist — tr.]?

His life, so discreet on the outside, contrasts with the glowing heat inside. A volcano beneath a thick layer of ice. But from two or three glances at his existence, we catch a glimpse of the furnace. Anecdotes reveal the essential. In the philosophic life, everything has meaning. Such things appear here or there. In fact, it exposes the most intimate to the light. Thus, his generosity toward his parishioners bears witness to a man devoid of the spirit of lucre, entirely turned to his spiritual mission of Being, not Having.

But, equally, let us turn to another story: the curé Meslier lives with a young servant woman. He is 30 years old; she is 23. The religious council forbids a young maid for a curé. Go figure why! Before 40 years of age (the canonical age of consent of the church for a woman to perform this work), the pheromones lead the dance! The hierarchy orders him to separate from her. He replies that she is his niece . . . and refuses. We do not know the outcome of this affair, but he does it again, exactly on the same grounds: this time he is 55, she, 18. The same churchly anger, the same refusal to obey. Punishment falls: a month's retreat in a Reims monastery. Discreetly and secretly, the curé had to practice the joy of free love advocated in his work.

And then this other adventure, a sign that this curé without material interest, close to the people and not refusing the joy of youth, knows too how to show his aversion to the people of the nobility. His sermons avowedly avoid even a form of the frantic apologia or Catholic edification. This curé, in a fragile relationship with God, presents the fables of his institution as an ethnologist would about a tribe to which he does not belong: "The Christians say that," "The Catholics think that," "The disciples of Christ affirm that," never does he mingle his own voice with the concert of bigots.

And one sermon resounds even today — because Jean Meslier calls a noble to account. Antoine de Toully — we know his name only by his noble title — mistreats his peasants. The curé before the assembled congregation, refuses to admit the lord to the service. In the same way, he forbids him from receiving incense and holy water. In other words, he declares war on the feudal lord.

The noble calls this to the attention of the bishop, who, as we might suspect, takes the side, as usual, of the blue blood. Meslier is reprimanded, recalled to the obedience. No matter, the following Sunday he asks his parishioners to pray, surely, but so that God might convert Antoine, enabling him to receive grace and not mistreat the poor or rob the orphan! For the petty nobleman present in his pew, this new affront does not pass unnoticed. Back goes the priest to the bishop's office. Thereafter, Meslier accumulates bad reports.

The bishop takes the side of the blue blood. Meslier is reprimanded.

The relations are not settled during the lifetime of Toully — at his (Toully's) death, Meslier urges the prayers of the faithful for the deceased, but adds without malice the importance to pray for him so God would pardon him and permit him to expiate, in the other world, his numerous extortions down here against the poor and the orphans of the commune of Etrépigny. Persistent curé . . .

The intention appears to be laudable: to appeal to the judgment of God could well be justified, above all on the part of a priest, but this priest believes in neither God nor Devil; he abominates the Christian religion, laughs like a madman at the fables of devout Christians and the devoutly religious, as he says, of the life after death, of hell and of paradise, of the judgment of sins, of the judgment of souls: because the curé Meslier is an atheist, the first to affirm so clearly, radically, and markedly that God does not exist, that religion depends on fraud, and that a post-Christian philosophy is needed.

III. A Philosophic Bomb

When the unfortunate Jean Meslier joins in death the aristocrat of Etrépigny, he leaves behind him a philosophical work that one can, without risk of exaggeration, compare to a bomb. Indeed, the *Testament* is a time bomb. His precise timing aims to produce the maximum amount of damage to the targets clearly defined: God, the Catholic religion, priests, monks, Jesus Christ, the prophets, the Church, the authorities — kings and princes, emperors and popes, tyrants, nobles, diverse parasites, people of justice, and other powerful men of this world.

Whom does this curé who is not even Catholic bless? The poor, the miserable, those without rank, the victims, the peasants, the workers, the exploited, the humiliated, the offended, but also the women, the children, without forgetting those who feel — the animals who submit above all to the wickedness of humans. His faction? The side of every living creature whose right to exist peacefully and quietly is denied.

This bomb aims at an explosion and a new clean slate. Nevertheless, the proposal of Jean Meslier is not nihilistic. To destroy, certainly, but in order to construct or reconstruct. This drive to be done with the old world is sixty years away from the first jolts of the French Revolution and acts as a preparatory moment for a new world. His dialectical thought — even if the dialectic often gets lost in the digressions of a rococo exposition — begins for the first time in the West a post-Christian aspiration. To think *against* Christian teachings, surely, but above all *after* them.

Atheism does not constitute an end in itself, but a beginning, a necessary base, an ethical foundation. Meslier negates the principle of God in order to arrive at a caring morality of a joyful body, of happy existence, of peaceful relations between beings and between the sexes. His ethical concern unfolds and defines him as a political communalist. This unpublished curé invents communism, indeed, anarchism.

The curé Meslier remains the man of a single book, this famous *Testament* — the name by which we know him: in fact, *Memoir of the Thoughts and Feelings of Jean Meslier,* or, to be more precise: *Memoir of the Thoughts and*

Feelings of J... M... Prie... Cur... of Estrep... and of Bal... On an Exposition of Errors and of Abuses of the Behavior and of the Government of Men, where We See clear and Evident Demonstrations of the Vanity and Falsity of All the Gods and of All the Religions of the World in Order to Be Addressed to His Parishioners After His Death and in Order to Serve As Witness of Truth to Them, and to All Like Them. In His Testimony to the People. Henceforth abridged as *Testament*.

He also leaves annotations, in his own handwriting, of *The Demonstration of the Existence of God* by (Francois) Fénelon (known under the title *Anti-Fénelon)* and the *Reflections on Atheism* of the Jesuit (Jean de) Tournemire, but nothing more than his scathing attack contains. On the other hand, accompanying his big manuscript, he writes a letter to the curés of his neighborhood. In twenty pages he proposes an excellent synthesis rather more attractive than the thousand pages of the somewhat stodgy *Testament*.

IV. The Essays of an Atheist

MESLIER WRITES this manuscript by hand, with a goose quill pen, in the feeble light of a candle, in the evening, after the priestly obligations. Looking ahead, he makes four copies to avoid the loss of the fruit of forty years of readings, meditations, analyses, reflection where some ill-intentioned person, a henchman of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, could throw its body into the hearth.

This book requires ten years of clandestine work between 1719 to 1729, when Meslier is between 50 and 60 years old — the age at which death puts a period to his enterprise. Surely, he has time to finish it, but he indicates in the course of his exposition, that with time pressing on him, he confesses he has written in eagerness and haste. Probably pricked by the violent desire to resolve the contradiction which has consumed him for so long: having to teach vain and frivolous propositions which he does not believe, having to lie and to deceive people to sell belief in another world, which he knows does not exist . . . The curé confides that this double role repels him at the deepest level. The humiliating tension is resolved in the work which sublimates it.

Why does he not renounce these falsities during his lifetime? In an incredible manner, this Prometheus kills God on paper, ravages religions, puts to the fire all the conventional philosophies, destroys political fortresses, spares nothing and no one who resembles from near or afar a figure of authority; he confesses plainly his reasons: for not renouncing publicly — he wishes to avoid harming his parents, his family, his near ones.

And then, prudently, he adds: to avoid also the annoyances associated with a public retraction. The Catholic Church has the pyre handy, the enduring persecution. The curé wants, he writes, *to live tranquilly.* Might this be the price of this double game — a double ego — which illustrates superbly the libertine logic suppressed on the outside under laws and customs of his country, yet in the interior absolutely free, radically free, totally free.

But this tension within a solitary person in the Ardennes with no help from the philosophical community practiced by baroque libertines in Parisian salons, has probably produced unbearable problems of conscience, nameless psychological grief, and mental suffering which only the writing of the *Testament* — like a madman crying a violence which he keeps inside himself — could little by little lessen.

The fact that the manuscript arises from a desire to go beyond personal psychological contradiction does not invalidate its theses . On the other hand, the form of the work bears witness to the forces acting both against the writing and against the writer. In the manner of Montaigne — often cited and much admired — Meslier finds himself entirely within his book: he makes it, then is made by it, he is the matter even of his own book, he relies on it, he constructs it in speaking silently, the *Testament*? The Montaigne

Essays of an atheist.

The priest without God dies June 28 or 29, 1729. The cadaver clearly offends the Catholic hierarchy, since they have unsealed the letters and taken cognizance of these voluminous packs of darkened pages. The Church makes the corpse disappear, it knows how, and buries the curé in the vicarage garden. No tomb, no plaque, no distinctive sign. No need for the name of the apostate to figure on the Catholic registry — the love of one's neighbors and the forgiveness of sins have limits . . .

In his major work Meslier envisages his postmortem destiny. Coherent, he knows that in this state conscience finds itself annihilated along with the matter of the brain. Thereafter, all suffering becomes impossible. Nothing happens at death except decomposition. In the manner of Diogenes, he states that they can do what they want to do with his corpse: eat it, cook it; fricassee it; boil it, roast it, little matter what. Surely, he cannot imagine that the vicarage garden will one day be integrated into the property of the lord of the manor! Meslier lies today — no one knows exactly where — in the ground of descendants of Antoine de Toully! But neither that, nor the rest, he need no longer to be truly angry at him!

V. A Rococo Architecture

THE *TESTAMENT* PROPOSES new proofs developed in 97 chapters of various lengths and of problematic arrangement. Its structure is not easily perceived; the constructions slips away; the internal architecture does not manifest itself at first glance — or at the second. Parts overlap, subjects interpenetrate. Not that clarity is missing — the text is never complex even at the most arduous moments dealing with materialist ontology, but the essential vanishes under the incidental. Thought is hidden in the development.

The *Testament* recalls an oral philosophy in the manner of the *Essays* of Montaigne: the book could have been copied by dictation to a patient and abetting scribe. Reading Meslier is *hearing* his imprecation coming down from the pulpit from which he would have liked to convoke post-mortem all his parishioners. The text resembles that of an inflamed sermon, a glowing Philippic, an endless monologue, a flowing discourse which nothing can stop, so great the anger motivating this radical logic.

And, as in all soliloquies, repetition reigns, the style becomes redundant, Meslier speaks in his writing and becomes intoxicated, he uses words repeatedly, but he also duplicates entire expressions. He recopies certain sentences or certain proofs. Imprecation continues to form the base, and variations are sometimes superimposed. The ensemble triumphs as a rococo monument where the indispensable and the useless are mixed with extravagant overlays.

Surely the cathartic function of the work explains its jumbled nature. The disorder concerns only the exposition of ideas, the construction, the structure — the form. Never the foundation. No obscurity, no new words, no taste for the hazy, so dear to the philosophic professionals. The pen goes right to the goal. No leftovers from classicism, no vocabulary of the philosophic caste or of its accomplice, the religious cult. Meslier throws himself into the work, rushes, accelerates, he acts like a driven man, knowing as a philosopher that death can prevent him from bringing his great work to a conclusion.

But the purifying logic of writing does not explain by itself the main allure of the edifice. We have to reckon equally with the spirit of the times, the zeitgeist. The *Testament* recalls the rococo, surely, but in two senses of the term: the conventional sense — loaded, crowded, luxuriant, profuse — but also the aesthetic sense relative to the first years of the eighteenth century. The philosopher does not escape the color of the times, a book, even a didactic book, obeys the same laws as every other work of art.

What does the history of art tell us? The rococo is characterized by ornamental exuberance, broken or wavy lines, the dialectic play of curves and counter-curves, profusion, asymmetry and absence of symmetry, the content stretched out, softened, the presence of those famous rocailles, whence rococo gets its name, but also chicory, vines, and garlands . . . All that corresponds to the form of the work. Like Montaigne's (baroque) *Essays*, which proceed from *leaps* and *capers*, the (rococo) *Testament* results in a semblance of a Dionysian dance. Apollo does not appear there, at least in its style.

Let us go further and try to define rococo architectural technique beyond just a cut and dried inventory. In architecture, the motifs of rococo style are located in places of access: window openings, joining together of dissimilar arcs, transitions between walls and archways. Hence the frets and curves which go back and forth and entwine with each other, blotting out the structural lines of the building. The same is true in the curé's big book: citations, references, repetitions, recurrent motives cover over the stages of the argument in an ebullition which clogs the progression of thought.

Surely, the eight proofs can each be summed up in a clear sentence, but often, the part concerned with a single line of synthesis is shunted to the side by graftings on the teaching stem. Let us try, all the same. First, *proof of futility and falseness of religions*: they contradict each other. Second, faith — *blind belief* — enters into contradiction with the *natural light of reason*. Third, the visions of prophets are the work of madmen. Fourth, prophecies are never fulfilled. Fifth, Christian morality contradicts all that nature teaches. Sixth, the Christian religion acts as the accomplice of political tyrannies. Seventh, atheism is an idea as old as the world. Eighth, the soul is mortal, an idea also as old as the previous one.

But, indeed, each proof contains sometimes a summing up of this or that other one, bits taken again *in extenso* in a demonstration against the current. Sometimes one re-reads entire pages. In a nearly fractal manner, each of the contents and the development of a single moment recalls the totality of the contents. A self-contained work, the *Testament* functions within itself because it develops themes and theorizes a vision of a coherent and systematic world — despite the apparent formal chaos.

VI. Intestines of Curés, Guts of Nobles

THIS ROCOCO FORM contains nuggets. Deep down are diamonds, which one must have the patience to go look for at the cost of a close, rigorous, determined reading. In this castle of multiple rooms where we get lost often during the first reading, there does exist a decipherable project: an ethic of happiness and how to get there: a politics of communalism. Meslier invents and proposes a social hedonism, he projects into a collective dimension a jubilation that for a long time was an individual matter — let us recall Epicurus or Montaigne. And for the first time in history.

People are often unaware that a sentence, having had its hour of glory on the wall in the Latin Quarter, May, '68, sprang, despite its paraphrasing in the spirit of the time, from the famous *Testament*. On a wall of the Sorbonne a graffiti announced: *When the last social philosopher is strangled by the intestines of the last bureaucrat, will we still have problems?* This young man painting on the wall knew Meslier in recalling the proposal of a man of the people who wished that "all the great ones of the earth and all the nobles might be hanged and strangled with the intestines of the last priest . . ." The young man who wrote his curses borrows it, surely, and signs his agreement with the priest.

The red priest remains in the annals of holy anger and permanent indignation. He regrets, for example, not having at his disposal either the muscular arms of Hercules — a model for cynical Greeks — or his club, or his force, or his courage in to stun the kings, the tyrants, the priests — *ministers of error and iniquity* and all the exploiters of the peoples of the earth who produce social injustice. *To purge* *the vices of the world*, there is his project. 1789 will give body to his plan with the outcome that we all know . . .

The ethics of happiness presupposes a prior job of destruction of Christianity. Well before the cultural revolution of Year II of the Revolution and the robust rage of the Hébertists, Meslier undertakes de-Christianization on ideological grounds. From them comes not only total war against Christian theology, Catholic morality, but also Cartesian philosophy, which he perceives quite well as the fellow traveler of devout Christians.

After having burned the Christian boats, he reconstructs a new fleet: a materialist ontology, a morality based on that of Eudemus of Rhodes and a post-Christian philosophy. To which he gives a pragmatic dimension by elaborating and inaugurating a new politics: after atheism, the priest invents, among a thousand other things, the class struggle, communism, anarchism, the international revolution, collective disobedience, public welfare. The ideologists of the French Revolution will only have to bend down to gather the red and black flowers of the *Testament*.

VII. Fire Against Devout Christians and the Devoutly Religious

The curé Meslier proposes the first atheist thinking in Western history. Too often people take atheism for what it is not. Protagoras' conclusions about gods lead us to say nothing about them, neither whether they exist, nor whether they don't exist. That is agnostic, not atheist. Epicurus, Lucretius, and the Epicureans affirm multiple gods, established in a subtle manner, situated in the between-worlds. That is polytheism, not atheism; Spinoza maintains the coincidence of God with Nature. (Lucilio) Vanini and (Giordano) Bruno think the same. That is pantheism, not atheism. (Pierre) Charron, (Francois de)La Mothe Le Vayer, (Charles de) Saint Evremond, and other baroque libertines believe sacrificing to the Catholic religion is necessary because that is the religion of their country; they avoid dwelling on the nature of God, but do they believe in Him? That is a Christianity turned Epicurean, heterodox with regard to the Vatican, surely, but not atheism; Voltaire cries out the useful and indispensable character of a Great Watchmaker in view of the superb mechanism of Nature: Rousseau agrees with that. That is deism, not atheism. An atheist denies clearly the existence of God; he does not refine definitions.

Atheism probably goes against the grain for common people incapable of theorizing their world view. But, unless I am mistaken, the *Testament* manifests for the first time in history this idea of a universe rid of God, an idea which induces a coherent world view — immanent and materialist. The exact date is unknown, but it is somewhere between 1719 and 1729. Jean Meslier writes: "There is no God." (II, 150) *Ite missa est*. (The Mass is over. — tr.)

Not yet. The mass is not finished because it remains to be said. The book acts in the manner of a great atheist sermon in an address to his parishioners abused by his own fault. In the urgency of coming to a conclusion and getting rid of a great guilt accumulated during so many years, Meslier accumulates propositions, adds proof upon proof at the risk of saying one time, two times, ten times the same thing. The book improvises as if it were an oral communication. The text speaks; Meslier does not express himself as one would do in a book, but the book speaks like the curé Meslier.

To every lord every honor. Fire on God. Meslier abandons what is said customarily about this and demonstrates that these many definitions constitute a tissue of contradiction. All Christians affirm that: God is omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient; he created the world and humans, he is Providence. Putting this into perspective with reality proves that he has none of these qualities. The world itself, as Meslier goes on to prove, is evidence of the non-existence of God.

Examples:

God's kindness? What shall we make of all the places in the Holy Scriptures which show him as jealous, angry, vindictive, aggressive, wicked, demanding, unjust, capricious, and of other human qualities all too human? Is it goodness when God judges men, in certain cases, to eternal damnation, to the fire of hell forever and for some unimportant sin? Is it goodness that allows evil when he could prevent it and produce only good? Come on . . .

Omnipotent? But where does all the misery of the wretched, the poverty of the poor on this planet come from? Why do wicked men exist? How do we explain the invention of evil when it would be sufficient for God just not to want it, then there would be a paradise on earth? And the exploitation of men, the social injustices, the whole complicity of the powerful ones with the Church, what justification is there for all that?

Merciful? Same remarks as about God's kindness: this God creates a Hell, sends unbaptised dead children into Limbo and deprives them of paradise, inflicts purgatory in the case of the undetermined; he expresses so much anger in punishing blindly, in rewarding vice and punishing virtue, this God looks to be the exact opposite of mercy . . .

Invulnerable, inaccessible? Then why is God vexed if someone commits a lie, desires his neighbor's wife, if someone does not honor his father or his mother — mere trifles however, taking into consideration as justification for his anger. What good does it do to invoke him, pray to him, ask favors of him, desire his intercession for our little self and our small affairs, if no communication is possible with him?

This God wants us to love him, but he never manifests himself. A straightforward, clear and incontestable appearance ought to be in his power. How can we love a power that we fear, a power that makes himself dreaded, and that we finally come to detest him so great is his cruelty manifested upon the most innocent people who bear the blows of fate? He wants obedience, but never makes his will clearly known.

The Church makes the corpse disappear.

Meslier does not develop an analysis of the human fabrication of God. He does not show, like Feuerbach, that this fiction is fabricated by men who fear death, dread nothingness and invent no matter what in order to live despite their cramped, limited, and finally brief existence. He does not explain why God is the fundamental fiction of human impotence turned inside out like fingers of a glove and venerated under a sole power as desirable powers might be: people cannot know all, are unaware of the psychological omnipresence, they are born, live, grow old, die and disappear into the void. To live with all this powerlessness, the same people venerate omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, the eternal, the one who was not created, the incorruptible, the immortal given to the qualities of a divinity who is one as man is one.

But Meslier reclaims a continent never embarked upon, unexplored; we cannot ask him to finish in one stroke and in one instant the atheist monument . . . His negation, his dismantling, his proposition to read God as a fiction — there is the essential. Dozens of philosophers ponder this idea; they avoid proposing it openly; they come to terms with heaven and reason; they have the intelligence and the good sense to compose still and despite all with this fiction. It is for Meslier to announce for the first time philosophically the death of God.

VIII. The First Deconstruction of Christianity

If Meslier is the first atheist philosopher, he also holds another glorious title: he shines equally in the sky of ideas for his mastery of the first deconstruction of Christianity. God after all is one matter, religion another, and the Christian concept a third. Atheist, he excels also as an atheistic ideologue who knows how to dismantle the gears of the Christian machine in order to show its fictitious character.

Surely, there is a precedent in Richard Simon (1638-1712) living obscurely in his library, a Norman curé who discovers biblical exegesis and writes a great number of works, some in several volumes, including three major histories critical of the New Testament in its different versions and its principal commentators. (Jacques-Benign) Bossuet and the Jesuits did everything to make life impossible for this incorruptible priest who believed himself able to unite reason and the Christian texts. He falls seriously ill . . . Richard Simon dies of grief, they say; his manuscripts are burned . . . During this epoch Meslier goes on working on his magnus opus.

Like Richard Simon, Jean Meslier reads scrupulously those texts called sacred, but with an identical care for pagan texts. To read the *Gospels* like Tacitus' *Annals?* A mortal sin during this epoch. The Ardennes curé has at his disposal the Latin Fathers of the Church and the *Bible* in his library; he can read carefully and establishes that, in the inspired texts, dictated by God, contradiction reigns; in fact contradictions abound, absurdities overflow, and lies teem.

To begin with, Meslier affirms a rare thing during this epoch: the pollution of the source of all Christian myth. The Scriptures are not reliable. Falsified, patched together, and functioning only for political interests, established into an allegedly coherent corpus, in order to give ideological weapons to the temporal power supported by spiritual power, one can give no credit to this mythology.

Saint Jerome says it himself . . . Why do we have here the Apocrypha, there the synoptic gospels? Who decides? According to what criteria? For what reasons? What interests? Meslier replies and points to the determining role of the Synods, that of Carthage and that of Trent; he arranges these acts on his display tables: these are princes in vile league with the bishops, emperors supported by clergy, who make arbitrarily these decisions which form the law.

These books contain nothing sacred. On the contrary, the formidable number of rough estimates, of contradictions, of imperfections, of defects, of errors, are all witness to a human production, very human! Meslier sees acting in certain literary creations the same principle that animates folklore and fiction: "stories of fairies and our old novels," writes Meslier, proceeding from the same world . . . he recommends Aesop rather than Luke, Mark, or Matthew!

To those who argue of the power of allegory and challenge the atheist critical exegesis because of its supposed simplism, the curé replies in calling attention to allegory's hidden sense, second, extra-literal to theologians who insist upon the third, fourth, or nth degree taking up with great subterfuge: this bad faith appealing to that of the reader in soliciting his interpretative fantasy. This fraud, "anagogic and tropological" he lays up to Saint Paul, this "great trickster" careful to cover his errors and his guesses by this intellectual malice.

VIII. The Plums of Paradise

THE SUPPOSEDLY HOLY SCRIPTURE collects absurdities. Hence the miracles of the prophets. Meslier devotes a long time to cutting to pieces these ravings that contradict the laws of nature, which are the only rules recognized in a sound undertaking conducted by the light of reason. Whatever happens manifests itself ineluctably according to the natural order. We cannot believe in the possibility of walking on water, of splitting the sea into two, resuscitating the dead, healing the incurable, multiplying fish, changing water into wine, and so on without exposing ourselves to ridicule.

If someone today claimed to accomplish

this kind of miracle or to have been present at one of them, certainly he would be led away to join other madmen, for he would be mad. These extravagances are not to be read in an allegorical sense because they are presented as proof of divine supernatural powers.

Meslier puts into perspective the pagan texts and the holy texts, then shows that miracles abound in each category as in the other. Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* is as valuable as either the gospel narrator or the apologetic books telling about the lives of saints, who, decapitated, keep walking on their road, immersed in a cauldron of boiling oil, continue to pray and preach calmly, dismembered or cooked on the grill, eviscerated down to the last intestine, keep sporting a smug smile of the insane, certain of their deeds.

To which he adds theological considerations: let us even admit the existence of miracles, what would we have to conclude about them? That this God who grants his favors in a random manner, saving one but rejecting another, granting his benevolence to the first but not to the second, this God must be of an unshakable cruelty! One who, (see above), contradicts even the definition of God which always emphasizes Justice. To become credible the miracle ought to work for everyone, always, all the time, which would define paradise on earth. And we are far from it. CQFD (Ce qu'il fallait demontrer, That which must be demonstrated — tr.), writes Spinoza.

The extravagances recorded in the Bible are no more worthy of credit than the miracles. Hence, to hold with *Genesis*, the primal paradise, the talking serpent, the story of the apple — or of the plum, writes Meslier — the tree of life, of knowledge, a first man and a first woman, an original sin, its transmission to all the descendants of Adam and Eve. Fable, fable, fable . . .

IX. A Sick Person named Jesus

Jean Meslier does not doubt the historical existence of Jesus. For that, it is necessary to wait for Bruno Bauer (1809-82), a Hegelian of the Left and his *Critique of the Synoptic Gospels* (1841). But he does reduce Jesus to a human condition, and of the shabbiest: this *arch-fanatic*, he writes, is equally *mad, out of his mind, miserably fanatic, unhappy rogue, a man of the abyss, vile and despicable*, a person with adventures more extravagant than those of Don Quixote!

His thoughts are unsettled. This man pretends to come on earth to redeem through his death the sins of the world, but, on one hand, he shows himself incapable of saving himself from the agony of the cross; on the other hand, since his death we have not seen either evil or the planet's negativity, diminish, as announced. Moreover, all his prophecies are vain and have never been fulfilled: they prove the mental disorder of a man not of a son of God!

So many pronouncements placing Jesus on the side of the malicious and the wicked. Because to deceive men about their fate, to lead them into error about things as essential as the conduct of their existence and their fate after death, these are culpable lies and merit the gallows. The method amounts to metaphysical fraud.

His mode of life equally bears witness against him: why did he, this raving person, have to run everywhere, to come and to go through all the areas of Judea in order to evangelize and try to convert to his fables the greatest number of people? And then to say that the Devil led him to a mountain peak in order to tempt him? Is he serious? Would all this be proposed by a man equipped with all his mental faculties?

Note even his miracles. When he supposedly accomplishes these fairy tales, we have to see, writes Meslier, what kind of guru he pretends to be! The fragile psychology of this man evidently matches that of his disciples, who are also of a debilitated mental constitution. His deeds form an incredible tissue of lies.

This person has no real consistency. His disposition is dream-like. All we need is to pay attention to the *Gospels* carefully. Contradictions abound. Historical truth does not exist. The witnesses disagree in every sense. Examples: the genealogy of Jesus differs from one evangelist to another; the facts and the gestures, the anecdotes of the infant Jesus do not coincide; the length of time of the duration of his public life varies; there are even differences among his acts after baptism; and on the details of his first retreat; equally on the inconsistencies in the time and manner in which the individual apostles follow him; on that which really happens during the Last Supper; on the women having followed him since Galilee; on the number, the place, the circumstances of his apparitions after his death; likewise about his ascension into heaven; and these among many other examples . . .

X. Paste and Flour Idols

TO BEGIN WITH, the Church is a vile and pernicious sect. Historians of the epoch confirm it. Its dogmas are loaded with records of extravagance: the Holy Trinity, for example. How can three people make one when the Father engenders the Son, hence ought to precede him, without speaking of the Holy Ghost . . . This belief, Meslier writes, denotes real paganism!

Same comment about the supposed mystery of the Eucharist. The Middle Ages abounds with texts of philosophers and theologians giving long and laborious dissertations on the status of the host. With the help of casuistry, one asks oneself what would become of it if, for example, a rat came along to chew it up alas, or if, dropped into a ditch — by a priest staggering to give extreme unction . . . does it still remain the body of Christ?

Theology has many unsmiling dissertations on these subjects — all resolved by a sentence of the curé which defines the host as "an idol of paste and flour" using the same title as pagan idols of iron, wood, stone, gold, or silver adored by the most backward people of ancient times. Folly! Jesus never asked to be worshiped in this bakery form. In no part of the *Gospels* can this stupid superstition be proven or deduced.

The Eucharist, a Christian mystery, needs Aristotle's thought to establish its philosophic legitimacy. Scholasticism, with its categories of substance, accidents, genera, substantial forms, is the sole authorization of this ontological three card monte which permits affirmation of the bread really, not symbolically — " literally" and not "figuratively,' for, to speak like Thomas Aquinas, the body of a man dead two thousand years ago is identical with the wine originating in French vineyards, real blood of the same man.

One understands why the Church has always condemned so strongly materialist thought since for it this story of substance and of its accidents counts for zero, because in its eyes everything in the world, including the hosts or the chalice wine, is reduced to an atomic arrangement purely and simply. A disciple of Epicurus cannot decently believe in the nonsense of transubstantiation.

We are not surprised that Meslier defends as well, in proper logic, an extremely coherent materialist theory, which it might be said in passing, is formulated independently of Epicurus, without recourse to his atoms, particles, to the void, to the *clinamen* (deviation or swerve — tr.) and to the whole Epicurean arsenal, an original, modern materialist theory shamelessly appropriated by La Mettrie, (Adrien) Helvétius, (Baron Paul-Henri de) Holbach, (Marquis Donatien de) Sade.

XI. For a Post-Christian Morality

THUS MESLIER UNDERMINES Christianity in its foundation, its reasons, its rationale, its logic, its rhetoric, its beliefs, its myths, its fables: God does not exist; the sacred texts, products of forgers, convey fables; Christianity is a factory of absurd fictions involving paradise, hell, original sin, etc.; Jesus is not the Son of God, but a miserable madman, human, very human; the dogmas and mysteries of the Holy Trinity type or the sacrament like the Eucharist proceed from the idolatrous belief of pagans. But Meslier attacks, as well, the theory of Christian morality, which he finds perfidious, bad, against nature and unfounded.

After the destruction of the logical fantasies of Heaven, he attacks the pernicious practices of the Catholic world on earth. The deconstruction of theology expands into a deconstruction of ethics. The Christian ethic is degraded because it is pegged on the compulsion of death, it loves and cherishes misery, it devotes a cult of suffering in the insistent logic of the imitation of the Passion of Christ. How can anyone defend a position like that?

Why condemn desires? These are natural affections of the flesh — "the gentle inclination of Nature." Let us remain in the Christian logic: if desires exist it is indeed because God placed them into the body of men. How could he endow humans with desire and ask them to detest it? Let us leave this logic: God does not exist, only nature has put these affections into human flesh. She has her good reasons — reproduction of the species, continuation of humanity.

The sexual morality defended by the Church prevents sexuality outside marriage; and it codifies very severely the sexuality of a married couple. Meslier finds nothing to criticize in the free usage of one's body, including partners not united in holy sacrament. The hedonist contract suffices to legitimize the sexual act: a desire shared for a time and agreed to by both parties. Too many badly married women suffer; too many children submit under the hard law of married parents who hate each other but who remain together because the Church forces them to and threatens them with Hell if they divorce. Meslier defends a common law marriage, understood as apt for priests, monks, and brothers — and divorce for a relationship without sexual and sensual fulfillment.

No question however of a license for the body or for celebrating debauchery. Meslier understands pleasure as a simple thing, natural, not complicated. Excess does not suit him. No prude, but also no defender of seignoral libertinage of the powerful ones of the moment, the curé proposes a flesh without guilt, playing naturally with the potentialities of permitted joy here and now.

Nature commands: one cannot desire what goes against it. Austerity endangers it. If by chance one practiced continence or chastity, if one forbade oneself all sexuality, then the world will go toward its ruin and its end. The Christian commandments are unfounded and ridiculous. The model for sexuality is none the less not the animal, as it is for cynics. For Meslier, thinking of baroque libertines, when it comes to sexuality, one must submit to the laws and customs of one's country: thus one will not agree to incest or other endogamic sexualities. On alternative modalities of sexuality, homosexuality for example, Meslier keeps silent.

The atheist curé follows through with his criticism of Christian morality: it is wrong with regard to grief; it is wrong in matters of sexual morality; it is equally indefensible in its eulogy of love for one's fellow men. This dangerous invitation supposes that men and women ought to endure wickedness without flinching . Not to respond to blows, to offer the other cheek, to love one's enemies, there is that which justifies the perverse order of the world. With similar logic, one can give free rein to feudal brutality, exploitation of the weak, and assure impunity for those beasts of prey who are louts and lords, parasites of the system, and other tyrants of the monarchy.

To bless those who curse us, to pardon those who injure us daily under the pretext that one day in the next world justice will be rendered one very hypothetical last day of judgment — this is what, here and now, legitimizes the law of the jungle. The text of *Beatitudes* plays a conservative, counter-revolutionary role; it endorses the status quo and gives its blessing to general injustice.

XII. An Ethic of Pity

Meslier defends the humble, the humiliated, those without status, modest people, the victims. Not astonishing that we find from his pen a defense, unpublished in the history of ideas before him, of women, children and animals, these three groups of exploited humanity upon whom violence, and wickedness, are primarily concentrated along with brutality of husband at his wife, parents at children, masters at animals. We could start with a view of these three victims of servitude. Let us not forget, first of all, that these pages date during the first years of the 18th century, and humanity is subject to the exclusive white formula — European, male, Christian, adult. If Meslier writes nothing about people of color — just a few lines in passing in the relativist spirit of a (Francois de) La Mothe Le Vayer — nothing about people outside Europe, he still devotes significant sentences to beaten, abandoned children, to neglected and unhappy women in bad marriages, and then long convincing pages fighting against the Cartesian theses of animals as machines in favor of a real humanity of animals. At his epoch the combat does not exist.

The Christian position on the indissolubility of marriage causes ravages in families: the impossibility of leaving an aggressive, violent, evil spouse transforms life into a nightmare. When parents separate, the children — though rescued by in-laws, grandfathers and grandmothers, surrogates or tutors, are not provided with a better education. Their experience and the bad examples transform these individuals into asocial adults. Meslier hopes for communal education supported by public funds in order to contribute to children's education, which promotes public welfare.

The curé combats servitude in all forms. Consistent with his materialism, he poses the problem of animals as a philosopher for whom there exists only one world with multiple variations. The material unity of being prevents him from thinking in terms of hierarchy, and the submission and servitude that come with hierarchy. This reading of immanence does not oppose, as does Christian thought, dualism to transcendence, two universes, men and women, humans and animals, adults and children, males and females — offering one positively over the other.

Meslier cannot bear figures of evil. His metaphysical position seems to proceed less from a rational and reasonable demonstration than from a radical instinct, from a visceral response to the spectacle of injustice and iniquity. In the manner of Montaigne who speaks in the first person and thinks universally, taking off from autobiographical anecdotes, Meslier discloses that he can not endure butchers and butcheries. The life of blood makes him unconfortable. And, when it is necessary to kill chickens, pigeons, or pigs to eat, he feels a genuine aversion, a real repugnance.

If he should assent to vegetarianism, it would not be as a result of intellectual deductions, but from this very incapacity to endure the spectacle of grief and the suffering of animals — springing from his feeling for all living beings. The systematic refusal to eat meat, though, seems to him a superstitious choice, recalling religious bigotry, the other side of the coin where one finds the lust of religions for animal holocausts to win favor from the gods.

With equal fervor, Meslier fights against this barbaric custom of immolation of innocent victims. How could God, if he exists, consent to so much gratuitous destruction of these specimens of perfection of his creation? What a nonsensical idea to believe that God likes gestures similar to madness.? What would be the sense in it? And why would so much blood outpoured persuade him to satisfy human prayer?

This man who rejoices in recalling a peasant's desire to strangle the bourgeois with the intestines of priests, this revolutionary communist who devotes very beautiful lines to justifying tyrannicide under the form of a pure and simple slaughter of the King for keeping his subjects in slavery, this atheist curé who raves against the waves of blood poured in the course of too numerous religious ceremonies of immolation of beasts, this radical atheist ideologist who deplores just as much the blood bespattering the cross on Golgotha, this volcanic philosopher cannot endure watching someone eating a chicken. His morality of pity generates a pitiless ethic: no pity for people without pity. Is he wrong to think this way?

XIII. Kicking the Backsides of (Nicholas) Malebranche

MESLIER DEFENDS NATURE, all Nature. He challenges hierarchical thought and, today, would be sensitive to the arguments of antispeciesists who fight a pyramidical organization of nature with man at the summit and the animals at the base, with the former having the liberty to inflict on the latter all sorts of inhuman acts: to exploit, to torture, to martyr, to kill, to enslave, to enchain, to beat down, to devour.

This position, dominant in our society for two thousand years, proceeds from the Judeo-Christian incitement in *Genesis:* soulless animals, unscathed by original sin, without possibility of survival, these creatures placed under human rule, below man, above the vegetable, then the mineral, these creatures exist for the welfare of humans. Humans can use them as they choose to obtain force for work, gentleness for company, flesh to consume, skin for clothing, currency for sacrifice for holocausts. Meslier, again, vituperates Christianity.

Among his enemies are the Cartesian philosophers — whom he well perceives as "the devoutly religious." A favorite target is Malebranche, who devotes long pages in *Research of Truth* to reviving, pursuing, and developing the theses produced by Descartes in his *Treatise on Man.* Animals are reduced to an assembly of wheels, pulleys, and springs. These things do not think, do not experience any sentiment, do not communicate, do not feel anything, are ignorant of language. From which arises the difference of radical nature between men and beasts.

The anecdote is perhaps false, but it makes a point: the famous Father Malebranche, orator, author, thus of famous theses on animal machines, is supposed to have kicked the rear end of a dog who was prancing in the presence of his visitor. Even though apocryphal, the story is telling: it says that a philosophical thesis justifies the bad treatments inflicted upon animals. It legitimizes above all the lack of remorse when animals are tortured or put to death.

For his part, Meslier undertakes to kick the philosophical backside of Malebranche. Because these Cartesians imagine that to think is above all, and above all to think that one thinks, to know that one thinks, these zoophobes conclude that animals do not think. But Meslier defines exactly that to think is to recognize the adjustment of flesh to modifications of matter. Men and beasts, in this sense, live by the same standard.

The enemies of materialism who are the disciples of Descartes cannot resolve the problem without the subterfuge of dualist sophism of thinking matter as distinct from matter at large. That is why the Cartesians are religiously devout and devout Christians: their two contradictory modes — of which one is fiction . . . — allow them to be partisans of the Catholic religion.

For Meslier, animals are indeed machines — just like men! Nothing distinguishes them, except for variations in arrangement of their matter. No thinking substance in man but a brain; the same as in a nightingale or a pig. Even if the grey matter differs, the essential remains: a being is reduced to the materiality of his physiology, the sow and the worshipper at the Oratory mingle. The lesson? Between men and beasts there exists no natural difference, only a difference of degree. This conclusion defines a materialist ontology, a first in French philosophy.

XIV. The Massacre of Cats

JEAN MESLIER DEPLORES that the Christian metaphysics and the Cartesian philosophy —

so like each other after all — offer royal road for the wickedness of men. The curé affirms that animals think, not like men, certainly, but that they think well; that they enjoy, suffer, feel emotion, communicate, reciprocate, use a language. Indeed, this language is not constructed like ours, but, at least, with beasts, one does not find all the treachery, lies, perfidies, ruses and sleight of hand permitted by human language.

He recommends Aesop rather than Luke, Mark, or Matthew!

No need for long dissertations, the practiced eye of the peasant suffices. Laughing, the philosopher (Meslier) opposes the learned demonstrations in the service of Malebranche's false idea to the good sense of the peasant. What does the man of the fields, the man of the lower orders, the worker of the earth with his horses or cows, the farmer with his cows and his sheep, the cowherd, the swine-herd, the shepherd — what do they say when the philosopher offers them Cartesian discourse on beasts? They laugh with a big and beautiful philosophic laughter!

The *Testament* continues: because wrong ideas on this subject exist, men give free rein to their bad passions. Hence those massacres of cats which transform vice, wickedness, perversion into a very popular spectacle much frequented at this epoch. These hysterical village fetes at which people throw into the blaze cats captured for this purpose degrading the humans who take part in it. "Detestable pleasures," "mad and detestable joy," he writes. If he had known Spinoza at first hand, Meslier would have diagnosed the "sad passions."

XV. Meslier, the Complete Philosopher

The philosophical establishment awards the degrees and certificates of conformity; it honors, first of all, the idealists, the Christians, the conservatives, the authors of a hazy style, lovers of abstruse vocabulary and of neologisms, strung like pearls. Meslier is a poor match, he who flaunts his atheism clearly, his materialism, his communism, all in a rather vernacular language in which one searches in vain for any trace of the vocabulary of the philosopher tribe. And so much better . . .

His atheism we have seen. Now, his materialism. As Meslier innovates in affirming the non-existence of God, he invents all in creating a French materialism out of whole cloth. Certainly (Pierre) Gassendi came before him. We know the Christian limits of the atomism of the canon of Digne: all is matter, absolutely all, except for the soul . . . Epicurus is entirely right, except when Christianity makes him wrong . . . Let us grant it, he deserves credit for the materialism in question.

We must remember that the curé Meslier lives for forty years in the vicarage of a little village in the Ardennes, never left. Let us be clear that he works in his personal library with only a handful of books, less than fifty; let us add that he performs conscientiously the absorbing daily tasks of the priest, at least on the surface.

Let us put it differently: Meslier does not frequent any worldly Parisian salon like the one, a few years later of Baron Holbach where one would meet sometimes at the same table such great thinkers as Hume, Rousseau, Condorcet, Helvétius, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot . . . Meslier has no street he can cross to leave his house and find himself in a magnificent public or private library . . . Meslier does not live on the revenue of a tax collector or on the rent of the nobility . . . Alone, without references and resources and without leisure, the sheer extent of his work of discovery constitutes a feat. Let us imagine what the productions of this spirit might have been under more favorable conditions.

It is thus with his intelligence alone, his pen and his tallow candles that Meslier without commentaries, without the support of the thought of others, grounds the basis of precise and detailed materialism to combat the metaphysics of Descartes.. As a lone herald, the atheist curé lights the fires of his philosophic anger and fires the ontological consequence of his immanent metaphysical position: God does not exist; there is only matter. All that exists is a single substance which coincides exactly with matter. Without having read him, Meslier follows Spinoza's swerve from which he produced such considerable results: the French materialist genealogy of the eighteenth century. A single substance: matter.

Atheism intellectually compels this position. The only option possible for every philosopher who denies transcendence, dualism, spiritualism, idealism, and all the bric-a-brac of other worlds that define all religions; materialism opens a fresh avenue for philosophy: the world here and now, down here, the real, the concrete, the life of every day. First of all understand it, then transform it.

XVI. A Materialist Ontology

MESLIER'S MATERIALIST ONTOLOGY constitutes the counterpart of spiritualist Christian theology. God does not exist because only Being exists, and Being is Nature. We avail ourselves of this certitude of Being by the simple fact of being. Meslier proposes a genre of Descartes' tautological "Cogito, ergo sum": if I am, I cannot question being — at least with a pure game of spirit replaced by a Pyrrhic game. (Note: Pyrrho was a Greek skeptic — tr.) The sole thought of being proves being. No need of metaphysics; good sense suffices.

The curé does not enter into the detail of the constituents of matter that define being. We don't find, with him, a physics of atoms, a description of particles, a mechanics of molecular arrangements, a theology of clinamen (deviation): the name of Epicurus does not appear in the *Testament*. Lucretius'*On the Nature of Things* is not found in his library, nor Epicurus' *Letters*, nor even any Diogenes Laertius, who would make up for those absences: Meslier conceives the sole world, and his materialism owes to his situation its strengths and its weaknesses — revealing his originality and his theoretical limits.

This matter is defined negatively: it is not the extensive substance of Descartes. In his *Principles of Philosophy* (1644), the philosopher of Poitiers states that the material world assumes length, breadth, and depth; it is infinitely divisible in parts, but not on the atomic principle; the parts differ by their size, types, places, and movements. Meslier refuses this definition. Matter furnishes, first of all, the explanatory principle of the totality of Nature.

Certainly, we could ask Meslier to specify. He affirms the clear but undefinable principle, undefinable because, no more than the eye can see itself, matter which thinks cannot seize to define that which it thinks. In the same way that there exists a relation of causality between the eye and vision, the limbs and the movement, the brain and thought, there exists a relation between matter and nature, but, in the actual state of our awareness, he states, one cannot say what or how.

The same questions concern us today, but honesty within the limits of reason is more valuable than straightforward irrational delirium. Better an admission of impotence to the credit of reason and of the philosopher who recognizes limits, than a false reason which has recourse to sophisms, to a specious rhetoric, hence the *cogito* of Descartes. Before Meslier, (Pierre) Gassendi had already opposed common sense to *cogito*, that mammoth of world philosophic literature.

Reality, nature, being, matter, there is the equation of the world. Working it out follows combinations, movements, configurations, modifications, arrangements, variations of the constituent parts of matter. At this moment it appears legitimate to affirm: matter feels, thinks, reflects, desires, loves. Let us stop saying: *I think*, *therefore I am*; let us rectify it instead: *matter thinks, therefore matter is.*

All that exists is reduced to a particular configuration of matter: life and death, virtue and vice, beauty and ugliness, health and sickness, pleasure and grief, joy and sadness, strength and weakness, all those constitute variations on the materialist theme. We are unaware of the reasons for *this* rather than *that*, but *this* and *that* proceed from a working out of matter. Meslier speaks of "the continual fermentation of being" without further elaboration.

Without scientific knowledge — like every other curé educated in the seminary — without reference books in physics and biology at hand, without resources to observation of the infinitely small, without conversation with fellow scientific friends, Meslier can hardly go further in postulating the dynamic of matter, which, even today is far from having delivered all its secrets. From his metaphor of fermentation, let us grasp a faulty approximation containing all the same the truth of a materialism that is vital, dynamic, dialectic (not in the political sense of the word).

To give some organization to matter, Meslier states that in nature there exists only time, place, space, and expanse. Time has not been created — either by God, who does not exist, or by whatever else; because the very act of creation presupposes a time to unfold and occur. A period before time makes time impossible since nothing can precede it — otherwise it is already in time . . . Time has been there always "like an invisible point which is without any extension."

Place, space, and expanse — Meslier establishes their relative identity. Place? "A space or a limited expanse which contains a body." Space? "An expanse more spacious which contains or which can contain several bodies." Expanse? "A space without limits and without end which contains all the beings, all the places, and all the imaginable spaces." Outside of these modalites of space, time, and matter; there is nothing.

From that, let us conclude with the Epicurians: if all is matter, that includes the soul. Thus the soul dies at the same time as the body. The brain, which contains a person's world and makes conscience possible, also decomposes. And the world and conscience with it. Nothing to fear, therefore, of death and of what follows afterward. Afterward? Nothing. Matter metamorphoses. Death is not to fear, the sole significance is that which has taken place before it during life. The materialist ontology legitimizes the Eudemian ethic which is deployed in a communist politics. (Eudemus of Rhodes)

XVII. A Natural History of Evil

MESLIER CLEARLY DOES NOT BELIEVE in original sin as the cause of evil on the planet. Negativity does not come down from the sky, it climbs up from the earth. In contemporary terms, one could say that he furnishes an ethnological genealogy of evil. His version avoids metaphysics, ignores theology, and bypasses traditional ontology; it offers a coherent theory of the materialist and atheist option of the curé.

Where does evil come from? From the fact that too many people occupy at the same time a too small territory. The scarcity inseparable from the narrowness of the territory forces people to fight to obtain what they need to live and to survive. All means are good which permit people to assure their existence: tricks, perfidy, meanness, violence, and other strategies of resourcefulness.

No doubt about it, Meslier does not take the paths of theodicy in order to justify evil. There again he spins his metaphor: evil is necessary because it permits a kind of social homeostasis (internal stability). If there were no murder, murder between species, a dangerous proliferation of humans or other animals would swallow up space. In this equilibrium, nothing dominates, no one holds the monopoly of plunder, everything ends with coexistence in a harmony permitting all to be and to endure.

This natural conception of evil — or this conception of natural evil . . . — does not present the fatalistic character of original sin. It is not an indelible mark. The mechanism which produces it is reduced to redistributing, on which one can act. Hence, the penury naturally generated by the constraints of space can vanish if one organizes differently the distribution of wealth and property. If there exists a state of nature in which violence reigns a priori, for mechanical reasons, a state of culture can remedy it in proposing new systems of ethological organization, hence social communalism. So a political workshop can come into being . . .

XVIII. Philosophy of the Estates General

MESLIER IS INVENTIVE also on political terrain because he formulates for the first time a social and political hedonism. Before him, there had been Eudemianism, hedonism as well, but they remained above all an affair of the individual. It's up to each person to fashion his own happiness and joy. If there is a politics of the Epicureans, cynics, Cyrenaics (for whom pleasure is the highest good — tr.), it is rather marginal, reached indirectly by extrapolation, and certainly not the central issue. Montaigne does not expect from his politics a realization of his own happiness or even that his politics might contribute to it. Gassendi likewise. But Meslier, does.

Atheist, materialist, hedonist, Meslier locks up his system with the promotion of an *international communalism* somewhat self-contradictory since it depends on the village cell, while aiming toward a planetary revolution. We have spoken accurately of a *communism* and of a *pre-socialism*, equally correct, or of a *libertarian communism*, which seems to me more exact. But each of these terms is used today through the deforming prism of what has become of these ideas during two centuries of history: neither Marx nor Bakunin, neither Engels nor Proudon, neither Lenin nor Stalin allows us to understand Meslier's concepts; it is better to read Meslier in his own right and in the context of his epoch. Without ever forgetting that seventy years separate the first pages of the *Testament* from the first movement of the French Revolution . . . . If one judges less by the overt influence than by the man's thought revealed by the current running through his text, Meslier prepares for that revolution a century in advance! Nothing less . . .

Among the pages of the work, if we search for political gems to organize them together into a revolutionary jewel, we would begin with what resembles a philosophy of the Estates General. Meslier paints in detail a picture of peasant manners and suffering under the feudal regime of Louis XIV, for whom he does not have words fierce enough to paint him: great thief, great criminal, great killer, great exploiter, guilty of ravages, carnage, war, usurpation, *thefts*, desolation, nameless injustices, famines. Through the sixty-two years of his long rule (1643-1715) the provinces bled white experienced nothing but misery and poverty. Even (Francois) Fénelon thought so and wrote it in a sublime letter . . .

Jean Meslier invents the visibility of the class struggle. On one side, the peasants, the workers, the poor, the wretched, the people suffering at work, strangled with multiple taxes and fees, mentally, spiritually, physically, enslaved every day; on the other side, the priests and the kings, the bishops and the princes, the gendarmes and the people of justice — he writes, "people of injustice" and names them: notaries, prosecutors, lawyers, clerks of the court, controllers, stewards of the police, sergeants, judges, the powerful accomplices of offenders — the fee collectors, the tax collectors, and the other "vile rats of the cave," the nobles, the "rich idlers," who play with the goods of this world, eating, drinking, dancing, joking, diverting themselves and laughing in the salons. These powerful people avail themselves of the most beautiful lands, the most beautiful houses, the most beautiful inheritances; they live from their rents and from taxes violently levied on the workers — which does not prevent them from always wanting more and more.

The former have nothing; the latter everything. The former are deprived of all and deserve everything; the others control it all and deserve to have nothing; soon they will also deserve being dispossessed of their goods. Although glutted and sated, the wealthy nobles also want to see the poor grovel. This situation creates hatred between people. The class struggle produces hatred between classes. What philosopher was thinking like this as early as a little after 1700? What potential revolutionary, lawyer here, tax collector there, great landowner elsewhere, would have acquiesced to these ideas at this time? Meslier is a visionary . . .

XIX. A Eudemian Republic (Eudemus of Rhodes)

SUCH INSTITUTIONAL INEQUALITY contradicts and is contrary to natural equality. Meslier believes in natural law. Not that of the Christians (their religion transformed the laws of nature into its own cultural law) but that of judicial naturalists — whom he has probably not read. (Hugo) Grotius, (Baron Samuel von) Pufendorf . . . — according to whom people naturally by the law of life have each day the right to nourish themselves, to clothe themselves, to house themselves, to assure a decent education for their children, but also to enjoy their natural liberty, then to work for public usefulness and the common welfare of all.

In order to end with the state of deplorable conditions produced by the French monarchy with the help of the Catholic clergy, the leftist curé appeals to human rights and to the law: good laws can make people good. If in the state of nature — he does not use that expression — people submit to violent law in the struggle for existence, the state of civilization ought by law to allow the realization of justice. Meslier sets two objectives: "public welfare" and a project for "living happily." Otherwise known as a Eudemian republic.

XX. The Church Supports Tyrants

IN THE LOGIC OF MESLIER'S REASONING, the Catholic church makes possible the tyranny of the kings and princes of the moment. Paul of Tarsus has said and said again: all power comes from God; to resist or rebel is to resist and rebel against God. The spiritual power of priests supports the temporal power of kings in order to enslave the people. The tonsured heads and the crowned heads rely on the threat of eternal damnation post mortem, and play on the existential fears in order to nourish servitude.

First of all, the kings call themselves the envoys of God; then they carry out a deft maneuver and affirm that they are actual gods. Since the clergy do not deny it, and worse, they confirm it, the little people, terrified of the judgment of God, his anger and his habitual talent for punishment, are willing to kneel to the people of the court who form one single family.

The curés, priests, abbots, bishops, the pope, but also the king and all his court, then the auxiliaries in the most backward corners of the provinces act to in order to create, preserve, and fortify religious mystifications. Religion exists only through deceit; it generates deceptions, politics. The saber and the instrument for sprinkling holy water make a good pair. Catholicism and the monarchy "get along with each other like two peas in the pod."

Meslier attacks the monks and the abbesses, ridiculously clothed and living in the abbeys where money, food, and drink are not lacking. The kitchen gardens and pleasure grounds are magnificent. Their farms generate big profits. And this he labels injustice, seeing how these parasites enjoy all their goods because they plunder that which "the good workers ought to have."

But oddly (!) Jean Meslier indicts those who renounce, they who live the monastic life and the regular and secular priests — abbots, priors, canons — while he excuses the bishops and curés of the countryside . . . Surely these people with their institution teach pernicious fables, peddle nonsensical ideas, yet one owes them an important thing: they transmit values and virtues.

Meslier's colleagues teach morality, and this is a necessary thing, capital even, in "every well regulated republic." In summoning all to goodness, the priests work for "the public welfare," hence they can be supported by public funds because they merit a salary and are not parasites like the others . . . The French Revolution by inviting these church people to take the constitutional oath in 1790 will subscribe to this spirit!

XXI. A Gramscian under Louis XIV

THE LEFTIST PRIEST REASONS in this way about a virtuous republic and of the necessity for it to act in relation with those who are, for want of a word, it is not yet conventional to call the *intellectuals* — a neologism created by Clemenceau at the time of the Dreyfus Affair . . . Meslier speaks of people of wit, of orators, of the wisest and the most enlightened — a regular phrase under his pen.

What can one, what ought one to expect from them? In the Gramscian model, the revolution begins by a militancy of ideas on a daily basis: to write, speak, talk, spread vital ideas: to establish an inventory of how they stand, to isolate the causes of poverty and exploitation, to enlighten the people on the functioning of the feudal machinery, to tell them that one can change the things and the order of the world by a revolution.

The travelers on the road to revolution ought above all "to excite the people to rescue them from the insupportable bondage of tyrants." Meslier believes in "the sole light of human reason" and in the dynamic effects of "natural reason." Could only one person, all alone, without friends, without connections, in the depths of the Ardennes, in the vicarage of a country curé, formulate any better the ideal of the Enlightenment as it will appear a half-century later?

Despite his isolation, the leftist priest is already sadly aware of the absence of intellectuals on the terrain of revolutionary anger and their absence from the companionship of the wretched of the earth. Some decades later the ultras of the Enlightenment will realize his theoretical dream with the Enragés, the Sans Culottes, the Hébertists or Hébert's companion in arms the curé Jacques Roux, one of the famous leftists of 1789, and verify Meslier's ideas, this time here on earth, in the streets of the cities, in Paris as in the provinces. [Jacques Roux led the Enragés — leftist workers — in food riots in 1793 — tr.]

XXII. What Kind of Revolution?

WHAT SORT OF REVOLUTION does the *Testament* propose? How is it to be done? And to bring about what new order? First of all, the method: insurrection, rebellion, refusal to submit. In his library, the curé Meslier has the (La Boétie's excellent 1548*) Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* in which he marks theses and ideas: A fact: power exists only with the consent of those upon whom they exercise their power; a solution: stop giving them your blessing, they will fall immediately.

The political categorical imperative of Montaigne's friend is clear, and his effectiveness formidable: "Be resolute in no longer serving and presto you will be free," Meslier takes up again the idea: give nothing more to the rich, exclude them from your society, leave them out of your world in refusing to give them what they pretend that you owe them. The curé does not spell it out concretely, but he invents the civil disobedience dear to the heart of Henry David Thoreau; stop paying taxes, refuse the feudal rent, say no to the salt tax, rebel against forced labor.

The revolutionary project does not stop at this Boétian dynamic of resistance. Meslier adds to this first phase of active and dynamic force, the deliberate will to unite to overturn established order and smash the seats of power. In this line of reasoning, he clearly eulogizes tyrannicide. "Stun or stab all these detestable monsters and enemies of humankind," he writes . . . Vengeance? Not at all! Installation of a reign of justice and truth.

To this he links as well the abolition of private property. Fifty years before the Rousseau's critique of *Discourse On the Origin of Inequality Among People,* Meslier makes private possession and enjoyment of wealth responsible for all evil. Because with it, the most cunning, the craftiest, the meanest and the strong join forces to triumph over the poor and develop means of exploiting them.

Once private property is abolished, common wealth will be realized — "to enjoy in common." All that is obtained by work, the fruits of prosperity and of talent, will be treated as common goods of the commune. And the unit at a base? The family. But it is a cell, a link in the chain. By itself it does not constitute the goal of rural communism but its organizing kernel. The village ought to correspond to the family organization. And the villages, through legislation to maintain peace, create situations of social prosperity and happiness in common life. It is a prefiguration of the perpetual peace of the Abbot of St. Pierre — itself the model of Kant's notion.

Social hedonism proposes the happiness of all and of each individual. Not an ideal happiness, but a real one, concrete, pragmatic: to work, by which people can eat healthfully and sufficiently all the time, live and sleep in a decent and heated house, be nourished, be clothed, have the means to educate their children, and be cared for in case of illness.

In a century in which people survived miserably from day to day, covered with rags, sleeping in stables or on the dung of straw mattresses gnawed at by vermin, subsisting in penury or famine, the easy targets of epidemics, of pandemics, in such a century happiness ought to be concrete, susceptible of being realized here and now. A little later Saint-Just will say that "happiness is a new idea in Europe": Meslier

Religion exists only through deceit.

signs the birth certificate of this powerful thought.

For local communalism to extend to the universal requires internationalization. Meslier thinks for the village, surely, but he does not conceive a resolution of problems solely on the level of the village association. "I will speak freely to the peoples of the earth," he writes, in inventing too the principle of exporting revolutionary values to the totality of the planet. Leon Trotsky will only have to re-read . . .

Atheist, deChristianizer, anarchist, communist, communalist, materialist, internationalist, revolutionary, leftist, and yet still a philosopher, Jean Meslier incarnates in himself the genius of the French Revolution. This sublime curé gathers together and concentrates in his sole personnage the open atheism of Anacharsis Cloots, the deChristianizing passion of Pierre Dolivier, the Homeric anger of Hébert, the republican virtue of Saint-Just, the communism among equals of Babeuf, the revolutionary incorruptibility of Robespierre, the passion for justice of Abbot Gregory, the Ultra rage of (Jean) Varlet, (Antoine-Francois) Momoro, or Jacques Roux, the "religion of the dagger" (Michelet) of Charlotte Corday, Marat's passion for the people, and the desire of "equality of enjoyment" of the Sans-Culottes . . . That such a man had ever existed — humanity is suddenly justified!

XXIII. Voltaire Robs Cadavers

JEAN MESLIER DIES at the end of June, 1715. At his residence they discover the letter left to priests and the manuscript of the *Testament*. Till that date, no one had read it. This time bomb exists in four copies. With time, in the manner of the apostles, they are passed around and they multiply . . . Soon, the thick manuscript is sold expensively, very expensively clandestinely: more than 150 copies are circulating in Paris less than five years after the death of the philosopher.

Among marquises, bankers, and the bewigged blue bloods, Voltaire hears of this treasure from Nicolas Thiriot, a friend from childhood. He indicates the existence of this dangerous philosophical object in a letter to him dated winter, 1735. Voltaire entrusts his correspondent to get a copy for him so that he can read it in its entirety. With enthusiasm, certainly, but with reserve, also.

Because Voltaire is neither the philosopher nor the man that people believe him to be, Meslier's atheism is repugnant to him; even more so his emancipatory politics. This artful opportunist, friend of the powerful, flatterer, interested in morality often to the point of fastidiousness, this egoist, this man is a deist yet keeping up with the Catholic religion in private, a relationship very much closer than one might expect from the usual biography of the public man who has become a national monument. He evidently does not like a priest who denies the existence of God and of all divinity; even more he reviles the radical condemnation of the fundamental system of all religion, repeated at length in the pages of the *Testament;* clearly, he detests the revolutionary and communist project.

The author of *Philosophical Letters* believes in God, cohabits with Catholics — even, and above all, when he signs his letters "Wipe out the infamy" . . . — writes pages of a rare violence against atheists, is anxious to obtain relics for the church he is having built on his property at Ferney, and to that end sends a humble request to the Pope, maintains on his own funds a chaplain for his chapel at Cirey, and at one time envisages his burial in a Catholic edifice built for this purpose .

This covert bigot does not at all like Meslier as one might think.

All the same, the defender of Calas, Sirven, and other well known causes conducive to the shaping of his statue, does indeed love liberty, but like a fancy dress occasion in worldly style. Because when it is a matter of the liberty of the people, of the little people, of those without rank, of the peasants, the country people, of the provincials bled white by his friends the powerful ones, he clearly sides with the kings and the princes, with the nobles and the bishops.

This philosopher of selective indignations has no words severe enough for the "ignorant tramps," the "canaille," the "populace" so many "cattle for whom a yoke, a goad, and a whip are necessary." Religion is necessary for slaves, not for thinkers. How could the whole work of the curé find favor in his eyes? Shameless, Voltaire fabricates a falsehood — trims, cuts, forgets, ignores and, under his pen, adds passages to make people believe that Meslier was, let us say, a Voltairean! Brave, but foolhardy, he attributes to the great dead man words which, in the mouth of another, permit him to escape Catholic and monarchist contumely. Under the title of *Extract of the Sentiments of Jean Meslier,* Voltaire publishes in 1761 a corrupt falsification of the work of Meslier. Certainly, he passes over in silence the atheism, the materialism, the communism, the revolution which makes too much noise already; he keeps the critique of religion, of miracles, of prophecies, of some Christian dogma; but, above all, he falsifies the proposals of the curé in order to transform him into an adept deist, like himself, with a natural religion . . . *In cauda venenum* (as a final blow), Voltaire concludes this text in stating that the work bears the "witness of a dying priest who asks God's pardon." Meslier asking God's pardon! Voltaire is raving . . . More repugnant one cannot be.

XXIV. Pillages and Posthumous Destiny

For a long time people would know

Meslier only as Votairean drivel; Voltaire sent 300 copies to his friends, then paid out of his own pocket for a second, then a third edition, the evil was considerable — all the intellectual gain going to the anticlerical bigot. Meanwhile, copies of the original manuscript still exist. (Julien Offroy de) La Mettrie learns of another among them at the court of Frederick II of Prussia. (Claude-Adrien) Helvétius and (Paul-Henri d') Holbach use it, avail themselves of it, but never give a citation. The baron (d'Hobach), author of *System of Nature*, publishes an abridged version of the work in 1772. He titles it: *The Good Sense of Curé Meslier,* not a word truly Meslier's. Likewise with Sylvain Maréchal who tries to make the famous work known in *The Cask of Diogenes,* then publishes *The Catechism of Curé Meslier* in which nothing of the curé's is written . . . Sade pillages d'Holbach who borrows so much from Meslier: pages of Sade's first book — *Dialogue Between a Priest and a Dying Person* (1782) — but also in *Philosophy in the Boudoir,* which owes everything to the solitary of the Ardennes.

The ultras of the Enlightenment century drink at this source but remain quiet about their debt. Certain revolutionaries, less stingy, cite the great man: (Simon-Nicolas-Henri) Linguet, (Camille) Desmoulins, for example. On November 17, 1793 Anarchasis Cloots asks the National Convention to erect a statue in the Temple of Reason (a grotesque deist homage which Meslier probably would not have enjoyed . . .)

After the French Revolution people stop misunderstanding. Meslier can finally become what he is: atheist curé, revolutionary priest, materialist philosopher. The entire text, without retouching, or falsifications, appears finally thanks to Rudolf Charles d'Ablaing Van Giessenburg, under the name of Rudolf Charles, in 1864 in a three volume edition at Amsterdam. The title? *Testament of Jean Meslier.*

In 1919 the Bolsheviks engrave his name on an obelisk in Moscow. Meslier becomes a precursor of scientific socialism enrolled in the Soviet adventure! The Leninist empire regards him as a major philosopher and he occupies in Bolshevik historiography the place of Descartes in ours. Here is a new homage just as unbecoming as a statue in the Temple of Reason! After the checkmating of the libertarian sailors at Kronstadt by the Bolshevik power, Meslier becomes rather a model for insurrection and insubordination than a companion for the authorities. Because he is and remains a model for all insurrectionary thought. For all action worthy of this name. The sole homage to which he would probably consent? That people read him and build on his work. . . .

After Wojtyla: Thoughts for the Times on Democracy and Faith

CHRIS RHOADES DYKEMA

THE SPECTACLE of adoration following the death of Karol Wojtyla, also known as Pope John Paul the Second — maudlin and baleful as it was — was also time wasted by the American left. What incremental analysis it fostered came from the ranks of the faithful, not of the irreverent.

Writing in *The New York Times* for April 5, 2005, Catholic historian Thomas Cahill cited Wojtyla's packing the church hierarchy with prelates who shared his retrograde stances on "masturbation, premarital sex, birth control (including condoms used to prevent the spread of AIDS), abortion, divorce, homosexual relations, married priests, female priests and any hint of Marxism."

Cahill's concerns were practical and strategic as well as principled: "It is nearly impossible to find men who subscribe wholeheartedly to this entire catalogue of certitudes; as a result the ranks of the episcopate are filled with mindless sycophants and intellectual incompetents." And he described the consequences: "The situation is dire. Anyone can walk into a Catholic church on a Sunday and see pews, once filled to bursting, now sparsely populated with gray heads."

The following day, the Rev. John Dear, author of *Jesus the Rebel: Bearer of God's Peace and Justice*, and many similar works, wrote on the Common Dreams web site that "While I mourn for John Paul II, I lament that he did not ordain women, support liberation theology, or defend martyred Archbishop Oscar Romero. But I recognize that he was clearly against war, poverty and nuclear weapons. This conviction, I think, holds the key to the future of the church."

Father Dear thinks change in the church is inevitable, that the dramatic and deepening shortage of priests will compel relaxation of the Wojtylite legacy's crude ascetic misogyny. Women, he hopes, will get ordained. Then the compassionate ethos of the Second Vatican Council will once again flourish. He thinks it's a kind of restoration, though — like the Mishiach — it won't come soon. Dear admits we might have to wait " ten years or one hundred . . . for . . . the Catholic community's full embrace of the Gospel of peace, renunciation of the just war theory and renewed adherence to active nonviolence in the tradition of the early Christian martyrs."

This is wishful thinking, and there is no reason to believe change for the better is coming. Sadly, though, some secular progressives still think this kind of thing is more than vacuity, and overlook obvious facts. The habit of talking to liberal and radical Catholics sometimes encourages this — they tend to be such very nice people, and one wants to share their hopes. On the other hand, George W. Bush surely opposes "war, poverty and nuclear weapons," at least in the abstract. Wojtyla and his successor, Ratzinger, would too. But among the presidential and papal perquisites is for empty rhetoric to escape normal scrutiny.

The passing of a major theocratic figure could have served as the time for a full-scale discussion of religion. Materialists could have benefited from an opening to examine whether a politics rooted in religious values and orientations can have strategic value for the defense

CHRISTOPHER RHOADES DYKEMA *is a clinical social worker and activist, who has a long-standing interest in the practical, psychological, cultural, political, and theoretical implications of faith.*

and advancement of democratic values and institutions in the U.S. In this of course there are two key questions: are there experiences and assumptions about faith that are applicable to progressive politics today? If so, which, if any, should be retained? Which discarded ?

The discussion never happened.

If nothing else, the religious right's role in the 2004 election should dispel any doubt that a politics of faith has the potential to influence power. That potential is too important to leave just to religious folk. But how do we address the political problems faith poses? Do we attack it, because we know better, or accommodate it, without knowing what principled accommodations can be made. Blanket opposition means staring down the huge majority of Americans — an anomaly among people in advanced democracies — who define themselves as religious? Being agnostic toward religion means a fey tolerance toward institutions and practices that lie at the heart of false consciousness. Each has its drawbacks.

Of the various faiths, I want to focus on U.S. Catholicism as particularly problematic for the left. Organized Judaism, despite its abiding interest in Middle East policy and the involvement of prominent and religiously identified Jews in American life, is too marginal in too many parts of the United States to make substantial political difference by itself. So is Islam for the time being, though for different reasons.

Within mainstream Protestantism the religious Left is fairly transparent. It needs no new analysis. Little about it has changed fundamentally in some decades, except that like the Left, it has weakened. And, of course, its broad base, the mainstream Protestant churches, has drastically lost membership.

As for the Protestant evangelical churches and organizations, they are our opponents — except for a few marginal and equivocal outliers like James Wallis and The Sojourners. To be sure, there is a distinction between the evangelical churches and organizations and those masses who move in and out of their sphere of influence. Evangelical commitment is often flighty, a distraction from material realities for desperate people. In this case, progressives can learn to discuss concrete economic and other material issues in more compelling ways that can draw people back to reality. Figuring out how to do that is a worthy project, but a different analysis, and one beyond the scope of this article.

By contrast, making political sense out of contemporary Catholicism is urgent. Its importance is contradictory and complex. Unlike evangelicalism, it is not a straightforward enemy of nearly all that is progressive. In the past liberals and leftists have allied, and fruitfully, with parts of Catholicism. There is a self-identified Catholic left, and for a long time much of the broad left could feel fairly comfortable with Catholicism. That has changed, and the change is permanent. There is no prospect for revitalization of the institutional Catholic church's progressive role.

Moreover, many of the crucial political fissures of the foreseeable future in the United States are ones that increasingly place all orthodox patriarchal monotheism, especially Catholicism, on the side of reaction. A look at Wojtyla and his legacy illuminates why.

The late Karol Wojtyla was a commanding figure.

In parts of the left there is a conventionally reassuring view of this man: he suffered from a kind of disconnect. On the one side he supposedly saw issues of war, poverty and injustice as progressives do, but then there was this unfortunate stick-in-the-mud quality when it came to issues of sexuality and gender. So he was a well-meaning man with a blind spot.

To be sure, there was a lot about him to encourage these illusions: his warm exterior, his winning manner, his restless travels to meet the suffering and unfortunate, his seeming openness to all, his carefully cultivated persona, his training and experience as an actor.

Let us be clear. Wojtyla was a brilliant and skillful ideological politician. In the twentieth century, probably only Lenin compares with him. He leaves vulgarians like Hitler and Stalin in the dust. Wojtyla was also an intellectual of some substance. He wrote a doctoral dissertation on the abstruse philosopher Max Scheler, sometimes called "the Catholic Nietzsche." And all the while he was a humble servant of the lord.

Above all, he took his Catholicism seriously. Most secular liberals and radicals miss the implications of this fact. And their Catholic counterparts, too, try to forget the core of Catholic faith, or to deny its importance—preoccupied as they are with human existence as people actually live it, and contaminated, as they also are, with democratic humanist values.

By contrast, Wojtyla's right wing supporters, who celebrate his achievements, often cite his reviving a sense of direction in a church he found in disarray. This is accurate enough. "He Roused Us From a Lethargic Faith," was the title of Cardinal Ratzinger's (now Pope Benedict XVI's) homily. Though Wojtyla added nothing new, his immense energy and organizing zeal did codify and regularize what was traditional. Most of all he emphasized Jesus and Mary, and the relation of god to humanity. In his long reign, Wojtyla held the church to his own authentic Catholic image. If we want to understand the politics of Catholicism in the coming years, we need to take Catholicism as seriously as he did.

True, Wojtyla did not entirely neglect good works, Christian love, and compassion. They are very much part of the Catholic tradition and are much of what preoccupies liberal and radical Catholics as the basis of their politics. But Wojtyla's priorities were clear, and just as traditional. He left no doubt: the importance of works, love, and compassion was secondary. The mysteries of Christian faith came first.

People who think in secular terms miss the salience of the mysteries. They mostly ignore notions like the nature of deity, virgin birth, immaculate conception, or the divinity of Christ. They know these matters are important to others but don't think about them themselves, or inform themselves as to their meaning or implications. For many secular progressives there is an informal tradition of treating other peoples' faith as a private and personal matter, with a presumptive claim on deference, respect, even approbation.

To this way of thinking, it is legitimate to make realistic secular criticism of the stances people of faith take on worldly, practical issues like abortion, gay rights, condom use. Questioning the substance of faith itself, however, is supposed to be somehow improper, even when the regressive stances flow from the beliefs. When it comes to criticism, faith, even its most bizarre manifestations, enjoys a *prima facie* claim to immunity. This is supposed to be the virtue of tolerance in operation.

Hence, when progressive people enter debate with the theologically inclined about issues of public concern they accept an inherent handicap from the start. Defenders of Catholicism, like the blustery William Donohue of the Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights, appeal to liberal guilt by asserting that criticism of Catholic faith, and of the church, is equivalent to racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination, and that secular critics are no better than haters.

The secular-minded are not the only ones with this tenderness about discussion of faith. Many liberal and radical Catholics also avoid discussion of the sort of theological matter that so consumed Wojtyla and his followers. Their kind of Catholicism comes out in their often histrionic compassion and genuine, courageous, even sometimes heroic self-sacrifice. They profess this — often, even to themselves — as a substitute for theological doctrines they only vaguely believe, and would rather not think about.

When they didn't get in his way, Wojtyla sometimes ignored Catholics like this, but he never approved of them. Publicly wagging his finger at Father Ernesto Cardenal, in Nicaragua, in 1983, was only one example. And Wojtyla's ideological enforcer, Ratzinger, effectively purged the church hierarchy of the liberation theologists.

Buy why was Wojtyla this way? No mystery about that. He went out of his way to explain.

Among Wojtyla's monuments is *The Cathechism of the Catholic Church*, of 1994, which, in 823 pages, tells you almost everything you need to know.

In particular, it tells you that ascetic misogyny — and its corollary, homophobia — rank higher for an authentically orthodox Catholic like Wojtyla and his partisans than does good works, or the eradication of poverty, or securing peace, or winning other compassionate concerns, important as those may be.

The *Catechism* includes the Apostles Creed, the most basic of Catholic doctrinal statements. It starts with a clear evocation of male dominance: "I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord. He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary."

This is a family narrative, with a powerful father, a mother and a child. Though not quite an origin myth in itself, it does consciously and explicitly mimic the founding mythology of Adam, Eve and a child. From the start, this establishes a specific family structure as the norm: men, as husbands and fathers, are in charge. Women, as wives and mothers, are subordinates. Children relate primarily to the parents, and not to broader groups. In the sweep of human history, this particular family form, even in its very diverse manifestations, is hardly universal. In the Catholic way of thinking, however, it is the only legitimate one. God invented it.

"The family based on marriage corresponds to the Creator's design 'at the beginning' (Matthew 19:4). In the Kingdom of God, where no seed can be sowed other than that of the truth that is already written in the human heart, the only seed capable of 'bearing fruit through perseverance' (Luke. 8:15), this truth becomes mercy, understanding and a call to recognize in Jesus the 'light of the world' (John. 8:12), and the power that frees from the bonds of evil." (From the Pontifical Council for the Family on the subject of "Family, Marriage and 'De Facto' Unions'")

Historically, patriarchal monotheism, in all its manifestations, including Catholicism, has developed in interdependence with this type of family structure. The experience of growing up in families where husbands and fathers dominate forms the fantasy basis of patriarchal monotheist faith. It gradually supplanted earlier forms of family organization. In institutionalized form patriarchal monotheism reinforces their authority. Patriarchal monotheism became more and more prevalent along with this kind of family form.

But is this how we live now? Objectively, we know that growing numbers of contemporary men and women organize their lives differently. They have little choice. Throughout the world, profound political and economic changes are altering the internal structure of the family and the ways men and women experience each other. In turn, children growing up experience a structure of authority in the family that corresponds less and less well to patriarchal monotheist ideals.

For example, there used to be a sharp distinction between men's and women's work. Many men did heavy labor that required a physical strength that only men were likely to possess. They also tended to earn more and their wages mostly supported the family. Women did less strenuous work, and tended to do it in the home, unpaid. Nurturing the children was a key component of women's expected work.

But we know this has changed. Except in rural areas, productive work has almost totally moved out of the family. Women work for pay. Fewer men, proportionally, are primary breadwinners. Ideals of masculine and feminine behavior and of relationships between them are changing too, in ways that are complex, to be sure, but that mostly tend toward greater equality, in practice, if not in law or custom.

This is a very large social reality, with implications that progressive people and left organizations have hardly explored, except for their general support — usually on the basis of "rights" — of women's equality, feminist concerns like reproductive choice, and laws banning homophobic discrimination.

Changes in family reality create whole ranges of social needs, both materially and affectively. The same changes limit the family's ability to meet both the old needs, and the new. The need for nurturance constantly mounts, just as the family's effective ability to meet it declines. This has created political conflicts that go beyond these rather conventional feminist and gay rights positions inherited from the 1960s and 70s.

In the absence of initiatives from progressives, the religious right has dominated public debate over family policy, pushing a gender politics that seeks to restore an imagined norm of male-dominant heterosexuality and "family values."

In the summer of 2004, for example, Cardinal Ratzinger, then prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (the Inquisition's new name) sent a "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World."

Ratzinger began with the modest claim that: "The Church, expert in humanity, has a perennial interest in whatever concerns men and women." He disclaimed any desire to subordinate women. But then he went on to deplore "certain currents of thought which are often at variance with the authentic advancement of women." He named them "lethal feminism."

In Wojtyla's and Ratzinger's view, the womb is woman's destiny, whether she uses it or not. Women's reproductive sexuality is their essence. Their highest callings are virginity and motherhood. If this limits women's options, men, of course, ought to be nice about it. But this is a fundamental doctrine, at the core of everything. To think otherwise calls "into question the family, in its natural two-parent structure of mother and father, and make homosexuality and heterosexuality virtually equivalent, in a new model of polymorphous sexuality." The effects of this are "lethal."

The *Catechism* already told us "The Christian family is a communion of persons, a sign and image of the communion of the Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. In the procreation and education of children it reflects the Father's work of creation. . . . . The Christian family has an evangelizing and missionary task."

God said it was so: every husband penetrating his wife — vaginally, of course — carries a little of the divine, at least by example, and so long as he doesn't wear a condom. God just meant it that way. Wojtyla was listening, and that's the way it is. These are the misogynist and homophobic "family values" of the Christian right, including Wojtyla and the institutional Catholic church.

All this follows irresistibly from fundamental mythological elements in the Apostles Creed, those having to do with Jesus' uniquely idiosyncratic conception, birth, and quasi-human, quasi-divine identity. This is the idea of the trinity, which manifests the emotional conflicts typical of people whose formative experience is in male-dominant family structure. The central experience of Catholic worship, the sacrament of the Eucharist, the ritual symbolic cannibalism of communion, links the believer to this mythological family fantasy.

Now, however, we are at a point in human history in which women's objective position in society is becoming more equal to men's. Changes in family structure and the roles of men and women are changing in ways that undermine the experiential basis of patriarchal monotheist faith. It gets harder to believe in an omnipotent, omniscient father-god if the father you knew growing up is your mother's objective equal, and your parents may not be a stable, married pair.

Wojtyla and Ratzinger hold to the basics, though. This is an understandable defensive reaction. In the last generation they worked together to intensify Catholicism's traditionally obsessive focus on the notion of virgin birth, a rather zany fantasy about human reproductive biology.

The trinity and virgin birth are political doctrines. They deal with power, inasmuch as they regulate relations between men and women by defining their ideal qualities. This is particularly true when they idealize the roles of revered figures as they dominate and submit to each other. And Mary certainly submits! The *Catechism*: "To obey (from the Latin ob-audire, to 'hear or listen to') . . . is to submit freely to the word that has been heard, because its truth is guaranteed by God, who is Truth itself. . . The Virgin Mary is its most perfect embodiment."

There is no idealization like the idealization of Mary. Take original sin for example. The sin of Eve saddled every human with it. But, by the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, Mary starts out sinless. She has to. How would it look if the mother of the savior was a sinner? But how is this possible? Indeed you may wonder. Here is where the ascetic misogyny comes in. It's because her mother, Saint Ann, in the genital act leading to Mary's conception, did not experience orgasm.

And then, of course, Mary herself conceives in a way that no actual woman can equal. None of that messy erotic stuff for her. This is because, as the *Catechism* elaborates the creed: "Mary's virginity manifests God's absolute initiative in the Incarnation. Jesus has only God as Father. 'He was never estranged from the Father because of the human nature which he assumed. . . He is naturally Son of the Father as to his divinity and naturally son of his mother as to his humanity, but properly Son of the Father in both natures.'"

This gobbledygook makes sense only as expression of unconscious wishes, ambivalence, and conflict. It's clear though: there is an idealized, all powerful masculine figure, and there is an idealized, submissive female. Her role is clear, too — she opens herself to an obscure divine entity, who impregnates her with whatever substance it is, if it is a substance, that engenders whatever it was that her son, who is also his father, turned out to be. More trinity.

God is immensely powerful and paternal. His identity, too, is ambiguous — it blurs with his son's. There also a fourth, more amorphous figure: the holy ghost. In the middle ages, when people thought more intensely about this kind of thing, theologians speculated about just how the holy ghost actually impregnated her, if she remained a virgin. Some thought he blew in her ear.

Mary was and remained a virgin — i.e., a figure idealized through denial of her factual sexuality — even as she procreated and delivered her offspring. This peculiar assertion is not trivial, though most Catholics don't think much about it. People like Wojtyla don't let it go however, and we can be sure his successor, Ratzinger, will go on flogging it.

Of course, the notion of the trinity, and of virgin birth within it, defines the feminine ideal in grotesquely rarefied terms. No living woman can ever live up to Mary's standard. This is the dark side of any idealization. Where this kind of thinking prevails, any living, breathing, nonmythological, normally sexual woman is at risk for stigma. All it takes is a little bad luck. Getting raped, for example.

Conversely, such thinking also defines legitimate sexuality, masculinity and femininity in a crudely stereotypical, rigidly delimited, crudely binary way. To be legitimate, sexuality has to be at least potentially reproductive. Men are humans that penetrate other humans so that they can make them pregnant. Women are humans that other humans penetrate so they can become pregnant.

What about people who seek pleasure through other forms of coupling? Pleasure is inherently suspect, of course. What of gays? We know the answer in general, but here's what Ratzinger's Congregation said specifically in 1986: "To chose someone of the same sex for one's sexual activity is to annul the rich symbolism and meaning, not to mention the goals, of the Creator's sexual design. Homosexual activity is not a complementary union, able to transmit life. . . ." It "is a more or less strong tendency ordered toward an intrinsic moral evil; and thus the inclination itself must be seen as an objective disorder."

This explicit homophobia flows consistently — indeed, inescapably — from Catholicism's essential ascetic misogyny. It goes back to the creeds. Though Ratzinger went on to deplore "violent malice in speech or in action" towards gays, this soothing tone yields to an hard edge of menace, lurking under the velvet surface of Christian love, which, of course, emulates the love god showed in giving his only-begotten son for the redemption of man: " when homosexual activity is consequently condoned, or when civil legislation is introduced to protect behavior to which no one has any conceivable right, neither the Church nor society at large should be surprised when other distorted notions and practices gain ground, and irrational and violent reactions increase."

In other words, Christian men's violence against gays is kind of bad form. However, if gays and their supporters do persist in seeking democratic gender equality, and Christian men rise up to attack . . . well then, the church will wash its hands.

THIS IS THE BASIS of the politics of faith in the United States. It claims to defend the family against forces that threaten it. We have to recognize that this claim is not absurd on its own terms.

Those, however, who want to see "love" and compassion as the true essence of patriarchal monotheism, and who still think they can recast it as a "tolerant" humanism, are unable to explain this essentially retrograde character away.

This mythological thinking is not a regression to something ancient. Rather, people like Wojtyla and Ratzinger cling to mythological fantasies and an ideology that came into its own only rather recently in human terms, when the family ruled by the husband and father became the actual, and not the abstract ideal for the whole of society, and not merely its feudal elites.

Even in western Europe as recently as 1900 there were widespread pre-modern features, with patriarchal monotheism only an overlay on top of earlier magical, animist beliefs. The change to a faith in one, single, masculine, paternal deity is historically recent. It rests on a narrative that accounts, in magical terms, for the relation of the human person to a power which is overwhelming, but inscrutable. This is not at all the experience of a pre-modern peasant hoping for the indulgence of an immediately tangible, though still arbitrary power, like the sun, the fertility of the soil, the rain, which can foster the crops, or the availability of game.

Patriarchal monotheism is an ideology of societies that rest on relations of money and exchange. The patriarchal monotheist god is what the sociologist Emile Durkheim called a "collective representation" of human experience. God is a fantasized personification of the market as it dominates the vicissitudes of life. And the patriarchal monotheist god is a father, since market relations also encouraged development of the isolated family in which the father/husband ruled. In whatever religion, this deity is masculine and paternal, because the developing personality's first experience with power and authority is with the father's.

But reality can and does change underneath this fantasy. When the actual family in which we spend our lives takes on a different form, people confront an emotional choice. They can accept that the family is changing, and that society needs to develop alternatives to meet the needs the family once was able to meet. Or they can cling, with increasing frenzy, to mythologies and quaint doctrines whose loss of basis in experienced reality leaves them more and more decadent.

Feminism and the gay movement are examples of the first of these responses, an attempt to come to terms with reality. In the U.S., the religious right, including evangelicalism and the core of Catholicism is the other response. Other fundamentalisms, such as contemporary Judaic orthodoxy and political Islam, play the same role. These faiths flow coherently from mythological narratives and from the ideas that rest on them. If we ask these people of faith to be tolerant and humanistic, we ask them to abandon their faith.

To be sure, many who profess a formal commitment to these faiths really do not want to bash gays, do support gender equality, and broadly support a democratic gender politics. Their contradictions exemplify the deterioration of faith.

As a social phenomenon, faith is at the center of conflict, both in practical and psychological terms. This creates a complex political situation. On the one hand, faith, in U.S., still commands sufficient legitimacy that progressive political forces mostly cannot challenge it directly, yet. On the other hand, the inner imperatives of their faith compel reactionary religious forces to behave in ways that frequently drive some of their more lukewarm supporters away.

We saw this in the public response to the religious right's attempt to remove President Clinton from office. When they had to choose, a majority of Americans thought Clinton's behavior not admirable, but they wanted him to be president because they thought — whether accurately or not — that he was doing something for them. We saw the same response to the Catholic church's conduct in the ongoing priest scandal and in the recent Terri Schiavo imbroglio.

What is happening? On the one hand, the most malignantly reactionary religious forces in the United States have won major political victories. They control congress and the presidency and grasp at the judiciary. At the same time their desperation is plain to see. Do they fail to recognize their victories, or is this just excessive spleen?

Actually, it is some of both, but also neither. If they seem insatiable it's because there are basic forces in the society, more precisely in the broad political economy, that are changing family experience and the roles of men and women in ways that confound them. But there is more.

One key secularizing force is the way marketing recruits images of the human body to sell products. Many progressives with a nostalgic streak dislike the reification inherent in this process. At the same time they overlook the way sexual imagery functions to undermine the quainter kind of objectification of the body inherent in patriarchal monotheism. The idealization of women in the concept of virgin birth, for example, may be older, but is no nicer than those images of women and men used to sell cigarettes, cellular telephones, beer, automobiles, and what have you. The notion that the idealizations flowing from ascetic misogyny are somehow more acceptable than those in pornography, to cite a somewhat starker example, is really just another instance of the power of fake nostalgia to move even people who think themselves forward-looking. The late Andrea Dworkin, with her anti-porn fulminations and alliances with right-wing religious groups, is an example of how dangerous this kind of thinking can get.

We needn't love all aspects of the objective process of secularization. What we do need to do is recognize it as a force that weakens our enemies. More specifically, we need to think clearly about how to work politically as the objective process of secularization forms the material reality we all live with. In other words, our reactions to it need to rest on analysis of the material consequences of the same political-economic changes that bring the objective process of secularization into being.

In particular, we need to think programmatically, rather than in terms of protest politics.

Much of the left still responds to events with protest, or at least by thinking and talking about protesting. We did it this way in the 1960s, when we felt strong, and it worked pretty well in the civil rights and antiwar movements. While that was going on, however, the right was planning its own programmatic challenges to the then-prevailing liberal corporate state, the legacy of the New Deal. We criticized it too, and sometimes rightly, but mostly didn't advance alternatives. When we did they tended towards an anti-political, anti-bureaucratic populism that the right has since appropriated, with devastating political effect.

The right came to power with a clear, consistent sense of what it wanted to do in social policy—all consistent too, with authentic patriarchal monotheism. It wanted to restore the authority of the family, and really of fathers in the family. It wanted to restore gender roles to what they supposedly used to be. It wanted to re-establish homophobia as a norm.

More, the right wanted to base social efforts to address human need on compassion, variously manifested, but always with an essential message of individualism and paternalism. Authentic compassion is an obviously good thing of course. But its essence is in the private encounters of individuals. It cannot form the basis of universalistic social policy and social provision, because these rest not on individual relationships, but on encounters between individuals and organized society. The right-wing thrust in social policy was to pervert the pretense of a private virtue into a social policy.

The essence of this institutionalized sophistry is the means test, never absent from American social welfare, but which they wanted to make immeasurably harsher. The recipient of compassion would always have to demonstrate some form of incapacity or disability, and hence of deservingness. And the fraudulent right-wing appropriation of compassion was just one side of its social policy program. The other involved a sentimental fantasy of the ideal family.

All of what the right has attempted in social policy includes a conscious and intentional obliviousness to the material realities of changing family life. Consider our enemies' success. Forty or so years ago, back when the liberal-left was protesting war and racism, conservatives confronted a fairly well-entrenched welfare state. It was a limited one but it seemed secure. They developed a clear alternative notion — an intensely individualist neoliberal society in which the person has "freedom" to advance himself by participation in the marketplace. If he or she needs help with this, then the default nurturer is the family. To be sure, this leaves most people essentially defenseless before corporate power, but that's inconsequential compared to restoring and defending family values.

Restoration of this spuriously idealized family is key to right wing social policy. This is most signally so, according to conservative dogma, if the person needs help by virtue of being a child in a failed family. Anyone else could qualify for assistance from the broader society by only proving, through one or another form of means test, that he or she deserved compassion. A fixation with small government, family restoration, and compassion go hand in hand. They succeeded in reforming welfare to meet these criteria, and now want to do the same with Social Security.

In the absence of challenge from a militant left, liberals have capitulated, and right wing social policy prescriptions have become ideologically hegemonic. This has well served the political and material advantage of corporate elites. It creates a privatist justification for social policies resting on low taxes, a subservient work force, and a populace politically demobilized by fear of social dissolution and crime, (itself, in large part an expression of the entrepreneurial individualism of people without capital).

Hopefully it is not too late for the left to develop an alternative, progressive social policy, resting on precisely opposite principles. The right achieved its aims, in large part, because it had a clear conception of what it was after, and there were many organizations committed to its vision of just how stunted the social wage ought to be. The left needs to create a mechanism to counter what the right has done, but in order to create it we need to understand what we are up against. In particular, we need to recognize the changed political role of faith today.

SOME STILL HOPE to revivify the traditional liberal and left cooperation with liberal people of faith. Unfortunately, liberal and radical patriarchal monotheism is a nearly spent force. We may not like this but we get nowhere by ignoring this reality.

Cooperation between secular and religious leftists in the past depended on the issues being altogether different from those at the center of day-to-day politics now. Forty years ago it was possible to see the African-American claim to equal political and social participation as consistent with the central notions of patriarchal monotheist faith. This was particularly true in the much earlier case of abolitionism, whose thrust, and sometimes, its conscious intent, was to legally legitimize father-dominated African-American family formation. It is not a criticism to point this out. Back then, in the context of slavery, patriarchal monotheism was historically progressive. Similarly, during the Civil Rights Movement the notion of racial equality didn't challenge ascetic misogynist assumptions.

Again, forty years ago, in the antiwar movement, the pacifist and quasi-pacifist atmosphere could fit in with notions of Christian love that are secondary derivatives of ascetic misogyny. It was possible to hold to the notion — common among Christian liberals and radicals — that the crucial element of Christian faith is kindness, gentleness, concern for the feelings and well-being of others, and so forth, and that the various right-wing manifestations of Christianity are just perverse mistakes, false imitations of the sound essence of faith, which is Christian love.

All that has changed in less than a lifetime. The presuppositions of optimistic liberal patriarchal monotheism largely vanished. Progressive social policy must aim to establish universalistic social provision, eliminate the means test in all its forms, and challenge the legitimacy of compassion as the basis for determining need. Fundamentally, a progressive social-prevision policy would challenge ascetic misogyny. Appeals to compassion are obsolete, and play into enemy hands.

British right wing former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher once said that there is no such thing as society. A central element of the right-wing approach to social policy lies in that pretense that organized society does not exist; there are just individuals and families. When it comes to social policy and social welfare, privatization is key to the right-wing thrust.

Privatization necessarily implies a denial of reality. It rests on the pretense that it is possible to meet human needs in a sound and equitable way through applying private, compassionate, and charitable efforts to meeting human needs that are really in origin. Piling privatization of social provision onto an ideology of compassion is not just a way to save money on human services or cynically reward faith-based service delivery agencies run by political allies. It is also a grand approach to denying a material dimension to any rights that come with participation in the society. Linked to social policy, compassion is itself inherently regressive and reactionary.

It is not just that recipients of faith-based services have to undergo humiliation, self-abasement, enforced praying, and other indignities, and, in general, a series of experiences that reinforce the notion that suffering is a bit meritorious. More important, from the strategic standpoint as well as from the point of view of longer-term adequate social provision, is that faith-based services based on compassion are fragmented and residual.

Residualism distinguishes the respectable from the disreputable. It invites those who aren't quite abjectly poor to demean those who are. The means test sets up a hierarchy of deserving. Its classic and original form is the proof of need for public material relief, but it has other forms, including labeling various diseases as more deserving of concern than others, or defining some drug addictions or uses as more stigmatizing than others. It is a device for creating ignominy.

That is why we cannot look to the religious left for a coherent and effective approach to social provision. The message of the scriptures offers no useful guidance. Some religious liberals and leftists deplore the religious right's emphasis on the Book of Revelations rather than the Sermon on the Mount, and hanker after the glory days of the Civil Rights movement, and of those political movements, like welfare rights, that were part of its orbit.

Yet the supposedly alternative notion of Christian love and Jesus' message of compassion offers us little support when the political task is to develop a democratic and progressive social and family policy founded on universalism. Compassion also lends itself more to episodic histrionics than to provision of nurturance, as a matter of right, by a responsible governmental administration whose principle is universalism.

Only universalism broadens the definition of eligibility to include everyone. In some countries, a large part of public financial assistance falls under family allowances, which are payments for which all children are eligible, and which create a floor under income. They are cheap to administer because there is no means test, children of all levels of family income qualify, and the only criterion of eligibility is to be a child.

Social welfare policy and family policy are linked, and need to be part of a progressive strategy. Here too, patriarchal monotheism offers us no support. Its roots in a father/husband dominated family narrative show it to be necessarily retrograde.

The Catholic position on this is clear. The Catechism puts it thus: " 2207. The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life. Authority, stability, and a life of relationships within the family constitute the foundations for freedom, security, and fraternity within society. The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God, and make good use of freedom. Family life is an initiation into life in society."

Again the restorationist thrust. But what would a progressive family policy look like?

The key issue is how to respond realistically to the political and economic shifts that have changed family structure and functioning. These change not just men's and women's roles, but also the family's ability to bring together two disparate and fundamentally distinct functions. One is the developmental nurturance of children, and the other is meeting the nurturant needs of adults. Older family forms were able to harmonize them with some ease and success. But the family as we experience it in the U.S. today has great difficulty managing this.

Again, right wing family policy defines reality as irrelevant. In fact it claims not to be a policy at all: there is no need for family policy because the male dominant family is divinely ordained and natural. There is no real conflict between the family's nurturant tasks. It's simple, they tell us, just go with god's plan. You don't need a village to raise a child, says Pennsylvania Sen. Rick Santorum. You need a family.

> The notion of Christian love and Jesus' compassion offers us little support when the political task is to develop a democratic and progressive social and family policy founded on universalism.

We need to maintain a clear sense that any reform which presupposes the conventional family definition will be ineffective and diversionary. In particular, we need to steer clear of any reinforcement of heterosexual male-dominant gender definitions. Fortunately, a lot of reality is on our side.

Unwittingly, much of the culture is tending in a progressive direction on this point. Last year's Supreme Court sodomy decision is one example. A majority of rather conventional older judges was able to see that gays are not abnormal and not dangerous, and, in fact are everywhere, without anything having gone too far wrong. Another example is the increasing majority who accept civil unions for gays, and the growing acceptance of gay marriage. This is the objective process of secularization at work.

Another hopeful sign is the apparent languishing of organizations that aim to restore male-dominant family relationships. Take the Promise Keepers, whose leader is a rabid homophobe. It proclaimed the need to artificially pump up ideals of responsible masculine dominance in the home. Another is the Nation of Islam with its Million Man March, putting forward an obsolete ideal of fatherhood. Both of these organizations had a corresponding feminine ideal — the submissive and domestic wife and mother. Both are stagnating.

Here is where a progressive family policy intersects with the aspirations of the existing feminist and gay movements. Neither has developed a vision of family and social welfare policy that goes beyond an emphasis on "rights," but both implicitly point towards it, inasmuch as universalist developmental services for children, like day care, and universally funded public education, are the only way to assure that children will actually get what they need.

But the family has another function that often works at cross-purposes with its function as the arena for child development.

The instability of the family, and its tendency to dissolve through formal or informal divorce, comes out of its other task in meeting adult nurturant needs. Now that production has migrated out of the family unit, there is less to hold couples together. There also is no specifically normative set of relationships that one can call by the name "family." There is nothing to stop same-sex relationships from seeming as legitimate as those between men and women. Younger people, having grown up in families that formed and reformed as they grew up, find less experiential basis for taking heterosexual family life as a norm.

Creating a national family policy that addresses the conflict between the family's two functions is a prime task for all throughout much of the world, and is probably the most important domestic political issue in the U.S. So far the right has dominated discussion. The left needs to join this issue and put forward strong alternatives.

Part of knowing what to do about the reactionary politics of faith involves knowing how to pose these alternatives. However, it is difficult to see such an alternative in the self-abnegatory pity politics of those liberals and leftists who still think a progressive alternative is a primary focus on the poor, perhaps through attempts to revive New Deal institutions, instead of developing universalistic programmatic initiatives.

A particularly ineffectual version of this outdated foolishness is the attempt at a kind of intellectual sleight of hand — the claim that cruelty to the impoverished and downtrodden is un-Christian. This limping argument invites devastating counter-attack. From the evangelical standpoint, for example, there is a strong neo-Calvinist "tough-love" counter-argument: that it is kinder to be strict, to make the poor work their own way up to a more respectable state, and that helping them only reinforces dependency.

From the Catholic camp there is a different counter-argument — to see a pitying Christian concern as part of a seamless web of compassion — a "preferential option" if you will — that extends to the poor and friendless as well as to the at-risk fetuses, and to argue for making the society soundly Christian enough that it will be able to work to eliminate poverty, cruelty, and injustice. These arguments have the merit of consistency with fundamental doctrines rooted in the bizarre family fantasies of scripture and Catholic tradition — mothers, fathers, children drenched in maudlin sentimentality.

For the right the pathetic image of children getting sacrificed to their divorcing parents' self-indulgence is a way to legitimize retrograde policy prescriptions. This ideological ploy attacks as hedonistic pleasure seekers, oblivious to their offspring, those many parents who experience the vicissitudes of marital attachment. The ascetic aspect of ascetic misogyny manifests itself here — since the purpose of the family is procreation, in the Catholic view, husbands and wives should all just buckle down and get to work. What others might see as social reality, as day-to-day difficulties of typical relationships of men and women in the contemporary United States — well now! That's no excuse!

The religious right really is no fun. Its dismal thoughts, in essence, reduce sexuality and family life to labor. "In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."

This comes from Genesis 3:19, which is about the expulsion from the garden, a mythologized version of an historical event — a political triumph of male-dominant religion and the political defeat of Canaanite polytheism, which had a significant goddess component and which preceded patriarchal monotheism.

By contrast, a progressive family policy would recognize the family's basic limitations as a nurturer. It would recognize the things it is capable of doing and define areas of universal responsibility for the whole society in nurturing children. Day care, for example is not just a way to accommodate working parents. It is a positive experience of participation in society and offers something the family cannot offer.

Basic to a progressive family policy is for pleasure to be an end rather than a distraction in the family situation. Affirming pleasure is something progressives ought to be about. Once again, perhaps, we need to recognize that one of the left's most sterile aspects is its own inclinations towards asceticism.

When we agree on the basic characteristics of a progressive social welfare and family policy, there remains the question of the politics of putting it into public discussion. Our opponents, as it happens have created strategic vulnerabilities, which offer opportunities for strong progressive political initiatives.

Patriarchal monotheism's basic doctrines, and, in particular its ascetic misogyny, have led many of the churches into difficult terrain. One manifestation of ascetic misogyny is the Catholic church's priestly celibacy. On taking the Sacrament of Ordination a man's sacrifice involves abjuring a particular kind of fun, and leading a life supposedly free of sensual distraction. This absurdity is a clear manifestation of ascetic misogyny in doctrine if not in practice. Moreover, celibacy is at the root of the Catholic church's criminal failure to protect children entrusted to the care of sexually predatory priests and nuns.

Nothing has done more to discredit the Catholic Church than this scandal. In some countries, such as Ireland, it has become a political issue in its own right. Unfortunately, the American tradition of deference to faith has somewhat spared the church, thus far.

One must stipulate, of course, that no one knows if priests, more than anybody else, have a greater tendency towards child-raping. Early in the crisis, spokesmen for the church estimated that the molesters among the priesthood represented just 2 percent of all priests.

Ratzinger, more confident, asserted late in 2002 that "In the United States, there is constant news on this topic, but less than 1 percent of priests are guilty of acts of this type."

In June, 2002, the church in the United States established a "Charter for the Protection of Children and Youth," and bound itself to conduct yearly audits of progress in assuring the safety of children who had to encounter priests. The church's own audit then found the child-molesting percentage of priests to be 4 percent, even though its findings rested on self-reported data the dioceses themselves — grudgingly — supplied.

Moreover, the comparison with a non-priest population is difficult, as nobody really knows the percentage of all American men who molest children. One could make a case for a "rotten apple" interpretation of the problem of the child-raping priest, if, in fact, the problem lay only with the priests themselves.

However, the church's great crime was not the individual crimes of the priests. Rather, it is the church policy, worldwide in scope, of concealing and facilitating these individual crimes. In France the Bishop of Bayeux, Monsignor Pican, served a prison sentence for failing to report sexual assaults on minors by a priest, René Bissey. Even in the United States however, where faith commands every politician's reflexive respect, civil and criminal actions have uncovered gross dereliction. Dioceses have entered into plea-bargains. The church has to sell off vast properties to pay damages.

It is worth looking at the researches of the psychologist and psychotherapist, A. W. Richard Sipe. Sipe entered the Benedictine order in 1953 and the priesthood in 1959. He seems to be a conscientious man, and probably took his own vow of celibacy seriously as long as it applied. (He left the priesthood in 1970, and married.) In 1960, impressed with how the interior culture of the church honored celibacy in the breach — or, better put, in and around the breeches — he began to study celibacy's actualities instead of its idealities. His many publications are clinical and scholarly, but leave little doubt that most priests are actively sexual, many with women, many with other men, especially other priests, many with themselves as masturbators, and some with children.

In fact, though Catholic ascetic misogyny is the basis for required priestly celibacy, and the fiction that the church organization is a sexless environment, the reality is the opposite. Celibacy only succeeds in creating a pervasive, though covert, immature, and cynically guilt-ridden sexualized environment.

But why now? Many priests' victims described crimes dating back decades. Why did they come out only now?

Here too, the cultural changes in the broader society flowing from a consumer society and changes in gender roles, have left neither the priest nor their victims untouched.

As early as the 1970s, prescient voices within the church pointed to the immaturity and general lack of adult personality formation of the priests they were recruiting. The church's damage control after the crisis began in 2002 included The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops setting up The National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, which found that priests ". . . ordained in their mid-twenties, had the emotional maturity of adolescents. This lack of 'normal' psychosexual development may have hindered some of these priests from achieving a healthy celibacy and may explain why some of them sought the company of adolescent boys. The Review Board was struck by the large number of individuals who believed that many offender priests lacked emotional and psychological maturity and considered this phenomenon to be a cause of the incidence of sexual abuse of minors by clergy."

In this enclosed "Secret World," as Sipe called it, the dark side of ascetic misogyny flourished. One could call this hypocrisy, but that would obscure the coherent psychodynamic chain linking ascetic misogyny to antisocial and criminal behavior, and, more important, to the church's policy of criminal squalor in tacitly accepting it. On the other hand, the society's growing sexual openness and the gradual weakening of homophobia freed many of the victims to come forward.

The Catholic church is not the only offender. Other churches have done the same, and also gotten caught. In Texas the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America had to pay $36 million to victims of a pastor whose crimes it had concealed. The Catholic case is the biggest, of course, because it is a bigger church, with wherewithal for a bigger criminal enterprise.

It is quite astounding that progressives have done so little to respond to the sex abuse revelations. It is easy to link the churches' regressive policies on family and social welfare policy with their egregious criminal conduct, given that both arise out of fundamental features of patriarchal monotheism's ascetic misogyny. This issue gets right to the question of whether or not patriarchal monotheism really can serve as a sound guide for organizing and regulating the family and sexual conduct. The Catholic church's opposition to loving relationships between men and men and women and women, for example, is difficult to reconcile with its inability to cope with its liturgical staff's seeking exploitive sensual gratification.

Challenges to regressive church initiatives are potentially effective. Ecclesiastical prestige no longer shields the churches from bad publicity. Just one example: when gay marriage, in response to a court decision, became an issue in Massachusetts, the Catholic Church mounted a vigorous campaign against it. The Most Reverend Thomas L. Dupre, Bishop of Springfield, was among its more frothing and homophobic spokesmen. Hearing of this, two outraged men he had raped as a young priest, came forward to expose him, and Dupre resigned abruptly last year.

This happened solely due to the personal initiative of two courageous individuals. Imagine how much more we could gain if exposures like this went along with a fight for a progressive, universalistic, social welfare and family policy.

The coming years will bring more and more opportunities. Ratzinger has moved quickly to intensify campaigns for the church's prime, authentic commitments. He seems to think a smaller, but more ideologically pure church is the way to go. He has removed the pleasantly liberal Jesuit editor, Father Thomas J. Reese, from the magazine *America*. He has chosen, as his successor at the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, Archbishop William Levada, of San Francisco, notorious for his secretive response to the sex abuse scandal. There will be much, much more of this, and it will go far to discredit the church and Catholicism generally.

The United States remains a country in which faith retains unusual legitimacy, but mass faith is becoming less systematic, less church-based, and, as time goes on, less faithful. Moreover, the number of those who disclaim religious affiliation is growing rapidly, particularly among young people, and particularly among those with a Catholic background, though their outlooks are various. In Europe, of course, the situation is far more favorable, but there is a longer tradition of anti-clericalism there. It goes back to the struggles against feudalism and for formal democracy, when the churches, especially the Catholic church, were on the reactionary side. The United States did not develop that way, and we've had little recent anti-clerical agitation.

Yet even those who are falling away from faith do not have a coherently organized secularism to identify with and — for the moment — creating one would be both artificial and premature. There are even still a few instances where the old alliance between progressives and the Catholic Church is not yet dead.

On the other hand, the usual progressive notion of religion as the third rail of American politics is also outdated. Changes in the roles of men and women, and in the functioning of the family more and more erase the distinction between issues of personal conduct and those issues leftists like to think are more authentic, those with a material focus. A politics built around a long-range campaign to meet human needs in a democratic, gender-progressive way, with a realistic family policy is the key to the left breaking out of isolation.

That is the positive side of what we need to do. How do we deal with those authentic patriarchal monotheists who oppose what we support, the religious right?

Let us note that there are limits to their influence. They have failed when they took on issues that draw the attention of the general American population and which demand that Americans make some kind of decision, as with destroying the Clinton presidency or building support to keep a brain-dead woman's heart and lungs going. And though they are numerous and influential they are still a minority.

The Catholic part of this minority is a minority of the Catholic whole. For decades, polls have showed majorities of Catholics rejecting church teaching on issues crucial to the essential Catholic ascetic misogyny, those on subjects like birth control, for example. The priest scandal creates further new opportunities.

A PROGRESSIVE APPROACH on matters of faith can succeed, and must succeed if we are to defend democracy and advance beyond its current parlous state. For reasons outlined here, Catholicism is probably the weakest link in the religious right, and dealing with it is a priority.

Direct secularist challenges to faith are premature for now, and our decisions about this for the future need to follow assessment of what is expedient. On the other hand, where the churches' conduct is overtly criminal, there need to be systematic efforts to mobilize the criminal justice system to cope legally with their challenges. For example, progressives need to support legislative initiatives to extend statutes of limitations on sexual abuse, and to require clergy to report abuse to secular authorities, even though this would violate the seal of the Confessional.

The political approach to faith needs to be positive, in presenting progressive alternatives to the currently hegemonic regressive family and social welfare policy. We need to understand that alternatives challenge patriarchal monotheist faith in a basic way.

Above all, progressives need to recognize faith as essentially male-dominant, ascetic misogynist, and anti-democratic, even when, as it happens, we agree with people of faith on specific issues. This means the careful study of faith, of patriarchal monotheist doctrine, of scriptural narratives and of all their implications is essential to any sound understanding of our political tasks. Political Islam is just one faith that needs to be understood and contended with.

Moreover, looking to the future, beyond the defensive mire of today, we have to recognize that faith became a mass phenomenon as human society came to rest on all-embracing relations between people based on monetary exchange, and on family structure based on rule by the husband and father.

Now, however, the development of capitalism has changed that kind of family. The experience of day-to-day family life makes belief in a masculine and paternal deity less and less psychologically tenable. The worldwide phenomenon of fundamentalism is a menace, but also is a defensive response. We see it in all religions. Wojtyla and Ratzinger are its most overt Catholic manifestations.

In the United States, the authentic core of patriarchal monotheism works to support privatism in meeting social needs. It serves corporate power, and is the basis of the right wing alliance between the reactionary churches and reactionary economic elites.

On the other hand, there are democratic and humanistic responses too. They embrace the objective process of secularization and ride it towards a healthier, democratic culture. This is the basis of a sound left politics in the coming years.

Section 17, The Annunciation by Carlo Crivelli
Class Struggle

Robert Kelly

This is the Renaissance,
everything is for sale. The poor man
is greedy (that's why he's poor —
does Ficino tell us this, or Bruno?),
ill-dressed, his hair a mess.
Yet this transaction is directly underneath
the glory of God.
These characters (dubious seller,
too-comfortable doubtful buyer)
are closer to the Divine Light
than Mary is. What does this mean?

The class struggle
is the meaning of history.
Any light there is in the picture
rational, knowable,
tractable, divine,
illuminates that,
the conflict, the scruffy
poor man and the glib aristo.

They are us, rich and poor,
big and little, prosperous and needy,
greedy, on rooftops which are arches
which are bridges over spaces
which are roads from one wall
to another, who live in houses
but stand outside them terrified,
not even one of them looking
up at the sky, we stand in areaways
in alleys in courtyards between
one house of life and another,
we are them, the ordinary everybody
for whose sake this whole bizarre
business of a bird from heaven,
virgin mother, god on scaffold,
dead man talking with his friends,
a book comes on a visit, a book
no one can understand, all of it,
everything comes down. Comes
for us. Sometimes businessmen
haggle to keep from crying.
From doing what we always do.

Robert Kelly *teaches at Bard College. His latest books are* Lapis *(Godine) and* Shame/Scham *(McPherson).*

Roundtable on Immigration and African Americans

Stephen Steinberg's "Immigration, African Americans and Race Discourse" in our last issue of *New Politics* (#39) elicited several responses. Here they are with Steinberg's rejoinder. Steinberg's article, together with a different set of responses and a reply from Steinberg, also appears in the Winter issue of *New Labor Forum*. We urge readers to follow this debate in both venues. — EDS.

The Intra-Immigrant Dilemma

ALAN AJA

> *"Black people should do more to help themselves. . . . We worked for everything we have. They should too."* (Cuban-American Miami resident)
>
> *"[Whites] are racists by tradition and they at least know that what they're doing is not quite right . . . Cubans don't even think there is anything wrong with it. That is the way they've always related, period."* (African-American Miami resident)*

IN HIS RECENT PIECE ON RACE, immigration and African Americans, Stephen Steinberg challenges progressives to think outside our own box — a box that has held strong support for a liberalized immigration policy and the immigrant struggle for social/economic inclusion in the United States. However, in our call to defend, organize, and empower newcomers, social outcasts, "have-nots" and people of color, we often forget to question institutional structures that allow the transfer of power and privilege from one set of hands to another in a way that sustains pre-existing forms of inequality. As Steinberg duly noted, this transfer of relative privilege comes at the cost of those the farthest down, spurned by society in a discriminatory preference toward newcomers they can easily exploit. Today, we have come full-circle, once again "preferring" immigrants over native-born African Americans (and various U.S.-born groups of color) while in many cases allowing elite ethnic communities to bask in the limelight of exploitation, engaging in similar practices as their oppressors to their own advantage.

In this brief response, I use the growth, power and privilege of the Cuban-American community in South Florida as an explicit case-example of Steinberg's necessary argument. When African Americans could have been absorbed into the local economy and looked to make political gains after the legal death of Jim Crow, predominantly "white" recently-arrived

ALAN AJA *is an Adjunct Professor in the Puerto Rican & Latino Studies department at Brooklyn College (CUNY) and is a Ph.D. candidate in Public & Urban Policy at the New School. Born of Cuban parents, he has worked in Argentina, Cuba,and Texas.*

**Nicolas C. Vaca,* The Presumed Alliance: The unspoken conflict between Latinos and Blacks and what it means for America *(New York, Rayo Press 2004).*

high-skilled elites from Cuba were ultimately allowed to transplant pre-Castro-like conditions of segregation and economic exploitation, transferring them onto native-born African Americans and eventually Caribbean/Latino immigrants of color (even Afro-Cubans). The result after 45 years is a diverse yet tumultuous, mostly "elite" immigrant-dominated environment with a history of ethnic/racial tension and conflict, continued social and economic segregation, and deeply concentrated pockets of poverty. Moreover, the root causes lie in the wake of government policies that have given Cubans relative preferential immigrant status and the often-unquestioned right to favor "their own" in local economic, social, and political institutions.

Before continuing, what I argue in this commentary should not be received as a negation of historical facts, or as a public attack on the community of my roots. Cuban-Americans, like any other refugee or immigrant group, clearly entered this country as an "other," subject to the likes of xenophobia and ethnic-racial discrimination that have plagued this nation since its very inception. I am also aware that Cubans were also manipulatively used as an instrument in U.S. Cold War policy, given their open discontent toward Fidel Castro's government. More importantly, this argument should not be applied in every context where immigrants outnumber African Americans. It is easy to scapegoat and blame post-1965 immigrants as the cause of the native-immigrant struggle, when Steinberg very well illustrated that today's conflict is no different than yesteryear's.

Instead, my purpose is to provide a perspective in which the person at the lowest position, looking to integrate into a society that has historically denied them due process and economic mobility, is (to borrow from Nicolas Vaca) "passed by and shut out" by a group that has been aided through U.S. refugee and immigrant-adaptation policy more so than any other group in U.S. history. More importantly, as Steinberg noted, it is the unannounced endorsement by academics and policymakers for immigrant groups to "prefer" their own in local hiring through "networks," as well as those allowed to maintain a relative monopoly through "ethnic niches," that is most detrimental to African Americans and marginalized groups. Scholars including Patricia Fernandez-Kelly, Alex Grenier, Alejandro Portes, and Alex Stepick have written extensively on the Cuban "ethnic economy," sometimes comparing it to other local native-born and immigrant group enclave communities. Their results allow an observer to perceive Cubans as a "model-minority" Hispanic/Latino group overall, although with some reservations toward our overbearing political power, yet one that has been deemed one of the most economically successful immigrant groups in U.S. history.[1]

> Black Latinos ocupy the lowest socio-economic position.

However, what many scholars and policymakers seem to ignore gives even more credence to Steinberg's controversial thesis. Scholarly research on today's immigrants informs us of the divergent paths groups take while incorporating into U.S. society. It has been clearly documented, for example, that not all Latin-American and Asian groups adapt the same way. The reason, scholars have debated, range from the strength of social networks, skills, and human capital to the amount of economic aid given upon initial arrival. Likewise, "culture" is a defined motive and reason of economic success by some groups and cause of relative poverty in others. Racism, deemed a declining factor in life chances, takes the most subservient position in many of these studies.

However, it is the racialized identity of peoples *within* their own ethnic communities that begs the need to discuss the impact of immigration and immigrant-adaptation policies on U.S.-born African Americans and vulnerable minority groups. As the previous U.S. Census illustrates, more Latinos, for example, are self-identifying beyond the traditional black/white social categories, choosing "other" or their home country as the source of their ethnic identity. However, scholars like William Darity, Jason Dietrich, Darrick Hamilton, and John Logan have dug deeper, using different methodologies, but find similarly significant disparities in wages and the overall socio-economic position of Latinos by "race."[2] For instance, Logan's detailed extraction of census data found that Latinos who identified as "white" had the highest socioeconomic standing and were more likely to live around non-Latino whites. The group that identified as some other race, or what Logan calls "Hispanic-Hispanics," held less favorable positions than their "white" Latino counterparts. "Black" Latinos, the smallest group, occupies the lowest socio-economic position, which are more likely to live near and have income and unemployment rates similar to African Americans.[33]

Let us apply the above inequalities in a historical context by using South Florida as an example. The prevailing narrative is that Cubans first entered as a high-skilled, politically persecuted group that initially experienced discrimination and used hiring networks to establish an economic foothold before less-skilled relatives and other Latinos arrived whom they would aid and employ (i.e., Nicaraguans). Another perspective, which most scholars seem to ignore, is that Cubans eventually replaced white economic and political power and adopted similar Jim Crow-like patterns within their own economic circles. As immigration increased from Latin America and the Caribbean, immigrant groups of color (even Afro-Cubans) were forced to battle it out with African Americans for scarce economic and housing opportunities. Meanwhile, Cubans and other "white" Latinos segregated themselves from African Americans and dark-skinned Caribbean groups as they moved up the socioeconomic ladder. The result throws out any credibility to arguments that cite "culture" as an indicator of economic mobility and instead places race smack dab in the middle of the equation.

While growing up in the surroundings of the Cuban ethnic economy, African Americans (and Haitians) were consistently blamed for their own struggles and living conditions. What we rarely questioned (although we very well knew and lobbied for) is that we were given the go-ahead through preferential immigration policies such as the Cuban Adjustment Act (1966, 1996), aided with additional benefits and resources, and allowed to employ the same workplace hiring and economically manipulative tactics that led to revolutionary resistance and our initial expulsion from Cuba in the first place. As a former "other," we took no responsibility for the plight of African Americans and unapologetically had them occupy that former space. But we did the same to members of our own group, even though we heralded Jose Marti's famous "*mas que blanco, mas que mulato, mas que negro*, (more than white, more than mulatto, more than black). Alejandro Portes and Juan Clark's post-Mariel boatlift survey shows the degrees that Cubans (of whom roughly 25-40 percent were Afro-Cuban) felt discriminated against by their fellow Cuban counterparts as by whites and African Americans.[4] Mirta Ojito, whose ethnographic piece details the lives of two young best friends from Cuba who arrived with relatively similar skills; one "white," one "black," details this phenomenon. The result is divergent paths, with the light-skinned Cuban moving up in Cuban-American social settings, benefiting from economic opportunities, while his Afro-Cuban counterpart lives alongside African Americans, jumping from unstable job to job in the secondary labor market.[5]

Policymakers and researchers are too often blinded by labels and categories; frequently forgetting that immigrants themselves have internal intra-enclave/community race and class issues that evolved prior to their arrival and are often accentuated in U.S. society. Scholars like Juan Flores, Miguel De La Torre and others teach us that these dynamics often go unmentioned, overlooked by scholars due to an extensive focus on the oppressive structures of dominant Eurocentric culture.[6] Scholars who study race in Latin America and its transnational implications support their works. For instance, Amy Chua's *World on Fire*, argues that a pigmentocratic phenomenon in Latin America, where lightness in skin color means more access to the upper echelons of society, is allowing oppressed groups to identify away from national terms and embrace their ethnicity as they organize against the power and privilege of "white" elites.[7] Eduardo Bonilla-Silva argues the United States is moving beyond the traditional "black," "white" and "honorary white" stratification and now encompasses this new pigmentocratic component through factors including Latin-American immigration.[8]

What the above circumstances imply calls for a whole new approach to understanding existing tension between immigrant and U.S.-born groups, especially in cities where minorities (especially elite Latinos) are making significant political and economic gains. The debate should no longer just consider that ethnics hire, rent, loan (or sometimes appoint) co-ethnics in cities as a forced or chosen response to greater oppressive structures. Yes, we must indeed organize around issues and policies that disallows "white" to discriminate against "yellow," "brown," "red," "black," and shades in-between. However, we must also be vigilant in cases in which immigrants of all colors of the spectrum are "preferred" and exploited through immigration/refugee policies and are eventually allowed to prefer "their own" to the detriment of "black." In other words, we should also turn our focus to groups that lean into the "expanding boundaries of whiteness" as they discriminate against African Americans, even their own, and exploit others in order to achieve this status.[9]

NOTES

1. See Orlando Patterson's comments on the Cuban success story in his book, *The Ordeal of Integration: Progress and Resentment in America's Racial Crisis* (Washington, D.C., Civitas/Counterpoint 1998): 181.
2. Darity, Jr., William, Hamilton, Darrick and Dietrich, Jason. "Passing on Blackness: Latinos, Race and Earnings in the USA," *Applied Economics Letters*, Vol. 9 (2002): 847-853.
3. Logan, John R.,"How Race Counts for Hispanic Americans," Lewis Mumford Center (July 14, 2003).
4. Portes, Alejandro and Clark, Juan., "Mariel Refugees: Six Years Later" (*Migration World 15*, fall, 1987), 14-18.
5. Ojito, Mirta, "Best of Friends, Worlds Apart" in *How Race is Lived in America* (New York: Times Books/Henry Holt, 2001).
6. De La Torre, Miguel, *La Lucha for Cuba: Religion and Politics on the Streets of Miami* (University of California Press 2003). Flores, Juan. "Islands and Enclaves: Caribbean Latinos in Historical Perspective," in *Latinos Remaking America*, eds. Suarez Orozco, M. and Paez M (University of California Press, 2002.)
7. See Chua, Amy, *World on Fire* (New York: Doubleday 2004).
8. Bonilla-Silva, Eduardo, "From bi-racial to tri-racial: Towards a new system of racial stratification in the USA," *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, November, 2004, vol. 27, no. 6, 931-950 .
9. For a discussion on the expanding boundaries of whiteness, see Omi, Michael and Winant, Howard, *Racial Formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1980s* (New York and London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1992).

Mobilizing Immigrants and Blacks

PETER DRUCKER

AS STEPHEN STEINBERG SAYS, "There is nothing progressive about flooding the lower echelons of the labor market with desperate immigrants who depress wages . . . It is also problematic when the nation imports workers to fill higher echelons of the job pyramid. . . ." Progressives should support elements of his policy agenda such as vigorously enforcing anti-discrimination laws, expanding affirmative action and creating a job corps for minority youth.

But Steinberg's call to "face some hard choices" on immigration policy seems to imply, as many on the left argue here in Holland, that the left has to choose between defending immigrants or defending the wages and social gains of native-born workers. The reality is rather that immigrants are interesting to capital, and thus competitors of African Americans and other native-born workers, primarily to the extent that they are defenseless, have fewer rights and benefits and lower wages, and are less well organized. The left should respond by helping them organize and helping them win equal rights, benefits, and wages.

Whole sectors of the world economy now depend on undocumented workers who are paid less and treated worse than the law requires. These workers live in fear while the employers who exploit them go unpunished. This situation should be turned around. Even legal workers are at a disadvantage when they are denied the rights to vote or speak freely — as under the Patriot Act — denied food stamps and welfare — as in the United States since Clinton's "welfare reform" — or prevented by language barriers from knowing their rights, a situation that the English Only movement seeks to perpetuate. A labor movement that fails to make these fights a high priority is cutting its own throat.

Experience shows, on the other hand, that when immigrants have the same rights and militancy as non-immigrant workers, capital cannot use them to undermine labor's gains. In the Netherlands for example, where the children and grandchildren of Moroccan "guest workers" are Dutch citizens, speak Dutch and have a strong sense of entitlement, employers are unlikely to hire them anymore to do low-paid work. Now employers much prefer Polish immigrants, who are not rooted here and are barely beginning to protest against the way they are treated. The cases of countries like Germany and Israel, which give rights to some immigrants but not others depending on ethnicity, are particularly revealing. When Israel decided to get rid of the Palestinians who were doing much of the country's dirty work, replacing them with Jews of Arab origin — often from even poorer countries than the West Bank and Gaza, but Hebrew-speaking citizens and union members — was not considered a serious option. Instead Israel imported rightless, unorganized Romanians and Vietnamese to do the dirty work.

So Steinberg should add some items to his policy agenda: the right of immigrants to vote, whether citizens or not (as was permitted in many U.S. states until the beginning of the 20th century); equal protection under the constitution; equal entitlements to social benefits; a living wage for immigrants; explanations of civil and social rights in immigrants' own languages; tough employer sanctions for those who break

---

PETER DRUCKER *is the author of* Max Shachtman and His Left: A Socialist's Odyssey Through the American Century *(Humanities Press,* 1994). He now lives and works in Amsterdam.

the law; amnesty and green cards for undocumented workers who blow the whistle on lawbreaking and union busting employers.

None of this will be easy to win; but neither will Steinberg's other demands be. None of it amounts to a full solution to the racism that African Americans suffer from; neither would it eliminate the poverty that creates desperate immigrants. Getting rid of capitalism is the best way to achieve those goals. Meanwhile the best way to make progress toward them is to fight for demands that will mobilize and empower both immigrants and the most oppressed native-born workers, and make it easier for them to unite in the struggle.

Alliances Needed

Ron Hayduk

Steve Steinberg highlights a critical issue at an important time. Steinberg is right to draw our attention to the impact of immigration on the project of progressive politics, particularly as it relates to the plight of African Americans. Progressives, workers, people of color, activists for economic and social justice, and especially immigrants and immigrant advocates must grapple with Steinberg's call to "think about immigration from the standpoint" of African Americans if progressive politics is to emerge and thrive.

There is little doubt that immigrants are here to stay. Population projections indicate the foreign-born will grow in number and disperse further throughout the United States, given current family reunification policies, birth rates, domestic economic needs, and so on. Their large and growing numbers make them increasingly important political players. Although questions remain about the direction of U.S. immigration policy, there is little doubt that how immigrants will be incorporated — socially, politically, culturally, and economically — will remain a burning issue for years to come. In other words, it is not a question about whether the millions of immigrants in the United States will be incorporated, but how they will be incorporated.

As Steinberg rightly notes, the problem of persistent and structural racism complicates this process, especially regarding how immigrants are being incorporated vis-a-vis African Americans. Today, just as in the past, some immigrants are becoming "white" while others are becoming "black." A changing but strong racial hierarchy in the United States continues to act as a sorting mechanism. As the Aspen Institute Roundtable on Community Change noted in a recent publication, "Structural Racism and Community Building," racial group status can change but not easily, and not without support from others: "A group that is subordinated in one era can move closer to power and privilege in another era. In the past century, groups such as the Irish, Italians, and Jews in America started low on the socioeconomic and political ladder and 'became white' over time. More recently, 'model minority' status has been given to some Asian groups, allowing group members to gain access to some of the privileges associated with whiteness."

These authors stress that a group's position and mobility within the racial hierarchy, which in many ways resembles a caste system, cannot be solely determined by the nonwhite or subordinated groups themselves. How those who are at the lower end of the privilege scale perceive themselves, or how they behave, is less significant to their racial privilege status than broadly held perceptions about them. "European immigrants to nineteenth-century America could not 'become white' by simply adopting the mainstream habits and declaring themselves its members. They had to be allowed access into occupational, educational, residential, and other settings that had previously excluded them. In other words, racial and ethnic group position reflects the dominant group's exclusionary or inclusionary exercise of political, economic, and cultural power." Sadly, the enduring fact, as Steinberg rightly casts the spotlight on, is that African Americans have by and large been closed off from the pathways to opportunity. Only in times of mass social movements that give primacy to the conditions of

Ron Hayduk *is Associate Professor of Political Science at the Borough of Manhattan Community College.*

African Americans that actions or inactions of progressive allies have been able to make strides forward, such as in the Civil Rights Movement.

We live in a moment pregnant with disastrous and progressive possibilities. The tide will turn, in part, on how immigrants and their allies line up with others. On the one hand, immigration could further reinforce racial hierarchies by pitting newcomers against the native-born, particularly African Americans. This is evident in tensions between immigrants from the Caribbean and native-born African Americans, for example, or between Dominicans and Puerto Ricans. Fear of the other, particularly by African Americans who witness their numbers dwindling compared with an increasing Latino population, is not unfounded. Just when African Americans have gained political power in electoral terms, they are watching their strength diminish. And while many factors are at work in depressing real wages, immigration is surely one. In addition, whites have successfully exploited divide and conquer strategies to push and pull immigrants in conflicting directions. These dynamics strain already fragile multiethnic coalitions.

On the other hand, as Steinberg notes, new immigrants create opportunities for multiracial coalitions along working class lines. Multiracial alliances — particularly between blacks and Latinos — have won living wage campaigns, gains in public education and health care, and scored electoral victories at the local level. These kinds of alliances, however, require concerted efforts to sustain themselves over time to be effective. To be sure, invoking the need for working-class solidarity across racial and ethnic lines will not alone overcome the multiple and significant challenges that advocates face in forging and sustaining such alliances on a scale able to make significant advances. But progressive efforts will likely falter without multiracial solidarity.

Ultimately, Steinberg points us in the direction that is crucial for progressive politics: The advancement of working people of all stripes hinges on undoing racial hierarchy — read white privilege. The liberation of groups subordinated on the basis of race and ethnicity — immigrants and African Americans alike — is intertwined with the progress of the working class. Immigration complicates these processes. At the same time, the struggle for immigrant and civil rights, i.e., for human rights, offers an opportunity to achieve greater strength through unity. Campaigns for civil and immigrant rights put a human face on the millions of newcomers and can elevate other causes important to African Americans and all working people, including affordable housing and health care, access to good schools and jobs, and so on. But such campaigns can not be won if done at the expense of African-American advancement. They must be done in tandem.

Toward that end, as Steinberg notes, immigrant scholars and advocates and immigrants themselves owe a great debt to civil rights activists. One year after the Civil Rights Act was signed into law (July 2, 1964) and just months after the Voting Rights Act became law (August 6, 1965), the 1965 Hart-Celler Act was enacted in October 1965 (formally titled the Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments of 1965), which prohibited immigration and naturalization on the basis of race, sex, or nationality, effectively abolishing the nation-of-origin restrictions that were imposed in the 1920s that had previously limited immigration to Europeans and opened up the United States to immigrants from Africa, Latin America, and Asia. Thus, the reason most contemporary immigrants are persons of color are that the civil rights movement helped open the door to the United States that had been closed to them.

Steinberg challenges immigrant scholars and advocates — and all progressives — to confront racism in order to advance the cause of equality and social justice. Who will heed this timely and critical call?

A Reply to Stephen Steinberg

Finger-Pointing Toward "Freedom Now!"

MICHAEL HIRSCH

I IMAGINE STEPHEN STEINBERG astride a muscular white horse, whip in one hand, pistol in the other, riding to scourge the American left of its racial amnesia. Or he's a biblical prophet, imbued with the divine spirit and setting the highest standards for the community. Sometimes the need for such a seer is self-evident, and sometimes Steinberg fairly meets it. Sometimes. His *The Ethnic Myth: Race, Ethnicity, and Class in America* is a powerful effort to say some meaningful and needed things about race relations. His essay on Nathan Glazer in an earlier *New Politics*, which I edited with a great deal of pleasure and agreement, is required reading if you want to understand the interstices of race and politics after World War II and the role accommodating critics of remedial efforts played in housebreaking American left liberalism. Even when he gets it wrong — as I think he does in this essay — you can't help learning from Steinberg,

Still, there's a uneasy line between the prophet and the scold, and Steinberg crosses that line like the town drunk. Like the heiress who can't be too rich or too thin, Stephen Steinberg writes as if you can't be too anti-racist, at least when it comes to crimes against African Americans.

Well, you can.

Because for every powerful statement Steinberg makes about United States racism as structured and how the fight against inequality is a battle with an anticorporate class dynamic at its heart, there's a niggling moralism attached, one that threatens to reduce political and economic relations to mere objects of shame. Now, shame may be, as Marx said, a revolutionary sentiment, but Steinberg writes as if it's first among equals. He writes less as the interpreter of the situation — how Sartre described Frantz Fanon and how I expect he sees himself — and more as its progenitor.

Steinberg is also a gifted polemist. That's no crime on the left; it's only a felony when adopting an attitude isn't braced by intelligence, and Steinberg can make powerful points intelligently. His demand that immigration policy be looked at critically is compelling. Whether the nation's borders are porous or hermetically sealed represent policy choices in which someone gains and someone loses. Open borders are not in themselves good, and cutthroat competition that drags down wages is an undeniable evil that can be eradicated through rigorous union organizing, new labor policies and — yes — an eye to shaking up the federal immigration guidelines, Steinberg's preferred cure-all.

But then he overpersonalizes. He finger-points. Even his Glazer essay, like his earlier critique of William Julius Wilson,* left me feeling

MICHAEL HIRSCH *is a member of the* New Politics *editorial board. A quondam sociologist and steelworker, he works as a labor journalist in New York.*

*Full disclosure. I studied with Wilson at the University of Chicago some two decades ago. He was a dedicated teacher and a dear friend. I also had my political differences with him, which is illustrated by the comment he made to me that he, too, was a socialist, and an ecumenical one, being equally comfortable with Bayard Rustin's SDUSA and Michael Harrington's DSOC. I was not impressed by the breadth of his vision, as I still considered myself more of a Hal Draper-Tony Cliff acolyte. But Wilson did not deserve Steinberg's comment in "The Liberal Retreat From Race" (*New Politics*, Summer 1994] that the founding father of neocon public policy, Daniel Patrick Moynihan "was reincarnated 15 years later in the form of William Julius Wilson." Ironically, it was Wilson who introduced me to Steinberg's work, a book which was required reading for the sociology exams.

he exaggerated the importance of Glazer's apostasy. Certainly he doesn't prove that Glazer and company's chatter mattered. Steinberg also has a tendency, as at least one critic observed, to caricature or flatten an opponent's argument by reducing it not to its essentials but to his. He's not alone to do so, but it's surely a bad habit.

When he writes "immigrants are implicated in America's race problem through the very act of immigration . . . they also acquire some heavy baggage: moral and political responsibility for the vestiges of slavery," that language is incendiary without necessarily burning anything that ought to be torched. His caveat, that he is "not calling into question the rights of immigrants" is cold comfort. The immigrant bashers could do it for him.

Or when he writes, " mass immigration has exacerbated the problems of African Americans. Even if this is an accident of history — a silent conflict on a gigantic scale — it implicates immigrants in America's race problem, " this is more guilt by association.

And while he gives lip service to the values that newcomers bring with them, such a sensibility doesn't suffuse his essay. Not as does the sense of a zero-sum immigrant menace. I wish he'd acknowledge flat out what immigrants contribute, as well. In *Jasmine*, for example, the novelist Bharati Mukherjee has her South Asian immigrant heroine offering her Iowan husband the trilogy of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva in return for St. Louis Cardinals baseball godheads Musial, Brock and Gibson. That's the beginning of a fair trade, I think.

Let me raise some problems with Steve's piece that go beyond tone or name-calling to a discussion of socialist politics.

Riffing on a cartoon by *Amsterdam News* great Melvin Tapley, Steinberg writes:

> my challenge is to think about immigration from the standpoint of this black figure, crouched on the ground as others pluck fruit off the tree of opportunity. Dare we also read the immigration literature, the celebratory narratives of immigrant progress and triumph against adversity, from the point of view of "the man farthest down," to borrow a phrase from Booker T. Washington?. . . and that doing so is an intellectual and moral imperative.

That could be a good heuristic exercise. But is doing so an intellectual and moral imperative? Is it even appropriate, except as ethnography or anthropology to organize evidence and view things from the point of view of "the man farthest down"? Yes, Steinberg admits in the ellipsed section that "It goes without saying that this is only one among many standpoints for thinking about immigration and immigration policy. My only contention is that it is one that must be considered." Here it is the only one he adopts. It's a change of pace from the view of a common-sense driven common good — something which is rarely common and never good — but it's dangerously parochial. What does the man farthest down want? To be less far down, and by any means necessary!

WITHOUT OUR BEING SCHEMATIC or unfeeling or pre-Cambrian about American racism, there are pitfalls to internalizing anything that's not taken from a class point of view. Yes, it's crucial to think broadly and nondogmatically. The university-centered left probably has a better understanding of "the ladies who lunch" and the Fortune 500 CEOs who power lunch than it does the perspective of those who barely eat one meal a day. It's necessary to speak for the victims and work alongside the victims. It's a sacrament to teach children that what privileges they inherit are an accident of birth and that the greatest sin is class pride. But it is a disaster for socialists to adopt a point of view that isn't class based. Positing an inherent contradiction between African Americans and immigrants is playing some other class's tune.

There are also factual problems that muddle his analysis. Steinberg cites Gunner Myrdal's saying he is mystified as to why blacks didn't migrate north to the expanding industrial centers. He answers it thus:

> Immigration is the most important single factor in dispelling this "mystery." The North was able to satisfy its insatiable need for cheap labor through the immigration of some 25 million Europeans between 1880 and 1924. Blacks, on the other hand, were categorically excluded from the entire industrial sector, except for a few menial, dangerous, or backbreaking jobs that immigrants spurned. Note that the culprits in this drama were not Southern sheriffs and lynch mobs. Nor does blame go only to greedy capitalists who played one group off against the other. Workers, including workers of immigrant stock, through their unions engaged in a combination of ethnic nepotism and blatant racism that reinforced black exclusion. In effect, the industrial revolution in the United States was "for whites only."

If anyone is to blame, it was the previous generations of immigrants.

Yes and no. Nineteenth century craft unions were racially exclusionary, and the union label got its start in the West Coast cigar factories to signify their product was not Chinese- or Japanese-made, but produced by union — read "white" — labor. In fact, if anyone is to blame in the period Steinberg cites, it was the previous generation of immigrants — those largely Americanized — who now hogged the best jobs. So, in the coal fields and steel mills, for example, Irish workers succeeded Germans and Scots in holding craft jobs, while succeeding waves of immigrants fought to enter these trades. Ethnic succession did go on, with the unions backing the earlier immigrant members. The bigger question Steinberg does not answer is that if bloody battles over ethnic succession were the rule, then why were African Americans never in the fight? Immigration won't explain it.

He writes:

> The proof that European immigration was devastating to blacks is that as soon as immigration was cut off by the First World War, it triggered a massive migration of blacks to cities in the North and West, resulting in the most significant economic advance since the abolition of slavery.

That's not proof. What triggered the migration was a push-pull factor, and Steinberg leaves out the push and half of the pull. The mechanization of agriculture devastated small farmers and sharecroppers. Falling crop prices and competition between white and black agrarian workers made a bad situation untenable. But it did allow blacks to leave the black-belt South, something they were prohibited from doing before. Add to that the peculiar boom economics in northern cities leading up to U.S. entry into the WWI and migration was inevitable.

As to the *New Republic*'s observation about immigrant/black competition for jobs being "a silent conflict on a gigantic scale," (and forget whether it was indeed silent), how is this any different from the observations organized labor made about all new immigrants, not just Asians? It was Gompers who said in his autobiography, that "immigration is, in its fundamental aspects, a labor problem." If there is a consistent theme in craft union ideology and practice, it is a desire to keep wages high through capping the labor supply by keeping newcomers out. How were blacks' positions structurally different?

Steve even blames modern, post-1965 immigration for the "missed opportunity to integrate blacks into the economic mainstream." What would be the preconditions for grasping that opportunity? I can think of two, neither of which were operational. One, a socialist labor movement committed to unifying the class and militating for full employment and equality in hiring. Or two, a chauvinist administration that closed the U.S. borders. And how well would U.S. blacks have fared in the ideological context in which foreign workers were stigmatized, restricted or exiled?

Steinberg is on solid ground where he writes,

> Although it is often argued that blacks arrived at a time when the industries that had provided opportunity to earlier immigrants were in decline, the fact is that millions of new immigrants were rapidly absorbed into both the residual blue-collar sector and the expanding service industries."

I wish he made more of the argument. Because for the last two generations, it was what the Right calls "entrepreneurial minorities," or at least those with skills and the capital to form niche businesses, whom the immigration laws favored. It's not just a white blind spot that valorized so-called "immigrant virtues" while native blacks' skills were belittled; it's an objective question of whether the two populations are comparable. If they are, Steinberg should say so. He might have a case in tracking immigration from Ireland, where minimally-skilled young Irish men and women got jobs closed to ghetto blacks. But what jobs did unskilled blacks compete over with south Asians or Eastern Europeans?

He should also at least acknowledge the gains blacks made in the 1970s, before the wave of deindustrialization slammed black families the way the depression had. In the steel industry by the mid-1970s, high paying production jobs in such areas as Cleveland, Buffalo, Baltimore, Chicago, and Northwest Indiana were sizeably held by black men and a growing number of black women. The high-paid industrial proletariat in heavy industry was increasingly African-American, out of all proportion to its size in the general population. Doors to the crafts were creaking open, in part because of OEO affirmative action watch dogging. New immigrants in the mills — chiefly east Europeans (Serbs, Croats, Albanians, etc) — confronted strict fair-hiring seniority rules, meaning there was no way they could hold the better jobs.

Employers still used divide-and-rule tactics for political gain, such as Chrysler's hiring Middle Eastern immigrants as a buffer against militant black workers' demands. The tragedy of deindustrialization is that the closing of the mills liquidated this generation of well-paid black breadwinners and the shop-floor leadership that was emerging. Yet whether through steel industry collapse or auto industry downsizing, jobs were being wiped out. No chance for African-American hiring if downsizing and then off shoring became industry watchwords, and no reason to blame immigrants.

Steinberg even calls post-1965 immigration "a conservative policy in liberal garb." Can he name an ostensibly progressive federal policy that isn't fundamentally conservative, in the sense of maintaining social order and class peace, no matter how it is dressed? Social Security? OSHA? The Wagner Act? Conversely, an anti-immigrant stance would not have been ipso facto a "liberal policy in conservative garb." There would be nothing liberal about closed borders, broken families, an alien witch-hunt and the stench of xenophobic ideology that would accompany such policies. Corporate choices were, as always, to either import labor or export jobs. Had the U.S. done what Steinberg urges, outsourcing of U.S. products and services would have happened that much sooner. A harbinger was the collapse of the U.S. maritime fleet by the end of the Vietnam War. Think Liberian flag ships. Think Aristotle Onassis.

Think also about the mechanization and containerization that did away with the longshore industry. Today, New York is in competition with Baltimore, Newport News, and Montreal for the East Coast container superport title. Immigration was not a factor in closing the ports, though racial hiring by the mobbed up Longshore union kept restricted much of the remaining jobs.

The same problem appears where Steinberg writes

> If immigration had remained at the level that existed in 1965, at 292,000 immigrants annually, compared to over one million last year (then) clearly, the tight labor markets would have provided incentives for employers to lower their racist barriers, to hire and train black workers, and if necessary to improve wages and conditions to make even these marginal jobs attractive to native workers.

There's nothing "clear" about it. Would "tight labor markets" alone provide incentives to lower racial barriers? Possibly. Would it improve wages and conditions? Not necessarily. It would have taken anti-capital-flight legislation in addition to closed labor markets to do that, and there was no political context for raising, let alone winning, that demand. Not with both Democratic and Republican administrations facilitating capital flight even as they were opening immigration doors.

Part of Steinberg's animus is toward his own discipline; the fact that sociology, if it ever had sharp, defining edges, has become toothless, shapeless, lazy, and accommodating. He writes about one study:

> The accuracy of employer claims — that blacks are less reliable and efficient worker — are never subjected to critical scrutiny, much less put to an empirical test . . . .We never get to hear the experiences and viewpoint of these black workers: what their qualifications are for the job, what their job experiences are, how they are treated by their white bosses, how they are treated by immigrant coworkers and how they regard them in return. In other words, we never hear from the man farthest down, who is not only crouched on the ground but also silenced.

I strayed from the academic groves twice, most recently 20 years ago, so I can't quote chapter and verse, but I can certainly believe the sociological literature is that thin. Still it would be useful if Steinberg had scanned the literature — even in passing. He cannot be the only nonracialist left standing.

I leave it to other readers whether his call to action is doable. Most of his policy recommendations are desirable in part, and most express politics a socialist can and should support, though I would add an emphasis on guaranteeing union organizing rights and on restricting offshoring. But movements are not built or many moved to solidarize through moral calls to do the right thing, a principle with which Steinberg seems to cohabit. That's not how I read what motivated participation in the civil rights movement, or mobilization for any movements anywhere. A political program, especially one claiming to be radical, has to be concerned more with linking the present to a tangible future than with making the grand gesture. Yet with so many voices demanding ugly things today, a little of Steinberg's teary, bug-eyed humanity can only help.

Another American Dilemma: Race vs. Immigration

GILBERT JONAS

EVER SINCE AMERICA'S NEGRO SLAVES were emancipated after the Civil War, our nation's generous immigration policies have worked against the interests and advancement of African Americans. And for almost as long, African Americans have, to a great extent, nurtured the belief that the post-Civil War open door policies which eventually attracted some 30 million European immigrants to our shores were part of a conscious plan — to some a conspiracy — to prevent the newly-freed slaves and their descendants from ever achieving self-sufficiency and full citizenship.

Readers of *New Politics* should heed the message of Stephen Steinberg's much-needed and well-timed essay (*New Politics* Summer, 2005) that the casting aside of black workers from the moment of Emancipation until the present has been no accident of history but a product of conscious design. African Americans have not been yet another ethnic/racial/religious group against whom our society discriminated for one or two generations only to be absorbed in the great "melting pot." It is true, of course, that since the arrival of English/Scotch immigrants in the early 17th Century virtually every succeeding group of immigrants has encountered discrimination by those who had arrived earlier. Indeed, this practice continues well into contemporary American life as immigrants from Japan, China, Korea and Vietnam, having paid their "dues," are well into the American mainstream while immigrants from the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East presently bear the brunt as the "newly-arrived" targets of discrimination.

There is one common thread, however, that tends to unite the majorities of virtually all immigrant groups — whether they are fleeing from religious, ethnic or racial oppression or simply seeking better economic opportunities — and that is the almost immediate adoption of our garden variety anti-black bias. Thus, in the early decades of the Industrial Revolution, when hundreds of thousands of European socialists and anarchists emigrated to America and formed the rank-and-file of the nascent trade union movement, the exclusion of African American from these unions — and, therefore, from most jobs in the growing industrial base — become the norm. The charismatic leader of the new American Federation of Labor, Samuel Gompers, was himself an unabashed racist. That tradition has comfortably carried through the history of the mainstream American labor movement during the 20th Century.

Even when the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) opened its door to black workers during the 1930s, initiated by Mineworkers President John L. Lewis, it was soon diluted, then abandoned by the Walter Reuther-led CIO, especially after it merged with the AFL in 1955. Neither George Meany nor Lane Kirkland managed to provide more than cosmetic changes to the deeply entrenched racially exclusionary policies and practices of the vast majority of the AFL-CIO's trade unions. The courageous and articulate demands of A. Philip Randolph were rudely dismissed by Meany and ignored by Kirkland. The tireless and imaginative four decades of pressure from the NAACP, led relentlessly by Herbert Hill,

GILBERT JONAS *has been very active in the NAACP, having headed both their national fund raising and their public relations. He headed his own firm for over 40 years. In 2004 Routledge published his* Freedom's Sword: the NAACP and the Struggle Against Racism in America, 1909-69.

produced only marginal gains for black workers in the end.

Almost alone, African Americans had been the object of local, state and federal laws which until 1965 prohibited them from becoming first class citizens. (The noxious anti-Asian laws enacted by the Pacific Rim states is perhaps the only exception.) This is not to argue that local and state practices have not also discriminated against Native Americans and Hispanics.

They have and continue to do so. But no group has ever faced the cumulative burden of racial oppression to the degree experienced by black Americans.

I WRITE FROM A PARTICULAR SET of experiences which have formed my frame of reference. Since 1949, I actively participated in the civil rights "movement," primarily through the NAACP, as both a volunteer and a professional. Five decades of daily involvement exposed me to an almost universal belief among African Americans: that every immigrant group has been able to leap frog over black Americans, socially, economically and politically. While the empirical and statistical data appears to bear out this widespread belief (though the conclusions in respect to Hispanics are still unclear), there is another, and more disturbing dimension to this dilemma. The majority of blacks believe that the system has been rigged in favor of immigrants (and whites) and against African Americans.

After the widespread and costly riots in Los Angeles following the acquittal of the policemen who had beaten Rodney King — an event captured on video tape and broadcast thousands of time thereafter — some powerful Americans were deeply concerned by the vehemence with which so many of LA's blacks attacked the Korean community's shops and homes. After all, Korean-Americans had nothing to do with the Rodney King beating or with the jury in largely white Simi Valley. The venerable Ford Foundation called upon the NAACP's Executive Director Benjamin L. Hooks to examine this phenomenon with their executives. Ford then offered Hooks a major grant to try to bring together the black and Korean communities in Los Angeles. Hooks flew to the West Coast and met with the leaders of the nineteen NAACP branches in metro Los Angeles, each of whom was an educated individual of considerable achievement.

After Hooks broached the Ford Foundation's offer, however, he was met with a storm of rejection from the local leaders, virtually all of whom believed that the Korean immigrants had in relatively short time surpassed most African Americans economically and socially, despite the fact that few spoke English well. This process of rapid achievement, they asserted, could have only been the product of underhanded methods. For example, they believed that Korean shopholders, mostly in the greengrocer trade, were awarded bank loans expeditiously and without the collateral demanded of blacks. Few of the NAACP local leaders had any notion of the process by which Korean families worked for decades to reach American shores with a modest amount of capital in hand, or of how, by utilizing the extended family and remaining open for sixteen or more hours a day, they were able to eke out enough to support all of their family members. Nor were any of the black leaders aware of the numerous Korean-American trade groups which, after decades of business "success," often loaned the recently-arrived shopkeepers enough capital to continue to keep their doors open until they too reached firmer ground.

Instead of appreciating or even copying this modest business model, neighborhood blacks often resented the ability of Korean immigrants to sustain their enterprise and especially to do so without hiring local (black) workers. Numerous confrontations erupted between resentful blacks and Korean shopkeepers, many of whom suffered from cultural restraints which made them appear hostile to black customers. The same resentment is now being directed towards East

Indian and Pakistani shopkeepers whose entire capital investment is also often located in black or other minority neighborhoods. During the mid-20th century, manifestations of similar hostility were directed towards Jewish and Italian shopkeepers in neighborhoods which had over time become largely African-American.

Though much of the "folk" explanation of the success of other groups has been myth-based within the African-American culture for decades, not all of it is, of course, without a foundation of fact. Recall that the Civil War ended just as the American Industrial Revolution was taking off in the Northeast and then the Midwest. The demand for labor in the new factories and mines appeared inexhaustible by the late 1860s. At that moment in time, about four million slaves had been emancipated, of whom approximately one million were men over the age of eighteen. All had a heritage of hard work and many had the mechanical skills — iron work, carpentry, plumbing, masonry, construction, and so forth — which had for centuries built and maintained the South's grand plantations. Many were Civil War military veterans. Here was the historically unique opportunity to integrate the emancipated slaves into the larger society and to provide them with dignified work to support their families. Here was the chance for the federal government to not only atone for the oppressive past but to provide solutions to avoid terrible future problems. Yet not only did they and the entrepreneurs of the period avoid the problem; they were actually hostile to employment of blacks. Instead, they pursued immigration policies which brought to our shores thirty times the number of workers than were available among the newly-freed black men

This policy of attracting large-scale immigration has most often resulted in substantial labor surpluses which kept wages levels low and discouraged unionization. On two counts 1965 was the critical year:

1. The enactment of the Hart-Celler immigration measure opened the door to vastly expanded immigration; and,

2. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act became effective, barring employment discrimination while mandating remedial measures to correct the wrongs of the past. Instead of initiating affirmative measures to advance the employment rights of the most aggrieved groups — blacks and Native Americans — the Act expanded the definition of "minority" status to include women (a last minute afterthought) and later Hispanics, Asians, and the disabled. With those changes, the 1964 Act eventually covered some seventy percent of the population but the total economic pie failed to grow fast enough to provide decent jobs for all those covered. Not surprisingly, blacks and Native Americans were the least to benefit. Indeed, white employers turned most often to white women, then Asians, for new hires. (A similar pattern has been reflected in college admissions.)

In late August, 2005, a federal report revealed that fifty percent of black men in New York City were either unemployed or underemployed. Comparable patterns emerged in many other metropolitan regions. Real income, this report noted, has remained the same for almost five years. Does immigration affect this pattern? Since the liberalization of immigration in 1965, about thirty-five million immigrants have reached our shores — roughly equal to the entire African-American population today. With real unemployment (including those who have abandoned hope of a job) nearing ten percent, wages stagnant or worse, and unionization declining, common sense dictates that the steady flow of immigrants has impacted negatively — and harshly — on black workers, as well as on overall wage levels. The most compelling question of the moment is, now that advocates like Herbert Hill have passed away, who will lead the public campaign to demand decent job opportunities for African Americans, even if that requires a moratorium on the current level of immigration?

Reintroducing the Black/White Divide in Racial Discourse

GREGORY D. SQUIRES

Does it matter that most of the problems that disproportionately affect black Americans don't stem from racism — or at any rate, modern day racism? . . . These issues just aren't particularly black anymore.

WILLIAM RASPBERRY[1]

CONVENTIONAL WISDOM TELLS US that the playing field for blacks and whites has been leveled, or is as close to being even as is practically possible.[2] The increasing diversity of the nation's population and the success of many, but by no means all, immigrants are often interpreted as further proof that the continuing problems of African Americans are of their own making. Unfortunately, this misconception applies virtually across the board whether the discussion is employment, housing, education, or virtually any aspect of private or public life in the United States. Immigration is not the only factor, and may not be a particularly significant factor, in explaining why, as Stephen Steinberg cogently observes, "the extension of race beyond the binary of black and white . . . has deflected attention away from the unique and unresolved problems of race *qua* African Americans." And as he continues, "The result is that the nation congratulates itself on its 'diversity' and celebrates its 'multiculturalism,' while the problems of African Americans continue to fester." (51) But, again, immigration alone cannot account for this racial narrative. The factual inaccuracy of this celebratory perception seems matched only by the nation's commitment to it. The doors have swung open, we are informed. It is time for blacks to take advantage of the opportunities that have been made available to them, as other groups are doing. As *Washington Post* columnist William Raspberry concluded, "White America, I am saying, has done a reasonably decent job of increasing opportunity for minorities, and those who were ready took full advantage."[3]

But the social science evidence of the persistence of widespread, systemic racial discrimination (and not just racial disparities), as well as the uniquely disadvantaged status of black Americans is overwhelming.[4] No doubt many racial gaps have been reduced and overt discrimination has been ameliorated in recent decades. Many of the barriers confronting racial minorities today, and particularly African Americans, include deindustrialization and the loss of manufacturing jobs, globalization and the flight of blue collar and white collar jobs overseas, and other forces that may not be rooted only or explicitly in intentional racial discrimination.[5] But if current forms of discrimination are more subtle, they remain pervasive. And blacks remain the primary target. That is the important story Steinberg tries to tell us, and one that needs to reverberate throughout research, policy, and popular circles. If this amounts to "playing the race card" so be it. In fact, those effectively playing the race card today are primarily whites and white-controlled institutions who continue to benefit from the privileged position of their race.

For example, recent research found that white job applicants with a felony conviction

GREGORY D. SQUIRES *is a professor in the Department of Sociology at George Washington University.*

on their record were more likely to get a job than comparable black applicants with no criminal record.[6] Applicants with white sounding names are more likely to obtain employment than those with black sounding names.[7] The most recent national housing discrimination study found that racial minorities encountered unlawful discrimination in approximately one out of every five visits to a real estate or rental agent.[8] Even when homeseekers contact housing providers by telephone, linguistic profiling (whereby the provider recognizes the race of the caller and provides less service to those with a recognizable black voice) results in African Americans experiencing discrimination in efforts to buy or rent a home even when they do not even meet the housing provider.[9]

The nationwide housing study noted above found that blacks and Latinos encountered similar levels of discrimination. However, in light of other research finding that dark skinned Latinos face far more discrimination than do light skinned Latinos, at least part of the discrimination they encounter may well be racial rather than ethnic discrimination.[10] In addition, other research has clearly demonstrated that blacks are the least favored neighbor by all other racial and ethnic groups. When asked to describe their neighborhood preferences one-fifth of whites opted for a neighborhood that has no blacks as did one-third of Hispanics and more than 40 percent of Asians. The share of respondents expressing a preference for no whites, Hispanics, or Asians in their community was smaller for each group.[11] Other research demonstrated that whites explicitly avoid blacks and black areas and that such avoidance results from a clear election to avoid blacks as a racial group and not just those factors often associated with black neighborhoods (e.g. high crime, poor schools). That is, white respondents indicated they would not purchase a home in a neighborhood that had all the features they claimed they wanted, including safe streets and good schools, if there was a substantial presence of black residents. A presence of Asians or Latinos exerted no similar adverse impact on whites' stated willingness to purchase such homes.[12]

Ironically, the growing diversity of the nation's population may be making it even more difficult for blacks to secure their rights via the very mechanisms that are supposed to protect them. Between 1990 (two years after passage of the Fair Housing Amendments Act adding families with children and handicapped as protected groups) and 2003, scarce enforcement resources were being reallocated in a manner that undercut the ability of fair housing agencies to protect the rights of African Americans. The number of complaints of racial discrimination filed with HUD and related public fair housing enforcement agencies dropped from 3,729 to 3,198 and the number of complaints charging discrimination against African Americans dropped from 3,367 to 2,756.[13]

The costs of such racial discrimination are wideranging and severe. Life expectancy, the quality and quantity of public education, the safety and security of neighborhoods, access to public accommodations, treatment by the criminal justice system, and almost every aspect of public and private life varies with race, with whites at the top, blacks at the bottom, and other minority groups somewhere in between on virtually every measure.[14] These inequities and disparities are perhaps captured best by measures of wealth, and particularly the role of inheritance in the accumulation of wealth. Wealth, of course, accrues over generations reflecting both historical and contemporary discrimination with the costs (and benefits) felt in many concrete ways by current residents, whether or not they actively or intentionally ever participated in any discriminatory act. White privilege is most explicitly demonstrated by inequalities in the distribution of wealth.

As of 2002, the median household net worth for whites was $88,651, compared to

$5,988 for blacks and $7,932 for Latinos. Just 13 percent of whites had zero or negative net worth compared to 32 percent of blacks and 26 percent of Latinos. Inheritance figures, which are available just for whites and blacks, suggest the extent to which such disparities are unearned. Whereas 24 percent of whites receive an inheritance, just 11 percent of blacks do so. Among those who get an inheritance, whites receive $115,000 on average compared to $32,000 for blacks.[15] And these figures do not reflect the gifts children receive during their parents' lifetimes. To illustrate the significance of these disparities, whites on average are more than twice as likely as blacks to be able to provide a healthy downpayment on a home even in the nation's most expensive housing markets or to pay tuition for four years at almost any college or university for one child from an inheritance. Given these disparities in wealth, it comes as little surprise why whites do better than others, and particularly better than blacks, on almost every measure, and that they do so over generations.

All of this raises the age-old question of what is to be done. Steinberg offers a number of familiar recommendations, mentioning in passing what may be the most important challenge ahead, creating a political mobilization that will turn potentially effective ideas into actual policy and practice. There is no lack of ideas, many of which have been attempted with some degree of success in the past. The civil rights movement of the 1960s did away with many of the legal barriers confronting blacks and other minorities. Affirmative action opened doors to higher education and employment opportunities that previously did not exist. Enforcement of fair housing laws has generated over $191 million for victims of unlawful discrimination. The reparations movement has secured some benefits for various minority groups from the public sector and some private businesses may soon also be making such payments. The Community Reinvestment Act has generated more than $4 trillion in mortgage loans for previously underserved communities, particularly those with large black populations.[16]

The primary challenge today is mobilizing an effective political coalition that can secure the public policies and private practices that can eliminate remaining discriminatory barriers. In fact, a number of effective organizations and coalitions have emerged in recent years that have achieved important victories on a range of social justice issues. Though many are, by design, interracial groups that do not always pursue race-specific matters, they provide useful models for racial justice initiatives. Examples include ACORN, the Industrial Areas Foundation, the Center for Community Change, the National Community Reinvestment Coalition, Justice for Janitors, the National Fair Housing Alliance, and many more. These efforts have culminated in living wage ordinances and inclusionary zoning laws in more than 100 communities, increases in many minimum wage statutes, greater access to mortgage and small business loans in traditionally underserved communities, creation of land banks and community land trusts to provide more affordable housing, and many other initiatives to assist low-income and minority families as well as communities with large low-income and minority populations.[17] Many of these organizations learned their trade from the civil rights movement. Now the civil rights movement may be able to learn some things from them.

Clearly there are many social justice battles yet to be fought. As Steinberg observes, nothing in his argument is intended to discount the very real mistreatment suffered by various racial and ethnic groups, other minorities in American society, and low-income families in general. But if justice is to be achieved, it cannot be pursued at the expense of the group which has experienced the most extensive and abusive treatment throughout the nation's history and still confronts "unique and unresolved problems of race." Contrary to William Raspberry, many of the remaining issues are black issues. Recognizing the continuing black/white divide is a vital next step in the struggle for racial justice in the United States.

NOTES

1. William Raspberry, "The Incredible Shrinking Black Agenda," *The Washington Post*, February 9, 2001.

2. Dinesh D'Souza, *The End of Racism: Principles for a Multliracial Society*, (New York: The Free Press, 1995). John H. McWhorter, *Losing the Race: Self Sabotage in Black America,* (New York: The Free Press, 2000).

3. William Raspberry, "Show Blacks How to Fill Their Glasses," *The Washington Post*, April 11, 2005.

4. Douglas S. Massey and Nancy A. Denton, *American Apartheid: Segregation and the Making of the Underclass*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993). Michael K. Brown, Martin Carnoy, Elliott Currie, Troy Duster, David B. Oppenheimer, Marjorie M. Shultz, and David Wellman, *White-Washing Race: The Myth of a Color-Blind Society*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003). Eduardo Bonnilla-Silva, *Racism Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003). Alexander Polikoff, "Racial Inequality and the Black Ghetto," *Poverty & Race*, 13 (6): 1-10, 2004.

5. William J. Wilson, *When Work Disappears: The World of the New Urban Poor*, (Knopf, 1996).

6. Devah Pager, "The Mark of a Criminal Record." *American Journal of Sociology,*

108 (5): 937-975, 2003.

7. Bertrand, Marianne and Sendhil Mullainathan,"Are Emily and Greg More Employable Than Lakisha and Jamal? A Field Experiment on Labor Market Discrimination," *The AmericanEconomic Review*, 94 (4): 991-1013, 2004.

8. Margery Austin Turner, Stephen L. Ross, George C. Galster, and John Yinger, *Discrimination in Metropolitan Housing Markets: National Results from Phase I HDS 2000*, Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 2002.

9. Douglas S. Massey and Garvey Lundy, "Use of Black English and Racial Discrimination in Urban Housing Markets: New Methods and Findings," *Urban Affairs Review* 36 (4): 452-469, 2001. Mary J. Fischer and Douglas S. Massey, "The Ecology of Racial Discrimination," *City & Community,* 3 (3): 221-241, 2004.

10. Douglas S. Massey, Residential Segregation and Neighborhood Conditions in U.S. Metropolitan Areas," in Neil J. Smelser, William Julius Wilson, and Faith Mitchell (eds.) *America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences*, (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000).

11. Camille Zubrinsky Charles, "Can We Live Together? Racial Preferences and Neighborhood Outcomes," in Xavier de Sousa Briggs (ed) *The Geography of Opportunity: Race and Housing Choice in Metropolitan America*. (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2005).

12. Michael O. Emerson, Karen J. Chai, and George Yancey, "Does Race Matter in Residential Segregation? Exploring the Preferences of White Americans," *American Sociological Review,* 66(6): 922-935, 2001.

13. Data provided by John Sheehy, Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, November 2003.

14. Gregory D. Squires and Charis E. Kubrin, "Privileged Places: Race, Uneven Development, and the Geography of Opportunity in Urban America," *Urban Studies,* 42, (1): 47-68, 2005. Neil J. Smelser, William Julius Wilson, and Faith Mitchell (eds.) *America Becoming: Racial Trends and Their Consequences*, (Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 2000). Joe R. Feagin and Karyn D. McKinney, *The Many Costs of Racism*, (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2003).

15. Thomas M. Shapiro, *The Hidden Cost of Being African-American: How Wealth Perpetuates Inequality*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2004.

16. Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1990). Barbara R. Bergmann, *In Defense of Affirmative Action*, New York: Basic Books, 1996). Joe R. Feagin, *Racist America: Roots, Current Realities, and Future Reparations*, (New York: Routledge, 2000). National Fair Housing Alliance, "$190,000,000 and Counting," (Washington, D.C.: National Fair Housing Alliance, 2003).

17. Gar Alperovitz, *America Beyond Capitalism: Reclaiming Our Wealth, Our Liberty, and Our Democracy*, (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Son, 2005). Michael Gecan,. *Going Public: An Inside Story of Disrupting Politics as Usual*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2002). Robert Pollin and Stephanie Luce, *The Living Wage: Building a Fair Economy*, (New York: New Press, 2000). Mara S. Sidney, *Unfair Housing: How National Policy Shapes Community Action*, (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2003). Mark R. Warren, *Dry Bones Rattling: Community Building to Revitalize American Democracy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

Response

Stephen Steinberg

I knew when I wrote my piece that I was walking through a minefield of controversy, first of all because I challenge the dominant discourse on immigration and call into question many of the orthodoxies of a new generation of immigration scholars. I therefore came prepared to engage in verbal battle with outraged critics whose scholarship has been called into question. Alas, they did not show up at the table! This is worth noting because it points up something about the wiles and dynamics of hegemonic discourse: we are compelled to engage their arguments but they can afford to ignore ours. After all, who reads *New Politics*? I have two answers to that. One is that our shared commitment is to develop what Edward Said called "antithetical scholarship" that opposes hegemonic discourses and that represents the interests and viewpoints of subaltern groups. We do this not only as a moral and political commitment, but also to advance knowledge claims that form an epistemic foundation for political action, now and in the future. But my other answer is that people do read *New Politics*! I have been struck over the years, including this time, to discover that our message gets "out there," albeit through circuitous routes. Thanks to the Internet (and Steve Shalom's magic), there is no longer such a thing as a "fringe journal."

My article also challenges certain articles of faith among the Left, and I expected to get an earful from them as well. This in fact will come to pass in another venue (the winter issue of the *New Labor Forum* is republishing my *NP* article, along with critical comments from Adolph Reed, Gary Gerstle, Peter Kwong, and Maria Elena Durazo and David Koff of Unite Here). By and large, the responses here from *New Politics* readers do not take issue with my core argument. So much the better. As much as we on the Left relish contention, it is perhaps more constructive to have a dialogue that fleshes out progressive thinking on immigration, and explores implications for politics and public policy.

Gregory Squires provides an empirical foundation for this dialogue with a lucid synthesis of recent literature on race showing 1) the deep and persistent inequalities between African Americans and others; and 2) persistent racism in job markets, housing, and other areas, leading to sharp difference in the quality of life, reflected in vital statistics on health and longevity. All of which validates the prescient warning of the 1968 Kerner Commission that the United States was "moving toward two societies, one black, one white — separate and unequal." What the Kerner Commission could not know was that in subsequent decades there would be a massive influx of over 25 million legal immigrants, and millions more who are undocumented. The conclusion is inescapable that, as "the last hired," African Americans have been pushed further back in the hiring queue, and yet this simple truth has been the subject of denial and evasion by left-leaning immigration scholars. Yes, immigration struggles warrant the concern of progressives too, but Squires is on target when he writes that justice "cannot be pursued at the expense of the group which has experienced the most extensive and abusive treatment throughout the nation's history."

Peter Drucker insists that there is no need to choose between African Americans and immigrants, and he presents us with the enlightened and progressive model of the Netherlands

Stephen Steinberg *is a frequent contributor to New Politics. His last book,* Turning Back: the Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy, *received the Oliver Cromwell Cox Award for Distinguished Anti-Racist Scholarship.*

where immigrants are granted the same rights as non-immigrant workers. According to his reasoning, if immigrants are not paid less than other workers, the problem will be solved, since immigrants will not be given preference for jobs or undercut the wages of non-immigrant workers. I'm skeptical whether this formula works even in the Netherlands, since Drucker concedes that the success in incorporating Moroccan guest workers as Dutch citizens has only meant employers have turned to recent Polish immigrants who don't have the same protections. One would never know from Drucker's rosy account that in recent years Dutch immigration policy has become increasingly restrictive, that large numbers of illegal immigrants and asylum seekers have been expelled by force, and that laws have been passed making it difficult for immigrants to take advantage of the Dutch welfare system. Moreover, according to Philip Muus, a Swedish human geographer and expert on international migration, "ethnic minorities policies in the Netherlands have been relatively successful in areas of housing and education and in advancing legal rights, but far less successful in increasing minority participation in the Dutch labor market."[1] But all of this is beside the point since the Dutch and American situations are so different as to vitiate Drucker's analysis. How can you compare a racially homogeneous nation like the Netherlands (prior to immigration) with the United States, with its system of occupational caste so entrenched that it is mitigated only by affirmative action policy? In such a context, immigrants in the United States, although themselves exploited and abused, are given racial preference in the labor market. So the problem is not that immigrants work for less, but rather that they are preferred over blacks. Indeed, studies conducted by William Julius Wilson and his students in Chicago found, much to their consternation, that the "reservation wage" (the lowest wage that workers would accept) was *lower* for jobless blacks than for immigrants.[2] Yet employers still preferred immigrants, and engaged in what amounts to racial profiling in hiring. Providing more rights and entitlements to immigrant workers is certainly a desideratum, but it does not even begin to address the issue of entrenched racism in labor markets.

> Even as we applaud immigrant incorporation, it comes at the expense of blacks.

Like Drucker, **Ron Hayduk** is concerned with the question of immigrant incorporation, and he has been in the forefront of the struggle for immigrant voting rights. To his credit, though, he does not allow those allegiances to obstruct his perspective on race, including the danger that "immigration could further reinforce racial hierarchies by pitting newcomers against the native-born, particularly African Americans." Nor is it just a matter of jobs. As a political scientist, Hayduk is sensitive to the fact that "just when African Americans have gained political power in electoral terms, they are watching their strength diminish." Thus, even as we applaud immigrant incorporation, we need to be mindful of the fact that it often comes at the expense of blacks (take Los Angeles and New York, for example). This presents a dilemma for activists. Much is at stake, because as Hayduk argues, "progressive efforts will likely falter without multiracial solidarity." As the sorry history of union racism and affirmative action show, "multiracial solidarity" has often meant that blacks are asked to subordinate their legitimate interests because they are too divisive among workers in general and union members in particular. As Hayduk acknowledges, "interracial solidarity" is a hollow slogan unless immigrants can see beyond their own struggles and actively support affirmative action and the reparations movement.

For years, now, **Mike Hirsch** and I have sparred over issues of race and class, and particularly my critiques of William Julius Wilson in the pages of *New Politics*. Perhaps I forgot this, but Mike now divulges that he was a student and "a dear friend" of Wilson, adding that they have had their disagreements as well. But why does Mike feel compelled to say this, even in the name of "full disclosure"? What he reveals is his difficulty in separating the intellectual from the personal, which explains why he berates me for "overpersonalizing" and "finger-pointing" in my critique of Wilson. I do not know the man, and have no basis whatsoever for personal animus. Unless, as in the great Groucho Marx joke about not wanting to belong to a club that would take him as a member, I felt compelled to disdain the man who had showered praise on my first book! What would have been "personal" is if I had held my fire, and engaged in the mutual backslapping that is as rife in academic life as in the corporate world. Would Mike also berate Du Bois, as some of his contemporaries did, for "disloyalty" to Booker T. Washington to whom he owed his position at Tuskegee? Indeed, while at Tuskegee, Du Bois paid Washington back by writing *Souls of Black Folks,* which included a devastating critique of his patron. Intellectual life is seriously compromised unless we let the chips fall where they may. So is political life. Bill Clinton used to publicly invoke the name of "the brilliant sociologist, William Julius Wilson," to defend his waffling on affirmative action and his lack of any policy agenda for race, except for what Adolph Reed disdains as his "yackety-yak on race" initiative. Too bad that Wilson did not do what other "friends of Bill" did, and denounce Clinton publicly when he signed the bill that abolished welfare entitlements, and signed the crime bill that has sent hundreds of thousands of black youth to unconscionable years in prison, and then did nothing to stop the genocide in Rwanda. There are things more important than loyalty.

Do these fighting words make me deserving of Mike's characterization of "Steinberg (an oxymoron right there) astride a muscular white horse, whip in one hand, pistol in the other"? I don't want to match Mike corn for corn, but I rather think that he is the one playing the gunslinger, riding in with both guns blazing, shooting wildly at any word that moves! In all seriousness, Mike makes a number of sage observations and barbed criticisms, but it seems to me that he does not engage my core argument, or for that matter, advance one himself. I'm not sure it is productive to draw our readers into each jab of our sparring match, so I will just close by saying that it has been helpful over the years to have Mike as a sparring partner, and he keeps me on my toes. I wonder though if he has a feminist voice in his ear, as I do, sighing about how "you men" need to engage in combat with metaphorical pistols and whips.

Gilbert Jonas brings to the table a valuable historical perspective, seasoned by four decades on the front lines as an NAACP warrior. He provides an effective rejoinder to Mike Hirsch's skepticism about the extent to which mass immigration prevented blacks from being absorbed into Northern industries during the half century after slavery. He also brings into focus contemporary flashpoints of conflict between blacks and the Koreans, Indians, and Pakistanis who often dominate retailing and commerce in black communities. In effect, the United States has created its own class of "coloreds" who, as James Baldwin once said of Jews, "do the dirty work of whites in the ghetto." The critics may scoff at what they wrongly call "comparative suffering," but Jonas has no trouble asserting that "no group has ever faced the cumulative burden of racial oppression to the degree experienced by black Americans." Already Asian and Latino immigrants are far more integrated in terms of housing and jobs than are African Americans seven generations after the abolition of slavery. As some prognosticators have suggested, the nation is evolving into a black/not black divide. How can progressives, with their myopic fixation on "class," fail to face up to "the immigrant dilemma," as Jonas calls it, at a time when 50 percent of black men in New York City are either unemployed or underemployed?

Alan Aja's intervention is most welcome, because Aja says things that I have rarely encountered in the vast immigration literature and because he suggests, by his example, some of the contours of a genuinely progressive approach to the immigration question. His personal identification with the struggles of immigrants does not mean that he puts blinders on and ignores the ways in which immigrants are implicated in the reproduction of racial inequalities. How could he, given that he is attuned to the problems of Afro-Cubans both inside and outside the Cuban enclave economy? Others have made this observation as well, but Aja is the first I have encountered who is willing to challenge the ethnic exclusivity of the celebrated "ethnic economy." Moreover, he uses the case of Afro-Cubans to draw the right theoretical inference: "The result throws out any credibility to arguments that cite 'culture' as an indicator of economic mobility and instead places race smack dab in the middle of the equation." Smack dab is right. The predicament of Afro-Cubans and other Afro-Latinos provides ironclad evidence that the three most important factors that explain the plight of African Americans are racism, racism, and racism, both past and present, operating through precisely the intersecting institutional spheres that Greg Squires surveyed: incomes, jobs, family assets, housing, schools, the welfare system, and the criminal justice system, and finally manifesting itself in poorer health and truncated lives.

Above and beyond the specific issues debated here, there is a larger issue that looms in the background. Progressives have to ask themselves how they can rail against neoliberal trade policy, and fall into silence when it comes to a neoliberal immigration policy that is *designed* to crowd labor markets, depress wages, and undercut unions, and that exacerbates the problems of African Americans and other marginal groups, including immigrants themselves. Or as we see in France, the children of immigrants who find themselves cast to the periphery, with the dreams of their parents dried up like, well, a raisin in the sun. The French intifada not only exposes the recklessness of neoliberal immigration policy, but also the urgent need for progressive thinking and a progressive agenda on race and immigration that does not subordinate one to the other.

NOTES

1. Philip Muus, "The Netherlands: A Pragmatic Approach to Economic Needs and Humanitarian Considerations," in, *Controlling Immigration: A Global Perspective*, ed. Wayne A. Cornelius et. al (Stanford University Press, 2005), 283.

2. William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears* (University of Chicago Press, 1996), 139-40. For my critique of Wilson's study, see "Science and Politics in the Work of William Julius Wilson, *New Politics* (Winter 1997), 72-83. www.wpunj.edu/newpol/issue22/steinb22.htm

Mar del Plata, Argentina
The (People's) Summit of the Americas

Lois Weiner

On November 2-5, as two dozen heads of state gathered in Mar del Plata, Argentina for a hemispheric summit to negotiate trade agreements, thousands of global justice activists, I among them, participated in a concurrent "People's Summit" ("cumbre de los pueblos") or "counter-summit" ("contracumbre"). The official summit meetings were moved to Mar del Plata, a seaside resort which is a five-hour bus or train trip from Buenos Aires, to deter mass protests. The ability of the global justice movement to bring thousands of contracumbre participants to Mar del Plata was testimony to the economic devastation neoliberal economic policies have produced in Latin America as well as to popular determination to resist further inroads in the quality of life. Most Argentinians watched their life savings and livelihoods vanish overnight with the devaluation of the peso, and Bush's presence at the summit was a bitter — and unwelcome — reminder of U.S. domination in the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and the policies that led to the peso's devaluation.

I joined a Canadian contingent that traveled to the Educational Summit ("cumbre educativa"), held in conjunction with the People's Summit. My report is focused primarily on the Educational Summit because its sessions were concurrent with other workshops and meetings of the contracumbre. However, judging from the listing of sessions in the contracumbre program, as well as by the number of people at the contracumbre opening rally, the Educational Summit was the largest single gathering of the counter-summit. Organized by CTERA, the more left-wing of the two confederations of teachers unions in Argentina, and supported by the labor confederation representing public employees (CTA), the Educational Summit brought together hundreds of activists.

As I've explained elsewhere, (*New Politics*, Winter 2005, online at www.wpunj.edu/~newpol/issue38/Weiner38.htm), public education in Latin America and much of the world is the battleground of a fierce struggle between progressive forces trying to maintain public systems of schooling, and on the other side, international financial institutions and neoliberal governments supported by the U.S. with a program that uses the rhetoric of educational equity to dismantle public education. To neoliberal politicians and transnational corporations, education is a huge, untapped market for supplies and services: standardized tests and curricula to train and sort the new global workforce; and online degrees supplied by corporations located mostly in Australia and the U.S. The primary obstacle to neoliberalism's restructuring of education is teacher unions, which throughout Latin America and much of Africa have led popular struggles for free, universal public education as a social right. Teacher union leadership in the contracumbre and protests against Bush were quite visible. CTERA organized a work stoppage of teachers on Nov. 5 to protest Bush's presence in Argentina and the assault on public education. The public employee confederation, CTA, of which it is a member, endorsed and joined the effort.

The *New York Times* coverage of the summit and the global justice meetings highlighted photos of protestors holding aloft images of Che Guevara, fiery anti-U.S. rhetoric of Hugo Chavez, and the stalled "progress" by heads of state in reaching consensus on new trade agreements. Unsurprisingly, the *Time's* analysis is simultaneously accurate and politically misleading. U.S. media, as usual, did not explain the reasons for Bush's unpopularity, yet it would be difficult to overstate the harm done to the general standard of living in Latin America in the name of economic restructuring and free trade, promoted and enforced by the U.S. government. From the friendly hand waves and shouts of support given demonstrators in the massive protest on the streets of Buenos Aires the day Bush arrived, to the unsolicited encouragement I received from hotel clerks, taxi driv-

Lois Weiner, *a member of the* New Politics *editorial board, teaches education at New Jersey City University in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. She is a long-time teacher union activist and is currently Executive Vice President of AFT 1839, her campus local.*

ers, sales people, and waiters when I mentioned my participation in the contracumbre, hostility to Bush and the expansion of free trade was deep and widely visible. Equally apparent from coverage of the summit by the Argentinean media was popular unease about the massive police and military presence in Mar del Plata. Police, often with machine guns, cordoned off the city into two sections. Only those with an official security clearance could travel into the section of Mar del Plata with the fancy hotels and official meetings. (With the exception of those ubiquitous machine guns, Mar del Plata's deployment of police was not that different from the police saturation around Madison Square Garden during the last Republican National Convention.) Argentinean discomfort with this show of armed force is more than understandable when one considers that the question of how to win justice for victims of the military's dirty war against the Left is still a passionate debate. The pages of "Pagina Doce," Argentina's left-leaning daily newspaper, regularly contain memorial announcements on the anniversary of the date on which people "disappeared." The photos of young students and statements from family and friends that they will not "forget or forgive" are a reminder of the democratically-elected government's tenuous ability to navigate the righteous calls for justice and the unbroken back of the political forces responsible for the terror.

> It would be difficult to overstate the harm done to the general standard of living in Latin America in the name of economic restructuring and free trade, promoted and enforced by the U.S. government.

A network of Canadian and Latin American unions, called the Initiative for Democratic Education in the Americas (IDEA), used the occasion of the contracumbre and the Educational Summit to meet. The network has emerged slowly over the past decade, nurtured in North America mostly by progressives in the British Columbia Teachers Federation and Centrale des Syndicats du Québec (CSQ) and in Latin America by CTERA and a coalition of Mexican teachers unions that are independent of the corrupt government-controlled organizations. The Hemispheric Secretariat on Education (www.secretaria.ca/eng/secretariat.htm), a broader umbrella group separate from the IDEA network, organized the Educational Summit along with CTERA, with support from the Latin American branch of the Education International (EI), the international confederation of teachers unions. Buses chartered by CTERA took its delegates and those of us in an international contingent for the five-hour bus ride from Buenos Aires to Mar del Plata. Activists, both working teachers who hold union office and full-time staff, came from Mexico, Ecuador (representing Chile and Bolivia), Nicaragua, Brazil, Uruguay, and the Carribean. A Cuban delegate arrived independently. CTERA hosted the international visitors and its delegates at hotels it owned and operated, an arrangement dating back to Peronist days when unions held their conventions in Mar del Plata and rented the facilities out to union members when the hotel was not otherwise being used. Two other people from the U.S. traveled with the IDEA network, a film maker who recently completed a powerful new documentary about the struggles of Mexican teachers unions *(Grains of Sand* or *Granito de Arena*, available at www.corrugate.org), and a faculty member from Evergreen State College in Washington who more than a decade ago helped forge hemispheric cooperation to oppose neoliberal trade agreements (http://americas.irc_online.org/borderlines/1995/bl14/bl14foc_body.html). I appeared to be the sole activist in a U.S. teachers union at the IDEA network meetings and at the Educational Summit.

Despite my rudimentary Spanish, it was clear to me that the IDEA network contains representatives of organizations with sharp political differences. Representatives all listened respectfully to one another and also gingerly avoided pointed debates. Still, striking political disagreements emerged in delegates' presentations about the conditions in their respective countries in regard to educational policy and teacher union responses. The Mexicans, representing a network of opposition locals, distributed hand-folded photocopies of their ten-point program, materials that illustrated well the grass-roots nature of their organization, which is battling the government and a party-controlled union. The Brazilian delegate described the "delicate" political situation of the teachers unions in working with the government it had helped bring to power based on promises that were being broken. Argentina's delegate discussed the school reform program of her teachers confederation CTERA but not that of the rival confederation, CEA, which like CTERA is an affiliate of the Education International. (CEA also participated in the Educational Summit but is not in the IDEA network.) Representatives from the Ecuador teachers union, distributed books printed on heavy, glossy paper filled with color photos and sharp criticisms of capitalism. When they concluded their report with a call for revolution and the overthrow of capitalism, I surmised, correctly I learned later, that this union was affiliated with the Communist Party. Sitting in on the meeting, a U.S. professor gave a brief report about the (sorry) state of the Left in the U.S., explaining he lacked expertise to discuss U.S. teachers unions.

A Hemispheric Network — Without the U.S.?

THE CONTRADICTION in this being a *hemispheric* network, with representation of teachers unions in much of Latin America and Canada but not the U.S., has been the topic of my conversations with Canadians. Latin American and Canadian teachers unions obviously should not and cannot delay organizing an alliance until U.S. unions are ready to join them. But to the extent possible, given meager human and financial resources, attempts to involve U.S. teachers' unions should be an organizing priority. One purely practical reason to try to involve more U.S. participants is that they can add resources and political contacts that can benefit the Latin American unions. Further, including U.S. teacher activists in the network would clarify that the attack on public education and the struggle of educational workers is not simply between the U.S. and the rest of the hemisphere. The absence of U.S. participation encourages a national rather than class configuration to network politics, providing a smokescreen for the often willing collaboration of local plutocrats in neoliberal policies. An experience I had at the opening rally illustrated what might occur with more involvement by U.S. teachers unions in the contracumbre. The exuberant CTERA activists sitting in front of me began chanting an equivalent of "Yankees go home!" Then they did a double-take when they realized I was behind them. They apologized for any offense they may have caused and I explained (I think) that I understood their chant as signaling political opposition to Bush, not to those of us in the U.S. who oppose him. Together we resumed waving CTERA banners, cheering and chanting slogans.

In calling for greater involvement of U.S. teachers unions, I should clarify that it must be based on the explicit, unequivocal rejection of the imperial appetite and policies of the U.S. government. This is the sine qua non of any principled international alliance among unions. As I pointed out in my article cited above, the leadership of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) generally identifies the greatest threat to education emanating from popular resistance to policies that shore up capitalism, and on many issues the AFT as a national organization is found on the *wrong* side of the literal and actual barricades that separate global justice activists from heads of state. One Canadian activist was incredulous when he learned that the AFT national leadership fully endorses standardized testing and helped draft many provisions of the Bush administration's omnibus education "reform," the No Child Left Behind Act. The absence of the other, larger U.S. teachers union, the National Education Association (NEA) was something of a disappointment to conference organizers. At the last minute the NEA decided it would not participate, officially or unofficially. The formal explanation was that the Education International segments its North American and Caribbean affiliates in one sector and its Latin American affiliates in another. The NEA argued that its participation in a hemispheric meeting was counter to EI's organizational structure. The speciousness of this argument was readily exposed by the presence of EI's newly-elected President and his prominent role in the Educational Summit. Plainly NEA's explanation masked other concerns, probably a sense of vulnerability to attack by the rival AFT. In domestic politics the NEA almost always takes positions that are more left-leaning than those advocated by the AFT. Participation in the Educational Summit and the IDEA network, especially given Cuba's prominence, would have made the NEA open to AFT charges that the NEA is "soft on communism," a criticism the NEA wants to avoid.

In the conference workshop on free trade, I decided to test political possibilities of developing a hemispheric collaboration that included the expression of disagreements. Realizing that as the sole activist from a U.S. teachers union my remarks on any subject would be closely scrutinized for political implications, I commented on a subject I hoped would be less politically pointed, how teachers unions should regard online education. The World Bank and neoliberal governments internationally are pressing for teachers to be educated through online course work. Online education is an attractive option for neoliberal politicians as it can be provided cheaply by for-profits with use of contingent labor/faculty whose low wages insure hefty profits. Requiring online coursework ignores how often teachers do not have ready access to the technology they need to complete online courses, as well as the need for social contact with colleagues that a traditional classroom environment provides. While defending the right of teachers to choose the learning environment that they find most helpful and arguing for equity in access to the technology, I also suggested that we should imagine the progressive potential of online learning, to consider how the technology could be a powerful pedagogical tool if used for public good rather than for profit. I suggested we could create online classes in which teachers in the hemisphere share knowledge and analysis and that, as this example illustrated, the exploitation of technologies for profit should not blind us to how we might harness such tools for *our* purposes.

A hailstorm of criticism followed my remarks. From the dais a Cuban student who had presented one of the workshop addresses dismissed my idea, averring that Cuba permits nothing but face-to-face instruction for its foreign language teaching because personal interaction is the only way learning can occur. Her passionate repudiation of technology contradicted what I subsequently learned: Canadian teachers who collaborate with Cuban school officials in a project to improve the teaching of foreign languages have been frustrated by the Cubans' unwillingness to end the (ineffective) practice of using video instruction for foreign language teachers. Despite many topics far more urgent than distance learning, debate in the workshop remain riveted on my incendiary notion that technology is a tool that could be used for social progress. (Plainly, delegates did not share Lenin's thinking that Electrification plus Soviets equals communism.) Finally, a lone CTERA delegate observed that "political and economic situations" determine the use of any tool, and that technology is a tool. The moderator of the workshop, an experienced CTERA leader who had to formulate a consensus, ably constructed a platform statement that acknowledged my point as well as my critics' ideas.

Educational Summit meetings and documents were marked by a passionate romance with Cuba. The Cuban delegation, a racially diverse group of exuberant young people attired in red jogging suits, thrived in the spotlight. Cuba's representative to the IDEA network was warmly embraced when she walked into a planning meeting a bit after work had begun. In his opening remarks to the Educational Summit, Thulas Nxesi, the gregarious EI President from South Africa's teachers' union who follows in office Mary Futrell, former President of the NEA, gave his "special greeting to the Cuban people here today," noting their "very special place in our hearts." The "role they played in the liberation of Africa" has made them "a shining example of the left project and the new world order," he stated, to wild applause and cheers. In a pause after Nxesi's remarks, I turned to a genial delegate from the Canadian Teachers Federation seated next to me and asked what sense he made of these comments. The Canadian was plainly disconcerted by my question and responded that "we have to understand" that Cuba has given considerable support to Africa and "people are grateful." IDEA network publications also reflect the embrace of Cuba as a progressive alternative to neoliberalism. The IDEA network's report on democratic education in the Americas, written by the International Secretary of the Peruvian Education Workers Union, extols Cuba's educational system as a model for the rest of Latin America, arguing that "With the exception of Cuba... [Latin American] education systems tend to be anti-democratic and elitist."

The shameful failure of U.S. teachers unions to oppose unequivocally the U.S. menacing of Cuba and U.S.-supported policies that are destroying public education in Latin America fuels the romance with Cuba. The embrace of Cuba similarly depresses prospects for organizing broad political support for the Hemispheric Secretariat and the IDEA network among teacher union activists in U.S. unions. To the extent that U.S. unions do not join with Latin American teachers' struggles against the devastation of public education enacted by governments in thrall to U.S.-controlled agencies like the World Bank, the U.S. unions reinforce Cuban claims that the only alternative to corrupt, capitalist plutocracies is Cuba's undemocratic social and political model. On the other hand, when Cuba's denials of elementary political rights, like the right to form an independent teachers union, are ignored, progressive activists in U.S.

teachers unions unwittingly reinforce neoliberalism's contention that "there is no alternative" way of organizing the economy and political life that allows both economic and political democracy.

When the Cuban government greets political dissent with police action and progressives fail to support the Cuban people's right to freedoms that are exercised (though increasingly with restraints) in liberal capitalist democracies, we willy-nilly reinforce pro-capitalist and pro-U.S. political tendencies among Cuban dissidents. The Campaign for Peace and Democracy petition of June 2003, simultaneously condemning both U.S. threats to Cuba and Cuba's arrest of scores of people for nonviolent political activity, challenges the symbiosis between Cuba and neoliberalism that is reinforced by AFT and NEA unwillingness to support the IDEA network as well as the IDEA network's defense of Cuban society as a progressive model. As the exchanges about repression in Cuba in previous issues of *New Politics* (most recently in Vol. IX, no. 3 and no. 4) reveal, the consistent defense of political freedom exemplified by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy petition on Cuba is sometimes rejected as providing backhanded support for U.S. imperialism. I think the embrace of Cuba at the Educational Summit and the absence of participation by U.S. teacher union activists illustrates quite the opposite: Our ability to build an international struggle against policies that are destroying public education (as well as the quality of life generally, working conditions, the environment, etc.) depends on projecting a vision of another world that provides both political freedom *and* social control over economic resources.

A consistent commitment to full democracy raises other urgent issues for education activists and teacher unions. Attention to gender inequality in education, including its presence in the ranks of the teachers union leadership throughout the hemisphere is still a problem. Teaching young children is very much "women's work" throughout the world, and the vast majority of teachers in the hemisphere are women. Yet on the dais of the Educational Summit opening session sat seven men and one woman — and only the men spoke. Also, special concerns in the education of and for indigenous peoples and issues of racism were muffled when they were heard at all. As the upheaval in Bolivia indicates, racism is not exclusively a U.S. problem, yet the special issues that arise in education of the often rural communities of indigenous peoples in Latin America seemed to me not explored as fully as they ought to have been in the Educational Summit nor in IDEA network publications. For teachers unions to be "close to the people," as several union representatives advocated, they must support and lead struggles to allow indigenous peoples to enjoy the material benefits of industrial societies without being forced to assimilate. Unions throughout the world, not just those of teachers, face the problem of negotiating alliances with social movements that are not based in the workplace.

At Mar del Plata I saw a movement that has possibilities to make a just world a reality. The opening rally of the contracumbre, with its passion and verve, contrasted so sharply with tired speechifying that characterizes most labor protests in the U.S. Not since participating in the AFL-CIO's huge march on Washington, D.C. in defense of striking PATCO workers who had been fired by Ronald Reagan have I seen such an impressive illustration of the power of trade unions to use their institutional strength to lead a social movement. CTERA organized a conference that brought together hundreds of teacher union activists from Latin America and Canada, aligning teacher union struggles with the demands of the contracumbre. Thulas Nxesi's participation in the Educational Summit and the People's Summit, rather than the official summit meetings, illustrated that U.S. control of the EI has been broken. In the IDEA network, Latin American and Canadian teachers unions have developed a fledgling hemispheric umbrella organization that has exciting potential. The support the British Columbia Teachers Federation (BCTF) received when BCTF teachers went out on strike shortly before the contracumbre shows the IDEA network's potential. Teachers unions in the IDEA network sent telegrams and messages of support of the strikers to the BC government and even staged demonstrations at Canadian consulates.

Union activists from several countries agreed that we face an international challenge in bringing into union activity the generation of teachers raised in the 1980s and 1990s, periods in which conservative ideology dominated. The generation that now leads teachers unions was frequently schooled in radical politics in the 1960s and 70s. Our ability to bring into activity and leadership younger teachers who can continue and expand our project of protecting public education depends on our willingness to scrutinize teacher unionism's successes and failures.

I suggest that many of the movement's errors can be encapsulated in the notion that democracy is a luxury that we can separate from economic struggles. A consistent struggle for democracy is, in fact, essential to win the battle to protect public education. Unions that are undemocratic in their internal life are handicapped in sustaining the kind and level of activity, what one BCTF delegate described as an "organizing culture," needed to defeat the onslaught of neoliberal politicians. Failing to insist on the right of teachers to have full political rights, including the right to organize unions that are independent of state control, reinforces the powerful ideological message of the U.S. and its client governments that only neoliberalism can provide political freedoms and economic stability.

A consistent defense of democracy is a supremely realistic strategy — if the other world we imagine is one of full human emancipation.

To: The President of Argentina, Nestor Kirchner

(Para texto en español ver abajo)

The struggle of Argentinian workers to recover factories and companies abandoned by their owners has become an inspiring model worldwide, and an important symbol that another world is possible. The Bauen Hotel is a concrete example. Its future and significance were recently recognized by the government of Venezuela, with an agreement signed with the Ministry of Tourism and the National Ministry of Popular Economy to work together in the development of a cooperative tourism venture. At the Bauen Hotel there are 120 men and women who every day demonstrate how to build self-managed alternatives that create jobs, dignity and justice where neoliberalism has resulted in devastating failure.

Following a fraudulent bankruptcy and after exhausting all legal paths for a year and a half, they decided to take their futures into their own hands and they built what we can see today: a fully functioning hotel with a restaurant, bookstore and cultural galleries, along with spaces that they lend to social organizations for meetings, conferences and assemblies. If you want to demonstrate your pride in a symbol of the movement right in the centre of Buenos Aires, all you have to do is let the Bauen Hotel continue to operate the way its workers, with efficiency and solidarity, have planned it.

But if you want to attack everything that this movement of recovered factories and companies represents, Hotel Bauen is a target.

Over the last few months, Hotel Bauen has been through various attempts to close it down. Now, some legislators in the city of Buenos Aires want to introduce a regulation that will destroy what the workers' cooperative has achieved. We, the undersigned, call on the Argentinian government and its legislators to act immediately to carry out the following measures:

1. Withdraw all threats of eviction or closure from the Bauen Hotel both now and in the future.
2. Pass a law of definitive expropriation in favour of the Workplace Cooperative B.A.U.E.N. (Buenos Aires a National Company, from the Spanish initials).

Social movements around the world are watching the struggle of the Bauen Hotel workers with great interest and passionate support. This highly successful alternative should not be destroyed or threatened: it should be celebrated, supported, and shared with others!

www.petitiononline.com/bauen/petition.html

Human Rights and the Colombian Government

An analysis of state-based atrocities toward noncombatants

JAMES J. BRITTAIN

THE COLOMBIAN CIVIL WAR, similar to other Latin American conflicts over the past 50 years, has had a large portion of noncombatants mortally affected by the horrors of conflict. However, those killed or injured in Colombia are not indirect results of the discord but are in themselves strategic military targets (Stokes, 2005; Lernoux, 1982). The reasoning behind invoking this aggression against the unarmed Colombian populace is due in part to the ever-increasing strength of the primary insurgent movement within the country. In response to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia — People's Army (FARC-EP), the Colombian State — with the political, economic, and militaristic training and support of the U.S. government — has implemented a vicious methodology in the aspiration of eliminating support for guerrillas through a "drain the sea" mentality. Via this practice, the government has ironically become, as the coming pages will demonstrate, the principle violator of human rights within Colombia. The following paper examines how the Colombian government has covertly capitalized on the façade of paramilitarism in the purpose of maintaining domestic and imperial fiscal-political interests through the methodical implementation of state-based intimidation and violence against a civilian population.

JAMES J. BRITTAIN *is a Ph.D. candidate and instructor in the Departments of Sociology and Political Science at the University of New Brunswick, Canada. His research interests include revolutionary class-conflict within Latin America, the relevance of classical Marxism within contemporary geopolitics, and alternative forms of international development and social change.*

The four-decade-old civil war within Colombia has been a conflict between two principal groups; the people and the state. Over such a period the Colombian government has used its authority to concede several elite class-based laws and/or decrees in the hopes of strengthening its domestic political and economic allies against the emergence of organized rural and urban proletarian antagonists. These political edicts were not mere legislative matters of congressional concern whose importance rarely left the walls of the *Capitolio Nacional*[3] in Bogotá. On the contrary, these lawmaking processes have had a much deeper tangible existence, experienced throughout much of Colombia's social environment; an unfortunate disposition which has had a devastating outcome on hundreds of thousands of Colombians. Since 1968, the state began to systematically formulate, support, and pass legislation which enabled the legal construction, formation, and continuance of paramilitary forces or more conservatively, "self-defense units" (Leech, 2002:20; Murillo and Avirama, 2004:101). In doing so, the Colombian government established laws that legitimated state attacks against the guerrillas (and their supporters) through informal means; however, as increasing opposition to the paramilitary forces evolved, the government had to legitimize their alternative combatants. Hence, in 1993, Decree 2535 and Decree 356 legitimated the ability of armed "private security" forces to protect economic interests of large landowners and MNCs (Richani, 2002:50, 52, 104-105).

The paramilitary creation was stated to be a *defensive* mechanism to protect the economic and political well-being of the country's wealthiest landowners; the authentic result of the paramilitary, however, has been of a more converse fashion. They have actually been an integrated reactionary model of transgression (for those that could afford it) whose purpose is to eliminate oppositional movements in the country through non-democratic means. As opposed to addressing or rectifying the true reasons as to why oppositional movements have been created (sociopolitical and economic dislocation), the state — alongside the economic, political and militaristic support of the U.S. administration(s) — has sought to organize counterinsurgencies to decimate those who scream for change, thus removing the political audibility of the resistance (Ampuero and Brittain, 2005). As a result, the state has institutionalized the validity of the paramilitary, making them a mechanism to protect the economic interests of a select minority, while simultaneously supporting their own political stability.

By reading the preceding one may agree that the state provided an avenue for paramilitaries to be created but may question whether the Colombian government has essentially preserved a direct role in continuing the contra forces. The answer to this can be recognized through investigating who the paramilitary forces are. One way this could be done is through examining the combatants themselves. Are these counterinsurgents merely Colombians who seek a wage in an economically restrictive society (Howe, 2004), are some simply sadistic mongers seeking to dominate much of rural Colombia (Dudley, 2004; Betancourt, 2002), or are these anti-guerrilla far-right combatants seeking to eliminate leftist oppositionists (Kirk, 2003)? Doing this however, while of great importance, can alleviate the institutional reality of how these groups were formed and why they were created. The proceeding does not fray from this reality and seeks to describe the paramilitary's composition and their direct relation to the state.

In most respects the paramilitary units are largely made up of active Colombian soldiers and/or retired state combatants while maintaining close alignment through strong technical and physical contacts with the Colombian army. In this respect one can think of the paramilitary as an extended hand or division of the army rather than a separate entity (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003; Smith, 2001). As a result of this, to view the Colombian conflict through the lens of several opposing elements or multiple actors is faulty, for the civil war is in fact a bipartisan conflict between the state and those conscious Colombians seeking emancipatory conditions. This then leads one to ask, how can the government of Colombia implement and support abuses against its own people? Why does the present Uribe administration support policies that physically, politically, and socially deny civil liberties to Colombians? To answer these questions an examination of the contextual social environment and the multidimensional economic and political importance of Colombia must take place.

Fiscal and Political Dimensions of Veiled Institutionalized Violence

Economically speaking, Colombia holds a plethora of natural resources that carry a substantial monetary value *if* they are concentrated in the hands of a few and managed with surplus-value being of the utmost priority (Currie, 1966; 1971). Colombia is also home to what could be a substantial supply of untapped oil, thus giving minority-world markets in North America easy access to the globally desired commodity (Scott, 2003; Leech, 2004b). The benefit of these oil-reserves however is more than sheer economic profit; in reality a great deal of the reserve's importance is political in scope.

North American markets need access to quick and cheap oil. Recent U.S. political and militaristic actions taken against oil-rich regions in the Middle East have resulted in oil supplies becoming exceedingly difficult to negotiate. Compounding this problem for the U.S. is Venezuela. Colombia's neighbor has one of the most important oil holdings in the world but is in direct opposition to U.S. foreign policy and deployments within the Andean region. In reverse, the United States has portrayed a less than supportive demeanor towards the socially-progressive economic and political practices of President Hugo Chávez (Guevara, 2005; Harnecker, 2005; Brittain, 2003; Gott, 2001). Coming from this context, Colombia, coupled with the Uribe administration, has become an excellent partner for the United States when trying to procure an easily accessible oil supply and strongly needed ally in upper South America. With the Colombian government recognizing its importance they have enabled numerous incentives for multinational and transnational corporations (MNCs, TNCs) to "set up shop" within Colombia. One important incentive was the previously discussed provision of allocating the employment of paramilitary forces, thus insuring consistent oil exploration and/or extraction, while countering insurgent activities against corporate assets (Leech, 2004a). However, the paramilitaries are doing a great deal more than defending attacks against refinery pipelines. The paramilitary are using other methods of ensuring large profit values through the active targeting of union organizations, worker's collectives, and indigenous movements which are seen as deterrents to economic progress (NUPGE, 2004; Gareau, 2004).

Supporting the maintenance of monetary centralization and minority interest is not a new theory within Colombian politics nor has it merely arisen through the "organic" structure of the state. This ideology has actually been realized for decades through the guidance of several developmental and economic theorists, in particular the Nova Scotian-born economist Lauchlin Currie (Brittain, 2005a). Currie (1971; 1981) wrote extensively on how natural resources throughout Colombia (specifically in rural regions) must be monopolized so that Colombia's potential economic profits can be fully realized.[14] His theory of "accelerating economic development" and ideas of "dampening" sociopolitical resistance were, and continue to be, seen as the primary economic developmental model that directed decades of Colombian political administrations and continues to be utilized by the state today (Mondragon, 2001). Aspects such as these, while seeming out of place or of little importance, are central economic (and thus political) derivations to the current civil conflict.

Politically, Colombia is one of the most unique and important countries in the world. The reason that the country is of such contemporary geopolitical significance is that it contains the largest and most powerful Marxist-based insurgency movement in the Western Hemisphere. The FARC-EP has been in existence since 1964 and has been labeled as "the most important military and political force in South America opposing imperialism" (Fisher and Ponniah, 2003:299). The insurgency promotes the implementation of a socialist revolution in the optimism of providing a social and political alternative to the present continuation of imperialist expansionism (Brittain and Sacouman, forthcoming). By the late 1990s, the FARC-EP exemplified that it had become a substantial threat to the political stability and military capacity of the Colombian government, with little sign of slowing down (Cienfuegos, 2004; Petras, 2002; 1999; Ruiz, 2001; Pearce, 1990). Others extended this sentiment by arguing that the guerrilla forces cannot be defeated by the Colombian/United States offensive fueling the internal war (Braun, 2003; Ungerman and Brohy, 2003; KAIROS, 2001; Murch, 2000). Reading such statements allows one the ability to deduce that militarily the FARC-EP "poses the most powerful threat" to the Colombian government and to United States "dominance in the hemisphere" (Petras and Veltmeyer, 2003:32).

Apart from the physical fortitude of the FARC-EP, the insurgency also provides an obstacle to majority-based economic concentration. The insurgency has implemented a class-based taxation system entitled *Bill 002*, which is a "tax for peace" to be collected "from those persons or corporations whose wealth is greater than $1,000,000 U.S." (FARC-EP, 2000:1). The justification for such a "bill," according to the guerrilla organization, is that "trans-national corporations continue to loot our natural resources and the labour of our majorities" (2000:1; see also Leech, 2004b). Given the economic loss provoked by the tax, the "wealthy" are also anxious because the levies acquired are partially used to "improve" the insurgency's "military capabilities by modernizing its weaponry and improving the standard of living of its fighters" (Brittain and Sacouman, forthcoming; Richani, 2005; Leech, 2002:18).

It is then obvious that such a system does not sit well with the owners, shareholders, and government officials for two specific reasons. Firstly, the tax allows the FARC-EP to extract income from the MNCs and TNCs, thus decreasing the full economic pot that could be acquired from their resource extraction. Secondly, the tax allows for the insurgency to increase its military capacity, thus increasing its affluence to fight the state and expand its colonization of remaining areas that are not under FARC-EP extension. Through using the paramilitary the affected (elite) groups had hoped to diminish the FARC-EP's objectives. To the dismay of those above, the FARC-EP proved, on numerous occasions, to be a far-superior military opponent due to its knowledge of the region coupled by its guerrilla-based tactics of warfare. In response to the government's inability to defeat the FARC-EP directly, the state has taken an unconventional approach of paramilitarism and human rights abuse to try to trounce the guerrilla force, its support base, and/or opponents to the government's policies and control.

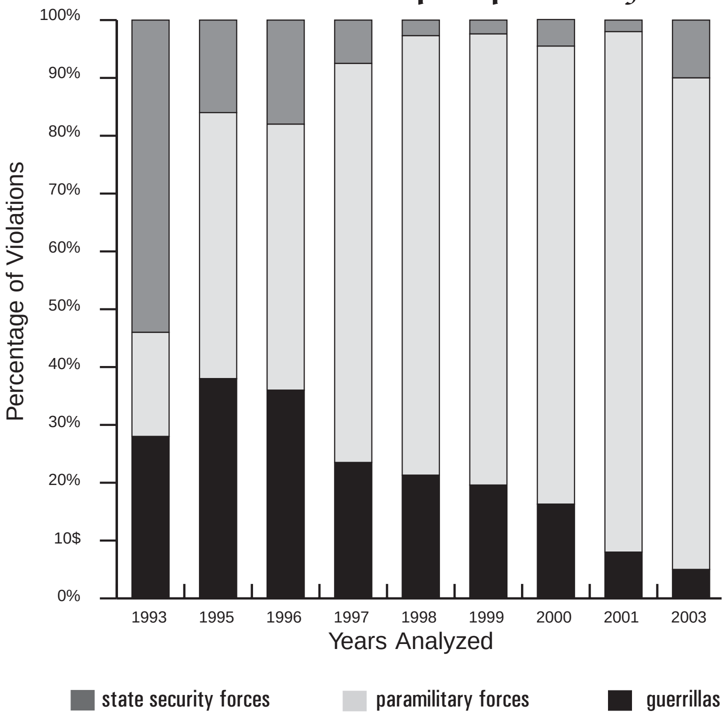
The Numbers: A Nonexistent Analysis

THE SUBJECT OF HUMAN RIGHTS abuse within Colombia has received limited analysis, if any. In failing to examine the issue, minimal information of who tangibly commits these abuses has been revealed. Many popular-communication media have reported that most violations are a result of the civil war and the "actors" therein. Yet, when one examines Colombian human rights abuse data they recognize that this is a tremendous misrepresentation.

The author's findings have demonstrated that the state-sponsored far-right paramilitary are the leading architects of violence, torture, rape, and murder throughout the country. This is not difficult to deduce in the simple fact that those assaulted — unionists, left-of-center political elements, and large portions of the *campesino* population — maintain a more communal-based practice of social interaction, which does not align with the right-wing ideology of the paramilitary and the existing Uribe administration. As a result, numerous popular-media outlets, journalists, and academics have failed to report that the majority perpetrators of abuses against noncombatants in Colombia is essentially the Colombian government.

Under the paramilitary pretense, the state has co-perpetuated violence, intimidation, and acts of murder to prolong political stability and economic influence. The Colombian state and military, in collaboration with the so-called United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), have perpetuated the preponderance of human rights violations against the civilian population (see graph). The state and paramilitary have exemplified on numerous occasions their tremendous ferocity against the Colombian rural and urban population. In spite of this, the domestic and international popular media alongside many learned institutions have made a conscious decision to underexamine or more blatantly silence analyses that present the state's role in committing violence against the people

Percentage of Human Rights Violations in Colombia and Group Responsibility



SOURCES: Gareau, 2004:214; NUPGE, 2004:2; HURIDOCS, 2003; Murillo and Avirama, 2003:89, 185-186; Stokes, 2003; Valenzuela, 2002:10; Colombian Commission of Jurists, 2001.

they are delegated to protect. This misinformation provides a misrepresentation of the reality of human rights abuses in Colombia and who is committing them.

Paramilitaries and the State: A Furtive Reactionary Alliance

IN THE PURPOSE OF DISMANTLING oppositional sociopolitical organizations the Colombian government has creatively used the paramilitary card as an instrument to combat the supporters and expansion of antagonistic movements. Using this method allows the state to claim that the abuses taking place against the population are the result of nonaffiliated paramilitary forces. This enables the government (and the supporting U.S. administration[s]) to shield international condemnation, thus continuing the flow of military and economic "aid" against what it now calls "the war against terror."

The government has used methods of paramilitary-induced violence to excuse themselves from the charge of human rights abuses. The state and popular-communication media report that it is the paramilitary that is one of the architects of the internal violence, never exposing or making the connection that it is the state that has brought them into existence. As a result, the crimes against humanity therefore appear not to be carried out by the "state" per se, but are performed through the perceived external independent forces of the paramilitary (Coghlan, 2004).

Examining who the abusers are is undoubtedly important but it is also necessary to illustrate those who are mistreated. Interestingly enough, the noncombatants abused do not represent a broad milieu or spectrum of the Colombian population but are largely co-associated through a political demographic (politically active-unionists, students, and campesinos, to name a few). These persons, and many other critical members of Colombian society, are seen as a threat to the legitimacy and control of the Colombian government and elite minority; therefore, the state has deemed them as hindrances to political and economic interests (Vélez, 2003). Since 2004, an outright assault against human and civil rights has occurred, not only against the individual (as many human rights abuses are perceived) but also toward the collective as well. Legalized detentions without cause or warrant (i.e., numerous members of FENSUAGRO); rural and urban unionists and communities being systematic targets of threats, torture, and murder (i.e., recent activities against the Comunidad de Paz de San Jose de Apartadó and the murder of three union members in Arauca in August 2004); the implementation of political genocide (i.e., Patriotic Union); and violent intimidation aimed at restricting political opponents (i.e., Colombian Communist Party, Bolivarian Movement for a New Colombia) have all become daily certainties for critics of the Uribe administration and its new economic and "democratic security" policies. The proceeding exemplifies these statements.

Along a secondary road in Huila, anti-guerrilla units (linked to the AUC) have begun stopping all vehicles and conducting physical searches and immediate interrogations, which is not a new phenomenon. What is new however is that the soldiers have begun a campaign of intimidation by actively passing out coupons/flyers to those persons stopped indicating how they "ought" to vote. Through the coercive tactic campesinos in the region are indirectly forced to vote for how the state/combatants "encourage" them. If the people within the locality do not vote the way expected then the soldiers will know in what region dissenters are located, thus opening the door to tremendous atrocities. It should be known however that these activities of coercion are not restricted to the rural regions alone but are being administered throughout the country. Just outside the Plaza de Bolivar, in the capital city of Bogotá, brigades of armored government SUVs have been seen with their windows down while armed guards hold signs telling people on the street to lift their thumbs in the air as a sign of political support. Through these measures, a false image is portrayed as state-controlled TV cameras film the "supportive" onlookers. In relation to this, the military has also begun detaining persons in the city who are discovered selling papers, literature, and/or music that is sympathetic to the insurgency or leftist political associations. In the past year, a tyrannical campaign akin to that which took place during the 1980s and early 1990s against the Patriotic Union (UP) has also begun throughout the country. Within the past eighteen months reports have arisen that hundreds of Colombian Communist Party (PCC) members have been murdered, with over 70 being killed within a span of several weeks during the summer of 2004. It is feared that this is the beginning of another political genocide to limit the growth of leftists from the spectrum of Colombian politics and society, thus enabling the enhancement of the present neoconservative economic and militaristic policies of the Colombian government.

Conclusion

THE PRECEDING ANALYSIS illustrates that the government of Colombia has purposely legitimized the paramilitary as an instrument constructed to violently respond to sociopolitical antagonists through the method of human rights abuse. Through presenting the above data on the contemporary reality of this ongoing issue within Colombia, it is hoped that the greater public obtains a stronger understanding of how the Colombian state has clandestinely profited from the pretense of paramilitarism to maintain elite-based economic and political interests. Presenting these issues openly is one way in which the international community can come to understand what is taking place within Colombia: a strategic campaign to silence social and political movements that are in opposition to the economic, political, and militaristic policies of the Uribe administration; and what the people of the country are struggling against. The only way in which true integrity can come to Colombia is if other unionists, students, workers, and conscious persons unite with the people of Colombia in their struggle for social justice.

Editor's note: A fully footnoted version of this article will be found on our website, www.newpol.org.

Zimbabwe: Violent Oppression Continues

MICHAEL WATERMEYER

ZANU-PF (Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front) was formed in the 1960s to actively oppose white minority rule in Rhodesia. In 1972, ZANU-PF chose the route of armed struggle to achieve its objectives. This marked a departure (typical of the majority of African liberation movements of the time) from the peaceful Gandhiest approach to liberation and self-determination to a radically ideologically informed approach which was promoted by the then Eastern bloc countries. It was an approach which endorsed liberation by violent means. As a result and in spite of stubborn resistance by the white minority government, political liberation was finally achieved in 1980. It brought to an end a bloody war characterized by innumerable ruthless atrocities.

After assuming power it soon became evident that ZANU-PF did not share a fundamental belief of many supporters of liberation, namely that free political activity, universal franchise, and a democratically-elected government which was representative of the people was the ultimate objective of the violent military struggle. Those who believed that after independence political campaigns would be fought on the political battlefield through debate, an active civil society, and the ballot box were gravely disappointed.

Instead the rationale that in Zimbabwe the end justifies the means and the means can be violent and brutal has been perpetuated by the ZANU-PF regime. After 1980, a pattern of identifying various elements of its own citizenry as a threat to national values and interests and using military or quasi-military means to deal with these citizens became evident. This is a pattern deeply reminiscent of fascist governments in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s and other fascist regimes since. ZANU-PF was barely in power when it unleashed the first of its violent military and quasi-military operations on the people of Zimbabwe named Gukurahundi — a program which resulted in the systematic murder of thousands of Ndebele speaking citizens by the state. Retaining many of the laws relied upon by the repressive white minority Rhodesian government, ZANU-PF positioned itself to enforce quasi-military "security" clampdowns whenever it felt the need evolving more latterly into operations such as Murambatsvina and Hondo yeMinda.

"Hondo YeMinda" (Land War) refers to a government campaign to drive so-called white and colored (mixed race) commercial farmers off the land. This operation commenced in 2000. It has succeeded with most reliable media reports suggesting that around 3000 of the original 3500 commercial farmers were driven off their land between 2000 and 2003. Operation Murambatsvina (Operation Drive Out Trash) is a government program to drive informal traders staying in informal dwellings into the countryside. This is done by destroying the informal structures which act as trading venues and accommodation for these people. It is widely believed and reported that this is a strategy on the part of ZANU-PF to break up opposition strongholds which are predominantly in the cities and drive opposition MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) supporters into the countryside where they can be "dealt with" by traditional leaders.

MICHAEL SEAN WATERMEYER *was born in Zimbabwe and is now a lawyer in South Africa.*

The United Nations estimates that around 700,000 people have been displaced and left homeless and without an income as a result of this campaign. Many deaths have been reported — particularly of very young children dying of exposure.

Operation Murambatsvina continues as we speak in spite of loud condemnation from the United Nations and other bodies concerned with human rights.

There are powerful social justice arguments which can be made in support of the 1970s liberation struggle, also known as the Rhodesian bush war. The country now known as Zimbabwe under the rule of Robert Mugabe's ZANU-PF regime since 1980 was annexed as a colony to the British Empire at the end of the 19th century. After dealing with initial uprisings, the indigenous inhabitants of the new colony were subjugated into a working class with limited rights and freedoms. Systems for the continuing domination of the indigenous peoples were soon established using principles of racial classification and segregation. Thus white minority rule was established over a black majority of the population. The colony was named Southern Rhodesia by the British. It later became the Republic of Rhodesia after a unilateral declaration of independence from Britain instituted by white Rhodesians in 1965.

Clearly on this reading of history there is plenty of room for righteous anger on the part of the indigenous people of Zimbabwe — so callously segregated from the relative newcomers and pressed into service as a laboring class. Indeed it is easily sufficient to take up arms against their uncompromising oppressors. How though are the current levels of atrocities against fellow Zimbabwean citizens justified nearly 25 years after liberation? One answer appears to be that the violent liberation struggle together with its philosophy of achieving political objectives at any cost, has never been formally ended. Instead, the liberation struggle has been placed in a type of suspended animation to be called on when the ZANU-PF Harare regime needs to justify violence and oppressive tactics perpetrated on its own citizens.

In itself, the mechanism which allows for the retention of the violent liberation struggle as a political instrument is relatively simple. This mechanism stands four square on the notion of the unfulfilled promises of liberation.

To encourage and maintain support for the cause in the '70s liberation movements, including ZANU-PF, relied heavily on the promise of two emotive benefits which they claimed would flow from liberation and the elevation of liberation leaders to power. The first benefit promised was universal franchise in the form of one-man-one-vote. The second and more important benefit in the context of current debates was the redistribution of land in favor of the black majority of the population. By agreeing to a negotiated settlement at Lancaster House, ZANU-PF and other liberation movements effectively entered into a compromise which diminished the scope for the redistribution of land in favour of peace and a democratically elected government. Limited land reform formed part of the Lancaster House agreement but relied on a cash settlement from Britain which would be used to pay out white farmers affected by the redistribution. Britain reneged on the payment of these funds initially citing the lack of a solid land reform policy in Zimbabwe and later their repugnance at the Gukurahundi genocide.

With or without support from Britain, the failure of the ZANU-PF regime to design and implement a solid land reform program meant that a scapegoat would sooner or later need to be found for their broken promise. In a deft and opportunistic move, ZANU-PF seized on these developments and their own inaction on the land issue to create a dichotomy based on the polarization of white farmers and black nationalists. In spite of having full control of government and holding immense political power within Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF claimed it was being blocked from implementing reasonable and fair land reforms for the majority by a small minority of citizens who were white and owned land. In fact, ZANU-PF has to date not designed a formal land reform program of any sort that does not rely on violence, let alone try to implement it.

It can be concluded from this that land reform for the majority was and is not a priority for the ZANU-PF regime. Instead, its priority is to use the land issue to sustain dichotomous tensions fuelling emotive social dynamics which provide a popular majority support base for ZANU-PF to retain power. This dynamic also provides the popular support which allows ZANU-PF to maintain a fascist authoritarian regime which openly persecutes freethinkers, opponents, and critics. Projecting the illusion of political oppression and continuing to expound that liberation as an end justifies any (even violent) means the armed liberation struggle is placed in suspended animation which means retention of a licence to kill . . . literally.

Since the commencement of violent land seizures in 2000, it has slowly become more difficult for ZANU-PF to use land as a mechanism to maintain the necessary polarization forming one side of the dichotomy which is the armed struggle in suspended animation. This is because one pole of the dichotomy (the white farmers as oppressor) is disappearing. In an effort to prop up the mechanism political opponents and NGOs have been cited as representing the oppressor. They are described as organizations in the service of Britain and the United States bent on undermining Zimbabwe. Other threats which ZANU-PF links in some vague way to the oppressor to perpetuate the illusion of a national threat include black-market traders and individuals holding foreign exchange. Naturally as the ZANU-PF regime uses up the more obvious candidates against whom it can "legitimately" exercise its violent oppressive machinery the candidates become more and more farfetched. In the same way that even the most convincing propaganda must eventually run its course leaving scores of bewildered zealots in its wake, it cannot be too long now before the people of Zimbabwe supporting ZANU-PF and its emotive but fraudulent liberation rhetoric wake up and discover that they are buying into a ruse. This is particularly the case when, as in Zimbabwe, modern media technology makes it more and more difficult for the state to muzzle free expression.

The experience of British rule in the area now known as Zimbabwe was humiliating for the indigenous people of that region and understandably gave rise to anger. But for those who are addicted to the power associated with righteous indignation and still buy into the idea that violent liberation is still legitimate in a country which has had majority rule for 25 years, the message must clearly be sent that there is nothing admirable about abusing your own citizenry. The world's experience of the German Third Reich clearly shows that majority rule through democratic elections means little without democratic values and respect for human rights and property. As in the case of the Third Reich, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the world to live with the knowledge of the tyrannical ZANU-PF Harare regime led by Robert Mugabe. The people of Zimbabwe have been misled and abused for more than a century; that these same peoples should continue to be exposed to the manipulation and opportunism of the violent fascist thugs who are now in power is nothing short of tragic.

Blair's Education Policy

MARY COMPTON

If the school that is on your doorstep is not sufficiently good, we are not going to leave you with the choice of either going privately or sticking with the school that is not up to standard.

TONY BLAIR, 2004

INSTEAD, THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT is providing parents with the "choice" of either going to a better state school or sticking with the school that is not up to standard. Presumably, the schools which are "not up to standard" will be attended by those children whose parents haven't made the choice. It is hardly surprising that a man who is himself an exerciser of school choice — sending his children half way across London to avoid the "school on his doorstep" — spares little thought for those who can't or don't make the choice away from a substandard school. His comment is somewhat more surprising when we consider that he has been prime minister for the past eight years, and therefore should not be speaking unashamedly about Britain's substandard schools. This forces us to ask some questions: What on earth is going on in the British educational system? And what is the so-called "Labour" government doing about it?

Let's set out briefly the background to the situation we are facing in Britain today. Comprehensive schooling in Britain reached its glorious heights in the 1960s. This was the culmination of a process begun when organized labor brought about a Labour landslide in 1945. This was the closest we've come to a socialist government; it gave us the National Health Service and nationalized Britain's utilities. And one after another local authorities changed from a system of selection through aptitude tests, dividing children into grammar and secondary modern schools, to a system where all children transferred to the same local secondary school. At that time, my union, the National Union of Teachers, was a powerful force in the land, leading the movement for comprehensive education. Unfortunately this period was short-lived.

The Thatcher government came to destroy what had been built. It began to "think the unthinkable" and to roll back the power of the state by introducing a whole package of measures designed to undermine the comprehensive system — from league tables (public comparisons of schools) and SATs (an unwelcome import from the United States) — to local management of schools and so-called "opted out" schools, completely independent of their local authority.

TO ADD INSULT TO INJURY, the eighteen year long conservative administration starved the majority of state schools of funds, so that when the Labour government was finally returned in 1997, many schools were in such a sorry state that it was not surprising that many middle-class parents, including several new cabinet ministers, did not want to send their children to their local school. Of course, the answer was to make huge increases in education spending and reverse the conservative policy agenda. But far from doing that, Labour stuck to conservative spending plans, so that by 2001

MARY COMPTON *is a job-sharing head of modern languages in a secondary school in Wales. She was last year's President of the National Union of Teachers — the largest teaching union in England and Wales and is still a national officer of the union. The views expressed in this article are her own and not necessarily those of the union.*

— after one full term of a Labour government — we still had some of the lowest per-pupil spending and the highest class sizes of any OECD country. And they pursued the conservative "choice" agenda with vigor. A sure sign of their loyalty to conservative education policy was the retention of the reviled Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools who had subscribed enthusiastically to every article of conservative education policy and was loathed by teachers and their unions. (It is telling, that after resigning to become a right-wing newspaper columnist, he founded his own chain of private schools.). Any naive hopes we had for change were dashed.

Although this isn't entirely true, for there was change, only not the change we were hoping for. Labour added their own new ideas to the conservative agenda. The first of these was performance related pay for teachers, based in part on pupil results. This brought yet another dimension to the wretched SATs — not only were they used to pitch school against school as parents pored over league tables, but they could now be used to pitch teacher against teacher. And in their second term they introduced a raft of measures which were supposed to increase parental choice. One of their most high profile policies is the so-called city academy Initiative. This extraordinary scheme allows any person with two million pounds to spare to start up his or her own school. The state provides the twenty-four million pounds needed for start up costs and all of the running costs. In exchange for the two million, the rich person gets to choose the governors of the school and to have the largest say over its running, ethos, and even curriculum. Unsurprisingly, this opportunity has been seized by religious fundamentalists who see it as a means to peddle their ideology. One such — Peter Vardy, the owner of a second-hand car chain — has two academies and has attempted to start another in Doncaster in the North of England. In his schools, science teachers are required to teach creationism alongside evolution and history teachers are asked to introduce into their lessons the possibility that England escaped invasion by Hitler because of an act of God.

This scheme allows any person with two million pounds to start up his or her own school.

In 2004, the Labour government produced its five-year plan for education in preparation for a hoped for third Labour term. This takes the choice agenda even farther, calling for the expansion of the academies program to 200 schools and the encouraging all schools to opt out of local authority control. Throughout, there is an emphasis on training children to be employable and a call to "build employers much more closely into the process of designing and delivering education and training." Not only does this plan give unashamed precedence to the needs of business, but its claim that it will bring "choice" to parents and learners is bogus. For while using "choice" as the justification for its plan, the plan in fact restricts choice. For instance, it demands only the support of a simple majority of the governing body in order for a school to opt out. The document refers to the parental ballots favored by the conservatives as "a complicated and time-consuming process of local decision making" and proposes to "sweep these obstacles away entirely." Not much choice there then. It also makes pretty clear what sort of schools it expects to see, and amongst other things, says that the government "will expect every school to have a school uniform." Not much choice there either. It is interesting that another major government policy paper is called "Every Child Matters." Like the slightly less grammatical "No Child Left Behind," this is a sentiment which no reasonable person could disagree with yet it is completely at odds with the inevitable consequences of the education plan that Labour wants to implement. If every child matters, how can you possibly justify a situation where some children will have to put up with, what Blair calls, the substandard provision on their doorstep? It is simple primary school mathematics — if you cut a cake unequally, then sure, some people will have bigger slices, but those who come last will get less. So what about those that come last, those children whose parents are either not in a position to make a choice, do not wish to make a choice, are too confused to make a choice, too demoralized to make a choice, or just don't care? Why should these children have to put up with the school on their doorstep "which is not sufficiently good"?

As I write we have just been through another general election in which little or none of this much-vaunted choice has been offered to voters. New Labour was reelected for a third time by a miserably small turn-out of voters. The "Times Educational Supplement" pointed out that yet another new policy in Labour's manifesto — this time the extraordinary idea that parents should have the right to demand an inspection of a school and that the inspectors would then have the power to close the school down, triggering headlines such as "Parents, the new School Masters!"— had been lifted directly from the Conservative Manifesto of 2001, a policy which the then Labour education minister derided as being unworkable. When Labour borrows policies from the Conservatives, it is no wonder voters don't turn up to vote; there's nothing to choose between.

Of course, there has been opposition to the government's agenda from parents and NUT members. For instance, there was strong resistance amongst teachers to SATs, which they saw as undermining both their creativity and their professional autonomy. As a result, there was a union boycott of SATs in the early 90s. However this boycott was eventually called off by the leaders of the teaching unions, in reaction to a promise by government of a "review." Not surprisingly, the "review" failed to find any need for change. There have also been some, more successful, campaigns against City Academies. For instance, Peter Vardy's plans to open a city academy in Doncaster were stopped by a powerful coalition of parents and union members, who launched a strong and imaginative campaign — including advertising the school for sale on EBay — and scuppered his plans. Similar resistance has taken place over the years in schools all over the country. In fact, in my own school, the headteacher failed in his plans to turn our school into the first opted out school in Wales, as a result of the strong opposition from the local NUT group and parents. It is clear that, with trade union support, the potential for change does exist.

But it has to be said that for all the prime minister's talk of having "scars on his back" from the public service unions, the teacher unions have inflicted little pain on him. For again and again the union leaders give in to government promises. And again and again, memories of the failed SATs boycott of the early nineties return to haunt us. Only this year, after our finally getting the agreement of the executive for a ballot for strike action against changes to our pension system, the government suddenly decided that it was prepared to negotiate — not surprising since it was just about to start a general election campaign — and so the NUT leaders called the action off. And it's by no means just the NUT. The leaders of all the big public service unions have come to an agreement with the government that they will campaign for the return of a Labour government in exchange for a few relatively minor concessions. In other words, the Labour government, which unlike the Democratic Party in the United States was set up by the trade union movement and is still to a certain extent dependent on it for funds and influence with voters, is being allowed to proceed at almost breakneck speed with its neoliberal and antiunion agenda. Tony Blair even has the nerve to boast in a radio interview that we have some of the strongest antiunion laws in Europe. And he can, because the unions sit back and let him.

My union has wonderful policies on almost every issue. It has recently published a cogently argued document "Bringing Down the Barriers," attacking the government's choice agenda, and it has remained firm on its stance against government's plans to allow unqualified people to take whole classes, despite the acquiescence of other trade unions on this issue. On this and every other aspect of educational policy it produces and commissions excellent and groundbreaking research. If argument were enough to persuade the government, then we would have the best education system in the world, and one commensurate with our position as the fourth-largest economy. But it is not enough. It is clear that this message, made in 1969 by a trade union leader, Frank Cousins, must be heeded by today's trade union leaders:

> Some of my colleagues were content to go no further than to walk alongside the inhabitants of the corridors of power. But if the central authority of the trade union movement sees its main function as taking part in discussions with ministers then it makes a grave mistake. In the last instance governments are not influenced by painstakingly prepared research documents or chats in the garden of Number Ten, but by pressure.
>
> Look at the response exerted by the international monetary interests or the pressure of the big employers, whose decisions on where to invest and when can make or break a government's policy on full employment or regional development or even the balance of payments.
>
> Our power as trade unionists is industrial, and that is why the chief function of the TUC and its member unions must be to expand and sustain activity at the place of work.

What were once the orthodox opinions of British trade union leaders have largely been forgotten by today's leaders. The more they forget, the more their potential for making a difference weakens. The only change they'll make to the government is a better night's sleep at Number Ten. As long as trade union leaders remain unwilling to harness the discontent of their members into putting pressure on the government, then British governments will continue to pursue their neoliberal agenda, and anti-union laws will become more harsh, and more boasted about. Meanwhile, our education system will move further and further from the truth that every child matters.

Neoliberal Strategies to Defuse a Powder Keg in Europe
The "Decade of Roma Inclusion" and its Rationale

BILL TEMPLER

Empire is characterized by the close proximity of extremely unequal populations, which creates a situation of permanent social danger and requires the powerful apparatuses of the society of control to ensure separation and guarantee the new management of social space.

THE ROMA ARE Europe's ubiquitous underclass, the largest ethnic minority on the continent. Its most marginalized, oppressed and alienated citizens, they have now been "targeted" for a major concerted effort by East European governments, the World Bank, and George Soros' Open Society Institute. There is much hype and some hope in the air. The fanfare around the Decade of Roma Inclusion peaked on February 2, 2005 in Sofia, when it was formally launched in a high-level meeting of prime ministers from across Central and South East Europe. This multi-pronged initiative funded by European capital and the WB will span the decade 2005-2015, and is aimed at "ending discrimination against the Roma and ensuring equal access to education, housing, employment, and health care." Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia are formally committed to reform in these four priority sectoral areas.

The prelude to this initiative was a 2004 EU report, "The Situation of Roma in an Enlarged European Union," which presents an alarming picture of squalor and exclusion, a key statement on how the European plutocracy views its most powerless citizens. It is instructive to compare that assessment with the Roma National Congress "Report on the Condition of the Roma in Europe 2000," which presents the perspective of an international Roma elite on the most pressing needs of the broader Roma masses.

An open letter presented to the EU by the European Roma Rights Center and other groups on International Roma Day April 8, 2005, highlighted the crisis: "anti-Gypsyism continues to be rife, is rarely punished and is often used as an acceptable outlet of racism in mass media as well as in every aspect of life," stressing "the persistent reality of extreme poverty and systemic human rights frustration or active abuse in the Roma ghettos which requires urgent concrete action."

This article explores the underlying rationale of the present initiative to forge new hierarchies of control over the Roma in the light of this "persistent reality." In closing, it also suggests a potential vista for alternative pathways to self-management for Europe's Roma, social change from the bottom up, and the need for Romany intellectuals to speak the rude truth to power. Observations here are based in part on my own work in civil rights over a decade among impoverished urban Roma, all Muslim, in eastern Bulgaria.

The core thesis of this critique is that unless pervasive anti-Cyganism is rooted out, and

BILL TEMPLER *worked many years with Roma activists in eastern Bulgaria. He is on the staff of the Dubnow Institute for Jewish History and Culture at the University of Leipzig and the editorial advisory board of the Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies.*

Roma are treated as "subjects" rather than "objects," an end to discrimination, poverty and inequality, a kind of pan-European apartheid, is illusory. Their victimization is grounded both on racism and socioeconomic class antagonisms, coupled in some corners of the continent — like eastern Bulgaria where most Roma are Muslim — with an animus against Islam. Romani destitution highlights the garden of stark contradictions that Eastern Europe under neoliberalism has become.

Their dispersion as a supranational people "beyond territory" — and everywhere in the vortex of a dynamics of internal colonization — suggests an ethnic micromodel for an alternative Europe of autonomous regions beyond the current architecture of the nation-state, with the potential of a transformed politics of self-organization from below. They constitute a potential transverse within the emergent "counter-Empire" at the very base of European social space. In their radical oppression and exclusion, the Roma may epitomize the prospect for a kind of "regeneration of soil cultures" envisioned by Prakash and Esteva, not in Zapatista Mexico but across the expanding turf of the European Union: "Localization or relocalization, taking root again, is being pioneered by those already awake to their marginalization by the global economy."

There are kernels within Roma alienation of a spirit analogous to "*ya basta!*, this is enough." That holds out the prospect of learning from the analogous experiments in the popular power of *horizontalidad* and neighborhood autonomy and solidarity now blossoming, for example, as an amazing complex of movements across Argentina.

As internally dominated and heavily policed populations, the Roma constitute an ethnic archipelago of enclaves inside Europe. Under an impress of continental cultural denigration, they are now caught up in the need for "decolonizing the mind," in a society that has negated their being and "voice," perpetuated their silencing and destitution. Indeed, Roma voice has, analogous to the situation of African Americans over generations, often been reduced to Roma "music" and "rhythmicality," or an exoticism of the Other on the most destitute internal peripheries. In their shared trans-territorial and transnational topography and mobility, Jewish and Roma life worlds in European space and time can be illuminated in fresh ways through post-colonial prisms. But the present paper will not develop an analysis of Roma alterity seen through a post-colonial prism lens.

1. The Free Market's Principal Victims: A Decade of Delusion

THE DECADE OF INCLUSION is the first cooperative international effort by Capital's elites to ameliorate the misery of the Romani masses and confront segregation and wholesale discrimination. The advent of the market-driven economies, guided by neoliberal cutbacks in social expenditures and privatization of state enterprises, has spelled disaster for many working people in Europe's East, but it is the Roma who have been its primary victims. A decade and a half after the end of the Cold War, and prolonged pressure by the organs of the EU, Eastern Europe's emergent political cliques and power elites in Western Europe have now agreed that the plight of the Roma, hardest hit by World Bank and IMF austerity economics, can no longer be ignored. Soros has pledged $30 million for aid to Roma education, and an entire array of new programs are on the drafting boards. New NGOs eager to get a piece of the action are sprouting by the month, attempting to literally "steal" projects from each other. It is reasonable to wonder: who will benefit? How much of this "aid" on the ground will reach the people who need it most? Experience suggests there will be much rhetoric, a veritable rewriting of the "public transcript" and little concrete change. Already, Roma activists in Central Europe are pointing to the fact that the broader public has been scarcely informed about the new "Roma integration schemes" of the ruling elites, which threaten to remain more spectacle than substance.

Most ordinary Roma across Eastern Europe perceive this to be a kind of cleverly engineered hype. In the Bulgarian Roma communities where I have worked for more than a decade, there is a vast disillusionment with the new oligarchies that have emerged to cement class rule since the collapse of state socialism. And they distrust the mainstream organizations and will of the government to actually implement any of the grand promises envisioned by technocratic schemes for change. Roma on the street are wary of the rhetoric of their often self-appointed Roma leaders and power brokers in Sofia. They know they are often never consulted and cannot participate. Under a thinly-disguised authoritarianism, they are turned into "clients," unable to decide any basic questions about change in their lives, and live under a tutelage of government agencies distant from their needs.

Unless they shout on the street, they are in a real sense "invisible." This is compounded by a profusion of bureaucratized and often corrupted NGO projects, designed to pad the pocket of a miniscule Romani entrepreneurial elite. The Decade of Inclusion may be another "decade of delusion" in the history of hypocrisy which Romani communities have come to know so well since 1989.

Indeed, as the official guests were delivering speeches on February 2, hundreds of Roma, most from the provinces, gathered in front of Parliament in Sofia to protest against their wretched condition. Ilia Iliev, young leader of the new Bulgarian Romani political party *Drom*, accused the government of working preferentially with select Roma organizations. He complained it was treating these as "puppets invited to applaud." Iliev stressed that the money donated to NGOs working on the Roma problems almost never reached intended recipients. Over 30 Roma journalists attending the event were excluded from a key reception, and later lodged a formal protest with the Bulgarian government.

In an action emblematic of the garden of contradictions and the huge chasm between people and power that Roma perceive as their own core predicament, on August 31, 2005, the authorities in a neighborhood of Sofia ordered the demolition of 22 "illegal" homes, all of which were inhabited by Roma families. Other demolitions in Roma ghetto areas in Sofia are expected in the months to come. The International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights condemned the demolition of these Roma houses. It stressed that The Framework Program for Equal Integration of Roma in Bulgarian Society, adopted by the Bulgarian government in 1999, requires the legalization of the Roma neighborhoods and of the property in them.

Romanies in many communities across Eastern Europe are a population both *preinstitutionalized*, in the sense that were never included in institutional coverage by the State or integrated into the Market, and *deinstitutionalized*, in that many with a former job, even a career under state socialism, lost it in the turmoil of the collapse of the command economy, with little hope ever to be included on a payroll again.

II. Why Now?

WHAT HAS BROUGHT East European political elites and the World Bank to this "historic" juncture of high-profile "concern"? Addressing the opening in Sofia on February 2, Hungarian prime minister Ferenc Gyurcsany put one aspect bluntly if not cynically: "The problems of the Roma are not locked on the territory of the individual EU member states, because the free movement of people means free movement of social problems."

1. Fears of Immigration

A SPECTER HAS BEGUN TO PERTURB the corporate and ministerial halls in Western Europe:

a massive influx of Roma economic immigrants, especially from the new states in the EU and those slated to join in 2007, such as Bulgaria and Romania. They are the most menacing edge of the mass worker nomadism that Hardt and Negri see as integral to a "powerful form of class struggle within and against imperial post-modernity": "A spectre haunts the world and it is the spectre of migration." So it is a desperate race against time to try to create conditions to "persuade" the indigent to stay at home, as reflected in British fears and articles in the English tabloid press about imminent waves of "ragged Slovakian Roma" descending on the country.

The Decade's launching party in Sofia was followed by a "Resolution on the Situation of Roma in the European Union" adopted by the European Parliament (May 5, 2005) stressing "the recognition of Roma rights concerns as matters of the highest political urgency in Europe," and condemning "racist attacks, hate speech, physical attacks by extremist groups, unlawful evictions and police harassment motivated by Anti-Gypsyism and Romaphobia" across the continent. It decries "substandard and insanitary living conditions and evidence of ghettoisation . . . on a wide scale, with Roma being regularly prevented from moving out of such neighbourhoods" as well as "racially segregated schooling systems in place across several Member States, in which Roma children are taught either in segregated classes with lower standards or in classes for the mentally handicapped."

2. A Potential Time Bomb in the Pacification of the European Poor

BEYOND LABOR MIGRATION WAVES, the Roma population is recognized by Power as a potential powder keg under Europe's New Order. Their social pacification now ranks among the imperatives of the coming decade as Europe's eastern periphery is brought under the West's iron economic and political control. The West European working classes have long since been co-opted, but an ethnic underclass spread across Eastern Europe could pose a threat to European integration at its very base. As the ever more unified and NATOized Europe enters the 21st century, it is unsettled by the prospect of a politically rebellious pan-European ethnic "pariah" population, beginning to listen to new Romani leaders like Iliev, hardened and radicalized by the economic struggle to survive over the past 15 years. Imagine a movement of mass civil disobedience, half a million Roma marching on the Parliament in Sofia or several thousand lying down on the tracks of the Bulgarian national railroad to protest their misery. Younger Roma feel cheated, lost in a jungle of doublespeak, greed and exclusion, and the growing gap between the haves and have-nots in Eastern Europe's version of the "ownership society." Now emerging from a culture of imposed silence, the Romani "hidden transcripts" reflect pervasive cynicism and anger everywhere across Europe's East.

THE DEFUSING OF THAT ANGER, its depoliticization, is essential for the future "integration'" of these societies into the periphery of the broader core EU. In February 2004, a Roma uprising over cuts in welfare benefits in Slovakia was finally quelled by 20,000 police officers and soldiers. Slovakia has the largest (nearly one-half million) and most destitute Roma population in Central Europe. This "riot" is what some observers believe is a foreboding of violent protest to come. As the Roma National Congress has stated:

> A restriction of civil rights in the Western democracies as a result of "refugee fighting measures" against Roma is already reality. Numerous Roma understand this refugee policy as a continuation of the "National-Socialist Roma policy by different means." The RNC fears the beginning of a race for deterrence against Roma in Europe.

3. The Coopting of Roma Autonomy

ROMANI SELF-ORGANIZATION is gathering pace across Europe, exemplified in part in the work of the European Roma Information Office in Brussels (www.erionet.org), the Roma National Congress (www.romanationalcongress.org), the Roma Student Network (www.romastudent.net) and the European Roma Rights Center (www.errc.org), which publishes an online journal *Roma Rights*. Though there is still no transparent Roma international representation with grassroots support, they remain a diasporic virtual collectivity. Nonetheless, through networking, bonds are being forged from Eastern Europe to the large *gitano* Roma community in Spain (www.unionromani.org), where violence against *gitanos* flared earlier this year. New Roma media are proliferating. In European board rooms and ministries, it is understood that this emerging leadership, demanding fresh departures and genuine change, must be brought "under control." The Decade of the Romanies is a major strategy by the EU and World Bank to integrate, neutralize and co-opt or "clientize" this evolving grassroots Romani self-organization — while passing down some modicum of economic relief to the impoverished Roma masses in the form of handouts or jobs as street cleaners.

The Western oligarchies wish to shape emergent Romani civil society in the image of the European elite models, including a regiment of NGOs totally dependent on external capital and a leadership attuned to the values of managerialism. This is a prime example of what Arundhati Roy has called the "NGO-ization of resistance": "the capital available to NGOs plays the same role in alternative politics as the speculative capital that flows in and out of the economies of poor countries. It begins to dictate the agenda. It turns confrontation into negotiation. It depoliticizes resistance. It interferes with local peoples' movements that have traditionally been self-reliant."

4. The Imperative to Neutralize

ALONG WITH NGOS, numerous Romani-built political parties are emerging. The political elites in Eastern Europe fear the potential clout that could be exercised by independent Roma parties that can organize the Roma electorate into a separate political force. Their "inclusion" means political incorporation into the existing system of capital-dominated parties. That was evident in the run-up to the Bulgarian national elections on June 26, 2005. Hopes were high in January 2005, when a number of the new small Romani parties tried to form a coalition. But that bid failed, torpedoed in part by the desire and machinations of the major parties to woo the Roma voters for themselves. Yet at the grassroots, many Roma remain alienated from the electoral carnival, certain those Romani parties are corrupted and fully co-opted, instruments to "steal even more from the people," as a senior Roma women's rights activist in Bulgaria recently put it to me. Last December Mircea Dusa, the first Rom deputy in recent Romanian history, entered the national Parliament. In January 2004, an initiative was launched for a Europe-wide Romani party. Viewed from the cockpits of continental power, any potential trans-national dual ethnic power and its leadership must be neutralized.

In the Roma communities in Bulgaria there is vast disillusionment with the new oligarchies since the collapse of state socialism.

5. The Dynamics of "Demographics"

ANOTHER REASON FOR ACTION now is the growing "demographic danger." Roma continue to have birth rates significantly higher than majority populations, and marry younger. The growth rate in the majority population in a number of post-communist countries has plummeted since 1990 (now 0.5 in the Czech Republic, just above zero in Slovakia and not much higher in Bulgaria), while the birth rate among the Roma population continues to rise. Inclusion is a strategy for generating smaller Romani families: later marriages, fewer babies. Their mounting relative numbers are regarded as a threat to national ethnic dominance. A standing joke in Bulgaria is that pretty soon "only the Gypsies will be left" as much of the younger skilled non-Roma emigrate west to greener pastures, a brain drain of huge proportions. In numerous villages in northeastern Bulgaria, almost all younger couples and children are Roma, while many of the non-Roma villagers are well over 65.

Programs for improving the dire situation of Roma women have an inevitable demographic subtext of a scheme to reduce fertility. That complex subtext, while essential to the liberation of Romani women, also retains this alternate racist reading that should not be overlooked. In a number of countries, Romani women are still the victims of forced sterilization.

In partial response to perceived "demographic" threats, a chilling result of the June 26, 2005, poll in Bulgaria was the surprising emergence of a new xenophobic nativist party Ataka as fourth largest grouping in the parliament. Its slogan is "Bulgaria for the Bulgarians." Along with a strong anti-NATO stance that has garnered votes from the left, Ataka also appeals to a growing far-right nationalism, emphasizing a proto-racist politics against the "dangers" emanating from the Turkish and Roma minorities. Some observers regard Ataka and its leader Volen Siderov as semi-fascist in outlook, its success a backlash against an ever more militant and impoverished Roma minority. Its electoral victory points up underlying ethnic tensions in the country and the prospects for fanning them. The Ataka website features a map of Bulgaria with the sign "FOR SALE" covered with Israeli and Turkish flags (http://atakabg.com). The successful right-wing cable Bulgarian TV channel Skat features hypernationalist programming that often appeals to anti-minority sentiment.

These tensions are also rising between the Roma and the large ethnic Turkish minority, which claims the Roma are getting "preferential treatment" from the government and European institutions. Such animosity is deeply rooted in eastern Bulgaria, where Muslim Turkish-speaking Roma often attempt to "pass" as ethnic Turks. Observers claim the Ataka party is also intentionally churning inter-ethnic strife between Roma and ethnic Turks.

6. The Challenge of Regenerated Ethnic Identity

A FURTHER FACTOR is linked to the politics of pluralism: in their anger and bewilderment, ever more young Roma are seeking to define themselves as a distinctive ethnic minority and culture, with a distinctive Romani language and demands for "collective rights." Such "ethnic renewal" poses a potential threat to efforts for their "integration" in societies chary of pluralist versions of multicultural national identity. What the EU does not want is a proud, culturally conscious, and ever more militant Roma minority, linking internationally across borders. While the EU and governments give lip service to some concepts of ethnic pluralism, the reality tends to be a monocultural dominance of one elite and its narratives. The Roma contribution to the history of these nation-states in music, dance, literature, handicrafts, village life and other spheres over 600 years is everywhere, suppressed — in schoolbooks, in museums, in the national memory, and the cultural engineering of heritage. That of course also has a strong class element, the pervasive 'invisibility' of the working class and ethnic underclass minorities in Europe's now profusely bourgeois national narratives.

7. The Reluctant Recognition of the Roma Genocide

A MORE SUBMERGED corollary factor in answering "why now?" may be entwined with the re-emergent politics of the Holocaust. In the EU narrative of the "new Europe," the Mass Murder under National Socialism has emerged in the past decade as the "negative foundational icon of unity," part of the very charter of this new Europe. Romani organizations have succeeded in placing the plight of the Roma — the only other ethnic group singled out by the Nazis for extermination — on the agenda of Europe's ruling elites. The decades-old invisibility of the Roma Holocaust (*O Porrajmos*, "The Devouring,") in European perception, and Roma demands raised for recognition as victims and financial compensation, can no longer be ignored. The multiple parallels between anti-Semitism and anti-Gypsyism are more clearly seen. The new European Center for the Study of Antiziganism (EZAF) at the University of Hamburg is pursuing a program of research, publication (annual *Blackbook on Antiziganism*) and conferences, and is the first such research center established in Western Europe (www.ezaf.org). In a striking volume, Sonneman provides a moving oral history of a German-Romani family and the similarities between Jewish and Romani victimization and personal experience in the Holocaust. There may be a growing sense among European plutocrats that the Roma, by dint of Nazism's genocidal history, must also be incorporated, however begrudgingly, into its post-Cold War myth of neo-liberal pan-European unity under the shadow of Auschwitz.

III. Turning the Tide of History?

COMMENTING ON THE contradictions of Romani squalor in the midst of European affluence, Andrey Ivanov of the UNDP in Slovakia recently stated: "These conditions are unacceptable in countries that are part of the European Union or aspire to be. . . . We need action now to close the appalling development gap that separates the Roma from the majority populations in this region." The vaunted Decade is also supported by the European Commission, the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank, and the United Nations Development Program. Thus, a full ensemble of neoliberal institutions are joining hands and coffers to help Roma 'integrate.' Speaking at the Decade's gala liftoff in Sofia — home to one of the continent's largest Romani ghettos, the hellhole of Faculteta — World Bank President Wolfensohn formulated the primary neoliberal rhetoric of such "inclusion": "It is one of the great moral issues facing Europe today. If we do nothing, we will see continued disaffection and suffering. If we succeed, the decade offers an opportunity to turn the tide of history and harness the political will to include the Roma as full citizens in European societies." Yet it is *precisely* World Bank-promoted austerity and privatization programs that have plunged the Roma into such misery.

In late June 2005, Romania was chosen for the rotating Presidency of the Decade in its first stage effective July 1. In Bucharest, the Decade's veritable "godfather" George Soros intoned the agenda substantially dependent on his bankroll:

> I hope that the Romanian government will rise to the challenge and work to lift Roma out of poverty and isolation, and to put an end to centuries of discrimination. . . . The launch of the Decade four months ago showed that the political will exists to enact reform. But the real work must now be done to effect concrete change to transform the lives of Roma in Europe.

Yet "real work" and "concrete change" may prove elusive.

IV. "Persistent Reality": Some Grim Facts

THE ROMA ARE NOW THE largest, poorest, and geographically most widely dispersed minority in Europe, stretching from Turkey to Spain, Wales and Scotland — and across the Arab world. Originally from northwest India, they began to migrate west in the 12th century. An extraordinary fact of social oppression is that Europe and much of the Arab world share a downtrodden, subaltern universally despised Other, a community known in North Africa and West Asia as the Dom or Nawar, the direct cousins of the Roma. Many Dom still speak Domari, a language related to the many varieties of Romani spoken in Europe, itself a distant linguistic relative of Hindi. In Iraq, the small Dom (Gajar) community is among the war's most desperate victims. The best single resource on the contemporary Dom, a vastly unresearched minority, is the website of the Dom Research Center (www.domresearchcenter.com). The Nawar also form the most internally oppressed and "silenced" pariah segment of the Palestinians.

The Roma are now the largest, poorest, and most widely dispersed minority in Europe.

The total European Roma population in Europe is estimated at 10 million. Accurate census figures do not exist, since Roma are fearful to identify themselves to census-takers as Roma. The two largest Roma communities are in Romania and Bulgaria. Veteran activist Georgi Parushev is certain the Romani population in Bulgaria is close to one million, more than double official government figures. Everywhere they form a "pariah" underclass, nearly totally endogamous, a contemporary pan-European lumpenproletariat, often perceived and demonized by local populations in this dialectic of Othering of the poor as "merely a residue of pre-industrial social forms, a kind of historical refuse." Poverty rates for Roma range between four and ten times that of non-Roma in Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, and Serbia and Montenegro. Estimates are that nearly 40 percent of Roma in Romania and Bulgaria live on less than two U.S. dollars per day. Unemployment among Romani Bulgarian youth and young adults is around 85 percent. In terms of social and economic geography, rural Roma indeed form the periphery of a periphery, itself within an East European periphery, marginality raised to the third power.

A study released in mid-January 2005 indicated that that the condition of Romani Czechs is worsening, despite millions of crowns of government spending and dozens of government projects, and Romani hard-core joblessness is in the range of 70 percent. Ghettoization is on the increase. In Slovakia, there are several hundred extremely substandard Romani slum settlements, characterized by extreme deprivation and often lacking electricity, provision of potable water, sewage, and solid waste removal. Such spatial deprivation amounts in many communities to a form of socially-sanctioned residential segregation, both urban and rural.

Gaps in education between Roma and majority populations are striking. Across countries, some 70-80 percent of Romanies have less than a primary school education, and often must attend segregated schools, separate and unequal. Fewer than 1 percent of Roma continue on to higher education. In a bizarre construction, between 50-80 percent of Roma study in "special schools" intended for the mentally and physically disabled, which limit their future opportunities in education and on the labor market. According to a UNDP survey released in February 2005, only 10 per cent of Roma aged 12 and above in Bulgaria had completed primary education, compared to 72 per cent of Bulgarians. The infant mortality rate among Roma in Bulgaria is far higher than that of the general population.

V. Anti-Cyganism and Romanophobia

RACIST DISCRIMINATION IS endemic across social classes. Police harassment of Roma youth is common across Eastern Europe, their numbers in the prison population staggering. In women's prisons, many of the inmates are Roma; a recent study indicates that in Spain, 25 percent of all women prisoners are *gitanas*. Discrimination in the military is the order of the day: Roma recruits in the Bulgarian army, for example, are subject to repeated abuse and harassment, often used as veritable 'slave laborers' on construction projects. The conscript Bulgarian army has virtually no Romani commissioned officers and few non-coms, despite the fact that Roma may constitute up to 10 percent or more of the Bulgarian population.

In an article "Anti-Gypsyism: Europe's Tolerated Racism," the European Roma Information Office notes:

> Surveys of opinion from a variety of old and new EU countries including the accession countries of Romania and Bulgaria show that: — Roughly two thirds of Europeans find Roma unacceptable as neighbours. — There is strong opposition to having Roma as schoolmates, as work colleagues, friends and even more strongly against Roma as family members and the idea of intermarriage. — A significant proportion of Europeans belonging to the majority population approve of radical measures against Roma including their expulsion from countries, the restriction of their civil rights and sterilisation programmes.

In Kosovo, the 1999 ethnic cleansing of 120,000 Roma by Albanian militants was the worst collective disaster suffered by the Roma in Europe since WW II. A recent empirical study revealed virulent anti-Rom prejudice in the Romanian media. In Russia, anti-Romani racism is rampant and widespread. The "war on drugs" has generated the stereotype image in popular opinion and the media of the "typical Gypsy" drug dealer, and Roma are being profiled and hounded by the police: "In some instances, law enforcement officials knowingly failed to prevent violent assaults on Romani communities." In Macedonia, ever more incidents of Roma being refused service in restaurants and cafes are being reported, the tip of an iceberg of direct discrimination in public facilities.

In Britain and Ireland, where some 100,000 "Gypsies and Travelers" reside, open hostility is on the rise. On International Roma Day 2005 (April 8), the UK Association of Gypsy Women called on the British government "to halt the policy of violently evicting Gypsies and Travelers from their own land and to curb hate speech against our people. These acts of physical and verbal violence are causing particular pain to our women and our families. They are poisoning relations between our people and local communities. We are convinced that they will soon result in serious injuries and even deaths."

VI. Pervasive Prejudice: Bulgaria a Case in Point

UNTIL A GARGANTUAN EFFORT to confront racist anti-Cyganism is undertaken in citizenship education in the schools, neighborhood relations, the media, and many other corners, there can be little substantive change. Apartheid structures and ghettoization will remain. In Bulgaria today, Romanophobic stereotypes are so widespread in the media (the typical "fool" for stand-up comedians is almost inevitably a Rom) that to ban them would be to torpedo a main mode of Bulgarian popular humor. Intermarriage between Roma and non-Roma is almost nonexistent. Due to racist bias, many employers refuse to hire Roma, part of the reason for blocked access even to low-paying service-sector jobs. Romani women are the most oppressed and marginalized segment of society across the Balkans. They are frequently abused by nursing staff in hospitals. An "identifiable" Rom female waiting on table is a rarity in Bulgarian cafes and restaurants, as are Roma shop assistants. This is what drives Romani girls to become sex workers across the EU today. Roma cleaning personnel did not exist at the university where I taught many years in eastern Bulgaria. When I inquired why, the answer was: "How can we give a Gypsy woman the key to an office?!"

Such views and discourse are inveterate and remain conventional wisdom across Bulgarian society, even in the halls of academe. These attitudes have been exacerbated by the economic implosion throughout much of the former socialist bloc since democracy's advent. Recent surveys of Bulgarian university students show high levels of anti-Cyganism. The small number of Romani school teachers in Bulgaria who let their background be known are soon fired, due to "complaints by students and their parents," and most are too demoralized to fight back. If you want to succeed in the civil service, you keep your "origin" a secret and "pass" for non-Rom.

VII. Alternative Pathways?

THE DECADE OF INCLUSION thus needs to be watchdogged, its rationales interrogated, its concrete programs monitored for their real impact at the grassroots. And how far they openly confront the core problem of anti-Roma bigotry throughout much of Europe, East and West. Whatever NGOs do, the decisions on implementation should be made by the majority of people affected. Roma need to be "subjects" rather than "objects" or "clients" in their self-empowerment, an approach pioneered by the network of organizations from Albania to Moldova under the NGO umbrella Spolu (www.spolu.nl). This Dutch-sponsored initiative is an inventive model for rural Roma-run projects, as exemplified in the grassroots village work of their affiliate Integro in Bulgaria. Leida Schuringa's *Community Work and Roma Inclusion* (2005) is a Spolu-based "how-to" handbook on their approach to community-based alternatives. New more "horizontal" forms of NGO organization along these lines are badly needed. Indeed, "horizontality" rather than "verticality" should become a watchword of what is imperative. The innovations in neighborhood solidarity and microlocal *asambleas* (assemblies) described by Satrin in Argentina, "a new space outside of what has been previously instituted or established," is directly applicable to a regeneration of Roma space and *horizontalidad* in Europe:

> We have stopped being passive subjects, which is what voting, electoral politics and the system try and do to us. We have stopped being marginalized subjects, so as to be historical subjects, active subjects, participatory subjects. Actors in our own lives. . . . to expand the work in the neighborhoods. Clearly with an anti-capitalist vision of construction. Most important for me right now, as this moment of resistance, is to expand our community gardens, expand our occupied factories, expand really all of the constructive projects we are working on.

Sitrin also notes: "Autonomy is a bubble that exists within the system. With autonomy what we are able to do is to construct spaces where the logic of the system does not reign. . . . What we can do is continue constructing, without falling into the logic of the system. To not think as the system thinks. Trying to make the revolution in our everyday life." After Argentina's economy collapsed in 2001, workers took control over their factories, seized the machines, and once again started to produce, without the boss. The unemployed movements continued to provide for the unmet needs of their communities, creating bakeries, small cooperatives, and community gardens to provide food and jobs.

Roma can learn from that experience in autonomy. Just as necessary are community-run educational experiments centered on enhancing Roma self-pride and identity, emulating paradigms such as the Gandhi Foundation School in Pecs in southern Hungary – not mechanical "integration" into existing state school systems and their competitive structures. If "inclusion" into monolithic nation-state ideologies and their narratives means erasure of Rom identity, it must be resisted. A new school for Roma kids in Vrancea in eastern Romania, run by Romani educators, is pioneering fresh directions. More such experiments are needed. They could be free "democratic schools" modeled in part on the Sudbury libertarian educational paradigm (www.sudval.org) and concepts of place-based education. And the example of the Kedvez Haz (Dear House) non-hierarchical "free" school for Roma kids in Hungary.

Another option worth exploring is the application of Waldorf pedagogy to new types of alternative schools, as pioneered in central rural Romania:

> Roma children from Rosia village (Sibiu county) have been studying for three years in a school where they have never been given grades, homework, or test papers. All the children graduate and are treated equally, therefore there is no reason to drop out of school. The teachers say this method attracts a lot of children and they are very diligent as far as school is concerned. This alternative education system is being implemented within a project based on Waldorf pedagogy, run by the Vasile Voiculescu Association and funded by a series of foundations from Germany, Netherlands and Switzerland. The project also facilitates access to education for children without ID papers and for those who are older that the maximum age limit allowed by standard primary education system.

Roma cultural youth camps oriented to building Roma self-esteem are a further real option. Some have been pioneered in eastern Bulgaria in recent summers. Initiatives are imperative to revive and spread knowledge of the Romani language among all Roma. In Hungary, for example, only some 30 percent of Roma speak Romani. Roma cultural and language studies are being spearheaded by the new Department of Romani Studies at Veliko Turnovo University in Bulgaria and similar departments at the University of Pecs in Hungary and Nitra University in western Slovakia. Roma self-awareness and cultural pride can be coupled with practical skills for survival.

The empowerment of Romani girls and women must become a central priority. As noted in a report on the situation of Romani women in Croatia:

> Discrimination in access to a range of social and economic rights — most significantly education, employment and health care — is experienced by many Romani women in Croatia — even those who have managed to secure Croatian citizenship. Romani women are often victims of violence and abuse by public officials, especially law enforcement bodies. Domestic violence as well as other abusive practices such as child marriage contribute to the social exclusion of Romani women in Croatia.

New approaches to countering gendered anti-Cyganism are imperative.

VIII. A Laboratory for Self-Management Beyond Borders?

THE ROMA CONSTITUTE a diasporic and "lumpenized" pariah people par excellence. Potentially, their experience in the self-organization of a supranational identity in localized communities can help point certain directions over the longer haul for a denationalizing of Europe's political structures from the bottom up: decentralized nodes of community within a transnational frame of inventive federation. For Roma, this would mean encouraging structures of autonomous self-management, mutual aid, and localized social entrepreneurship — not their top-down "inclusion" into existing Procrustean corporate structures and priorities dictated by transnational capital. Local people-run initiatives and coops, grounded in local economies, are the diametric opposite of the hierarchical, corporatism-driven dynamics of the EU:

> Grassroots postmodernism opens windows to the initiatives of peoples for regaining their autonomous cultural spheres from the clutches of the economy . . . the people are

> keeping alive their home economics — that nurtures, nourishes, and sustains them. . . . They are recovering and protecting their own ways of teaching and learning—those that enrich and regenerate their commons and their places of dwelling.

The bedrock of the Romani communities is their resilience, an extraordinary grit in the face of prolonged hardship. Romani life worlds often preserve a sense of solidarity, savvy, conviviality, humanity, and mutual aid that is unique. Roma ghettos, both urban and rural, provide a unique laboratory for experimenting with forms of communalism and cooperative living. It would mean reinventing politics at very local scales, moving toward neighborhood structures of direct democracy which could provide an alternative basis for reconfiguring Romani social, political and economic life and preserving their unique cultural universe. A venture to "regain the commons" analogous to the politics of *zapatismo*, "away from the dominant discourse of a "good life," managed and molded by the experts of the establishment." In their transterritoriality and marginality to existing economies and polities, they are indeed a potential basal part of "the multitude, the living alternative that grows within empire" identified by Hardt and Negri as a counterforce to the cold logic of capital and neoliberal institutions and agendas. As alluded above, that alternative can also be read in the sense of the internal colonization of the Roma in terms of an emergent post-coloniality *inside* the imperial aggregation of Europe, and their need for a radical decolonizing project, counter to the concerted efforts for a "new management of social space" (Hardt and Negri) to control and contain them.

Most Roma have little stake in the present system. By history and consciousness, they epitomize the "will to be against" integral to building a postmodern republicanism. More perhaps than any other social or ethnic segment of the European population, in their primal alienation they see through the hypocrisies of the "public transcript" and are open to ideas for fundamental radical change and self-regeneration from below.

Editors' note: A fully footnoted version will be found on our website, www.newpol.org

The Last Social Democrat
An Obituary for James Weinstein

STANLEY ARONOWITZ

REVOLUTIONARY LEFT POLITICS is, essentially, a movement of the exploited, the oppressed, and the excluded. In every era since the rise of capitalism, however, there have been a few "class traitors" from the rich and well-born, even scions of the ruling class who have made genuine contributions to the cause of human emancipation. Some of them have been leaders of the movement, others intellectuals whose brains and pen have been offered in the service of socialist and communist education, theory, or journalism. James Weinstein was not an organizer of workers; but he was a superb organizer of people and institutions of ideas. Throughout his political life there was no question of his commitment to human emancipation; unlike some of his class origins, he did not embrace radicalism as a fashion, nor did he waver in his conviction that capitalism could not meet the fundamental needs of the immense majority of people. Like few others in the United States, he devoted his life to providing some of the means by which radical ideas are produced and disseminated, principally journals and magazines, but also schools and conferences. And he placed a considerable part of his fortune to advance his lifelong passion, democratic socialism.

James Weinstein, founder, editor, and publisher of three important leftist periodicals, died at his Chicago home on June 16, 2005 at age 78. He was known to his friends and associates as Jimmy, a testament to his informal, but by no means casual demeanor. Jimmy was raised in Manhattan in a family of substantial wealth — his father made a lot of the money in the garment trades (where he said the union made too modest demands), but was even more successful in real estate. But Jimmy had little interest in business, especially after he became an avid follower of news about the Spanish Civil War as a boy. On his way to socialism Jimmy decided to become a historian. He enrolled in Columbia University's graduate history program, but his studies were interrupted by World War II, in which he served as a navy technician. He joined the Communist Party in 1948 and became a leader of the Young Progressives of America (YPA), the youth movement of the Progressive Party, which sponsored the presidential campaign of former vice-president Henry Wallace that year.

I first met Jimmy because he was responsible for the YPA high school groups. At fifteen-years-old I was chair of the Music and Art YPA chapter, which had 250 members in a school of 1,800 students (Wallace won the majority in the straw vote against Truman and Dewey). Jimmy often came to our off-campus meetings to tell us what was going on around the city and the country. He was a lousy speaker, but a genial person and was hard not to like.

As a young Communist, Jimmy fell into the CP's program of "industrial concentration" and spent seven years working in television plants in New York and New Jersey. He was perfectly capable of performing the work, but he later told me he had no business in industry. He did not recruit anyone into the CP, and was not especially influential in the local union of the United Electrical Workers. His whole personality was introspective and even shy. And his class origins were all too apparent to his fellow

---

STANLEY ARONOWITZ *teaches social theory at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is author or editor of twenty-three books including his latest,* Just Around the Corner: The Paradox of the Jobless Recovery *(Temple 2005).*

workers and to himself. Besides, by his own account, he had serious reservations about the party and the Soviet Union while he was working in the factory and came to believe its industrial concentration program was a failure. I don't know whether he left the industry because of his disillusionment with the CP after Nikita Khruschev's 1956 report to the 20th Soviet Party Congress, but he was certainly convinced of its futility before that.

Shortly after these events Jimmy resumed his studies at Columbia but again left, this time to go to Madison, Wisconsin, to work with a group of young historians around William Appleman Williams, many of whom were expatriates from the Communist Party and its youth movement. Inspired by Williams, but also by the French historian and radical Harvey Goldberg, in 1959 they started the quarterly *Studies on the Left*. Much of the financing for the journal came from Jimmy's pocket, but he was much more than an "angel." The journal was a integral part of the collective project of this brilliant group led by Williams, Gabriel Kolko and Martin Sklar. They sought to revise the understanding of America and American history — not, as the CP would have it, "from below," but "from above" — but not in the sense of ordinary political and economic history. They sought nothing less than to comprehend history after the Gilded Age as a more or less self-conscious effort by a powerful fraction of the emerging ruling class to thwart insurgent labor and socialist movements and to stabilize an increasingly rocky economic system by rationalizing some of the more odious features of United States capitalism. Contrary to Progressive myth — according to which the populist and labor movements were chiefly responsible for turn-of-the 20th-century reforms such as business regulation, health and factory legislation, and the introduction of collective bargaining to replace the brutal anti-labor government and industry policy of jailings, blacklists, and even killings of union militants — the burden of the *Studies* group's argument was that the rulers themselves, were the main force behind the reforms enacted from the Progressive era to the Great Society. In fact, the revisionist historians were decidedly unimpressed by the left after World War I and Jimmy argued — mostly in personal conversation—that the Congress of Industrial Organizations itself had been co-opted by corporate America, not only via the Roosevelt coalition, but also by the doctrine of labor-management cooperation, long before the Cold War. Some who have offered eulogies to Jimmy emphasize his work in starting and running publications that developed and disseminated socialist and radical ideas. (Studs Terkel actually compared him to muckrakers like George Seldes, I.F. Stone and Lincoln Steffens, a stretch if I ever heard one). Jimmy was a historian who fervently believed in ideas and the ideological importance of publications, not for the purposes of exposure, but for the purposes of education. As important as was his role as a publisher and an editor, his five books of historical scholarship — especially *The Decline of Socialism 1912-1925* (published in 1968 but written in 1962) and *The Corporate Ideal and the Liberal State* (1966) — have made substantial contributions to our self-understanding as Americans and radicals.

Jimmy was a historian who fervently believed in ideas.

THE CORPORATE IDEAL IS AN account of how, in the wake of the rise of Progressivism and socialism, but also the destructive effects of business competition, some business leaders were in the forefront of supporting legislation that would subject important economic sectors to government regulation, and a few were even supportive of collective bargaining as a means to regulate what, in the early 20th century, had been an unruly and militant labor movement. The study focuses sharply on the National Civil Federation, founded at the turn of the 20th century as an alliance of labor, the dominant sectors of finance and industrial capital, and the "public" to promote values and legislation that represent the common interest. Samuel Gompers, the AFL founder and president, was a prominent figure in this effort; another was Gerard Swope, the General Electric top executive who actively promoted the idea of collective bargaining as a solution to contentious and often destructive class conflict, especially crippling strikes that were often led by radicals.

Among the revisionists Jimmy made one of the few contributions to the history of American socialism, a field that had been dominated by Communists and anti-communists since the 1920s. *The Decline of Socialism* was his first, and perhaps his best, book of socialist history. Two others — *Ambiguous Legacy* and his last, *The Long Detour* — add little to the main thesis of the earlier book. In his own words:

> For more than a half a century, the American left was debilitated by its troubled relationship to the Russian Revolution, and by the impact that Communism had on left political movements throughout the world. Once a leading source of the ideas and programs that helped humanize American capitalism, socialists in the United States were relegated to the sidelines during the New Deal even as reform movements and mainstream political actors adopted many of their earlier proposals.

The first sentence is a paraphrase of one of the central ideas of C.Wright Mills's "Letter to the American Left," published in the first issue of *Studies* (1960). It became extremely influential in the civil rights and university reform movements and was a guiding theme of the main tendency of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), represented by the leadership of Tom Hayden, Al Haber, and many others. The mantra "don't follow the old left's obsession with the Russian Question" prevailed until 1965 when SDS organized the first major demonstration in Washington against the Vietnam War. The almost inevitable result of that demonstration was a burst of sympathy for the Vietnamese revolution. In Jimmy's eyes, that a large fraction of the New Left began to reconsider the virtues of Soviet and Chinese-style Marxism-Leninism ultimately led to the fragmentation and decline of what was once a promising revival of American radicalism.

Jimmy held fast to the judgment that the split in the Socialist Party in 1919 when the bulk of its left wing were either expelled or resigned was a major blow to the American socialist movement. Ohio SP leader Charles Krumbein, a substantial number of leaders of the large nationality federations, and the journalist John Reed had urged the Party to submit to the 21 demands of the Communist International (CI) and affiliate with it. When the SP leadership angrily rejected the left wing's demands, the dissidents formed two Communist parties, but merged a few years later. Jimmy believed the Communists had all but sealed the fate of American socialism. They were alternately sectarian in their attacks on other socialists, blindly following the Soviet party line — a weakness that tended to discredit radicalism — and, in a stunning reversal of their previous position, were later opportunist in their relation to Franklin D. Roosevelt, especially after 1935 when the CI secretary, George Dimitrov, announced an anti-fascist right turn in policy. In pursuit of the United Front against Fascism, according to Jimmy, the CP squandered the enormous prestige it had gained during the industrial union upsurge of the 1930s. The Communists forfeited their socialism in two ways. After 1935 they did almost no public socialist education and instead presented themselves as merely a "progressive" movement. Even more important was the Popular Front, an outgrowth of the United Front that proposed an alliance with "progressive" sections of the capitalist class. In pursuit of anti-fascist unity, the CP forswore independent socialist politics in favor of an alliance with the Democratic Party and the New Deal.

But Jimmy had even less respect for the remnants of the SP. After 1920 the SP began an almost uninterrupted slide into obscurity. Its last hurrah occurred in 1932 when the party's standard bearer, the ex-minister Norman Thomas, received more than 800,000 votes for president. Jimmy agreed with Trotsky's assessment: Thomas was a socialist "out of a misunderstanding." The subsequent SP refusal to join the war effort led Thomas to forge an alliance with a group of America Firsters, including the notorious protofascist Gerald L .K. Smith. And the SP found itself outflanked by the New Deal, leading Thomas to complain that Roosevelt "stole" his program.

In 1963, Jimmy had brought *Studies* to New York City and immediately recruited a new cohort to the journal's editorial board, among them the historian Eugene Genovese; writer Norm Fruchter; Hayden; who was now living and working in SDS's Newark Community Union project; radical pacifist and peace activist Staughton Lynd, who was about to be fired from Yale, despite his good publishing and teaching record and because of his radicalism; and me. At the time I was a representative for the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers union and a close associate of SDS; I had played an important role in the formulation of the organization's Economic Research and Action Project (ERAP), which sent organizers in the summer 1964 into eight northern cities and Hazard, Kentucky, to help create "an interracial movement of the poor." In fact, even as a significant fraction of SDS was, against Mills's advice, in the process of adopting an internationalist perspective, many in ERAP, including Hayden, Carl Whitman, Sharon Jeffries and others, held fast to the view that they would have nothing to do with conventional politics, including leftist internationalism.

Of course, this was soon to change. In April 1965, SDS organized the largest antiwar Washington demonstration since the 1930s, attended by some 25,000 marchers. By 1967, anti-Vietnam War protests had involved millions of Americans, and had sharply divided the Democratic Party. At the time, Hayden was preparing to leave Newark and become one of the tribunes of the antiwar movement. Although Jimmy was against the war, he never veered from his appointed course. The revival of the American left, in his view, depended on its retrieval of the Socialist Party's ideas, programs, and style of work before WWI, and its renunciation of the legacy of Soviet Communism, even in its anti-Stalinist incarnations. Most importantly, the left had to root itself in American history, its homegrown radical and socialist traditions, and its democratic political institutions. The left had to become a viable electoral vehicle, had to attract a considerable portion of the secondary labor union and social movement leaderships, and needed to develop an extensive network of educational activities, of which publications would play a decisive role.

The *Studies* board met monthly (or sometimes more frequently) on a weekend afternoon at Jimmy's Chelsea house. Although there was some pretense that we were a collective, Jimmy was clearly the first among equals. And it was not mainly because he continued to pay the bills. He had strong editorial talents, good judgment about manuscripts, and worked harder than any of us. And he had a lucid perspective for the journal and definite views of the emerging New Left. He admired its mass character, but was critical of anti-intellectual tendencies that pervaded much of the movement. Fruchter, Hayden, and Lynd were, despite their own intellectual heft, unbridled partisans of the "movement"— particularly its "action faction"— and, while they stopped short of rejecting theory and the significance of history, wanted *Studies* to mainly become a chronicler, more or less uncritical, of protest and resistance. A few months into the tenure of the new board and the room was divided: Lynd, Hayden, and Fruchter carried the burden of this view; on the other side were Weinstein, Genovese, Lee Baxandall, and Helen Kramer — each of whom had had strong ties to one or another branch of the Old Left or, more accurately, the old New Left — and me, who, paradoxically, was closer in temperament and experience to the action faction. The disputes broke out over some manuscripts, but mostly it became a philosophical difference with enormous implications for the future of *Studies*. In the end, having succeeded in altering the journal's focus to a great extent, Hayden, Lynd et al., left the board, but the issues stayed with Jimmy for a long time.

No question *Studies* became the leading voice of the intellectual New Left throughout its almost nine-year existence. James O'Connor wrote a two-part article which attempted to theorize community unions as a parallel institutional site to the trade unions. Gabriel Kolko wrote of the "Decline of American Radicalism," arguing against liberal self-congratulation and the concept of "American exceptionalism." And Genovese wrote a very fine review of John Cammett's biography of Italian communist Antonio Gramsci. One of our proudest achievements, spurred by Lee Baxandall's research, was the publication of two of Wilhelm Reich's early essays on dialectical materialism and psychoanalysis, a decision that required considerable discussion because of the hostility of some on the board to Reich, psychoanalysis, or both. In the same issue as Kolko's critical article (Vol. 6 No. 5, 1966) the remaining editors ruminated about the transformation of the journal from a social-scientific project to analyze the specificity of American capitalism to the descriptive project that the recently departed editors had advocated. "The realm in which socialists are weakest is that of ideas" said the editors. They declared that *Studies* had tilted too much to the side of mere reportage and vowed to bend the stick in the opposite direction.

In 1965, Jimmy and I decided to collaborate in a new project. Impressed by the growth of the New Left and the popular struggles that it had initiated, we wanted to find a way to actualize a different vision. We founded the Committee for Independent Political Action on Manhattan's Upper West Side. The previous year we had been part of the committee that started the Free University of New York, the animating catalysts being Allen and Sharon Krebs, whose politics were inspired, in part, by the Cuban and Chinese revolutions. Yet the school prided itself on its nonsectarian character. Instructors ranged from right-wing libertarian economic Murray Rothbard to the anarchist Murray Bookchin and various shades of socialist like Weinstein, to cultural radicals like Susan Sherman and members of Progressive Labor, a dissident Communist group. But CIPA would invite anybody to join who agreed with its perspective of independent socialist political, i.e. electoral and non-electoral action.

We founded the Committee for Independent Political Action.

After a founding meeting that attracted some 200 people we were convinced the idea had legs. We rented a storefront on Manhattan's West Side on Amsterdam Avenue near 79th street. The strategy was to conduct three types of activity: running candidates for public office; a community organizing project devoted chiefly to housing; and forums and other educational events. Within a few months, CIPA had several hundred members and had launched its tenant organizing and educational work. (One of the best tenant organizers I have ever encountered was Barbara Ehrenreich, who worked almost every evening). By spring 1966, it decided to run Jimmy for Congress in the 19th Congressional District as an independent against a hack Democratic incumbent and

Manuela Dobos for State Assembly against one the anchors of the reform Democrats. Our community organizing had proven quite successful and we were attracting good crowds at our forums. Moreover, other CIPAs were organized in the Lower East Side and East Village, Greenwich Village and Chelsea, all of which were part of the district. Jimmy campaigned hard and won some 4 percent of the vote in the general election and Manuela did slightly better. As mentioned earlier, he bombed at mass rallies but was very effective in smaller house meetings where he could display his detailed knowledge of national and international issues. But the momentum soon slowed and two years later CIPA died.

Meanwhile, largely due to his conviction that New York was an inappropriate site for conducting radical politics because it could not free itself of sectarian squabbling, Jimmy announced he was closing *Studies* and, in 1967, moved to San Francisco. I was in Puerto Rico on union assignment during this period and I returned to New York to the news of the demise. It was my first clue to Jimmy's arbitrary side, and I was furious. Yet for me and the rest of the board, Jimmy presented a *fait accompli*, which prompted surprisingly little protest. Within a few years he started a new journal, *Socialist Revolution* (*SR*), which was later rechristened *Socialist Review*. Jimmy was the guiding force of *SR* which was more explicitly a journal of socialist politics. For twenty years the journal became one of the more widely read publications on the intellectual and practical left, but it had shed the historical and theoretical orientation of *Studies* in favor of a more topical focus. He left the journal in 1975 because, as he said at the time, the West Coast was atypical of America. But this time there was a fairly stable collective and financial base in place and his departure did not result in its demise. *SR* survived through the 1990s after which it became a journal oriented, in the main, to libraries.

In response to the turn of a considerable fraction of the New Left toward socialism, in 1972 Michael Harrington, Irving Howe, Bodgan Denitch, and others who had joined the Socialist Party and dissolved their own Independent Socialist League at the behest of their ideological mentor, Max Shachtman, bolted the SP. They formed the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC). Its aim was to build a membership organization that could provide the country with a public social-democratic face and a practical strategy of "political realignment"— to bring together young leftists, the trade union leadership, and public intellectuals into the Democratic Party, and force the party to extend its New Deal tradition. Harrington, who had tardily come to openly oppose the Vietnam War, remained cautious, even hostile, to overtly radical politics, especially the project of putting socialism on the electoral agenda of American politics. Needless to say, the political line of working within the Democratic Party (Harrington called it a "Popular Front without Stalinism"), as well as DSOC's open courting of labor leaders, was calculated to exclude a substantial fraction of the left which had drawn the lesson of the 1960s that the Democrats were a second party of capital and the top union leaders their loyal subordinates. So, in 1974, together with Staughton Lynd, Jimmy spearheaded the formation of the New American Movement (NAM) as an incipient vehicle for the propagation of socialist ideas and independent politics. But by the time I joined NAM in Fall 1976, both Staughton and Jimmy were long gone. While the organization succeeded in recruiting well over a thousand members in its first year, Jimmy decided they were not sufficiently serious to merit his continued involvement. His resignation from NAM again revealed a disturbing character flaw: Jimmy was all too willing to take his marbles and go home if he did not get his way.

When *SR* proved too confining, Jimmy moved from San Francisco to the main center of the American "heartland," Chicago and, in 1976 founded *In These Times* (*ITT*), a leftist newsweekly that, at first, resembled the old *Guardian*, which six years earlier had all but self-destructed in the heat of the brief revival of Marxist-Leninist politics. After almost thirty years, *ITT* survives his death, but not before it became a twice-monthly news magazine and not before Jimmy himself left his independent socialist politics behind and joined the left-liberal consensus that the Democratic Party was the only viable political vehicle for progressive social reform. Was it the heartland that changed Jimmy's mind or the grim 1980s and 1990s which witnessed the virtual disappearance of the left in American political life? Of course, like so many progressives, he retained socialism in his heart, but not as a practical alternative to the prevailing capitalist economic and political system. From their graves Harrington and Howe had won Jimmy over, along with many of his generation who had held out against the tide of left-centrism that accompanied the collapse of the New Left.

The last thirty years of Jimmy's life earned him the approbation of the likes of the progressive Democratic Senator Paul Wellstone, Independent Representative Bernie Sanders, Chalmers Johnson, Joel Rogers, Eric Foner, and other prominent left-liberals. *ITT* was, after all, one of the few magazines that offered news and commentary from a general leftist perspective. In its early days, John Judis, one of Jimmy's *SR*-period protégés, provided predictably "realistic" political reports that prefigured his current position as an editor of the *New Republic*: progressive on economic issues (he's more pro-labor than most), centrist on politics, and socially conservative. And David Moberg led a small crew of labor writers whose pieces were the best the left-of-center press could offer. Moberg was no acolyte of the so-called progressive trade union leadership, but neither was he a critic of the labor bureaucracy. Moberg's writing walked an intellectual tightrope — because, after all, the left shouldn't hit organized labor in its moment of travail. And besides, wasn't it true that those who carp about the sins of the labor bureaucracy are mostly talking to themselves? The result was some good investigative reporting but little in the way of the "ideas" that Jimmy had always believed marked a genuine socialist publication. In fact, slowly but surely, *ITT* drifted toward becoming what it is today, a "progressive" magazine.

ITT actually covered culture in ways that were brand new for the left-liberal press. While its point of view followed, in broad strokes, the position that popular culture was little more than a branch of the culture industry, and its movie reviews retained the stridency that we associate with much of leftist critique, unlike the *Nation* and *Progressive* it took popular culture seriously even if its understanding was informed by some of the most stringent critiques of the Frankfurt School and its successors. And on international affairs the magazine took some courageous positions, not falling into the trap of assuming that anti-imperialism meant automatic, mindless endorsement of any particular opponent of U.S. imperialism, no matter how authoritarian or reactionary it might be. During the Cold War, for example, *ITT* supported the fight for democratic rights in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, and China at the same time that it vigorously opposed U.S. militarism and imperial power.

In the obituaries that ran in the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Times*, a well as *ITT* itself, the fact that Jimmy was a lifelong socialist and founder and editor of *ITT* took center stage. But his larger significance consists in his persistent efforts in the 1960s and early 1970s to resuscitate radicalism in American life on the basis of a program of political and ideological education. Sadly, his work remains largely unrecognized as a legitimate form of political organizing. But wherever people were prepared to organize institutions that debated, published, and disseminated the history and the contemporary aspects of socialism, Jimmy was prepared to join in and put his money where his ideology was. In addition to the Free University, Jimmy was one of the organizers of the first Socialist Scholars Conferences in the late 1960s, an institution that, in a different form, persists to this day and has inspired parallel conferences in Chicago and on the West Coast. He constantly railed against anti-intellectualism on the left, and did not hesitate to criticize single-issue movements that did not link their efforts to the general struggle against capitalism — in short, to the making of history. If his model, European and American social democracy of the pre-World War I period, has itself become history and, given the slide of social democracy into a sophisticated form of neoliberalism, may retain little relevance for our time except as an object lesson, this failing is less important than Jimmy's core conviction that protest and resistance to corporate capitalist policies of the state is necessary, but not sufficient to change the world. For him the socialist project entailed the search for practical as well as theoretical alternatives that could persuade the underlying population that it was prudent to give up old ways, especially petty-bourgeois individualism and adherence to the two-party system. We can only hope that Jimmy's passing does not signal an end to the journey.

A Review Essay

In Search of Economic Justice

STEPHEN R. SHALOM

Economic Justice and Democracy: From Competition to Cooperation
ROBIN HAHNEL
New York: Routledge, 2005

ROBIN HAHNEL HAS WRITTEN an important book that will be of real value to all libertarian socialists (a term he uses very broadly to cover anyone who wants to replace capitalism with a system characterized by the direct control of workers and consumers over their own economic activities).

The book is divided into four sections. In the first section, Hahnel examines the concepts of economic justice and economic democracy in an effort to get the Left to have a clearer sense of what its aims ought to be. He also tries to dispel various myths that, he argues, have debilitated movements for economic justice and democracy in the past. Part two is a critique of capitalism, of Communism (using the term as popularly understood: the single-party states with centrally-planned economies, exemplified by the Soviet Union), and of social democracy, as well as an analysis of where libertarian socialism went wrong.

In part three, Hahnel examines democratic postcapitalist visions. He analyzes market socialism and community-based economics and finds them both lacking. He summarizes the vision that he favors, participatory economics, describing and defending its main features and adding two new aspects to the model that he and Michael Albert have elaborated in many other writings.[1] In the fourth and final section, Hahnel proposes a general strategy for the Left — a way to reach the goal of a society of "equitable cooperation." His strategy combines working for reforms — though in a particular way — with constructing and being part of experiments in equitable cooperation within capitalism.

I. Economic Justice and Economic Democracy

THE GENERAL ARGUMENT of the chapters on economic justice and economic democracy will be familiar to those acquainted with Hahnel's and Albert's writings. Almost everyone supports the notion of economic justice, but there are many different ways to define the term. To conservative defenders of capitalism, economic justice means everyone should be remunerated according to the value of the contribution of their physical and human capital — that is, according to the value of their capital and their personal skills. In this view, it is perfectly fair that the good-for-nothing, ignoramus with a huge inheritance earns more than the hard-working genius who comes from poverty. There is widespread agreement

STEPHEN R. SHALOM *is a member of the* New Politics *editorial board and editor of* Socialist Visions *(South End Press, 1983).*

that this notion of economic justice is morally repellant (witness the campaign commercials of billionaire Michael Bloomberg that go to great pains to show that he "earned" rather than inherited his fortune). An alternative definition that is often used — even by some on the Left (most market socialists, for example) — is that people should be remunerated according only to the value of the contribution of their personal skills: their intelligence, their athletic ability, or what-have-you. If your personal characteristics benefit society a great deal you deserve more than someone whose personal characteristics benefit society only a little.

But many differences in our contribution to society are the result of genetic differences over which we have no control. If it offends our sense of right and wrong that the good-for-nothing heir has riches that he did nothing to earn, then it ought to be just as problematic to compensate people on the basis of their intelligence, which they likewise inherited and did nothing to earn.

To be sure, schooling and training can enhance the value of one's genetic endowment, and these can involve a sacrifice that ought to be compensated. Education takes time that could be used for earning money or for leisure. But if society paid students — not just to cover their tuition costs, but a stipend so that they forego no income while at school — then there would be no moral reason to pay those with extra schooling more than others (26). Therefore, argues Hahnel, we ought to define economic justice as compensating people according not to their capital, nor their skills, but to their effort or their personal sacrifice. This is not the same as saying that everyone should receive equal income, but it in fact represents equality at a deeper level. Some people will prefer to be compensated in a higher standard of living, while others will prefer more leisure (including working at a more leisurely pace). There is no reason society ought to impose a single view of the appropriate number of work hours or the appropriate pace of work. Everyone is thus compensated equally, in terms of the sum of income and leisure, with the precise mix of these up to each individual (29, 37).[2]

Of course, there are many who can't or don't work at all: the young, the old, the infirm. Whichever definition of economic justice we use, says Hahnel, we will make exceptions for these people. One other definition of economic justice generalizes this point and proposes that people should be compensated according to their needs. (So, for example, those in cold climates *need* more heating oil than those in more temperate climates.) Hahnel says compensation according to need and sacrifice is his view of how society ought to be organized, but that, strictly speaking, need is a matter of humaneness, not economic justice. I'm not sure this distinction is compelling, but it's certainly the case that need alone is a problematic standard. Everyone will agree that food, medical care, and so on, are needs that society must provide. But once we get beyond *basic* needs, then what? No one *needs* a DVD player or a stereo or a seat at a basketball game. Are these all absent in a good society? If such things do exist, how are they allocated? Do I need the stereo more than you because I *really* enjoy music, while you are only a minor enthusiast? If you really like a whole lot of things while I am less of a fan, do you get them all and I none? Certainly the Marxian "each according to their needs" is a just way to dispense life's necessities. But beyond that, for *wants*, compensation according to sacrifice indeed seems to represent economic justice.

There are many other proposed principles of economic justice. John Rawls's difference principle[3] says that inequality is justified only if it improves the condition of the worst off. Hahnel argues that the Rawlsian principle under at least one plausible interpretation could be a potent argument against both capitalism and market socialism. But more generally, Hahnel notes that Rawls implicitly assumes that efficiency is to be valued more than equality.

Yes, we might agree that a society where one person made $55,000 and everyone else made $50,000 is preferable to a society in which everyone made $10,000, but Rawls requires us also to prefer a society where one person makes a billion dollars a year and everyone else makes $10,001 a year to a society where everyone makes $10,000. *If* there is a trade-off between efficiency and equality, says Hahnel — though he doubts there is — then people should have the right to decide democratically which they prefer, rather than automatically assume, as Rawls's difference principle does, that efficiency should be determinative.

TURNING TO ECONOMIC democracy, Hahnel asks how we should make decisions. Letting each individual decide things for him or herself makes good sense when the decision affects only the individual in question. But it makes no sense when one person's decision affects others. Likewise, majority rule — which weighs the opinions of everyone equally — is appropriate when everyone is affected equally by a decision. But it is quite inappropriate when different people are affected differently, perhaps some not at all and some a great deal. True democracy, says Hahnel — what he calls "economic self-management" — occurs when people have input into a decision proportional to the degree they are affected by it. Markets tend to promote the "everyone decides for themselves" view of democracy, ignoring the extent to which your decision, for example, to emit some pollutant into the atmosphere might affect others. And "even the most democratic version of central planning conceivable would still deny people economic democracy by failing to let those who are more affected by a decision have more say over that choice" (55).

This definition of economic democracy offers important insights, but I think Hahnel underestimates the difficulty in operationalizing it. He writes:

> Of course it will never be possible to arrange for decisions to be made in ways that every person enjoys perfect economic self-management, any more than it is possible to ever achieve perfect economic justice no matter how well an economy is designed to promote justice (54).

But it seems to me that institutions for realizing economic justice are far more easily constructed than those for economic self-management. The participatory economics model he describes in part III of the book provides a reasonable approximation to economic justice; I'm not sure the same can be said about self-management, as I will discuss below when I consider his model in more detail.

Hahnel believes that the Left has been burdened by its lack of clarity over the meaning of economic justice and economic democracy. He argues as well that there are a variety of myths that the Left has long held that it ought to jettison if it hopes to make progress. It is not the case, he says, citing the work of Nobuo Okishio, that there is an inevitable tendency for the rate of profit to fall, leading to capitalist collapse.[4] "Despite a number of attempts by die-hard Marxists during the 1970s and 1980s to rescue the falling rate of profit crisis theory," notes Hahnel, "by the end of the century" the theory was rejected by "virtually all open-minded political economists" (58). "Nor, unfortunately," Hahnel observes, "does capitalism nurture the seeds of its own replacement in ways most 20th-century progressives believed it would. It does not generate a growing, homogeneous, working class whose economic activities lead them to see the advantages of seizing and managing the means of production themselves" (61-62).

More controversially, Hahnel argues that the common Marxist view that there are only two classes that we need concern ourselves with — capitalists and proletarians[5] — ignores the class of "coordinators," the professional/managerial class that has interests antagonistic to both capitalists and workers. As long as the Left fails "to recognize that a class of coordinators could rise to ruling class status in public enterprise economies," Hahnel rightly argues, it will be unable "to understand the non-socialist nature of the so-called 'socialist' economies" (64-65). If there are only two classes, and the capitalists are expropriated, then obviously the workers must be in control (though perhaps it's a "deformed" workers' state, or some other contortion). Lenin and Trotsky were not Stalin. But when Lenin said "We want the socialist revolution with human nature as it is now, with human nature that cannot dispense with subordination, control and managers" and that piecework, much of Taylorism, and "*unquestioning submission* to a single will" are necessary for modern large-scale industry; and when Trotsky declared that socialism is expressed "not at all in the form in which individual economic enterprises are administered," they were reflecting the perspective and interests of the coordinator class, not the working class.[6]

Another Left myth, says Hahnel, is the belief that the economy is always the decisive factor, with sexism and racism being merely problems within the superstructure. Hahnel calls this problem *economism*, "attributing unwarranted importance to economics in some way or another" (65). This is a useful point. Hahnel notes that "to assume that economic forces and class struggle are *always* most important is unwarranted, to reduce explanations of war, gender oppression, and racial discrimination to economic motives is untenable, and to demand that oppressed racial and gender groups always subordinate their struggles to the class struggle is unconscionable" (66). But Hahnel overreaches, I think, when we says that economism "can take the form of referring to a society as 'capitalist' when it is also patriarchal and racist" (65). But societies which have these three characteristics are also heterosexist, authoritarian, and able-ist. I'm not sure we need to say all these things each time we refer to a particular society. So why use the term "capitalist" as the general-purpose designation? Since all current-day societies are racist, sexist, heterosexist, able-ist, and authoritarian, these terms don't distinguish between one group of countries and another, while the term capitalist does. Despite this overstatement, Hahnel's general argument that we should avoid reducing everything to economics is a valuable one.

II. Capitalism and Communism

IN PART TWO, Hahnel offers powerful critiques of capitalism and Communism, as well as of the practice of social democracy and libertarian socialism in the 20th century. Hahnel is not content to show that many people are suffering under capitalism; he aims to establish as well that the intrinsic workings of capitalism lead to unjust, undemocratic, and inefficient results. Hahnel compellingly demonstrates that the capitalist market doesn't provide what people want, in part because it's a system of "one dollar, one vote" (79). When initial conditions are unequal — as is typically the case under capitalism — even "voluntary, informed, and mutually beneficial exchanges" taking place under competitive conditions "will still be coercive and lead to inequitable outcomes" (81). Capitalism undermines political democracy, not just economic democracy. Capitalism is profoundly inefficient (defining efficiency not as the simple volume of output, but socially-valuable production), and inherently plagued by externalities and biased price signals. And even if capitalism worked perfectly, it would distribute the costs and benefits of economic activity in a manner inconsistent with economic justice (92).

The first post capitalist societies were single-party states with central planning. Much of the horror of these societies was due to their dictatorial political systems, and it is widely assumed that their economic systems were terrible failures as well. In fact, says Hahnel, "after decades of *outperforming* their Western capitalist competitors, growth rates in the centrally-planned economies had dipped below Western growth rates by the beginning of the 1980s," but they weren't in economic crisis. "After 1985 the Soviet economy was in crisis because it was in a never-never land between an old system and a new one that was never successfully put into place" (104-05).

This doesn't mean, however, that central planning doesn't have serious theoretical and practical difficulties. Hahnel argues that central planning has a strongly antidemocratic bias with a tendency toward inequality and inefficiency. This would be true, he says, even if the central political leadership were elected. In even the best version of central planning, planners send down questions, gather up information from production units (and perhaps consumers), and then send down production orders which must be carried out. But the preferences of producers and consumers are not a given; they can only truly be formulated if everyone knows the impact of their choices on others. Under central planning, however, there is no information flow except from down to up. Moreover, to assure conformity to the plan, central planners have to be able to hold managers accountable, but this can't be done if the managers are democratically controlled from below. There is thus a tendency for the center to favor giving increased power to managers over workers as a way to make sure that the plan gets carried out.

In the real world, central planning has further problems. There is a strong incentive for managers to lie to the central planners. Since managers get punished for failing to meet their output quotas, it pays for them to underreport capabilities. This either leads to plans based on false information or else, as often happened, the central planners have their own staff of experts to determine the accuracy of the information from each plant, which is wasteful and encourages the development of a police-state. Hahnel summarizes:

> Combined with a more democratic political system and redone to closer approximate a best case version, centrally planned economies would have done better than they did. But they could never have delivered economic self-management, and would have always been susceptible to growing inequities and inefficiencies as the inevitable effects of differential economic power appeared (101).

Social democracy is another economic approach, which in Europe at least was quite successful in some respects. Hahnel notes that the "golden age of capitalism" was primarily attributable to the influence of social democrats (109). But despite its "important accomplishments," social democracy also bears a major responsibility for the failure of democratic socialism in the 20th century (109). The problem was not, says Hahnel, that social democrats pursued reforms. Yes, reforms did make capitalism less harmful while leaving its fundamental institutions intact. But that is not a reason, insists Hahnel, to eschew reforms. No, the problem for Hahnel is how the reforms were pursued. For social democrats, reforms were everything.

> It is one thing to say: We are committed to democracy above all else. Therefore we promise that as long as a majority of the population does not want to replace capitalism we have no intentions of trying to do so. It is quite another thing to say: Despite our best efforts we have failed to convince a majority of the population that capitalism is fundamentally incompatible with economic justice and democracy. Therefore we will cease to challenge the legitimacy of the capitalist system and confine our efforts to reforming it (124).

Sometimes when social democrats actually had a chance to move toward radical social change, they balked. When Mitterand and his Socialist Party took power in 1982, they carried out their policy of nationalizing many companies. But they determined to pay the owners for the full value of their assets, which meant that the firms had to extract great profits from their employees. This could only be done if the managers behaved just like the previous capitalist managers. And the ruling socialists had to behave no differently from their predecessors. "My job," declared Alain Gomez, a founder of the Marxist left wing of the Socialist party, CERES, "is to get surplus value" (120).

In these sorts of situations, says Hahnel, the compromises of the social democrats alienated those who might have been their strongest supporters, making it relatively easy for the right wing to roll back so much of what social democracy had accomplished over the 20th century. And by refraining from discussing the limits of the reforms they pursued, and by neglecting to try to build examples of equitable cooperation that could serve as inspiration, support, and practice for those looking beyond the reforms, social democrats undermined the long-term struggle for fundamental social change.

LIBERTARIAN SOCIALISTS WERE even less successful. (Though identifying with libertarian socialists, Hahnel considers them "by far the worst underachievers among twentieth century anticapitalists" [137].)[7] Hahnel attributes their failure in significant part to a refusal to engage in reform campaigns and movements.

> The principal failure of libertarian socialists during the twentieth century was their inability to understand the necessity and importance of reform organizing. When anti-capitalist uprisings were few and far between, and libertarian socialists proved incapable of sustaining the few that did occur early in the twentieth century, their ineptness in reform campaigns doomed libertarian socialists to more than a half century of decline after their devastating defeat during the Spanish Civil War of 1936-1939 (138).

Libertarian socialists well understood the limitations of social democratic reforms, but, suggests Hahnel, this understanding may have led them to give up on reform efforts too easily (152). The question, of course, is how can one pursue reforms in non-revolutionary times without falling into the trap that ensnared social democrats. This is a question that Hahnel takes up in the final section of his book and I discuss it below.

In a postscript to this chapter, Noam Chomsky notes that libertarian successes were not much based on "reform organizing," but on "creating the facts of the future within the present society." And their ultimate defeat, Chomsky persuasively argues, came not from failures in their attitude toward reforms but from violence — by the Bolsheviks in Russia and by Stalinists, fascists, and liberals in Spain. Nevertheless, Chomsky agrees with Hahnel that among some present-day anarchists there is a dismissive attitude toward reforms that don't overthrow the state.

Hahnel also argues that while libertarians were right to reject the Leninist view that workers could not achieve more than trade union consciousness without an external vanguard party, some current-day libertarians have gone beyond this to adopt spontaneism — the belief that when the right circumstances arise, leading to a revolutionary crisis, workers will spontaneously establish liberatory institutions. This was not the view, he notes, of the most successful libertarian movements. In Russia and in Spain there was both a long tradition of communal ownership of land and arduous efforts to build alternative institutions over many years. For example, Hahnel, citing Sam Dolgoff, points out that in Spain,

> the intense preoccupation of the Spanish anarchists with libertarian reconstruction of society has been called an "obsession" and not altogether without reason. At their Saragossa Congress in May, 1936 there were lengthy resolutions on "The Establishment of Communes, Their Function and Structure," "Plan of Economic Organization," "Coordination and Exchange," "Economic Conception of the Revolution," "Federation of Industrial and Agricultural Associations," "Art, Culture and Education," and sessions on relations with non-libertarian individuals and groupings, crime, delinquency, equality of sexes, and individual rights (145).

"But what is even more telling," points out Hahnel, "is that the resolutions debated, refined, and approved" at the Saragossa Congress, "had been worked on by every congress of the Spanish section of the Libertarian International beginning in 1870" (145-46). This is a record of commitment that many of us on the Left would do well to emulate.

III. Vision for the Future

PART THREE DEALS WITH VISION for the future. The word "vision" seems to send chills down the spines of many Leftists, conjuring up images of Don Quixote on LSD in place of no-nonsense Marxian scientific socialism.

Interestingly, the importance of developing a vision of socialism is being recognized by more and more Leftists, the latest contribution being a special Summer issue of *Monthly Review*.[8]

The arguments for attending to the question of vision are powerful. First, there is Hahnel's telling point that Leftists don't have such a good track record in promising people that what would replace capitalism would be a society worth dying for or living in. As Hahnel and John Bellamy Foster[9] in *Monthly Review* among others have noted, capitalist apologists have been able to defend the status quo by proclaiming that there is no alternative. If we on the Left can't answer this challenge, we will never get people to support us.

A second argument for vision is well put by Michael A. Lebowitz in his contribution to the *Monthly Review* issue:

> There is an old saying that if you don't know where you want to go, then any road will take you there. [But] our experience tells us that if you don't know where you want to go, then *no* road will take you there.[10]

Of course, not all considerations of vision are equally compelling. And while it might seem churlish to use some of the *Monthly Review* articles as examples, given their welcome attention to the topic of vision, these do illustrate some of the problems that often afflict vision discussions on the Left.

John Bellamy Foster approvingly quotes Rosa Luxemburg on the importance of democracy (17-18) and he defines socialism as a society controlled by the direct producers (5). Under Stalin, he says, the Soviet Union was neither capitalist nor socialist (5, 11).[11] But then he tells us that in China Mao tried unsuccessfully to combat the rise of a new ruling class emerging out of the Communist Party (CCP) (8-9). But surely Mao — the most powerful member of a dictatorial ruling party — was not a champion of democracy. He was the head of the new ruling class that was the CCP. That his faction within the party lost out to another faction does not make this a struggle against class rule, for democracy, or for socialism. Likewise, Harry Magdoff and Fred Magdoff, who also express their commitment to democracy, favorably quote Mao and Chou Enlai to support their point about the dangers of bureaucratic rule.[12] While not doubting the sincerity of any of these writers' commitment to democracy, many who have been burned by the Left are going to treat this residual enthusiasm for an absolute and murderous tyrant as discrediting any Left pretensions of supporting democracy.

Foster also speaks of "Cuban socialism," with its record of providing healthcare and other social welfare benefits" (10-11), ignoring his own definition of socialism as the direct control of the producers. Yes, Cuba's health accomplishments are impressive, and perhaps many of Latin America's poor would gladly trade places with a resident of Havana (though probably not Costa Ricans, who without a dictatorship have a higher life expectancy than do Cubans). Of course the Left needs to insist that Washington keep its hands off Cuba and end its economic embargo, but to confuse the Cuban system with socialism makes whatever we say about a better future suspect.

Another contribution to the *Monthly Review* issue is by Bertell Ollman, who has often quoted Oscar Wilde's line that a map without Utopia on it is not worth looking at.[13] In this article, however, Ollman offers a critique of what he sees as the chief characteristics of utopian thinking. "Most American radicals," he says, carry a significant strain of utopian thinking in their DNA" (84). "The various social movements," he charges,

> are particularly affected by the frame of mind that sets out ideals — a pollution-free environment, racial/gender/ethnic equality, an end to hunger, durable peace, etc. — before making any analysis of the encompassing capitalist system, and then offering highly charged moral solutions that blithely ignore what would have emerged from such an analysis (84-85).

Strikingly, however, Ollman gives not a single citation to any modern-day individual or organization. Though there are sprinkled references throughout his essay to Saint Simon, Fourier, and Owen, he provides not one specific example of anyone employing utopian thinking in the past century and a half. So his claims are not readily assessed.

A totally pollution-free environment is indeed utopian in the pejorative sense, but we know this not because of any careful "analysis of the encompassing capitalist system," but from common sense. An end to hunger seems like a perfectly achievable goal in any modern society, but it's hard to see why those who have mastered the three volumes of *Capital* are any better prepared to offer solutions. Achieving racial, gender, and ethnic equality are extremely complex undertakings, but I am aware of few ideal solutions, simplistic or otherwise, being proffered by any of the social movements, and Ollman cites none. As for durable peace, the peace movement frequently calls for this or that armed force to withdraw from this or that country, but it seems to me there is rarely any thought given beyond the immediate war.

MARX, SAYS OLLMAN, raised six main criticisms of utopian thinking:

> (1) utopian thinking tends to produce visions of the future that are unrealistically rigid and complete; (2) there is no basis for determining if a vision constructed in this speculative manner is desirable . . . ; (3) equally, there is no clear way of determining if it is possible . . . ; (4) . . . utopian visions undermine the possibility of making a dialectical analysis of the present as a temporal dimension in which the future already appears as a potential; (5) . . . results in ineffective ways of arguing; and (6) . . . leads to ineffective political strategies (89-90).

"Rigid" and "complete" in Ollman's first point are very different things. Rigidity is indeed a bad trait, but completeness is necessary if a vision is going to be judged for whether it is desirable and possible — which are Ollman's points two and three. Whatever one thinks of Hahnel's proposed economic model, it is laid out in enough detail so that others can decide if they like it and if they think it is possible. Compare that with some of the sketchy "principles that would contribute to a better world" which Magdoff and Magdoff offer instead of any model:

> 1. The elimination of human domination and exploitation of other humans . . . .
> 3. A minimum number of basic rights for all people: three nutritious meals a day; a job; a decent home; good education; health care; and protection of the disabled and aged.
> 4. The elimination of hierarchy among people. At a minimum, real, vigorous affirmative action . . . .
> 6. Rotation of jobs between managers and subordinates . . . .
> 7. Differences in pay from top to bottom should be small . . . (54-55).

These seem extremely vague, impossible to judge, and in fact contradictory. What does it mean to eliminate domination and exploitation? If domination, exploitation, and hierarchy are eliminated, why are there managers and subordinates? Why are there pay differences? Why is it only the basic minimum of three meals, a job, housing, education, and healthcare that are guaranteed?

Ollman says there is no way to determine whether a vision is desirable without engaging in a detailed study of capitalism. But first of all, surely everyone doesn't have to study everything. And since the amount of Left effort expended on describing the ills of capitalism vastly exceeds that devoted to vision, visionaries are by no means operating in a vacuum. Moreover, the suffering caused by capitalism is known to most people through their daily lives, not through in-depth social and economic analyses. So it is rather straightforward to assess any detailed vision: compare it to what we know about the present from our own experience.

Ollman's claim that there is no way to determine if a utopian vision is possible seems similarly unconvincing. If a vision is described in rich enough detail, others can assess its plausibility. What seems much harder to do is to assess a very superficially-described vision which we are told follows from a Marxist analysis of capitalist dynamics. Of course, assessing any vision will call for us to draw upon insights from psychology, sociology, economics, history, and other disciplines. (For example, what sorts of incentives are needed to get people to work?) But these insights do not really come from the study of capitalism.

Ollman charges that "prioritizing and emphasizing the future in the manner of utopian thinkers preempts the time and even the interest required to make a serious study of the present" (92). But, again, this assumes we must all study the same thing. Even if we grant that studying the present is more important than thinking about the future, it surely doesn't follow that every individual ought to focus on studying capitalism, or that, to use an economists' formulation, the marginal benefit from another study of capitalism to add to the tens of thousands that exist is greater than the marginal benefit from another study of possible futures that will add to the tiny existing literature.[14] And, of course, understanding future options can also help us understand the present.

UTOPIAN THINKING, asserts Ollman, provides us with "a weak and ineffective way of arguing for socialism." Ollman charges that there is no empirical evidence that utopian arguments move people in a leftward direction, long-lastingly (94), but of course there's no empirical evidence that Marxist arguments (or anything else for that matter) do either. Says Ollman:

> For Marxists, all arguments for socialism are based on an analysis that demonstrates that capitalism is not only responsible for our worst social and ecological problems but contains the means for their solution as well as the seeds of a new world that would follow (95).

But why is this convincing? What if capitalism didn't contain the seeds of the new world (as Hahnel claims it doesn't) — would that make us less desirous of socialism? What if capitalism actually contains the seeds of several possible futures within it? Would we then be indifferent between these?

Ollman says that in the absence of an "objective study" of "what needs to be corrected, utopians rely heavily on the meaning of such key concepts as 'freedom,' 'justice,' and 'rights' to make their case." And such terms, he says, have been so manipulated by the capitalist consciousness industry that they "convey little and convince less." For example, people understand freedom as meaning simply being left alone (95). But I think Ollman is triply wrong here. First, I think the moral arguments are right: I want a society without racial discrimination, for example, because it's moral, not because my objective study shows me that, in Ollman's words, "equality, in socialism, is not just a goal; it is an interest and therefore a need" (87). Second, I suspect that arguing that racial discrimination is unjust is more persuasive than trying to convince someone that they should support a society without racial discrimination because "it is an interest and therefore a need." And, third, the capitalist consciousness industry is going to be hard at work no matter what we do: if we don't confront head on the manipulated definitions of such terms (as Hahnel does, for example, with economic justice), we concede the field.

In Ollman's view,

> perhaps the most important argument against the utopian way of arguing is that, though it addresses *our* ideal future, it carries out the debate on *their* terrain. Instead of forcing capitalists and their "paid hirelings" to defend what is intolerable and unnecessary in present-day society, it allows them to sit back and pick holes in whatever sounds untidy or unlikely in our hopes for the future (96-97).

But, as already noted, proponents of the status quo don't try to defend the intolerable; they just claim that there's no alternative. So if all we do is offer yet another analysis showing that people are poor, exploited, and suffering, we have no answer to the "there is no alternative" argument. We just depress people. On the other hand, if we can suggest a better future, those who know the pain of capitalism firsthand will have reason to work for change.

Ollman's final argument is that utopianism "leads to adopting ineffective political strategies for bringing about the desired changes." The social change strategy of "many modern-day utopians," he says, is to make "appeals to the rich and powerful" (98), but he cites no examples later than Robert Owen. "What utopians of all kinds try to do," says Ollman, is achieve economic and social power first and then political power, rather than the other way around (99). This characterization, however, while applying to a few such as John Holloway, does not apply to most of those who theorize about future societies.

But — and here's the truly encouraging thing — after this extended critique of utopian thinking, Ollman asks whether "the reasons that kept Marx from integrating more of his vision of communism into his analysis of capitalism still apply," and he concludes that they do not.

> Projecting communism as a realistic and desirable alternative inherent in the workings of capitalist society, providing sufficient detail to make it comprehensible, attractive, and believable, has become one of the more urgent tasks of socialist scholarship (101).

Whether "communism" (in Ollman's utopian sense) is inherent in capitalism, the urgency of discussing the future is increasingly evident.

IV. Post-Capitalist Possibilities

In resisting presenting more than the basic principles of socialism, Magdoff and Magdoff write,

> If the new society is to be socialist, it won't be constructed along the lines of models designed by intellectuals or parties. Socialism by its very nature must be built by the people in accord with their wishes (54).

Hahnel provides a powerful response to arguments of this sort: There are those who

> claim that describing how better to make economic decisions is totalitarian because it robs those who will live in post-capitalist economies of their democratic right to manage their economy as they see fit when the time comes. This argument is nonsense. Since when did discussing difficult and momentous issues in advance impede deliberative democracy rather than advance it? Only if those debating such matters attempt to impose their formulas on future generations would this be a problem. And I know of none who discuss *democratic* post-capitalist possibilities who have any such pretentions (166).

One such post-capitalist possibility is market socialism (which, contrary to Foster [p. 16] and Magdoff and Magdoff [p. 48], is not based on the Chinese model). There are several market socialist models.

John Roemer has proposed a "coupon economy" where everyone is given a share of society's assets. As Hahnel shows, however, the benefits of such a system would be small in terms of equalizing income (even though improving the income distribution is, in Roemer's view, his model's main virtue). Additionally, Hahnel notes that under a coupon economy there would eventually be highly unequal profit income, and work relations would remain unchanged.

Other market socialist variants feature employee-managed firms. But here, even without property income, labor markets will distribute labor income unfairly. Economic activities coordinated through markets — whether under private or public enterprise market systems — are inevitably inefficient and antisocial. And as firms respond to market pressures, there will be strong incentives to allow class divisions to grow between workers and their managers, and worker self-management will atrophy (173). Hahnel quotes market-socialism advocate Tom Weisskopf admitting some of these problems:

> under market socialism there must be some people occupying positions of key decision-making responsibility, and in all likelihood such people will have higher incomes as well as greater power than most of the rest of the population . . . . There would be ample scope for inequalities associated with differential skills, talents and responsibilities (180).

Another model is community-based economics, where society is broken up into small-scale, relatively self-sufficient, democratic communities. Hahnel identifies several serious problems with community-based economics.

Hahnel notes that, "unlike many versions of market socialism and democratic planning, no 'model' of community-based economics is a real model in the sense that it specifies rules and procedures for how to make all the decisions that must be made in any economy. For this reason all versions of community-based economics are really 'visions,' not coherent 'models'" (182).

Moreover, there is no clear explanation for exactly how self-sufficient the communities are supposed to be. Under Murray Bookchin's version, no community need accept a division of labor it opposes, meaning that those who want the least cooperation can impose their will. This means, for example, that communities that are fortunately endowed can reject redistribution to their less fortunate neighbors.

In addition, there are no clear mechanisms for decision-making within the communities. Several thousand people cannot make all the necessary economic decisions in one big meeting. Nor can decisions be left up to individual workgroups, given that their choices have effects on others.

The model of a post-capitalist economy that Hahnel puts forward is called participatory economics, a model that he, along with Michael Albert, have been developing, promoting, and refining for more than two decades. The basic features of the model — spelled out in much greater detail in some of their other writings — are as follows:

- Economic production is carried out by workers councils. Each job is composed of tasks — as in any economy — but instead of several desirable and empowering tasks being bundled together into one job and several undesirable and disempowering tasks being bundled together into another job, each job is made up of a mix of the two sorts of tasks, so that everyone has a "balanced job complex" — of roughly the same level of desirability and empowerment. Balanced job complexes do not mean an end to specialization. (An artist would do a mix of desirable/empowering and undesirable/disempowering art tasks; a scientist would do a mix of science tasks.) And though Hahnel doesn't make it clear in this book, it is clarified elsewhere that no assumption is being made that everyone is intellectually equivalent; equalizing empowerment does not mean equalizing intelligence. There are empowering jobs at many different levels of intellect, from figuring out how to best to accomplish some other tasks, to determining how best to satisfy consumers, to planning for the future.[15]

- Remuneration is based on the principle of economic justice discussed earlier: namely, remuneration according to effort, with effort being judged by one's workmates. For people who put in the same number of work hours at roughly the same level of intensity, their remuneration is the same.

- Production proposals are put forward by workers' councils, and consumption requests by nested consumption councils — which incorporate the consumption requests of individuals, living units, neighborhoods, regions, and the whole society. There is then an iterative participatory planning process that tries to reconcile the production proposals and the consumption requests, getting them more and more in sync with each iteration. The process is helped along by Iteration Facilitation Boards, which have no power to make decisions (unlike planners in central planning models) or even to monopolize information, since the social costs and benefits of all the requests and proposals from each level are available for all to see and decisions made democratically. The process does not implicitly favor individual consumption requests over social requests (as markets do).

Various criticisms have been raised regarding this model, and Hahnel seeks to address some of the main ones here. He shows in some detail how the model provides the right incentives to promote efficiency and innovation and sufficient incentives to induce people to work and to educate or train themselves. He shows that the model provides at least as much freedom as other systems — no system, for example, can allow everyone to have the job they most desire (if we were all poets and baseball players, everyone would starve). Though not offering "absolute" freedom, which is internally contradictory whenever people's desires to do as they please interfere with one another, a participatory economy is consistent with the general principle that "restrictions on the right of some individuals are justified when they are necessary to protect more fundamental rights of others" (246).

In replying to the criticism that a participatory economy requires too much time spent on information processing and meetings, Hahnel first notes that the time for these activities under capitalism is far longer than usually realized. Second, he points out that while democratic decision making may take more "meeting time" than autocratic decision making, democratic decisions take less time to monitor and enforce than autocratic ones (218). He then argues that critics overstate the meeting time required in a participatory economy. Here I think he goes too far. Councils and federations of councils, he says, don't hold face-to-face meetings with others, or even representatives of others; they simply "submit their own proposals and vote thumbs up or down on the proposals of others" (219). After a few iterations of the plan, he says, IFBs could define several feasible plans consistent with the already settled contours of the plan — and then people could vote on these "without ever meeting or debating at all" (219). Hahnel is right that deciding such things in a big meeting would be impractical and a nightmare, but the only two choices are not one big meeting or the sort of referendum democracy that Hahnel is proposing. Referenda without the opportunity for debate seem to me contrary to the social deliberation that ought to be part of democratic governance. Elsewhere, I have proposed a mechanism of nested councils that I think can offer the opportunity of democratic deliberation without prohibitive meeting time.[16]

Another criticism of participatory economics revolves around the question of how "effort" could be measured. Hahnel points out that the alternative — calculating remuneration by output — is complicated as well. (How, for example, do you determine the output of individuals who work in groups?) Critics raise issues of inadequate information, gaming the system, cliques, and other interpersonal dynamics. Hahnel argues convincingly that no one knows better what your effort is than those who work closely with you. There might be some cases where a small democratic workplace is less able to deal with a loafer than is an authoritarian workplace. (For example, Hahnel quotes a report by Paul Burrows regarding a bookstore run on participatory economic principles, which indicates that people sometimes let grievances or inequities persist for fear that the potential conflict with a coworker would "create a more negative work environment than the continuation of the inequity or grievance itself" [369-70].) But I think Hahnel gives an appropriate answer to his critics when he notes that the participatory economics model doesn't insist on any one way of a workplace rating its members' contributions. Some workplaces could choose to have each member of the workgroup openly giving a rating to each other member; other workplaces might set up an effort-rating committee, maybe even composed of outsiders. Hahnel's guess — and I agree — is that in practice people would choose more transparent and participatory schemes.

Favoritism and even systematic discrimination can of course intrude into the rating process, but these are dangers (and realities) under other economic systems as well, and there's no reason workers couldn't have some sort of grievance procedure to mitigate these sorts of problems. As Hahnel summarizes,

> Ultimately the question is not whether people's efforts, or personal sacrifices in work, will be perfectly estimated, because, of course they will not be. Instead the question is if most people will feel they are being treated fairly most of the time — and if not, if people feel they have reasonable opportunities for redress (229).

There is one other problem with the effort ratings, though, that I do not believe Hahnel adequately addresses. What is to prevent a group of coworkers from all exaggerating the effort of one another? Hahnel writes,

> to prevent the possibility of "effort rating inflation" the average effort rating a council awards its members cannot exceed the worker council's ratio of the social benefits of its outputs divided by the social costs of its inputs . . . (190).

But consider two workplaces. Assume that in both workplaces the social benefits of the output and the social costs of the inputs are the same (say, the societal average). How can we tell whether this average output was achieved by having workers of average skill put in an average amount of effort, by having workers of above average skill put in a below average amount of effort, or by having workers of below average skill putting in an above average amount of effort? For workplaces with large numbers of workers, we can assume that the law of averages will apply; but for small workplaces, the workforce could easily be below or above average in skill level.

Some critics worry that in a participatory economy individual workers could fake ineptitude as a way to get remunerated at a higher level for a given level of output. I don't think this sort of gaming by an individual is much of a danger, because your co-workers would see your daily efforts (and could revise their estimates of your abilities based on later observations). But there won't be this same sort of firsthand knowledge to thwart a whole workplace from inflating its effort ratings. So while I think there are good reasons to think that this sort of cheating won't be common — the dynamics of the system tend to promote cooperation over competition, there are high levels of transparency, the consequences of antisocial behavior don't snowball into greater power to engage in further such behavior — I don't think the social benefits to social cost ratio will prevent it.[17]

A final problem with the participatory economics model is the question of whether it actually accomplishes Hahnel's goal of economic self-management: that is, letting everyone have a say proportional to the degree to which they are affected by the decision. I think it does give people zero input where they are affected not at all and equal input when they are affected equally — and these are important achievements of the model — but does it really give me one-third the say in a decision relative to someone who is affected by the decision three times as much as me? Unlike some aspects of the model which are documented in great mathematical detail,[18] the claim that the model yields self-management seems to me unproven.

V. Criticisms of the Model

MUCH OF HAHNEL'S DESCRIPTION and defense of the participatory economics model will be familiar to readers of his other books, those of Michael Albert, and those of the two of them together. Here Hahnel offers two new aspects of the model. Both of them seem to me problematic, even partly inconsistent with some basic principles of the rest of the model. Stung by criticism that, in the words of one Left Green, participatory economics is nothing but "industrialism with a human face" (195), Hahnel is determined to show how a participatory economy would protect the environment. He first points out, quite usefully and sensibly, that it makes no sense to call for zero pollution or zero depletion of nonrenewable resources. "Unless we plan to vacate planet earth, zero pollution and no resource depletion are impossible. But fortunately, they are also unnecessary" (196). Our goal, he says, must be sustainability, not zero impact, and he claims that a participatory economy can attain this goal better than any alternative system.

> In each iteration in the annual planning procedure there is an indicative price for every pollutant in every relevant region representing the current estimate of the damage, or social cost of releasing a unit of that pollutant into the region.

The determination of what is a pollutant and what is not is made by federations representing those who live in the region, aided by experts. The relevant region is wherever people believe they are affected by the pollutant in question. Workplaces, in generating their production proposals will then include the cost of any pollutants they propose to emit as part of the total social cost of their proposal, just as are other costs of production.

> The consumer federation for the relevant region looks at the indicative price for a unit of every pollutant that impacts the region and decides how many units it wishes to allow to be emitted. The federation can decide they do not wish to permit any units of a pollutant to be emitted — in which case no worker council operating in the region will be allowed to emit any units of that pollutant. But, if the federation decides to allow X units of a pollutant to be emitted in the region, then the regional federation is 'credited' with X times the indicative price for that pollutant (199).

There seem to me two things wrong with this procedure. First, by giving veto power to a region it will lead to a more extreme version of the NIMBY (not in my backyard) problem that plagues capitalism. Say we need a vaccine to save millions of lives, but the factory that produces the vaccine pollutes. Where do we locate the factory? The region where the pollution would cause the least harm says we do not want any pollution, hence we veto construction of the factory in our region. Presumably, the society would not let itself just die out; some region would step up and be socially responsible and volunteer to have the factory built within its borders. But this is nothing more than a giant game of chicken — who's going to concede first — with the most socially irresponsible regions benefiting most.

A key principle of a participatory economy is supposed to be that people have input into a decision in proportion to how much they are affected. But allowing veto power is a very different decision-making rule. And why allow veto power for environmental issues but not for other equally important issues? I suspect Hahnel has allowed the complaints of environmentalists to cause him to elevate environmental protection to the most important social concern, trumping all others. Perhaps it is the most important, but that needs to be determined by some democratic procedure.

Moreover, the definition of "an environmental issue" is not well-defined. Is it only the emission of physical pollutants? What about noise pollution? What about maintaining open spaces or picturesque vistas? Surely a participatory economy will want to have at least as broad an understanding of the term "environmental" as do environmental impact statements (EIS) in the United States today. Here, for example is what is considered in the EIS for construction on the site of the former World Trade Center (www.renewnyc.com/content/pdfs/eis/04-12-2004/vol1/_iAbstractOLD.pdf):

> potential impacts to land use and public policy, urban design and visual resources, historic resources, open space, shadows, community facilities, socioeconomic conditions, neighborhood character, hazardous materials, infrastructure/safety/security, traffic and parking, transit and pedestrians, air quality, noise, coastal zone, floodplain, natural resources, electromagnetic fields, environmental justice, and construction.

All these impacts, of course, are worthy of serious consideration. But would we really want to give veto power to those who are affected by any of these considerations?

Even without the veto, Hahnel's environmental procedure seems inconsistent with his general decision-making rule. The problem is that he defines the relevant region as that geographic area where residents believe they are affected by a pollutant, without taking into account the *degree to which* people are affected. Whenever some are affected a great deal and others very little (though not zero), Hahnel's procedure yields a bizarre result. Say there is a proposal to build some facility in a town which causes huge amounts of pollution for the residents of the town and trivial, but nonzero, pollution throughout the county. The relevant region under Hahnel's definition is the county. The people in the county want the facility built and they agree to allow X units of the pollutant to be emitted, for which they will be compensated. County residents then receive compensation for the pollution, but the town residents, who are harmed much more by the pollution, receive the same compensation as those who are harmed much less.

I think the way to make this work is to use nested regions. That is, each geographic area where the environmental impact is different is considered a separately-impacted region. And each region then has its own indicative price that must be compensated. So in the example above, the indicative price for the pollution caused by the facility is one thing for its impact on the town's residents and a far lesser price for its impact on the county outside the town. The facility will then be "charged" for the indicative price for the pollution it is causing in the town plus the indicative price for the (lesser amount of) pollution it is causing in the county beyond the town.

Some will object that even eliminating the veto and using nested regions, Hahnel's procedure presumes that we can actually calculate indicative prices that reflect the dollar value of the harm pollution causes. This objection actually has two parts: (a) that environmental harm cannot be compensated for, that unbalanced ecosystems are beyond compensation; and (b) that most environmental harm does not lend itself to quantitative assessment, as opposed to qualitative statement. I think, however, that Hahnel is quite right that zero harm is not a standard real human beings in real societies can adopt. And while not all environmental impacts can be measured quantitatively, we are always implicitly attaching cost assessments to our qualitative judgments (would we forego $1 million in lost output to maintain, say, a pristine wilderness? what about $1 billion or $100 billion? — which of course translates to that many more hospitals and schools, etc.). The best we can do is strive to make decisions about what we do and what we impact as democratically as possible, informed by as much information as possible.

HAHNEL'S SECOND ADDITION to the participatory economics model deals with the international economy. As he poses the question:

> Is it possible for a country practicing participatory economics to function in a global economy that is still largely capitalist? Is it possible for a country seeking to practice participatory economics to benefit from international economic relationships without betraying its core principles? (208).

His answer is that:

> As long as a participatory economy is interacting with a wealthier economy, its principles of justice do not prevent it from trying to strike the best bargain it can get. A moral problem only arises when a participatory economy interacts with a poorer economy. But a participatory economy can always agree to terms of trade that would give a poorer trading partner more than 50% of the efficiency gain from specialization and trade. . . . As long as efficiency gains from international economic relations are shared according to this "greater than 50% rule," both the participatory economy and its poorer international partners will benefit, but the benefits will be shared in a way so the gap between the wealthier participatory economy and its poorer international partners is diminished by their interaction (208).[19]

Hahnel notes that it is no argument against applying his 50 percent rule to point out that the citizens of the poorer economy have not committed themselves to participatory economics or its distributive principles; after all, he says, it is wrong to torture a prisoner of war even if that prisoner has not agreed to refrain from torturing me (209). But I think his 50 percent rule suffers from another problem: it is based on an assessment of the relative wealth of another economy as a whole, rather than of the specific individuals who stand to gain or lose from the transaction. That is, should a participatory economy in a rich society apply the 50 percent rule when buying coffee or shirts from a much poorer country? The rule says yes, but what if the entire benefit from the transaction goes to the rich capitalist who owns the coffee plantation or the garment factory, with the impoverished workers getting nothing? Or what about selling goods to a firm in a rich country, where in fact the beneficiaries are the residents of an impoverished neighborhood? In dealing with a trading partner whose income distribution is moderately egalitarian, we can be fairly confident in assessing whether the beneficiaries of a trade are better off than us or not, but in operating within a capitalist world this won't generally be the case. And because most economies do not provide outsiders (or most insiders, for that matter) with sufficient information to judge the actual impact of a trade, it is hard to see how the 50 percent rule could be applied in practice.

Perhaps a partial solution is to establish organizations in the participatory economy similar to those set up by "fair trade" groups and labor unions in rich countries that investigate labor conditions abroad and issue advisories to consumers. These organizations would determine (as best they could, given the limited information) the actual beneficiaries in international transactions and provide reports to those responsible for importing or exporting. But it has to be acknowledged that these determinations — and hence the application of the 50 percent rule — would not be easy.

One other problem with the 50 percent rule is that it would allow a participatory economy to allocate 51percent of the benefit of a trade to an economy that was far, far poorer. This would mean that the income gap between the two countries would narrow, but would not be eliminated for centuries. Presumably, the greater the gap, the higher the percentage of the benefit ought to accrue to the poorer party.

Hahnel proposes the 50 percent rule simply to show that a participatory economy can participate in the global economy without violating its core principles. He is putting forward a rule that tells us which trades are permissible, not which trades among the many permissible trades we ought to choose. There is no reason that political criteria cannot play a role here — favor trade with more rather than less egalitarian or participatory systems, and be averse to trade with more rather than less exploitative or oppressive systems — just as current U.S. law (in a much more modest way) may prohibit imports made by child or prison labor.

In his discussion of international economic interactions, Hahnel refers not only to trade, but to interest rates and profit rates generated abroad (which should also be subject, he says, to the 50 percent rule). Many Leftists will immediately dismiss loaning money to or investing money in poor countries as activities that an equitable economy should never engage in. Unfortunately, Hahnel doesn't offer a rationale for their legitimacy. The issue is worth considering.

Certainly a rich country that has transformed to a participatory economy would not eschew giving foreign aid to poor countries. We of course want rich capitalist countries to give as much of their aid as possible in the form of grants, not loans, so as to minimize the dangers of the debt trap, to reduce the continuing control the rich nation maintains over the poor one, and in general because a $1 billion grant is worth far more than a $1 billion loan. In the real world of finite resources, for every dollar in grants that a donor nation can afford, it is likely to be able to afford many times as many dollars in loans. (Ignoring issues of collateral and default, a loan at less than the market rate of interest is a grant — but not of the face value of the loan, but of the difference between the market interest rate and the subsidized interest rate. So a loan of $1 billion at 1 percent interest a year, when the prevailing market interest rate is 3 percent is equivalent to a grant of 2 percent of a billion, or $20 million per year.) So there's probably no reason why a rich participatory economy could not give some of its aid in the form of subsidized loans (especially if it also asks for less collateral than a market loan would demand) without violating any of its principles. Such loans might readily be offered in the circumstance where a poor country needs financial assistance to carry out some project or experiment in equitable economic relations or democracy. But it seems much harder to justify a loan to support some activity where we know the benefits will be distributed very unequally within the poor country. In a case where people were starving, but we knew that our aid — whether in the form of loans or grants or even bags of rice — would end up disproportionately, though not entirely, in the hands of local elites, we still might do it if the situation were dire enough, though we'd surely try to figure out which method would most benefit those at the bottom.

In all the examples discussed thus far, the 50 percent rule doesn't really apply, because the rich country is seeking no benefit at all. What about a case where there are gains to be had by both countries? Say our participatory economy, P, has a great need for a particular rare plant that grows only in country X. (The plant is needed for environment-enhancing projects that the participatory economy engages in to a much greater extent than do other countries.) Assume that X has a capitalist economy.[20] Country X says we don't have the capital or the technology to produce this plant, but you can either lend us the money to establish a company to do so or invest and set up your own company, hiring local labor. Under the first option, it might be possible for P to require, as a condition of its loan, that the company be organized on participatory economic principles, or at least on relatively egalitarian principles. (In the capitalist world, banks and other lenders impose all sorts of requirements on borrowers, often highly inegalitarian in their impact.) Under the second option, P could set up a participatory economic company, which of course would have to interact with the non-participatory economic units within X, but at least internally the company would reflect the economics of equitable cooperation. But that means that the company is not "owned" by P or citizens of P (as with traditional direct investment), but by the workforce of the company, mostly citizens of X. And what happens when the workforce votes to fire their workmates from P, jack up the "price" of the plant, and so on. The company workforce is not part of the same political or economic system as the residents of P and so many of the dynamics that encourage people to see their shared interests in different workplaces within P are unlikely to be operating in this case. In short, it seems hard to imagine the foreign investment option being able to work in a manner consistent with participatory economic principles.

The question of how to relate to the international economy has a more immediate relevance: by analogy, it raises the question of how an experimental institution built on participatory economic principles but existing within a larger capitalist society ought to relate to other economic units in the society. Hahnel's notes that his 50 percent rule can be applied in economic dealings among producer and consumer cooperatives (358), but the rule can be applied more generally to serve as a guideline for how a participatory institution should relate to the non-participatory outside economy.

VI. How to Get There

A QUESTION OFTEN ASKED of those who put forward visions and models for the future is whether there is a way to get there and if so, how. Sometimes this question is used simply to stifle any theorizing about the future at all, but it is an important question, one that Hahnel takes up in the final section of his book.

Basically, Hahnel offers a three part answer: (1) We need to work on reform campaigns and in reform movements, both because they make life better and because victories encourage people to ask for more. (2) We need to pursue reforms in the right way, continually pointing out the limits of reform campaigns and movements, both in order to avoid raising false expectations and to persuade people to look beyond a patched-up capitalism. (3) We need to get involved in real experiments in equitable cooperation — and to do so *now* — mindful of their limits within capitalism, so that we can continually refine our visions of the future based on actual practice, as well as to give more and more people the benefits of experiencing different kinds of social relations.

Hahnel rejects the idea that there are such things as "nonreformist reforms" that are qualitatively different from and better than "reformist reforms." Every reform, if successful, "will make capitalism less harmful to some extent" (154-55). This might seem to suggest that Hahnel thinks all reforms are equally valuable to pursue, as long as they are pursued in the right way. But in fact, he does believe that some reforms lend themselves much better than others to long-term social change. For example, he notes that

> Beside judging if a particular reform is "winnable," those who work on financial reforms must judge how the reform will affect efficiency and stability in the real economy, must ask if it will decrease rather than further increase income and wealth inequality, must consider whether it will give ordinary people more or less control over their economic destinies, and most importantly, must evaluate if winning the reform will strengthen the broad movement struggling to replace the economics of competition and greed with the economics of equitable cooperation (263).

In his chapter on "Economic Reform Campaigns," Hahnel provides an extremely useful survey of current economic reform campaigns (mostly in the United States), for each one assessing its value, discussing the best way to frame arguments on its behalf, and pointing out its limitations. He discusses financial reforms, full employment macropolicies, industrial policy, wage-led growth, rescuing welfare, tax reform, living-wage campaigns, fighting privatization, single-payer healthcare, rebuilding public education, community development initiatives, and antisprawl initiatives. Just a few sample highlights from his rich discussion are possible here.

He thinks we should campaign for full-employment macropolicies for the same reason capitalists oppose them — "it diminishes their bargaining power." But at the same time we should never tire of pointing out that capitalism will never be able to assure that every citizen has a socially useful job with fair compensation, and that a just economy could do so (265-66). Industrial policy reforms have great danger — they can be hijacked by corporations and make the economy less democratic (as occurred in France, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan); but when unions and cooperatives and grassroots organizations are involved in the process, industrial policy can prove extremely valuable. Hahnel concludes that "industrial policy reform work within capitalism is recommended only for movements fighting for equitable cooperation that are already very strong" (269).

Leftists have long campaigned for progressive taxes with the argument that the rich should pay more because they can afford more. While not rejecting this argument, Hahnel notes that a stronger argument is that, because people should be remunerated based on effort, the rich on average deserve less of what they earn than do those with lower incomes (277).

Critics of increasing wages through living wage campaigns often argue that higher wages mean higher unemployment for society. Hahnel presents theoretical and empirical evidence to refute this claim. In any particular local area, on the other hand, the criticism has more force, but, says Hahnel, "the lessons those working on living wage campaigns need to draw from this is not to give up, but to expand the living wage into adjoining jurisdictions, and to press for restrictions on the right of businesses to pick up and move" (279).

"In all reform campaigns," notes Hahnel, "there is always tension between those who want to hold out for more far reaching, significant changes and those who preach the practical necessity of a more incrementalist approach." The struggle for healthcare reform in the United States "is a rare case where the incremental approach is actually *less* practical than fighting for significant reform because there is simply no way to extend adequate coverage to all and control escalating costs through the private insurance industry" (283). In this case, "settling for anything less than universal, single-payer coverage is not only immoral, it is impractical as well" (284).

Hahnel summarizes his advice regarding reform campaigns this way:

> While a necessary first step, the reforms outlined in this chapter will suffer the same fate as the best efforts of twentieth century reformers unless twenty-first century activists never tire of explaining what economic justice and democracy mean, unless we take every opportunity to explain why private enterprise and markets are fundamentally incompatible with equitable cooperation, and unless reforms are accompanied by expanding experiments in equitable cooperation and new safeguards within progressive economic movements (291).

Turning from specific reform campaigns to economic reform movements, Hahnel assesses the potential and pitfalls of working in the labor movement, the anticorporate movement, the environmental movement, the consumer movement, the poor people's movement, and the antiglobalization movement. In each case he tries to show "how people can participate in ways that are not only effective at winning important reforms but also build momentum for a fuller program of equitable cooperation" (295). Again, there is only room here to discuss a few of Hahnel's interesting observations.

In his consideration of the environmental movement, Hahnel analyzes two approaches to dealing with the problem of pollution — pollution taxes and tradable pollution permits, the latter having been endorsed in some cases by the Environmental Defense Fund — and shows why the tax approach is far preferable. (However, it should be noted that Hahnel seems to only be considering policies on a national level, not the international level, where the absence of a taxing authority may make tradable emission rights more compelling.[21]) Hahnel also argues that it is critical for the environmental movement to build powerful political coalitions and that it is just as important for the movement to come up with policies that "fully compensate different categories of ordinary people" who might be harmed by environmental regulations "as it is . . . to come up with policies that stop environmental destruction" (315).

For the antiglobalization movement, the key challenge, says Hahnel, is how to avoid dividing the movement along north-south lines over the issues of labor and environmental standards.[22] Hahnel writes:

> I strongly suspect there are other reforms that would better preserve the living standards of first world workers than fighting to achieve some level of universal labor standards, especially if labor standards are achieved only in exchange for further trade and capital liberalization. And if pressing for labor standards in trade treaties threatens to drive a wedge between organizations representing first and Third World workers in the anti-globalization movement while other reforms do not, it is almost surely a counterproductive strategy for slowing the race to the bottom effect. In sum, the AFL-CIO would do well to take their cue from organizations representing Third World workers regarding how the AFL-CIO can best help them improve their bargaining power, because the members of the AFL-CIO will be best served by whatever helps Third World workers most (335).

In his analysis of the labor movement, Hahnel persuasively argues that if this movement is to help prepare people for thinking beyond capitalism, then labor unions must be democratic. It's a disgrace, says Hahnel, that unions are often even less democratic than mainstream politics. One problem is corruption — which radicals need to build reform movements to fight, not bringing the government in — but another is electoral rules that heavily tilt elections toward incumbents.

Hahnel asserts that unfortunately "most unions have fallen into the ideological trap of justifying wage demands on the basis of the market value of their member's contributions" rather than by arguing that economic justice requires remuneration based on effort. "This approach fails to challenge the legitimacy of capitalist profits and CEO super salaries, and creates obstacles to solidarity among workers in different industries and occupations." Hahnel asks what the best way is for a union to convince its members they are being unfairly compensated. Is it to "[t]ell them they are being paid less than their marginal revenue product" or that they are being paid less than their sacrifices entitle them to? (299) The latter, says Hahnel, is not just a more sound ethical argument, but more convincing as well. But I think the task for radicals in unions is tougher than Hahnel indicates. Of course an argument in terms of marginal revenue product has little appeal. But there is another argument that has lots of intuitive appeal, with the same dangerous political consequences: telling union members that they are not being paid more than others with fewer skills. (I recall a flyer put out by my college faculty union comparing our salaries to those of public school teachers in nearby communities.) I agree that we need to make the case for remuneration based on effort, but it won't be as easy as Hahnel suggests.

Hahnel says that a good step in the right direction would be for unions themselves to pay wages based on the remuneration-for-effort principle. "The average wage of elected union leaders and staff members should be the same as the average wage of those they represent." This makes perfect sense if workers earn roughly the same wage. But in many workplaces wages are a function of seniority. One can discuss whether there is any justification for this — it might for example reflect the differential need of people of different ages, for which seniority is a proxy — and we can fight for future wage increases to tend to bring the top and bottom closer together rather than further apart, but in any event the practice is currently widespread. Do we want workers with above-average experience to have to take a pay cut to work for the union? (And, correspondingly, that less experienced workers have a financial incentive to hold on to union office?) Presumably, our union work won't get us very far demanding that those earning above average wages should have their incomes cut.[23]

Work in unions has always been difficult for radicals. Some have sought positions of union leadership, which usually requires all sorts of compromises with radical principles. Others have remained in the rank-and-file, and joined one revolutionary sect or another for psychological and social support. Hahnel rejects both these options, though he doesn't really give an argument against the second approach other than the implicit argument that he disagrees with the political views of the existing sects. But if we replaced "revolutionary sect" with "a caucus or organization committed to equitable cooperation, economic justice, and democracy," I don't see what the problem would be.[24]

Hahnel offers another option: activists who want to serve as union officials should commit to "equitable living communities" as a way to avoid the temptations of corruption and to assure coworkers of their political integrity. In an endnote he explains that "Equitable living 'communities' need not be geographically defined or encompass all aspects of a person's life. While many experiments reviewed in [the next chapter] have taken this form, more flexible alternatives are also discussed" (402n4). But his brief discussion in the next chapter (372-74) makes clear that instances of such non-geographic, non all-encompassing equitable cooperation do not yet exist anywhere and the details of any such arrangement have not been worked out. One possibility, he says, is that people could exchange their entire annual incomes for incomes based on effort (taking account, he says, of tax obligations and expenses for dependents, medical care, and retirement). Such arrangements seem to me admirable, like Peter Singer's proposal that people in rich countries give away 10 percent of their income, but, also like Singer's idea, this is not persuasive as a strategy for social change. Hahnel admits this would require a level of trust far beyond what his participatory economics model requires and in that respect instead of encouraging people to take equitable cooperation models seriously might have precisely the opposite effect. Hahnel says "We need to create more ways for people to make partial commitments to live according to the principles of equitable cooperation short of joining full scale intentional communities or working in participatory economics collectives" (372). I think he's right, but this doesn't strike me as one of those ways.

Hahnel is persuasive, however, in arguing that the Left needs to promote experiments in equitable cooperation, not as "the" road to social change, but as a part of the process. Hahnel surveys a large number of such experiments, ranging from important efforts in Kerala, India, involving millions of people, to workplaces of half a dozen people. Included in his discussion are local currency systems, worker participation, worker ownership, worker takeovers in Argentina, consumer cooperatives, participatory budgeting, and collectives in the United States and Canada that are explicitly organized according to the principles of participatory economics. All such experiments have their limits given that they take place in an inhospitable capitalist environment. But they also have real value:

> They provide palpable evidence that a better world is possible. They are an invaluable testing ground for ideas about how to achieve

> equitable cooperation. Living experiments in equitable cooperation begin the process of establishing new norms and expectations among broad segments of the population beyond the core of anti-capitalist activists. And experiments in equitable cooperation provide opportunities for activists in anti-capitalist reform campaigns suffering from burn out to rejuvenate themselves instead of drifting back into personal lives in the capitalist mainstream (341).

Hahnel doesn't avoid hard-headed analysis of different sorts of experiments. He examines local currency systems, for example, and finds they are useful in some respects, but "counterproductive when participants deceive themselves about how much can be accomplished and see nothing wrong with allowing the laws of supply and demand to determine the terms of their labor exchanges" (345). Worker-owned firms, he finds, are constrained in many ways by capitalist dynamics. Incrementally increasing the number of such firms "is *not* a feasible transition strategy" to the economics of equitable cooperation, but it can be an important *part* of such a strategy. Participatory budgeting, as pioneered in Porto Alegre, Brazil, had some potential but "has been reduced to a way to coopt citizens into deciding how to distribute a budgetary shortfall they never agreed to in the first place, and many Workers Party activists have started calling it 'participatory austerity'" (363).

Hahnel summarizes his view of experiments in equitable cooperation:

> there is little point in either pretending experiments are flawless or vilifying those struggling to create something better. What is needed is to nurture and improve those that already exist, to build new ones that can reach out to people who continue to live in their traditional communities, and eventually to link experiments in cooperation together to form a visible alternative to capitalism in its midst (374).

Such experiments are, for Hahnel, a crucial part of what the Left ought to be doing:

> Since both reform work and building alternatives within capitalism are necessary, neither is inherently more crucial or strategic than the other. Neither is more 'revolutionary' or 'reformist' than the other (380).

The other thing the Left ought to be doing, of course, is giving serious, non-dogmatic thought to both what it is we want and how we can best get there. Hahnel certainly doesn't have all the answers, but there is no doubt that his book is a major contribution in this regard and should be a taking off point for subsequent analysis.

NOTES

1. See, for example, Albert and Hahnel, *Looking Forward*, Boston: South End Press, 1991; Albert and Hahnel, *The Political Economy of Participatory Economics*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991; Albert, *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*, London: Verso, 2003; and, in these pages, Justin Podur, "Participatory Economics: An Interview with Michael Albert," *New Politics*, no. 35, Summer 2003.

2. Thus, in Hahnel's view, a low income is not a "punishment," but simply an indication that someone's personal preference for intensity of work happens to be below the societal average (28) (though at one point, Hahnel slips and says that in his preferred economy there are "material penalties for below-average efforts" [226] which carries the implication of wrong-doing).

3. See John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971.

4. Hahnel gives a simple explanation of Okishio's result in his *The ABC's of Political Economy: A Modern Approach*, London: Pluto Press, 2002, especially 123-25.

5. Marxists of course make reference to the petite bourgeoisie, but in the standard Marxist view this group was destined to collapse into the proletariat.

6. Citations from Maurice Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control*, 1917-1921, London: Solidarity, 1970, 24 (Lenin, *State and Revolution*), 40-41 (Lenin, *The Immediate Tasks of the Proletariat Government*), 66 (Trotsky, *Terrorism and Communism*). Hahnel notes, "Stalin was by no means the only communist leader to preach the virtues of 'one man management.' Lenin and Trotsky campaigned against worker self-management in Soviet enterprises and proclaimed the advantages of 'one man management' long before Stalin. And Mao in China and Che Guevara in Cuba were no less adamant

in their support for 'one man management' as opposed to worker councils" (391n16).

7. Though counting himself a libertarian socialist, Hahnel prefers to call his vision "equitable cooperation" rather than "socialism." Michael Albert made an argument to dispense with using the term socialism for our goal, given its sorry history, in "Is Socialism Still on The Agenda?" *New Politics*, no. 30, Winter 2001. I lean in favor of using the term socialism for what I want precisely because I don't want to use the term socialist to apply to the grotesque societies that have called themselves socialist.

8. Volume 57, no. 3, July-August 2005. Hahnel notes that *Monthly Review*'s former editor, Paul Sweezy, wrote to him back in the 1970s turning down a submission, but indicating that while he favored scientific socialism to Hahnel's utopian socialism, he considered it an open question which would prove more insightful and wished Hahnel the best of luck in his work (390n3).

9. "Renewing Socialism," *Monthly Review*, July-August 2005, p. 1.

10. "The Knowledge of a Better World," *Monthly Review*, July-August 2005, 62.

11. For Foster, it wasn't until the 1930s that the Soviet Union ceased being "in any meaningful sense socialist" (11). But, of course, it was as early as 1918 that Lenin wrote "our task is to study the state capitalism of the Germans, to spare no effort in copying it" and not "shrink from adopting *dictatorial* methods to hasten the copying of it," and in practice the Bolsheviks dismantled most of the incipient socialist structures — workers' councils, collectives, and so on — by 1921 (see Brinton, *The Bolsheviks and Workers' Control* [quote p. 42]).

12. "Approaching Socialism," *Monthly Review*, July-August 2005, 45.

13. Bertell Ollman, "The Utopian Vision of the Future (Then and Now): A Marxist Critique," *Monthly Review*, July-August 2005, 78.

14. As a totally unscientific, but nonetheless suggestive experiment, when the words "Marxism" and "capitalism" are put into the Amazon.com search engine, you get 23,524 titles; when "Marxism" and "utopia" are entered, you get 21. One might also note that Hahnel, who has been among the most vigorous Left voices pushing for attention to vision, has also produced major analyses and critiques of capitalism, including *Quiet Revolution in Welfare Economics*, Princeton University Press, 1990 (with Michael Albert), *The ABC's of Political Economy*, and *Panic Rules! Everything You Need to Know About the Global Economy*, Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 1999. The same can be said of many others who have written on vision, including Michael Albert, Murray Bookchin, David Korten, John Roemer, and Tom Weisskopf, among others.

15. See Albert, *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*, 107.

16. See "Parpolity: Political Vision for A Good Society," revised November, 2005, www.zmag.org/shalompol.htm.

17. This being said, however, it should be noted that even if no mechanism were devised to deal with this problem, it would hardly lead to the demise of a participatory economic system. In the United States, for example, some 12-14 percent of all tax monies due are not paid, even after enforcement measures, without leading to social collapse (see Internal Revenue Service, "Understanding the Tax Gap," FS-2005-14, March 2005, www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=137246,00.html).

18. Especially in Albert and Hahnel, *The Political Economy of Participatory Economics*.

19. Hahnel discusses efficiency gains from international trade — and why trade usually aggravates global inequality — in chapter 8 of *The ABCs of Political Economy* and appendix B of *Panic Rules!*

20. In a later chapter on "Experiments in Equitable Cooperation," in which Hahnel assesses the lessons of the Mondragon cooperatives in Spain, he urges "stubborn adherence" to the principle that cooperatives should lend only to members or to other cooperatives (355), which suggests that Hahnel may approve only of international loans to other participatory economies. But his analogy about torturing prisoners suggests the opposite: that by applying his 50 percent rule a participatory economy can loan to or invest in a non-participatory economy without violating its principles.

21. See Tom Athanasiou and Paul Baer, *Dead Heat: Global Justice and Global Warming*, New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002.

22. Hahnel has addressed some of these matters in the pages of *New Politics* ("Globalization: Beyond Reaction, Thinking Ahead," no. 29, Summer 2000; "Imperialism, Human Rights and Protectionism," no. 30, Winter 2001) and in his book *Panic Rules!*

23. And, of course, even the worst-paid first world workers make above-average wages on a global scale.

24. One problem with many of the existing sects is that they employ "democratic centralism," a principle that says once the party or organization has reached a democratic decision, all members are bound to accept and follow it. In practice, in many such organizations the decisions are not reached democratically, but even when they are, democratic centralism will often be experienced negatively by those who are not members of the party or organization. It is extremely alienating to have a discussion with someone only to discover that no matter how persuasive your arguments, no matter how much effort you make to find some middle ground, your interlocutor is bound by democratic centralism to maintaining the party line.

Is Class Relevant?

MILTON FISK

The Philosopher and His Poor
JACQUES RANCIÈRE
Translated by J. Drury, C. Oster, and A. Parker, ed., Andrew Parker
Durham: Duke University Press, 2003

GIVING A CENTRAL ROLE to class has met with strong opposition even among those committed to radical social restructuring. After World War II, much of the opposition declared that class had ceased to play the important role it had in the early stages of capitalism. Some went so far as to say that late capitalism was classless. The movements of the 1960s against oppression gave primacy to other groupings or at least gave equal status to both non-class and class groupings.

In *The Philosopher and His Poor,* Jacques Rancière, a prolific French philosopher, labor historian, and social critic, advances an even stronger criticism. It is that any appeal to class is suspect. His criticism targets class not just in the postwar period but all the way back to Plato. In the recent neoliberal period, his criticism would apply to those who claim that corporate globalization cannot be understood without a class analysis.

Suspicions about class abounded from the 1960s through the 1980s. These suspicions were inherent in the disillusion with socialist and communist movements. This disillusion was expressed by denouncing their "totalizing character" and their "economic reductionism." Rancière shares this disillusion but tries, in this book from 1983, to explain it on a firmer footing.

There are two sides to his criticism. One side starts by questioning the point of view of the theorist who defines a lower class. The other puts in question the passivity that theories of class inevitably attribute to the lower class. The reference to the poor in Rancière's title is his own way of pointing to a lower class's lack — in the mind of theorists from Plato to Bourdieu — of capabilities those theorists possess themselves.

By beginning his discussion with Plato, the prototypical defender of elites, Rancière wants to lay the ground for showing that even the radicals he discusses — Karl Marx, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Pierre Bourdieu — are deeply committed to elitist views. His criticism of these views is that they deny the potential of those not in an elite by constructing a class to cage them in. The motive for such a denial is more a desire to protect the privilege of leadership than an insight into the limitations of a lower class.

There is a rigid division of labor in Plato's ideal city-state, with philosopher-rulers controlling the thought of workers and with workers forgoing participation in politics. Rancière notes that higher and lower forms of human nature are not the basis for this division, even though the myth that they are is useful to philosopher-rulers in discouraging workers from democratic participation. Instead of participation, the philosophers give them spectacles to applaud.

To understand Rancière's vitriolic attack on Marx, one must take notice of his use of the postmodernist theme of mixture or hybridity. Workers are more than productive machinery; they are creative in a variety of directions. They are hybrids in the sense that they are also poets, politicians, and aspirants to capitalist lifestyles. The pre-industrial artisan showed both the pro-

MILTON FISK *is Professor Emeritus of Philosophy, Indiana University-Bloomington.*

ductive and the creative side, but Marx and Engels criticized radical artisans as petty-bourgeois philistines. Without the creative side, though, the industrial worker could not be a revolutionary. Class as an economic category is then, for Rancière, useless in revolutionary theory.

Since workers are hybrids they will chase common interests with the bourgeoisie, thus behaving as citizens rather than as class members. The philosopher — Marx — and the party — the International — must step in to separate workers off from all that makes them hybrids. Rancière comments that trade unions already satisfy the interests of workers as a class, so a party will be no more successful at enabling workers in the pure, non-hybrid sense to rule than unions are. Since any class, proletarian or bourgeois, will fail in the task of ruling, it will end by dissolving itself into its members. Thus, for Rancière, class becomes an inherently inconsistent concept, leading from group unity to atomized individuals.

This interpretation of Marx makes sense only by ignoring all that Marx says about the agency of workers: Workers resist the lengthening of the working day; they have the right to political participation in the community; and they are capable of self-emancipation. Class hybridity is no stranger to Marx. Still, Rancière thinks that marking off classes amounts to treating their members as unreflective automata. Instead, for Marx, marking off classes sets different contexts that condition the gamut of human activity, individual and collective. They do not eliminate that activity.

In Rancière's view, Marx carries on the tradition of Platonic guardians. Marx divides workers into artisans, whom he treats dismissively, and proletarians, who allegedly do not yet exist. In 1850, Marx calls the revolution off until there will be a genuine proletariat. His role as philosopher-guardian is safe that way, with only an embryonic and largely passive proletariat to challenge his leadership.

Rancière advances this account without attention either to the historical situation after the defeat of revolution in 1848 or to the debates in 1850 within the Communist League, which Marx headed. He does not even challenge Marx's position in these debates that to seize state power in such a situation would not allow revolutionaries to implement a proletarian program but only one that would leave capitalist property untouched. Rancière seems to prefer the position of those artisans led by Schapper and Willich who did not want to wait.

The treatment of Sartre expands on Rancière's discussion of party and class in Marx. The revolutionary party for Sartre is active while workers are passive due to fatigue. The possibility of overcoming their isolation depends on the party. They become a group only through the party, whose correctness is vouched for by Marxist philosophers. Again, philosophers are cast in the role of Platonic guardians, who create the lower orders.

The result of this view is, for Rancière, terror — Stalinist terror. "The party of the working class will always be a lie. It *cannot* be born of the working class," he says in reference to Sartre. The party will have to use terror to unify the class as a battering ram of revolution. In short, Stalinist terror is inherent in Sartre's relation between party and class. Though Sartre criticized the Soviet repression of the 1956 Hungarian uprising, he worried whether, without it, the reactionary forces within the uprising would have triumphed. For, there was no party able to unify the workers as revolutionaries rather than as instruments of the Soviet-backed party of Ràkosi and Geró.

Rancière does not use this criticism of Sartre to make the adjustments needed for a more viable relation between party and class. Yet the abstractness of Sartre's concepts allows for making them more specific. The passivity and fatigue of workers does not exclude solidarities they can easily extend and strengthen under repression. And a party's freedom to act is never so absolute that it creates unity among workers while ignoring their character.

Instead, Rancière takes flight in the direction of artisans. Sartre's worker is not enough of a hybrid to avoid the need for terror. In Tintoretto, Rancière finds the kind of hybridity he wants, for in this "artisan-king" there is a mixing of a creativity that does not call for revolt with individual ambition. There is no "dizzying vision" such as that of revolutionary socialism and no "terrifying creator" like a Stalinist party. The suggestion seems to be that the unit in social analysis should not be the passive worker but the worker active in the way artisans are. Yet it is far from obvious that Tintoretto can be a helpful clue to the nature of the modern wage-worker.

Bourdieu hopes to find a standpoint behind that of Marxian economics and Sartrean metaphysics. Sociology should, he thinks, be such a standpoint. As the study of symbolic practices, it should help avoid a problem that Marx and Sartre had. They could not think their own place when putting others in their place. But a sociologist can, since sociology itself is but another symbolic practice among all the rest.

In his studies of the educational system, Bourdieu sees that it creates the illusion that it is open to the lower classes. Yet once admitted they eliminate themselves. This illusion of freedom extends beyond education to work. It is the illusion of freedom that keeps workers in their places. The illusion of freedom is created as a symbolic effect of the absence of discrimination in the distribution of jobs, goods, and services.

By keeping people in their places, this illusion of freedom permits no end to the class struggle and hence no rupture with capitalism. For at least the early Bourdieu, workers had to accept this fate, which they could do without guilt or suffering if they had sociologists to explain their fate to them. Rancière finds this unacceptable and suggests an alternative that he designs with the use of his notion of mixture and hybridity.

Beyond the acceptance generated by the illusion of freedom, workers can take pleasure in the architecture, the art, and the music created for the elite. Rancière refers here to the universality claimed by Kant for aesthetic sensibility. There is, then, a mixture within workers that includes an aesthetic appreciation shared with the elite. This intimation of equality raises the hope that the fate of eternal class struggle could be dispelled without the terror created by vanguards.

Here we encounter part of a general theme of Rancière's that workers, if given a chance, pursue the values of their elites. The "philosophers," though, want workers to pursue the values they have as workers, thus valorizing the bottom against the top. He makes clear in his Afterword of 2002 how this pursuit of elite values by lower orders leads him to reject both communism and social democracy.

Rancière is trying in this book to establish a middle ground between the two. His communist emphasizes the pure worker, lacking the mixture of other elements, including a desire for discourse both political and poetic, an artisan's ambition for recognition, and a susceptibility to beauty. His social democrat has come to emphasize uniform citizenship, with its right of all to participate on an equal footing, while ignoring the inequality that makes an illusion of such citizenship.

In short, for Rancière, the communist path leads to a manipulation of workers and then Stalinist terror whereas the social democratic path locks the worker in eternal class struggle under the illusion of enjoying republican citizenship.

He keeps a secret of the whereabouts of his middle ground. Setting out from the importance he gives to the artisan and to the aesthetic, one is led to see him moving in the direction of the 19th century artisan egalitarianism of William Morris and some of the pre-Raphaelites.

The transition to such an equality would, for Rancière, occur through the gradual discovery of more and more commonalities — such as the valuing of elite art — between workers and the bourgeoisie.

However, behind each of these commonalities there are important differences. Rich and poor alike want art, architecture, education, the media, and a political arena, but it is the rich whose interests dominate in their production. These regions of commonality become, not bases for unity, but instead for struggle. The mixture within workers of interests over and above their interests arising from their productive work is indeed something that social theory cannot ignore. However, it does not cancel the necessity for revolutionary transformation, as Rancière supposes it does. Instead, it calls for that transformation to be an even deeper one.

Rancière's book is not just flawed as an effort to debunk the relevance of class and to put in its place a more useful concept around which to build social transformation. The style of presentation is also flawed. Sentences do not connect with one another. The excessive use of terms whose familiar sense does not apply leaves the reader grasping for understanding. All this suggests an author so self-absorbed that a concern as to who his audience is just does not arise. My interpretations above are, then, nothing more than the shakiest of guesses as to what he means.

Cold War Triumphalism

MICHAEL WRESZIN

The Misuse of History After the Fall of Communism

EDITED BY ELLEN SCHRECKER

New York: The New Press, 2004

IN JANUARY 1900, the senator from Indiana, Albert Beveridge, spoke glowingly of the acquisition of the Philippines and the benefits of imperialism for the United States:

> Mr. President, this question is deeper than any question of party politics; deeper than any question of the isolated policy of our country, deeper even than any question of constitutional power. It is elemental. It is racial. God has not been preparing the English speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self contemplation and self admiration . No! He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among savage and senile peoples. Were it not for such a force as this, the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race He has marked the American people as His chosen nation to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us all the profit, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master is upon us: "Ye have been faithful over a few things I will make you ruler over many things."

Profit and glory and happiness in that order were guaranteed. Here was an American triumphalism a half century before the Cold War versions that are the focus of this volume. There are obviously many similarities between the old and the new. However this collection of astute essays deals with a triumphalism that is part and parcel of the post-World War II national security state. There is a military industrial milieu that is markedly different than the often cautious and even reluctant imperialism of the beginning of the century. The word "imperialism" was seldom uttered except by radicals, then as now a tiny minority. However, as one reads through these essays concerning U.S. power, its military, and its economic domination of global markets, one often hears the late 19th and early 20th century voices of Theodore Roosevelt, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge and Admiral Alfred Mahan. While this is an interesting and useful collection of essays that analyze and critique the rhetoric and deeds of the American empire that has developed since the Cold War, it often neglects the historical perspective. The essays don't often connect because there is no clearly organized theme.

There are ten scholars represented in addition to Schrecker, the editor. Bruce Cummings and Leo Rebuffo deal with the Cold War vision of the world, Nelson Lichtenstein and Michael Bernstein discuss the economic ramifications of the triumphant vision, Schrecker and Maurice Isserman, Carolyn Eisenberg, and Jessica Wang take up historical institutions and episodes that mark the period. The concluding section contains a devastating critique of trumphalist foreign policy by Chalmers Johnson, a comparative study of Vietnam and Iraq by Marilyn Young, and the volume closes with a fascinating essay on the culture of the Cold War by Corey Robin, who most appropriately has just completed a book on *Fear: The History of an Idea.*

TAKEN AS A WHOLE, this is a depressing volume because there is so little evidence that any serious challenge to this triumphalism is likely in the near future. Surely while the Soviet

MICHAEL WRESZIN *is professor emeritus of Queens College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is the biographer of Dwight Macdonald.*

Union was seen as a competitive superpower, the aggressive tendencies of the United States were restrained. On the other hand Chalmers Johnson does argue persuasively that America's "imperial pretensions are unraveling." It is clear that this "so-called empire" runs on fear — not fear of a challenging nation state but fear of suicidal terrorism. Chalmers is convinced that the national security state does not know how best to respond to this threat. As Marilyn Young observes: Unrestrained and unlimited power has not proved to be the answer. It is the current panic-stricken response to the threat of terrorism that reveals the clay feet of the current triumphalism. This overriding fear, encouraged and politically manipulated by the strategists of the Bush administration, has led to the rash policies that are dissected in this volume. Phillip Roth has recently written in his enigmatic *The Plot Against America*: "Fear presides over these memories, a perpetual fear." And what John Wolcott, Roth's reviewer, writes of this historical novel is true of this volume: "The taunting jack-o-lantern grin of George W. Bush haunts the back of the mind as one consumes these pages."

Perhaps because it is close to my own interests and field of study, I found the essay by the young political scientist, Corey Robin, most interesting and provocative. Robin begins with an eloquent paraphrase of the moralistic and visionary perspective of the contemporary neoconservatives. They attack exhilarating contemporary business culture and global market orientation as without imagination or ideas, simply engaged in a tawdry discussion of marketing. Here we are returned to Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt constantly lectured leaders of American business, indicting their ledger book minds, their lack of a "larger policy," anything that might transcend their banal account books. It's the "vision thing."

George W. Bush would surely have been one of Roosevelt's targets with his devotion to corporate America. But Bush was not doing very well politically when, as he reportedly gloated to his budget director, Mitch Daniels, after 9/11, "Lucky me — I hit the trifecta." (*Baltimore Chronicle* 6/12/2002) Bush had discovered what Herbert Croly described during the Roosevelt administration, the exhilarating " tonic of a moral adventure." The United States under his leadership, according to this view, had finally awakened from the torpor of its trivial consumer existence. Bush, a man of the fraternity and locker-room, a Yalie reborn as a good old boy, now had the vision, something his father had dismissed. He was in touch with a "higher Father." He was now not simply leading the corporate brigades and, of course, the religious right cadres. He was at the head of a crusade against evil and he brought with him the virtues of democracy — that God bestows on all willing and perhaps unwilling recipients. Free at last, oh Lord almighty, free at last from the "quicksand of free markets." Now moral values and the war on terrorism were conflated. Not only was a skeptic seen as subversive but also immoral in not upholding fervently the righteousness of this crusade.

Christopher Lasch, in a brilliant description of the "Making of the War Class" during the Vietnam war, in 1971, pointed out how early in the century Theodore Roosevelt and his colleagues tirelessly lectured their peers on the importance of rising above the vulgar concern with trade, even while they proved themselves quite capable of defending the interests of American business. Robin's discussion of Wolfowitz and the other neocons and writers for the *Weekly Standard* comes out of the same historical context. Robin sees a tension and opposing agendas between the neocon "reckless utopians" and the realist CEO globalists, but where that tension will lead is not at all clear. I am not sure that this volume, as one blurb asserts, provides an "essential roadmap to American political ideas in the twenty first century," but it is a comprehensive and devastating account of the dismantling of the social democratic agenda during the past four decades.

After the Collapse

SEAN CAIN

THROUGHOUT THE NATION of Argentina, tens of thousands of unemployed people search the streets and garbage dumps for recyclable products. Called *cartoneros*, many of them are young, some of them barely teenagers. Each Saturday, a truck drives by their neighborhood to buy some of what they have collected. This is their means of survival in the new Argentina.

Argentina: Hope in Hard Times
MELISSA YOUNG
AND MARK DWORKIN

Illustrating this day-to-day struggle of unemployed and poverty-stricken Argentines is an inspiring new documentary by Seattle-based independent film makers Melissa Young and Mark Dworkin. Named *Argentina: Hope in Hard Times*, the film reveals how ordinary people in dire circumstances can overcome incredible challenges by working together for common goals.

The story of Argentina over the past decade has been a sad one: due to financial pressures from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the government privatized state assets, fired tens of thousands of civil servants, deregulated financial markets, slashed social program spending, rose interest rates, and cut public sector wages and benefits. Not surprisingly, the incomes of the wealthy and powerful increased almost exponentially, while unemployment and poverty skyrocketed for the poor and working class, leaving the country with greater inequality and poverty. Added to this is the financial collapse that began in 2001, when even hundreds of thousands of middle-class Argentines started to lose their jobs and savings.

When this crisis hit, Young and Dworkin were actually on vacation in South America. But with millions of Argentines taking to the streets shouting "*Que se vayan todos!*" ("throw them all out!") and thousands of desperate workers taking over abandoned factories to protect their jobs, the filmmakers went back to the United States and later returned to Argentina with their film equipment.

Whereas other documentaries such as Naomi Klein's *The Take* focus on democratically-controlled businesses in Argentina, *Hope In Hard Times* embraces a much broader perspective on the Argentine free market tragedy. The documentary not only examines how Argentines have adapted their lifestyles to a crumbling economic system, but asks larger questions about human nature and the possibilities people have of building a different kind of economy and a new society.

It is difficult to believe that 100 years ago, Argentina had one of the largest economies in the world, and the per capita income was about 70 percent of that of the United States (today, that number is about 25 percent). Historically being the richest country in the continent, many Argentines used to consider themselves more European than South American, although recently this attitude has begun to evaporate.

Some of the more memorable scenes from the documentary include its dire illustrations of shanty towns that look remarkably similar to those of apartheid-era South Africa, demonstrating the widening divide between the rich and the poor.. Young and Dworkin also take the viewers into the street corners of Buenos Aires, where organized groups of activists, many of them unemployed, gather on a regular basis to discuss

---

SEAN CAIN *is a freelance writer from Oakville, Ontario. He can be reached at seancain@hotmail.com.* *Originally published in* LiP Magazine*, Winter 2006.*

ideas and proposals for future actions, such as street demonstrations, tax revolts, land occupations, and more ambitiously, lobbying government officials to refuse additional IMF loans. Every suggestion is voted on democratically by the group, with each member having a vote.

This egalitarian form of organization mirrors many of the factories recently taken over by workers throughout the country. With the economic collapse came the abandonment of hundreds of businesses by their owners. But instead of joining the ranks of the unemployed, some workers decided to not-so-legally take control of their companies and manage them democratically, without bosses. The film examines the worker-controlled Ghelco company, *Industrias Metalurgicas y Argentina (IMPA)*, and the celebrated Brukman clothing factory of Buenos Aires.

Related to these industries are the newly-developed cooperatives that have sprung up throughout the countryside, all of whom integrate significant levels of democratic decision-making. The Light of Hope Community Centre, which was created on the site of a former garbage dump, includes 340 families. Just a few miles down the road there exists another cooperative where more than 130 people farm on nine hectares of land (22 acres). Child-care cooperatives, barter fairs (where people can freely exchange goods and services), and a growing array of charitable organizations further symbolize the new forms of collaboration growing in the country.

Viewers might expect the documentary to deal with the politicians, IMF officials and other elites who were largely responsible for the crisis. It refuses to do so, and it is the film's interaction with ordinary Argentinians that is most stimulating. A young protester is interviewed and proudly states that his local church raised funds for the victims of 9/11. He then ironically asks "if someday the U.S. will help us." One elderly woman, a member of the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo, who march every week through a square in Buenos Aires carrying pictures of their sons to remember the 30,000 people killed by the military dictatorship from 1976 to 1983, comments on the larger picture: "Globalization is still capitalism, they've just given it another name. Capitalism always turns into imperialism."

It is this collective outlook of the Argentine people that reveals their true character. One would think that desperate people would turn inwards and concern themselves with their own well-being. As *Hope in Hard Times* illustrates, millions of people decided instead to work together for the common good to improve their conditions. During a political or economic crisis, what is it that makes one society turn to equality and democracy, such as contemporary Argentina, and others to turn to fear, repression and exploitation, such as 1930s Germany? What would happen if such an economic catastrophe were to strike North America, something which no longer seems that unfeasible. How would we respond? Would people work together to tackle such problems as poverty, unemployment, and inequality, or would they turn to xenophobia, immigrant-bashing, leader worship, and the neoliberal orthodoxy of "greed is good?"

What is most unfortunate is that the recent story of Argentina has largely been ignored by the mainstream media (just imagine the news coverage if this kind of economic crisis and eventual revolt of the masses were to take place in Cuba or Venezuela). *Hope in Hard Times* should be required viewing for economics professors and government leaders who still have faith in the neoliberal policies of the IMF and the World Bank. Shown recently at several film festivals throughout North America, it paints a very hopeful picture and reveals the huge potential for billions of people throughout the Global South to overcome even the most spectacular failures of free market capitalism.

The Fuhrer's Fury

KURT JACOBSEN

Downfall
DIRECTED BY OLIVER HIRSCHBIEGEL
2004

PERHAPS THE LAST CINEMATIC TABOO, now hopelessly broken, is the premeditated portrayal of Adolf Hitler, or any of his henchmen, as a recognizably sane human being. If you can't demonize Hitler, who the hell can you demonize? Even Auschwitz survivor Primo Levi, as good a guide as one gets in these terrible matters, recoiled at really trying to understand Nazi captors — putting himself in their shiny jack boots, so to speak — for fear that this dangerous exercise might in some way excuse the bastards for the countless horrors they inflicted. Yet, contrary to a cloying New Age-style maxim, to understand all does not mean having to forgive all, or even anything. So why shy away?

There are powerful clues. In Studs Terkel's classic *The Good War* Nuremberg trial prosecutor Telford Taylor ruefully recalled his utter frustration at trying to make audiences understand that the Nazi leaders in the dock were neither psychotic nor stupid. Quite the contrary. Studies show that the master race architects usually had high IQs. (Have we ever shed the tacit belief that an intelligent person must therefore be a moral one too?) Just after the major Nazi trials ended an apprehensive Taylor was invited to speak about the experience at a Brooklyn synagogue:

> I said, 'The idea that these Nazis of the Holocaust are all a bunch of abnormal sadists is not so. Most of them are ordinary people like you and me. You should have heard the uproar that went up from that audience. The same thing happened to me last Spring [in the early 1980s]. I told the rabbi that my views were a bit clinical and might not be the right thing for his congregation. He said it's a very sophisticated group. Exactly the same thing happened.'

It wasn't exclusively synagogues. The notion that only Germans of a certain age could behave like Nazis is a most reassuring narcotic. Hence, we beheld the astonishingly warm public reception for Daniel Goldhagen some years ago when he came skipping along into the historians' fray with his far from unprecedented "willing executioners" thesis. (British historian A.J.P. Taylor, several decades before, depicted Hitler as "the ordinary German writ large.") Yet Hitler did not need all that many "willing executioners' to work his ghastly racial will. Intriguingly, the Ken Branagh TV remake of *The Wannsee Conference*, which portrays the bureaucratic crafting of the 'final solution,' was entitled *Conspiracy*, for that is exactly what Reinhard Heydrich (played by Branagh as a charming blonde serpent) was chairing. The German people, as the Nazis suspected, could not handle the truth. Mass murder, so far as possible, was performed on a "need to know" basis.

All that is required is that most citizens timidly mind their own business whilst fanatics, opportunists, and sniveling conformists do what they want, ill-concealed though many hideous acts were. As Reichsminister Albert Speer, with incomplete but undeniable candor, told post-

KURT JACOBSEN *is a research associate in political science at the University of Chicago. His latest books include* Maverick Voices: Conversations with Political and Cultural Rebels *(Rowman & Littlefield 2004) and, co-edited,* Experiencing the State *(Oxford University Press 2005).*

war interrogators, "I think we saw what we wanted to see and knew what we wanted to know." A lot of people anywhere and anytime can relate to that cynical self-protective inclination. Look at all the help the mainstream U.S. news networks today provide skittish citizens in shutting out or soft-peddling the truth about the Bush junior administration. Any media CEO today can make Nazi propaganda minister Goebbels look like an amateurish runt, by comparison.

As Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo, and Bagram revelations remind, enough Americans — like, say, the French in Algeria — will become willing torturers or executioners, if so ordered. The lurking Nazi spirit is there to be kindled, even if all the conditions for a textbook definition of full-blown fascism are not. Most functionaries can square their deeds easily with whatever passes for conscience. That is modern professionalism, a sort of moral Alzheimer's disease, at work. It's simply too scary a thought for Norman Rockwell poster-loving citizens to contemplate. The good reverend Pat Robertson discreetly should keep his opinions of which South American leaders deserve to be assassinated to himself. "Good Germans," after all, were obsessed with propriety and property, swallowed whatever authorities spewed, were anxious to conform, contemptuous of outsiders, valued security *uber alles*, adored authoritarian religion, and loved living in their own tidy little worlds. What could big brash America, or half of America, have in common with those creeps?

In the deliriously audacious 2002 film *Max*, the title character, an incredibly indulgent art exhibitor, vies unknowingly in 1918-1919 against dark Teutonic forces for the soul of aspiring artist Corporal Adolf Hitler (Noah Taylor), and comes tantalizingly close — onscreen anyway — to diverting him from beer hall bellowing to brush strokes. The speculative flick raised an outcry in all the predictable quarters. Now, submitted for your consideration (as Rod Serling used to intone), comes director Oliver Hirschbiegel with a script based on Joachim Fest's *In Hitler's Bunker*, which displays Hitler as a worried and troubled man — *Downfall* (2004). (By most accounts, Hitler's whole body was shaking at this stage from Parkinsonism, if not fright.) What's more human than worry? Der Fuhrer, it seems, is inconsolably aggrieved that his cherished German *volk* failed so miserably to accomplish their simple biological mission of conquest, and therefore the wretches were not worthy of him. Who couldn't sympathize?

Opening scene: In November 1942 a gaggle of giggly young Aryan women splash in a rain storm like so many little red riding hoods through gloomy woods into the Wolf's Lair headquarters for a secretarial job interview with Herr Hitler. The tense atmosphere inside resembles an episode of *The Apprentice* with eager acolytes fawning to please a thoroughly repugnant would-be boss. Instead of emerging from an operatic cloud of sulfur and brimstone, Hitler (Bruno Ganz), at first sight, might well be the doddering gentlemanly head of a musty accountancy firm. He gallantly soothes the rattled Traudl Junge during her typing audition. Hailing from Munich — scene of good old days — is a definite plus; the avuncular Hitler hires her on the spot. Junge's real memoirs are put to good use here: the repentant tale of a fairly naïve lass working for an icon she soon suspected was a "monster": although, in taking the job, she admits "curiosity" — and perhaps the glamour — "got the better of me."

THE FILM JUMPS TO April 20, 1945, Hitler's 56th birthday, and Soviet artillery rounds are raining around the thick chancellory bunker in the center of Berlin. Inside, bickering staff officers — veering wildly, like their leader, from fits of arrogance to palls of despair — can hardly believe that the subhuman Russkis are only a dozen kilometers away. At a grim birthday party in the bowels of the bunker we espy shifty rivals Martin Bormann, Josef Goebbels, and everybody's sentimental favorite, Heinrich Himmler, the ballyhooed "truest of the true," who all are busy plotting to succeed the withered Hitler, as does, off camera, corpulent Hermann Goering. The avid guests flock like black and brown buzzards around a pale and frayed fuhrer, scheming to grab what poisonous slivers of the shattered Third Reich yet remain. Their nutty, whispered refrain is: "we should use politics," as if "politics" were another "miracle weapon" to pull out of a clever scientist's drawer, and as if anything other than abject surrender were possible. The Western powers, they hysterically imagine, will strike a bargain with fuhrerless Nazis to stave off communist Asiatic hordes — a laughable notion (although Patton might have been amenable).

Cameras track along long ugly interior passageways, these honeycomb chambers of grey stones and bathroom tiles resembling a vast public urinal. Apt enough, as images go. The denizens, however, aren't all one-dimensional central casting, heel-clicking fanatics, although we glimpse plenty such critters in ardent action here and elsewhere. The filmmakers prudently settle on Hitler's secretary and on a seemingly decent-minded physician, Schenck, as frail moral compass points while the Gotterdammurung crushingly descends by way of swarming Soviet troops (who suffered over 300 thousand casualties capturing Berlin).

As Russians doggedly battle though a defensive line composed mostly of old men, rabid youths and non-German SS troops with nothing to lose, Hitler dreams of a protective barrier of imaginary armored divisions still at his command. Yet rank despair spasmodically reappears. Hitler's left hand waggles as he walks, held hanging behind his stooped back like an extra extremity, a demoralized devil's tail. Ganz as Hitler is brilliant, although a slight technical amplification might have added the necessary castrato touch of shrillness when he is ranting, which is, despite a few notorious tender moments, much of the time. Hitler takes momentary comfort when gazing at an old ornate portrait of Frederick the Great (reminding one eerily of Nixon's nocturnal "communing" with Lincoln's portrait as impeachment loomed).

The filmmakers kindly confer slippery Albert Speer with a radiant halo for restraining Hitler's insatiable urge to drag everything and everyone down into Hades with him. These scenes, drawn straight from Speer's diaries with nary a trace of skepticism, amount to a glowing self-advertisement for an armaments chief who paid no attention to the dreadful fate of slave laborers in his cherished arms factory system. On the other hand, Goebbel's wife Magda, as anal a personality as the law and nature allows, methodically carries out the ultimate Medea-like "sacrifice" in as wrenching a sequence as anyone could conjure. We watch Hitler turn his head away in pain as his beloved Alsatian dog Blondi is recruited as a test subject for SS-procured cyanide capsules. Hitler could not otherwise be certain that devious Himmler scored the real thing for him.

A no-nonsense Wehrmacht general, acutely aware of the disastrous military situation, is summoned to be shot for violating orders but, after impressing Hitler with his iron nerve, is appointed instead as head of Berlin's defense. Whims rule, totalitarianly. Hitler prattles on about nonexistent elite units and hordes of wonder weapons amassing on the city outskirts at this very moment to save the Reich from slavering Reds. Might there be echoes here of a hard lesson about a focus on self-deluding symbols to the exclusion of on-the-ground reality in Vietnam later, or today in Iraq?

Eva Braun gamely keeps up spirits with a pack-up-your-troubles-in-that-old-kit-bag (right beside those used Zyklon B canisters) bonhomie, fretting for her friends' futures even as her own loyalty soon sucks her into a pit of burning petrol. Eva gets a party started and twirls on a table top beneath a shaking subterranean chandelier. Eva stands by her man even after he orders the execution of her odiously ambitious brother-in-law. During a short break in the shelling, Eva, Traudl, and other bunker girls tiptoe past piles of panzerfausts (antitank devices) and debris to enjoy a smoke outside and a bit of gossip. Eva later generously gives Traudl her silver fox cape, just the thing for swanning around besieged Berlin.

At times the film comes across like a mordant "Heidi in Hitlerland," as squeaky clean Traudl meanders child-like among despondent wraiths in the bunker, feeds Goebbels' picture book perfect Aryan children, gabs with manic Eva, observes (and evades) debauchery, treachery, and despair, and finally types Hitler's last preposterous testament. There, Hitler fully exculpates himself by blaming Jews, scoffs at silly compassion, and invokes the social Darwinian struggle of winner takes all: "I have always observed the law of nature." All he was doing, for goodness sake, was winnowing out the weak, the "life unworthy of life," within the Fatherland as well as a bit beyond it. It's nature's way.

Pity the German people weren't up to the historic task. So they must perish too. Nature decrees it. Traudl types his addled alibi just as a cadaverous Goebbels intrudes to request his own. Join the queue, pal; the more, the merrier. In a rare instance of low-grade comedy, Himmler, insanely optimistic, wonders aloud if he should greet General Eisenhower with a Nazi salute or a handshake. Anyone here know the protocol? Hitler consolingly boasts that at least he has had the consolation of having "cleansed the German lands" of dirty Jews. Feel any sympathy yet?

"In private [Hitler] can be such a caring person," Traudl marvels, but then he "says such brutal things." Sounds just like many a battered housewife. Hitler gallantly marries Eva in a peremptory ceremony where the nervous minister misspells his own name on the marriage certificate. A little later a jaunty Goebbels offspring shouts "Bulls-eye" as the fatal shot rings out. The limp bodies of Adolf and Eva are dutifully hauled outside and burned to a nice crisp in a shallow ditch. Goebbels and his martinet wife likewise do themselves in after first dispatching their six children in a heart-rending scene — for if anyone deserved a part in such horror, these parents did. The children were faultless yet one knows what they would grow up to be under the ministrations of a flourishing national socialism.

More fanaticism? A 12-year-old boy knocks out two Soviet tanks single-handed and yearns to tally more of them. At a street barricade an apoplectic amputee father argues that his son to be released from this futile defense duty. A ferocious teenage girl helps man an 88 millimeter cannon, readily agreeing to a suicide pact as the Red Army overwhelms the position. Gestapo and SS squads execute any stray passerby as traitors, decorating lampposts with nabbed unfortunates, even as the pitiless killers line their own pockets and plan their own escapes. As dire as it is inside, beyond Berlin's ruins are the death camp ovens, the carnage of six years of combat, and more than 50 million corpses. Of course, Hitler pleads, the Jews, by dint of their very existence, made him do it. How very human of him to put the responsibility elsewhere, preferably on the victims.

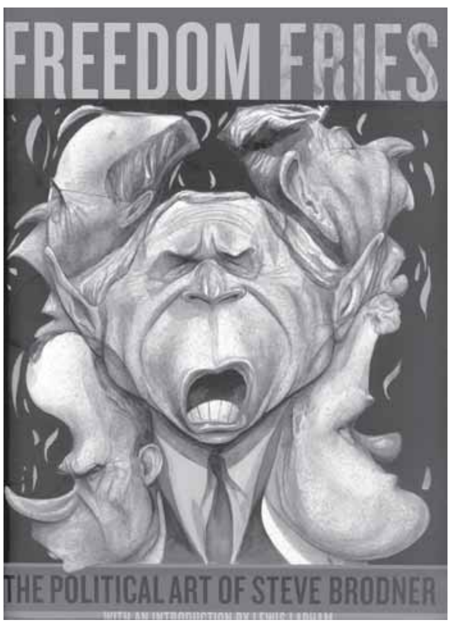
The film reels on in a well-paced gallop to a rough retributive justice. A fastidious doctor patiently advises Hitler, after he sobers from reveries of last minute rescue, on the correct technique for committing suicide. Bunker inhabitants get increasingly demented and drunk, ridding themselves of their fatal cultural intoxication with order at all costs. Officers desultorily blow their own brains out. War-weary bands of soldiers hopelessly await the end. Traudl, though, manages to slip away. The concluding lesson — fair enough that there should be one — is a clip of Traudl in old age, lifted from a recent documentary of her life, warning us that youth is no excuse for not knowing what you need to know about the nature of the regime you live under. Got that?

Anger and Wit

GARY MARTIN

Freedom Fries
STEVE BRODNER
Seattle: Fantagraphics, 2004

IN THE MASSIVE NEW COLLECTION of his work, *Freedom Fries*, Steve Brodner presents us with his visual take on the political landscape for the past 20-odd years. Brodner has been a working satirical illustrator for over 25 years. Born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1954, he began publishing for a small newspaper, *The Hudson Dispatch*, in 1976 after graduating Cooper Union. He began to be seen in *The New York Times Book Review* which was the start of his long and successful freelance career. He's contributed to *Harper's, National Lampoon, Sports Illustrated, Playboy, Esquire, Spy* and his own political journal, *The New York Illustrated News.*

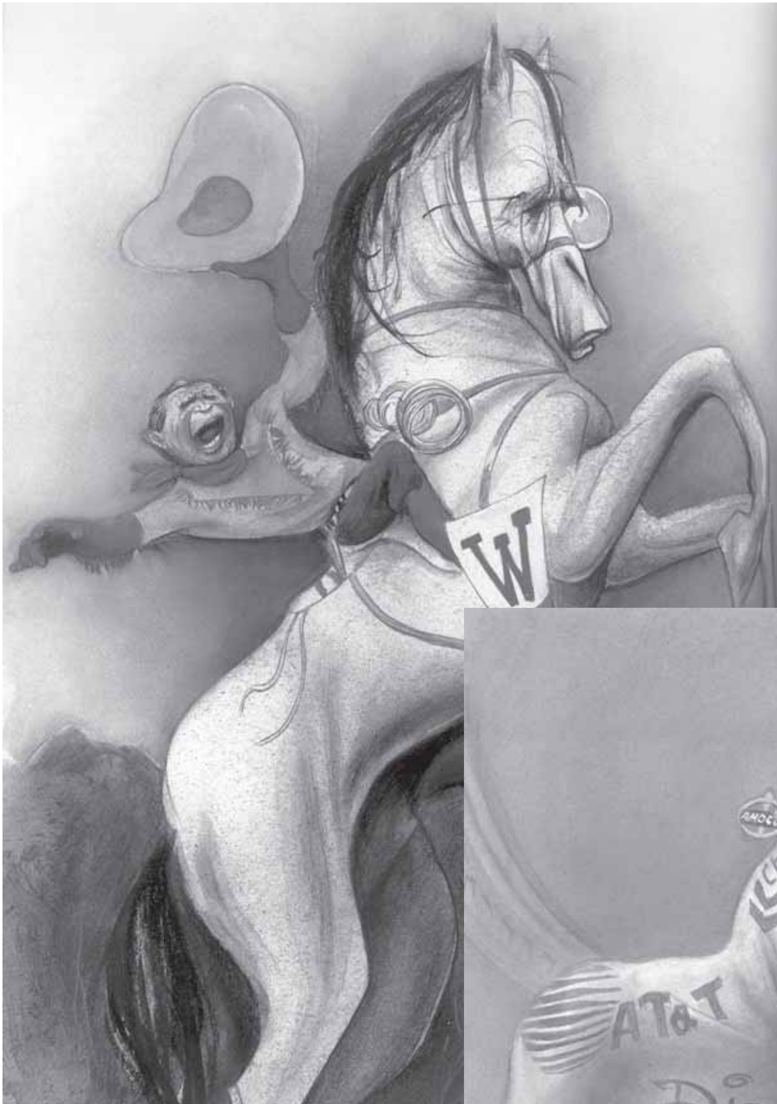


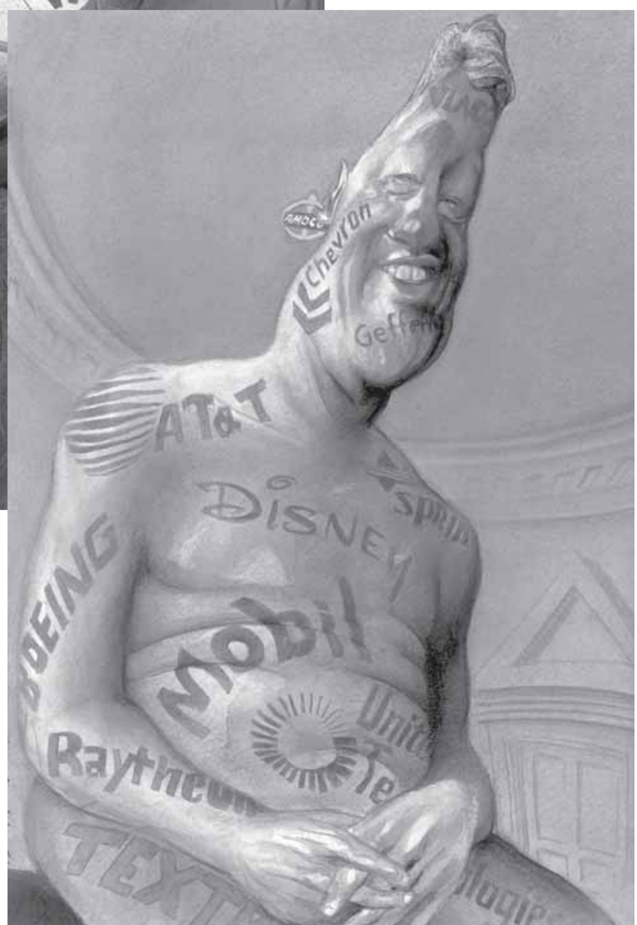
Steve Brodner's anger and wit are apparent throughout this large and sometimes disturbing collection. The grouping on the cover of this Fantagraphics book is a sculptural rendering of five past presidents: George W. Bush in the center flanked, as if growing from his head, by Nixon, George H.W. Bush, Reagan and Clinton. Since Brodner has been creating political artwork since 1976, I wondered what these five had in common. Why had he left out Gerald Ford & Jimmy Carter who were present during this period of time? Then it struck me: these men can be viewed as the five most prominent Republican leaders of the last 50 years. Brodner's take on Clinton as a Republican (see Welfare Reform, NAFTA, FCC), appealed to me immediately. I could see now that this was going to be a sharp and pointed view of the recent political landscape and I was ready.

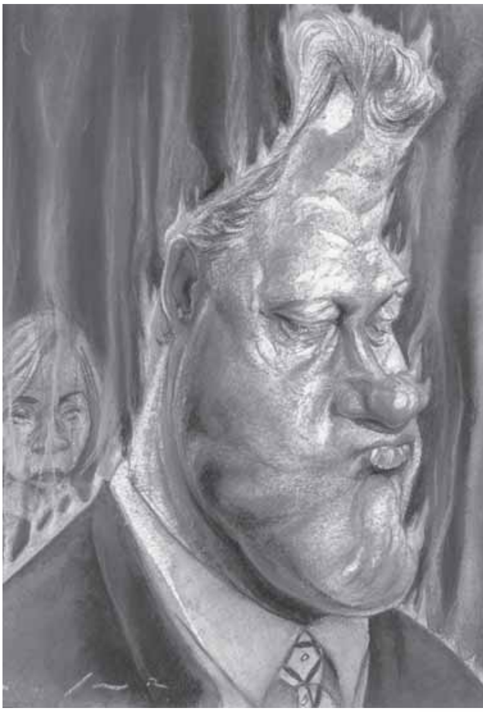
A working illustrator for all his adult life, Brodner merges satire, wit, humor, outrage, and the grotesque to show us his vision of the world since the mid 70s. Included as well are examples of what he refers to as art journalism, that is, sketches and pastiches from events captured on the spot. Stylistically his work grows from Thomas Nast-inspired black and white drawings, through a Jules Feiffer-influenced cartoon style. He then adds some Ralph Steadman color and energy until the work crystallizes into something uniquely his own.

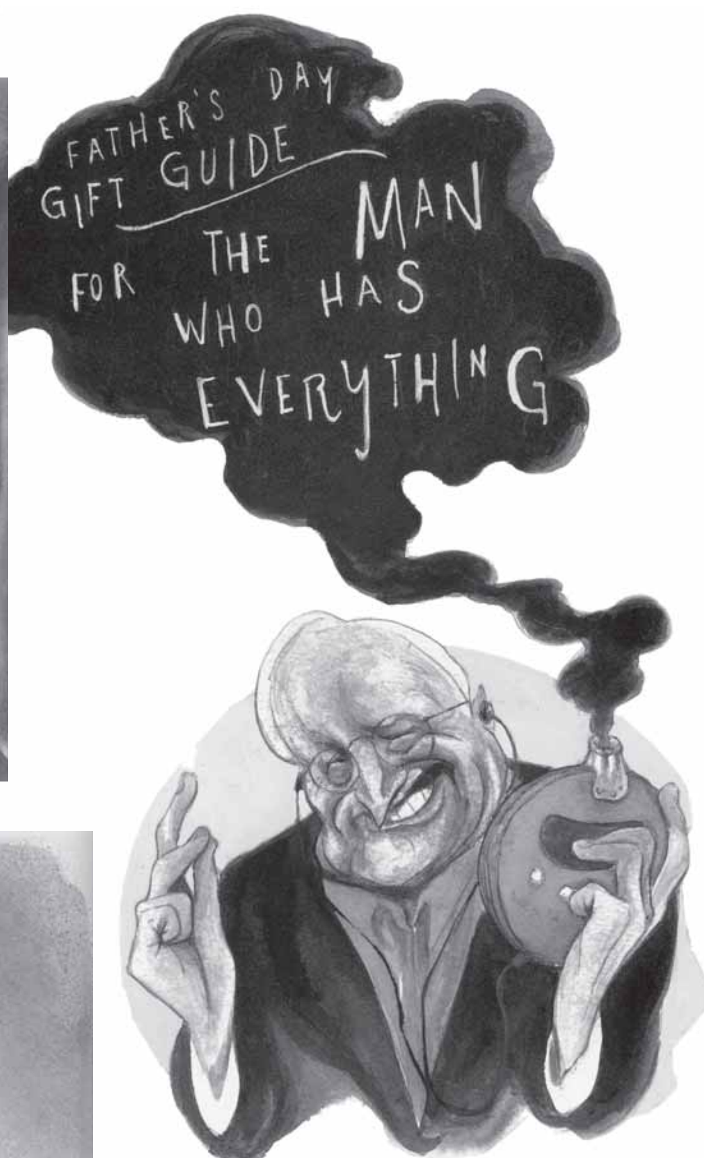
The best take on Brodner's work comes from a Martha Stewart quote on the dust flap; "Is this how you treat people? Is this how you draw people? Are you some kind of an assassin?" Let's answer all that with a resounding and appreciative "YES."

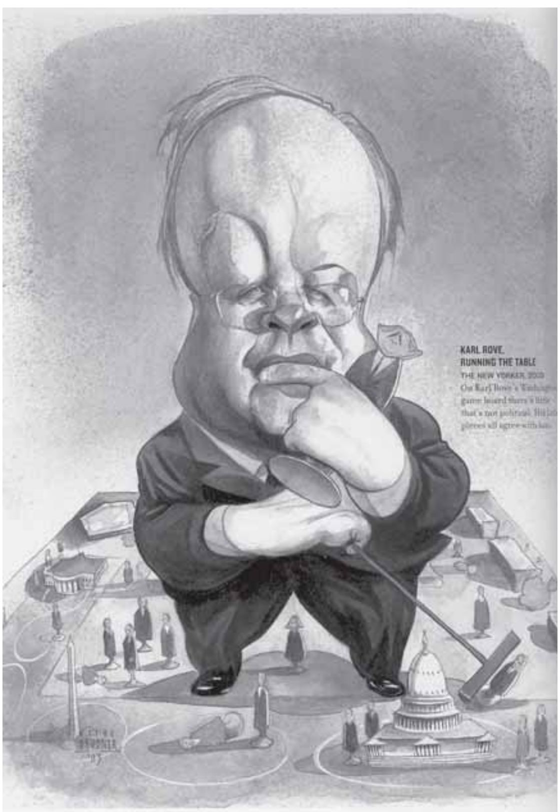
GARY MARTIN *is a politically-minded cartoon artist and author of two collections of drawings. His work can be seen at www.antisocialstudies.com*


W


Chevron
Disney
BOEING
Mobil




FATHER'S DAY
GIFT GUIDE
FOR THE MAN
WHO HAS
EVERYTHING


KARL ROVE,
RUNNING THE TABLE
THE NEW YORKER, 2003