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a journal of socialist thought

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Special Attention: In #43 *New Politics* published Sherry Gorelick's review of Mario Kessler's *On Anti-Semitism and Socialism*. David Finkel responded to this in #44. Now Bennett Muraskin and (again) Sherry Gorelick have joined in the discussion, which will be found on our website, www.newpol.org.

In #39 *New Politics* published Stephen Steinberg's "Immigration, African-Americans, and Race Discourse." A symposium on this subject followed in #40 with seven participants, including, again, Stephen Steinberg. Finally, Martin Oppenheimer considered this question in #44. We are publishing in this issue a response to this article by Desnee Flakes, a long time employee in the horse racing industry. This discussion is now continued on our website.

Other contributions to both discussions are welcome.

Other topics also have web-only discussion posted on our site.

From a Co-Editor

AUTUMN ALONG THE ITALIAN DOLOMITES in 1945 was more like the spring of one's youth, full of tenderness and promise. The war had ended and at last one could think of living and of home.

In our outfit — the 88th Infantry Division — everyone became “Home” or “Homes.” I remember one roll call when the platoon sergeant called out, “Private Dominick Homes, Corporal Jonathan Home, Private Marvin Homes. . . .”

We were alive! And we were going Home.

In October I was appointed orderly to General Fry. I took care of Villa Peragallo, along with Maria, the cook, and Rosa, the housecleaner. Villa Peragallo, atop Mount Tofano, reached by a cable car at Cortina d'Ampezzo, was the former home of King Victor Emmanuel III, and the 88th commandeered it from him. The general was seldom there.

I usually had to wait several days for mail because at Villa Perogallo I was so far removed from my company. One day a non-com got off the cable car and gave me several letters. Of course I opened the one from my girlfriend first. When I read that one of our high school classmates had killed himself, I was sure that he had been persecuted for homosexuality. Home, our precious home, home for him must have been

Hell. I read no more that day.

A few years after World War II, when the Soviet Union, the United States, and China began to square off against each other, Max Nomad said, “Three dogs are fighting over a bone, and they ask me which side I am on. I am the bone!” But skip several years to the 1960s, and people — especially Blacks and young people — did rise up against oppression and war. And, as Jeffrey Escoffier points out in his article, modern homosexual politics dates itself from the Stonewall riots of 1969 when gays too began to fight back.

We are proud that this issue of *New Politics* features a special section on the Gay Movement and the Left.

Other articles and reviews range widely: education; health care; the Middle East; the struggles of Native Americans, Blacks, workers, and women; social welfare; and more. All of them remind us that *La Lutte Continue*, that, while, like Martin Luther King, we may not reach the goal in our lifetime, struggle for us is its own journey.

We invite our readers to respond to articles and reviews. *New Politics* welcomes lively debate.

MARVIN

SILENT AUCTION

NOTICE: Silent auction for benefit of *New Politics* . . . The highest bidder will receive a week's vacation at a house on Cuttyhunk Island, MA, during Fall 2008 or Spring 2009. Place bids at mmandell@curry.edu before deadline, August 1, 2008. Sunporch, deck, beautiful view of Vineyard Sound. Minimum bid: \$500

MARVIN AND BETTY

LETTERS

Horseracing

I JUST FINISHED READING the article by Martin Oppenheimer in Vol XI No.4, and was fascinated. I have read many articles on this subject including the ones by Stephen Steinberg. As an African-American woman who spent 30 years in the horseracing industry, I have to say that Mr. Steinberg appears to have a much better grasp of the situation than Mr. Oppenheimer. I find it insulting when writers rely solely on researchers to form opinions, because neither has any first hand knowledge of the subject matter.

Horseracing began in this country during slavery; therefore the majority of workers were Black. During the last immigration wave Irish, English, Italians, and Jews replaced Blacks primarily as trainers and jockeys. They also began to work in larger numbers as grooms and hotwalkers. During the latest (1977 to present) migration, which I bore witness to, Hispanics work the majority of backstretch jobs with the exception of trainer and assistant trainer, which are still the domain of whites. I was there when illegal immigrants came to Hollywood Park, Santa Anita, and Delmar, and asked how much the boss was paying his American help, then offered to work for much less. I have gone to barns for a job, been told the job was filled, then heard from someone on the job that they wanted someone Hispanic. The reasons for this vary from the tried and true, "Mexicans work harder" to the more honest "they would rather work with their own kind." How do you justify hiring someone with little or no skill set over someone with years on the job? You don't. There is no way to justify hiring someone who needs to be trained to care for a living thing (that often costs more than that person will make in a lifetime) over someone who has done the work for a lifetime.

Another thing I have witnessed first hand is the slave master mentality of many trainers. This mentality is best served by those who have little or no rights. Most grooms, hotwalkers, and exercise riders work seven days a week, and

many workers don't get vacations. Large numbers of illegal immigrants often leave the country for months at a time to tend their farms and homes, most often in Mexico. For years it would amaze me to see trainers during the winter in New York begging the Americans to work for them, because that is the time of year many illegals go home. During this time of year you might hear trainers complaining about their immigrant help, but come spring they gladly rehire them. Researchers wouldn't draw conclusions based on history, and they don't know enough about various industries to ask the right questions. Nor do they seem to ask those who have been affected by wholesale shifts in policy; they tend to ask those who have shifted the policy. Even the most unsophisticated people tend not to incriminate themselves.

DESNEE FLAKES
Aiken, SC

THE HORSERACING INDUSTRY ISN'T MUCH different from other capitalist enterprises. It's one of many in which African-Americans have been displaced over the years, first, as Ms. Flakes reminds us, by European immigrants after slavery, and more recently by Latinos. Racetrack owners want cheap "backstretch labor," complain U.S.-born workers aren't available, hire immigrants, and pretty soon their networks enable them to take over most of the jobs. There is no doubt that African-Americans are trapped between the demand for cheap labor, the supply of available immigrant cheap labor, the process of network hiring, and discrimination based on stereotypes ("Mexicans work harder" among others) and old-fashioned racism. Researchers from different perspectives, as I said in my article, agree that employers have a "hierarchy of preferences" with African-Americans on the bottom.

A step in the direction of trying to overcome this hierarchy would be to emulate janitors and other service workers and move towards organizing, a process that is already well underway in the "gaming industry" and even in

some parts of racing. It's really the only way to cure slave master mentalities.

MARTIN OPPENHEIMER

Alternatives for U.S. Unions

THOUGH YOU WOULDN'T KNOW IT from Manfred McDowell's review in *New Politics* #44, *U.S. Labor in Trouble and Transition* actually has a theme and proposals for "an alternative" direction for U.S. labor. The theme concerns the failure of various top-down union practices to stem the decline and disorientation of organized labor in the United States. Since the upsurge of the 1960s and 1970s, on the one hand, and arguments and suggestions for an alternative direction, on the other. The failed practices include: concessions; union mergers; various forms of partnership between labor and capital; and efforts at "reform" from above (the Sweeney era, Change-to-Win). The suggestions for an alternative direction for U.S. unions are based not on some "ideal" nor an upsurge "disclaimer," as McDowell puts it, but on ideas drawn from recent practice. These include: the development of a strong workplace stewards' organization (for both defense and new organizing); rank and file-based reform movements to increase union democracy and member mobilization (of which TDU is the best known); independent political action; the emerging centrality and organization of immigrant workers in both unions and "worker centers"; and a re-orientation of organizing efforts to concentrate on the South. McDowell at best mentions some of these in passing even though they are the bulk of the second half of the book. The rising role of immigrant workers and the as yet inadequate efforts to organize in the South are new elements in the recent history of U.S. labor and deserve some attention. They are, of course, debatable as "solutions," but rather than debating their value, McDowell simply dismisses them. Instead, attention is directed to the "labor party" question I raise in the chapter of failed politics.

This is dismissed by pointing to the abysmal state of affairs of labor and "socialist" parties in Europe. True enough, but not central to the meaning of this in the United States. Without going into the whole argument, it seems clear to me that the emergence of a working class-based party with a left program would be

an event (or process) of historic proportions no matter how it developed down the road. It would, among other things, provide socialists with political opportunities that simply don't exist today. The effort led by Tony Mazzocchi and supported by five national unions and scores of regional and local labor bodies in the 1990s was more less still born, as my book argues, but the fact that it even attracted as much support as it did is significant. McDowell is wrong to argue that perhaps U.S. unions are better off without such a party as they are "free to agitate. . . ." In fact, they are dependent and in many respects subordinate to the Democratic Party in the realm of politics. Our labor leaders seldom "agitate" for anything as that might upset their Democratic allies. Rather they engage in run-of-the-mill pressure politics that deliver very little for working class people. In the 2004-2006 national elections the unions spent \$561 million, most of it on electing Democrats, more than was spent on new organizing, much less agitating.

The heart of the alternatives in *U.S. Unions in Trouble and Transition*, however, is in its discussion of the need for and examples of membership mobilization from the workplace to the organizing drive to the polling place. Union democracy is key to this. It is the antidote to the shallow power of the top-down, corporate SEIU model well-described in Herman Benson's article in the same issue of *New Politics*. Agree or disagree, it is an alternative in which many union activists, reformers, and official believe and for which they fight.

In solidarity,

KIM MOODY
London, England

A Reply to Kim Moody

IF YOU "WOULDN'T KNOW IT" FROM MY review that Moody indicts "top-down union practices" for the failure "to stem the decline and disorientation of organized labor in the United States" I would be dismayed. I thought I had exhausted the greater part of my brief summarizing precisely that point:

That I referred only in "passing" to the "glimmers of successful actions and tactics" that suggest to Moody the possibility of a resurgence is true, and these did deserve more. But in rushing past, I don't believe I was going down some

byway in the “alternative direction” Moody proposes for the unions.

Moody takes up the case for a labor party in his final chapter where presumably he is pulling together the strands of his argument — not that his discussion of “politics, the road not taken” does this, but then that is the concern.

He makes the argument for a bottom-up reconstruction of the union and then, in the tradition of a well-worn polemic, suggests that the capstone for this development would be a party for “the class.” As to how grassroots organization and initiative is to be harnessed by the authority required to negotiate the challenges of electoral strategy and of legislative coalition there is no indication.

The calculation and discipline involved in going down the party-political road are not a promising basis for challenging union bureaucracy. Broadly criticized for stifling internal debate, Mazzocchi’s “more or less still born” party doesn’t appear to have been particularly sympathetic to the spirit of “democratic social movement unionism,” nor, as I suggested, have other “really existing” socialist or labor parties.

Rather than look “down the road,” however, Moody would have us consider simply this: the unions now spend more on trying to elect Democrats than on new organizing. It is a devastating observation. But what are we to conclude — that they should continue to short change their organizing efforts in favor of a new and, given the very high barriers to third party bids in the United States, immensely ambitious pursuit of electoral leverage?

There may well be a place and a time for the union organizer to defer to the party strategist. Moody’s political frustration is widely shared. But we would be as well to acknowledge that the very name “Labor Party” would seem to deny that movement and party are separate and not necessarily parallel paths.

MANFRED MCDOWELL
Belfast, Northern Ireland

Social Networks, Struggle, and How People Make History: But Not “Social Capital”

AS STEPHEN STEINBERG KNOWS, I am an admirer of his writings. In many ways, I also admire his critique¹ of “social capital” in his piece on Mario Louis Small’s *Villa Victoria*², an eth-

nographic study of a community in Boston’s South End. I agree that social capital theory runs away from issues of class, racial oppression, and capital’s assault on the broad working class. Nonetheless, I feel a discomfort at an omission in his analysis and think that it might lead us astray politically and analytically.

As I read his review, I thought about an article my colleagues and I wrote about the Bushwick community in Brooklyn.³ This article used the history of Bushwick to eviscerate the concept of social capital. We showed that Bushwick lacked both “trust” and “consensus” — two of the key elements of social capital as usually described — and yet we also showed that the residents of Bushwick had been very successful in overcoming problems. They overcame the chaos and despair of the 1980’s and early 1990’s — which in Bushwick took the forms of mass unemployment; physical deterioration of buildings and public spaces; massive AIDS sickness and death among very large numbers of drug injectors; enormous street markets in, and widespread use of, heroin, cocaine and crack; many murders based around the drug trade and the killing of sex workers; large-scale police lock-downs of city blocks; and police violence. They overcame this through finding informal and limited ways to cooperate to respect each other’s needs among drug dealers, drug users, and other residents. Their success was based on social network ties — which are often considered to be a part of the concept of “social capital.” Unlike the rest of that concept, however, social network ties are important politically and historically.

To us, our analysis showed the ways in which the residents of embattled neighborhoods “make history” through their social ties and their social-network based action even during the doldrum-years of history. To his credit, Steinberg does discuss the fact that Villa Victoria was built as the result of a social movement in which the local Puerto Rican community resisted the planned destruction of their neighborhoods and won the construction of Villa Victoria as affordable housing for displaced residents. He does not, however, discuss the social network and other ties that undoubtedly shaped this movement. Steinberg’s argument focuses primarily on Small’s failure to analyze larger-scale forces, and through this on the inadequacy of Small’s account of the de-

cline of Villa Victoria during the later 1970s into the recent past as reflecting a loss of social capital. Although his critique of the social capital approach seems valid, he nevertheless is omitting something important — that people live, struggle, and make (local) history even during the years of downturn.

Now, I do not say this from the perspective of James C. Scott, since I agree with Samuel Farber's critique that Scott's view of resistance is quite apolitical.⁴ But I would argue that the social ties and social learning that take place in these small struggles can be of great significance. Like the primary work group struggles that Stan Weir described in many works,⁵ or the ties among activists in different truck barns that I describe as the "active stratum" behind Teamster militancy in the period from the mid-50s through 1975,⁶ or the church-based and other local ties that formed the soil from which many civil rights outbreaks sprang,⁷ *these ties and these experiences prepare—and then may ideologically limit—the future struggles to come.*

Again, I do not mean to criticize Steinberg here. He wrote an insightful review (although I cannot judge its accuracy as a review, since I have not read *Villa Victoria*.) But I do want to suggest that history and politics grow out of the interaction of the forces Steinberg discusses and the consciousness, social ties, and hard-to-ex-

tinguish dialectical "we are and we can act" of those subjected to the attacks of capital and the State.

SAMUEL R FRIEDMAN
Highland Park, NJ

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4. Farber, Samuel, *Social Decay and Transformation* (Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2000), Chapter 6.
5. Weir, Stanley Lewis, "Class Forces in the '70's," *Radical America* 7, 1972; *A Study of the Work Culture of San Francisco Longshoremen*. Unpublished M.A. Thesis, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1974; "A Tale of Two Cities: Gdansk and San Diego," *Against the Current* 1, 1981; *Informal Work Groups: Invisible Power in the Workplace*, *Against the Current* 1, 1982.
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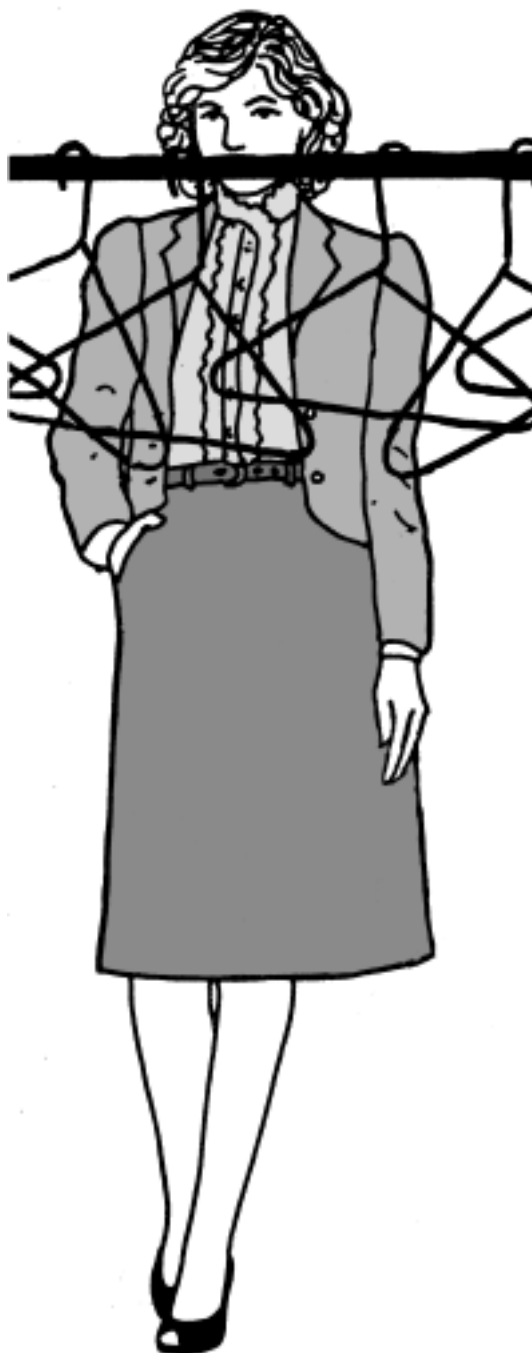
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Symposium on Gays and the Left (Part 1)

THOMAS HARRISON AND JOANNE LANDY

THE HISTORIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN homosexuals and the left is complicated, because, as Jeffrey Escoffier reminds us in his overview of various currents — socialist, left-Freudian, post-1969 gay liberationist — “there are many different lefts.” As we see it, the most important difference within the left has been the one separating an authoritarian, top-down tradition that focuses on social engineering, on the one hand, from a democratic, from below tradition that emphasizes freedom and popular control, on the other. Looking at the socialist tradition, specifically — and all our contributors are or have been associated in some way with it — one can discern traces of a different attitude toward sexual difference depending on which of the “two souls of socialism” — to use the term coined by Hal Draper, a frequent contributor to *New Politics* in its early years — one is examining. We say “traces” because explicit discussion of sexual matters of any kind, in writing, has been rare among socialists until fairly recent times.

Christopher Phelps has discovered an internal document of the Socialist Party youth, dated 1952, during the darkest days of McCarthyism, which urges the Party to support the decriminalization of same-sex activity. Tentative though it was, this initiative represents an intriguing echo, from within the left, of the politically neutral (though led largely by former Communists) “homophile” movement cautiously emerging in the 50s. In his important article, Phelps places the episode in the context of a long tradition of sexual libertarianism that has flickered unsteadily in and around the so-



THOMAS HARRISON and JOANNE LANDY, members of the *New Politics* editorial board, organized this symposium.

cialist movement since the late nineteenth century — or at least that part of the movement with more democratic proclivities. The U.S. Socialist Party, as Phelps describes it, was probably pretty typical in its treatment of homosexuals and homosexuality: a “peculiar admixture of freedom and caution, acceptance and denial, silence and honesty” prevailed. There was plenty of homophobia, but “no official prohibition against same-sex desire and . . . no official ideology against it.” David McReynolds, a veteran of the socialist and pacifist movements, recalls this twilight world of gay radicals in the 50s. In McReynolds’ milieu — the Los Angeles Socialist Party and the War Resisters League in New York — homosexuals were tolerated, at best, but a same-sex orientation seldom interfered with common work for the cause.

Hardly a heroic record, but what a contrast with the policy of Stalinism, the system that came to power in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and enveloped the Communist parties of the world — the most extreme development of what Draper called “socialism from above.” The Bolsheviks abolished all legal restrictions on same-sex activity after they came to power in 1917, but in 1934 the new Stalinist ruling elite made homosexuality illegal, punishable by three to five years in prison (a penalty far more severe than that imposed under the tsars). Bettina Aptheker, in a candid and hard-hitting recollection, portrays the stiflingly puritanical and homophobic atmosphere in the American Communist Party, which persisted well beyond the explosion of sexual freedom that accompanied the arrival of the New Left in the 1960s and the birth of the gay liberation movement at the end of the decade. Amazingly, the Party’s official attitude toward homosexuality, and even toward “recreational sex,” differed hardly at all from the most conservative elements in American society. To a young woman trying to come to terms with her lesbianism, it was a powerful obstacle to overcome.

While acknowledging that leftists have played a decisive role in the formation of the modern gay and lesbian movement, John D’Emilio asks why the left as a whole has been so negligent in championing the cause of gay liberation. In our view, the success with which the right has demagogically exploited the same-sex marriage issue has unnerved many on the left as, increasingly, elements of a left program are subordinated to the perceived urgency of electing Democrats, and one senses a tendency to hold gays and lesbians at arm’s length. In his critique, D’Emilio asserts the centrality that gay rights ought to have for a left that claims to fight oppression.

THE GAY AND LESBIAN MOVEMENT, AND ITS demands, have been denounced or dismissed with some regularity by the critics of “identity politics” — moderates such as Todd Gitlin and Michael Tomasky, and even radicals like Ralph Nader. Martin Duberman, in a nuanced and critical defense of the politics of identity, refutes the charge that these politics have destroyed the U.S. left; instead, he insists that it is the homophobia still rampant in the unions, the black churches, and elsewhere, as well as the disdain shown by Gitlin, Tomasky, and co. — not the alleged obsession with identity and difference — that prevents the formation of a powerful alliance of all oppressed forces against the right. “You cannot link arms under a universalist banner,” he says, “when you can’t find your own name on it.”

Below is Part One of the *New Politics* discussion on Gays and the Left. In our next issue we will continue the symposium with contributions from Blanche Wiesen Cook, Thomas Harrison, Amber Hollibaugh, Doug Ireland, and perhaps others.

Thanks to Doug Ireland, Jesse Lemisch, and Christopher Phelps for their help in designing this symposium.

On Socialism and Sex: An Introduction

CHRISTOPHER PHELPS

PREFATORY NOTE: *While researching a book on African-Americans and the anti-Stalinist left in the archives last summer, I stumbled across a striking and long-forgotten document, "Socialism and Sex," in a 1952 discussion bulletin, The Young Socialist. In one page, its author H. L. Small — almost surely a pseudonym — provided an elegant, concise exposition on behalf of destigmatizing consensual sexuality between same-sex lovers. Excited by this discovery and persuaded that the document deserved rescue from obscurity, I arranged for it to be printed in The Journal of the History of Sexuality. That the editors of New Politics are now publishing it in these pages, too, ensures its accessibility to a wider political audience. I am very grateful to all concerned.*¹

H. L. SMALL'S DOCUMENT "Socialism and Sex" was written at a moment when few in the United States imagined, let alone expressed, so bold a philosophy of sexual liberation or so explicit a political program in favor of decriminalizing sexual acts between consenting adults of the same sex. Therefore, it provides fresh evidence supplementing recent understandings that a "homophile" or homosexual rights consciousness was tentatively emerging within a severely repressive context. The important developments of the 1950s catalogued by scholars include the Mattachine Society (formed 1951), *ONE* magazine (first issued 1953), the Daughters of Bilitis (launched 1955),

CHRISTOPHER PHELPS, associate professor of history at Ohio State University at Mansfield, is author of *Young Sidney Hook: Marxist and Pragmatist* (2nd ed., University of Michigan Press, 2005) and editor of Max Shachtman's *Race and Revolution* (Verso, 2003) and Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005).

and literary manifestations such as Allen Ginsberg's poem "Howl" (1956) and Ann Bannon's bestselling novel *Odd Girl Out* (1957).² "Socialism and Sex" illustrates that like-minded views found expression in yet another subterranean niche: among socialist youth.

Although many American lives in the 1950s did not fit the domestic stereotypes fostered by such radio and television series as "Father Knows Best," conservative postwar gender ideology and anti-communist hysteria had severely constrictive consequences for anyone attracted to others of the same sex.³ During and before the Second World War, a flourishing gay subculture existed, but starting in the 1930s and escalating in the late 1940s and 1950s, morals crusades, conformist pressure, and restrictive governmental interventions, including the anti-gay aspects of Cold War repression, combined to impose fear, shame, and invisibility on gay life.⁴ Quincy Troupe, a writer and friend of James Baldwin, recalls that in the 1950s, "You weren't just in the closet, you were in the basement. Under the basement."⁵ Martin Duberman observes that in the 1950s "the vast majority of gay people were locked away in painful isolation and fear, doing everything possible not to declare themselves."⁶ Given this context of loneliness and terror, the present document is of great significance — a statement rare and daring for its time.

At the same time, the document confirms that conceptualizations of same-sex longing as a social issue in need of political solutions existed well before the 1969 Stonewall rebellion signaled the arrival of a vastly larger, bolder, and more visible gay civil rights movement.⁷ The most famous of these forerunners is the Mattachine Society, formed by Harry Hay and

a handful of other veterans and sympathizers of the Communist Party.⁸ “Socialism and Sex,” written one year after *Mattachine* was created, appeared within a very different radical milieu: the democratic socialist movement. Because of the great variance between the respective political traditions that produced these efforts on behalf of the rights of homosexuals, “Socialism and Sex” represents a parallel and simultaneous impulse to political action that contrasts in salient ways with the *Mattachine* approach.

“Socialism and Sex” appeared as a single typewritten page in *Young Socialist*, the mimeographed bulletin of the Young Socialists, the youth group of the Socialist Party headed by Norman Thomas. Until shortly before, the Young Socialists had been known as the Young People’s Socialist League, and its members as YPSLs (with this acronym affectionately pronounced “Yipsels”). The Socialists — whose youth wing was more militant than their adult party — were defined by a commitment to social reform, but also by an opposition to the dogmatism and authoritarianism they perceived in the American Communist Party and Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin.

The essay’s rhetorical strategy was to claim that a libertarian rejection of strictures against same-sex encounters would help win new adherents to the socialist cause. This may have seemed implausible, causing readers’ eyes to roll at the time. Given the blanket of ignorance and stigma that overlay the issue in the 1950s, public advocacy of eliminating legal sanctions against homosexuality would have been far more likely to unnerve or alienate potential recruits (even gay ones) than win them over. On the other hand, this claim carried within it the astute insight that those suffering oppression in a specific manner often come to political awareness or socialist consciousness through that

identity — in other words, that so-called “single issues” often lead to broader perceptions and connections, prompting more sustained and ambitious commitments.

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The document is written in an allusive language that is nonetheless assertive and crystalline in the clarity of its meaning. This quality speaks to the lack of a common vocabulary at the time to describe

variance in sexual orientation. Nevertheless, “Socialism and Sex” drew effectively upon several traditions to make its case. Its expression of civil libertarian sensibilities in a Jeffersonian idiom was redolent of contemporaneous left-liberal resistance to McCarthyism’s attack on subversive “un-Americans.” Here, however, the individual right to pursue happiness was applied to the fulfillment of sexual desire without fear of arrest or blackmail. Reference to the sexual openness of Scandinavian countries drew upon a more general trans-Atlantic social-democratic admiration commonplace among YPSLs. The warning that suppression of “libidinal expression” or its “practice under fear” will thwart “a whole, productive individual” suggests the Kinsey report and Wilhelm Reich as possible influences.⁹ Conscious placement of the word “deviant” in quotation marks called into question not only the castigation of a particular sexual preference as abnormal simply because it is a minority one, but also hinted of resistance against the host of psychological and popular prejudices then prevalent against “inverts” as depraved, irresponsible, pathological, or unnatural. “Socialism and Sex” postulated that unhealthy guilt and shame were the result not of sex or sexual orientation but of puritanical and discriminatory injunctions against same-sex relations. The way for those attracted to others of the same sex to become “whole” and “productive” was not to suppress their desires but for the society to cease branding them in pejo-

rative terms. In this way, “Socialism and Sex” pointed the way toward notions of psychology and health that would not become normative until the 1970s.

All of this contrasts with Harry Hay’s political and intellectual framework, as reflected in the Mattachine Society. Hay first enrolled in Communist Party classes in 1933 in emulation of his lover, the actor Will Geer, who after the lifting of the Hollywood blacklist would play Grandpa Walton in the 1970s television series. Standard accounts of Hay’s attraction to the Communist movement emphasize his fleeting involvement in the 1934 San Francisco general strike. At that very moment, ironically, the Soviet Union, which Communists upheld as the highest hope for humanity, was proceeding to outlaw homosexuality by prescribing five years of hard labor for men guilty of voluntary sexual relations with other men.¹⁰ At the height of the Popular Front, in 1937, Hay joined the American Communist Party despite its prohibition of homosexuality among its members. By the 1940s, he was a teacher of numerous Party classes, both internal and public. The immersion in ideology and theory that this required of him explains why he drew upon Joseph Stalin’s writings on nationalities and self-determination as well as anthropological understandings of culture (stemming from his interest in indigenous peoples and world folk music) to arrive at a historical materialist theory of “homophiles” as akin to “Negro, Mexican, and Jewish peoples.”¹¹ Hay’s perception of gays as an oppressed minority culture was developed in tandem with his organizing of “bachelors” to support Henry Wallace’s Progressive Party campaign in 1948, culminating in the creation of the Mattachine Society, the first enduring American organization of gays for self-understanding and social transformation. The Mattachine was not entirely original, because at least one precursor existed: Henry Gerber had begun the very short-lived Society for Human Rights in Chicago in 1924, an attempt that an early lover of

Hay’s had told him about. However, that earlier effort was almost entirely lost to memory in the general culture by the 1950s, and the Mattachine Society was an unquestionable breakthrough: the first sustained gay rights advocacy group in American history.

SINCE THE MATTACHINE SOCIETY AT FIRST existed in a veil of secrecy, it was probably unknown to the writer of “Socialism and Sex.” This newly found document therefore represents a synchronous impulse. It ratifies the findings of scholars on the Mattachine Society who have identified the political left as an important wellspring for modern gay civil rights consciousness, but speaks at the same time to a need for more in-depth scholarship on other left-wing contributors to that consciousness.

“Socialism and Sex” does not reflect or anticipate the instinct of self-organization that would shape the Mattachine Society and so much subsequent gay political activism. Its author does not refer directly to homosexuals or coin a term, like Hay’s “androgyne” and “homophile,” that would avoid stigmas attached to the word “homosexual” and yet describe those attracted primarily to others of the same sex. That “Socialism and Sex” did not contribute to the creation of an independent organization goes a good way toward explaining why it was lost to memory. It is not that “Socialism and Sex” was guilty of what would later be termed an “assimilationist” or “accommodationist” reticence, for its animating spirit is emancipation. The contrast is rather between the structure and cultures of two very different sectors of the left.

Hay was compelled to leave the Communist Party, advocating his own expulsion, in order to pursue his quest for homophile rights. The leadership valued Hay’s contributions, but accepted his judgment that severance of attachment was necessary. The Communist Party forbade membership to homosexuals on the grounds that homosexuality was symptomatic of bourgeois decadence, a perversion, a

byproduct of capitalism and fascism. It also viewed homosexuality, like drug use, as a security risk that made individuals susceptible to blackmail that would undermine the organization or exposure that would discredit it. Needless to say, this policy did not prevent gays from becoming party members, or party members from coming to the realization that they were gay. It did, however, perpetuate inner identity conflicts and encourage subterfuge by subjecting gay party members to the very same pressures inflicted upon them by conventional society. Hay, for example, felt compelled to marry Anita Platky in 1938 in order to demonstrate his reformed nature when he sought to join the Communist Party in that same year. Although he had many same-sex affairs and stands throughout his marriage, abandonment of the mask came only when he left the Party and formed the Mattachine Society. The logic behind the CP's policy was blinkered. Homosexuality becomes a heightened security risk when there is a policy that denies gays and lesbians membership, thereby requiring them to remain closeted. Openness annuls blackmail by removing its opportunity. As the California Communist leader who informed Harry Hay he was being dropped from membership observes, "It was a stupid policy nonetheless. After all, we had a number of Communists in Los Angeles who became informers because they worked for the post office and their jobs were at risk, but no one ever proposed that all government employees be dropped from our membership."¹²

Although he left the Communist Party, Hay brought many residues of his Stalinism with him.¹³ The Party's habits of organization, combined with the circumstances of McCarthyism and anti-gay repression (which demanded at least some modicum of discretion), led Hay to conceive of Mattachine as a hierarchical organization led by an inner circle while maintaining the secrecy of the underground. By 1953, a majority of newer members, hundreds of whom had joined after Mattachine success-

fully defended a member in Los Angeles from police entrapment, came to feel manipulated and sought an "open, democratic organization." Hay opposed them, holding that such a transformation would sacrifice "all the idealism that we held while we were a private organization."¹⁴ This membership rebellion, reflective of widespread distrust of the initial conspiratorial and top-down structure, coincided with threatened inquiry by Congressional investigative committees, prompting Hay and other radical founding members to withdraw from Mattachine in 1953. As its new and more conservative leaders sought respectability, the Mattachine Society subsequently lost many members and pursued a timid, self-effacing course. Although other groups and individuals would make fits and starts — including within the Mattachine Society itself — a combination of openness and democracy with militancy and uncompromising gay politics would not be forged consistently or completely until after Stonewall.

A rather different organizational style and set of political traditions existed among the YPSLs. The Young Socialists made no official prohibition against same-sex desire and had no official ideology against it. No one was ever expelled from the Socialist Party or its youth group for "deviancy" or "bohemianism." As one of the leading youth members in New York City, Bogdan Denitch, puts it, "We did discuss things sexual and were open to gay members."¹⁵ "Socialism and Sex" lacked any suggestion of a caucus or separate organization, or even of a notion of distinctive cultural identities built upon variance in sexual orientation. That was consistent with the standard social-democratic manner of thinking about oppressed groups, which had both strengths and weaknesses. To challenge racism, for example, socialists of this persuasion tended to protest discrimination and encourage inclusiveness, rather than a policy of separate action by African-Americans. This tradition, when applied to the question of "the sexual individualist," was double-edged. It in-

hibited and discouraged the type of independent self-organization that Mattachine pioneered and which would prove decisive for later gay and lesbian political development. On the other hand, the socialist valuation of tolerance, democracy, and inclusion meant H. L. Small could write freely, without fear of suppression within the left, such as the expulsions gay Communists experienced. Given the censorious climate in the wider society toward homosexuality and socialism, there were abundant reasons to fear sanction from outside the organization, of course. This most likely explains why the author adopted a pseudonym. Use of a party name, even if a thin veil for identity, was not unusual in radical periodicals in the 1940s and 1950s as a means to prevent employer reprisals in the age of Sen. Joseph McCarthy. It was one thing to be a socialist or homosexual, or even to be known as such to acquaintances. It was another level of commitment to put one's name on documents that might lead to persecution in the press, the workplace, or court of law.

That *The Young Socialist* would publish such an article at all without disclaimer or controversy is testament to the scope of its internal freedom. H. L. Small may even have had reason to believe that the precepts of "Socialism and Sex" might actually be adopted as official group policy. YPSL members in the 1950s were attracted to libertarian socialism — evincing, for example, a strong interest in Rosa Luxemburg, the Polish-German revolutionary socialist who supported the Russian Revolution but was critical of the early Soviet state for its ominous consolidation of power.¹⁶

None of this is to say that the YPSL was free from homophobia or that a culture of complete openness prevailed on sexual matters within the organization, since nowhere in the United States was that true at the time. The atmosphere that prevailed within the group was a peculiar admixture of freedom and caution, acceptance and denial, silence and honesty. David McReynolds, a YPSL in Los Angeles

who came to terms with his attraction to men in 1949, says, "Generally, in those days, it just wasn't discussed. . . . It wasn't tolerance but

Is there a connection between this early history and the Socialist Party USA's role as the first party in United States history to nominate an openly gay man, David McReynolds, for President of the United States, in 1980?

rather 'look the other way.' The Socialist Party always had a strong streak of 'libertarianism' on such matters. What we would have done if the member was a flaming queen I don't know. But so long as it was not pushed in our faces we didn't care. Nor was it discussed — so far as I know — in our groups on the West Coast."¹⁷ Vern Davidson, who became a socialist as a freshman at UCLA in 1948 and who would later serve prison time for his resistance to compulsory military service during the Korean War, says that he had two serious male lovers when he was a YPSL and numerous same-sex encounters within Socialist Party circles, including many with men who were not homosexuals. Nevertheless, he recalls a conversation in which he took McReynolds aside to say, "David, you know, it would be a lot better if you just wouldn't be so gay, openly." He explains, "It was an issue, if we made a scene of it, but so was drinking. Drinking took you away from the cause. We had a real drunk party at the party headquarters in L.A., and boy did we catch hell for it. . . . Our position had nothing to do with being against homosexuality, but that it distracted from our main job which was to sell to a public the concept of socialism."¹⁸ According to Ralph Shaffer, who attended many public

meetings of the Socialist Party in southern California in the 1950s and on a few occasions paid membership dues, “‘gayness’ was not a topic of discussion.” Nevertheless, he notes, it “was common knowledge — even for someone as naive as I was — that several male socialists were gay and it was accepted. . . . I don’t recall that any of the CP/PP people were known as gays. Nor was the gayness of the SP men openly displayed. It was discreet.”¹⁹

When Vern Davidson moved to New York after he was elected YPSL national chairman in 1951, he participated in policy discussions of the very issues raised in the document “Socialism and Sex,” conversations that very nearly resulted in a new plank in the Socialist Party platform:

Before the 1952 party convention, when I was still in New York, I was instructed by the YPSLs to attempt to put a homosexual rights plank before the platform committee. . . . That was my instructions. And I do know at the convention, I went into the convention, and I was a member of the platform committee, and said, “The YPSL would like the party to consider a” — we didn’t use “gay rights” in that day, but a gay rights platform. We didn’t have any history to work from. There weren’t any of those things. You’ve got to remember how *much* things have changed. I was met with a lot of embarrassed-looking old codgers staring at me in a little horror, but not getting angry; it just shocked them that we had to talk about this nasty thing. But good old Norman Thomas, and he’s a sweet guy, said, “Well, Vern, if the YPSL thinks that’s something that we should consider, I certainly think that we should consider it, and I have nothing against it, but I wish you could draw up something and come back with it.” So I’ve always felt that I was the cause of all of this, because I tried and tried and tried, and I just couldn’t write anything that seemed to fit into the platform. So I let it slide by. I had no guidance. We didn’t talk about “discrimination because of sexual preference” in those days. That phrase would never have come to me. And everything was going fast, we were fighting over the war and

everything, and it didn’t get done. And I take responsibility. But I believe to this day, had I been able to do my job Thomas would have joined me, and we could have had it back then, in ’52.²⁰

DESPITE THE MARGINALITY OF SOCIALISM in the 1950s, such a plank, had the Socialist Party adopted it, would have been nothing less than a historic breakthrough in American political life. This episode goes unreported in existing accounts of the Socialist Party or the American left, suggesting that there would be value in further research into the Socialist Party’s sexual politics. Is there, for example, a connection between this early history and the Socialist Party USA’s role almost thirty years later as the first party in United States history to nominate an openly gay man, David McReynolds, for President of the United States, in 1980?

Much further research is warranted on same-sex desire and the anti-Stalinist left, both its social-democratic and revolutionary socialist variants. Anti-Stalinist radicals known or believed to have had lovers of the same sex include the Harlem Renaissance poet and novelist Claude McKay; Trotskyist poet John Brooks Wheelwright; poet and film critic Parker Tyler, who wrote for the Trotskyist *New International* as early as 1938 and was in the Workers Party and Independent Socialist League subsequently; Bayard Rustin, pacifist advisor to Martin Luther King; and Tom Kahn, a Yipsel in the late 1950s and a lover of Rustin who helped organize the March on Washington in 1963 before becoming a high-ranking official in the AFL-CIO. Dwight Macdonald’s iconoclastic periodical *Politics* published Robert Duncan’s pathbreaking “The Homosexual in Society” in 1944, and in his phase as a semi-Trotskyist “libertarian socialist” the novelist Norman Mailer wrote a sympathetic piece for *ONE* entitled “The Homosexual Villain” in 1954. To be sure, the anti-Stalinist left was also capable of censorious approaches to homosexuality. The largest Trotskyist party in the United States, for

Socialism and Sex

H. L. SMALL

THE GROWTH OF SOCIALISM in the United States has been hampered by the lack of imagination of the leaders of socialist thought. The appeal of the socialist has always been to the future, with a paradisiacal vision of economic plentitude and true democratic freedom. That is — the level of appeal has been a mixture of economic and social goods and leisure in a milieu of democratic-liberal sentiment. This has been good but not good enough.

In a time of comparative plentitude, or at least not economic deprivation, one cannot gain adherents as during a depression. The gaining of new people as potential socialists, as potential subscribers to the socialist program, has to be directed toward interests that are immediate and practical today. It has to be directed towards areas of circumscription of society that are vital to their individual happiness and which, if presented to them as political problems will give them an idea of the type of freedom that can be maintained in a free American socialist society.

The freedom of the legally of-age adult of both sexes to have sexual relations with whomever he or she wishes of the same or opposite sex, without fear of sanction is an important libertarian principle that is part of the law in many socialist and semi-socialist countries today, e.g., in Sweden, Norway, the Netherlands, etc. It means, to the individual “deviant” that the fear of legal sanction, as well as illegal repression, blackmail, etc. are forever banished from his mind. It means an area of operational freedom that will enable the emancipated individual to work and think more effectively in his tasks of everyday life. It means the difference between health and sickness for thousands of people who are non-productive members of society today.

It can be argued that sexual deviancy is a mark of ill health in the first place, but it was also argued, with equal clarity and legality, at one time, that it was the mark of the devil — or at least the pagan gods. The point is this: whether we individually consider it right or wrong, healthy or unhealthy, to have a large or small vocabulary of libidinal expression, repression of such expression, or practice under fear, does not make for a whole, productive individual.

Propaganda aimed toward the sexual individualist should stress his importance as a political concern; it should point out his right to what the Declaration of Independence called the “pursuit of happiness.” This soon will make more and more people aware of socialism as a constructive force in the transformation of America into a truly happy country where the individual rights of all its people (regardless of their departure from the Puritan “norm”) are both observed and respected.

It may at first be considered jokingly but the principle is at the root of political effectiveness. Be concerned with what your people are concerned — that is, with real issues, not straw men — issues that hit at the very vitals of the people. Those who will see socialist literature on this level for the first time will be interested in the program as a whole, for they have already made the first step toward conversion. They have realized that their interests are our interests. Perhaps then more people shall consider what we have to offer.

example, the Socialist Workers Party, expelled its known gay members until 1970.²¹

The actual identity of the author of the article "Socialism and Sex," H. L. Small, remains obscure.²² Most likely the writer was male, since a majority of YPSLs were male, and since movement veterans remember no apparent lesbian members.²³ This obscurity of identity makes it impossible to trace the forebears who influenced the writer of "Socialism and Sex." Nevertheless, the document may be situated within a heritage of left-wing support for sexual freedom espoused by such earlier figures as Oscar Wilde, Edward Carpenter, Alexandra Kollontai, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Emma Goldman, Magnus Hirschfeld, and André Gide. This tradition combined acceptance (and often celebration) of same-sex love with social and political radicalism. Although it was beleaguered at midcentury by the consolidation of Stalinism and further obscured by Cold War repression and homophobia, this historical current had the democratic, libertarian proclivities often attributed to the new left of the 1960s — a decade when a freewheeling form of radicalism would indeed come to be espoused more widely, even if it was not "new" in the sense of being unprecedented.²⁴

In several other senses, "Socialism and Sex" prefigured the 1960s. It urged socialists to understand the genesis of political commitment and their ultimate goals in a capacious sense, transcending narrowly economic terms. It treated sexuality as a political issue, comprehending the interrelationship between personal and public in a manner strikingly similar to the subsequent feminist position that "the personal is political." While the scant intellectual resources available to a young person exploring such questions in the early 1950s lent the article a modest temperament, the document contains in embryonic form the admixture of socialism and gay liberation that would find more militant, revolutionary expression in the post-Stonewall explosion of such groups as the Gay

Liberation Front. For all of these reasons, "Socialism and Sex" is a document of great significance in the larger sexual history of the political left. However brief, it stands as an arresting forerunner of modern gay civil rights consciousness.

NOTES

1. In addition to the *New Politics* editorial board, I wish to thank Doug Ireland for urging *New Politics* to reprint "Socialism and Sex," Gail Malmgreen for her idea of a symposium to follow, Joanne Landy and Tom Harrison for their hard editorial work in organizing the entire package, and Mathew Keuffler at *The Journal of the History of Sexuality* for his earlier editorial work. "Socialism and Sex" was first published in *Young Socialist*, whole no. 5 (winter 1952): 21. I came across it in *Independent Socialist Mimeographia*, vol. 22 (Berkeley, CA: Independent Socialist Press, 1971): 227. This collection, a set of 28 bound volumes containing photocopies of discussion bulletins and other mimeographed ephemera of the socialist movement of the 1940s and 1950s, was amassed by Hal Draper and is owned by only four libraries: the Bancroft Library at the University of California, Berkeley; the University of California, Davis; Southern Illinois University; and the University of Michigan. Ernest Haberkern, director of the Center for Socialist History, which owns the rights to the *Independent Socialist Mimeographia*, courteously granted rights to this republication. With more extensive footnotes and in somewhat altered form, this introduction and document were first published as Christopher Phelps, "A Neglected Document on Socialism and Sex," *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, vol. 16, no. 1 (January 2007): 1-13; the University of Texas Press has kindly granted permission for this reissue.

2. Vern L. Bullough, ed., *Before Stonewall: Activists for Gay and Lesbian Rights in Historical Context* (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002); Eric Marcus, *Making History: The Struggle for Gay and Lesbian Equal Rights, 1945-1990* (New York: HarperCollins, 1992); Jim Kepner, *Rough News, Daring Views: 1950s' Pioneer Gay Press Journalism* (Binghamton, NY: The Haworth Press, 1997); John Loughery, *The Other Side of Silence: Men's Lives and Gay Identities: A Twentieth-Century History* (New York: Henry Holt, 1998); Barry Miles, *Ginsberg: A Biography* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989); and Lillian Faderman, *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991).

3. John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago,

1983); Jeffrey Escoffier, "The Political Economy of the Closet: Notes Toward an Economic History of Gay and Lesbian Life Before Stonewall," in *Homo Economics: Capitalism, Community, and Gay and Lesbian Life*, ed. Amy Gluckman and Betsy Reed (New York: Routledge, 1997): 123-134; and Joanne Meyerowitz, ed., *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994).

4. On the thriving earlier subculture, see George Chauncey, *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (New York: Basic, 1994); and Allan Bérubé, *Coming Out Under Fire: The History of Gay Men and Women in World War Two* (New York: Plume, 1990). On the Cold War and the construction of the closet, see David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Robert D. Dean, *Imperial Brotherhood: Gender and the Making of Cold War Foreign Policy* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001); Robert J. Corber, *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (Durham: University of North Carolina, 1997); Andrea Friedman, "The Smearing of Joe McCarthy: The Lavender Scare, Gossip, and Cold War Politics," *American Quarterly* 57, no. 4 (December 2005): 1105-1129; and John D'Emilio, "The Homosexual Menace: The Politics of Sexuality in Cold War America," in *Making Trouble*, 57-73.

5. Quoted in Stuart Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay: Founder of the Modern Gay Movement* (Boston: Alyson, 1990), xiv.

6. Martin Duberman, *Cures: A Gay Man's Odyssey* (New York: Plume, 1991), 3.

7. The two best treatments of Stonewall evoke both the subterranean quality of much of gay life before 1969 and the nascent rights consciousness developing well before the eruption, particularly by the early 1960s, when the black freedom movement provided an inspiration and model. David Carter, *Stonewall: The Riots that Sparked the Gay Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2004); Martin Duberman, *Stonewall* (New York: Dutton, 1993).

8. On Hay, see Jonathan Katz, *Gay American History* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1976): 105-109, 406-420; John D'Emilio, "Dreams Deferred: The Birth and Betrayal of America's First Gay Liberation Movement" (1978-1979), reprinted in *Making Trouble: Essays on Gay History, Politics, and the University* (New York: Routledge, 1992): 17-56; and especially Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*, *op cit*.

9. Reich's most salient work, *The Sexual Revolution*, was translated into English in 1945; interest in him was great in postwar bohemian circles because he seemed

to justify "derepression" while combining political with sexual revolution, so he is a possible inspiration despite his antipathy toward homosexuality. The Kinsey report, whose findings included much higher levels of same-sex sexual experience than previously known, evoked excitement among homosexuals. Wilhelm Reich, *The Sexual Revolution* (New York: Orgone Institute Press, 1945); Alfred Kinsey, et al., *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders, 1948). Another possible influence, though more difficult to obtain, was Donald Webster Cory, *The Homosexual in America* (New York: Greenberg, 1951).

10. The new law, Article 121 of the Soviet Penal Code, was announced on December 17, 1933, and put into effect on March 7, 1934. Mass arrests ensued, with artists, musicians, and stage personnel disproportionately affected. See David Thorstad and John Lauritsen, *The Early Homosexual Rights Movement (1864-1935)* (New York: Times Change, 1974); and Simon Karlinsky, "Russia's Gay Literature and Culture: The Impact of the October Revolution," in *Hidden from History*, ed. Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr. (New York: New American Library, 1989): 347-364.

11. "Mattachine Society Mission and Purposes" (1951), in Harry Hay, *Radically Gay*, ed. Will Roscoe (Boston: Beacon, 1996): 131.

12. Dorothy Healey and Maurice Isserman, *Dorothy Healey Remembers: A Life in the American Communist Party* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990): 130. Allan Bérubé's research on the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union promises to shed new light on a context in which an open gay subculture did exist within a Communist-led labor union. Other studies of gay lives in and around the Communist Party include Martin Duberman, *Paul Robeson* (New York: Knopf, 1988); Eric A. Gordon, *Mark the Music: The Life and Work of Marc Blitzstein* (New York: St. Martin's, 1989); Janet Lee, *Comrades and Partners: The Shared Lives of Grace Hutchins and Anna Rochester* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000); and Bettina Aptheker, *Intimate Politics: How I Grew Up Red, Fought for Free Speech, and Became a Feminist Rebel* (Emeryville, CA: Seal Press, 2006).

13. Despite his late-life involvement in the Radical Faeries, a countercultural project, Hay continued to deny that the Communist Party had been homophobic, and he held considerable illusions about Communist states. For example, Hay once made his biographer leave his residence when he asked a question about the Communist Party's homophobia, and he criticized defecting Cuban gays as "running-dog homosexuals" rather than speak out against Fidel Castro's repressive policies toward gays. Timmons, *The Trouble with Harry Hay*,

xiv, 186.

14. Katz, *Gay American History*, 417.

15. Bogdan Denitch, e-mail message to author, August 19, 2006.

16. The point is not that Rosa Luxemburg would necessarily have supported gay and lesbian liberation, but rather that the YPSLs were more attracted to revolutionary socialism than some accounts of the Socialist Party as "social democracy" imagine, and that in their discussions of 1952 the YPSLs presumed that freedom, democracy, and socialism were indissoluble, making fertile ground for the advocacy of sexual liberation. *Young Socialist* carried advertisements for editions of Luxemburg's writings sold by the Young Socialists. One of its factions, spearheaded by Bogdan Denitch (and subsequently joined by Michael Harrington), called itself the Luxemburg Tendency.

17. David McReynolds, e-mail message to author, August 27, 2006.

18. Vern Davidson, tape-recorded telephone interview by author, August 29, 2006.

19. "PP" here refers to the Progressive Party, vehicle for the left-wing New Dealer Henry Wallace's 1948 campaign, which became badly isolated and preponderantly composed of Communists and fellow travelers. The Socialist Party ran Norman Thomas for President in 1948. Quotation: Ralph Shaffer, e-mail message to author, August 29, 2006.

20. Davidson interview.

21. While many of these figures and episodes are obscure, others have been chronicled well. Bayard Rustin's experiences, for example, are brilliantly reconstructed in John D'Emilio, *Lost Prophet: The Life and Times of Bayard Rustin* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2003). For the specific articles cited above, see Robert Duncan, "The Homosexual in Society," *Politics* 1, no. 7 (August 1944): 209-211; Norman Mailer, "The Homosexual Villain" (1954), reprinted in *Advertisements for Myself* (1959; New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1970): 203-211. The debate within the SWP over how to relate to the gay liberation movement is reprised in David Thorstad, ed., *Gay Liberation and Socialism: Documents from the Discussions on Gay Liberation inside the Socialist Workers Party (1970-1973)* (New York: David Thorstad,

1976), and Steve Forgione and Kurt T. Hill, eds., *No Apologies: The Unauthorized Publications of Internal Discussion Documents of the Socialist Workers Party (SWP) Concerning Lesbian/Gay Male Liberation. Part 2, 1975-79* (New York: Lesbian/Gay Rights Monitoring Group, 1980).

22. In addition to the correspondence with Denitch and McReynolds and interviews with Davidson and Shaffer cited above, personal recollections were tape-recorded in telephone interviews with R. W. Tucker on August 31, 2006 and Maggie Phair on September 2, 2006. None of these veterans of the 1950s young socialist left claimed authorship of "Socialism and Sex" or remembered its existence. Nor were they able to recall H. L. Small or anyone who used that name as a pseudonym. Those consulted, many of them major national leaders, arched across several geographical regions of the organization, as well as both sides of an emerging internal faction fight that would end very soon after the publication of "Socialism and Sex." Much of the membership broke away in 1952 to collaborate with the Socialist Youth League (SYL), the affiliate of the Independent Socialist League (ISL) led by Max Shachtman, and eventually to fuse with the SYL to form the Young Socialist League (YSL) in 1954. Part of the youth remained behind with the Socialist Party, reverting in name to the Young People's Socialist League. In 1958, the YSL would reunite with the YPSL after the ISL dissolved and its members joined the Socialist Party (at that time called the SP-SDF because of its 1956 reunification with the Social-Democratic Federation, which had split off from the party in 1936). H. L. Small's position in relation to the faction fight is not clear; on the one hand, the document opens by putting down "democratic-liberal" sentiment, which would suggest a left-wing outlook, but on the other it upholds certain states in Western Europe as "socialist or semi-socialist," which would suggest a moderate social-democratic viewpoint.

23. Harry Siitonen, e-mail message to author, September 29, 2006, and David McReynolds, e-mail message to author, September 29, 2006.

24. For useful background on the libidinal left, see Gert Hekma, Harry Oosterhuis, and James Steakley, eds., *Gay Men and the Sexual History of the Political Left* (New York: The Haworth Press, 1995).

Keeping the Communist Party Straight, 1940s – 1980s

BETTINA APTHEKER

GROWING UP IN A COMMUNIST FAMILY and in Communist circles in New York City in the late 1940s and 1950s sexuality of any kind was never discussed, ever, in any context, for any reason. I am not laying claim to any kind of universal experience in saying this; I am only commenting on the absence of discussion in my own experience.

Although I knew from an early age, and certainly by adolescence, that my primary attractions were to women, I had no language with which to express these feelings, and a firm belief that I was sexually perverted and evil, and absolutely singular in my desires. It was not until 1973 that I learned the word “lesbian” because I found the book *Lesbian Woman* by Del Martin and Phyllis Lyons. I hid the book from my husband and read it with acute attention and a shortness of breath, borne of panic. By 1980 I was in a committed lesbian relationship, but I was still terrified to tell my Communist parents, Herbert and Fay Aptheker. Much to my mother’s credit, when I did come out to her she was very supportive, and told me not to worry about my father; she would take care of him.

By the late 1970s many feminists and gays and lesbians were using Marxist theory as a way to analyze both women’s oppression and homophobic institutions and practices. In line with this interest I was asked to give a paper at a con-

ference in San Francisco in 1980 on Marxism and Sexuality. I began that paper by saying I didn’t think Marxism had anything to say about sexuality, still shied away from the lesbian issue, and proceeded to talk about the historical and social construction of sexuality, and the ways in which heterosexual marriage was tied to capitalist relations of production. In the same year John D’Emilio wrote his wonderful essay on “Capitalism and Gay Identity”; a few years earlier and in the same genre, Eli Zaretsky had published his book on *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life*, using Marxist theory to examine the relationship between the family and the modes and relations of production. Likewise, Zillah Eisenstein’s edited volume, *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism*, historicized and gave a materiality to issues that had previously been seen as “personal” and/or “fixed.” Although heterosexuality was the unspoken, underlying, and unquestioned assumption in the book, the Combahee River Collective Statement offered an intersectional analysis of multiple systems of domination for the first time, and included sexuality and lesbian experience.

All of these works were extremely helpful to me. All of them were also outside the framework of any politics within the Communist Party, which, in my experience (between the 1950s and until well into the 1980s) looked upon these works — insofar as they were viewed at all — with suspicion and ridicule.

Shortly after I had left my husband, I talked to an older woman comrade in the Communist Party whom I trusted and who I thought could help me understand my own sexuality. This would have been sometime in 1978 or 1979. With trepidation I came out to her. She responded to me gently, looking out the living room

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window of my home, and not making eye contact with me. She said two things that I clearly remember. First, this comrade told me that she thought that sex was solely for reproduction, and not for recreational purposes, and therefore any sex outside of this framework was not appropriate. She was careful in her choice of language and especially not to cast moral aspersion.

Told to Leave

THE SECOND THING SHE TOLD ME was that in the 1950s during the McCarthy and HUAC hearings, she was instructed by the Party leadership to talk with several women comrades about their sexuality. Because these comrades were lesbians, or had had a lesbian liaison, she was told to ask them to leave the Party. My comrade friend explained this was because the Party feared that if the FBI threatened them with exposure they could become informants. Although no one has done a study of this, none of the informants I know of, or who surfaced in various trials, were blackmailed homosexuals, with the possible exception of Jerome Robbins.¹ My friend said that other comrades were asked to make similar inquiries inside the Party, and women and men were thus forced to leave the Party voluntarily or were expelled. My friend told me that she deeply regretted her role in this purge. I was stunned at such a level of homophobia and I could only just begin to fathom the impact this would have had on gay women and men forced to abandon their comrades, at a time when everyone was under such intense attack.

This historical episode was reconfirmed when sociologist Ellen Kay Trimberger published her study of women in the Old Left and recounted an interview with a former CP organizer who related that in the late 1940s

The Party leadership made a decision to drop all homosexuals from the Party because of their presumed openness to blackmail as state repression increased. A local organizer was asked to speak to several known lesbians to request their resignations. These lesbians were friends of the organizer, although she never discussed their sexual

preference with them. When she met them, they all cried, but the lesbians “obeyed” and resigned. Looking back on this incident this activist says that neither she nor the lesbians, although some may have questioned the assumption, ever considered opposing the Party decision.²

This heterosexist history within the Communist Party was further explored by historian Jennifer Terry in *An American Obsession: Science, Medi-*

This comrade told me that she thought that sex was solely for reproduction, and not for recreational purposes, and therefore any sex outside of this framework was not appropriate.

cine and Homosexuality in Modern Society. While the anti-Communist purges of the McCarthy period are well known, Terry makes the connection between them and the persecution of gays and lesbians. In her discussion of “Loyalty, Security, and the Homosexual Conspirator,” Terry argues that the men in power in the 1950s invoked a hyper-masculinity as a hallmark of patriotism, while at the same time asserting a hyper-femininity that propelled “normal” women firmly out of their higher paying jobs and careers and into heterosexual marriage, low-paying marginal employment, and maternity.

Terry gives ample and sickening evidence of the ways in which Washington politicians made their careers by alleging that so-called “effete” men were running key government agencies and weakening the country because they were not “real” men. These pundits also claimed that homosexuals in “sensitive” government positions were vulnerable to blackmail by foreign powers. This echoed precisely the (il)logic of the Communist Party. The Washington politicians whipped themselves into a

veritable rhetorical and persecutorial frenzy with Congressional hearings, FBI and police raids, arrests, beatings, firings, and purges. By the end of the campaign, Terry concludes, “homosexual” and “communist” were discursively indistinguishable in the Washington lexicon.

Although Terry does not explore this, it is probable that the initial idea for these claims linking Communists and homosexuals was the widely publicized British spy scandal, in which four men who had been students together at Cambridge in the 1930s became spies for the Soviet Union during World War II when we were all allies, but continued their espionage activities on behalf of the Soviets as the Cold War began. They were all perceived to be gay men, and the case made international headlines in 1951 when Donald Maclean and Guy Burgess defected to the Soviet Union. It is likely that Maclean and Burgess were actually gay. The third key member of the spy ring was Kim Philby, who was very high up in British intelligence, and the fourth member of the group was Anthony Blunt. Maclean and Burgess had been working for the British government and lodged in the United States when they were discovered, and this added to the American panic. What is significant here, of course, is that when you have a targeted and despised minority as in the case of gays and lesbians, the gay identity of two of these actual spies provided fuel for a massive witch hunt. In my experience and from my personal knowledge the Communist Party never defended the many people who came under these homophobic attacks, which is no surprise given the homophobia of the Party itself.

Lesbians in the Communist Party

WHILE I WAS STRUGGLING TO COME OUT, I also searched for evidence of lesbians in the Communist Party. It was awkward because I didn’t feel safe in asking my parents or others directly, but I tried to find indirect ways of turning conversations, usually putting my questions in the context of classes I was teaching. This

was how I found out from my father about Anna Rochester (1880 -1960) and Grace Hutchins (1885 - 1969). He knew them both and deeply respected their work. Anna Rochester’s many books and pamphlets were in our home, with titles such as *Rulers of America: A Study of Finance Capital*, *Lenin on the Agrarian Question* and *Why Farmers are Poor: The Agricultural Crisis in the United States*. Meanwhile, Grace Hutchins, whom I had actually met, was a radical labor economist and co-founder in 1927 of the Labor Research Association whose scholarly papers and statistical research I had used for years. My father told me this as though it were no big deal, and reported that everyone in the Party knew about Anna and Grace. They were most certainly not expelled from the Party. It was astonishing to me.

Years later I was interviewed by the biographer of Rochester and Hutchins, Janet Lee, whose book is titled *Comrades and Partners: The Shared Lives of Grace Hutchins and Anna Rochester*. Lee wrote: “To my best knowledge, Hutchins and Rochester . . . never openly identified as lesbians. They demonstrated the innocence of the golden age of romantic friendships, seeing each other as treasured companions and soul-mates.” This was so even though, Lee continued, “about the time Hutchins and Rochester started to live together in the early twenties, romantic friendships were starting to come under scrutiny.” Lee concluded, and I feel certain that she is correct, that Hutchins and Rochester maintained the designation of romantic friends because it allowed them to remain in the Communist Party; their lesbian relationship was in no way a challenge to the patriarchal family; it was not in any way connected to a feminist movement, and their work was solidly within the fold of Marxist political economy. This is not said to disparage Anna Rochester and Grace Hutchins. It is merely meant as a historical acknowledgement of who they were in their time and place. I personally was thrilled to learn about them and more than a little an-

noyed with myself for not knowing about them until I was in my mid-thirties!

Elizabeth Gurley Flynn

ANOTHER SIGNIFICANT MOMENT in my history with the Communist Party and its lesbian and gay members was the controversy surrounding Elizabeth Gurley Flynn whom I knew well in childhood, and whom I last saw in San Francisco in 1962, during my first year in college, about a year before her death. A heroine of the U.S. working class movement, especially in her days with the I.W.W., Flynn's membership in the Communist Party was a source of pride for the Party; there was great reverence for her. In 1963 Flynn's account of her life in prison was published. She had been convicted of conspiring to advocate the overthrow of the U.S. government under the infamous Smith Act and served 28 months in Alderson Federal Penitentiary. I read her prison memoir with considerable personal interest and came upon her somewhat disparaging description of lesbian life behind bars. I was in such desperate need of anything relating to lesbian life that I read Flynn's descriptions again and again. She focused in particular on the punishments meted out to lesbians in prison, and announced her theory that these relationships were a result of the deprivation of male companionship.³

Years later a controversy over Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's papers erupted. In the early 1980s Rosalyn Baxandall got in touch with me with an urgent request. She was then researching her book *Words on Fire: The Life and Writing of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn*, eventually published in 1987. Flynn's papers were in the possession of the National Office of the Communist Party and Baxandall could not gain access to them. She was told at first that the papers were "lost," and then she was told a series of other stories, all of which were untrue, and all of which were intended to deny her access to the papers.

In an effort to help Ros I talked to my father because I knew that Elizabeth had left her

papers to him as director of the American Institute for Marxist Studies (AIMS) precisely, as I understood it, to avoid Party control over them. At first my father was vague as he discussed this with me, but I finally got him to admit that when he had moved to California in 1978 and estab-

There was no critical analysis in the Party I grew up in and worked in, of the family, or of its patriarchal character and its relationship to capitalist relations of production.

lished a West Coast office for AIMS he had not wanted to bother with Flynn's papers, and had arranged for the Party to have them after all. I was furious with him for betraying Elizabeth's trust because it was inconvenient for him to arrange for the transport of the papers or for their relocation to a university archive, which apparently never occurred to him. I contacted Gil Green who was a member of the Party's Central Committee. Gil was more broad-minded and reasonable than many. He promised to help and shortly afterwards the Party made Flynn's papers available to Baxandall. I am sure that other folks also intervened on Ros's behalf.

Now, one may ask, why was this even an issue. It was an issue because Elizabeth Gurley Flynn had lived with a "known lesbian," Marie Equi, a physician in Portland, Oregon, for ten years beginning late in 1926. Flynn had suffered a nervous and physical breakdown during a particularly vigorous speaking trip, and credited Dr. Equi with having saved her life. Labor historian Helen C. Camp, who wrote a biography of Flynn, felt compelled to write the following:

Equi's open acknowledgement of a number of lesbian unions has inevitably led to speculation about the nature of her relationship with

Flynn. Nancy Krieger, who made a study of Equi's career, has stated that "it is certain they had an intense, emotionally involved relationship" — a judgment confirmed by Flynn herself — but neither she nor any other researcher has found positive evidence of an erotic relationship. Kathie Flynn (Elizabeth's sister, who was devoted to her) worried about Elizabeth's living with Marie because she thought it would hurt her sister's reputation.⁴

It was certainly personally thrilling for me to learn of Flynn's relationship with Marie Equi. However, Camp's preoccupation with the "erotic" is foolish both because she is using it as a euphemism for sex and because it so narrows and belittles the emotional sustenance and importance of their relationship. This preoccupation with "protecting" Flynn from the lesbian charge — by the Party even posthumously in the 1980s — is a measure of the Party's demeaning attitudes towards gay and lesbian people. As for Elizabeth herself, I would say that she didn't cast negative judgments on people's sexual orientation. For example, she was a member of the Heterodoxy Club in New York in the 1920s and she wrote about it with fond memory in her autobiography, *I Speak My Own Piece*,

It was a women's luncheon club which met fortnightly. . . . It shunned publicity, but as its name implied, had free and frank discussions on all subjects . . . The subjects dealt mainly with women and their accomplishments. All of its members were ardent suffragists, some were quite extreme feminists. No one was there because her husband or father was famous. . . . It made me conscious of women and their accomplishments. My mother, who had great pride in women, was very pleased by this association."⁵

Out lesbians were among Heterodoxy's many luminaries, including the well-known poet Amy Lowell.

Sometime in the late 1970s I wrote a position paper for the Party's Women's Commission that made a first attempt to link the significance of lesbian women with the struggles of working class women (I was thinking of the lesbian

women in the National Women's Trade Union League at the turn of the 20th century, and their heroic organizing in the ILGWU) In that same paper I made my first foray into understanding the relationship between lesbian lives and women's potential independence from men. I was told in very direct terms by the Party leadership to abandon any such effort. It was just after this that I read Mari Jo Buhle's excellent book, *Women and American Socialism 1870 – 1920* and got a better understanding of the ways in which independent women's organizing within the socialist and communist movements had been discouraged. It was then I realized the deeper significance of what I was up to! Eventually I returned to these themes in my book *Tapestries of Life*, but by then I was long since out of the Communist Party. It was also with considerable pride that I learned about Harry Hay (1912 – 2002) and his membership in the Communist Party when he founded the Mattachine Society in 1950 in Los Angeles. He was expelled from the Party for his efforts, although with "regret" because Harry was quite beloved as a teacher in the California Labor School and elsewhere.

"Coming Out" in the Communist Party

I "CAME OUT" IN THE COMMUNIST PARTY under great subterfuge in the late 1970s. The comrades in my Party club in Santa Cruz knew I was a lesbian, and many of them knew my partner. The leadership of the Communist Party of Northern California also knew, and many of them had also met my partner. My comrades in California were accepting, as long as nothing about my sexual preference had anything to do with my politics. There evolved a kind of "don't ask, don't tell" attitude in the Party, as a few gay and lesbian people joined us in the 1970s. As a matter of preference we were tolerated in the Northern California district. Not so the national leadership of the Communist Party, which maintained a steadfast hostility.

In addition to a conservative "good old boys'" objection to gay and lesbian people in

the Party, I think two other observations are worth making. The first concerns the attitude towards the family. John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman are correct when they speak of “Male radicals wedded to a socialist tradition that exalted the working class family and excoriated capitalism for corrupting it”⁶ There was no critical analysis in the Party I grew up in and worked in, of the family, or of its patriarchal character and its relationship to capitalist relations of production. In addition, whenever I and others tried to raise issues of domestic and/or sexual violence within the family we were told that these subjects were out of bounds because they were private and personal matters.

The Party was generally opposed to any sort of politics that compromised (in its mind) the centrality of the class struggle over all others. Thus, the assertions of intersectional analysis, of intertwining systems of domination by race, class, gender, sexuality that has marked a more mature feminist scholarship but was already evident in the 1970s and 1980s, was rejected out of hand. In this regard, I think that Martin Duberman’s essay on “The Divided Left: Identity Politics versus Class” is on the mark.⁷

The continuing spiritual, political and historical analysis of sexuality and of the queer community is a deeply worthwhile and welcome project. Examining the historical record, especially in the Socialist and Communist movements, is of great benefit in critically shifting our understanding of those movements, and of the particular contributions made by the queer community. Christopher Phelps’ discovery of H.L. Small’s document “Socialism and Sex” is a wonderful one, and he provides a historical context consonant with many of my own experiences in the Communist Party. In continuing to review the archival record with a queer sensibility we might well discover many gems buried in darkened closets. We come from a long line of courageous, inspired, wounded, crazy, beautiful, and talented people who have waited a long time for proper and respectful recogni-

tion. Beyond adding the historical contributions of such individuals, the continuing excavations will surely queer the history itself. This process

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has already begun. May it continue!

Note: This article draws substantially on a paper for a panel on “Queering the Left in U.S. History” at the American Studies Association National Conference, Oct. 13, 2006. Many thanks to Aaron Lecklider for inviting me to participate.

The references to my own work, including unpublished papers and letters, are located in the Bettina Aptheker Archive, Special Collections, McHenry Library, University of California, Santa Cruz.

NOTES

1. According to Victor Navasky, Robbins was rumored to have testified because HUAC investigators threatened to reveal he was gay. Robbins denies this, although his demeanor before HUAC, says Navasky, had an aura of social blackmail, Victor S. Navasky, *Naming Names*, (N.Y.:Viking, 1980) p. 75.
2. Ellen Kay Trimberger, “Women in the Old and New Left: The Evolution of a Politics of Personal Life,” *Feminist Studies*, fall, 1979, p. 438.
3. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *The Alderson Story: My Life As A Political Prisoner*, (N.Y.:International Publishers, 1963) 54-56.
4. Helen C. Camp, *Iron In Her Soul: Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and the American Left* (Pullman, WA:Washington State University Press, 1995) 129-30.
5. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, *I Speak My Own Piece* (N.Y.:Masses and Mainstream Publishers, 1955) 270-71.
6. John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (Chicago, IL:University of Chicago press, second edition, 1997) 232.
7. Martin Duberman, *Left Out: The Politics of Exclusion* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2002).

Can the Left Ignore Gay Liberation?

JOHN D'EMILIO

THE JESUITS TRAINED ME WELL. My high school speech and debate coach taught me how to speak in complete paragraphs and to construct what he described as a “seamless” argument. Many years later, a close friend and fellow historian used the same word in reference to my historical writing. He described one of my books as a “seamless” narrative. Well, that skill, if I have it, has eluded me as I’ve tried to compose my contribution to this discussion. So, instead, I offer a series of disconnected, but I hope relevant, observations.

I have been teaching an undergraduate history course on the U.S. in the 1960s for almost twenty-five years. Since important elements of the spirit of “the sixties” lasted well into the seventies and were passed on by older brothers and sisters, for a long time my students came to the course already at least partly versed in that decade’s history. But, a few years ago I noticed that something decisive had shifted. I now have to explain that liberal and left are two different political categories; that at many points in the sixties they were bitterly opposed to each other; and that “radical” in the sixties meant something other than a wild fundamentalist, whether Christian or Muslim.

The change brought home to me what I suppose I already knew but didn’t want to admit: that the left in the U.S. today is so inconsequential that groups of working class college students at a public urban university don’t even

know what the term means. That is, they think that liberals are the left. Why do I mention this? Because I find it hard to grab hold of the premises of this forum. Instead of asking “should the contemporary left campaign on this issue as part of a program for American society?” I’m pulled to ask, “why should a gay and lesbian movement, whose component parts number thousands and thousands of organizations in the U.S., give a second thought to a ‘left’ that, for the overwhelming majority of Americans, is hardly known to exist?”

As Christopher Phelps reminds us, the Mattachine Society, the group whose founding launched a history of continuous queer organizing in the U.S., owed its birth to a group of men with ties to the Communist Party. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, critical figures in the radical gay and lesbian liberation movement — Carl Wittman, Charlotte Bunch, Allen Young are three names that come to mind, but there were many more — had roots in the New Left activism of the era and brought those experiences and perspectives with them as they helped radicalize gay and lesbian politics. Then, in the late 1980s, ACT UP chapters around the country not only had angry twenty-two-year-olds at their overflow meetings, but also alumni of the radical social movements of the 1960s and 1970s who invested AIDS organizing with militancy and with a politics that called attention to systemic inequalities and oppression.

So, yes, in a sense, the left can claim a critical role in what I consider the three most compelling, historically significant moments in the gay and lesbian movement. Yet the movement’s headiest periods have neither been initiated nor carried out by left organizations and their leadership. Rather, they have come from gay, les-

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bian, bisexual, and transgender activists whose worldviews were shaped by various left traditions but who worked outside the left.

Wonderful and important as those three transforming moments were, none of them lasted long. After each of them, as gay activism resettled into more mainstream or reformist or civil rights frameworks, individual activists who saw themselves as leftists either went back to the left or tried to keep a left analysis or program alive within the gay and lesbian movement. My own direct experience of this history (rather than my retelling of it as a historian) came in the 1970s in the wake of the gay liberation moment. I joined one of the many pre-party formations that grew out of the upheavals of the sixties. The one I chose, the New Action Party, was completely unsuccessful in its aspirations to become a political party, but it did provide me with wonderful mentoring from impressive community organizers who were older than I.

At the same time, I was part of a collective in New York called the Gay Socialist Action Project. We organized “actions”; convened educational forums to talk about left analyses of gay oppression; and mobilized visible gay contingents for events like the 1976 counter-Bicentennial demonstrations or protest rallies outside the Democratic National Convention in New York City that summer. There were equivalent gay men’s groups in cities around the country — San Francisco, Chicago, Boston, D.C., Los Angeles and, I’m sure, others. I’d be hard pressed to claim that these grouplets did many things of earth-shaking consequence. Leftist labels in themselves tended to marginalize us. But we did function as a system of support and self-education among ourselves, cracking a political isolation that tended to deepen with the rightward shift of the country. The connections between us helped shape how some of us were able to be activists within the gay and lesbian and, as the eighties moved into the nineties, bisexual and transgender

movement.

Here’s how the above process played itself out with me. At some point, I decided to devote my activist energies to the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Of the various national

The movement’s headiest periods have neither been initiated nor carried out by left organizations and their leadership. Rather, they have come from gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender activists whose worldviews were shaped by various left traditions but who worked outside the left.

gay groups, it was the one that seemed most attached, even during the Reagan years, to the spirit of gay liberation. And it seemed to attract, to both its staff and its board, folks who were now labeling themselves “progressive.” In concrete terms this meant an allegiance to community organizing and grassroots mobilizations rather than to inside-the-Beltway lobbying. It meant an approach to gay politics that always argued for interconnections between issues and between various forms of oppression. Thus, when I chaired the board of NGLTF, we issued a statement opposing the Gulf War in 1991. Later, when I became director of its Policy Institute, we issued position papers and took stands on things like affirmative action, welfare reform, and immigration restriction. From inside the GLBT movement, activists who thought of themselves as leftists worked consistently to magnify the movement’s lens so that segments of the movement at least stood for a vision of social justice broader than a single-issue politics contained within a civil rights framework. But, again, we didn’t do this as members

of a left organization. We did it from within the GLBT movement, as activists who had a left-inspired vision of what social justice might look like.

At some point in my twenties, I began to identify as a leftist. I did it for a combination of reasons. I came to believe that capitalism (the private ownership of the means of production) would always produce inequality and exploitation. I longed for an economic structure in which everybody had enough (vague to you reading this, but clear to me what this means). I wanted a social structure in which other systems of oppression and inequality would become artifacts of the past. Because I didn't think that the latter (no racism, no sexism, no homophobia) would ever happen under capitalism, a democratic socialist vision of a future society became mine. And, as I read more history, especially about American radicalism, I was taken by the way that fighting for the underdog, fighting for those who were persecuted and mistreated, seemed to be what motivated the people who called themselves leftists.

So imagine now how disorienting it is, for someone who thinks the left fights against injustice, to read one of the questions guiding this forum: "Should the contemporary left campaign on this [i.e., gay] issue as part of a program for American society?"

In the 1950s, it is almost certain that more gay men and lesbians than leftists were the target of government investigations and were fired from their jobs. In the 1960s, when leftists were enjoying expansive possibilities for organizing mass protests, gay men and lesbians were routinely arrested in mass sweeps by the police in major American cities. In Chicago, Mayor Daley's police force arrested a lot more homosexuals than radicals. When the Chicago police murdered Black Panther leader Fred Hampton, there were tons of protests, as there should have been. When, the following year, police shot and killed James Clay, a black transvestite, not a peep of protest. Between 1961 and 1973,

something like 58,000 American military personnel died in Southeast Asia. The war became the central obsession of both the government and of a broad left. Between 1981 and 1993, more than 58,000 Americans died of AIDS. The Reagan-Bush government had other things to occupy their attention, and the left, if there was one, didn't make AIDS a rallying cry.

The point of the preceding paragraph? It's hard for me to understand why, at this point in time, adherents of a political tradition committed to fighting against oppression, to championing the underdog, and to promoting justice and equality, would still be asking whether they should campaign on "this issue." What needs to happen to a group of people before it becomes obvious to everyone that they are the targets of systematic oppression?

In the early 1980s, I published an essay titled "Capitalism and Gay Identity." It was an attempt to theorize a materialist basis for the emergence of gay identities, communities, and politics in the U.S. across the twentieth century. A key piece of the argument proposed that gay and lesbian communities formed on social terrain outside the family and kinship networks. It was the system of wage labor at the heart of capitalist social relations that allowed same-sex desire to congeal into an identity and that made it possible for groups of such people to come together. I also argued that the success of gay and lesbian liberation depended on fighting to expand that terrain, but not in the harshly individualist ways of the capitalist market. Rather, it depended on constructing a society in which the boundaries between family and community were porous, a social democratic society, if you will, that offered security for all regardless of an individual's relationship to a heterosexual family unit.

A GLBT movement in the conservative climate of the twenty-first century campaigns on a single-issue marriage-equality platform, and it becomes a mobilizing tool for the right. I suppose the left could stand shoulder to shoulder

with those gay activists who are obsessively fighting for marriage rights. Or, it could propose, and then organize around, a comprehensive “family agenda” that promises security for all the complex family forms that exist in the U.S. today. The “valuing all families” approach to policy taken by someone like Nancy Polikoff, author of *Beyond (Gay and Straight) Marriage*, encourages a progressive democratic socialist politics of the family that potentially builds coalition across lines of sexuality, ethnicity, race, and class.

In this first decade of the twenty-first century, gay and lesbian life seems so visible and normalized. Ellen is a big star. Mayor Richard Daley Jr. presides each year over the induction of new members into Chicago’s Gay and Lesbian Hall of Fame. President Bush jokes with Representative Barney Frank about Frank’s boyfriend. But, at the same time, young people who come out, or who betray signs of transgressing gender and sexual identity boundaries, are subject to a level of ridicule, harassment, and violence that was rare half a century ago, when the closet reigned supreme. I suppose the left could add the issue of queer youth to its program for American society (Actually, I wish it would, since these young folks could use all the allies they can get). Or the left could make the systematic dismantling of public education by the right over the last generation the scandal that it is; offer a comprehensive program for financing the education of our children; and have respect for all young folks by the schools, regardless of sexual or gender identity, be a non-negotiable item.

Okay, so I know there’s something ridiculous about proposing in two short paragraphs big, complex, almost-impossible-to-imagine-achieving programs. But the point is that there

There isn’t a single significant element of American politics and policy — family, schooling, health care, national security — in which issues germane to GLBT folks don’t surface organically. But the issues will surface among leftists only if the left, whoever and whatever that is today, opens its eyes and ears to see and hear the queers all around them.

isn’t a single significant element of American politics and policy — family, schooling, health care, national security — in which issues germane to GLBT folks don’t surface organically. But the issues will surface among leftists only if the left, whoever and whatever that is today, opens its eyes and ears to see and hear the queers all around them. If the left is fundamentally about constructing a society without exploitation and oppression, I don’t see why or how gay issues would not be part of its program for American society.

Gay Leftie Seeks Straight Friends

MARTIN DUBERMAN

THE PRESENCE ON MANY CAMPUSES of a significant number of liberals (“Of course gay people are entitled to the full rights of citizenship”) proved critical in allowing lesbian and gay studies to gain a toehold. But as I kept discovering, unpleasantly, a willingness to grant us basic rights wasn’t remotely the equivalent of actually wanting to know about our lives — let alone of believing that our distinctive perspectives might have anything of importance to say to *them*. Even as these liberals fell in love with, and broadly announced, their own tolerance, they seemed clueless about the patronization that so often characterized their actual tone when dealing with us. (“What YOU PEOPLE need to understand is that . . .”)

This was *far* more true of straight white male scholars than female or minority ones. The latter, after all, knew a great deal about being kept outside the centers of power — and how being on the margins often gave them greater insight into the psyches and behavior of the Big Boys than those self-reverential smarty-pants had about themselves. Women also know — having themselves long been relegated to the private realm — the inherent falsity of such commonplace statements as “what gay people do in the privacy of their own homes is no concern of ours.”

The liberal adoption of “the privacy principle”

is an effective shield against letting too much subversive information get through, the equivalent of building a wall between gay and straight that not only perpetuates the fallacious het/homo binary but conveniently protects straight male academia from learning more about the actual complexity of gay lives and the challenging findings of gay scholarship. Even male scholars fur-

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ther to the left than merely “liberal” (Todd Gitlin, say, or Eric Hobsbawm and Bogdan Denitch) seal themselves off from the realities of gay identity — or as Gitlin scornfully puts it, being “overly concerned with protecting and purifying what they imagine to be their identities.”

Many left-wingers, on campus and off, position themselves as radicals on economic and class issues, but are utterly traditional in regard to feminist and gay concerns. Zealous in challenging the economic status quo, they are no less zealous in defending the status quo in regard to cultural issues. Michael Tomasky, to give one example, has cavalierly dismissed “supposedly oppositional” gay culture with its “superficially transgressive ideas.” Supposedly? Superficially? None of these left-wing traditionalists could conceivably express such views if they’d read a word of Eve Sedgwick or Judith Butler.

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If they had, they'd have to take seriously some of the basic insights of queer history and theory: the performative aspects of gender, the nature and parameters of friendship, the shifting view across time and culture of such purported universals as the nuclear family, monogamy, life-long pair-bonding and the questionable linkage between love and sex — and as well, the omnipresence in all of us of a wildly anarchic, unorthodox range of erotic fantasy and desire. Such insights, *if* taken seriously, would have a transformative impact on current arrangements of power — yes, economic power too.

Diary, March 30, 1990:

At the end of the “Whose History?” panel last night at the New York Historical Society, a young man with a large ACT-UP button on his lapel came up to me and said he wanted me to know how I ended up (belatedly) on the panel: “When I got the NYHS mailing,” he said, “and saw that gay/lesbian history had been omitted, I wrote in protest to R.M., director of public programs. She wrote back that NYHS simply couldn’t afford another fee (a big \$250). To which he responded, “That simply isn’t good enough. *One way or the other* we will be represented at that event.” R.M. got the message — and out went the call to me. Good old ACT-UP!

The “young man,” I soon learned, was in fact 45 and his name was Bob Rafsky. He’d been a public relations executive until 1989 when he quit to devote his time entirely to ACT-UP. Arrested several times in civil disobedience demonstrations, he became ACT-UP’s media coordinator in New York and a well-known figure in the struggle against AIDS. Soon after the NYHS panel, Rafsky sent me the pertinent correspondence. I reprint excerpts below to demonstrate the kind of liberal double-speak I just wrote about — to say nothing of illuminating Rafsky’s organizing skills and eloquent prose.

Rafsky to R. M., Feb. 2, 1990:

“Here we are, in New York, in 1990, in the midst of an epidemic beyond imagining. One of the few consolations of these plague years —

if the very idea of consolation is not obscene — is that it has forced us all to focus on the presence of gays and lesbians everywhere, and the implications of that presence — social, political, historical. . .” (NYHS’s advance announcement of the “Whose History?” panel had noted that it would examine “the role of race, nationality and gender in contemporary historical thinking,” and that the panelists would speak from the vantage points of women, Puerto Ricans, blacks, and Asian-Americans.)

Rafsky went on:

“But is something missing from this panel? Is something missing? I doubt you can appreciate how angry it makes me to have to take time from dealing with my life and the epidemic to write a letter that, in effect, forces me to justify my existence to you, And who are you?”

“The only thing that makes me angrier is the prospect of having to deal with your reply and whatever rationalizations and excuses it trails with it. What are my obligations here? Do I have to tell you what you should do by March 29?” (the evening of the panel): “Do I have to make clear what I think our community will do if you don’t do what you should? . . .”

R. M.’s Feb. 7, 1990 reply, nearly in its entirety:

“ . . . Because of limited funding, we were not able to address the concerns of the gay and lesbian community at this time. But we do plan in the near future to have a series entitled ‘New York City in Crisis,’ and will at that time address the issue of the AIDS epidemic and health care policy, I will keep your letter on file, and contact you at the time of the event so that you can be in attendance. . . . I hope that what I have written brings some clarity to the issues raised.”

Rafsky to R.M., Feb. 23, 1990, in its entirety:

“ ‘Limited funding’ prevented you from adding a panelist to a panel that already had four members and a moderator? And the omission just happened to be the gay and lesbian community? Aren’t you ashamed, at some level, to write this sort of thing?”

“No, we’re not going to wait for some ghettoized panel on AIDS to be recognized by the New York Historical Society, which uses

our tax money to insult us.

"We're going to stand tall with our black, Latino, and Asian-American brothers and sisters. And we're going to do it on March 29, with or without your cooperation."

A few days later, Rafsky sent near-duplicate letters to both NYHS's President and Chairperson, to the Commissioner of NYC's Department of Cultural Affairs, and to State Senators Manfred Ohrenstein and Roy Goodman (who'd gotten state funds allocated to help cover the costs of the panel). To all, Rafsky sent approximately the same message:

"I assume you're not aware of the slap in the face the New Historical Society plans to give the gay and lesbian community on March 29 — with money from the Department of Cultural Affairs.

I also assume that, once made aware, you'll take steps to prevent it . . ."

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT — who stepped on whose toes, and how hard — is unrecorded. But on March 8, Bob Rafsky got another letter from R. M., quite different in tone, acknowledging that the Society had been "remiss" in not having included a gay or lesbian historian in the first place, informing him that I would now be on the panel, and thanking him for his "interest in The New York Historical Society."

As I later wrote Rafsky, "You're a snazzy letter writer; most 'persuasive' . . . You did a great job! One more confirmation of the respectful awe I feel for the ACT-UP generation."

Three years later, Bob Rafsky was dead of AIDS.

2008. When I accepted an offer to join the CUNY system back in 1972 as a Distinguished Professor, I was asked to teach at the Graduate Center as well as on one of the undergraduate campuses. For the time being I declined, preferring for a while just to be on an undergraduate campus. I'd grown tired in re-

cent years of teaching graduate students — they were too dutiful, writing down everything I said as if it was Truth. But I did offer to sit on Ph.D. exams and read Ph.D. theses until the urge to produce scholarly offspring returned.

By the mid-seventies, I'd become increasingly involved in the brand new field of the history of sexuality and at that point I went back to the Graduate School and said that I'd be willing, after all, to offer a course on that subject — that I needed older students with more information and experience to bounce ideas off. The reaction was immediate: NO. So much for *no-blesse oblige*. Gertrude Himmelfarb, chair of the Graduate School History Department at the time, acerbically told me that the Department felt that sexual history wasn't "real" history at all; it had been spawned by political polemics, not scholarly necessity. As if activism hasn't always ignited scholarship — the feminist movement and feminist studies, the black movement and black studies. As if a scholar's political and social views don't always, consciously or not, color his/her narratives (Himmelfarb herself — a right-wing conservative — being among the more notorious current examples). My standing as a legitimate scholar, she told me, might well be at stake.

I wasn't entirely surprised. Back in 1974, Dennis Rubini, an openly gay historian at Temple University, and I had submitted a proposal for a panel on "the history of sexuality" (not the more inflammatory "lesbian and gay history") for the American Historical Association's annual convention; not getting any response, we'd inquired and been told that the proposal had gotten "unaccountably lost." We resubmitted the following year, and this time were formally rejected.

While prepared for the Graduate School's turndown, I was nonetheless angered, and I reached for the only card in my deck. If my scholarship was now regarded as tainted, I told the history faculty, then surely it wouldn't want me contaminating its innocent students. Surely it would be best if I no longer sat on Ph.D. ex-

ams or read Ph.D. theses; should the faculty decide at some future point that the history of sexual behavior was a legitimate seminar and research subject, I'd be glad once more to serve as a Ph.D. examiner and mentor.

And there the stalemate held for some 15 years, as the national — and Graduate School — climate slowly changed. Finally, in 1991, my seminar on gay and lesbian history was formally approved.

Diary, February 7, 1991:

Thirty seven students showed up last night for my seminar at the Graduate Center — including two faculty members, students from NYU, Rutgers, the Univ. of Rochester, and representing nearly every conceivable field (yes, even Japanese literature!) except history (Joe W. says the history students are afraid to sign up because the department is notoriously conservative.) The official registration list had only 16 names and the turnout stunned — and thrilled — me. It confirms the wish/need for gay/lesbian studies and sends a clear message to the university's powers-that-be.

Since my whole point in giving the course is to excite interest in the field, I'm not going to turn anyone away (though I had originally cut off enrollment at 20, wanting to preserve an intimate, informal atmosphere). But I told them last night that they were all welcome, and to keep the size manageable I would break the group into two parts and give a second seminar on another evening. We'll put that decision off until next week, to see if the same number turns up. Anyway, I'm hugely excited, and gratified. . . .

2008. My lengthy review of Michael Tomasky's *Left for Dead: the Life, Death, and Possible Resurrection of Progressive Politics in America*, in which I defended "identity politics" against his attack on it, appeared in the July 2, 1996 issue of *The Nation*. Tomasky had denounced those on the Left who concentrated on demands that had "nothing to do with a larger concern for our common humanity and everything to do with a narrow concern for fragmented and supposedly oppositional cultures."

"Elsewhere Tomasky refers to the 'superficially radical and transgressive' ideas of multiculturalism. But declaring certain ideas superficial," I wrote in my *Nation* response "does not make them so — especially since it isn't clear that Tomasky has absorbed [the radical redefinitions of gender and sexuality that are under discussion in feminist and queer circles] . . . postulates about such *universal* matters as the historicity and fluidity of sexual desire, the performative nature of gender, and the multiplicity of impulses, narratives and loyalties that lie within us all. This is no ersatz sideshow..."

"Many minority intellectuals . . . [are also] troubled about the inability of comprehensive categories ('black,' 'gay,' etc.) to speak to the complex, overlapping identities of individual lives; uncomfortable about referring to 'communities' as if they were homogenous units rather than hothouses of contradiction; concerned about the inadequacy of efforts to create bridges between marginalized people and then outward to broader constituencies. Yet one holds on to a group identity, despite its insufficiencies, because it's the closest most non-mainstream people have ever gotten to having a political home. Yes, identity politics reduces and simplifies; it *is* a kind of prison. But it is also, paradoxically, a haven. It is at once confining *and* empowering. And in the absence of alternative havens, group identity will for many continue to be the appropriate site of resistance and the main source of comfort . . . the legitimacy of our differentness as minorities has not yet been more than superficially acknowledged — let alone safeguarded. You cannot link arms under a universalist banner when you can't find your own name on it. Cultural unity should not be purchased at the cost of cultural erasure.

"Tomasky's appeal 'to connect with those unlike oneself' is unimpeachable — but he's addressed it to the wrong crowd. Many of us involved in identity politics *have* been trying to connect. . . . Tomasky claims we have 'simply written off' many potential allies. Well, our efforts at dialogue could certainly improve, but they have not been as nothing. Yet we've met mostly with patronization and hostility — that is, when we really try to talk about our lives, rather than pretend that we're 'just folks' who

want to join up. It is not our interest-group politics that turn off Tomasky's purported legions of allies — it is our lives. . . .”

I CAME DOWN AS HARD AS I DID ON Tomasky because he represented what had become a mounting attack by straight, white, and “liberal” male public intellectuals on an identity politics that emphasized issues relating to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation. Among the more prominent of these intellectuals were Eric Hobsbawm, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., Ralph Nader, Richard Rorty, Jack Newfield, and Todd Gitlin. Collectively — and curiously — they chose to focus on us, rather than on corporate America (which of course they did denounce for its greed and corruption), as the chief villain in the decline of interest in the transcendent issues of class division and economic inequity. *We* had abandoned the working class. *We* had destroyed the Left.

They did have what seemed to me several irrefutable points. Our national gay political organizations have long been woefully indifferent to class-based inequities, even among LGBT people — those within our own ranks who suffered from the mounting insecurities of blue-collar life, to say nothing of the impoverished and unemployed. The major, partial, exceptions have been the Gay Liberation Front in the early years of the movement (1969–71), which had spoken out boldly against entrenched privilege of every kind, and the struggles by ACT-UP and other AIDS organizations to get drugs and housing into the hands of those who couldn't afford them.

In between, middle-class reformism (skilled lobbyists pressing for narrow, piecemeal change through traditional political channels) had reigned — though the quest for respectability was far less pronounced in the separatist-inclined, left-leaning lesbian community. I myself had long been arguing against the reformist turn. When, in a speech at the seventh annual Lambda Legal Defense Fund dinner in 1982, I used the occasion to denounce the “endemic racism” in the gay world and our indif-

ference to class based issues, a number of white men walked out in the middle of my remarks, and I was subsequently reprimanded for my “inappropriate and offensive” comments.

I came down as hard as I did on Tomasky because he represented what had become a mounting attack by straight, white, and “liberal” male public intellectuals on an identity politics that emphasized issues relating to race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation.

When the central goal of the organized national gay movement is focused on “acceptance,” then gay people, like the good, mainstream Americans they choose to emulate, will, by definition, remain deaf to class issues and in denial about the extent of ongoing racism and sexism. But it needs to be remembered that gay politics is not uniquely limited in scope. The Tomaskys were certainly right in 1996 to sound the alarm against the growing disparity in income in this country, even as social services were being scaled back and more and more companies were denying benefits to their workers.

In 1999, *The New York Times* would announce that it had detected “the biggest surge in campus activism in nearly two decades,” most of it focused on improving working conditions for labor — on providing a living wage, an end to sweatshops, and so forth. The announcement mystified me. On my own campus, The City University of New York, I did see a marked increase in tolerance for “differentness” of all kinds — but nothing like a newly activated campaign to curb plutocratic excess or broaden the safety net for the working class. Indeed, over the next decade the gap between rich

and poor would turn into a chasm.

In emphasizing the role identity politics had played in shattering the Left, Tomasky, Gitlin, and others failed to give anything like equal weight to a host of other, more convincing culprits: a hostile state apparatus; a news-media network that dutifully turned to conservative commentators for “expert” testimony and shunned the countervailing opinions of anyone to the left of Rudy Giuliani; a corporate culture that increasingly gave workers the choice between rejecting unionization (and collective bargaining’s ability to protect them) — or losing their jobs; a powerful religious right that, ignorant of Biblical scholarship, preached the Bible’s literal truth (lingering lovingly over the contested Levitical passage about homosexuality being an “abomination,” even while nimbly disregarding such discomfiting Biblical injunctions as the need to return fugitive slaves to their “rightful” masters); and the bland textbook mill that either teaches the young nothing about the Left’s history or distorts and denounces it (those “fanatical” abolitionists, etc.)

Nor are these well-positioned white male critics of identity politics close to being truthful in claiming we’ve “written off” potential allies. One could argue (as Stanley Aronowitz has) that labor has long since ceased to be a progressive force. As late as the seventies, many unions had still not integrated; and more recently, the feminist and gay movements have been primarily the butt of jokes. On the factory floor, traditional heterosexist norms remain dominant; gay workers either remain in the closet or risk being ostracized — or physically harmed. When John Sweeney was elected president of the AFL-CIO in 1996, he pledged to push for more progressive policies; some argue that he’s succeeded, but others claim that the AFL’s new rhetoric has still not been matched by new practices.

The story has been similar when gay people try to form coalitions with other marginalized groups. As far back as the Black Panther Party

— for which GLF raised money and offered support — Huey Newton stood alone in accepting the extended hand. As recently as the AIDS crisis, efforts by gay organizations to make information and services available to other groups were largely rebuffed, the black churches slamming their doors with particular force.

Oh — and have I somehow missed Gitlin & Co. making any reciprocal gestures to gay people, ever lifting a finger to alleviate the discrimination under which they suffer? (Some heterosexual women have, with a few of them — Mathilde Krim, say, or Judy Peabody — becoming genuine heroes). During the eighties and mid-nineties, did the Gitlin crowd ever sign a petition or join a protest in support of the life-and-death struggle for early release of promising AIDS drugs? Have I missed their banner passing by in the major D.C. marches for gay rights? Have they so much as written a small check for *any* gay-related cause? I’ve never seen the name of a single one of these humanist champions on the donor list of an LGBT organization (and I’ve seen most of them). Certainly none of these prominent and prosperous worthies have ever put a dime into CLAGS’ [Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies] coffers — though scholarship is often their own calling, and though topics relating to race and class — which they claim we don’t care about — have been the subjects of many CLAGS colloquia and conferences.

Still, it is true enough, and the cause for real despair, that on the whole national gay and lesbian organizations continue to pay scant attention to issues relating to working-class grievances. And it is equally true that while some unions have improved the work climate for their LGBT members, a significant amount of fear and discrimination continues to exist. The challenge ahead is to further transform attitudes on both sides: to create a heightened awareness of class issues among gays and an increased sensitivity among unionists to the difficulties of gay life. Should that millennium arrive, we would be on our way to a revitalized politics and civic culture.

Left-wing Homosexuality Emancipation, Sexual Liberation, and Identity Politics

JEFFREY ESCOFFIER

Socialism without fucking is dull and lifeless.

— THE HEROINE, *WR: THE MYSTERIES OF THE ORGANISM*,
A 1971 FILM DIRECTED BY DUSAN MAKAVEJEV.

THE HISTORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP between “the homosexual question,” to use an old-fashioned phrase, and the left is yet to be written. And when it is, the story will be a difficult and complicated one to tell. One reason for that is that there are many different “lefts” and “homosexual questions” and the strands of these different threads are connected to one another and intertwined in very diverse ways. As a topic “the homosexual question” includes everything from sexual freedom to emancipation and civil rights. But even the terms for homosexuality — that is, same-sex desire and those who identify with it — and its political themes reflect the constantly shifting historical meanings of same-sex desire: the third sex, homophile, gay, gay and lesbian, queer, and most recently, glbtq. Every set of terms implies radically different assumptions about desire and sexual identity, as well as gender roles and identities; about the role of biology, culture and psychological development; and about the political significance of same-sex desire.

Then there are many ways that left and progressive positions in relation to homosexuality

have evolved. One is the positions taken by organized socialist and left-wing groups (for example, the Socialist Workers Party, Democratic Socialists of America), another are those left political perspectives that emerged within homosexual communities (*Gay Left* magazine, *Gay Community News*). But there are also other left perspectives that have impinged on homosexual issues, such as that of the libertarian and anarchist left (Emma Goldman, Alexander Berkman) or the Freudian Left (Wilhelm Reich, Herbert Marcuse). But this list comes nowhere near to exhausting the possibilities. I will sketch a crude map of some of these overlapping and often discontinuous historical currents.

The Socialist Traditions

THE FIGHT FOR ACCEPTANCE of homosexuality and political recognition of homosexuals’ right to sexual freedom has a long lineage on the left and can be traced back to political movements and activists on the left in Germany, Great Britain and the United States.

The trial of Oscar Wilde for sodomy sparked many homosexuals and progressives to undertake intellectual and political defenses of homosexuality. In the years following Oscar Wilde’s trial, a number of socialists in Germany and England began to champion homosexual rights. Wilde himself wrote a series of essays on political-aesthetic themes that implicitly defended homosexuality, the most famous of which was “The Soul of Man under Socialism.”

JEFFREY ESCOFFIER writes on lesbian and gay politics, economics, pornography, and sexuality. He was the executive editor of *Socialist Review* from 1980 to 1987, and publisher and editor of *OUT/LOOK: A National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly* from 1988 to 1991. He is the author of *American Homo: Perversity and Community* and a biography of John Maynard Keynes. His most recent book is *Sexual Revolution*, an anthology of the most important writing on sex from the 1960s and 70s.

Between the time of Wilde's trial (1895) and World War I, Edward Carpenter, a leading author on sexuality and socialism, wrote about homosexuality, gender, and identity in *The Intermediate Sex* and defended feminism and homosexuality in his best-selling book, *Love's Coming of Age*.

One of the first and most significant connections between the cause of homosexual rights and political movements on the Left emerged in Germany at the end of the nineteenth-century. The Scientific-Humanitarian Committee (Wissenschaftlich-Humanitäres Komitee), the first homosexual rights movement, founded in Germany by Magnus Hirschfeld in 1897, was closely allied with the Social Democratic Party, the leading German socialist party.

In the United States, political activists on the Left were often among the earliest proponents of homosexual rights. During the first decade of the twentieth-century, the great anarchist and feminist leader Emma Goldman argued for the acceptance of homosexuals in her speeches and writings.

During World War II, the well-known poet Robert Duncan published the first political analysis of the status of homosexuals in American society in Dwight MacDonald's non-sectarian leftist/anarchist journal *Politics* (August 1944). After World War II the first efforts to organize homosexuals were undertaken — in Los Angeles, Chicago and New York — by war veterans and by members, acting privately, of the Communist Party. The homophile movement that emerged in the 1950s was founded by former members of the Communist party who drew upon their organizing skills to establish the first gay rights organization, the Mattachine Society.

Sexual Revolution and the Left

THE SEXUAL REVOLUTION OF THE 1960S AND 70S played a major role in the emergence of a sexual politics more closely aligned to the left. Three major political-cultural shifts closely al-

lied with the radical politics of the 60s and 70s re-configured American sexual mores. One was the explosion of youth culture (and the student political movements) that stimulated the thirst

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of young men and women for sexual experience before marriage; another was the emergence of feminism and the women's movement at the end of the sixties; and lastly was the gay liberation movement's dramatic Stonewall rebellion in 1969. At the same time, changes in the social forms organizing sexuality and gender relations — for example, invention of the birth control pill, large-scale entry of married women into the labor force, decline of the family wage, increased divorced rates, and the emergence of a new consumerism — played a role in the sexual revolution.

But the sexual revolution was an immense and contradictory process, often not very obvious, stretching out over the life span of two generations. It was the historical culmination of processes begun long before World War II and it continued to produce significant changes in the decades that followed. It radically altered the meaning of the cultural and social patterns that constitute our lives as gendered and sexual human beings. In time, the sexual revolution also provoked a profound and powerful counter-revolution — the religious fundamentalist right — that continues to wage a battle against the forces and over the issues (homosexuality, abortion, sex education, and non-marital sexuality) that originally ignited the revolution.

The exhilaration, the sense of freedom and the utopian impulse that underlay it is often

forgotten today. Even those who contributed to it directly — hippies, rock musicians, anti-war activists, leftist revolutionaries, feminists, and lesbian and gay activists — sometimes felt that it was irrelevant, perhaps dangerous, misguided, or even misogynist. But the sexual revolution shared the same sense of energy, adventure, and utopianism that the political and cultural movements did.

The Freudian Left

FREUD ARGUED THAT “PERVERSE” SEXUAL desires, which was how he labeled all non-reproductive forms of sexual behavior, for example, kissing or oral sex, were incompatible with a stable social order; instead, they must be transformed, through repression and sublimation, into forms of energy more compatible with “civilized society.” In his early work, Freud saw the costs of sexual repression, but he also believed that the libidinal energies were powerful and disruptive forces. However, toward the end of his life, in *Civilization and Its Discontents*, he came to believe that sexual repression and sublimation were necessary to the survival of modern society.

One of his students, Wilhelm Reich, drew a more radical conclusion — that sexual expression (primarily, the orgasm) was natural and that social control of libidinal energies by the family, conservative sexual morality, and the state was destructive. Reich believed that sexual repression profoundly distorted psychological development and led to authoritarian behavior (fascism).

Reich was committed to “sexual revolution” as the fundamental change necessary to promote mental health — by ending, among other things, the double standard as applied to women and by eliminating the deleterious impact of enforced sexual abstinence on adolescents. Reich argued that all neuroses were accompanied by a disturbance of genitality and that damned up sexual energy was the cause of neurotic symptoms. While he recognized that sexu-

ality had non-genital aspects, Reich stressed the unequivocal importance of the orgasm. The capability of achieving an orgasm — the release of sexual energy — marked the difference between sickness and health, and a true orgasm resulted in the complete release of all damned-up sexual excitation through involuntary pleasurable contractions of the body.

Long active on the left, Reich also contended that progressive political change was doomed to failure unless it was accompanied by the abolition of sexual repression. “To define freedom is the same as to define sexual health,” he wrote. Yet Reich believed that homosexuality was a neurotic form of sexual behavior, a product of sexual repression that could “cured” by healthy heterosexual orgasms.

In *Eros and Civilization* (1955), Marxist theorist Herbert Marcuse sought to develop the emancipatory potential of Freud’s theories. He argued for the possibility of “non-repressive sublimation” which would allow for new forms of work based on non-alienated labor as well as the creation of new kinds of libidinal communities. Marcuse saw the “perversions” as the champions of the pleasure principle; they upheld sexuality as an end in itself. He claimed that “they thus place themselves outside the domination of the performance principle and challenge its very foundation.” He saw “narcissism” and “homosexuality” as examples of revolutionary sexualities which resisted the restriction of Eros to procreative sexuality. He championed “polymorphous perversity,” a sexuality not narrowly focused on any specific object or activity.

However, by 1964, Marcuse was increasingly concerned that advanced industrial society had made sexual liberation impossible — not through intensified repression, but by harnessing “de-sublimated” energies through increased productivity and mass consumption. Instead, the de-sublimated sexuality released by the sexual revolution was channeled into commercialized forms of advertising and entertain-

ment, and institutionalized forms of aggression, and it was isolated from broader forms of erotic life. The capitalist economic system had successfully harnessed the liberated libidinal energies to increase productivity and to generate increased consumption through the use of sex appeal in marketing, rather than by encouraging new social forms of erotic communities or pleasant and fulfilling work environments.

Yet the process of sexual revolution during the 60s and 70s undermined many of the social structures of sexual repression and led to new social patterns, attitudes, and ways of sexually interacting — this took place both through individual actions and through those undertaken by the various social movements dedicated to sexual liberation. The Freudian tradition — both Reich and Marcuse worked in that tradition — had failed to anticipate such an historical process. John Gagnon and William Simon, two sociologists working at the Kinsey Institute, developed a way of thinking that reflected the “deep structure” of experience during the 60s and 70s. Gagnon and Simon developed the view that sexual behavior was a process of learning, one that is possible, not because of instinctual drives or physiological requirements, but because it is embedded in complex social scripts that are specific to particular locations in culture and history. Their approach stressed the significance of individual agency and cultural symbols in the conduct of our sexual activities. They had redefined sexuality from being the combined product of biological drives and social repression into one of creative social initiative and symbolic action.

Freud and Marcuse had assumed that society regulated perverse sexual energies primarily through repression and/or sublimation, but the success of the sexual revolution showed the weakness of their hypothesis. By the end of the 70s Michel Foucault argued, like Gagnon and Simon, that the proliferation of discourses on sex — whether the theories and ideas of psychiatry, medicine, or statistics, the patterns of

social interaction, or popular cultural beliefs — stimulates the development of certain sexualities. In his *History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, Foucault showed that certain late-eighteenth-century and nineteenth-century discourses (such as medicine and psychiatry) articulated a series of pathological sexual stereotypes that exerted a tremendous influence up through the twentieth century: the masturbating child, the hysterical woman, the Malthusian couple (who practiced birth control), and the homosexual. Through the construction of these “identities,” society is able to govern what would otherwise be an uncontrollable underground sexuality. Thus sexual revolution and its discourses of sexual liberation, in Foucault’s theory, both emancipate those who are stigmatized for their sexuality and facilitate the governing of these newly emancipated identities.

It was one of Foucault’s most bitter truths that every socially institutionalized form of sexual liberation only furthered disciplinary and normalizing processes that controlled sexual expression and behavior. Yet he also believed that only the active struggle for the freedom to explore “our bodies and pleasures” allows us to also resist, modify or restructure the disciplinary and normalizing mechanisms that shape our sexuality.

The Gay Left

MODERN HOMOSEXUAL POLITICS dates itself from the Stonewall riots of 1969, when a police raid on a Greenwich Village bar called the Stonewall Inn provoked a series of riots that mobilized drag queens, street hustlers, lesbians and gay men, many of whom had been politicized by the movement against the war in Vietnam. Many early participants in the movements for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people’s rights had been involved in movements of the 1960s — the civil rights movements, the anti-war movement, the student movement, and the feminist movement.

The first political organization formed in

wake of the Stonewall riots was the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), named in honor of the National Liberation Front, the Vietnamese resistance movement, and as a gesture toward the unity of the struggles of blacks, the poor, the colonized in the Third World, and women. One early flyer, distributed in the Bay Area in early 1970, announced that, "The Gay Liberation Front is a nationwide coalition of revolutionary homosexual organizations creating a radical Counter Culture within the homosexual lifestyles. Politically it's part of the radical 'Movement' working to suppress and eliminate discrimination and oppression against homosexuals in industry, the mass media, government, schools, and churches."

In the period immediately after the Stonewall riots, the gay and lesbian movement did not at first focus on the question of identity, or even strictly on civil rights — though black civil rights was, most certainly, on the political horizon — but on sexual liberation. The sexual revolution had been underway since the early 60s and that, along with the student anti-war movement, which had mobilized millions of Americans against the war in Vietnam, influenced how gay activists framed their political struggles. Sexuality was defined as a central political issue. One early radical group, the Red Butterfly, GLF's "cell" of Marxist intellectuals, invoked Herbert Marcuse: "Today the fight for Eros, the fight for life, is the political fight."

In the early 1970s, many political discussion and consciousness-raising groups in the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Argentina, and Brazil sought to create a synthesis between Gay Liberation and Marxism. In a number of instances, these discussions took place in

In the early 1970s, many political discussion and consciousness-raising groups in the U.S., Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Argentina, and Brazil sought to create a synthesis between Gay Liberation and Marxism.

or on the fringes of established political parties and organizations.

In the autumn of 1975, a publication called *Gay Left* (1975-1980) appeared, published by a collective in Britain. More than any other political grouping around the project of creating a synthesis of Gay Liberation and Marxism, the Gay Left group produced an ambitious and theoretically coherent argument about the ways in which power shaped the notions of homosexuality and produced sustained sexual oppression.

Over the next five years, the Gay Left collective sought to articulate a radical politics of the left in which the gains of the women's and gay movements would be fully integrated. Drawing on the work of Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci, Sigmund Freud, and Michel Foucault (whose theories they anticipated to some degree), they wrote about the development of sexual oppression under capitalism, the forms of political resistance to it, the integration of sexual politics into political organizations on the left, the nature of the new gay and lesbian culture, the role of consumerism, and the emergence of lesbian and gay political identities.

Many members of the Gay Left collective became influential writers and thinkers in the decades since: Jeffrey Weeks on the history of sexuality; Frank Mort on the history of health, medicine, and the regulation of sexuality; Richard Dyer on film and gay culture; Simon Watney on the impact of media and on the politics of HIV/AIDS; and Bob Cant on the integration of sexual politics into the left. Writers like Mary McIntosh (in the U.K.), Dennis Altman (from Australia) and Amber Hollibaugh (from the U.S.) made their own contributions to the

Gay Left perspective.

One of the most significant intellectual contributions of the *Gay Left* group was a historical account of the emergence of homosexual identity. The approach combined the sociological approach of “symbolic interactionism” with Marxist analysis. Weeks, Kenneth Plummer, and other gay left historians identified the specific social and economic conditions that permitted the growth of a homosexual subculture and its psychological-political outgrowth — the modern lesbian and gay-male identity. They saw sexual identity as the result of a historical process, not a natural process. Jeffrey Weeks organized *Coming Out*, an early book on the history of homosexual politics in Britain, around that process.

In the late 1970s, centers of gay left thinking emerged in the North America — among the writers and editors of *The Body Politics* in Toronto (James Steakley, John D’Emilio, Tom Waugh); around the *Gay Community News* in Boston (Michael Bronski, Urvashi Vaid, Sue Hyde, Amy Hoffman, Ellen Herman); in the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay History Project (Amber Hollibaugh, Gayle Rubin, Allan Berube, Jeffrey Escoffier); and in a series of study groups on sexuality in New York City (John D’Emilio, Jonathan Ned Katz, Lisa Duggan, Nan Hunter).

Political Perspectives

IN THE UNITED STATES, the “Gay Left” perspective has repeatedly addressed certain key issues — coalition with other minorities, sexuality, and economic equality.

Since the founding of the GLF, the Gay Left as a political tendency has maintained that

political freedom of homosexual and transgendered people must take place within the context of promoting the rights of women, racial and ethnic minorities, workingclass and oppressed people around the world. Differences between this “rainbow” approach and a more “single issue” approach has frequently been the subject of major political debates within the movement. In fact, the demise of the GLF was due to a series of divisions within the organization around this question.

The second central tenet of the Gay Left is sexual freedom — that consenting sexual activity is the basis for the social and political rights of all glbtq people. The early gay and lesbian rights movement emerged in the context of the sexual revolution; so did the early opposition to the gay rights movement, right-wing fundamentalism. The issue of sexuality has also generated an ongoing series of debates within the glbtq rights movement — about the rights of sexual minorities such as the leather community, the issue of promiscuity, the role of pornography, and the prevention of HIV/AIDS.

The third issue that the Gay Left has addressed is the “traditional” one of the role of capitalism, social class, and economic forms of oppression. Gay left writers have explored how the market has shaped the identities of glbtq people. In addition, they have criticized how large corporations have targeted glbtq communities, and promoted narrow standards of beauty, restricted social needs and fostered a limited social expression. New formations on the gay left have emerged to address the inequalities of income and opportunity that affect glbtq people from minorities and working class backgrounds.

Queer Reflections

DAVID McREYNOLDS

LET ME USE MY SPACE in part simply as memory, reflections by a homosexual whose sexual orientation, at 78, is academic.

Christopher Phelps certainly opened an interesting chink in the history of the left with his article. It is probably as impossible for those under 40 to grasp what the social landscape was like for homosexuals in 1950 as it is for many young Blacks to believe there was a time when night clubs in Manhattan were segregated, and if you were Black and traveled south of the Mason Dixon line, you had to change to a “colored only” car. In the 1950s Allen Ginsberg was the first American “in polite company” who was an admitted homosexual. (After a poetry reading in Chicago sometime in the 1950s, a woman came up to him and said, “Mr. Ginsberg, I love your poetry. But tell me, why is there so much about homosexuality in it?” To which Allen responded, “Madam, it is because I am queer.”)

Why did the left ignore this issue? Why not? Sexual “deviation” was then a matter for the obscure, bohemian margins of society. Particularly, it seems to me, the Marxist Left tends to be rigidly “macho,” conformist on social norms, while radical on political views. And Marxists, because they are part of the society, tend to accept the norms of that society, even while in some areas setting their shoulders “against the norm.” Perhaps it was precisely because Marxists were challenging so many things and had, so to speak, so much on their plate,

that they showed little imagination in the sexual byways. Nor was Marx alone — Freud, while not treating homosexuality as “wrong,” did consider it an aberration.

Invisible

HOWEVER POORLY THE LEFT DEALT WITH racism, it did try to deal with it. On something as “socially acceptable” as anti-Semitism (prior to the Holocaust), the left engaged in courageous battle. But one of the reasons homosexuality remained beyond the pale was that to a great extent it was invisible (it still is, of which more in a moment). Jews could be identified, as could racial groups. But homosexuals were, it was assumed, those rare and obvious creatures with touches of makeup, the slight lisp, the gentle sense of fashion, the Oscar Wildes of the world, devoted to a love that dare not speak its name.

As a kid in Los Angeles I used to read one of the comics — Sheena, Queen of the Jungle. While others were looking at the sexy Sheena, I was drawn to the half naked guys who were her cohorts. I worried about my “tendencies,” read what little I could (no internet then), hoped that as adolescence passed I’d find girls exciting. Never happened. I had nothing against girls, but it was the slim young men my own age who drew my attention.

The how and why I “came out” are not important here (only the date is still clear — May 25, 1949). In those days gay men would ask one another “when did you come out?” in the way one butterfly might ask another “when did you learn to fly?” It was certainly a lonely time. I was very lucky in that the radical group I hung with at UCLA was as much bohemian as it was radical. It was accepting — though only a couple of us in that loose and wonderful group were

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gay. I could, therefore, be myself as well as take an active part in the Socialist Party.

I wasn't given to effeminate behavior. I might not have been the butchest guy on campus, but my sexuality wasn't an issue. It was after I came out that I began to realize just how many men are homosexual. Is it one in ten? It certainly isn't less than that. When Kinsey reported that 37 percent of men had had homosexual experiences after puberty the only question I had was why just 37 percent? Were the rest not good looking enough, or did they just miss the odd encounter, because, if we discuss sexuality, and if we go by the common experiences of most homosexual men, it is clear that a hell of a lot of straight guys had such experiences. Young men are open to almost any sexual adventure. We have an entire field of sexuality that is largely invisible. By the time men are 25 their sexuality has become pretty defined and some of their sexual past is simply forgotten (or repressed).

While one could never ignore the African in a white society, or the Jew in a Christian society, nothing was easier than to assume that the only homosexuals were those who were "obvious." (It would be my guess that, at best, only one in every six homosexual men are in any way obvious.) Homosexuals were, for the most part, invisible — even to each other, which was why once we "came out" we discovered an entire world we had never known existed. Homosexuals are not defined by race or class, appearing both as common criminals and J. Edgar Hoover, as truck drivers and actors, carpenters and dancers.

"You aren't one of them, are you?"

I EXPERIENCED LITTLE BIAS WITHIN the Socialist Party. The late, and nearly great, Samuel H. Friedman (a Jew who kept kosher and whose wife was an Irish Catholic) said to me "I've heard some nasty things about you, Comrade McReynolds, but I don't believe them." Dwight MacDonald once said "You aren't one of those,

are you?" But it was never used against me except by some of those around Max Shachtman (I always thought it ironic that Max ended up with Tom Kahn, whose homosexuality was an open secret, as one of the few who remained on

The task of socialists, who seek "the liberation of all" must be to understand that this must include all the byways of human sexuality. The only exceptions are forms of sexuality that harm people against their will.

his side to the end). Within the War Resisters League (WRL), where I worked on staff for 39 years, it was never an issue, not because there was some secret gay cabal in the WRL, but because the radical tradition of the secular pacifists was much more profoundly radical than that of most Marxists. Bayard Rustin wasn't hired by WRL because he was gay (or black) but because he was incredibly talented. (Let it be noted, as part of the historical record, and as a reminder that even great leaders have feet of clay, that A.J. Muste, so clearly a mentor for me, resigned from the executive committee of WRL in protest against the hiring of Bayard, because he felt Rustin's record of making indiscreet homosexual passes would threaten the organization. And Bayard himself, in 1969, when the WRL magazine *WIN* had a "gay liberation" issue, with pieces from Paul Goodman, Allen Ginsberg and myself, phoned Ralph DiGia to say, "you guys are going to have to fire David — he will destroy the organization." I never held this against Bayard, understanding only too well what his own experience had taught him.)

My personal take on the homosexual issue is controversial. I don't think homosexuality is

“normal” any more than I think my brown eyes are “normal” or my height, of 6' 3" is “normal.” Normal is a matter of a norm within a society. Natural is another matter altogether — homosexuality is as natural as any other form of sexual expression. I have found it hard to get used to transsexuals, etc. because those are things that happened long after I discovered who I was. Nor did I understand cross-dressing (except that I've learned many transvestites are not homosexual at all, but quite straight). I believe the curve of nature is to reproduce, and for this purpose a good bit of heterosexuality is essential. But in the whole of the animal kingdom there is always, also, a remarkable display of homosexuality. It ain't the norm, but it is very natural.

The task of socialists, who seek “the liberation of all” must be to understand that this must include all the byways of human sexuality. The only exceptions are forms of sexuality that harm people against their will. Sadomasochism is neither straight nor homosexual — it permeates much of our society. So long as it is consensual we have to accept it, even if we don't understand it. Children are off-limits not because they are innocent (Freud would be amused at the idea that children were ever really innocent) but because they too easily become victims.

Once I asked a group of young gays and lesbians what they thought about the movement for “inter-generational” sex. They laughed and said they noted that the magazines pushing this view all seemed to carry illustrations of young boys — never of old men. The kids were right. They had put their finger on why there need to be legal limits. But even conceding this, those limits are often unreal — whether in homosexual or heterosexual relations. It is hard to persuade me that a sexual liaison between a 16 year old and a 25 year old is some perversion.

A quick note on gay rights and the presence of gays within left organizations. We have always been there. I remember in the early 1950s that in California one friend had been expelled

from the Socialist Youth League (linked to Shachtman's Independent Socialist League) because he was gay. I know from talking with Dorothy Healey that there was a similar policy in the Communist Party — they were worried about possible dangers of blackmail. And until fairly recently it was true of both the main Trotskyist groups and of the Maoist groups (Bob Avakian of the Revolutionary Communist Party viewed homosexuality as a disease of capitalism).

The irony, for those of us with any sense of history, is that while the Soviet Union became quite puritanical under Stalin, the Bolsheviks, shortly after taking power, eliminated the laws relating to homosexuality. (And, I might add, they abolished the death penalty).

When the first Gay Pride Parades took place, I joined them, because I felt they needed support. But they are now so large (and commercial) that I don't feel a moral obligation to attend.

On issues such as gay marriage, I am not at all sure if I would have wanted to be married back in the days when this might have made a difference to me (as I said, at 78, some things are academic). But while I might not have made that choice, men and women who are gay and lesbian should have the same right to be unhappy that heterosexual couples have. Why do straights feel that their marriages are threatened if homosexuals get married? How insecure are straights that they are nervous about full rights for gays and lesbians? A person who is comfortable with his or her own sexuality really doesn't care. The only people who are nervous are those who have a deep homosexual streak they are trying to hide. Show me a gay-basher and I'll show you someone just one step away from being queer. (This I know from dangerous personal experience, not theory.)

Finally, I don't think homosexuals need the same kind of concern on the left in the way that racial minorities do, or women, or the working class. In those cases we have groups that are

systematically excluded from full rights in society. Ironically, when we come to homosexuals, you have Cardinals and offensive characters such as the late, unlamented Roy Cohn among the brotherhood. One reason that gay witch hunts peter out is that eventually you find too many public figures of wealth and power being tainted.

The Left has done a pretty good job catching up with homosexuality, as it has with gender issues. My own concern is more along traditional socialist lines of class, but when we talk about liberating the oppressed, gays and lesbians are right up there at the top of that agenda, and we should not hesitate to embrace their rights.

Let me close by noting that the tragedy in the “old days” was how often the issue of homosexuality defined people, as if their form of

sexual expression was the most important thing about them. I probably have never had an origi-

When we talk about liberating the oppressed, gays and lesbians are right up there at the top of that agenda, and we should not hesitate to embrace their rights.

nal idea, but do recognize one when I see it: Allen Ginsberg put it perfectly when he said that he was not a homosexual poet, but a poet who was homosexual.

Victory

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI

Where are the weapons?
I have only those of my reason
and in my violence there is no place

for even the trace of an act that is not
intellectual. Is it laughable
if, suggested by my dream on this

gray morning, which a dead man saw
and other dead men too will see
but for us is just another morning,

I scream words of struggle?
Who knows what will become of me
at noon, but the old poet is “ab joy”

who speaks like a lark or a starling or
a young man longing for death.
Where are the weapons? The old days

will not return, I know; the red
Aprils of youth are gone.
Only a dream, of joy, can open

a season of armed pain.
I who was an unarmed Partisan,
mystical, beardless, nameless,

now I sense in life the horribly
perfumed seed of the Resistance.
In the morning the leaves are still

as they once were on the Tagliamento
and Livenza — it is not a storm coming
or the night falling. It is the absence

of life, contemplating itself,
distanced from itself, intent on
understanding those terrible yet serene

forces that still fill it — aroma of April!
an armed youth for each blade of grass,
each a volunteer longing to die.

* * *

Good. I wake up and — for the first time
in my life — I want to take up arms.
Absurd to say it in poetry

— and to four friends from Rome, two from
Parma
who will understand me in this nostalgia
ideally translated from the German, in this
archeological

calm, which contemplates a sunny, depopu-
lated
Italy, home of barbaric Partisans who descend
the Alps and Apennines, down the ancient
roads . . .

My fury comes only at the dawn.
At noon I will be with my countrymen
at work, at meals, at reality, which raises

the flag, white today, of General Destinies.
And you, communists, my comrades/
noncomrades,
shadows of comrades, estranged first cousins

lost in the present as well as the distant,
unimagined days of the future, you, nameless
fathers who have heard calls that

I thought were like mine, which
burn now like fires abandoned
on cold plains, along sleeping

rivers, on bomb-quarried mountains. . . .

* * *

I take upon myself all the blame (my old
vocation, unconfessed, easy work)
for our desperate weakness,

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because of which millions of us,
all with a life in common, could not
persist to the end. It is over,

let us sing along, tralala: They are falling,
fewer and fewer, the last leaves of
the War and the martyred victory,

destroyed little by little by what
would become reality,
not only dear Reaction but also the birth of

beautiful social-democracy, tralala.

I take (with pleasure) on myself the guilt
for having left everything as it was:
for the defeat, for the distrust, for the dirty

hopes of the Bitter Years, tralla.
And I will take upon myself the tormenting
pain of the darkest nostalgia,

which summons up regretted things
with such truth as to almost
resurrect them or reconstruct the shattered

conditions that made them necessary
(trallallallalla). . .

* * *

Where have the weapons gone, peaceful
productive Italy, you who have no importance
in the world?
In this servile tranquility, which justifies

yesterday's boom, today's bust — from the
sublime
to the ridiculous — and in the most perfect
solitude,
j'accuse! Not, calm down, the Government or
the Latifundia

or the Monopolies — but rather their high
priests,
Italy's intellectuals, all of them,
even those who rightly call themselves

my good friends. These must have been the
worst
years of their lives: for having accepted

a reality that did not exist. The result

of this conniving, of this embezzling of ideals,
is that the real reality now has no poets.
(I? I am desiccated, obsolete.)

Now that Togliatti has exited amid
the echoes from the last bloody strikes,
old, in the company of the prophets,

who, alas, were right — I dream of weapons
hidden in the mud, the elegiac mud
where children play and old fathers toil —

while from the gravestones melancholy falls,
the lists of names crack,
the doors of the tombs explode,

and the young corpses in the overcoats
they wore in those years, the loose-fitting
trousers, the military cap on their Partisan's

hair, descend, along the walls
where the markets stand, down the paths
that join the town's vegetable gardens

to the hillsides. They descend from their
graves, young men
whose eyes hold something other than love:
a secret madness, of men who fight

as though called by a destiny different from
their own.
With that secret that is no longer a secret,
they descend, silent, in the dawning sun,

and, though so close to death, theirs is the
happy tread
of those who will journey far in the world.
But they are the inhabitants of the mountains,
of the wild

shores of the Po, of the remotest places
on the coldest plains. What are they doing
here?

They have come back, and no one can stop
them. They do not hide

their weapons, which they hold without grief
or joy,

and no one looks at them, as though blinded
by shame
at that obscene flashing of guns, at that tread
of vultures

which descend to their obscure duty in the
sunlight.

* * *

Who has the courage to tell them
that the ideal secretly burning in their eyes
is finished, belongs to another time, that the
children

of their brothers have not fought for years,
and that a cruelly new history has produced
other ideals, quietly corrupting them? . . .

Rough like poor barbarians, they will touch
the new things that in these two decades
human
cruelty has procured, things incapable of
moving

those who seek justice. . . .

But let us celebrate, let us open the bottles
of the good wine of the Cooperative. . . .
To always new victories, and new Bastilles!

Rafosco, Bacò. . . . Long life!
To your health, old friend! Strength, comrade!
And best wishes to the beautiful party!

From beyond the vineyards, from beyond the
farm ponds
comes the sun: from the empty graves,
from the white gravestones, from that distant
time.

But now that they are here, violent, absurd,
with the strange voices of emigrants,
hanged from lampposts, strangled by garrotes,

who will lead them in the new struggle?
Togliatti himself is finally old,
as he wanted to be all his life,

and he holds alarmed in his breast,
like a pope, all the love we have for him,

though stunted by epic affection,

loyalty that accepts even the most inhuman
fruit of a scorched lucidity, tenacious as a
scabie.

“All politics is Realpolitik,” warring

soul, with your delicate anger!
You do not recognize a soul other than this
one
which has all the prose of the clever man,

of the revolutionary devoted to the honest
common man (even the complicity
with the assassins of the Bitter Years grafted

onto protector classicism, which makes
the communist respectable): you do not
recognize the heart
that becomes slave to its enemy, and goes

where the enemy goes, led by a history
that is the history of both, and makes them,
deep down,
perversely, brothers; you do not recognize the
fears

of a consciousness that, by struggling with the
world,
shares the rules of the struggle over the
centuries,
as through a pessimism into which hopes

drown to become more virile. Joyous
with a joy that knows no hidden agenda,
this army — blind in the blind

sunlight — of dead young men comes
and waits. If their father, their leader, ab-
sorbed
in a mysterious debate with Power and bound

by its dialectics, which history renews cease-
lessly —
if he abandons them,
in the white mountains, on the serene plains,

little by little in the barbaric breasts
of the sons, hate becomes love of hate,
burning only in them, the few, the chosen.

Ah, Desperation that knows no laws!
Ah, Anarchy, free love
of Holiness, with your valiant songs!

* * *

I take also upon myself the guilt for trying
betraying, for struggling surrendering,
for accepting the good as the lesser evil,

symmetrical antinomies that I hold
in my fist like old habits. . . .
All the problems of man, with their awful
statements

of ambiguity (the knot of solitudes
of the ego that feels itself dying
and does not want to come before God
naked):

all this I take upon myself, so that I can
understand,
from the inside, the fruit of this ambiguity:
a beloved man, in this uncalculated

April, from whom a thousand youths
fallen from the world beyond await, trusting,
a sign
that has the force of a faith without pity,

to consecrate their humble rage.
Pining away within Nenni is the uncertainty
with which he re-entered the game, and the
skillful

coherence, the accepted greatness,
with which he renounced epic affection,
though his soul could claim title

to it: and, exiting a Brechtian stage
into the shadows of the backstage,
where he learns new words for reality, the
uncertain

hero breaks at great cost to himself the chain
that bound him, like an old idol, to the
people,
giving a new grief to his old age.

The young Cervis, my brother Guido,
the young men of Reggio killed in 1960,

with their chaste and strong and faithful

eyes, source of the holy light,
look to him, and await his old words.
But, a hero by now divided, he lacks

by now a voice that touches the heart:
he appeals to the reason that is not reason,
to the sad sister of reason, which wants

to understand the reality within reality, with a
passion
that refuses any extremism, any temerity.
What to say to them? That reality has a new
tension,

which is what it is, and by now one has
no other course than to accept it. . . .
That the revolution becomes a desert

if it is always without victory. . . that it may
not be
too late for those who want to win, but not
with the violence
of the old, desperate weapons. . . .

That one must sacrifice coherence
to the incoherence of life, attempt a creator
dialogue, even if that goes against our con-
science.

That the reality of even this small, stingy
State is greater than us, is always an awesome
thing:
and one must be part of it, however bitter that
is. . . .

But how do you expect them to be reasonable,
this band of anxious men who left — as
the songs say — home, bride,

life itself, specifically in the name of Reason?

* * *

But there may be a part of Nenni's soul that
wants
to say to these comrades — come from the
world beyond,
in military clothes, with holes in the soles

of their bourgeois shoes, and their youth
innocently thirsting for blood —
to shout: "Where are the weapons? Come on,
let's

go, get them, in the haystacks, in the earth,
don't you see that nothing has changed?
Those who were weeping still weep.

Those of you who have pure and innocent
hearts,
go and speak in the Capernaums of the slums,
in the Gomorrahs of the skyscrapers of the
poor,

who behind their walls and their alleys
hide the shameful plague, the passivity of
those
who know they are cut off from the days of
the future.

Those of you who have a heart
devoted to accursèd lucidity,
go into the factories and schools

to remind the people that nothing in these
years has
changed the quality of knowing, eternal
pretext,
sweet and useless form of Power, never of
truth.

Those of you who obey an honest
old imperative of religion
go among the children who grow

with hearts empty of real passion,
to remind them that the new evil
is still and always the division of the world.
Finally,

those of you to whom a sad accident of birth
in families without hope gave the thick
shoulders, the curly
hair of the criminal, dark cheekbones, eyes
without pity —

go, to start with, to the Crespis, to the
Agnellis,
to the Vallettas, to the potentates of the
companies

that brought Europe to the shores of the Po:

and for each of them comes the hour that has
no
equal to what they have and what they hate.
Those who have stolen from the common
good

precious capital and whom no law can
punish, well, then, go and tie them up with
the rope
of massacres. At the end of the Piazzale
Loreto

there are still, repainted, a few
gas pumps, red in the quiet
sunlight of the springtime that returns

with its destiny: It is time to make it again a
burial ground!

* * *

They are leaving . . . Help! They are turning
away,
their backs beneath the heroic coats
of beggars and deserters. . . . How serene are

the mountains they return to, so lightly
the submachine guns tap their hips, to the
tread
of the sun setting on the intact

forms of life, which has become what it was
before
to its very depths. Help, they are going away!
— back to their
silent worlds in Marzabotto or Via Tasso. . . .

With the broken head, our head, humble
treasure of the family, big head of the second-
born,
my brother resumes his bloody sleep, alone

among the dried leaves, in the serene
retreats of a wood in the pre-Alps, lost in
the golden peace of an interminable Sunday. . . .

* * *

And yet, this is a day of victory.

1964

NOTES

The “day of victory” of the poem’s last line is April 25, 1945, when German troops surrendered in Italy, effectively ending the Italian fascist era begun in the year of Pasolini’s birth, 1922. “Ab joy,” Provençal for “of joy, joyous,” evokes the exhilaration and the ecstasy of the troubadors that Pasolini felt in writing, in understanding. Pasolini spent much of his youth in the Friulian farm country; the Tagliamento and Livenza are the rivers of that area. Palmiro Togliatti (1893–1964) was head of the Italian Communist Party, Pietro Nenni (1891–

1980) head of the Italian Socialist Party. The Cervis were brothers killed by the Nazis. Pasolini’s younger brother, Guido, a partisan, was killed shortly before the end of the war. During riots in Reggio Calabria for better working conditions in the early 60s, several demonstrators were killed. Piazzale Loreto is the square in Milan where Mussolini’s body was hung upside down. Marzabotto was a village in the Appenines, destroyed, along with its inhabitants, by the Nazis. Via Tasso is a street in Rome where the Nazis and Fascists had their torture headquarters.

About Pasolini’s “Victory” The Gun in the Poem

NORMAN MACAFEE

PIER PAOLO PASOLINI, who was not just the major filmmaker of his generation in Italy but also the major poet, was murdered on November 1, 1975. How and why he was killed remain subject to fiery debate. The official story, now completely discredited, is that he was killed by a sixteen-year-old boy from the slums who didn’t want to have sex with him. Many think he was murdered by the CIA or the Mafia or the Italian Neofascists. A few believe he engineered his own suicide. The young man who was imprisoned for his death recently recanted his confession and said that three men had found him and Pasolini having sex, and beat the poet to death. The case was reopened recently but quickly closed.

Pasolini was born the year the fascists took power in Italy, 1922, and spent his first twenty-three years living under a system he despised.

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He later described himself during that time as “an unarmed Partisan/who fought with the weapons of poetry.” In the last months of the Second World War, his younger brother, Guido, decided to join the Partisan forces fighting the fascists in the mountains near their town of Casarsa in Friuli. Pier Paolo saw Guido off at the train station and gave him a book of poems by Eugenio Montale, the major poet of the previous generation. But the quiet book of poems held a surprise: Pier Paolo had carved out enough space in the book’s pages to hide a gun.

It is an image that sums up Pasolini’s approach to culture and history—Italian poetry at the time, speaking in a hermetic code to avoid fascist censorship, needed an opening up to history, to meaning, to the struggle all around, to “sex, death, political passion,” to reality. Pasolini would spend the rest of his life shooting his way out of the hermeticism of those decades under fascism. The gun in the book was also a fatal sign: Guido would be shot and killed a few months later in Partisan struggles in the mountains.

After the war, Pasolini became a central figure in Italian culture, embodying the overthrow

of fascism, the new era of democratic free speech, and new possibilities for gay people. He wrote brave long poems that contested the world around him: "The Ashes of Gramsci," "The Tears of the Excavator," "The Religion of My Time," "Reality," "A Desperate Vitality," "Plan of Future Works," and "Victory." He wrote novels about the Roman slums. Beginning in 1961, he made the films *Accattone*, *Mamma Roma*, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, *Hawks and Sparrows*, *Teorema*, *Medea*, *The Decameron*, *The Arabian Nights*, and the posthumously released *Salò: The 120 Days of Sodom*, the most scandalous film ever made. He painted and wrote plays. He was the defendant in thirty-three trials, mostly involving allegations of obscenity, blasphemy, and anti-national statements. He was hectorated and persecuted even as he was listened to. "I'm like a cat burned alive,/crushed by a truck's tires,/hanged by boys to a fig tree,/but still with at least eight/ of its nine lives," he wrote in 1963 in "A Desperate Vitality," one of his most extraordinary poems, composed while watching Jean-Luc Godard make *Contempt*, from a novel by Pasolini's close friend Alberto Moravia.

In the 1970s, Italy's most respected and influential newspaper, *Il Corriere della sera*, invited him to write several times a week a front-page column on whatever subjects he wanted. He seized the opportunity to shake things up. He wrote that he knew the names of those responsible for a decade of terrorism in Italy, asserting CIA and Mafia involvement. He compared consumerism to fascism. Shortly before his death he said, "You can't have ideas like mine and expect to be left alone."

As he was dying, I was on a train from New York to Philadelphia finishing the first draft of a poem dedicated to him. The next

morning, I woke to the front-page headline, "Italian Filmmaker Bludgeoned to Death." Inured to the mysteries surrounding the American assassinations of the 1960s, I assumed that we would never know conclusively how Pasolini died. One thing I could do, however, to balance this crime, to keep Pasolini alive in some way, was to translate his poetry, which had not yet appeared in English. But my Italian was rudimentary, and so, the next month, December 1975, again on the train to Philadelphia, I was lucky to sit next to Luciano Martinengo, an Italian documentary filmmaker, who quickly agreed to help me. The first and second poems we translated were "Reality" and "Victory." They are ecstatic, euphoric, prophetic, political, epic, everything American poetry was not. Most American poets of the 1970s were acting as if they were living under the new fascism of consumerism, hermetically writing about their marriages, divorces, houses, and students.

"Reality" would appear in the selection of our translations of Pasolini's poems, published by Random House in 1982 and John Calder in 1984, and republished by Farrar Straus & Giroux in 1996. As we were making final decisions on the book, Jonathan Galassi, my editor at Random House and later at Farrar Straus & Giroux, and I felt that the manuscript was too long, and we reluctantly agreed on "Victory" as the poem to cut.

"Victory" is, I think, Pasolini's last great poem. As he wrote it, he was making *The Gospel According to Matthew*; his attention shifted to filmmaking and the poems became sketchy. It is a bold poem: I would refer the reader to the final pages, with their exhortations to violence against neocapitalism. "Victory" has never before appeared in print in English. It will be, I hope, an inspiration to poets in English.

Last Exit to Utopia: Pasolini's Cinema

KURT JACOBSEN

IF, GRANTING CREDENCE TO THE LEGEND, Jesus Christ was addled enough to return today, nervous authorities soon would tack him right back up on the crossbars — or some technological equivalent, like an electroshock gurney. This old cynical saying is how most sensible (usually former) Christians I've known sum up the “actually existing” impact of the *New Testament*. Even Richard Dawkins or Christopher Hitchens, with all due allowances for the extreme hypothetical involved, might agree. Yet this gloomy verdict contains a deep and nagging ambivalence about just what it is that this fellow Christ represents. Does Christ belong only to the spittle spewing televangelists and religious shakedown artists because they say so? No? So how should a hardcore atheistic socialist handle this very touchy biblical saga?

Behold the sublimely improbable 1964 cinematic portrayal by Pier Paolo Pasolini, whose acerbic stylized Christ remains as difficult as ever for devout pagans to dislike. Edmund Wilson long ago described Marxism as, in part, the secularization of religious ethics, and one sees this familiar case put forth with irascible clarity in Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. Pasolini frankly said he was filming a tale he did not believe, but added that “I would be crazy if I denied what a strong force [the legacy of religion is] within me — if I left the monopoly of Good to the priests.” Not for Pasolini were the rouge-checked wimpy Messiah portraits peddled in religious goods stores everywhere, that bearded Elvis bathed in a

gleaming cone of light. Pasolini's Christ is a dark, brooding, passionate warrior, a fomenter of class struggle, even if of a mostly celestial variety. This Messiah is nobody's fool, advocating to followers that most tricky of existential combinations to live by: the “heart of a dove and the wisdom of a serpent,” which few of us, believer or non-believer, ever gets right.

Judea is a rugged dispirited colorless land where religion is, as a firebrand German philosopher scribbled, “the sigh of the oppressed.” Pasolini opens with sad-eyed lady of the lowlands Mary, a gawky unwed teen mother, whom Joseph hesitatingly takes on only after a drop-dead gorgeous angel assures him that the baby's conception was immaculate. Good king Herod, tipped off by roving agents about the prophecy of a rival king's birth, slaughters the innocents. A third-rate Machiavellian, as most national leaders are, can't be too careful.

Here, as elsewhere in Pasolini's films, gross human appetites percolate close to the unvarnished Hieronymous Bosch surface — pulsating with greed, lust, jealousy, vanity, narrow-mindedness, and, of course, the routine contempt with which amused elites view the silly masses. As Saint Adorno remarked in *Prisms* (Chapter 3 Verse 2), rulers rhapsodize about loving ordinary people as they are because they are terrified of what they could be.

Christ is — what else? — a talented rabble-rouser whose message is indisputably revolutionary, with a dangerous ambition to put real compassion to work minus the dogmatic holier-than-thouness that goes along with messianic tides. That way lies Satan, or Stalin. Pasolini's Christ manages to attune perfectly well with the scriptures while also unleashing an anarchic energy from the tame text.

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Which of our church-going presidential candidates will remind donors about the jibe about camels passing through an eye of the

Pasolini frankly said he was filming a tale he did not believe, but added that “I would be crazy if I denied what a strong force [the legacy of religion is] within me — if I left the monopoly of Good to the priests.”

needle? This Christ is a nimble foe of established order. Sins of the flesh are as nothing to him and, for lots of reasons, Pasolini compared to social horrors that conceit, neglect, and unchecked pursuit of gain inflict daily. The enraged Pharisees naturally don't want a low-born upstart spoiling their good thing, their secure posts. The spinmeisters we shall always have with us. The scribes are the mainstream media of the Mediterranean echoing what potentates want the hoi polloi to parrot. Pasolini is actually just as ready as Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* to absolve Roman colonizers, though for Pasolini it clearly isn't Jews as such but a bunch of fancy dress religious cult leaders who are responsible for the rub-out, as would be any other mobsters threatened by a smart charismatic outsider. Oh, those whited sepulchers!

The Gospel maintains a documentary-style regime of long and medium shots, keeping iconic figures grounded in the sparse sun-drenched landscape from which they dustily emerge. Close-ups are reserved for Christ's sermons and preachings. The music is unapologetically anachronistic but eerily fitting, with “Motherless Child” presaging the fate of anyone of humble origins at odds with the social patterns laid down for him or her. A working class hero, as a

British chap allegedly almost as popular as Jesus, ruefully sang, is something to be. So Christ cures lepers, walks on water, picks disciples, defies authority, rebuts sly Pharisees, and pretty much tells it like it is. He flashes a fierce temper, for which that famous fig tree suffers. He is smoldering, confrontational, and anything but cool, yet he ought to wear Blues Brothers' shades because he is, after all, on a mission. Pasolini's Christ is Antonio Gramsci or Joe Hill, alive as you or me: “Don't mourn, organize.” I mean, isn't that what the scriptures said?

IN THEORUM (1971), PASOLINI INTERCUTS the parched Judean landscape into a moral fable of a capitalist paradise come undone. Opening with the bewildering gift of a factory by its owner to the workers, the film has a ponderous television reporter ask, “What will the middle class do if it becomes ‘all mankind’ ” — that is to say, a classless society, or something akin to it. My goodness, has the bourgeoisie thrown up its hands and surrendered to the dialectic? (The factory, though, is ominously idle.) Cut to the owner's sumptuous manor where a sleek young stranger (Terence Stamp) unaccountably is invited into the family hearth, such as it is. This intensely bourgeois bunch, for Pasolini, cannot withstand their spiritual awakenings as the blue-eyed Adonis gently, lovingly, remorselessly wreaks erotic havoc upon their arid lives. A frustrated female servant is the first to dissolve, unable to keep her knickers on around his magnetic physique. Stamp, you see, is a divinely easy lay, but in the long run very costly, as is often the case in these matters.

The “stranger” responds to adolescent gropes with steadily tender eyes and a sturdy libido, like a buff Esalen guru on the prowl. A haughty upper-class mother, her gay son, her dreary daughter, and finally the tycoon father crumple like origami puffs under the stranger's sensuous spell. He departs. They awaken, painfully. What strikes one today is the punitive bourgeois consciences they all exhibit. They re-

ally need a justification for the wealth they enjoy; loot for loot's sake is not enough, as it is in contemporary sociopathic realms of high finance. A high strata family now probably imagines they deserve it all and would conjure a reasonable enough facsimile in consumer culture to slake their shallow ideas about their deepest needs. So it's almost touching to watch the father confess that "you [Stamp] destroyed the idea I had of myself" and then wander bare-assed off into the nearest wilderness in search of salvation. All he knows is where it's not. The daughter goes catatonic, the mother picks up syphilitic strangers, and the son becomes an artist, who is, in Pasolini's view, a "halfass who lives by choice and risk." The lad pisses on his own work or else, in doing so, makes art — I'm not sure which since there is scant difference in the conceptual art realm anyway. The servant goes back to her rural parents' home, gobbles a lot of greens, and, apparently for lack of anything else to do, levitates over a barnyard. That's how miracles happen. What they mean is another question altogether. On a clear day she can probably see decaying housing estates ringing Rome.

Welcome to Pasolini's patented grim milieu in the early 1960s, sites of his lumpen tragedies, shot through with plangent religious imagery. In *Accatone* (1960) the title lowlife mooches off devoted Maddelena whom he abuses and peddles to every guy with a wallet. The lower depths, we find, are no more alluring when shot in delirious sunlight on the outskirts of Rome. The estates are places to corral people and forget about them. Neither they nor you will glimpse of the Coliseum or other sight-seeing delights. Accatone is the author of his own misfortune (and that of others) as well as a surly victim of straitened circumstances whose structural origin he cannot grasp. What's absent in him is the ingredient of responsibility, as conservatives would see it, or any smidgen of consciousness, as leftists also complained. Yet it speaks plenty about poverty that he and sub-

proletarian pals guffaw as they recall their wartime boyhoods stealing money from a blind man in order to eat. That sort of resourcefulness makes an indelible mark. For all his macho bravado Accatone is only pushed this way and that by cronies, gangs, police, women, and the indifferent straight world. "You're lucky, not to know things," Accatone enviously remarks to Stella, a naïve blonde who is in his predatory sights. Everyone can turn on everyone else in a flash, according to advantage. Loyalty is momentary, and that is what constitutes hell for Pasolini — the momentariness of every value, the fleetingness, the evanescence of every pledge. That fickleness among deprived human beings paves the road to damnation: "The world belongs to those with teeth." It's a universe evoking Hubert Selby's nihilist *Last Exit to Brooklyn* more than anything vaguely Marxist.

In 1961 Pasolini followed up with *Mama Roma* (Anna Magnani), the street corner saga of a boisterous former hooker — flush for the first time in her life — striving to go straight in a world more rigged than she imagines. Retrieving her teenage son Ettore, her only obsession, ("You'd hang on a cross for him, wouldn't you?") she moves to a new housing estate in hopes of slipping into the respectable and comfortable petit bourgeoisie. "I've paid my dues, and for the next life too," she laments. Something has to go right, doesn't it? Yet her handsome and headstrong son goes gaga for a shrewd young woman, whom his mother despises mostly because she reminds her of herself. Mama black-mails a restaurateur to obtain for her son a comparatively upscale job as a waiter. She disdains communists *and* other riffraff as innate "losers." Her cheerfully merciless and highly American credo is, "how you end up is your own fault."

THAT RATHER HUBRISTIC ASSERTION assumes that you have more power than the gods or capital. And sure enough, nemesis strikes. Ettore spunkily despises the life of the "little gentleman" that she plots for him, but

the alternative, his companions, are simply petty thieves and schemers. When a minor theft goes awry, Ettore is nabbed, jailed, and eventually dies strapped on a cold slab. Christ again. Cluelessness again, too. Pasolini plays with this theme throughout his work — the fruits of a “what have you done for me lately” attitude jacked up to the nth power, and it’s an attitude enforced, and encouraged, from the top down, the pervasive reality of the “market,” which has no use for Accatone or Mama Roma or her son except as it can suck a surplus from their frail existences. Pasolini never thought the point needed to be stressed, which brought him an avalanche of criticism from the left in his lifetime. Was any of it deserved?

One doubts it was deserved in his early angry works, but later one finds his many dismaying distillations of what the world becomes when stripped of any pretense to spiritual (in the broadest sense of the word) or social values. In *The Decameron* (1971) Pasolini, like the author, may well relish the bawdy defeat of hypocrites and the outwitting of pious posturers. Yet there’s nothing much to recommend the brute lust that drives the snide storylines, since dim-witted lust only wants to be quenched at any price. So a rich bishop’s tomb is robbed (twice), a husband is cuckolded, and a nunnery gleefully is serviced by a clever young sport feigning being deaf and dumb. Nothing transcen-

Welcome to Pasolini’s patented grim milieu in the early 1960s, sites of his lumpen tragedies, shot through with plangent religious imagery.

dent to see here; move along, folks. Yet there is, however grudgingly, a negative lesson on display here too. Here lies abject meaninglessness, and it ain’t pretty.

The purest distillate, without question or competitor, is Pasolini’s notorious film *Salo* (1975), a DeSadean reimagining of the last days of Mussolini’s republic, and his last work before his murder — or assassination, as

some claim. Political power and economic commodification fuse, and their supremely ugly offspring is *Salo* where masters do what they will and the weak suffer what they must. No joy intrudes, no true pleasure, but only the whim made flesh. In *Salo* there is only the icy satisfaction of exerting total control, which is not what orgasms are usually about. The menu includes coprophagy, forcible sodomy, torture, and slitting of just about every body part. And, oh yes, death for all.

Pure authority, unchecked, is sadistic madness that after a while begins to look distressingly normal to those in charge. You see this inured craziness in the Bush Administration, in people so accustomed to power and its perks that the notion that their enemies, appointed or real, have any rights is as alien to them as drinking Chateau Lafitte through a soda straw. Pasolini captures an underlying threat of authority no one quite likes to imagine is true. If this is indeed modernity, gimme that ole time religion — according to Pasolini.

The United States in the Middle East

The Evolution of Its Israeli Policy

IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN

IN 2007, THE UNITED STATES has no foreign policy involvement greater and more significant than its military presence in Iraq. And in 2007, the United States has no closer ally and co-actor on the world scene than Israel. The relationship is arguably closer than the vaunted U.S.-British link. Neither an involvement of the United States in the Middle East nor the close links the United States has forged with Israel have always been the prevailing policy. On the contrary, both current realities are the outcome of a long and sinuous trajectory. We shall try to account for this evolution in terms of three different actors within the United States: the political elites, the American Jewish community, and the rest of the population. We shall then try to evaluate the likely evolution of this policy over the coming decades.

If we go back to the period before the Second World War, the story was quite different from what it is today. As late as the Second World War, the Middle East was off the radar screen for most Americans, except for an occasional look at exotica, such as Lowell Thomas's reportage on Lawrence of Arabia. This was a period in which the main outside actor in the Middle East was still Great Britain, which dominated most of it politically (formally and informally), the main exception being the two parts controlled by the French — today's Lebanon and Syria, and the three North African states. British firms controlled almost all of the oil produced there. The United States seemed to accept that the Middle East was a British zone of operation and primacy. Zionism was

not a preoccupation of U.S. elites.

Insofar as the U.S. government had any policy there, it was largely that forged by State Department diplomats, who were for the most part Arabists and unsympathetic to Zionism. Here and there some politicians sympathized with the Zionist cause, but generally only in a very low-key way. And the non-Jewish population in the United States were totally ignorant of and indifferent to whatever was happening in the Middle East.

THE U.S. JEWISH POPULATION was split into four quite different groups. There were the German/Central European Jews, most of whose ancestors had immigrated in the middle of the nineteenth century. This group was by and large reasonably well off and assimilationist. They attended for the most part Reform synagogues, and their political expression was the American Jewish Committee. Most of them were anti-Zionist precisely because they were assimilationist.

The German Jews were only a small part of the population compared to the "Eastern" Jews who had come from Russia, Belorussia, Ukraine, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and other parts of eastern Europe after 1890 or so. Most of these Jews, as late as the Second World War, either were poor urban workers or ran small neighborhood businesses. This group split three ways in their attitudes.

One group were political radicals, involved in every variety of Marxist and socialist organization. They rejected religious affiliation. They concentrated their energy on fighting the class struggle. To most of them, Zionism was simply one more bourgeois nationalist project, which they rejected. A second group remained very

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Orthodox, rejecting assimilation, political radicalism, and Zionism equally (although there were some religious Zionists).

And the third group were the Zionists. We have no figures on how many they were, but they could not have been more than a quarter of the U.S. Jewish population. They were politically weak, as demonstrated vividly by their inability to get the U.S. government just before and during the

Second World War to open its frontiers generously to refugees from Hitler or to take other measures that would have been seen as helpful by the Zionists.

One last element must be included in this picture. Anti-Semitism was the dominant attitude among both the elites and the general population in the United States at this time. The United States still thought of itself as a White, Protestant country. Of course, anti-Semitism was matched by anti-Catholicism, and the even more virulent antagonism to those who were then called Negroes and Indians. Almost all members of these groups were basically low income workers.

The Second World War changed all of this. First of all, U.S. foreign policy changed. The United States decided to get direct access to oil in the Middle East. President Roosevelt's meeting with Ibn Saud in Cairo just a month before his death was the seal on a political alliance that has been a lasting reality ever since. After 1945, the British recognized that they no longer had the political and military power to maintain their role in the Middle East, and in effect passed the baton to the United States.

Secondly, the war ended with the realization that the Nazis had exterminated a large part of European Jewry, and that there were now

large numbers of Jewish survivors who did not want to return to their countries of origin. Most wanted to go to the United States (or second-

arily to Great Britain, Canada, and Australia). Some, not too many, wanted to go to Palestine. Since neither the United States nor the other preferred destinations were ready to absorb many of these refugees, Palestine as a destination seemed to Western policy-makers and to the refugees as

an alternative worth exploring.

This meant among other things that the United States had to assume some responsibility for what would happen in Palestine when the British pulled out. What the United States and Great Britain agreed on became the 1947 United Nations resolution that offered independence to two states in a partitioned Palestine mandate. From the point of view of the United States, the partition accomplished three things simultaneously. It served as a response to pressure from Zionists for a Jewish state. It offered a solution to the so-called refugee problem (of Jews in Europe). And it increased the ability of the United States to take over British interests in Middle Eastern oil.

The Palestinian Arabs and the Arab independent states rejected the partition solution. When Israel declared independence on May 15, 1948, there was no corresponding declaration of independence in the zones designated by the United Nations for Palestinian Arab sovereignty. Instead, war between Israel and all the Arab states immediately broke out. Although the United States and the Soviet Union had competed for who would recognize the new Israeli state the first, only the United States reacted to the Israeli-Arab war by announcing an arms embargo. The Soviet Union, by contrast,

It was French arms that permitted Israel to join with France and Great Britain in the attack on Nasser's Egypt in 1956. And it was the United States that squashed this attack.

furnished arms to the Israelis — directly, and via its east European satellites, particularly Czechoslovakia. This was a major factor in helping the Israelis to win the war and to absorb part of the territory that had been assigned to the Palestinian Arabs in the U.N. partition resolution. The remaining areas were occupied by Egypt and Jordan. No Palestinian Arab state was created.

In the years from 1948 to 1967, the attitudes of the American Jewish community slowly evolved. The Zionists presented the state of Israel as not only the historic resurrection of a Jewish state, but as an anti-colonial achievement and a model of democratic socialism, as incarnated in the *kibbutzim*. As a result of the war and of the postwar public relations presentation of the Israelis to American Jews, the opposition to Zionism by the assimilationists, the political radicals, and the Orthodox community diminished significantly, although it did not disappear entirely.

THERE WERE THREE OTHER CHANGES of some importance in this period that are relevant to this analysis. (1) This was a period of incredible economic expansion in the world-economy as a whole, concurrent with the assumption by the United States of the role of unquestioned hegemony in the world-system. (2) Politically and rhetorically, a so-called cold war started between the United States and the Soviet Union, marked by an intensive ideology of anti-Communism in the United States, one that became synonymous with patriotism. (3) There was a major transformation of the socio-economic status of American Jews.

The first and third changes were linked. Between the economic expansion and the G.I. Bill of Rights, large numbers of American Jews went to university and moved into middle-class roles in the social structure. (This was true of the main Catholic groups of European extraction as well.) By the late 1960s, there were few Jewish workers or Jewish poor left in the United

States. This fact was fundamental to the shift of the three non-Zionist groups — the middle-class German Jewish assimilationists, the politically radical Jews, and the Orthodox community — in their attitudes towards Israel.

It helped that Israel was also shifting its internal politics. Soon after 1948, the Soviet Union more or less dropped Israel. Partly, this was due to Soviet concern with United States involvement in the Middle East and the sense that the Arabs might be more reliable and consequential allies than the Israelis. And partly, this was due to the sudden awareness that an Israeli state resonated with Soviet Jews, something that threatened the pattern of Soviet control over its citizenry.

Meanwhile, the Algerians launched their war of independence in 1954. The French searched for useful allies in combating this major attack on the French view of their country. They found one in Israel, which was ready to combat Arab nationalism anywhere. Israel, bereft of the Soviet Union and unsure about the United States, now turned to France as its major source of international support.

It was French arms that permitted Israel to join with France and Great Britain in the attack on Nasser's Egypt in 1956. And it was the United States that squashed this attack and forced the three countries to retreat. This of course only intensified the Franco-Israeli love affair, including decisive French assistance with the development by Israel of nuclear weapons. This relationship continued strongly until 1962, when the French conceded independence to Algeria. At that point, the French government decided that its main priority was restoring its links with the now independent North African states, and that links to Israel interfered seriously with that. The French government dropped Israel unceremoniously, just as the Soviet Union had done previously, and General De Gaulle made a famously anti-Semitic characterization of world Jewry "peuple d'élite, sûr de lui-même et dominateur."

The whole story changed in 1967 — within Israel, among the policy-making strata in the United States, and among American (and indeed other Western) Jews. The Israelis were nervous in 1967, perhaps unduly. But they saw a politically strong Nasser in Egypt hostile to them, and he seemed to be assembling Arab troops for an invasion. And the Israelis felt they had no certain outside guarantor. They decided on a pre-emptive strike against Egypt. Jordan joined the war, as did Syria. The Israelis were right about France. Although Israel enjoyed loud vocal support among French politicians and intellectuals, especially on the left, the French government embargoed arms to all sides.

In six days, the Israelis were nonetheless militarily victorious on all three fronts. When the cease-fire came, they controlled the whole of the British Mandated Palestine, undoing thereby the 1948 partition, to which they added territory beyond the area included in the mandate (Golan and Sinai). For most Israelis, this military victory consecrated the Zionist ideal. The Israeli government showed no serious intention of negotiating with anyone to return any part of the occupied territories. Furthermore, the military victory served to make Israelis confident that they would be able to maintain this position indefinitely. To be sure, neither the de facto incorporation of the West Bank and Gaza nor the de jure annexation of East Jerusalem were formally recognized by the United Nations or the world's major powers. But over the succeeding forty years, Israeli governments pursued a policy of Jewish settlements designed to create realities "on the ground" that would encrust this expansion of Israel.

The American Jewish community was politically transformed. All doubts about the Zionist ideal seem to have vanished overnight. Resistance to the validity of Israel among assimilationists, political radicals, and almost all of the Orthodox virtually disappeared. Rather, American Jews now invested their pride in an

Israel that had shown itself able to be a first-class military power. The socialization of American Jewish youth into a deep commitment to the survival and flourishing of Israel became a major focus of the synagogues and other Jewish organizations in the United States.

There also occurred a major shift in the ideological justification of Israel. The kibbutzim disappeared from the discourse — both because they were not thriving and because they were too "socialist." Two new themes were developed. One was the Holocaust, a subject little talked about before 1967. Making the Holocaust a central part of Jewish, and of non-Jewish, memory became a paramount effort of American Jews. The Holocaust was used both to justify whatever the Israeli government was doing in its policies towards the Arab populations and to argue that the United States (and other Western powers) were morally obligated to support Israel in its conflicts with the Arab world.

The second theme was "Israel, the outpost of democracy in the Middle East." The subtext of this theme was "Israel, the only reliable supporter of the United States in the Middle East." This was quite a contrast with the early days of Israel. For example, in 1949, Israel was one of the first countries to recognize the People's Republic of China. By 1967, such "leftist" expressions of foreign policy had totally disappeared. The emphasis was now on the degree to which Israel adhered to Western values and alliances. It was after 1967 that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC), which calls itself "America's Pro-Israel Lobby," became a major force in American politics, with a strong influence both in Congress and within the Executive branch of government.

Furthermore, the victory in 1967 not only profoundly affected U.S. policy-makers but had a big impact on U.S. non-Jewish public opinion. The United States was in the midst of the Vietnam war, which was not going as well as it had hoped, with growing opposition to U.S.

policy both in western Europe and among Americans at home. Israel as reliable friend in the Middle East seemed a rare positive element in a difficult global situation.

THE GENERAL NON-JEWISH POPULATION was impressed by an Israel that seemed virile and pro-Western. Old stereotypes were falling away. The decline of anti-Semitism — largely a victory of democratic forces within the United States — seemed to induce people to believe that they should be favorable to Israel. This was a position vociferously argued by American Jewish organizations, which tended to equate anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism. Even among the student protestors of 1968, who were by and large “Third-worldist” in their sympathies, there was little overt support for the Palestinians. The absence of a visible Palestinian movement conducting rambunctious demonstrations within Israel perhaps contributed to this lack of verbalized sympathy.

In 1967, the United Nations Security Council passed unanimously its famous Resolution 242. The exact meaning of the resolution has been subject to an endless debate ever since, but essentially it was the clarion call for what came to be called the “land for peace” solution — Israeli withdrawal from the occupied territories in return for recognition of the state of Israel by the Arab countries. It has never been implemented. It was not clear in 1967 whether or not Israel was ready to implement it. But it is surely clear that, at that point in time, they did not envisage the establishment of an independent state of Palestine. Political discussion in Israel centered around the possible reincorporation of part of the West Bank into Jordan. The then Israeli Prime Minister, Golda Meir, opined that there was no Palestinian people.

The so-called Yom Kippur war of 1973 (also called the Ramadan War and the October War) was intended to undo the de facto consequences of the 1967 war. It did not succeed in doing this. The Arab military forces did well

initially. The Israelis nonetheless won militarily again on all fronts. This time, however, the United States furnished significant armaments during the war. Israel had now found its third international guarantor.

The Yom Kippur war was followed almost immediately by the oil price rise of OPEC. This was interpreted as a major thrust by the oil-producing countries against the West. However, it should be noted that the two leading and crucial exponents of this oil price rise were Iran (then under the Shah) and Saudi Arabia, the two strongest allies of the United States (other than Israel) in the region. A long-term analysis of the OPEC decision shows that it helped the United States to secure its position in the region and to weaken the position of western Europe and Japan in the world economy. By 1978, the United States was able to mediate the so-called Camp David accords, which resulted in a formal peace treaty between Egypt and Israel, the return of the Sinai to Egypt, as well as mutual diplomatic recognition.

When Reagan became president of the United States in 1981, one of the factors that made his election possible was the emergence of a new group that we now call the Christian right. These were Protestant Evangelical voters, largely in rural areas, who were persuaded to desist from their previous electoral abstentionism and begin an effort to take over the Republican Party in order to center its attention on so-called social issues (such as the fight against abortion and later against homosexuality). This group, as we know, was very successful politically, reaching an apogee during the presidency of George W. Bush.

The Christian right generally espoused a position in favor of a strong military and unilateral assertiveness by the United States in the world arena. They turned a particular attention to the Middle East and especially to Israel. They espoused a theological position that the Second Coming of Christ required the establishment of a Jewish state in the entire territory of

Biblical Palestine. They became more militantly Zionist than the Israeli government itself. Of course, the theological justification included the belief that, when Christ returned to earth, all Jews would have to choose between adopting Christ as their savior or being eternally damned.

The American Jewish community might ultimately bend in part to the shifting assessments of the world's left-of-center evaluations.

No matter. For Israel, for the first time, now had a powerful supporter among the non-Jewish American population.

In 1987, Palestinians inside the occupied territories launched the first so-called intifada. It lasted six years, and profoundly changed the politics of Israel and of the Middle East. For one thing, it showed that there could be serious political resistance by the Arab population within Israel and the Occupied Territories. In the second place, it focused world attention, more or less for the first time, on the misdeeds of Israeli policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians. The Israeli David now began to be seen by many people as the Israeli Goliath.

THERE WERE TWO PRINCIPAL consequences of the intifada. On the one hand, the U.S. government, during the presidency of George H.W. Bush, pushed the Israelis towards negotiations with the PLO and with Yasser Arafat. The outcome was the Oslo accords. This was followed by the negotiations sponsored by President Clinton, reaching their climax (and non-culmination) in the meetings in Taba in January 2001. One may say that these accords and these negotiations were in the end a failure. But what they did accomplish was the first serious recognition by the world community of an in-

dependent Palestine as a concept.

The second consequence was a shift in the moral evaluations of the world community concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Whereas, up to the intifada, one could say that most persons in the United States and in other Western countries basically sympathized with Israel, now there began to be many who basically sympathized with the Palestinians. It has been a rolling stone that has gathered no moss. Each year, the percentage sympathizing more with the Palestinians has grown.

The situation changed again drastically with the coming to power of George W. Bush in 2001. The key element of Bush's policy was the decision to invade Iraq in 2003. It is not hard to demonstrate that this was the "chronicle of a death foretold." The neo-cons working with the militarists had pre-announced this war in 1997, long before the events of 9/11, which provided the political excuse for the invasion. The Bush policy was seen as the mode of reasserting unquestioned U.S. hegemony in the world-system.

Among the side effects of this policy was intended to be further support to and guarantees of Israeli interests. It was so interpreted by the Israeli government which enthusiastically endorsed the whole adventure. The Bush regime went much further in its support of Israeli objectives than any previous U.S. government had done, endorsing in effect the idea that the Jewish settlements in the occupied territories were to be considered realities on the ground and only marginally scaled back in any final settlement. When the Israelis in 2006 decided to invade Lebanon in order to destroy Hezbollah, they had the total support of the U.S. government.

The trouble with such a close alliance is always that a setback to one is a setback to the other. The fiasco of U.S. policy in Iraq redounded on the Israelis as well. And the failure of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon redounded on the United States in turn. The crunch be-

gan, and both the U.S. elites and the Israelis now faced painful reassessments of what they could possibly do.

It was just at this point that Israel's Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, addressed the 35th World Zionist Congress on June 26, 2006, reaffirming a historic Zionist position concerning the diaspora. He said that "every Jew in the world must come to Israel in order that the Jewish question be finally resolved." This was scarcely a message that most American Jews, however Zionist, wanted to hear, or had any intention to heed.

WHAT CAN WE PROJECT AHEAD? Israel has counted on the existence of an international guarantor — partly to give political and economic support, but crucially to give military support. As we have argued, this was first, for a brief but crucial period, the Soviet Union. Then it was, for a somewhat longer period, France. And at least since 1967 it has been the United States. Geopolitically, it is hard to see how Israel could have survived without this support. So, the question for Israel is whether they can in fact count on continued U.S. total (or near-total) support. I doubt it, for three reasons.

The first reason is the objective reality of U.S. geopolitical decline, which is well under way. Its decline as a hegemonic power began in 1970 or thereabouts. What had been a slow decline turned into a precipitate decline as a result of the total geopolitical folly of the Bush regime's attempt to recover the global status of the U.S. by a policy of unilateral macho militarism. U.S. decline is now irrecoverable — economically, politically, culturally, and even militarily. In the coming decades, this reality will be visible to everyone. It already is to informed elites everywhere.

The second reason is how we may expect the United States to react to this dethroning. The likelihood is that both the elites and the general population will take it hard and find it

difficult to cope, at least at first. A very sophisticated reaction would be to realize that erstwhile hegemonic powers have not suffered that much in their declining years. They have lived off their accumulated fat, provided they have adjusted to new realities. But others will want to withdraw into their shell, a new version of historic isolationism. And many will want to find scapegoats. Neither U.S. isolationism nor the search for scapegoats would bode well for Israel.

The third reason is that anti-Semitism (of the classic variety) is not dead in the United States. It has merely been pushed underground to a place where "decent" people stopped speaking of it, even to themselves — an analysis that Olmert's speech in 2006 seemed implicitly to endorse. When groups are in trouble, however, old demons often reemerge. We have seen this recently when the collapse of the Communists was followed by the reemergence of multiple xenophobic manifestations in all those countries. This is something that could very well occur in the United States. It is not at all clear what the Christian Zionists would do or feel in such a situation.

All three realities might lead to a reassessment of Zionism by the American Jewish community. Some would become more Zionist, in the sense that a revived anti-Semitism would be proof of the need for Israel as the ultimate refuge. They might even emigrate to Israel. But others would move in the opposite direction. And the American Jewish community, which is still left of center politically, might ultimately bend in part to the shifting assessments of the world's left-of-center evaluations. Indeed, this shift has already begun.

Meanwhile, in Israel, the glories of the 1967 war might fade for the younger generations in the light of the new geopolitical realities. If Israel lost the United States as its international guarantor, where could it find a replacement? There is only one plausible replacement, and one that is not under consideration at the mo-

ment. The only possible replacement would be an independent state of Palestine, but only one that was considered legitimate by the overwhelming majority of the Palestinians. It therefore would have to be one that included Hamas and similar movements.

COULD THIS BE ACHIEVED? It seems very difficult at the moment. Neither Israelis nor Palestinians seem at the moment attuned to this idea, and pessimism is the order of the day, on both sides. Yet, we know by looking at

history that deep and murderous struggles between peoples have been healed — not quite miraculously, but politically, after a long effort and much exhaustion. Of course not all such historic conflicts have had a reasonable ending. Some have resulted in less pleasant consequences. Neither I nor anyone else can predict what kind of outcome will be achieved in this case. What one can say clearly is that the U.S.-Israeli total clinging one to the other is coming to an inevitable end. Israel in a sense is on its own now.

Chicken Feathers

ROBERT KELLY

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY.
The term offends me.

What is owned? What can be owned?

When I hear about copyright of text or song, I think of a story a priest once told in a severe sermon.

He was speaking against the sin called Slander, which meant saying bad things (whether the things were true or not) about another person, spreading the bad word. He said that a woman came to a priest (another priest) and confessed that she had spread bad words about a friend. For her penance, the priest told her, you must take the pillow from your own bed and stand at the open window, then cut the pillow open and shake all the feathers out, so they fly out the window and into the world. Then you must go downstairs and into the street and collect all the feathers again. The woman groaned and said But I would never be able to find them all! The priest said, Exactly — and that's what you've done to your friend. The bad things you said will spread out forever, and there's no way to take them back.. Then he assigned her the actual "penance," the so-many Paters and Aves, the penance (mental, spiritual) that she could do.

That story stays with me, I like it. Because it's true (of course) — not just for bad words but all words.

That is our glory and our terror and our hope: whatever we say goes on forever.

A word never stops.

What is spoken is soon everywhere.

I think of this today because I am about to

publish my homeophonic translations of thirty poems by Paul Celan. From Paul Celan into printed German text into my hearing eye, and I heard them until I could hear them as English. They are in no sense a semantic equivalent of what Celan's poems are saying (which is not even to touch the question of whether his or any poet's poems are saying what he or she is saying — more on that later.) Nevertheless, magazines are anxious about publishing these, since Celan's poems are in copyright. And even though what my texts are is entirely out of my hearing and speaking, what I was hearing was "copyrighted." The whole issue of homeophonic translation is vexed enough.

But Celan's poems. Even in German, should they be copyrighted?

To whom does a poem belong?

We keep hearing about les droits de l'homme, the rights of man (at least in English we say Human Rights)

but what about the rights of the poem?

Les droits de mots, the right of words
words once spoken, their right to be heard.

Je sème à tout vent says the [copyrighted] Larousse dictionary, its motto = I sow my seeds into every wind.

THE RIGHT OF WORDS TO BE HEARD is the other side of freedom of speech, the necessary corollary of it.

There is no free speech without free hearing.

To make speech and hearing a commercial transaction, what an ultimate triumph for late capitalism, globalism's old name.

Its motto is: leave no human behavior free of commercial transaction. That is, leave no human behavior free.

ROBERT KELLY's recent books of poetry are *May Day and Threads*. A novel, *The Book from the Sky* is forthcoming from North Atlantic.

Piracy of text and music is the natural and beautiful (hence criminalized) response to the dead hand of publishers and record companies —

who have the effrontery to label their monopolistic greed “intellectual rights.”

What they really are after are aesthetic rights. And then spiritual rights (the Vatican and the ayatollahs show the world how to claim them). Then finally emotional rights.

I have been writing/had-writing-written-through-me for so many years that I am willing to call into question the relationship between the poet and “his” poem. I do not claim that the poem says what I mean. I claim only

that the poem says what the poem means. The poem’s own right to speak and be heard is at issue here, that and only that. When people read and translate (semantically, “normally”) Celan, do they know what Celan meant? Scarcely. Celan was never concerned (and therein lies his value for us) with what he meant. So the question, logically previous to all the legal stuff about rights and ownership, is the question of the relationship between the poet’s meaning and the poem’s saying.

Whatever else it does, this question destabilizes the idea that an idea can be owned — since an idea is only available ever as its expression, can be nothing but its expression.

Stealing Our Schools

JACKIE DEE KING

THE FEDERAL “NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND” law is in trouble. Critics and supporters alike predict that it will not be reauthorized in this legislative year. A growing chorus of voices from the grassroots and from major national organizations is calling for an overhaul of the law or even scrapping it altogether. Many teachers and parents hope that a newly elected Administration next year will examine the damage being done by the current law and take steps to change it. Corporate forces are pushing to take public education down the privatization path that has been paved by this law, but the real reform of our schools will come only from maintaining the public, democratic nature of education in this country while working to address its very real inequities.

“No Child Left Behind” describes an important goal for our nation’s educational system. Unfortunately, the current law accomplishes the opposite of what its catchy misnomer promises. It does, in fact, leave many children behind, especially those in urban, underfunded, and minority school districts, as well as students with special needs and limited English proficiency. A more appropriate title might be “No Child’s Behind Left Untested,” as educators and parents have noted bitterly.

Test and Punish

WHAT DOES THIS LONG AND COMPLEX PIECE of legislation actually do? No Child Left Be-

hind (NCLB) is the 2002 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), a 1965 federal law which funded the Title I program aimed at improving education for disadvantaged students.¹

The NCLB represents a dramatic break from the original version of ESEA. It requires that, in exchange for receiving Title I funds, states must set minimum “standards” in math, reading, and science. States must assess students annually in grades 3-8, and once in grades 10-12, to monitor their progress. Standardized, paper-and-pencil tests — usually designed by out-of-state, for-profit testing companies — are the sole means of assessment in almost all states.

The law requires that states set a cut-off score at which students are considered proficient in tested areas. Schools have to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) in the percentage of all students — and subgroups of students broken down by race, income, disability, gender, and language — that reach proficiency in each subject. Failure of any subgroup to meet the goal means that the school “fails” that year. The AYP for each year is determined by a formula based on all students scoring at a “proficient” level by 2014.

The rigid AYP formula sets up most public schools for failure, especially those schools with the most diverse student populations. Some studies suggest that more than 70 percent of the schools in the country will fail to reach AYP within several years. The National School Boards Association has estimated that most schools will fail eventually. Almost certainly, schools in low-income urban areas will not be able to jump this hurdle. Not only will these schools and districts be subject to drastic punishments, but the sheer number of such

JACKIE DEE KING worked for FairTest as statewide coordinator of the Massachusetts Coalition for Authentic Reform in Education. In that position, she organized parents, teachers, and students to oppose the discriminatory aspects of high-stakes testing and to fight for true reform in public schools.

schools will send a clear message: public schools are a failure!

Failure to reach AYP will render a school subject to an increasingly severe set of sanctions, year by year: the school must be placed on a

Perhaps the most disturbing trend is the rise in the dropout (or pushout) rate in many districts.

“school improvement” list and forced to send a letter to all parents saying that the school is failing; students must be given the option to transfer to another school, with transportation at the district’s expense; students must be offered tutoring services; the school must replace staff and/or implement new curriculum; the school must restructure, become a charter school, or face state takeover or privatization. None of these measures has a proven track record of actually improving schools, but many of them involve relinquishing the school to the private sector in some way.

It should be noted that funding for NCLB is woefully inadequate. In 2004, Congress authorized an additional \$18 billion to help states pay for the increased costs associated with the law. But the Bush Administration asked for only a \$1 billion increase, saying that was “more than enough” money.² Since NCLB is an unfunded mandate, the states have to implement it even without sufficient federal aid. The increased funding was one of the ways that many liberal Democrats were persuaded to go along with passage of the legislation.

Drill and Kill

THE EFFECTS OF NCLB ON OUR NATION’S schools and students have been devastating.³ In many school districts, high school graduation rates are declining; the curriculum is narrowing

and schools are being turned into test prep centers; art, music, gym, recess, and field trips are being swept aside to make way for intensive drilling exercises in math and reading for several periods during a school day; hands-on, project-based teaching and learning are being replaced by rote memorization and cookie-cutter, “teacher-proof” methodologies; for those schools labeled “failing” by the law, money which should go to improve classroom instruction instead is being used to bus children to another school or to pay for expensive private tutoring companies often staffed by inexperienced providers. Talented young teachers are becoming demoralized, as they are no longer able to apply their creativity in the classroom, and many are leaving the profession. Nowhere are these changes more apparent than in the very schools and districts that NCLB supposedly was designed to help the most: those urban schools with a high proportion of students of color and students living in poverty.

The Disappeared

PERHAPS THE MOST DISTURBING TREND is the rise in the dropout (or pushout) rate in many districts. These alarming statistics are gradually coming to light, despite the efforts by many state Education Departments to mask them. The hiding of accurate figures is accomplished in many ways. NCLB requires regular reports of how students perform on standardized tests and punishes schools that fail to progress, but does not require the same degree of rigor in tracking dropouts. States are allowed to set their own formula for calculating graduation rates; this has allowed many states to drastically undercount the number of dropouts.⁴ For example, New Mexico defines its graduation rate as the percentage of enrolled 12th graders who receive a diploma, thus ignoring all the students who have left school in the earlier grades. Massachusetts has decided to count those students who drop out but later seek a GED as high school graduates. (The dropout rate has been increasing any-

way.) Texas, the state that served as a model for NCLB, in the 1990s counted students who left school as “transients” rather than dropouts, because they might always decide to come back to school later. (Few made that choice.)⁵

One has to wonder why the federal and state governments would not put collection of uniform, verifiable, public data about dropouts at the top of their list in designing education reform. What does reform mean in the context of so many students being pushed out of school? It doesn’t take a rocket scientist: As struggling students drop out, a school’s test scores go up.

Many of these “dropouts” are eased out the door by school personnel. When I worked for the National Center for Fair and Open Testing (FairTest) from 2000 to 2004, we received hundreds of complaints from parents, teachers, and students about what the MCAS, the state’s high-stakes test, was doing to their schools. Some of the more chilling stories were about students being pushed out in order to improve their school’s MCAS scores. At a large district high school in Boston, one administrator (who would be subject to reprisal if identified) described how it worked at her school: “When the springtime comes around and the whole school is gearing up for the MCAS, we are told by the headmaster that we should just ‘let some students go.’ These are the ones who are scoring poorly on the test. Many are on the edge anyway, and if you just stop calling when they are absent, monitoring what they do in school, meeting with them to provide encouragement, they will often drift away. We were told, ‘Don’t worry, they can always come back later, or take the GED.’ So, the students leave, our MCAS scores go up, and the headmaster gets profiled in the newspaper. It makes me heartsick. Some of my young teachers come to me almost every day, talking about leaving the profession.”

(As this article goes to press, the Bush Administration, for the first time is proposing regulations that will require states to use a uniform national standard in determining graduation

rates. It remains to be seen what the final version of the formula will entail and how long the process of approving it will take, but the proposal is a step in the right direction.)

Corporate Control Tightens

NCLB IS PART OF A LARGE, LOOSELY orchestrated campaign by sectors of the corporate community to take control of our country’s schools. Public education in America was not won without a fight, as Kenneth Goodman has noted in *Saving Our Schools*.⁶ Child labor laws got young people out of factories and into schools; battles were waged state by state to make education compulsory. The American public came to believe that all children were entitled to a free education that would help them get ahead in life. But there have always been forces in society that resented the costs of the schools. Some groups, such as the religious right, have wanted to push their own agendas and curricula on the public schools. And some have wanted to make money. As other public services, such as electricity, health care, national parks, and water have become more privatized, some corporations are setting their sights on one of the last large sectors of the American economy in the public domain: its K-12 schools, a \$500 billion/year undertaking.⁷ (The other sector, Social Security, is also under attack.)

NCLB has played into the hands of those who want to privatize education. The law sets impossible goals for meeting its artificial “standards” through high-stakes tests. Most schools in the country will sooner or later fail to meet these goals and will be designated as failures. This sends a message that public education is “broken,” that we are in the midst of a crisis, and that a radically new approach is called for. Waiting in the wings are the corporations and their conservative think tanks, who step forward with the solution: give the schools to us! We’ll make them work!

NCLB requires children in elementary, middle, and high schools to take over 65 mil-

lion tests every year. This is a gold mine for privateers. Eduventures, Inc., a private education company in Boston, estimates that the U.S. market for tests, test prep materials, and related services was \$2.3 billion in 2006. The testing costs related solely to NCLB were at least \$517 million, most of them generated by a few large companies including Pearson Educational Measurement, Harcourt Assessment Inc., Riverside Publishing, and CTB/McGraw-Hill. Testing is just the tip of the iceberg of the education market. Other corporations are taking over and running entire schools and school systems.⁸

Perhaps the clearest indication of corporate intentions with respect to public schools is contained in a December 2006 report by the National Commission on Skills in the Workplace, "Tough Choices or Tough Times."⁹ The report, funded in large part by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, calls for a series of draconian measures which would end public control of our schools: 1) make all public schools into "contract schools" (essentially charter schools, but with even less public input) 2) eliminate almost all powers of local elected schools boards 3) take away teacher pensions and slash health benefits, while providing the temporary solace of higher salaries at the front end 4) force all 10th graders to take an exam, and stop the education of all who don't pass, throwing 16-year-olds out of school. Many corporations are ready to step in and take over these "contract" schools.

Billionaires Bill Gates and Eli Broad are pouring millions of dollars into funding charter schools in cities such as Houston and Los Angeles — basically establishing alternative school systems. Even conservative commentator Diane Ravitch has said that Bill Gates is setting himself up as the Superintendent of American Schools, able to promulgate what-

ever policies he wants. If ordinary people — parents, teachers, students, and other concerned citizens — do nothing to stop this privatizing juggernaut, our schools will slip out of the public sphere and into the hands of corporations whose primary motive is profit, not the education of our country's youth.¹⁰

Rising Resistance

AS GRIM AS THE NATIONAL PICTURE MAY BE, there is reason for hope. A vigorous grassroots movement has sprung up to fight the high-stakes standardized testing movement in many states and to challenge NCLB at the federal level. More than 140 national groups representing millions of Americans in education, civil

rights, parents, labor, and religious communities have come together in a coalition known as the Forum on Educational Accountability (FEA). They have sent a Joint Statement to Congress calling for major changes in No Child Left Behind.¹¹

The statement calls for less emphasis on standardized testing and more on rich curriculum; for accountability that does not over-identify schools in need of improvement; for taking account of each child's growth over time, rather than simply in relation to a test score; for using multiple measures to track student and school progress, not just standardized tests; and for fully funding the law so that schools can be helped rather than punished.

Central to the recommendations of the coalition is the concept of "authentic assessment." These groups want the law to reflect the fact that students learn in different ways, and express their achievements by various methods. An authentic assessment system picks up on this truth, adhering closely to what the student has learned in his or her classroom and how that

Schools do not exist in a vacuum.
They cannot solve every problem
in our society.

can be assessed: whether through classroom paper and pencil tests, performances, portfolio reviews, or hands-on projects. Authentic assessments are school- and classroom-based and give teachers important information about what and how students are learning, in order to fine-tune their instruction.

In addition to these grassroots efforts, a number of state legislatures are rebelling against the law. Resolutions and legislation have been considered in several states, including Virginia, Utah, and Arizona, that would “opt out” of NCLB by refusing to accept Title I funds and thus exempting themselves from the law’s requirements. Many are coming to recognize that they spend far more money attempting to follow the law’s arbitrary and unreasonable strictures than they receive in Title I funds.

Schools do not exist in a vacuum. They cannot solve every problem in our society. In order to learn, students need schools with decent facilities, small classrooms, high-quality teachers, well-stocked libraries, modern laboratories, and many other important components. But they also need safe streets, good nutrition, decent and stable housing, quality health care, recreational facilities, after-school programs, and caring communities. If we demand “adequate yearly progress” from our schools, why do we not demand that society make progress in providing for the basic needs of children in the same way?

The United States has one of the most unequal systems of education in the world. Children in wealthier communities receive a host of supports and opportunities to learn, both in and out of the classroom. Children living in poverty are taught in large classes in crumbling buildings, with few books. We need a massive

investment of funds and other resources in our inner-city schools, not a test that punishes those students it was supposed to help. It’s time to take back our schools.

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Neoliberalism, Teachers, and Teaching: Understanding the Assault

MARY COMPTON and LOIS WEINER

TEACHERS IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD are in the forefront of the struggle to ensure that children receive an education — whether in U.S. cities, the mountains of Chavez’s Venezuela, in civil war-torn Nepal, in Europe’s towns and countryside, or in the refugee camps of Sudan. In prosperous nations, identified by global justice activists as the global north, teachers’ wages, their voice in policy, and the quality of their working conditions have been reduced. In the South, societies that lack power and wealth in the new global economy, teachers are working for a pittance, sometimes unpaid, too often poorly trained or with no training at all. In many parts of Africa they teach children in classes of over 100, sometimes under trees or squatting in churches. Textbooks are nonexistent, libraries and computers a distant dream, and basic materials in short supply. When wars occur, declared or not, schools are taken over and the children evicted, as has been done in Congo and by the Israeli army in the Palestinian West Bank. In Sri Lanka and the Indian Ocean islands, schools were wiped out by the tsunami, and while luxury resorts are being built, school construction lags. In impoverished city neighborhoods in the “developed” world, from Paris and London to Berlin and New York, teachers are struggling against reduced school funding, racism, and social and economic dislocation to try to ensure that all children get quality schooling.

As a classroom teacher elected President

of the British National Union of Teachers (NUT), Mary had the unique opportunity to visit teachers’ conferences all around the world. The almost overwhelming social and political crises that so many teachers face were debated at all of these events. Activists at the 2002 South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) Congress in Durban debated the merits of various funeral plans for members and their families who would be killed by HIV and AIDS, the lack of water and electricity in their communities, school fees for the poor, and delays in payment of salaries. SADTU members were often working in appalling conditions, all too often sick and dying and teaching children in similar straits. In addition to dealing with these social crises, which are exacerbated by policies of world financial institutions, teachers must simultaneously contend with the deterioration in public education, itself an outcome of reforms promoted and imposed by those very same institutions. Though the titles and acronyms of policies differ from one country to another, the basics of the assault are the same: undercut the publicly-supported, publicly-controlled system of education, teachers’ professionalism, and teacher unions as organizations. The very nature of education is being contested: the Fourth World Congress of the international organization of teacher unions, Education International (EI), held in Brazil, explored the theme “Education: Public Service or Commodity?”

Over the last couple of decades a new global consensus about reshaping economies and

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schools has emerged among the politicians and the powerful of the world. Whereas in the past governments — preferably democratically elected — have assumed the responsibility to ensure that all children are educated, schools and universities are now regarded as a potential market. In these educational markets, entrepreneurs set up schools and determine what is taught and how it is taught in order to make a profit. The assumption that schooling is a “public good” is under the most severe attack it has ever endured. Teacher trade unionists are grappling with the increasing privatization of education services, the introduction of business “quality control” measures into education, and the requirement that education produce the kind of minimally-trained and flexible workforce that corporations require to maximize their profits. Among scholars and global justice activists, these reforms being made to the economy and education are often called “neoliberal.” They are experienced almost universally by teachers, children, and parents.

While rich northern nations spend billions of dollars prosecuting wars and have bottomless resources for the exploiting of new gas and oil reserves, the most precious reserves of all — the world’s children — stand at the back of the line. Nor is there an opportunity to develop education systems so that they can fulfill their true purpose — to enable people to live a full and creative life, or as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights puts it, to ensure that education is directed “toward the full development of the human personality.”

There is an old saying that “a lie gets half-way round the world before the truth gets on its running shoes.” The lie making the running in schooling is that private corporations and entrepreneurs are much more able to make education work for the poor than teachers, communities, and their elected representatives in government. And when one listens to politicians and reads in the media about the benefits of bringing the private market and business

methodologies into education, one can often feel as if teachers have hardly begun to tie the laces on their running shoes. The voices for privatization and neoliberalism have virtually

Teacher unions are identified in one World Bank report as the key threat to global prosperity.

the whole of the world’s media at their disposal to speed them on their way. Rebutting the “private good, public bad” propaganda is complicated by neoliberalism’s hijacking of ideals and terms borrowed from those who have spent their lives campaigning for education for all and opportunities for the poor and oppressed. Hearing news reports and politicians’ statements of lofty goals, one might think there is nothing closer to the hearts of the international financiers, accountants, and politicians than the needs of the poor. It is only when you look at the actual effects of the policies of world financial institutions like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank on “developing” countries and their education systems that you realize that nothing could be further from the truth. The World Bank’s structural adjustment programs have destroyed perfectly adequate education systems in countries like Zambia and are threatening to do the same in many others. Neoliberal reports, websites, and corporate financial bulletins with titles like “Why school fees are good for the poor,” show that when it serves their purpose, neoliberal gurus are quite willing to ditch the rhetoric of social justice and equality and lay bare the true face of their education policy.

Teachers are in a war being fought over the future of education, and though at times it might seem as though we are losing the war without firing a shot, we have a potentially powerful weapon in our hands — our solidarity and

organization into powerful teachers unions. Education International (EI), which brings the teaching unions of the world together, has over 29 million members. There is a lively global discourse about the need to wrest education back from the private entrepreneurs and corporations who want to turn it into a cash cow and a source of flexible labor. But there is very little discussion — from nongovernmental organizations that do advocacy work (NGOs), from academics, and even from teaching unions themselves — of the role that teacher unions can and must play in reversing these policies.

Public service unions, and in particular education unions, do have power. And yet it often feels as though the tremendous potential force that is contained in those 29 million teachers organized into trade unions is not being used. Capitalism has become global — its strategy and propaganda have a global reach and logic. Yet we in the trade union movement, despite some traditions of international solidarity, are a long way from achieving an equivalent global coherence. And even on a national level trade union leaders are often too ready to accept the rhetoric of politicians as the reality and adapt accordingly, instead of standing up boldly and opposing them — if necessary through job action.

Ironically, the potential power of teachers and our unions to derail neoliberal reforms like privatization is often more apparent to our opponents than it is to teachers and union leadership. Teacher unions are identified in one World Bank report as the key threat to global prosperity. In the face of this kind of rhetoric and in the context of the global assault by private capital on state education services, how are the unions responding, and how should they work to defend services for the poor? Is there any indication that teacher unions and their leaderships have the will to face up to this situation and reverse it?

In our respective careers we have seen evidence that a more assertive and democratic

teacher union movement is possible and can turn back the neoliberal agenda. In her travels, Mary has seen many straws in the wind. In Durban, the end of the SADTU conference signaled the beginning of a mass strike and demonstration for a maximum class size of fifty in the KwaZulu Natal province. The leaders of the union marched from the conference podium to the steps of the town hall to demand more money for education. The Egitem Sen teachers' conference in Ankara, Turkey, was also followed by a mass demonstration — this time against the threatened closing down of the union by a government that was refusing to recognize the rights of its Kurdish minority to be taught in its own language. The conference of a French teacher union, SNES, was interrupted by a strike and mass demonstrations all over France for the restoration of teachers' pension rights. In Wales, the combined effect of a boycott of standardized compulsory tests for young children and league tables (comparison charts) of schools, along with the concerted lobbying of parents and teacher unions, brought about their abandonment. And at EI, a motion condemning the invasion of Iraq was passed overwhelmingly despite opposition from the U.S. teacher unions.

Teaching at the university, Lois sees in prospective teachers an idealism about making a difference in children's lives, like the commitment that animated teachers like herself in the United States to create teacher unions in the 1960s and 70s. Now a researcher, Lois participates in the Special Interest Group on teachers' work and teacher unions of the American Educational Research Association. Several authors in our book belong to this international network of scholars, which has raised the visibility of teacher unions in educational reform and begun to clarify how teachers unions can be revitalized.

Our book intersperses scholarly analysis with personal, firsthand accounts of the impact that neoliberal policies are having on teachers

around the world. Contributors explain what neoliberal education policy is and why it is so important that teachers in general and union activists in particular understand its rationale and implications. Teachers, union activists, union officials, and researchers from around the globe write about a range of pressing problems

that have no simple solutions. We have undertaken this ambitious project in the hope that it will be a useful tool for activists in education and labor who, as we do, want teaching trade unions to use their power to fight for and bring to fruition the ideal of a quality education for every child in the globe.

Public Education is Under Assault

THE GLOBAL ASSAULT ON TEACHING, TEACHERS, AND THEIR UNIONS

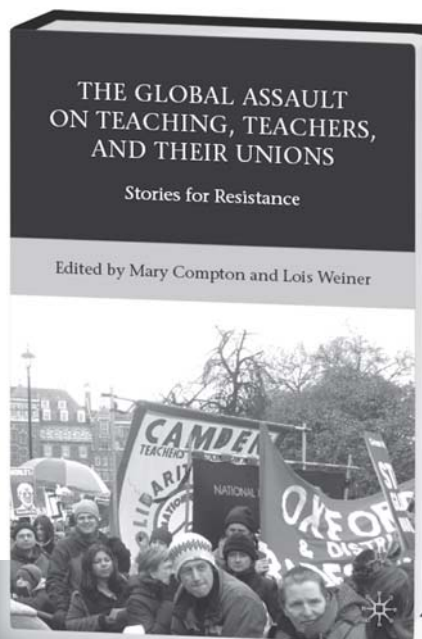
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We Can Do It!

JOANNE LANDY, M.P.H. and OLIVER FEIN, M.D.

Ed. Note: This is a chapter in a forthcoming book Ten Excellent Reasons for National Health Insurance, eds., Mary O'Brien, M.D. and Martha Livingston, Ph.D. (New Press).

THE TIME HAS COME for single payer National Health Insurance in the United States. We have excellent hospitals, skilled practitioners, the technological infrastructure — and we're already spending enough money to insure everyone and to improve access to care for many who are covered today by inadequate plans. All we need is the political will.

Yes, the barriers to single payer reform are considerable, and we ignore them at our peril. Private, for-profit insurance companies will fight tooth and nail against a system that will remove them from any significant role in the country's health care. Big Pharma too will use its clout to try to defeat single payer. The drug companies want multiple fragmented private purchasers rather than a single public payer with the power to negotiate lower prices for everyone. Moreover, right now most politicians are of little help. They often take money from and are beholden to insurance and drug companies (though with sufficient popular pressure many politicians could change their stance, and could add important strength and credibility to the fight for single payer). In addition, numerous economists and health care "experts" lend le-

gitimacy to the current system by advocating market-oriented reforms, which fail to be truly universal and meanwhile pour more money into private insurance companies. Finally, while employers often complain about the high cost of private health insurance premiums, they have thus far chosen to deal with rising premiums by shifting costs to their employees rather than by supporting a public insurance solution.

Overcoming these obstacles will require a public that demands single payer. The movement for single payer has made great strides, drawing on the fact that most people in this country already dislike and distrust insurance companies. But many Americans have grown increasingly distrustful of government in recent years. It is not uncommon to hear "You mean you want the government that didn't rescue New Orleans after Katrina, to solve the health care crisis? Forget it!" Moreover, those with health insurance frequently fear that they will lose the benefits they have now, and that the cost of a government-financed system will mean that they will have to pay extraordinarily high taxes and will end up even worse off than they are now.

However, the arguments against single payer don't measure up to the evidence. Here are some false claims the opponents make:

- *Universal coverage costs too much.* No, it doesn't. Every other industrialized nation offers its people universal coverage, and at a cost much lower than we now spend in the United States, which covers only part of its population. In 2005, we spent 15.3 percent of our Gross Domestic Product on health care compared to France's 11.1 percent, Germany's 10.7 percent, and Canada's 9.8 percent. (1) Yet, in 2005 we had 45 million uninsured (it's two million more at this writing!) while other industrialized countries covered everyone's

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health care.

- *Your taxes will go up.* Perhaps, but you are still likely to come out ahead when you consider the overall expenses. Single payer will cost most people the same or less than the premiums and medical bills they are paying today, and will be secure regardless of employment or income. Both the Congressional Budget Office and the General Accounting Office have testified that the United States could insure everyone for the amount of money we're spending. (2)

- *Americans get world-class care* — don't mess around with that. The fact is that the average American doesn't get world-class care. Sure, if you are wealthy and have the best private insurance, your chances of getting excellent care are high. But on almost all measures of health care and mortality, we lag behind Canada and Europe. (3)

- *Other countries have much longer waiting times* than we do. In actuality in other industrialized countries there are no waiting lists for emergency surgery or urgently needed procedures. It's true that the United States has shorter waits for elective surgery than Canada and England. But recent studies show that some waiting times in the U.S. are longer than in other countries. For example, in a study of seven developed countries, the Commonwealth Fund looked at how many sick adults had to wait six days or more for an appointment. (4) By this measure, only Canada's record was worse than ours. Within our market-driven system, an appointment for cosmetic surgery may be scheduled sooner than an appointment for possible skin cancer. A recent study (5) reported an average wait of 73 days for patients with possible skin cancer in Boston.

- *People get care even if they're uninsured* — there is no problem. Don't tell that to the American Cancer Society (ACS), which in September 2007 worked with its sister advocacy organization, the ACS Cancer Action Network, to launch a major initiative to make the access to health care a state and national priority. Research shows that uninsured patients were much more likely to have their cancers diagnosed at an advanced stage, when they are less curable, than were patients with insurance. (6) John Seffrin, the Society's chief executive, has stated that unless the health care system is fixed "lack of access will be a bigger cancer killer than tobacco." (7) And of course the problem isn't

limited to cancer: the Institute of Medicine estimates there are 18,000 deaths per year due to lack of insurance. (8) Unnecessary suffering and dis-

Most people in this country already dislike and distrust insurance companies.

ease affect millions more who have no insurance or are under-insured.

- *Single payer is socialized medicine.* But single payer is *not* socialized medicine, because for the most part government will not own the hospitals and physicians will not be on salary to government. It simply changes the financing of health care; the health care delivery system remains the same. It will operate like the Medicare program for the elderly today, in which patients are seen by private doctors in (mostly) private hospitals; this clearly isn't socialized medicine. Single payer is actually "social insurance" rather than "private insurance."

The times they are a-changing. Everyone — most Democrats and some Republicans — is talking about the need for universal health care coverage and cost controls. It's true that a minority of mainstream politicians endorse single payer at this time. But more and more people have jobs with no insurance, and those with insurance are seeing their employers reduce their benefits and increase their contributions for premiums, year by year. The latest General Motors-United Auto Workers agreement points toward a grim future in which employers try to shed all responsibility for insuring their employees. Meanwhile, every study that compares single payer with tax deductions or tax subsidies to buy private health insurance shows that single payer costs less and guarantees better coverage to more people than all the other approaches.

The evidence supports single payer, and in-

creasing numbers of people in this country are seeing that we don't have to be stuck with the irrational, expensive and cruel system we have. Michael Moore's *SICKO!* has made an incalculable contribution to overcoming ignorance about what is possible: Moore has shown us that by cutting the wasteful and totally unnecessary private insurance industry out of our health care system we can have real universal health insurance. Of course there have been vicious attacks on Moore but the strong positive response to *SICKO* — from Oprah to the *New York Times* to Jon Stewart — has begun to puncture the traditional U.S. media blackout of the truth about single payer. Perhaps most important, Moore has made a convincing case that government can work for people, and has brought outrage and a passion for justice to the fight for a humane health care system in the United States. He is helping to ignite the movement we will need to make it a reality.

More and more groups are endorsing HR 676. This is the bill in the U.S. House of Representatives introduced by Michigan's John Conyers, called The United States National Health Insurance Act or Expanded and Improved Medicare for All. As of this writing HR 676 has been endorsed by the National Organization for Women, the NAACP, and a wide variety of religious and civil groups, including We Be Illin', a group of young people reaching out to their peers to show why they urgently need single payer. HR676 has also been endorsed by 389 union organizations in 48 states including 96 Central Labor Councils and Area Labor Federations and 33 state AFL-CIOs (as of October 12, 2007). For an updated list, contact Kay Tillow, All Unions Committee For Single Payer Health Care — HR 676, c/o Nurses Professional Organization (NPO), 1169 Eastern Parkway, Suite 2218, Louisville, KY 40217, (502) 636 1551, nursenpo@aol.com. The AFL-CIO has adopted a policy statement favoring a Medicare for All approach. The Alliance of Retired Americans, but not to date the

American Association of Retired Persons (AARP), reaffirmed its earlier support for HR 676 in September 2007. It is encouraging that all these groups have indicated their support for HR 676; the next challenge is gaining endorsement from more organizations and enlisting those that have already endorsed to deploy their resources in an active fight to pass the bill and actually bring single payer to fruition.

Physicians are becoming more open to single payer. Physicians for a National Health Program (www.PNHP.org) has long advocated single payer national health insurance, and more doctors are coming to agree with them. In a well-designed study of Massachusetts physicians drawn from the AMA master file, 62 percent supported single payer reform. (9) In January 2008, the American College of Physicians, the second largest physician organization in the United States after the AMA, published a position paper recommending "Single payer financing models, in which one government entity is the sole third-party payer of health care costs" as one pathway to reform. (10) Recently, the New York State Academy of Family Physicians gave testimony strongly endorsing single payer.

The AMA does not have the strangle hold on physician opinion that it once had. Its membership has fallen to 27 percent of physicians. The AMA no longer represents the majority of practicing physicians in the United States. Many physicians are furious with the second-guessing and interference by the private insurance industry, which results in denial of claims and delay in treatment and in payment. Physicians become frustrated and patients suffer when each private insurance company's pharmaceutical formulary is different, so that patients can't get certain medications or have to pay higher co-pays. Private insurance company rules on prior approvals result in delay or denial of patient care. Physicians feel ethically compromised. In short, the physician is ultimately accountable to the patient, whereas the insurance company has a

responsibility only to its stockholders to maximize profits.

A MAJORITY OF THE PUBLIC favors national health insurance. In fact, 68 percent said that “providing health care coverage for all Americans” was more important than “holding down taxes” in the September 2006 ABC/Kaiser/USA Today poll. (11) The more recent CNN/Opinion Research Corporation poll (May 2007) finds similar results. Asked whether the “government should provide a national health insurance program for all Americans even if this would require higher taxes,” 64 percent of the sample said yes, while just 35 percent said no. When CNN asked that same question in January 1995, 55 percent answered yes and 37 percent said no. Of course, this is not an explicit endorsement of single payer, but it does suggest that more than a majority of Americans see government and higher taxes as part of the solution to the healthcare crisis, even when they have not been informed that for most people higher taxes under a single payer system would be compensated for by lower premiums, deductibles and co-pays.

Halfway solutions won't work, particularly those that put more taxpayer money into helping people buy more private health insurance. Private health insurance is not only extremely costly; it will result in more and more *under-insurance* and will actually move us *away* from achieving quality universal coverage. In order to maintain profits and control their costs, private insurers will jack up deductibles and co-pays and cut benefits. Private insurers will do all they can to recruit the healthy, and avoid the sick, who are burdened with pre-existing conditions.

Herein lies the fallacy of the “level the playing field” argument put forward by politicians and pundits who propose that we have Medicare offered to everyone and let it compete with private health insurance. The competition will not be fair, because private insurers will figure

out how to attract the well by offering perks like free health-club memberships and by advertising aggressively among healthier groups, and how to skip over the less healthy by under-

Private insurers will do all they can to recruit the healthy, and avoid the sick, who are burdened with pre-existing conditions.

marketing to high-risk populations, even if they are legally required to insure all applicants. This will inevitably leave a disproportionate number of the sick to Medicare, which will in turn raise Medicare premiums, which will make it less attractive to healthy people than private insurance.

Many reformers advocate regulating private insurance to prevent these abuses, but the record of government regulation in this country is poor. The private industry being regulated uses its clout to find ways to constrain and distort government intervention. Moreover, no one has proposed comprehensive regulations to curb the worst features of the insurance industry, its built-in desire to avoid paying claims. Most regulation being proposed involves primarily selling insurance, not actually paying for health care.

We already have a clear example of how private health insurance avoids regulation when it coexists with public health insurance, when we compare traditional Medicare to Medicare Advantage in which private insurance companies provide coverage. These private plans receive 12 to 18 percent more funding than traditional Medicare, and yet have been fraught with major problems. “Tens of thousands of Medicare recipients have been victims of deceptive sales tactics and had claims improperly denied by private insurers,” according to a review of 91 audit reports conducted by the *New*

York Times (12). The companies reviewed included three of the largest participants in the Medicare market: United Health, Humana, and Wellpoint. The problems described in the audit reports include “the improper termination of coverage for people with H.I.V. and AIDS, huge backlogs of claims and complaints, and a failure to answer telephone calls from consumers, doctors and drugstores . . . the audits document widespread violations of patients’ rights and consumer protection standards. Some violations could directly affect the health of patients — for example, by delaying access to urgently needed medications.”

The danger of halfway solutions is not only that they won’t work but also that their failure can discredit the whole effort on behalf of universal coverage. The public will blame the advocates for universal coverage for the lack of improvement in affordability and coverage. Moreover, the halfway measures that have been proposed lend added legitimacy and resources to the private insurance companies, who will use those assets to fight single payer every step of the way.

We must build a movement for single payer National Health Insurance in the United States from the bottom up, and by the power of our numbers bring enough politicians over to our side. No, it won’t be easy, given the array of forces that will oppose it. But political outcomes are not determined simply by the wishes of powerful elites. And some of the elites (e.g., businesses outside the health insurance and pharmaceutical industries) could potentially be moved by a determined popular movement and by the unwillingness of their employees to accept the growing restrictions and cutbacks on coverage that are generally the preferred response of business.

Building a powerful movement will require a creative combination of activism and educa-

tion about how a mobilized public can make government responsive to the needs of ordinary people. It will be a challenge, but the only alternative to a single payer system is to consign the people of our country to a more and more brutal health care system. The single payer movement can win not only a humane health care system, but also can contribute, in the words of Michael Moore, to making the United States more of a “we” society than a “me” society, one in which the individual and the society can truly flourish.

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Struggle for the Land

Racism, Class, and the Six Nations Land Reclamation

JEFFREY SHANTZ

ON FEBRUARY 28, 2006, members of Six Nations of the Iroquois Confederacy — the Cayuga, Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Seneca and Tuscarora — reclaimed 40 hectares of lands belonging to their community. The land, which was under construction as part of a new residential subdivision, had been sold to a developer, Henco Industries, despite the fact that the government knew it was contested land when it allowed it to be sold. Such has been the history of governments in Canada in disregarding indigenous land rights.

The ongoing reclamation of the Douglas Creek Estates site is one part of a longstanding struggle over around 950,000 acres of the Haldimand Tract originally granted to Six Nations by the British crown in 1784. The Haldimand Tract lands cover the length of the Grand River and includes current major Ontario cities such as Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph and Brantford. The Canadian government very early on encouraged the illegal sale and confiscation of land and revenue belonging to Six Nations. Beginning in the 1830s the Crown unilaterally determined that Six Nations' rights to these lands ended for all but the lands of a small reserve. Originally covering six miles on each side of the Grand River throughout its length, the lands were gradually alienated from Six Nations until only a much smaller Reserve of 46,500 acres, or 4.9 percent of the original Haldimand Grant, remained available to Six

Nations. These changes left the present day Six Nations as the largest First Nation in Canada in terms of population: almost 21,000 people living on reserve, confined to a shrunken and inadequate parcel of land. At the same time the rapidly growing urban and suburban developments, among the most extensive in the country, have put tremendous pressures on the Grand River watershed, upon which Six Nations rely materially and culturally, and over-taxed Six Nations' water treatment systems.

Despite this, Six Nations have made it clear that they are not now, nor do they intend to make claims against previously alienated lands on which people are currently residing. While opponents of Six Nations have tried to stoke fears that natives will be "coming for your land next," Six Nations' efforts are strictly directed against new developments on currently undeveloped lands.

In 1995, the Six Nations filed a statement of claim in Ontario Superior Court with regard to around half of their outstanding claims against the Crown. In 2004, the court case was suspended, initiating negotiations over a much smaller subset of files. Little progress has been made on these cases to this day.¹ Had the government developed a comprehensive and respectful land claims settlement process and negotiated honestly with Six Nations, the situation would have taken a different course.

The reclamation continued, garnering little attention outside of native communities, until the dramatic events of April 20th, when the Canadian state chose to take its favored path in dealing with indigenous land rights. In the early morning of April 20th, the Ontario Provincial Police, a racist organization with a recent history of violence against indigenous communities, in-

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cluding the outright murder of Dudley George during a reclamation at Ipperwash, raided the site at Douglas Creek and arrested 16 people.

The April 20th attack by the OPP served to backfire on authorities. Not only did it lead to a re-taking of the site by a larger and even more energized group, it also sparked a series of other solidarity actions by natives from other communities. The police raid, and the remarkably strong response by Six Nations to the raid, also brought wider attention to the struggle and encouraged many activists to become more actively involved in solidarity work.

Racist Violence

IN NUMEROUS STRUGGLES over indigenous land rights, governments at all levels in Canada have off-loaded the costs of crisis onto third parties, often local non-native residents in nearby towns. As Lawson suggests “the high visibility of protest in many aboriginal land cases (just as with labor disputes) can mobilize the non-protesting third parties as a kind of spontaneous human shield for the status quo.”² This typically occurs when non-native locals are mobilized to oppose or counter a reclamation.

Such has certainly been the case in Caledonia. Only a month into the reclamation, non-natives in the nearby town of Caledonia, which borders the reclamation site and Six Nations, began organizing counter-protests against the reclamation. These protests, many of which have become violent, have broadened to target Six Nations as a whole for condemnation.

On April 4, 2006, almost 500 non-native residents from Caledonia and surrounding areas turned out for the first major mobilization against the reclamation. Aggressive demonstrations organized by a section of non-native Caledonia residents soon intensified. April 24th saw a rally by non-native residents draw a reported 3000 people. Later that same day a smaller group of angry protesters attempted to rush the Six Nations barricades. On April 28th, around 500 took part in another demonstra-

tion against the reclamation. About this time a flyer recruiting for the Klan turned up but was discovered to be a fake. On several occasions white protesters from Caledonia have tried to breach police lines to overtake the reclamation site. On another occasion white residents of Caledonia attacked people from Six Nations by driving golf balls at them. When a Caledonia resident who supports the reclamation attempted to witness these activities, she was surrounded by the angry Caledonians and her life was threatened. On November 5, 2007, the unfinished home being used as an organizing and meeting space at the reclamation site was firebombed and burned to the ground.

The activities of non-native residents of Caledonia have gone beyond demonstrations near the site. There have also been reports of verbal and physical assaults against people from Six Nations who have visited Caledonia or who live there.

In addition to acts of physical and emotional violence carried out against Six Nations people, the racist mobilization by groups like the Caledonia Citizens’ Alliance has worked to create a climate in which the most reactionary and militaristic politicians at all levels of government have been emboldened to make aggressive and provocative statements against Six Nations and the reclamation. It also serves to ramp up tensions and create the conditions that might clear the way for a military invasion by the Canadian state. This is especially so given the aggressive stance of the ruling Conservative government, a government that has moved to embrace a more openly imperialist politics both globally (as in Afghanistan) and domestically. Thus the importance of developing an explicitly anti-racist pole of support within Caledonia that might work to de-legitimize the efforts of what is a well organized and resource rich opposition movement.

Solidarity Work

THERE HAVE BEEN PRIMARILY FOUR TYPES of

solidarity action that have been organized by non-native supporters of the reclamation: maintaining a physical presence at the site; organizing speaking tours and delegations; holding solidarity demonstrations; and anti-racist organizing within Caledonia. Of these, non-native activists have put most of their time and energy into the first three activities, with most energy and resources going toward site visits. Volunteering at the site, however, does little to alter the overall balance of forces that will determine how the struggle over the Douglas Creek Estates will be played out. In addition, it does not make a contribution to the reclamation site that would not otherwise be made by the people from Six Nations who are already there. It is the fourth option, organizing within Caledonia, which is the work that could have the greatest impact in terms of defusing the racist hostility being directed against Six Nations and the reclamation and in limiting the state's capacity for maneuvering towards a military intervention.

Unfortunately, most non-native activists have been reluctant to engage in this sort of crucial work, and the strategic political discussions that would decide how organizational resources might best be mobilized and distributed to support the reclamation (i.e. whether resources should be put into getting people to the site or going to Caledonia to do anti-racist or other work in town) have been generally absent. Discussions over who might be delegated to represent groups on the basis of specific skills or the willingness to undertake specific tasks (such as getting out and talking to Caledonians) have taken a back seat to visiting the site.

If the participation of non-native allies is restricted overwhelmingly to a presence at the reclamation site, the battle will likely be lost as the racist position comes to dominate the discussion and shape the context within which the Canadian state will mobilize its forces. Because military intervention requires the pretext of ungovernability and violence in the area, non-native activists can play an important part in

ensuring that this scenario is not played out. Doing so means organizing an alternative to the native versus non-native portrayal of events.

Another Caledonia Finds Its Voice

THE PEOPLE OF SIX NATIONS AND CALEDONIA share workplaces, schools, friendships, and families. Because of the intimate relationship between Six Nations and Caledonia over generations, many are concerned that the anger and violence being instigated by a core group of people within Caledonia not be allowed to create wounds that may never heal. There is clearly another, silent, Caledonia beyond the aggressive clamor of the Caledonia Citizens' Alliance. A real challenge has been to find a means by which that silent, and indeed silenced, Caledonia might find its voice.

The importance of white activists showing a willingness to talk to non-native Caledonians on the other side of the barricades is shown most forcefully in the emergence of the Community Friends for Peace and Understanding, an ally group that emerged to support the reclamation and to work against racism within Caledonia. This group came about after some white activists who had been at the site waded into one of the angry crowds protesting against the reclamation. Talking to people in a non-confrontational way, the activists found that some Caledonians were actually appalled by the anger and racism of their fellow townspeople. Through this dialogue it became apparent that the stark native versus non-native opposition that had taken on a hegemonic position in almost all media representations did not tell the real and complex story of how people in Caledonia felt about the reclamation. It also confounded the view of many white activists that Caledonia was a town of backwards racists, a view that allowed activists to feel good about themselves but discarded a huge opportunity for organizing.

Following the initial meeting at the barricades, a core of people came together in Caledonia to strategize how best to break the

racist hegemony of the Caledonia Citizens' Alliance while also providing support to the reclamation. The group that emerged from this, calling itself Community Friends for Peace and Understanding, has, since its inception in May, 2006, undertaken a variety of tasks in solidarity with Six Nations. Over a relatively brief period of time it has grown to include members from several labor unions, including the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW), the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) and the Steelworkers, as well as members of McMaster University who have met at a table with people from Six Nations involved in the reclamation. The perspective of Community Friends is that negotiation and peaceful resolution of the conflict can be achieved only through an honest recognition of Six Nations' land rights.

In contrast to the view that non-native support for the reclamation locally was marginal, more than 120 people have participated in Community Friends meetings and have tried to connect with others outside of meetings in order to build a base of support in Caledonia and surrounding areas for Six Nations and the reclamation. Despite the threat of violence, they have engaged with and peacefully discussed issues with their neighbors who have protested the reclamation. Members have gone to Citizens' Alliance meetings to raise an alternative perspective on the reclamation and to address concerns of Caledonians. They have set up a phone line and voice mailbox to allow concerned community members to get information about activities in Caledonia. Members of Community Friends have made themselves available for one-on-one meetings with people in Caledonia to discuss support for the reclamation. They have also helped to organize face-to-face group discussions between people from Caledonia and Six Nations to promote dialogue, understanding and reconciliation. Members have, again despite the concerns for safety, gone door-to-door in the areas of Caledonia nearest the reclamation site and have talked directly with resi-

dents in order to listen to their concerns and to discuss the issues. Group members have also delivered food, clothing and monetary donations to the reclamation site.

Representatives from Six Nations have been involved in each of the meetings and the direction is being taken from them, in terms of publications, events, public statements, and so on. They have been quite clear that this is crucial work that in their view has some sense of urgency about it. They have stressed the need for education and work towards understanding as necessary, but something which for obvious reasons they cannot go alone on.

Class and Conflict in Caledonia

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT in understanding events in Caledonia and the response of Caledonians who have opposed the reclamation that this is not strictly about anti-racism. There are a complexity of issues and these are of course in many ways intertwined.

The opposition to the reclamations of the Douglas Creek estate lands is driven fundamentally by the greed of real estate developers who are transforming the countryside into a sprawling suburbia in order to reap profits for themselves. One of the women from Six Nations with whom I have spoken at length has pointed out throughout the reclamation that a victory for the developers is going to affect farmers and small shop owners when the flow of big boxes, Wal-Mart, and so on follows the subdivisions. This is an unsustainable way of life that does little for working class people in towns like Caledonia, benefiting primarily realtors, lawyers, and bankers. It needs to be remembered that the Haldminad Tract lands are situated in the heart of one of the most profitable and booming real estate markets in all of Canada.

There is a recognition of some of the underlying economic issues and concerns among Caledonians, but there needs to be some way to reach people and develop an understanding that goes beyond the sort of dualistic one that is pre-

sented in the mainstream media or from groups like the Caledonia Citizens' Alliance. In other words, it's not that a defeat of Six Nations and victory for the developers saves Caledonian businesses or property. There are other alternatives (i.e. a defeat of Six Nations and victory for the developers costs people their livelihoods, negatively changes the character of the town, and so on). The Community Friends have suggested the farmers who want to keep producing food on their land rather than see it paved over, along with those Caledonians who value their town's identity as a close rural community have compelling reasons to support their neighbors on Six Nations and the reclamation.

In fact, there are real class and status struggles within Caledonia that have played no small part in this, and it is important to clarify some of the divisions that are simmering between long time residents and the city folks with dollars who have moved into the subdivisions. Several folks I've spoken with at Six Nations have identified these as important issues in terms of changing relationships over the past 10 to 20 years. Many longtime residents of Caledonia, who have close personal or familial ties with people from Six Nations, have quite different perspectives from the many people who have recently moved to one of Caledonia's new subdivisions and who work outside of town.

It is not coincidental that the Caledonia Citizens' Alliance was formed by members of the local Chamber of Commerce and includes among its membership many of the local developers and business people who have a vested interest in developing and profiting from Six Nations land. Not surprisingly, the CCA has used the force of its protests to make demands on the government for financial compensation for purported business losses supposedly stemming from the reclamation. Less surprising perhaps is the fact that the government has agreed to pay some form of compensation to them.

Against the suburban sprawl that destroys animal habitat and farmlands, the people of Six Nations have offered an alternative of close and

responsible stewardship of the land. Their community has a long history of protecting nature and respecting the environment throughout the area. As they have pointed out to all who would listen, a recognition of their rights will ensure the protection of lands around the Grand River and prevent the destruction of those lands by further suburban sprawl and increased road traffic.

Recently, a potentially important coalition has been formed by Six Nations members and non-native residents concerned about the loss of farmland in the Grand River region. Amy Lickers, a community planner with Six Nations, has emphasized the importance of land preservation for Six Nations: "Farmland plays a major part in our cultural awareness of who we are. . . If you look at the greater picture — when you start accumulating all of the development — it is a cause for concern."³ Lickers noted that new developments in the area have had a negative impact on water quality, environmental health, and food security across the region. These concerns are shared by coalition partners from the Brant County Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario and the Ontario Farmland Trust.

It is also necessary to keep in mind that the reclamation has taken place in a context in which Canada's current Conservative government is making known its interest in a broad privatization of native land. In a recent public response to the deplorable housing conditions on many reserves, a direct result of colonialist government policies, former Federal Indian Affairs Minister Jim Prentice suggested that individuals should be able to buy and sell reserve land. "To have a circumstance where 617 First Nations across the country are living as collectivities without private property ownership, I don't think is constructive," Prentice suggested. According to Prentice, it is the long standing tradition of communal land ownership, not government social and economic policies or racism, that economically hurts First Nations people. Prentice continued, revealing his underlying concern: "Many First Nations are sit-

ting on extremely valuable property that is not achieving its highest and best use.” Unwavering even momentarily from his paternalistic assertions, Prentice added: “It’s important for any citizen of Canada to have the ability in their own community to buy and invest in property, mortgage, it, service the mortgage and move forward. It’s the whole basis of wealth creation in our society.” Bringing the Douglas Creek lands within Six Nations’ control would make them communally owned resources rather than private property for individual sale for private gain.

Assembly of First Nations Chief Phil Fontaine responded by noting that the buying and selling of reserve land would result in the alienation of First Nations’ lands. He also pointed out the absurdity of Prentice’s claims that a lack of private land ownership causes poverty on reserves and reminded the Minister that the real causes are the lack of funds for basic human needs such as clean water and schools.

Federal governments dating back to the first Canadian government of 1867 under John A. Macdonald have tried to break reserve lands into individually owned private plots. It has been and continues to be an attempt to undermine the strength and traditions of indigenous communities.

Conclusion

JAMES LAWSON NOTES that capitalist accumulation still depends, as Minister Prentice is no doubt aware, on reliable property rights and stable government, even if it was born in North America in the presence of neither.⁴ As Lawson (2006) suggests, many indigenous communities still retain economic interests and political commitments that regularly conflict with the twin fictions of Canadian law: exclusive Crown sovereignty and the presumption that all land rights flow from the Crown (such that reserves are considered Crown land, for example).

It is crucial to think about how to prevent a convergence of state and local property interests from confining conflict within a logic of private property or exclusive Crown sovereignty

that benefits their interests. Non-native allies can make an important political contribution by organizing within white settler communities to demonstrate that indigenous struggles, like the Douglas Creek reclamation, are not a matter of conflict between native people and non-native people. Such a position only benefits the government and developers looking to gain quick, and illegitimate, access to contested lands. Rather it is crucial to show that these conflicts are based on larger issues of human rights and social justice. These are political issues, not “law and order” issues to be coercively resolved through the threat of violence or the actual use of force.

Media images of racist violence obscure the fact that there are many non-native people, in Caledonia and beyond, who support Six Nations and indigenous land rights more broadly. Making that support visible can play a significant part in limiting the government’s capacity to frame the issue in a way that would lend itself to a military response. As the Community Friends suggest, the days when the Canadian government or non-native vigilantes could drive First Nations people off their land has passed. Yet as events, including the police raid and the Citizens’ Alliance rallies, have shown, throughout the period of the Douglas Creek reclamation, making those days history cannot be taken for granted and will require much organizing and serious strategizing over the part that might be played by allies in support of the reclamation.

The opposition to the reclamations is driven fundamentally by the greed of real estate developers who are transforming the countryside into a sprawling suburbia.

NOTES

1. James C.B. Lawson, “The Caledonia Occupation,” *Relay: A Socialist Project Review*, 12, 2006, pp. 12-14
2. *Ibid.*, 14
3. Quoted in John Paul Zronik, “Farmland Losses Reach Crucial Point,” *The Brantford Expositor Weekender*, June 15, 2007, p. 6
4. Lawson, 14.

A Note on Anti-Americanism

JOHN SUMMERS

CZESLAW MILOSZ USED THE TERM “political correctness” to describe the collapse of metaphysical and political levels of argument into a singular “New Faith.” This fusion seems to be going on in American intellectual circles. I refer to the multiplying uses of the phrase, “anti-American.”

To be “anti-American” seems to mean to violate decency, to do violence to absolute truth. Understood in this way, the phrase realigns the conventional left-right groupings in the United States around the axis of state power. Thus does Norman Podhoretz range liberal internationalists, Republican realists, and the “anti-American left” into “de-facto allies” merely because each group doubts the wisdom of the Iraq occupation.

Podhoretz views modern American history as a succession of noble wars, a view that has the advantage of simplifying things into good and evil, winners and defeatists, patriots and subversives, free societies and “swamps” that must be “drained.” Since violence, in his view, is the instrument of historical change, diversity of opinion is the main threat. “Facing a conflict that may well go on for three or four decades,” Podhoretz writes in his recent book, *World War IV*, “Americans of this generation are called upon to be more patient than ‘the greatest generation’ needed to be in World War II, which for us lasted only four years; and facing an enemy even more elusive than the Communists, the American people of today are required to summon at least as much perseverance as the American people of those days did — for all their bitching and moaning — over the 47 long years

of World War III.”

Why morale should be so important to a war that is so manifestly just and necessary Podhoretz never quite explains. But Milosz would have recognized the cast of his thought. In contrast to republican and democratic thinkers, who usually do not consecrate political authority, Podhoretz conflates the practical necessities of national security with the preservation of the national honor. This conflation, so common in conservative political thought, discourages the analysis of institutions in favor of the flattery of a charismatic leader. Podhoretz writes of “the amazing leader this President has amazingly turned out to be.” He praises President Bush for his heart, stomach, and will, all the military virtues. Intelligence is tasked with moral surveillance of the many-sided opposition.

Those who are still willing to think freely about such matters might recall the old distinctions between country, government, and state. As Randolph Bourne wrote, the country comprises the social and cultural life of the people. It bears the common memories, habits, and values which make an American different from a Canadian, and an Englishman different from an Irishman. The idea of the country embraces these differences without rancor or rivalry. The government is the practical machinery by which the country conceives, debates, and agrees upon its laws. It comprises the temporary administrations, parliaments, or coalitions. The state constitutes the apparatus of coercion, the monopoly of the means of violence. It collects the taxes, polices the territory, makes the wars.

On the strength of these distinctions we can reply to those who use “anti-American” as a slogan of abuse and intimidation that they

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mix up attitudes toward country and nation with attitudes toward state. They make themselves deputies in the state's campaign of propaganda

“It is quite conceivable that after the next war we should have in this country a semi-military, semi-financial autocracy, which would fasten class divisions on this country for untold years,” John Dewey wrote in 1939.

against its citizens. This in itself is no surprise. As consumers turn themselves into salespeople for the corporations that jilt them, so do the state's most fanatical agents emerge from the formally free institutions of the country.

What is surprising is that contemporary elites have abandoned the vocabulary of obligation. Talk of national duty once eased the transformation of the free intellectual, who owed the highest obligation to culture itself, to the political ideologist willing to obfuscate for the sake of ends over which he exerted little direct control. Today the state does not even have to ask for such blind allegiance, though news from American journalism indicates that it is willing to pay cash for it, and there are buyers aplenty.

Reviving this link between popular sovereignty and mental freedom means refusing to be intimidated by allegations of “anti-Americanism,” and, equally so, refusing to be baited by the division of intellectuals into “soft” and “hard” with respect to state enemies. It is worth remembering how long this distinction has poisoned debate. Waldo Frank and Lewis Mumford used it to knock around John Dewey's pragmatism in the pages of *The New Republic*

in the late 1930s. Frank and Mumford charged then that pragmatic attitudes weakened the capacity to recognize the threat of European fascism. Their caricatures helped put two generations of liberal opinion on war footing, and drove Dewey into gloomy forecasting. “It is quite conceivable that after the next war we should have in this country a semi-military, semi-financial autocracy, which would fasten class divisions on this country for untold years,” Dewey wrote in 1939. “In any case we should have the suppression of all the democratic values for the sake of which we professedly went to war.”

Dewey's mood recovered, but his influence did not. The attacks of the late 1930s helped kill off the moral and political relevance of radical democratic thought for twenty years. By the 1950s the landscape of moral argument about foreign policy lay barren. Reviewing the work of Reinhold Niebuhr and Walter Lippmann in 1957, the philosopher Morton White complained, “It seems to me a sad commentary on the social thought of today that two of the most popular social thinkers on the American scene can produce nothing more original than the doctrines of original sin and natural law as answers to the pressing problems of this age.”

The attacks on pragmatism in the late 1930s, the attacks on New Leftists in the 1960s, and the attacks on “relativists” and “postmodernists” by liberal magazines in the weeks and months after September 11 betray a common anxiety. What they share is panic in the presence of free thought, as indicated by widely circulated but perfectly ridiculous notions that to try to understand a mass murder is tantamount to excusing or apologizing for it. Let us hope that we can move beyond a discussion in which one party continually rediscovers the loss of the republic, while the other continually rediscovers the birth of the empire. All parties may soon discover that they have no clue.

Lessons of the 1979 Iranian Revolution and Its Aftermath

FRIEDA AFARY

MARJANE SATRAPI IS SIX YEARS YOUNGER than I am, but we share some critical life-shaping experiences. We were both transformed by the 1979 Iranian revolution and its aftermath. At the time of the revolution, she was nine and I was fifteen. She lived in Iran and I had just emigrated to the U.S. Nevertheless the revolution raised so many questions that it changed how we viewed the world and exposed us to a host of ideas and experiences.

The fact that differing tendencies — Islamic leftists, nationalists, Maoists, Stalinists, independent Marxists — existed within the revolution prior to the coming to power of Islamism, forced us to abandon our childhood naiveté about the world. Having witnessed these tendencies compelled us to see that economic, social, philosophical and ideological determinants affect the actions of human beings.

My knowledge of Persian has allowed me to become more familiar with the writings of some dissident intellectuals inside Iran. Some are of my generation. Some are older. Most are younger. Most are critical of the old left for directly and indirectly having contributed to the

rise of the Islamism. Some are interested in humanist interpretations of Marx in their attempts to create a discourse that challenges any form of totalitarianism.

During the period 1997 to 2005, there were some openings for publications of books and newspapers that reflected the interest of Iranian intellectuals in humanist and

rationalist philosophies. Many were pursuing a new way of thinking that challenged religious fundamentalism and dogmatic thinking. The now banned daily newspaper *Sharq* devoted many of its pages to discussions of Western humanist thinkers and Iranian religious reformists. Translations and sales of works by and about Kant, Hegel, Marx, Habermas as well as conferences and symposia on religious reformism proliferated.

After the June 2005 presidential election in which Ahmadinejad came to power, the publication of dissident ideas became increasingly difficult. Nevertheless, the opposition movement is alive and relentless.

IN DECEMBER 2006, Ahmadinejad's conference on holocaust revisionism was challenged by students from Amir Kabir Polytechnic University who demonstrated against him, tore posters bearing his picture, and called him a

Persepolis
Written and directed by MARJANE
SATRAPI and VINCENT PARONNAUD
Sony Picture Classics, 2007

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“source of prejudice and corruption.” (www.jebhemelli.info/05_javanan/850920_amirkabirdaratashkhashm.htm) Three of these students — Majid Tavakoli, Ahmad Ghassaban, and Ehsan Mansoori — were later arrested, tortured, and held in prison for seven months. An appeals court has just issued prison sentences of two to three years for each.

• After Ahmadinejad’s September 2007 speech at Columbia University in New York where he boasted of academic freedoms in Iran, he was due to speak at Tehran University. There he was met by thousands of protesting students. These students held up signs which said: “Mr. Ahmadinejad: Why Only Columbia? We Have Questions Too.” (www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/story/2007/10/071009_an-az-ahmadinejad-university.shtml) A group of liberal students from the Office for Consolidation of Unity had published a very serious and lengthy letter in which they condemned the policies of the Iranian government on internal matters such as suppression of labor unions, increasing poverty, denial of women’s rights, as well as foreign affairs such as the denial of the holocaust and its nuclear policy. (www.bbc.co.uk/persian/iran/story/2007/10/printable/071007_bd-tahkim-letter.shtml). Several students were arrested and badly beaten in prison.

• In December 2007, a group of leftist students at Tehran University were arrested for opposing the militarization of the universities. Later, other leftist students at campuses in Tehran and Tabriz were arrested and tortured in prison. In a statement issued after the arrests, students from The Free University of Tabriz wrote: “The most important reason for the suppression of this forward looking movement is its attitude to political deals and its refusal to be used as a means. Furthermore the link it has established with other social movements (workers’ movement, women’s

movement. . .) is a fine point that should not be overlooked” (www.salam-democrat.com/spip.php?article6466). Four of the arrested leftist students remain in prison. Student protests are continuing at Shiraz University.

“Bullshit! Life isn’t absurd. Some people give their lives for freedom.”

• Some students have joined hands with workers on strike over the non-payment of wages and lack of union rights. A prominent labor union leader,

Mansour Osanloo of the Tehran Bus Workers Union, continues to languish in jail with deteriorating vision. Another labor leader, Mahmud Salehi, a baker who represents Kurdish labor unionists, was recently freed from a year in prison. His suspended sentence was granted after he went on a month-long hunger strike and after his family and supporters posted a \$43,000 bail. Thousands of workers have not been paid for months and are protesting this non-payment of wages. Several teachers have also been arrested for demanding better pay and working conditions.

• Women’s Rights activists continue to challenge Sharia law which considers a woman’s worth to be half a man’s and denies her basic civil and human rights. Many of the women’s rights activists who were arrested at an International Women’s Day demonstration in 2006 continue to be restricted by suspended sentences which prevent them from engaging in further protest or leaving the country to attend conferences. In January, the feminist magazine *Zanan* was banned. In early March, the feminist activist Parvin Ardalan was prevented from leaving the country for Sweden to receive an award from the Olaf Palme Institute. In April, Khadijeh Moghaddam, a member of the One Million Signatures Campaign, was arrested by security police who forcibly entered her home.

AT A TIME WHEN THE BUSH administration is raising the possibility of military strikes on Iran, these protests reveal that there is a strong democratic and anti-war opposition movement within Iran that the people of the U.S. can express solidarity with. This is where Marjane Satrapi's autobiographical graphic novel, *Persepolis*, has made a great contribution. It has humanized the Iranian people without sugarcoating their daily life experience.

Although many books have been written about the Iranian revolution, so far only two works have gained world acclaim: Satrapi's *Persepolis* and Azar Nafisi's *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. Whereas in *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, the narrator is a mature professor of English literature in Tehran, the narrator of *Persepolis* is a child who becomes a teenager and a young adult in the decade after the revolution. Marjane Satrapi comes from a background that clearly places her in a position different from an ordinary nine year old at the time of the revolution.

Satrapi's grandfather on her mother's side was an estranged prince from the 19th and early 20th century Qajar dynasty. He had become a Communist sympathizer of the Russian Revolution in the 1920s and had been imprisoned by the Pahlavi regime for most of his life. Satrapi's great uncle and uncle on her father's side were leaders of the 1945 Soviet-backed Azarbaijan Republic that was put down by the Pahlavi regime.

Satrapi's parents encouraged her to participate in the revolution and gave her the freedom to explore books and participate in their discussions on the fate of the revolution. Hence in her work, we have the benefit of viewing events through the eyes of a precocious child and a sophisticated and well-read young adult.

With the production of *Persepolis* as an animated film, the message embodied in this work has become available to a much wider audience. The film, which closely follows the book, was written and directed by Satrapi and Vincent Paronnaud. Each frame has been painstakingly

hand-drawn, mostly in black and white. The production has been a living embodiment of international solidarity as seen in the collaboration of Satrapi and Paronnaud as writers/directors. Catherine Deneuve and her daughter Chiara Mastroianni performed as the voices of Marjane's mother and that of Marjane. France selected this film as its official Oscar entry to be considered by the U.S. Academy of Motion Pictures in the foreign language category. The Academy nominated this film in the animation category.

Satrapi's account, funny and often tragic, reminds us that the revolution was not a monolithic phenomenon. The mass-based movement that overthrew the dictatorial Pahlavi monarchy had differing tendencies and political and social ideologies. Many participants were student youth who demanded freedom of speech and rejected both the Shah's police state and the wide gap between rich and poor. They had been influenced by theories of guerrilla warfare espoused by Mao Zedong of China and the Stalinist type of Communism that existed in the Soviet Union. Others were nationalists who had been part of a movement for the nationalization of Iran's oil industry, a movement that had been defeated by a CIA backed coup in 1953. Many were Islamic leftists who wanted to create a more egalitarian society. Some were Islamists who used the language of anti-imperialism, justice for the "wretched of the earth," and revolution, to promote a more orthodox brand of Shia Islam.

Immediately after the Shah was overthrown in February 1979 following a series of mass strikes of workers and the majority of the population, Khomeini came back from exile and organized a plebiscite to declare Iran an Islamic Republic. Within three years, workers' councils were banned, women were ordered to wear the hijab in public places, and the government completed a military campaign against ethnic minorities such as the Kurds of northwestern Iran, who had demanded self-determination.

It is by having an understanding of this background that we can appreciate Satrapi's critique of Iranian nationalist and leftist intellectuals in 1979. Her uncle Anoosh, the Tudeh Communist Party member who has come back from exile in the Soviet Union and several years in the Pahlavi regime's prison, portrays the attitude of those intellectuals who downplayed the influence of the Islamists or supported collaborating with them. In an argument between Marjane's father and her uncle, Marjane's father expresses his concern that the Islamists might take over the revolution. Anoosh responds: "It is not important. Everything will turn out fine. In a country where half the population is illiterate, you cannot unite the people around Marx. The only thing that can really unite them is nationalism or a religious ethic. . . But the religious leaders don't know how to govern. They will return to their mosques. . ." (*Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood*. [N.Y.: Pantheon Press, 2003] p. 62).

Soon afterward, most of Marjane's parents' leftist friends are arrested, or driven into exile. A few are murdered. Uncle Anoosh is arrested and subsequently executed as a "Russian spy."

While Satrapi portrays her uncle as a naïve romantic, the fact is that the Tudeh Party collaborated with the government and assisted it in repressing the other sectors of the left until the Tudeh Party's main leader Nur Al-Din Kianuri was arrested and imprisoned in 1983.

The November 1979 takeover of the U.S. Embassy and the taking of its staff as hostages by a group of young Islamists play a prominent role in Satrapi's account. She reveals that this was a determinant moment as it galvanized support for the state. Historical facts remind us that government hailed this takeover as an anti-imperialist act. Many Iranians supported it and subsequently voted in favor of a plebiscite, which ratified the constitution of the Islamic Republic.

She further demonstrates the variety of viewpoints inside Iran in her comments on the Iran-Iraq War. The war started in November

1980 with an attack by Saddam Hussein of Iraq, and was met by fierce resistance from Iranians of all political views. By June 1982, the Iraqi army was mostly driven back by Iranian forces. The Iraqi government called for negotiations. The Iranian government refused the offer. It sent youth recruits to run over Saddam Hussein's mines in "human wave" attacks. Saddam Hussein received military support and funds from the United States, the Soviet Union, and several Arab governments. The war continued until August of 1988. Satrapi's character, Marjane, writes: "They[the Iranian government] eventually admitted that the survival of the regime depended on the war. When I think we could have avoided it all. . . It just makes me sick. A million people would still be alive. Naturally the regime became more repressive. In the name of that war, they exterminated the enemy within." (*Ibid.*, pp. 116-117)

THROUGHOUT THIS GRAPHIC NOVEL we see how Satrapi targets dehumanization in general and women's dehumanization in particular. She recounts that many urban Iranian women opposed the imposition of the hijab in 1979. She reveals women's resistance at home, in school, at work, and on the street by recounting stories about herself, her mother, her grandmother, and her classmates. She highlights class differences by telling poignant stories about her family's maid or the way the son of her family maid was given a key to heaven and asked by the government to go to the war-front to run over Iraqi mines. She condemns prejudices held by Persian Iranians toward non-Persian Iranians such as Arabs in scenes where she captures the contemptuous attitude of people from Tehran toward war refugees from Ahvaz and Abadan. She condemns dehumanization wherever she sees it, be it in Iran or in Austria.

In 1984, Marjane's parents send her to Vienna to protect her from the consequences of her rebelliousness. She suddenly has to adjust to a different situation. She no longer has

to wear the hijab or live in fear of being imprisoned for challenging her teachers. She can wear anything she wants. She can read anything she wants. She can date boys, attend parties, and use drugs. However, she feels incredibly lonely because she is often treated as “the other” by her classmates, teachers, and landlords. The only groups of youth who are willing to socialize with her are anarchists, or those who advocate nihilist philosophies. Even among these groups, she feels an outsider. Her nihilist friends who reject the very idea of rationality and human liberation laugh at her commitment to human liberation. Her anarchist friends cannot relate to her deep intellectual curiosity and her experiences in Iran. She is turned off by their sloganeering.

Eventually, Marjane discovers that her boyfriend, who had been her sole source of emotional support, has been having sex with another woman. After breaking up with him and having a fight with her abusive landlord, she lands on the street for several months, becomes homeless, and almost dies of exposure. It is after surviving this experience that she decides to go back to Iran in 1988. Following an unsuccessful attempt to commit suicide in Iran because of her view of herself as a failure, she regains her strength. She studies art at a university and marries a classmate. At this point Satrapi continues to reveal the difficulties of being a college student in Iran in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Marjane also comes to terms with the non-viability of her marriage, a relationship in which there is no communication and shared intellectual understanding. She finally faces the challenge of being a divorced woman in a society that sees a young divorcee as available to any man. In 1994 with the support of her loving parents, she leaves Iran for Paris to study design and animation.

Perhaps two scenes in this work reveal her message of hope and struggle most strongly: During her time in Austria, she engages in a conversation with a nihilist friend who says:

“Life is a void. When man realizes that, he can no longer live. So he invents power games.” Marjane responds: “Bullshit! Life isn’t absurd. Some people give their lives for freedom.” (A slightly different version of this dialog is presented in *Persepolis: The Story of a Return* [N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 2004], p. 37.) Later, in Iran, when she attempts to commit suicide by taking a massive dose of anti-depressants, her character dreams that after her death she has met with God and Karl Marx. In that dream, Marx tells her that “the struggle continues.” God concurs. Marjane wakes up and realizes that she is still alive. She renews her commitment to a meaningful life.

In the spirit of Satrapi’s call for solidarity with Iranians who are willing to give their lives for freedom and a meaningful life, we need to have a better understanding of Iran today.

Much of the internal protest is rooted in Iran’s worsening economic condition. The Iranian government has abandoned any talk of “class balance” and an Islamic Utopia. It has compelled the introduction of some free-market reforms to cut subsidies and price controls.

Ahmadinejad’s competitor, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, who has his own followers, advocates full-scale free-market reforms, which can accelerate the rate of accumulation of capital and invite foreign investment. Rafsanjani is the former president of the country and the current leader of the powerful government Assembly of Experts.

In a recently published book, *Class and Labor in Iran: Did the Revolution Matter?* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2006), the authors Farhad Nomani and Sohrab Behdad argue that the “Achilles Heel” of the Islamic Republic remains unemployment. In a country in which 65 percent of a population of 72 million is under the age of 30, “the best that the overwhelming majority of the youth (‘educated’ or otherwise) can expect would be a working class position. Many will not be able to secure even that. The failed expectations of the youth will

be the major political and social dilemma of the current decade in Iran.” (pp 213-214)

When Nomani and Behdad refer to a working class position, they mean a job that pays \$200 per month in a country in which the unofficial poverty rate is \$600 per month for a family of four. Even those who succeed in getting government white-collar jobs do not make more than \$300 per month. According to some estimates, 90 percent of Iran’s population currently live below the poverty line.

A combination of two factors, first, the consequences of the U.S. led war in Iraq, and second, the failure of United States and other in-

ternational forces to substantially improve life in Afghanistan, have strengthened the hardliners in the Iranian government. However, the hardliners have not been able to put an end to the economic crisis in Iran despite the dramatic increase in oil prices during the past few years. The economic and political crisis continues to deepen while the internal democratic opposition movement continues to struggle. Reading Satrapi’s *Persepolis* and watching the movie, can be good starts on the path to solidarity with the people of Iran.

April 26, 2008

Argentine Workers' Takeover

MICHAEL BUSCH

BEFORE HIS RECENT STINT as intellectual arm candy to Bono on the rock star's crusade to save the world, Jeffrey Sachs made his name as a leading proponent of economic neoliberalism. The basic tenants of this philosophy, collectively derided as the "Washington Consensus," have been credited with exposing developing countries, through the strong arms of the World Bank and IMF, to debilitating predation by multinational corporations.

Indeed, while the wisdom of Washington Consensus wizards like Sachs may have shepherded some developing countries through a successful transition out of communism in the 1990s, in others it dismantled the institutional safeguards against privatized avarice and global recession. Throughout the last decade of the twentieth century, a contagion of crisis swept across the globe. Mexico was first to catch the bug in 1994. East Asian nations fell sick in 1997, followed by Russia a year later. The virus spread next to Brazil in 1999, before laying low the Argentine economy in 2001. In the case of this last country, however, alternative medicine was administered to alleviate the ailment. *Sin Patron*, a new book by the worker-run cooperative of journalists known as Lavaca, documents the treatment.

During the fall of 2001, while much of the world's attention was focused on the nascent War on Terrorism unfolding in Afghanistan, the Southern Cone of South America witnessed the

financial disintegration of a regional juggernaut. If September 11th inaugurated a cycle of corporate opportunism and unmitigated greed in the name of fighting terror, it also marked the

close of a similar cycle carried out in the name of "development" in Argentina. In the decade and a half since the country had emerged from authoritarian military rule, its mar-

kets had been opened by IMF conditionality, and picked clean by foreign investment. As a result, by the time Argentina fell into crisis at the start of the twenty-first century, the country was an emaciated version of its previously robust self.

The seeds of Argentina's financial meltdown were planted in 1991 with the adoption of the "Convertibility Plan." This program fastened the Argentine peso to the American dollar at a one-to-one ratio. On its face, the Convertibility Plan paid immediate dividends. The country finally prevailed in its wrestling match with hyper-inflation, and the dollar-peg provided necessary price stability that led immediately to healthy economic growth rates. Meanwhile, however, Argentina's president, Carlos Menem, spearheaded a campaign of market deregulation, liberalization, and privatization to insure greater rates of productivity and increased international competitiveness. At the same time, he did nothing to stem the rising tides of state spending and institutionalized cronyism. The mixture of Menem's proactive neoliberal policies combined with his blind eye to corruption laid the foundations for turmoil that would come to engulf Argentina in the final months of 2001.

Sin Patron
Lavaca Collective
Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2007
243 pp, \$16

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While the Argentine economy managed to escape the Mexican, Asian, and Russian financial crises relatively unscathed, the Brazilian currency crisis of 1999 brought Buenos Aires to its knees. The peso's parity with the U.S. dollar notwithstanding, Argentina relied primarily on its regional neighbors for most of its trade. Most importantly, the country looked to Brazil to provide the bedrock for its continuing success.

When financial crisis hit Brazil in early 1999, the value of its real plummeted by nearly 40 percent. Suddenly, pesos fixed to increasingly valuable American dollars became a serious liability. As other countries in the region scrambled to brace themselves against shocks from Brazil's faltering economy, however, the Argentine peso remained faithful in its marriage to the American dollar. The result: Argentine exports no longer found favor with foreign trading partners, especially those across the border.

Faced with this problem, the government responded by concocting a convoluted dual-peg exchange system that served primarily to reduce investor confidence in the country's markets. Soon, American dollars were flooding out of the country, sapping Argentina's foreign exchange reserves dry. The run on Argentina's banks prompted the government to freeze all accounts and holdings, which, in turn, catalyzed a groundswell of public dissatisfaction expressed through protests and riots. As the streets exploded into flames and violence, the currency imploded, leaving supermarket shelves empty, businesses bankrupt, and working people without jobs.

Yet as *Sin Patron* highlights, many unemployed Argentines refused to sit still while their country collapsed around them in ruins. Instead,

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they simply returned to work. Throughout the country, abandoned factories and bankrupted businesses were seized by their former employees, and reopened under democratic worker

management. How did they do it? Told almost exclusively through first-person testimonials of the movement workers, *Sin Patron* outlines their two-pronged collective action program. The workers at once navigated the proper institutional channels of the country's courts,

while at the same time, challenged state authority with brave acts of civil disobedience.

From the start, the cooperative movement in Argentina has focused on providing equitable work conditions for its laborers within the confines of national legal restraints.

While their initial seizure of "private property" was technically against the law, the workers did so in the name of another national law that protected a fundamental human right: the right to work. This truth shines light on an appropriately unique twist to the tale told in *Sin Patron*. Unlike other countries, where workers protect their right to work by leaving their workstations in protest, the cooperative workers struck by returning to theirs. Once inside, workers took legal action by quickly organizing themselves into cooperatives.

As *Sin Patron* makes clear, the reasons workers organized into legally recognized cooperatives were both moral and immediately pragmatic. A striking feature of the cooperative movement is its insistence on equal access to democratic participation. As one worker explains it, "We formed the cooperative with the condition of equal wages, making decisions by assembly. We are against the division of manual and intellectual work, we want a rotation of positions, and, above all, the ability to recall our

elected leaders.” At the same time, however, the workers shrewdly leveraged their identities as cooperatives to great economic advantage.

Under Argentine law, cooperative arrangements provide a shield for the workers against incursion of the previous owner’s debts, or legal action connected to the previous ownership’s illegal activities. In other words, the cooperative allows workers a fresh start. In addition, “registering a corporation in Argentine costs a minimum of 300 dollars. A worker cooperative, on the other hand, costs only 45 dollars.” But the legal instruments privileging cooperatives don’t end there. As the Lavaca authors point out, “over time . . . workers also managed to transform their cooperatives into tax shelters, since they are exempt from capital gains taxes and, in many districts, municipal taxes as well.”

Nevertheless, the workers’ willingness to work within the walls of national law did not prevent the courts from attempting to suffocate the movement’s building momentum. In most cases, the workers had their rights to expropriation repeatedly revoked by courts. Workers were physically escorted out of their workplaces, sometimes by ski mask-wearing, shotgun-toting security officers. Says one worker of her eviction, “I thought I was in a movie — I couldn’t believe this was happening. They came in by breaking down the doors with their rifle butts — it was pretty dramatic . . . Walking out of the factory, it was like a militarized zone — incredible. That’s when they charged us with trespassing and theft, and charged a fine of 50,000 pesos.”

These setbacks, however, did not shake the workers’ resolve to lay claim to what was rightfully theirs. Confronted with the refusal of the state to let them work their jobs, some hit the streets, setting up makeshift living quarters outside their companies, distributing literature to passersby on sidewalks, and lobbying local politicians for support. Others engaged in more confrontational resistance: intimidating private security guards with their power in numbers,

busting open locks on factory doors and retaking their plants by force. In sum, the workers demonstrated an unyielding willingness to carry on the fight until their objectives were met. Eventually, the state surrendered, allowing workers provisional control over their expropriated companies.

A PARTICULARLY PROMISING FEATURE of Argentina’s emerging cooperative labor movement is the overwhelming presence of strong women in the vanguard. This shouldn’t be surprising. Many of Argentina’s industrial factories were predominantly staffed by women. Whether negotiating with the state, rallying their fellow workers into action during moments of low morale, or leading the charge into an often violent political fray, women are the lead actors in the cooperative drama. Yet leadership demands considerable risks, as one woman makes clear in a typically arresting testimonial describing the early days of expropriation:

We were negotiating with the minister. But then there wasn’t anything left to discuss. The chief of police told us that we couldn’t go in, not even to negotiate. That made me feel so angry — impotent . . . I was holding onto the fence and Juanita, Estela, and Delia Figueroa were yelling at me, “Let’s go in, let’s go in!” I turned around and snapped at them, asked if they really wanted to go in. When they answered yes I turned back around and pushed the fence. I latched on to three campeneras who had stepped forward and we moved ahead. It was a moment of anger — a lightning bolt. When the fence fell I saw the police lift their rifles and take aim. Then they started shooting. I thought, “They’re going to kill us, right here.”

That the threat of state violence against the workers maintains a constant presence in all the narratives recorded in *Sin Patron* testifies to the legacy of military rule still haunting Argentine society. The country’s failure to institute democratic policing in the wake of an era defined by state-sponsored human rights violations invests

the workers' struggle with an added dimension of danger and heroism. After being arrested for trespassing on her former workplace, one worker remembers being escorted from the building by

The remarkable fact remains that,
in Argentina, not a single
reclaimed company has gone out
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"normal cops in unmarked cars. While I was in the car, I was mentally saying goodbye to everything . . . The car kept going and going . . . I even got to the point of thinking 'Am I going to be just one more missing person?'"

In the face of potential violence at the hands of the state, legal obfuscation from the courts, and attempts at cooption by leftist political parties, the cooperatives nevertheless continued to fight for their basic right to work. Their efforts have not gone unrewarded. There are currently almost two hundred recovered businesses under worker management in Argentina, employing nearly 20,000 citizens who would otherwise be out of a job. And they make money. One man notes that the expropriated companies are able to attract their old clients "without help, without subsidies, pure sweat." Lavaca echoes his claim. "Many of the businesses work with the cooperatives," it writes, "because they find in them a seriousness and efficiency that doesn't exist among the entrepreneurs bent on asset stripping." The remarkable fact remains that, in Argentina, not a single reclaimed company has gone out of business since 2001.

And while the aggregate numbers of reclaimed businesses and the workers they employ may be small, their power is not to be underestimated. Candido, a worker in the Chilavert plant, notes that while the expropriated businesses "are a small speck within the

Argentine economic universe," he understands that his movement is "a prestigious little speck. Not all who have a lot of power have prestige." And as Naomi Klein points out in her forward to the book, it's precisely this prestige that has produced ripples of change beyond the borders of Argentina. "These struggles have had a tremendous impact on the imaginations of activists around the world . . . there is [now] a renewed interest in democratic workplaces from Durban to Melbourne to New Orleans."

Closer to home, *Sin Patron* demonstrates that the cooperative movement's success heralds more immediately the birth of an exciting new brand of politics emerging in Latin America. In contrast to the top-down models of social change advocated by the likes of Hugo Chavez to the north, self-determined workers in Argentina have rejected the state as a go-between in their struggle against the capitalist consensus. Instead, they pursue a cutting-edge blend of strategies at the grass-roots which shatter the altar of private property at which traditional capitalists worship. As they reclaim their identities, and put food on their household tables, the workers force ideology and party politics to the back seat.

To be sure, parties aren't completely absent from the scene. But their political agendas are viewed with skepticism by cooperative members. According to one cooperative spokesman, "Leftist parties supported us during difficult times, but we didn't let that confuse us, nor did we let ourselves become directly influenced." Another worker points out that "There's a leftist leadership here, that there's opposition to the capitalist system. But I think the worst thing that could happen would be for this to turn into something sectarian or partisan."

That the Argentine expropriation experience inherently rejects the traditional place of party politics in its struggle against the state raises the most troubling questions about the nascent movement. While the legacy of corruption and political opportunism staining tradi-

tional parties of the Argentine Left has clearly stamped itself onto the minds of expropriated workers, the absence of a generalized movement challenging the social-neo-liberal order fostered by the state could threaten any chances at enduring progress. Indeed, social movements need an outside source of leadership, most frequently in the form of a party, to effect state transformation.

But for the moment, it is far from clear that the collectives seek such change. In fact, they resemble what Barrington Moore has labeled “revolutionary crowds” which he defines as “loosely organized . . . forms of collective human behavior that arise outside of the normal institutional structure.” Instead of acting in the name of major sociopolitical transformation, these groups come together to “revive a social contract that had been violated,” fighting for what James C. Scott has argued are the “rather mundane, if vital, objectives” of everyday survival. Because revolutionary crowds are highly autonomous, they create their own leaders independent of organized politics, and become therefore suspicious of outside sources of lead-

ership. Surely parties that are sensitive to the workers’ sentiments will serve as strategic leaders in future struggles. But thus far, the Argentine Left has failed to demonstrate the awareness — to say nothing of ethical discipline — necessary to assert vanguard leadership.

As the movement grows in size and scope, however, the tension between workers and organized politics will surely need to be reconciled. Nevertheless, in the meantime it seems clear where the majority of collective membership stands in relation to the parties in Argentina. As Alberto Esparza, a laborer at the FaSinPat plant (short for *Fabrica Sin Patron*, or “Factory Without a Boss”) says,

One can’t detach oneself from society and have a message demanding social justice . . . You know, children, students come here and ask how we did this. The first thing we did was break the law. And I like to explain it in my own words. Being in a party is simple because you’re tied to a set of statements the party defines, and that’s it. What we do here is much richer, where we debate, reach agreements, and know whose interests we defend.

Racial Knowledge

The Race Relations Paradigm, Assimilation, and the Challenge to Liberal Multiculturalism

SUNDIATA CHA-JUA

IN *RACE RELATIONS*, Stephen Steinberg has written a passionate, personal, and devastating critique of the race relation paradigm,* and perhaps more important, of sociology, the academic discipline that foisted that conceptual mystification upon American society. With *Race Relations*, Steinberg has come full circle, completing the meditation he began on the race relations paradigm in the prologue to his awarding winning book, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy* (1995). The new work is a brilliant illustration of the sociology of knowledge. Steinberg divides *Race Relations* into four parts. The first, also a prologue, is a brief but critical personal reflection on his intriguing encounter with Gunnar Myrdal. His questioning of the diametrically opposite fates of Myrdal and Oliver C. Cox, his harshest critic, sets the stage for his engagement with Robert Ezra Park and “the origins and ideological underpinnings of the race relations paradigm.” The second chapter, termed “the epistemology of ignorance” extends Steinberg’s interrogation of Robert Ezra Park’s development of the race relations paradigm and its implications for the discipline of sociology. This brings us to his third and final chapter, in which he deconstructs ethnicity, the melting pot thesis, and liberal multiculturalism. In an amazingly honest and humble conclusion, Steinberg adumbrates

Race Relations: A Critique

STEPHEN STEINBERG

Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press
2007, 194 pp, \$17.95

why he resisted the temptation to delineate an alternative to the race relations paradigm. A fresh and fascinating stylistic feature is the inclusion of italicized asides in which Steinberg attempts to create a more candid dialogue with the reader. What does this all add up to? What is at stake? In my humble opinion, this is a potent work that should be the last word on the race relations paradigm. It should inspire scholars to henceforth, in Marx’s pertinent phrases, consign the race relations paradigm to the dustbin of history where it can receive its final commentary from the gnawing criticism of the rats.

Steinberg establishes his triple mission in the prologue. It is here that he posits his critique of the race relations model, recovers the voice of Oliver C. Cox, who stood in for a more general rehabilitation of marginalized Black radical voices and Marxism, and launches his critical assessment of the discipline of sociology. Building on a criticism Myrdal made of a psychologist during weekly seminars as part of the project, *American Dilemma Revisited*, Steinberg asks three interrelated questions that get to the heart of his project: Was American sociology preoccupied with the minutiae and superficialities of race? What role did sociol-

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*Park’s students developed the race relations paradigm from his impressions and intuitions into theoretical constructs such as the race relations cycle (contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation). The theory ostensibly examined the interaction between different racial groups, but it was ahistorical, mechanistic and teleological, as it proposed the ultimate conquest and assimilation of “primitive races” (Africans, Asians, and indigenous people) by “civilized races,” Europeans.

ogy play in the Civil Rights revolution? And more pointedly, What did sociology do while Rome burned?"

In the first chapter, he answers these questions. He begins his response by juxtaposing the real world events of 1962-1963 with Everett Hughes' 1963 Presidential address, "Race Relations and the Sociological Imagination" to the American Sociological Association. Steinberg places Hughes' address in its sociohistorical context, 1962-63. This was a moment in which John F. Kennedy's Administration failed to submit civil rights legislation, and his initial proposal to create a cabinet-level Department of Urban Affairs was defeated. At this time we witnessed the African-American led March on Washington; the civil rights demonstrations at construction sites in New York City; and the massive "Freedom Day" Black student strike in Chicago. Hughes queried, "Why did social scientists — sociologists in particular — not foresee the explosion of collective action of Negro Americans toward immediate full integration into American society?" Steinberg replies by challenging the race relation paradigm and the myth of objectivity, the subjects of the first chapter of this incisive monograph.

What is the connection between the race relations paradigm and the myth of objectivity? Here Steinberg is at his best in showing how these two concepts and practices intertwined to reinforce the hegemony of the racist status quo. Using the career of Park, the man who created the race relations paradigm, Steinberg brilliantly demonstrates the intellectually devastating impact the myth of objectivity had on Park's scholarship. Park began his career as a passionate journalist railing against King Leopold's atrocities in the Belgian Congo. Yet, after a decade working as publicist for the wizard of Tuskegee, Booker T. Washington, and after striking a mentorship arrangement with W.I. Thomas (the first person to receive a Ph.D. from the University of Chicago's Department of Sociology) Park transformed himself into a

detached academic. Now the aloof scholar isolated from and disinterested in social reform movements, Park constructed a paradigm, a subfield, whose very name and theory obfuscated the real relationship between blacks and whites, the social relations of racial oppression.

Here Steinberg is at his best in showing how these two concepts and practices [the race relations paradigm and the myth of objectivity] intertwined to reinforce the hegemony of the racist status quo.

It is here that Steinberg reveals Park's paradigm as a handmaiden to the myth of objectivity. His deconstruction of the implied "value neutrality" of the myth of objectivity and the race relations cycle leads him to two earth shattering conclusions. First, the myth of objectivity served to exclude social reformers and radicals from the emerging discipline and to drive those who wished to engage in reformist or revolutionary praxis from it. Sociology served the capitalist class, who composed the boards of trustees of research universities and the foundations that funded them. For those who remain naïve, he offers several examples, though none as compelling as the case of Edward Bemis' dismissal from the famed University of Chicago's Sociology Department. Summing up the relationship between the myth of objectivity and the study of race in the United States, Steinberg states, "We can say with only slight exaggeration that American sociology had its roots in an effort to provide erudite justification for racial hierarchy." (p. 50) Second, as Steinberg argues, the euphemisms that compose the four stages of Park's race relations cycle: contact,

competition, accommodation, and assimilation are imbricated with the logic of imperialism. Nonetheless, Park's theory played both a progressive and reactionary role in U.S. racial formation. Perceptively, assessing the paradigm's historic role, Steinberg states:

Thus, the notable contribution of the Chicago school of race relations was to define the lower races in terms of culture rather than genes. Against the background of scientific racism, this was a major and significant theoretical turn, but its insidious function was to provide an updated and more creditable ideological rationale for racial hierarchy and for imperialism itself.

The race relations paradigm made three contributions to racial oppression. It ushered out the crude and disintegrating biological rationale that was embedded in scientific racism. Its acceptance, with its emphasis on political economy, white supremacy, and racial violence, prevented the recognition of a rival materialist paradigm represented by Marxism and its reverberations, particularly the race conscious Black neo-Marxism articulated by W.E.B. Du Bois, C.L.R. James, Claudia Jones, and Langston Hughes. Finally, by substituting culture for genetics, the race relations paradigm provided a less odious racist ideology, one that corresponded better with the emerging corporate political economy. For these reasons, I do not buy Steinberg's argument that the race relations paradigm produced an "epistemology of ignorance," even one that in his words "is not innocent of politics." It is important to note that the race relations paradigm did not become hegemonic until the 1950s. Therefore, I think, Park's model provided new but still reassuring racial knowledge and recast racist fictions, rooted in the new social sciences rather than the old physical sciences that buttressed a decaying ideological rationale for racial oppression and imperialism, at a moment when colonialism, foreign and domestic, was under serious assault.

PERHAPS THE MOST INTRIGUING CHAPTER is his last, "Ethnicity: The Epistemology of Wishful Thinking." In the book's most important chapter, Steinberg makes the difficult move of challenging the new orthodoxies of white and multicultural liberal and left scholars. First, he explodes the new myths perpetuated by a tendency in "whiteness studies" to conflate southern and eastern European immigrants' status as "racial others" with the roles and representations of what he terms "colonized minorities," African-Americans, Native Americans, Chicanos, and Asian-Americans. Here Steinberg departs from the ideas of his mentor, Robert Blauner, who at best considered most Asian-Americans as semi-colonial, though largely immigrants. I would not only dispute the colonized status of Asian-Americans but that of all Latino/as except Puerto Ricans and Chicanos, the descendants of the Mexicans incorporated into the United States by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildado. Steinberg smartly differentiates between the condition and position of "the races of Europe" and that of what Du Bois called "the darker races."¹

In one of his most controversial arguments, Steinberg posits that looking back from the vantage point of the early 21st century, Nathan Glazer's and Daniel Patrick Moynihan's melting pot thesis probably accurately accounted for the experiences of varied European immigrants. At the end of the day, this is of course the main point of whiteness studies, especially the critical school led by David Roediger. This revelation, however, is his penultimate claim. His ultimate argument for contemporary times concerns his analysis of the new immigrants' assimilation into whiteness and his deconstruction of liberal-left multiculturalism.

The big news in Steinberg's study is his challenge to the new multicultural people of color orthodoxy. Steinberg's third chapter is full of incendiary transgressive material. Like Herbert Gans, Steinberg sees the U.S. racial formation reconfiguring into a dual hierarchy

with groups divided on a non-black/black axis and classified on a continuum of blackness or more appropriately St. Clair Drake's concept of "Negroidness." He believes that two melting pots are operative in the U.S., one in which Asian Americans and light-skinned Latino/as regardless of national origin are slowly but surely being assimilated into whiteness; and one in which people of African descent are undergoing a contemporary creolization process. Steinberg's evidence is suggestive, but not conclusive. Nevertheless, those invested in progressive social transformation, especially Black radicals, ignore his evidence and explanation at their own peril. Steinberg presents four factors, which suggest that Asian-Americans and light-skinned Latino/as are being assimilated into whiteness, as were European ethnic groups before them, although according to him, the process is recurring at a faster pace. First, he cites studies that indicate that neither Asian-Americans nor Latino/as identify as such but by their country of origin. Moreover, other studies have found that youth from both "groups" overwhelmingly prefer "same ethnic-peers" (p. 125).

Second, citing several studies, he demonstrates that the tendency of both Latino/a and Asian immigrants is for a rapid and "pronounced tendency toward English monolingualism by the third generation (p. 131). For instance, David Lopez found that 57 percent of third-generation Latinos "spoke only English at home." Richard Alba et al found that by 1970, more than 90 percent of third generation persons of German, Italian, and Polish descent were monolingual English speakers, and they discovered that the same dynamic was also true for third generation persons of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Filipino descent. They also found that by the third generation 78 percent of Cubans, 64 percent of Mexicans, and 52 percent of Dominicans spoke only English at home (130-31, 173, n.68). Steinberg argues that this rapid loss of language has tremendous ramifications for these groups' abilities to retain dis-

tinct identities in the crushing crucible of Americanization.

His third category, marriage, is significant for two reasons. First, the fact that when Asians or Latino/as marry outside their own nationality/ethnicity, they tend to marry whites rather than a member of another Asian or Latino/a nationality/ethnicity. This constitutes a major challenge to arguments for Asian-American and Latino/a ethno-genesis. Forty percent of the children of Asian immigrants and a third of U.S. born Latino/as between age 25 and 34 marry non-Latino whites. The specific nationality/ethnicity figures are quite shocking — 72 percent of Koreans, 46 percent of Chinese, 31 percent of Japanese, 59 percent of Cubans, and 79 percent for Central Americans (132-33). Second, the true import of these figures can only be grasped when they are compared with the figures of exogamy among Blacks, which are extremely low — 6 percent for men and 2 percent for women. Even when low marriage rates are accounted for, these differences are striking. They suggest that by and large only other blacks — West Indians and Africans — find African-Americans worth marrying. (135, 141)

Steinberg's fourth final piece of evidence concerns naming. For him, the first name constitutes "the earliest indicator of assimilation." Several studies of Asian-American and Latino/a naming patterns, for both boys and girls, revealed a preference for Anglo, rather than Asian or Spanish first names. Steinberg sees the naming practices of Asian-Americans and Latino/as as indicators that they are in the process of blending into white America. Blacks and Native Americans remain the exceptions to this assimilating process.

Not surprisingly, the naming practices of Blacks, particularly African-Americans, suggest that they are consciously selecting names that distinguish their children from white Americans. Though often the butt of jokes, the phonetic names African-Americans often give their children serve to highlight their uniqueness as

individuals and their nationality/ethnic distinctiveness. In addition to naming, Steinberg points to Blacks' preservation of a "dialect" by which he means African American Vernacular English. However, his point is clear: Blacks have created and recreated a distinct culture, which has been extraordinarily influential in shaping U.S. popular culture. Nevertheless, Steinberg's message is clear: African-Americans (and Native Americans) represent exceptions to the U.S. assimilation process; though real, the melting pot is "a racist formation, divided along racial lines." (p. 141)

SURPRISINGLY, AFTER OPENING PANDORA'S box, Steinberg fails to explore the implications of his argument for multiracial coalitional politics. The political implications are knotty, in fact frightening. I think Steinberg is right, though he ignores counter trends among Asian-Americans and especially Latino/as. For instance, what does the development of Spanglish and the continued high rates of residential and school segregation among Latino/as suggest? Certainly, Steinberg would not suggest that activists abandon multiracial coalitional politics. Yet, activists cannot ignore the trend lines toward the reconfiguration of a new racial formation in which most Asians and light-skinned Latino/as are incorporated into whiteness. Americanization does appear to be a long process acting over two to three generations. In accordance with these trends, common sense and history suggest that it will take white Americans some time to acclimate to a new racial formation in which visibly brown Asians and Latino/as are accepted into the fraternity of whiteness. Efforts toward building multiracial alliances should be increased before the processes of assimilation overwhelm the residues of racial oppression and ethnic culture among Asians and Latino/as. In the meantime, Black

activists might additionally want to refine their efforts at multiracial coalitional politics by targeting the darker, poorer and more alienated Asian and Latino/as nationalities for collective struggle.

In conclusion, Stephen Steinberg has written another impressive work. However, there are some minor flaws. In addition to quibbling over whether he should have posed an alternative paradigm to the race relations model (he uses the concept racial oppression and implies support for the internal colonial thesis) or arguing that as an activist intellectual he is obligated to address the political implications of his analysis, there is not much to criticize here. Oh, he gets a few facts wrong; he confused the first (1916) and the second (1933) Amenia conferences. And for some reason, he seems attached to the Civil Rights movement and by its curious absence, perhaps hostile to the Black Power movement (excepting its theoretical innovation, institutional racism). It is of course striking that he has not adopted the new language — Black liberation movement, Black freedom struggles, etc. Nevertheless, by demolishing the race relations paradigm, Stephen Steinberg has made a seminal contribution to the study of race and racial oppression in the United States.³

NOTES

1. Robert Blauner, "Colonized and Immigrant Minorities" in *Still The Big News: Racial Oppression in America* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple U. Press, 2001) 44-63.
2. Herbert J. Gans, "The Possibility of a New Racial Hierarchy in the Twenty-first-century United States," chapter in David R. Grusky (ed.), *Social Stratification: Class, Race, and Gender in Sociological Perspective* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001) 642-50; St. Clair Drake, *Black Folk: Here and There*, Vol. 1 (Los Angeles: U. of California, Center for Afro Studies, 1987), 13-14.
3. Sundiata Keita Cha-Jua and Clarence E. Lang, "The 'Long Movement' as Vampire: Temporal and Spatial Fallacies in *Recent Black Freedom Studies*" *Journal of African American History*, Vol. 92, No. 2 (Spring 2007), 265-88.

Terrorism and Modernity

LOUIS F. COOPER

THE CURRENT HIERARCHICAL WORLD order is a three-legged stool. The legs are: the global capitalist economy; the system of juridically equal, but actually unequal, sovereign states; and a network of rules and institutions that grease the wheels and cushion the effect of shocks and crises. The phenomenon of “revolutionary Islam” or “radical Islamism” represents a serious challenge to this whole structure, not only because of the means it employs but also because it rejects so uncompromisingly the system’s ideological underpinnings. Al-Qaeda is not a dissatisfied state that wants to rise in the international pecking order; rather it aims at a replacement of that order with something entirely different (and not, needless to say, more attractive). Yet despite the fundamental challenge posed by al-Qaeda and similar groups, the sources of their behavior remain poorly understood in many quarters, including the highest levels of the U.S. government. Such, at least, is Michael Mazarr’s contention in *Unmodern Men in the Modern World*.

Mazarr, who teaches at the U.S. National War College, is no leftist, nor is he well-versed in the canonical texts of the socialist tradition (at one point he refers to the line “all that is solid melts into air” without seeming to realize that it comes from *The Communist Manifesto*). But it would be a mistake for leftists to dismiss his book on these grounds. Mazarr is highly critical of the Bush administration’s “war on

terror,” maintaining that it rests on a simplistic view of the adversaries’ motives and a failure to consider the social and psychological forces propelling al-Qaeda. His argument is clearly articulated and is rooted in a comparative historical analysis of “radical Islamism” that draws on a range of scholarly work by social theorists and historians, as well as

students of Islam.

The book’s thesis is that radical Islamism is “the latest in a series of violent reactions against the process and outcomes of modernization and modernity” (p. 2). Mazarr uses “modernization” as a general label for social and cultural changes that erode tradition, expand the range of personal choice, and accelerate urbanization. These forces undermine inherited structures and narratives of meaning, “washing over traditional societies like a cultural tsunami” (p. 57) and creating feelings of fear, alienation, and loss of control. When accompanied by economic crisis, failed development efforts, and the humiliation of military or diplomatic defeat, such pressures, he argues, trigger extreme and often violent responses.

Anti-modern movements, Mazarr writes, provide an escape from “psychological unmooredness” by holding out “the promise of a reconstructed identity” (p. 68). At the same time, these movements’ expressed hatred of modernity conceals a “sublimated desire” or an “unrequited longing” for its benefits (p. 72). This partly explains why anti-modern movements are contradictory, enlisting current technologies (such as the Internet) and modern ideas (such

Unmodern Men in the Modern World: Radical Islam, Terrorism, and the War on Modernity

BY MICHAEL J. MAZARR

Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
2007, 312 pp., \$75.00 cloth, \$19.99 paper

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as the vanguard party) in the service of reactionary or dystopian goals.

To support this picture, Mazarr examines four settings in which such movements arose:

The carriers of anti-modernist
notions have often been young
idealists.

Germany and Japan in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; Russia in the last decades of the tsarist regime; and parts of the contemporary Muslim world, particularly the Middle East. While acknowledging the important differences among Nazism, Russian populism, Japanese nationalism, and radical Islamism, Mazarr contends that they share similar ideological elements: glorification of an idealized past, exaltation of a “pure” or “true” national or religious community, and a search for enemies that have deflected the community from its rightful path of glory. He claims that this generic anti-modern ideology owes much to romanticism and existentialism.

The carriers of anti-modernist notions have often been young idealists, who “feel most keenly the sting of ineffectiveness of their society” (p. 118) and whose zeal for grand theories can turn, under the right conditions, into “arrogant nihilism” (p. 192). Thus in late nineteenth-century Russia, Mazarr observes, disappointment with incomplete or failed Westernization led some members of the intelligentsia to embrace violence, “culminating in the assassination of Tsar Alexander II [in 1881] and his successor’s brutal autocratic reaction” (p. 192). In the Muslim context, intellectuals such as Sayyid Qutb (1906–1966) heavily influenced al-Qaeda and its precursors.

Mazarr argues that appreciating the intellectual, ideological, and psychological roots of anti-modernism is essential for crafting a more

effective policy against terrorism.

After 9/11, he suggests, the U.S. military response played into al-Qaeda’s hands by giving it the apocalyptic struggle it had been seeking (p. 53). If radical Islamism is partly a response to humiliation, then a strategy which, intentionally or otherwise, further humiliates the Muslim world “amounts to nothing but self-gratifying — and self-destructive — madness” (p. 204). Acknowledging that “the hard core of terrorist disciples” must be dealt with by force (p. 215), he argues that the West generally should promote engagement rather than confrontation: demilitarize the conflict, isolate violent from non-violent radicals, develop more joint initiatives with Muslim states, and help create alternative routes to social change.

These recommendations are sensible, but the analysis that precedes them has some limitations. First, although he discusses the “price” of modernization, Mazarr focuses on the psychic burdens it imposes on individuals; he tends to downplay the undesirable societal consequences of even competently managed modernization. Third World mega-cities, even in relatively successful modernizing countries, present a combination of stark inequalities, deprivation, and looming environmental catastrophe. If this is what modernization or globalization portends in its supposedly successful form, it is no wonder that it provokes strong reactions, both among the destitute and those who are somewhat more fortunate. In order to draw the sting of the anti-modernist critique, it is not enough to put “radical anti-modernists” on the couch and trace the sources of their behavior to anomie and the failures of some societies to “manage” modernization properly. Rather, the doctor also must look inward: Modernity must reform itself and make the prospect it offers more just, egalitarian, rational, sustainable, and appealing. A neoliberal form of modernization designed primarily to benefit transnational corporations will necessarily fall short in these respects.

Then there is the issue of gender. Anti-modernism, according to Mazarr, “tends toward the patriarchal . . . it broadcasts images of the rugged *man* safeguarding the community and its women and children” (p. 164). However, Mazarr’s own analysis — not to mention his title, borrowed (he tells us) from Ralf Dahrendorf — also tends, it could be argued, toward the patriarchal. Radical anti-modern movements may “have been overwhelmingly male” (p. 164), and it may even be the case, though it seems unlikely, that “there is something uniquely male in obsessive meaning-seek-

ing to the point of fanaticism” (p. 187). Nonetheless, women have played roles in the movements at issue, and Mazarr might usefully have given those roles some attention.

In sum, Mazarr combines a comparative historical analysis of modernization and globalization with a critique of U.S. policy in the “war on terror.” He gives short shrift to economic forces and specifically to the role of transnational capital. Nonetheless, within its limits, *Unmodern Men in the Modern World* is a lucid exploration of modernization and its discontents.

The Crisis in Organized Labor

As Viewed from the Inside and Out

STEVE EARLY

ALTHOUGH HE LOOKS OLD AND TIRED today, AFL-CIO president John Sweeney was once hailed as a dynamic reformer, with a sharp eye for new talent. One of the first things he did, after getting elected in 1995, was appoint former sixties' radicals to be federation field reps and department heads. In Washington, D.C. and around the country, Sweeney's "New Voice" administration quickly filled up with energetic ex-staffers of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), his own union. Among them were veterans of campus and community organizing, the civil rights and black power movements, feminism, and Vietnam-era anti-war activity. On the labor left, no single personnel decision by Sweeney raised higher hopes and expectations than Bill Fletcher being named education director (a job he had held, under Sweeney, at SEIU previously).

Bay Area labor journalist David Bacon was still in awe of Fletcher's "key decision maker" role as Sweeney's assistant when he interviewed him for *The Progressive* in 2000. Bacon recounted Fletcher's background as an African-American activist and "self-described socialist," with ties to the Black Radical Congress and

Marxist journal *Monthly Review*. Drawing on his own history as "a left-wing organizer," Bacon recalled the political hostility of AFL-CIO

operatives during the era of George Meany and Lane Kirkland, Sweeney's conservative predecessors. "With Fletcher," he wrote, "I felt as though I was talking to someone from the same movement and history I've lived myself." Concluded Bacon: "Times have changed."

Not long after this interview appeared, times changed again. Fletcher was purged from his post and exiled to Silver Spring, Maryland, where he toiled briefly at the AFL's George Meany Center. Then, he left organized labor altogether, for half a decade, to replace anti-apartheid campaigner Randall Robinson as president of TransAfrica Forum. After that, Fletcher taught labor studies in New York City and began work with co-author Fernando Gapsin, a well-known West Coast Chicano labor activist, on a critique of organized labor during the Sweeney era and earlier periods, which has now been published by University of California Press. Their collaborative effort — *Solidarity Divided* — is quite unlike the usual "tell-all" tome by a presidential appointee who has quit the White House staff or been dropped from the Cabinet. In fact, we never do learn what personal falling out with Sweeney — or political conflicts with his real inner circle — led Fletcher to be pushed out the door of the "House of Labor." (In 2007, he was finally able to return, as a headquarters staffer for the American Federation of Government Employ-

Solidarity Divided: The Crisis in Organized Labor and A New Path Toward Social Justice

BILL FLETCHER AND
FERNANDO GAPASIN

Berkeley, CA: University of California
Press, 2008
320 pp, \$24.95

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ees.) Instead, we get a thoughtful, analytical overview of recent developments in American labor, and much of its earlier history as well.

But, as a practical “guide for those seeking to reconstitute a [labor-based] Left and build a globally conscious social justice unionism in the U.S.,” the book contains many curious omissions. In fact, *Solidarity Divided* is far more de-

tached (and lacking in specificity) than one might expect from authors long engaged in day-to-day trade union work and left-wing politics.

The book’s report card on Sweeney is, in contrast, quite detailed and displays little of Fletcher’s previous bullishness about his boss (before he left his employ). In a *Monthly Review* article published in the summer of 2000 — while Fletcher was still at the AFL — he chided other labor radicals for their skepticism about “New Voice reforms.” He accused “this grouching element” of being deficient in both theory and practice” because they were prone to “simply criticizing whatever initiatives come from labor’s leadership.” Instead, Fletcher argued, the labor left should “examine and organize around the inner dynamics of the trade union movement.” He urged leftists to “interact with the New Voice leadership . . . on the basis of a united front, offering ‘critical support’ for Sweeney” and guarding against the AFL-CIO’s “staunchly right-wing elements who would like nothing better than to regain their power.”

Eight years later, those “staunchly right wing elements” no longer seem to be lurking in the wings, plotting a comeback. Rather, it’s Sweeney himself, now in his mid-70s, who has become part of the problem. By hanging on to his job long past his once promised retirement age — surrounded by the same tight-knit circle

of former SEIU staffers who gave Fletcher the heave-ho — Sweeney helped create a new status quo at the AFL-

CIO, which led some unions to question why they still needed to be part of it. In 2005, the frustration and/or complaints of seven disgruntled affiliates reached the boiling point. The result was Change To Win (CTW), a rival labor

federation spearheaded by Sweeney’s own alma mater, SEIU.

Due to UPIU leadership pressure
for a contract settlement — on
almost any terms — “no significant
support came from the national
AFL-CIO, despite promises, implied
and explicit.”

IN *SOLIDARITY DIVIDED*, Fletcher and Gapasin express equal dissatisfaction with “the inner dynamics” of both CTW and the AFL-CIO. The authors first compile a stinging critique of the latter under Sweeney. We learn now, for example, that his “reform efforts seemed to be running out of steam” as early as 1998. The AFL-CIO president was already unable or unwilling to “replicate the exciting first months of his tenure” and “fell back into the consensus-building mode with which he seemed most comfortable.” What Fletcher and Gapasin describe as “the essential conservatism of the Sweeney approach toward change” had negative consequences in a number of areas. Even in the early days of his presidency — when Sweeney inherited the challenge of providing stronger strike support — the “new” AFL-CIO reneged on commitments made to locked-out members of United Paper Workers Union Local 7837 at A.E. Staley Co., in Decatur, Illinois, scene of a long-running community-wide conflict.

As the authors note, the Decatur workers and their supporters “expected the New Voice team to champion their cause,” but “they were to be disappointed” instead. Due to UPIU leadership pressure for a contract settlement — on

almost any terms — “no significant support came from the national AFL-CIO, despite promises, implied and explicit.” The Staley dispute “ended in defeat,” as did the Detroit newspaper strike, a multi-union fight that also “overlapped Sweeney’s assumption of office” and became another “missed opportunity” for “mobilizing the union movement” around key “mass struggles.”

Even in the areas of education and organizing — where Sweeney initially got high marks from most observers — the authors find deeper commitment lacking. One of Fletcher’s first projects was creating “a member focused economics education program.”

Common Sense Economics . . . was conceived as a means of speaking about capitalism, class, and ultimately, the importance of new organizing and new trade unionism. Piloted in 1997, it received rave reviews; since then, insufficient usage and engagement by the national AFL-CIO and its affiliates have undermined the achievement of the [program’s] original objectives.

On the organizing front, Fletcher and Gapasin recount the AFL’s short-lived rallying of its staff on behalf of the United Farm Workers. By 1997, this once vibrant union “was a shadow of what it had been in the 1970s.” Its weak infrastructure was, according to the authors, a legacy of internal purges conducted when union founder Cesar Chavez turned dictatorial and “eliminated many of his Left-leaning supporters, leaders, and staff, including numerous veterans who had led previous UFW campaigns.”

Nevertheless, Sweeney’s Washington brain trust decided that “mobilizing major support” for California strawberry worker organizing would demonstrate the AFL-CIO’s commitment to low-wage immigrant workers — and serve as a much-publicized “coming-out party” for its revived Organizing and Field Mobilization Departments. Despite initial enthusiasm, this heavily-funded effort “unraveled” within a

few months, as the UFW drive “seemed to disintegrate.” According to the authors, the cause of farm workers—as re-marketed by New Voices in the late 1990s — “did not gel as a social movement.” Lacking an effective strategy and “the long-term commitment necessary to organize strawberry workers . . . in a campaign that was essentially a major rebuilding effort,” AFL staffers soon moved on to other projects. (In 2005, an ungrateful and/or resentful UFW quit the federation to join Change to Win.)

Reflecting their own political orientation (and organizational ties), the authors fault the AFL for not tackling the larger challenge of organizing the Sunbelt. They note that, “during its first five years in office, the Sweeney administration put forth rhetoric about organizing the South, but it accomplished little overall.” Even an effort to just study the problem and begin outreach to potentially supportive “community-based organizations . . . failed and simply disappeared into the wind.” Meanwhile, on another (and related) issue of concern to the authors — racism — *Solidarity Divided* accuses Sweeney of dropping the ball when the federation was asked to participate in a presidential Commission on Race. “The AFL-CIO took no initiative to support the Commission,” created in 1997 to promote a “national dialogue” about race relations. The authors argue that the panel could have “advanced working people’s interests” by holding “hearings around the U.S. in union halls and community centers” about discrimination in jobs, housing, and health care.

Solidarity Divided also describes, in some detail, how the “new” AFL-CIO maintained “a nearly uncritical relationship with the Democratic Party.” Bill Clinton’s 1996 repeal of welfare was, the authors say, “a de facto Republican initiative and should have been attacked for what it represents.” Instead, “the AFL-CIO took a pass” and did nothing to defend “the poorest sections of the working class.” Two years later, “in keeping with its alliance with Clinton, the AFL-CIO took the position that

the World Trade Organization (WTO) could and should be reformed”—on the eve of anti-globalization protests in Seattle where demonstrators were seeking to “sink or shrink” the WTO. Across the board, Fletcher and Gapasin find, the federation failed “to offer badly needed criticisms of the economic policies of the [Clinton] administration.”

In 2000, lack of popular enthusiasm for Clinton heir Al Gore—as evidenced by some small labor defections to the Nader camp—led to the disastrous reign of George W. Bush. Further union woes ensued after 9/11. Soon, “the strategic and policy paralysis of the AFL-CIO had become so clear that the ties binding the union movement started to unravel.” Writing two years after the 2005 organizational split which followed, Fletcher and Gapasin “can identify very little significant change in organized labor”—notwithstanding the many PR claims of CTW (which lead some to call it “Change To Spin”). Initially, one of the biggest fears of the authors (and others) was that feuding national federations might disrupt promising new work by the CLCs—state and local central labor councils. *Solidarity Divided* cites “research by Gapasin for the AFL-CIO” showing that some CLCs “have transformed the labor movement in their communities” (while others have just displayed continuing “lethargy”). Never very excited about any Sweeney-era initiatives—as they view them today—the authors argue that “most ideas for reforming these central bodies” didn’t “stray far from the existing paradigm of U.S. trade unionism” (with the exception of Gapasin’s own proposals for the AFL’s Union Cities program).

Solidarity Divided is much preoccupied with the labor left’s failure to “analyze” and “debate” this old “paradigm” properly, or wage “comprehensive struggle” against it. That’s an understandable complaint from activist/intellectuals who find themselves stranded in a labor movement without the organized radical presence it had in the 1970s. Back then, many unionized

workplaces were flush with 60s-inspired agitators who devoted almost as much time to Marxist “study groups” (and related political sects) as they did to shop floor militancy. In contrast, most surviving members of this same generational cohort function today merely as trade unionists—whose politics long ago contracted into a semi-private creed. Their day-to-day work is very competent, even creative—but it lacks the collectivity and broader agenda of thirty years ago. Meanwhile, the frenetic activity of younger activists—who missed out on the big radicalizing upsurges of the 1960s or 70s, on campus or off—suffers from the same absence of a shared political framework. Many former New Leftists, as well as more recent recruits to the cause, realize they’d have greater impact if they were acting together on a cross-union basis regardless of what “business union” they’re stuck in (and, hopefully, still trying to change). Most labor leftists favor a stronger voice for workers—on the job and in their unions. They also want to unite workers and community activists in common struggles because these, in turn, create expanded opportunities for rank-and-file education and leadership development.

REFORM MOVEMENTS LIKE TEAMSTERS for a Democratic Union (TDU) and the fledgling SMART—SEIU Member Activists For Reform Today—remain a fertile ground for left-wing labor work. (See www.reformSEIU.org or www.seiuvoice.org for more info on long-overdue, TDU-style activity within SEIU.) Other radicals continue to function in less oppositional fashion, by building the durable, 20-year old network of community-labor coalitions known as Jobs with Justice (JWJ). They also devote themselves to the scores of immigrant “workers’ centers” that fight for the foreign born and immigration reform. Some lefties wield influence in fighting unions like the California Nurses Associations (CNA)—recently affiliated with

the AFL-CIO — and the still independent United Electrical Workers (UEW), always a beacon of rank-and-file unionism. Veterans of “anti-imperialist” organizing during the Vietnam era launched U.S. Labor Against The War to rally workers against the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003. USLAW has steadily gained official backing, while labor radicals active on other foreign policy fronts have developed strong cross-border ties with union organizers and free trade foes in South and Central America. Last but not least, indigenous militants and leftists of varying hues have kept *Labor Notes* afloat for nearly three decades. The Detroit-based monthly newsletter (and related labor education project) has been a vital source of alternative union news and views, plus a key catalyst for rank-and-file organizing and strike support. In April of this year, 1,100 *Labor Notes* backers had one of their largest, liveliest, and most diverse gatherings ever. This two-day solidarity conference in Dearborn, Michigan attracted hundreds of local officers or stewards from SEIU, CNA, AFSCME, the Teamsters, CWA, IBEW, UAW, ILA, and other unions, here and abroad. Many left the meeting with a copy of “Troublemaker’s Handbook,” a thick *Labor Notes* guide to workplace activism and “social movement unionism” that (in two editions) has sold more than 32,000 copies — reaching an audience of working class readers far larger than Fletcher and Gapasin are likely to find for *Solidarity Divided*.

Strangely enough, their book fails to acknowledge the existence of *Labor Notes* anywhere in its 288 pages — even though they favor a “more open approach to [union] education.” In the authors’ account of events in the 1990s, TDU gets a passing pat on the head (for being a surviving 70s “caucus”); but its central role in making Ron Carey president of the Teamsters in 1991 — and Carey’s subsequent critical support for Sweeney’s election in 1995 — is barely noted. Despite very suc-

cessful political work in California — and a distinctive critique of labor-management partnerships — CNA gets no mention in a chapter titled, “Putting The Left Foot Forward.” Also missing from the book is any sense of the rank-and-file backlash that’s been developing within SEIU against its top-down, anti-democratic methods. (The authors do agree that “the SEIU model” of forced membership consolidation into locals with little opportunity for “worker control” is “not the only solution to problems of competitive markets and aggressive employers.”) While touting “internal democracy” and “membership votes” throughout labor, Fletcher and Gapasin manage to ignore the singular contribution of the Association for Union Democracy (AUD), another left-initiated project which has, for forty years, fostered a more “democratic union culture.” Even the huge immigrant work stoppages that occurred during the spring of 2006 get less attention, in the book’s concluding chapter (on “Strategies for Transformation”), than “central labor councils” and “non-majority unionism.”

Jobs with Justice does get the F & G seal of approval (sort of). But, at the same time, *Solidarity Divided* makes the factually-challenged assertion that JWJ is not really a “union-community coalition” after all—at least compared to the authors’ preferred model, which is the Black Workers for Justice (BWFJ) in North Carolina. According to Fletcher and Gapasin, BWFJ “is open to both union and non-union workers [and] plays an active role in both workplace-based and community-based struggles.” (It’s also small and limited to one state.) Meanwhile, JWJ —with active multi-racial affiliates in 40 cities and 25 states — doesn’t fit this description? In reality, it does —in far more places, on a much larger scale. To add insult to injury, the authors have the chutzpah to highlight — in my own state of Massachusetts — a recently launched, union-bureaucrat dominated competitor to JWJ known as Community Labor United (CLU). With little supporting evidence

— because not much is available — Fletcher and Gapasin theorize that the CLU could become a “working people’s assembly” in Boston — “a joint concentration of progressive forces” based on “real (rather than symbolic) solidarity.” Such a development would certainly surprise Massachusetts JWJ supporters since that’s exactly the kind of solidarity that JWJ has long promoted by working — in feisty and independent fashion — with or without the cooperation of the Boston Central Labor Council and state AFL-CIO. In contrast, the CLU has been, from birth, an appendage of the CLC — even housed in its offices. As such, it’s far less likely to become a local reincarnation of the Knights of Labor!

To this reader, therefore, the Fletcher/Gapasin road map to “social justice unionism” seems sketchy and incomplete. It doesn’t do justice to some of the most valiant efforts to move the ball down the field in the direction of that goal. And it’s little consolation to learn that “no existing union or formal labor body” — anywhere in the country — “is practicing social justice unionism” or “social justice solidarity,” as the authors define and describe these organizational holy grails. Appended to the book, we do find a 20-page account of “local union transformation” — written by Gapasin and focusing, in the authors’ approved fashion, on the intersection of race, class, and gender. Unfortunately, this takes the form of an academic-style “blind study” — quite unlike all the “how-to” sections of *Troublemaker’s Handbook*. Gapasin disguises the name, location, and other details about the local involved — so forget about contacting anyone there for further information and advice about overhauling your own local.

The authors conclude with an indisputable point: “If the union movement is to shift further left, the left-wing forces within it must achieve organizational coherence.” But here again, *Solidarity Divided* is strangely silent about the efforts made, just several years ago, to hold a series of “Labor Left Meetings” at which, it was hoped, radical trade unionists would finally cohere into a more formalized network. Various groups on the left — Solidarity, the Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism (CCDS), the Freedom Road Socialist Organization (FRSO), Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), and other “political tendencies” — were represented in that process. (FRSO later came to a fork in the “road” — and split, so there are now two of them.) This reviewer was one of the meeting participants; Gapasin and Fletcher were among the original convenors or organizers. Yet, in *Solidarity Divided*, the whole two-year labor left “regroupment” attempt, involving several hundred people, has disappeared down the Orwellian “memory hole” — along with any useful lessons to be derived from it. In addition, none of the “real existing” socialist groups involved are even mentioned in the book, nor do we learn anything about their respective “trade union practice.”

Perhaps such blind spots are inevitable in any work of history produced by participant/observers writing about recent events or institutions in which they are still involved. But *Solidarity Divided* would have been a stronger, more useful guide to labor left activism — now and in the future — if it was less theoretical and generally prescriptive and, instead, more accurately described the actual struggles, setbacks, and accomplishments of union radicals.

Looking Back at Baden

PATRICIA GROSSMAN

DURING THE LAST DECADE OR SO memoirs have exploded in popularity. By no coincidence, the genre has seen an increasing share of fraudulence, frippery, and ostentation. Feeding the reading public's taste for triumph-over-adversity tales, publishers have released gripping memoirs that have then been unmasked as out-and-out fakes — written from the most cynical motives and, in the end, devaluing genuine suffering, as well as the human capacity to mine it for meaning. Among the hundreds of memoirs published each year are ones ghost-written on behalf of minor celebrities and politicians' wives, and entire books devoted to the memories of overcoming, for example, a fear of driving and of going gray.

And then there are the real memoirs — the ones that through describing and reflecting upon pivotal experiences in the lives of their authors impart lasting insights to readers. Not everyone is meant to write a memoir, and we can only hope that those who are don't get lost in the shuffle.

As a young teenager, Eva Kollisch emigrated to the United States from Austria, by way of England, where she was among nearly 10,000 children saved by the Kindertransport during WWII. In a previous memoir, *Girl in Movement*, Kollisch told of her early post-emigration years and her political awakening within the Trotskyist Workers Party, in which her contributions as a

woman were oftentimes demeaned.

Through short accounts, including three autobiographical stories, *The Ground Under My Feet* takes up Kollisch's childhood in Baden, Austria and recounts how her experiences there influenced the course of her life, up to the present time. She is highly selective, and manages through economic reflection to sustain several themes, most particularly the central question of an individual's relationship to her country.

To put this theme in perspective, we learn also about her parents' relationship to their country, a fraught and complex one during a time most of Austria was bending to Hitler's will. Margaret (Grete), a poet and translator, and Otto Kollisch, an architect, chose to raise their children, Stephen, Eva, and Peter, in Baden, where they would be close to nature — worshipping the natural beauty of Austria was a manifestation of nationalism — and where their children could mix with others from various backgrounds. The family was relatively well-off, more so than most of their neighbors, but with the exception of keeping nannies and maids over the years, believed in living simply. Grete's relationship to her Judaism, at least as it comes across in Kollisch's fair-minded recollections, was not always straightforward.

"In the Land of the Absolute" begins, "On whether our town in Austria was *somewhat* or *very* anti-Semitic, my family was divided. My parents held strongly to the former opinion." The autobiographical pieces that follow this first one bear out this statement, and it's easy to imagine why these disparate views existed. It is

The Ground Under My Feet

EVA KOLLISCH

Maplewood, NJ, Hamilton Stone, 2008
173 pp, appendices, \$14.95

PATRICIA GROSSMAN is the author of five novels. Brian in Three Seasons won the Ferro-Grumley Award for best LGBT literary novel, women, for 2006.

unlikely that the adult Kollisches experienced anti-Semitism as explicitly as their children did; like many professionally established and otherwise committed citizens the need to play down its insidious spread must have been quite instinctive. The Kollisch children, however, were the target of overt anti-Semitism. Eva got severely reprimanded for so much as looking at the Bleeding Jesus affixed to the front wall of her “public” school during the daily recitation of the Lord’s prayer. All the Kollisch siblings got beaten up, spat upon, and called “dirty Jew” on a regular basis. While they might not have had the prescience to know how bad it would get, they recognized more than their parents did that Baden was indeed *very* anti-Semitic.

Another reason that Kollisch’s parents held to the former opinion is one to their credit, especially to the credit of Grete. Involved in the intellectual and cultural life of Austria, she was, as depicted by her daughter, an open-minded woman who wanted her children to be exposed to different religions and points of view. Whether due to her striving to be accepted or simply through her nature, she wanted her children to recognize they were just as good as the gentiles surrounding them, but no better.

When the Nazis marched into Austria, no one could play down the influence of Hitler or the virulent hatred of Jews enveloping the country. Suddenly the country was on two sides, with the majority giving a straight-armed salute and declaring “Heil Hitler!” and the courageous minority (including Eva and some of her friends) greeting one another with the same salute, accompanied by “Heil Österreich!” (Austria). As time went on, no one would dare exclaim the latter in public, and Grete, who had been summoned to scrub the floor of the synagogue that was to become a stable for the Nazis’ horses, could not deny that her beloved Austria had become *very* anti-Semitic.

The facts of the *Anschluss*, the 1938 annexation of Austria into Greater Germany by the Nazi regime, are well-known, and it is not the

purpose of *The Ground Under My Feet* to restate them. It is Kollisch’s purpose to recall the effects of the *Anschluss* on her, her family, and friends — displaced flesh-and-blood people. It is her pur-

Few children have the occasion to
observe their parents plotting to
save their own and their children’s
lives.

pose to puzzle out the interrelations of Austrians during a time of unimaginable upheaval and the rise of a historic reign of terror. Her relationships during the time were those of a child to her schoolmates, friends, and the elders in charge of her — her parents and her nannies. In the autobiographical story “Betrayal,” Lisa and her two brothers are under the care of Louise Resch, a governess to whom Lisa grows close, wanting to fit her image of the feminine little girl by growing her hair long and wearing dresses. To please Louise she sometimes imitates her mother, making fun of what Louise perceives as Grete’s class affectations. Louise’s attitude towards Lisa is that she is an innocent; it’s not her fault she is a Jew. She takes her to church. “I just wanted to get some of that holy water on you.” Eventually Lisa’s parents take a trip, intending to leave Lisa in the care of friends in Vienna, but Louise convinces her to stay at home, and promises to take her to a Christmas party at her sister Caroline’s. Realizing she has nothing to give Caroline, Lisa steals a pair of silk stockings from her mother’s drawer. At Caroline’s Christmas party, Louise asks Lisa to entertain the guests by imitating her mother and her friends. In this strange setting, Lisa suddenly feels the depth of her betrayal. She ends up confessing her misdeeds to her mother, who forgives her but fires Louise. A trusted caretaker turned out to be defined chiefly by her class envy and anti-Semitism. Lisa cuts her hair short again

and reestablishes her identity as “a Jew, a fighter, and a tomboy.”

Much of *The Ground Under My Feet* takes place in Austria and, to a lesser extent, England (Eva’s host family in Southport treated her as a servant) before the Kollisch children finally sailed to New York. But a greater part still is devoted to how the events there shaped various stages of her life in the United States, and how her view of her parents was affected by their rapidly changing circumstances. Few children, fortunately, have the occasion to observe their parents plotting to save their own and their children’s lives, and then — once they have survived — striving to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles. In a life of so much evolution, people naturally reveal many sides of themselves. This was true of Otto Kollisch, distant and autocratic in Austria — and strict with his children in a way we would call abusive today. (Kollisch says her “whole childhood was a meditation on power and powerlessness,” with her father at the top of the hierarchy.) Because of a bureaucratic mishap, no doubt all too common at the time, Otto had to leave Austria ahead of his wife. He went to England to see his children and await his chance to sail to America, but he was consumed by panic over his wife’s fate. He tried but failed to hasten her departure. He went to the U.S., but she did not follow, via Amsterdam, until October 23, 1939. (The children came in April, 1940). It is not until 50 years later, reading her father’s letters to her mother at the time, does Eva realize her father was proud of her. Yet the need for his directly expressed love is still there. A year after Otto’s death from cancer at age 70, Eva visits an aquarium in Paris. Suddenly a gray fish appears that she positively identifies as her father. The fish looks at her for a long time. Finally it says, “I love you, love me.” It says this several times, then swims away.

HOW CAN THE VICTIMS of immeasurable loss proceed with their lives, especially

when that loss is the direct result of a calculated atrocity? One answer to this question is movingly illustrated in Kollisch’s portrait of her mother’s friend Mimi Grossberg in “Heimweh” (*homesickness*). Mimi’s parents were exterminated at Auschwitz and Kollisch could not understand how, as a refugee in New York, Mimi could remain such a passionate lover of pre-Hitler Austria, especially after all that had been revealed about Austria during the Holocaust. Mimi defended its people at every turn and actively promoted the writing of Austrian refugees, including that of Kollisch’s mother. She wore white gloves, a little hat tilted for effect, and she spoke in a sing-song. Kollisch saw her as “manipulative and sentimental; a master at name-dropping; an impresario at *Heimweh*.” After the death of Kollisch’s mother, though, she softened a bit towards Grossberg, who was working selflessly to help with the posthumous publication of Grete’s last book. And then, with the passing of time, the tables turned. During the summer of 1995, the fiftieth anniversary of the end of WWII, Kollisch, with some trepidation, visited Vienna. It was the post-Waldheim era and what she saw in her homeland was a great relief to her. Newspaper articles spoke openly about Austria’s past role in the persecution of Jews. There was a Jewish Museum and the city hall had an exhibition of the history of Austrian anti-Semitism. When Kollisch returned home, she called Mimi, eager to share with her Austria’s reckoning with its past and the hope she felt for its future. But Mimi, now senile, did not know who Eva was. She thought she was Grete, dead for years. Kollisch told her no, she was Grete’s daughter, and she had just come home from Austria. “I don’t go there anymore,” said Mimi. “Why is that, Mimi?” Kollisch asked. “Not since I learned about my parents’ death.” Kollisch asked how they died and Mimi whispered “Auschwitz.” We’re left with the question, was Mimi able to acknowledge the truth only as her mind was stripped of its capacity to defend, only when

her survival no longer depended upon her denial, or did her mind break down because the truth was knocking against it, aching to emerge?

Whatever the answer to this question, the effect of Mimi's reversal on Kollisch was clear: "For days her little voice echoes inside me. She was going out into that darkness — orphaned, with the terror she had managed to contain most of her life now so fresh in her bones." This is just the kind of spare and sharp-sighted observation with which Kollisch, throughout *The Ground Under My Feet*, maintains herself as an undaunted and trustworthy guide to events in history that, almost 70 years later, surpass the worst imaginings of what human beings are capable of inflicting upon one another.

There are other accounts of how Kollisch's family, friends, and acquaintances were shaped by the rise of the Third Reich, but perhaps none so vivid as two that occurred more recently, during Kollisch's retirement from Sarah Lawrence College, where she taught German, Comparative Literature, and Women's Studies for over 30 years. Both are layered examinations of the feelings that can arise when one reconnects with people from a harrowing era of their shared past. Both have their discomforts and their deep consolations. In one, "Together/Alone," Kollisch, ever conscious of the cost of maintaining secrets, is angry with herself for not revealing at a meeting of the American

Kindertransport Association that she is lesbian and that her partner, the poet Naomi Replansky, was unable to attend the reunion. All during this reunion the deceit-by-omission eats away at her. She calls herself a coward. Fear and shame fill this woman who has never denied her Judaism, even as it came under the most direct assault. She leaves the reunion without standing up to her fear. She does come out at another, smaller meeting of the Association. "I was well-dressed and felt charming, and mentioned it off-handedly. . . ."

It is revealing that Kollisch says she was well dressed, implying that she thought she would be better received as a lesbian if she was a certain kind of presentable. How deeply we internalize our differences in a society that, on the whole, tolerates them begrudgingly.

The Ground Under My Feet travels a long distance, longer than many memoirs on the same subject, because Kollisch seeks out the opportunity to reconnect with people who assumed different roles during the most unsettling time of her life. She is clear-eyed in her ability to view these people in the context of their own lives. There is condemnation in the book and there is forgiveness, and one gets the feeling there may be more of both as time goes on. As a writer and a former teacher of literature, Kollisch is not about to stop wondering or digging for meaning.

Worker Centers: Their Achievements and Their Limitations

DAN LABOTZ

WORKER CENTERS, HUBS OF IMMIGRANT organizing activity around the country, arose out of the great changes in the American economy since the 1970s. Corporations closed older industrial plants and opened new ones in the Sunbelt. They decentralized operations and outsourced, so that stable employment was replaced by temporary work, casual labor with low pay and no benefits. Employers began to hire greater numbers of immigrant workers, many of them undocumented, workers who could be overworked, mistreated, and cheated because they did not know the language, the law, or the customs. In this new economic environment and more complicated social reality, organized labor foundered. Many unions proved unable, or in some cases unwilling, to organize the new low-wage immigrant workers. So, out of necessity, the worker center was born.

Faced with low wages, ethnic and racial discrimination, employer chiseling, and government failure to enforce wages and hours laws, immigrants themselves organized some of the first worker centers, sometimes as alternatives to the unions that had neglected or rejected them. Social movement activists of the 1970s and 1980s who had been involved in solidarity with the Central American struggles of that era, also created some of the early centers. Later the Interfaith Worker Justice movement, backed by

major religious denominations, and then the AFL-CIO itself became involved in supporting worker centers. Today these centers, engaged in education, advocacy, organizing, and policy, represent an important section of the American workers' movement.

The worker center, whether located in a big city garment district or in a rural area near some poultry processing or meat packing plant, is almost always a vibrant community center that offers courses in English, provides legal services, helps workers find unions, and fights for immigration reform. Usually operating in one or more languages of the immigrants, the centers tend to have strong ties to local ethnic communities, and involve workers from various industries, companies, and trades. The centers prove most successful in pressuring or working with government agencies to enforce wages and hours laws and in working to change public policies regarding enforcement and compliance with those laws.

Fine believes that these centers generally do an excellent job of developing leadership, giving voice to low-wage immigrant workers, fighting for workers' minimum wages and working conditions, and bringing some bottom-up change to the labor movement. The problem is that the country's approximately 140 workers' centers generally only have a few hundred formal members each (though they may be able to mobilize hundreds more), have small staffs of 5 or at most 10 people, and if they collect dues do so only inconsistently, depending largely on

Worker Centers: Organizing Communities at the Edge of the Dream

JANICE FINE

Ithaca, New York: Cornell
University Press, 2006
316 pp, \$52.50 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

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foundations for their funding. Most significantly, for Fine, the worker centers generally don't think strategically and have no plan to turn their loose, ethnically-based community organizations into a force that can change the balance of power in the workforce, the society, and in politics.

Janice Fine surveyed the 137 centers that existed at the time and also researched in depth the experience of nine quite different centers in various parts of the country. *Worker Centers*, the first such overview of these relatively new workers' organizations, compares and contrasts the centers found in African American, Latino, Asian, and African immigrant communities in dozens of cities and towns throughout the United States. And she compares the structure and style of worker centers and unions. Fine searches to understand how to advance both the Worker Center movement and the AFL-CIO, recognizing the virtues of each, criticizing the failures of both.

Fine admires the worker centers' emphasis on leadership development, democratic process, and what she calls their comprehensive and transformational approach to the struggle for social justice, and she values the unions' larger numbers, dues base, organizational strength, and political power. She finds the biggest difference between the unions and the centers in their approach to organizing: unions prioritize based on their resources and carry out campaigns aimed at increasing their strength in certain corporations and industries, while worker centers take workers where they are at and accompany them in their experience of struggling, often in small ways, to improve their wages and conditions.

The unions' campaigning style and the worker centers' commitment to accompaniment have often led to tensions and sometime to conflicts. When worker centers approach unions with a "hot shop" ready to organize, the union may respond by saying that that shop is not a priority and that it cannot dedicate the resources

to helping. When a worker center opens a hiring hall where day laborers can shape up for construction jobs, the construction trades unions may see the laborers, carpenters, and roofers being sent out as competitors or worse,

Fine criticizes, deftly and subtly, the unions' tendency toward top-down organizing and the worker centers' lack of strategic priorities.

as scabs. In at least one case a building trades union took action to close immigrant worker centers' day labor halls. Yet often the construction trades unions will tell the centers that the unions cannot organize these workers because without papers the employers they represent will never hire them.

Fine's approach is to point out ways in which worker centers and unions might overcome their differences through collaboration. She suggests that both will have to change policy, particularly immigration policy, before much more progress can be made. She, her book, and the approach of collaboration she has advocated contributed to the establishment of the AFL-CIO and the National Day Labor Organizing Network announcing on August 9, 2006 the establishment of a formal partnership (www.milwaukeeelabor.org/data/newsletter/AFL-CIOonworkerunity.pdf and www.aflcio.org/mediacenter/prsptm/pr08092006.cfm).

In April 2008 the AFL-CIO reached a similar agreement with Enlace, a network of 21 worker centers, unions, and organizing groups in the United States and Mexico that claims to represent some 300,000 low wage workers (www.aflcio.org/mediacenter/prsptm/pr04172008.cfm).

Yet it is clear that collaboration alone won't

be enough to build the movement that is necessary if immigrant workers are to advance, and this is in part because of the institutional character of each. Fine criticizes, deftly and subtly, the unions' tendency toward top-down organizing and the worker centers' lack of strategic priorities. But she hesitates to push her argument to its logical conclusion, namely, that neither — either as now constituted or even under each other's mutual influence — represents the necessary organizational vehicle for a militant, democratic, low-wage, immigrant workers' movement. She suggests that unions have problems with democracy, but Fine hesitates to analyze and characterize the union bureaucracy that dominates organized labor — see Kim Moody's *U.S. Labor in Trouble and Transition* for that. She argues that worker centers are too dependent on foundations, but doesn't draw out the implications of the centers' dependency on them — see INCITE!'s *The Revolution Will Not Be Funded* for that. Unions and worker centers, the former far more than the latter, have structural features which inhibit their ability to lead workers in struggle. From the point of view of the needs of immigrant workers, neither achieves the degree of democracy combined with organization, of independence augmented by alliances, of flexibility linked to strategy that a workers' movement will need to win.

To win, low-wage immigrant workers will have to engage in a level of struggle and demonstrate a willingness to disrupt society and shake-up politics that we have not so far seen from them. Fine makes an interesting observation in her conclusion. "Over the course of conducting the study, I was struck by how little worker centers utilized the potential economic power of low-wage immigrant workers themselves." Worker centers say that they and the

workers they represent are afraid of reprisals, particularly firing or deportation. But, writes Fine, those may not be the only reasons. "I sense other reasons centers hesitated to ask workers to engage in economic action. They were afraid workers would say no, either because they were not that deeply unsatisfied with their situations, unwilling to risk having to return to their home countries, or viewed their situations as temporary and for that reason, tolerable." She adds, "... it has always been difficult for workers at the bottom of the labor market, especially in the private sector, to exercise economic power" (257).

Immigrant workers have enough reason to say "no" to calls to organize, strike, and boycott, but until they say "yes," there will be little progress. Worker centers have helped to give some immigrants confidence to struggle and through their development of leadership and the building of organization they are contributing to future gains. But if immigrant, low-wage workers should through their experiences with worker centers begin to engage in the kind of massive and militant struggle necessary to win significant gains, both the centers and the unions will be fundamentally transformed by the experience.

When workers take economic action, like that of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance which on September 5 organized 10,000 drivers to strike for one day over changes in conditions, they can win significant victories and begin to change both unions and workers centers into the more militant movement we need.

Note: Janice Fine's "A Marriage Made in Heaven? Mismatches and Misunderstandings between Worker Centers and Unions," *British Journal of Industrial Relations* 45:2 (June 2007) 1080, pp. 335-360, recapitulates and updates her book.

Breaking Into the Boys' Club

Sports, Power, and Gender

AMY LITTLEFIELD

PLAYING WITH THE BOYS: *Why Separate is Not Equal in Sports* is a meticulously researched critique of what Pappano argues is “the most sex-segregated institution in our society”: sports. In their analysis of the way segregated sports have perpetuated gender inequality, McDonagh and Pappano challenge perhaps the most sacred all-boys’ club in American society. To prepare for this controversial attack, the authors did their homework. The book includes 59 pages of footnotes and an appendix of court rulings (including many that have struck down gender segregation in sports). Developing the argument for the book took eight years of legal, historical, political, physiological, and biological research according to Pappano, and the effort shows.

Playing with the Boys has the power to shake up the way that sports fans and feminists think about the institution of American athletics. The premise is one that some may find radical; that no woman should be kept from “playing with the boys” on the basis of her gender, and that exclusion from sports has prevented women from reaching their potential, not just on the playing field, but in business and politics as well. Though the idea of gender-integrated sports may seem crazy to some, the authors use extensive legal and historical precedents to show that it may be the next logical step in the push for women’s equality. The book is compelling, entertaining, and easy to read. The authors’ well-

developed arguments and their well-placed sense of humor may convince even the staunchest defenders of gender-segregated sports.

McDonagh and

Pappano situate the argument for integrated athletics within both the feminist movement and the struggle for civil rights. The subtitle links women’s exclusion from sports on the basis of their physical

“inferiority” to racial segregation before 1954, when the Supreme Court ruled in *Brown v. Board of Education* that separate is never equal. The authors take the reader on a tour through historical justifications for excluding women from other realms of social power: education, voting, and the military. Though the segregation of men and women in sports is often taken for granted simply because “it [integration] feels wrong,” McDonagh and Pappano point out that not so long ago gender segregation in education seemed just as obvious (185). Though justifications for excluding women from education on the basis of their unequal brains or their delicate bodies now seem absurd, McDonagh and Pappano draw a convincing connection between these beliefs and the contemporary argument against girls playing with boys. American women have gained equal access to voting, education, and other vehicles of power, and the authors argue: “The next frontier in the long history of achieving equal rights for women in the United States is *sports*.” (7)

Though there have been other feminist examinations of gender and sports, McDonagh and Pappano depart from the common tendency to hail Title IX as the great solution. The authors

Playing with the Boys: Why Separate is Not Equal in Sports

EILEEN McDONAGH AND LAURA PAPPANO

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334 pp, \$28

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call the controversial 1972 law a “fabulous catalyst” for increasing women’s athletic opportunities at educational institutions. They argue, however, that the law contributes to gender segregation because of its “failure to challenge adequately the assumption of women’s athletic inferiority” (6) Since Title IX permits and even encourages gender segregation, it violates the book’s cardinal rule, summed up by Feminist Majority Foundation President Eleanor Smeal: “SEPARATE IS NEVER EQUAL!!!!” (213). *Playing with the Boys* goes beyond Title IX to attack the way we talk about sports, power, and gender.

McDonagh and Pappano’s book is a wake-up call to feminists who have ignored the issue of gender segregation in sports. From the title of the very first chapter the authors have a clear message: “Sports Matter” when it comes to the way we think about gender roles. Pappano and McDonagh show how keeping women out of men’s sports has enforced women’s alienation from social power. The authors point to the “easy chemistry between sports, politics, and business,” concluding that: “Success in athletics, as in politics and business, defines what it is to be ‘male’ in our society. Organized sports enforce a male power structure that reaches far beyond the field.” (2) The authors back up this bold statement with concrete examples that make the argument seem ironclad. They introduce us to businesswomen who credit their success to their golf skills or their knowledge of sports. They point to athletes, like Senator and ex-baseball star Jim Bunning, who have used their athletic success to achieve political power. (232) And as one particularly compelling example of the link between masculinity and power, the authors examine the way we talk about sports and war:

No sport is considered more masculine than

The authors show that traditional values surrounding masculinity are a central part of the way our country conducts business and war.

football (even today despite growing numbers of programs for women and girls). The game possesses overtly militaristic qualities, with the use of strategy and brute force to take an

opponent’s territory. As in combat, teammates protect one another from hits and make coordinated attacks. With long passes we now call ‘bombs’ and with the wearing of helmets, much like soldiers in combat, football has

long evoked the language, symbolism, and ethos of war. (161)

Is it any coincidence that George W. Bush “boasted to *Runner’s World Magazine* that his running times improved during the invasion of Iraq”? (234) The authors show that traditional values surrounding masculinity are a central part of the way our country conducts business and war. Women who want to play football confront more than what the coach at their high school may have to say about it. They challenge an institutionalized masculinity that throws bombs and refuses to pass the ball.

McDonagh and Pappano attack culturally embedded notions of masculinity head on. They introduce us to University of Minnesota basketball player Janel McCarville (6’2”, 220 pounds) high school football guard Holley Mangold (5’9”, 310 pounds), and to marathoner Pamela Reed, who beat all the boys (and the girls) in the 135-mile Badwater Ultra Marathon in 2003 at the age of 42. With these examples of women who have broken the “petite stereotype,” or who have excelled in spite of it — like top rock climber Lynn Hill, who is 5’0 and 100 pounds — Pappano and McDonagh challenge the assumption that men are necessarily bigger and better athletes.

THE AUTHORS ALSO RECOUNT the barriers that bigger and stronger women have faced, including social messages about what their bod-

ies should look like. Such social programming, the authors suggest, has perhaps kept women who have the potential to be football guards from cultivating the necessary girth and muscle strength. “Women’s sports are in their relative infancy compared with men’s sports,” the authors argue. “How can we truly physically compare the sexes when women are far from their athletic potential?” (73)

One of the departing messages of the book is that women need equal access to athletic opportunities in order to gain equal access to political and economic power. The authors encourage women to infiltrate the “male power structure,” arguing that sports is a “key feminist tool” for women who have become “sports fans, consumers, and participants.” (255) “Sports Matter” — that much is made clear. But should they matter as much as they do?

After citing Middle Tennessee State University President Sidney A. McPhee’s illuminating comment that “Athletics really is the front porch of the university,” the authors focus on the lack of comparable attention to women’s athletics: “There is little creative thinking about how a college might instead capitalize on a stellar women’s team, using it (instead of men’s football) as a ‘front porch’ to the school.” (247) The question — for feminists and university presidents alike — perhaps ought to be how to move athletics to the back or side porch.

We need more than increased women’s participation in athletics. Though big, powerful

women may challenge popular notions of masculinity through excelling at traditionally men’s sports, the authors could have delved deeper into the consequences of equating sports with power. The emphasis on sports as a “feminist tool” detracts somewhat from the authors’ criticism of the link between social power and sports. In the end, they seem to take it for granted that power and sports overlap.

Future books on this topic might further interrogate the role of sports in the way we articulate social, political, and military power. McDonagh and Pappano have certainly provided a strong foundation for future research. The authors encourage us to allow women to “play with the boys.” But we also need to drastically alter the way that the boys play. Our tendency to equate athletic strength — masculine or feminine — with power have led to disturbing social consequences in American culture; the fact that many (including our president) talk about war as a game is only one example. Still, the vision of the book is hopeful. The authors look to a world where women reach their potential — “what we ought to be” — through full participation in sports, business, and politics. We might extend this vision and hope for a world in which we don’t think of war in athletic terms or sports in masculine terms, a world in which boys and girls play together.

Email interview with Laura Pappano, April 14, 2008.

Mexico Trumped MLB Racism

BILL LITTLEFIELD

IF THE SUMMER OF 1942, during which he played professional baseball in Mexico, Monte Irvin said, “It was the first time in my life I felt that I was free.”

Such freedom was not possible for black ballplayers in the United States, where Major League Baseball was still segregated, and where traveling Negro League players were often refused service in restaurants, hotels, and even gas stations.

But a black professional ballplayer’s life was full of opportunities in Mexico because Jorge Pasquel, a wealthy and ambitious Mexican businessman, had seen the signs in the United States that read “No dogs, negroes, or Mexicans,” and he understood the advantage that vicious prejudice gave him in creating baseball teams in his native land that would be as good as the Major League clubs for which stars such as Irvin, Satchel Paige, Josh Gibson, and Cuban phenom Martin Dihigo could not play.

To the distress of Branch Rickey and the rest of the men who ran Major League Baseball, Jorge Pasquel was an equal opportunity employer. He signed white ballplayers, too. His strategy was to show up in the lobby of a hotel where Major Leaguers were staying with a suitcase full of cash. When he’d cornered a prospect, he’d open up the suitcase and offer it to the ballplayer in return for a commitment to jump to Mexico. Pitcher Sal Maglie was among

the players who accepted Pasquel’s offer. He said he made as much in one season in Mexico as he would have made in five playing for the New York Giants in the Major Leagues, where the reserve clause artificially depressed salaries. Stan Musial, to whom Pasquel offered a \$125,000 signing bonus and a quarter of a million dollars over five years in 1946, knew he wouldn’t make as much in a lifetime of playing for the

St. Louis Cardinals and acknowledged that “all that money makes a fellow do a lot of thinking before he says no.”

Black players didn’t need to think much before saying yes. Arthur Pennington played three seasons for the Veracruz Blues during the forties and reported that he “never had so much freedom in all my life, because you could eat anywhere and they got the finest restaurants, the beautifullest women — all colors, don’t make no difference. It’s beautiful. Everybody swimmin’ together.”

Jorge Pasquel’s endeavor, which preceded by more than a decade the “great experiment” by which Jackie Robinson and Branch Rickey began the integration of Major League Baseball, proved that black, white, and Hispanic ballplayers could share the infield, the outfield, and the clubhouse as well as eat in the same restaurants and sleep in the same hotels. Pasquel also gave black men the opportunity to manage integrated teams: a challenge Major League Baseball didn’t accept until 1975.

For his success, Jorge Pasquel was characterized as an outlaw by the men running Major

South of the Color Barrier: How Jorge Pasquel and the Mexican League Pushed Baseball Toward Racial Integration

JOHN VIRTUE

Jefferson, NC and London:
MacFarland & Co., 2008
231 pp, photographs, \$29.95

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League Baseball, and at one point he was forbidden by the U.S. government to enter the country.

The drama inherent in these circumstances and the shame they cast on the United States in general and the Major Leagues in particular provide plenty of material for a book, but to his credit, John Virtue, the author of *South of the Color Barrier*, has more in mind than baseball. He sets the story of Jorge Pasquel's work as a promoter, businessman, hustler, and champion of equal rights against the background of the historical relationship between Pasquel's native land and the colossus to the north...a relationship that Porfirio Diaz, for thirty five years the President of Mexico, once summarized by opining "Poor Mexico. We are so far away from God and so close to the United States."

It was that geographical circumstance that led the United States to absorb half of Mexico as a result of the 1846-1848 war that a congressman named Abraham Lincoln regarded as unconstitutional, and that U.S. Grant, who served in the conflict, characterized in his memoirs as "the most unjust war ever waged by a stronger against a weaker nation." Mexico's proximity to the United States also accounted in large part for the invasion of Veracruz by the U.S. in 1914, an attempt at regime change the violent ramifications of which shocked President Woodrow Wilson because "he had been convinced that Mexicans would welcome the American troops."

A FEW DECADES LATER, when the men who would otherwise have been harvesting crops in what had (not so long ago) been Mexico were instead fighting in Europe and the South Pacific, the United States asked Mexico for help. Would they send north some laborers? According to Virtue, "the Mexican government initially had some reservations because of the treatment given Mexican farm workers in the United States in the past," since "during the Great Depression, nearly half a million Mexicans were

rounded up and deported at Congress's behest."

The result was the Emergency Labor Program, which to some extent temporarily recog-

"I never had so much freedom in all my life, because you could eat anywhere and they got the finest restaurants, the beautiful women — all colors, don't make no difference. It's beautiful. Everybody swimmin' together."
— Arthur Pennington

nized the humanity and rights of the Mexican workers. It might be a stretch to conclude that in the cases of both the guest workers of the 40s and the black ballplayers of the same era, Mexico led the United States toward the pursuit of equal rights, and Virtue is too careful to make that leap. But the suggestion is there. Also there, if unstated, is the comparison between the invasion of Veracruz in 1914 and the invasion and ongoing occupation of Iraq. Victoriano Huerta, the military dictator whom Woodrow Wilson was determined to unseat, had seized the presidency in 1913. Wilson reasoned that Mexicans would welcome U.S. troops with open arms, if not flowers. He could not understand why they would not submit gratefully to martial law until a stable regime under a president friendly to Wilson's administration could be installed. Instead, the Mexicans threatened, somewhat quixotically, to invade Texas.

It seems a shame that those who've been responsible for U.S. foreign policy for the past eight years didn't learn from that chapter of American history that even populations ruled by tyrants don't like being invaded and occupied.

Family Policies in Post-Communist Nations

BETTY REID MANDELL

THE COUNTRIES THAT CLAIMED TO BE Communist also claimed to meet the needs of their families. What happened to those claims when the countries became capitalist? The fall 2007 issue of *Social Politics* seeks to answer that question. It analyzes family policies of Russia, Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia.

Some social welfare scholars have created a typology of welfare states in relation to the “family wage” ideology, i.e., male breadwinner and woman homemaker. They name the states that subscribe to this ideology “maternalist,” or “neofamilialist” rather than egalitarian. Those states encourage women to stay home and care for the children and the housekeeping, and the men to work at paid jobs. States are considered egalitarian if they encourage women to work in the paid labor force, and develop support systems that make that possible. The states that have a mixture of these two types are labeled as “third way” or “mixed.” All of the articles in this collection follow these typologies, at least in a general way, in their analysis. They also analyze nations in relation to labor policies and policies about reproduction. Nations that face population shortages are more likely to have policies that encourage women to stay home, and nations that want more labor are more likely to have support systems that make it possible for women to work in the paid labor force.

None of the writers of these articles ques-

tions the term “Communist” in referring to Communist nations. This leaves the impression that those nations were being governed by Marxist ideology. However, the goals of Marx and Engels and the 1917 Russian revolutionaries were very different from the subsequent repressive Stalinist state. I think it would be useful to under-

stand what those revolutionaries hoped for, as a framework to understanding how those lofty goals deteriorated under the Stalinist regime. In *The Revolution Betrayed*, Leon Trotsky describes the ambitious goals of the 1917 revolutionaries:

The place of the family as a shut-in petty enterprise was to be occupied, according to the plans, by a finished system of social care and accommodation: maternity houses, crèches, kindergartens, schools, social dining rooms, social laundries, first-aid stations, hospitals, sanatoria, athletic organizations, moving-picture theaters, etc. The complete absorption of the housekeeping functions of the family by institutions of the socialist society, uniting all generations in solidarity and mutual aid, was to bring to woman, and thereby to the loving couple, a real liberation from the thousand-year-old fetters.¹

The revolutionaries wanted to abolish the family, but as Trotsky pointed out, “You cannot ‘abolish’ the family: you have to replace it. The actual liberation of women is unrealizable on a basis of ‘generalized want.’” (145) The social dining rooms were inferior and after 1935 when the food-card system was abolished, workers returned to the home dining table when they could afford to. The social laundries “tear and

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steal linen more than they wash it.” (146) The crèches “are not satisfactory as a general rule to the least fastidious demands. . . It is no wonder if the better-placed workers’ families avoid crèches.” (147) Homeless children were criminalized and brought to court rather than cared for. “A vast amount of the homelessness of children obvious and open as well as disguised, is a direct result of the great social crisis in the course of which the old family continues to dissolve far faster than the new institutions are capable of replacing it.” (148) Trotsky continues:

Back to the family hearth! But home cooking and the home washtub, which are now half shamefacedly celebrated by orators and journalists, mean the return of the workers’ wives to their pots and pans — that is, to the old slavery. It is doubtful if the resolution of the Communist International on the “complete and irrevocable triumph of socialism in the Soviet Union” sounds very convincing to the women of the factory districts! (146)

Trotsky adds that the only women among the 40 million Russians who could consider themselves free were the 5 to 10 percent of the women of the upper strata:

Complete equality before the law has so far given infinitely more to the women of the upper strata, representatives of bureaucratic, technical, pedagogical and, in general, intellectual work, than to the working women and yet more the peasant women. So long as society is incapable of taking upon itself the material concern for the family, the mother can successfully fulfill a social function only on conditions that she has in her service a white slave: nurse, servant, cook, etc. (146)

Trotsky had this to say about anti-abortion laws in the Stalinist state:

On this subject even the optimistic *Pravda* is sometimes compelled to make a bitter confession: “The birth of a child is for many women a serious menace to their position.” It is just for this reason that the revolutionary

power gave women the right to abortion, which in conditions of want and family distress, whatever may be said upon this subject by the eunuchs and old maids of both sexes, is one of her most important civil, political and cultural rights. However, this right of women too, gloomy enough in itself, is under the ex-

“You cannot abolish the family.
You have to replace it.” — Trotsky

isting social inequality being converted into a privilege. . . In reality the new law against women . . . is the natural and logical fruit of a Thermidorian reaction.

The triumphal rehabilitation of the family, taking place simultaneously — what a providential coincidence! — with the rehabilitation of the ruble, is caused by the material and cultural bankruptcy of the state. Instead of openly saying, “We have proven still too poor and ignorant for the creation of socialist relations among men, our children and grandchildren will realize this aim,” the leaders are forcing people to glue together again the shell of the broken family, and not only that, but to consider it, under threat of extreme penalties, the sacred nucleus of triumphant socialism. It is hard to measure with the eye the scope of this retreat. (156-157)

Family Policy in Russia

IN HER DESCRIPTION OF FAMILY POLICY IN Russia, Tatyana Teplova² describes how the rapid industrialization of the Soviet Union resulted in forced mobilization of the labor force, including women. Women were predominantly seen as “productive units.” While women were required to work, they were also expected to do the work of caring for children and maintaining the household. In effect, they had two jobs. By the late 1920s, however, the massive entrance of women into the labor force led to a drop in the birthrate and decrease of family size. In an effort to counteract this, the regime expanded

childcare facilities, which were hastily organized in factories and collective farms. Policymakers also introduced relatively generous paid maternity and child care leave.

“During this time, a woman’s maternal function came to be seen as the foundation of sex differences. Abortions were outlawed and divorces became very expensive . . . and the party leaders repeatedly declared that the nuclear family was one of the main foundations of Soviet society.” (288)

The tremendous loss of population during World War II increased the problem of underpopulation. But while the Soviet state was able to achieve high female labor force participation rates, the birth and fertility rates remained relatively low. The inadequacy of public child care provisions resulted in many women relying on family networks, especially grandparents. Social provisions were provided through employment and were universal because employment was mandatory. The Soviet state did not encourage shared responsibility for domestic work between men and women but equated equality with women’s employment and the expansion of benefits and privileges related to motherhood.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 resulted in the shock therapy of neoliberalism, with privatization of companies. “Newly privatized enterprises were under increasing pressure to minimize production costs in order to become more competitive and improve labor productivity. Social service provision was becoming unsustainable.” (290) Because most welfare provisions had been administered through the work place, the newly privatized enterprises were under pressure to cut costs, and social service provisions were among the first to be cut. The new economy created a “flexible labor market,” which led to rising unemployment and a growth of the informal economy and part-time work. Abortion, which had been legalized, contributed to increasingly low fertility rates (1.3 births per woman in 2005). In 1992, the abor-

tion rate was 98 per 1,000 women aged 15–49, and abortions outnumbered births by more than two to one. (291)

As a result of fiscal pressures and high unemployment, the idea of bringing women back home became very popular. The provision of childcare services became less important and a number of facilities closed. The bulk of childcare is now provided at home. Yet, despite neoliberal pressures to cut long paid childcare leaves, these were preserved and maternity leave payments remain reasonably generous. Fathers or other family members are allowed to take some of the childcare leave with the permission of the mother. While the policy of extending childcare leave to fathers and other family members follows the policy advocated in Western Europe and OECD countries, few fathers take advantage of it in any country. “In the absence of policies designed to redistribute caring labor, women will continue to be expected to perform this role.” (298) Some of the social provisions had to be provided by private enterprises, which often constituted a disincentive to hire women. There was a substantial growth in part-time employment at the beginning of the 1990s.

Teplova argues that access to long parental leaves and in-home caregiving allowances, even for part-time workers, favors the growth of labor market flexibility and expansion of low wage, low-skill work for women, and lays the foundation for neofamilialist regimes, particularly when accompanied by a move away from institutionalized childcare. The effects of neofamilialist policies on women’s employment include a decline in the employment of mothers with young children; increased utilization of maternity/parental leave; increased part-time employment of mothers of young children; and increased rate of mothers with young children becoming full-time homemakers.

Yet, despite these policies, the rates of female labor force participation continued to be high, which Teplova says can be partially explained by the legacy of fulltime employment

and the legacy of higher education for women. The majority of women (53 percent) are still interested in their career growth. Over 46 percent of women had higher education or vocational training according to the 1989 census, as compared to 34.2 percent of men. Most former state enterprises continued to provide benefits to their employees such as sick leave, sanatoria and other health services, access to special goods, as well as sport and other facilities.

Because wages are low and welfare provisions are not sufficient to provide even a minimum standard of living, most women have to continue working for pay, "despite the attempts of neofamilialist policymakers to 'push women into the homes.'" (312) This is especially true for lone mothers. Many married women did stay home to care for their children, and many women say they would stay home if they had a chance.

Poland and Hungary

CHRISTY GLASS AND EVA FODOR compare the family policies of Poland and Hungary after 1989.³ They say that the family policies of Poland were largely shaped by the conservative ideology of the Catholic Church. (A later article in the journal by Saxonberg and Szelewa argues that the economic crisis was a stronger influence than the Church.) Strong universal welfare provisions have generally been won in countries where there is a strong labor movement, yet the authors see Poland as an exception to this because its labor movement was socially conservative and patriarchal, dominated by the Church. The Polish working class has been "significantly stronger in Poland than in any other country in the region," and Solidarity, as well as the Church, led in toppling the Stalinist government. Yet "both have cooperated in promoting a return to the traditional family of Poland's (re-imagined) pre-socialist era. . . . The Solidarity government was openly pro-Catholic and immediately introduced targeted welfare measures that aimed to return

men to their position as family breadwinner and women to their rightful roles as wives and mothers." (327) Solidarity has supported a strong anti-abortion platform since the 1980s. Only five percent of unemployed women are eligible for the government's public works program, even though they comprise a majority of the unemployed. Soon after Lech Walesa was elected president he disbanded the women's section of Solidarity because of their continued efforts to oppose the criminalization of abortion. This move was hailed by Catholic leaders.

The trade unions have lost much of their oppositional power and now influence legislation through political parties and elected positions in legislative bodies. There has been a massive displacement of women from positions in government. "As joblessness, economic uncertainty, and poverty have risen dramatically since 1989, Solidarity's primary goal has been to protect the employment of male workers." (328-329) Welfare policies promote maternalism. Both parental leave and family allowance are means tested rather than universal, and coverage is low.

The authors say that Hungary, in contrast to Poland, had relatively decentralized and politically weak trade unions "which were discredited among workers under state socialism and have been politically marginalized in the post-socialist era. As a result, working class interests were not articulated during the policy debates before and immediately following Hungary's move toward means tested family policies in the mid-1990s." (329) Instead, groups of middle class women mobilized against means tested benefits in 1995 and 1996, arguing for universal benefits as mothers. However, they did not want to leave the labor force but called for a return to the former policies that would support universal eligibility for paid maternity and long parental leaves. (330)

Another study of Hungarian welfare policies, by Lynne Haney, pointed out that the change from universal to means tested benefits

which occurred in 1996 were designed to exclude the middle class and to target the “needy.”⁴ The policy, called the “Bokros Plan” was designed to dismantle the remaining entitlement programs. It began income-testing of family allowances, making them available only to very poor families. Family allowances were no longer universal but means tested, and were reduced from 18 years to 6 years. Child-care grants were reduced from three years of maternity leave to 180 days. Family allowances and maternity leaves were no longer entitlements but “poor relief,” subject to parliamentary politics.

Glass and Fodor discuss the importance of timing in implementing policies. The Polish post-Solidarity government that came to power in 1989 immediately replaced universal and work-based welfare policies with limited and targeted measures. This speed was deliberate, a strategic attempt to use the post-89 euphoria to maximum political and economic advantage. “According to the rhetoric of the Polish shock therapy agenda, if some had to sacrifice in the short-run, all would be well in the long-run.” (330-331)

In contrast to Poland, the first democratically elected Hungarian government delayed reforms until the mid-1990s. The first conservative-nationalist Hungarian government resisted cuts in state social welfare despite increasing pressure from the IMF and the World Bank to do so. Instead they sought to increase social spending in order to avoid political unrest. This changed in the mid-1990s when the Socialist Party (the Communist Party successor) came to power. “In accordance with the IMF’s heavy-handed structural adjustment policy recommendations,” (331) they introduced means tests for family and maternity policies. However, when the centrist-conservative party defeated the Socialists in the first elections following the introduction of means tests, they restored universal eligibility for family welfare policies, which have remained universally available ever since. However, the value of these benefits has de-

clined significantly since 1989.

When means testing was introduced, middle class women were angry about losing their benefits. Lynn Haney says that a vociferous groups of populist writers protested the policy, arguing that it was teaching Hungarians that “being lumpen pays.” (Haney, 178) This is an example of how universal benefits can mobilize the middle class to protect those benefits, as happened with Social Security in the United States when the middle class mobilized to prevent privatization of the program. It also illustrates how means-testing increases the hostility of the middle class toward the poor. Haney documents how the poor were demonized and pathologized by the middle class and by welfare workers during the period of means testing. (199-204)

Glass and Fodor say that neither Poland nor Hungary provides public child care for children under 3. However, over 85 percent of Hungarian children are in public kindergarten, while only 33 percent of Polish children are. Hungary has more generous parental leave policies than Poland and is more supportive of women’s paid work. “The privatization of welfare in Poland — including the disappearance of public childcare since the early 1990s — has forced most mothers to either depend on wage-earning husbands, to purchase child care on the market (although the prices are prohibitively high for many), or to depend on unpaid, retired grandmothers to provide care.” (342)

Poland and the Czech Republic

STEVEN SAXONBERG AND DOROTA SZELEWA compare the family policies of Poland and the Czech Republic.⁵ Since the EU countries have moved toward greater defamilialization, making it easier for women to balance work and family, social welfare scholars have been interested in whether the post-Communist states would move in the same direction or toward “refamilialization” policies by encouraging women to leave the labor market and stay at

home. The authors say the former Communist countries in Central and Eastern Europe have gone in the direction of encouraging women to return to the home, and they ask why this is so, since “their starting point was much more defamilialized and more conducive to supporting gender equality than most West European countries.” (353-354) I question this assumption. While women were forced to work in those countries, they also had to care for the children and do housework. That is hardly liberation.

The most common explanations blame the anti-feminist ideology of the Communist regimes. No feminist debate, or any other kind of debate, was allowed and no independent women’s organizations could emerge to promote women’s interests. Because women were forced to work, they saw work as negative rather than liberating. Also, the family was seen as a refuge from the reach of the all-encompassing state, which strengthened the role of the woman as caretaker.

The authors say that these reasons cannot explain the differences in policies between nations and they hope their comparison of the directions that Poland and the Czech Republic took will help to illuminate this question. One explanation of the differences has been the strength of the Catholic Church in Poland. But the authors argue that the Church has not had as great an influence as is commonly claimed, as shown by their comparison of the most Catholic regime in Poland with the most secular regime in the Czech Republic. “If the Catholic hypothesis was correct, Poland’s policies would come the closest to the conservative, ‘general family support’ model. In fact, we will show that the Czech Republic actually fits this model much better than Poland, which in fact comes closer to the liberal, market-oriented, Anglo-

Saxon model, where the market is designed to solve family problems and most benefits are means tested.” (355)

The authors argue that the countries’ differing economic situations well before 1989 account for the main differences in family policies. Poland faced a greater economic crisis than did the Czech Republic; therefore economic scarcity was a larger factor in shaping its policies.

International organizations such as the IMF and World Bank tried to induce the post-communist countries to implement market-liberal reforms . . . Poland had the greatest foreign debt crisis of any post-communist country. . .

Not only did Poland follow a more neoliberal, “hands-off” policy concerning childcare, it also followed a more neoliberal policy toward parental leaves as both the extended maternal leaves and child allowances were means tested. Furthermore, the income-based maternity leave at 16 weeks was shorter than the usual 6 months which mothers in the other Central European countries enjoyed. (355)

If the Catholic Church had had a major influence on Poland’s policies, it would have advocated more generous extended maternity leaves, but by making them means tested, many mothers were ineligible. The Catholic Church did, however, try to influence policies. It criticized policies that reduced maternity leave and family allowances, calling them “anti-family” and claiming “the short sixteen-week leave is ‘overwhelmingly harmful for young mothers and their children.’” (363)

In contrast to Poland’s maternity leave policies, the Czech Republic added a year to the extended parental leave, while keeping benefit levels at a low flat rate. “In 2006, however, the then center-left coalition government passed a

**Because women were forced to
work, they saw work as negative
rather than liberating.**

measure increasing the parental allowance for extended leave to 40 percent of the average wage. In January, 2007, it will be . . . nearly twice as much as in 2004.” (364) The European Union pressured countries to open up the extended leave to men in order to join the EU. Poland succumbed to this pressure but their policies were half-hearted and “officials did not expect any men to actually take part in this leave.” (364) The Czech Republic, on the other hand, changed its parental leave policy to allow men to take part in it even before the EU pressure, but the level of support is too low to induce many men to go on the extended leave. “Since the Czech Republic inherited the region’s strongest and most balanced economy, the Christian Democrats were not under economic pressure to accept means testing for the parental leaves, although they agreed to make child allowances means tested in 1995.” (366)

The authors discuss the problem of low fertility in many countries and the family policies intended to address the problem. They conclude “the only way to encourage women to have children is by making it easier and not more difficult to balance work and family life.” (372)

Even conservative politicians are beginning to realize that if they want to preserve the family “in the industrialized world only policies promoting increased gender equality can succeed in enabling most women to balance work and family. . . . The Polish Vice-Minister in charge of family policy “confided that she believes that the Swedish model provides the best alternative for her country’s future. She would like to increase access to childcare for children under 3 and eventually to extend the period of maternity leave to a long enough level that it would be possible to reserve some months for fathers.” (372)

Domestic Violence Politics

JANET ELISE JOHNSON compares domestic violence politics in Russia with Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia, using social movement theory to

analyze the factors that lead to progressive policies.⁶ In Russia in the early 1990s people denied the existence of domestic violence, but now they accept that it exists and that the family is a place of violence. Despite widespread resistance to discussing gender related issues, increased public awareness of the problem has led to “increasing the state’s response to domestic violence, such as collaborations between social services, law enforcement, and the women’s crisis centers.” (381) Russia, followed closely by Ukraine, has made more progress than Moldova and Armenia. In the early to mid-1990s, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia were “all similar in their abysmal response to domestic violence.” (382)

By 2001, activists in all four societies had formed organizations or redirected them toward domestic violence. Russia had 80; Ukraine had 10; Moldova had 5; and Armenia had 2. However, shelter space in Russia was limited and even when it was available “cultural proscriptions about leaving a husband because of abuse, especially one who was the father of one’s children, meant that women tended to use the shelters as a temporary respite and then returned to their abusive partners.” (383) Most crisis centers were more likely to name the problem “violence in the family” and, “while maintaining that it was a violation of women’s rights, to use Soviet-sounding arguments about the need to protect the family.” (384)

Organizations, especially in Moldova and Ukraine, tended to be service-oriented, rather than advocacy-oriented, thus less concerned with fostering women’s empowerment and indifferent to creating a social movement. For example, the Ukrainian Women for Women centers focused on women’s psychological problems as a result of domestic violence, often ignoring the perpetrator’s behavior; the Moldovan Woman Today shelters sought to reunify the family after a brief rest. Unlike in Russia where the first domestic violence organizations were avowed feminists alienated from the state, these organizations tended to

be “government-organized nongovernmental organizations” headed by individuals with close ties to the corrupt political leadership. (386)

Only Ukraine had launched significant campaigns similar to those in Russia, and Ukraine is the only one of the four countries in which national domestic violence legislation had been approved. Armenian society was especially resistant to the campaigns. In Moldova and Armenia, there were no policy reforms.

The author examines three factors that affect domestic violence campaigns: foreign assistance, Russian exceptionalism, and crisis center movement autonomy and women in politics. The effect of foreign assistance is mixed. It sometimes “neuters” the NGOs that receive grants for “democracy assistance” because they “often serve the interests of foreign donors more than those of the local population.” (390) It sometimes encourages elitism, discourages grassroots activities, causes jealousy between recipient groups, and focuses on short-term rather than long-term goals. However, it can also provide needed resources to local groups. The most significant donor to Russia in the mid-1990s was the U.S.-NIS Women’s Consortium, which distributed almost \$100,000 to a variety of women’s NGOs. This established the crisis center as the model domestic violence organization. Later the U.S.-based Ford Foundation and international development supported the cause. The U.S. Agency for International Development gave money to 35 crisis centers between 1999 and 2001. When the Bush administration withdrew support, European agencies and foundations and international organizations such as UNICEF and UNIFEM picked up some of the slack. The infusion of international funds in Russia was positive for the most part.

In other post-Soviet nations, foreign assistance has been important but less successful. Groups in Moldova received funds from a U.S. NGO, CONNECT/U.S.-RUSSIA, and the Open Society. Groups in Ukraine received funds

from the NIS-U.S. Women’s Consortium and the U.S. State Department funded Project Harmony. “However, in both societies, already existing elites were able to secure most of these grants for themselves, undermining the potential for radical reform.” (392)

“Russian exceptionalism” is the belief that Russian culture is particularly resistant to domestic violence politics, and that policy reform is likely to occur first to countries geographically closest to the West. The author believes that the evidence belies both of these beliefs. “Among the countries in this study, the greater the percentage of the population who is Russian, the greater is the development of domestic violence politics.” (393) The geographic proximity argument is given the lie by the fact that international norms of domestic violence were first introduced in Russia, the state furthest away from the West.

The author finds that crisis center movement autonomy and women in politics are essential ingredients in progressive solutions to domestic violence. “The autonomous women’s movement holds the state accountable for its promises and precludes the state from seeing the problem as gender neutral, while the women’s policy agencies have at least some state authority to enact change.” (395) Russia was the only nation where a social movement emerged against domestic violence, and the movement’s organizations were the most autonomous. In Ukraine domestic violence workers did not pressure the state for reform because there was no autonomous movement. “In Moldova, domestic violence organizations were similarly cozy with the state.” (397) The author concludes, “This study affirms the importance of the one-two punch of an autonomous women’s movement combined with some institutionalized channels for considering women’s issues.” (398)

Welfare Reform in the U.S.

ALL OF THESE AUTHORS assume that libera-

tion of women and equality with men depends on women getting equal access to work. There is the implicit assumption that “work will make you free.” Because the authors are academics, they are probably thinking of their own relatively fulfilling careers. Yet they don’t emphasize the nature of the work for women of varying economic and ethnic statuses. The academics are not flipping hamburgers, making beds in hotels, or lifting patients in nursing homes.

The mantra of welfare reform in the U.S. has been “any job is a good job,” but we all know this isn’t true. For most recipients, the meager means tested benefits of welfare (TANF) are contingent on their working at a low wage and unfulfilling job without the hope of advancement, since the welfare law restricts higher education to two years of vocationally oriented schooling. Women who have worked at low-wage jobs for all of their working lives would often prefer to stay at home to care for their children. Many women in the Stalinist states who were forced to work would have preferred to stay home to care for their children and home. Forced work is not liberation, either in Stalinist Russia or the United States. When Engels proposed freeing women from caretaking and housework so that they could work, he was not thinking of demeaning forced labor in capitalist enterprises. He was thinking of worker-managed enterprises where people had active control over the conditions of their labor. Some women (and men) find more scope for creativity in caring for their children than they do in alienating low-wage work. It is worth recalling Marx’s thoughts on alienated work:

What constitutes the *alienation of labor*? The fact that labor is external to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he

is not working, and when he is working he is not at home. His labor is therefore not voluntary, but coerced; it is forced labor. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy needs external to it. Its alien character emerges clearly in the fact that as soon as no physical or other compulsion exists, labor is shunned like the plague. External labor, labor in which man alienates himself, is a labor of self-sacrifice, of mortification.⁷

Middle class and upper class women can afford to hire private care for their children and, like the rich women in Stalinist Russia, would not send their children to public day care facilities. Many of the nannies they hire for low wages are immigrant women who have left their own children in their native country. It is almost impossible to mobilize widespread support for universal public day care as long as middle class families don’t need it.

Because of their commitment to getting women into the paid work force, many feminists did not object to welfare reform, which made receiving welfare benefits contingent on working in the paid labor force. The leaders of NOW recognized the threat that welfare reform posed for most women and most workers and they opposed it militantly, as did church groups and welfare rights groups. Yet NOW could not bring along many of its followers to fight against the welfare reform bill.

Conservative policy makers call for middle class women to stay home to care for their children and pass legislation ‘giving’ tax breaks to “stay at home moms,” while they enact policies to force poor women to work. Flooding the low wage labor market with women lowers wages of working people, and pushing middle class women out of the labor market opens up professional jobs for men. Both policies reinforce the patriarchy for both middle class and poor women.

NOW leaders fought against the Personal Responsibility Act because they recognized that it would not only inflict suffering on poor women and their children, but it also heralded

a broader effort to pressure all women into repressive sexuality, limited reproductive choices, and conventional family arrangements. The radical right wing understands the connection between a safety net and women's autonomy. Title I of the Personal Responsibility Act, titled "Reducing Illegitimacy," declared that "marriage is the foundation of a successful society" and went on to give a laundry list of so-called facts about illegitimacy that features teenage mothers and linked criminality with black fathers.

No country has solved the problem of getting fathers to take equal responsibility for caretaking and housework. As long as fathers make more money than mothers, the problem is not likely to be solved since the family loses more money when the father opts out of the labor force. Sweden has gone the farthest in trying to solve this problem. It has replaced part of the leave for the father and has a high enough benefit level that families do not lose money if the father goes on leave. Yet even there relatively few fathers take advantage of this. The solution to the problem involves more than money; there are deep-seated cultural attitudes that need to be resolved.

Social Politics provides a valuable service by publishing international articles about gender, state, and society by leading academic feminists. Their articles are instructive but sometimes dull and not very well written. There is no provision for dissent or questioning. I have never completely trusted a journal that does not publish letters to the editor.

NOTES

1. New York: Merit Publishers, 1965, p. 144.
2. "Welfare state transformation, childcare, and women's work in Russia," pp. 284-322.
3. "From public to private maternalism? Gender and welfare in Poland and Hungary after 1989." pp. 323-350.
4. *Inventing the Needy: Gender and the Politics of Welfare in Hungary*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002, p. 178. This is an interesting study of how state policies were implemented at the local level by caseworkers and psychologists, and how clients responded to them.
5. "The continuing legacy of the Communist legacy? The development of family policies in Poland and the Czech Republic," pp. 351-379.
6. "Domestic Violence Politics in post-Soviet states," pp. 380-405.
7. Robert Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company Inc. 1972, p. 60.

A Strategy for Union Revival

KIM MOODY

LAST YEAR, UNION MEMBERSHIP in the United States grew by 311,000 members, the first large net gain in years. Perhaps even more heartening was that three-quarters of these new members were in the relatively young 16-34 age group, while almost two-thirds of the total gain were women and forty-two percent were Latino or Asian. Perhaps less heartening was the fact that over seventy percent were public sector workers, indicating that organizing in the private sector remains difficult and all too neglected. Furthermore, with recession setting in and electioneering drawing organizers and activists off the organizing trail, big gains are not likely to continue this year. American labor's crisis is far from over.

Over a decade ago the hope arose that a reformed AFL-CIO could inspire more unions to put new organizing higher on the agenda. But only a few unions took up the challenge — mostly those that already made organizing a priority. A decade after the victory of John Sweeney's "New Voice" team won a hotly contested election, the federation split. The ostensible justification for the split of five major unions that created the Change-To-Win Federation (CTW) in 2005 was the AFL-CIO's failure to live up to the promise to lead an organizing crusade. But what of the new federation? In 2004 Richard Hurd of Cornell looked

Unions in Crisis? The Future of Organized Labor in America

MICHAEL SCHIAVONE

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at the organizing record of the unions then grouped as the New Unity Partnership, predecessor to CTW, and found that from 1993 to 2003 almost all had lost union density in their major industrial and occupational jurisdictions. The exception was the SEIU and then only in nursing. The numbers had gone up in some cases, but not fast

enough to increase the proportion of union members. He concluded at the time, "the NUP unions have not been able to overcome these environmental forces to make major strides in their own markets on a national scale."

The gains of 2007 do not show the CTW running ahead of the AFL-CIO. According to its Department of Labor reports (LM2s) CTW grew by 95,103, while the AFL saw a net gain of 153,670. So far, at least, the CTW's promise to run ahead of the old federation's affiliates in organizing has not materialized. Most of its gains go to the SEIU which claimed to bring 114,000 new members into its ranks in 2007, although this is not a net gain figure. Reform from above has failed again and the crisis of U.S. unions continues.

Michael Schiavone's *Unions in Crisis?* analyzes labor's inability to move forward and proposes strategies and tactics to turn things around. He provides us with answers to the reasons why most CTW unions, like those in the AFL, have not been able to overcome the legacy of inertia. Not only globalization and political reaction, but the old "Folly of Business Unionism" and the continuing "Madness of Concession Bargaining" keep much of the labor movement from reaching and inspiring the millions

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of unorganized workers. Schiavone does not see either of these as inevitable. At various points in the book he looks to alternative paths taken by other unions such as the UE, ILWU, and, above all, the Canadian Auto Workers, who fought concessions for decades.

Schiavone also looks at some of the newer approaches, such as “value-added unionism.” This is not so much a strategy as a surrender of what unionism is all about. Value-added unionism is simply a form of labor-capital partnership in which the union agrees to advance the interests of the employer even if it contradicts those of the members. It is seen by some leaders, above all the SEIU’s Andy Stern, as a means of gaining union recognition without a fight. As Schiavone puts it, “Value-added unionism has to rely on employers agreeing to partnerships and to union representation for their employees. In other words, value-added unions attempt to organize employers and not employees.” He cites not only the SEIU, but the Machinists (IAM), Paper, Allied and Chemical Employees (PACE), UNITE, and the Auto Workers (UAW), the latter notably at Saturn. In the Saturn/UAW case, he reminds us, the membership eventually rebelled against the back-breaking conditions imposed by “partnership” and voted to go back to a more conventional union contract.

Unions in Crisis? argues for an alternative type of unionism, which Schiavone calls Social Justice Unionism, a term he prefers to social movement unionism. He counterposes this to partnership or value-added unionism. He links four elements of this style of unionism: “those who advocate union democracy, labor-community alliances, organizing the unorganized, and labor internationalism see labor not as an ally of business, but in the main, hostile to it.” He argues for union democracy and rank and file involvement as the key to success. Most of these ideas, he notes, are already practiced in some measure by some unions. What is missing are unions that bring all these elements into a co-

herent strategy and practice. Although he emphasizes the role of the rank and file, he is mindful of the importance of leadership. Later in the book he points to the example of the Teamsters under Ron Carey, where a dialectic of rank and

His two main examples of steps toward social justice unionism are the Teamsters in the 1990s and the Canadian Auto Workers.

file organization, the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, and Carey’s leadership brought a stunning victory at UPS in 1997.

He also argues that “. . . it is wrong to assume that the so-called union bureaucracy cannot greatly contribute to the positive transformation of unions.” He might have used the example of Carey again, in this instance the role he played in cleaning up several corrupt IBT locals. Instead, he uses a study by Kim Voss and Rachel Sherman of several locals in the SEIU, UFCW, and HERE in which the International Union intervened to “revitalize” moribund locals. Revitalization, however, is defined solely as moving the locals from the old, much despised “servicing model” to the new, vivacious “organizing model,” *à la* the SEIU. Voss and Sherman are clear they are not talking about democracy or membership initiative. Late in their article they state in a footnote, “how — and whether — oligarchic tendencies were overcome in the IUs is beyond the scope of this article.” (*American Journal of Sociology*, Volume 106, Number 3). In a 2000 article in the *Journal of Labor Research* (Volume 21, Number 2), Jarley, Fiorito, and Delaney argue that these unions and others in the CTW revealed “low member access” and “low-activity levels.” So, as one indicator of low access, while CWA has annual conventions and AFSCME bi-annual,

the CTW's Teamsters, Laborers, and Food and Commercial Workers meet only every five years. Later in *Unions in Crisis?* Schiavone also notes that these unions are not among the most democratic. Union bureaucracy is not just "so-called." It's a structural problem that demands a democratic solution.

One of the most valuable parts of *Unions in Crisis?* is its discussion of CTW and the SEIU. Although there is a growing literature on these organizations, this is one of the first books to devote significant space to their recent development in the context of labor's overall crisis. Schiavone is balanced in his assessment of SEIU in that he praises its organizing record, especially the Justice for Janitors campaign and the 1999 campaign that brought 74,000 home health care workers in southern California into the SEIU. This was, in fact, the first of a series of successful organizing drives that brought tens of thousands of home care workers into the union in northern California, Oregon, and Washington State. At the same time, Schiavone sharply criticizes CTW for its top-down partnership approach. He cites several examples, all from the SEIU, including ones in which health care employees are prevented from criticizing poor care practices or of striking during the collective bargaining process. Recently, these practices have led to open opposition from Sol Rosselli, the head of the 150,000 member (SEIU) United Healthcare Workers-West, and a growing number of local officials, staffers, and members. In March, Rosselli told *Labor Notes* that opposition to Andy Stern, who attempted to impose such agreements, was "about concentrating power, resources, and decision-making authority among a few people in Washington, DC (SEIU's International headquarters — KM)."

THE LAST QUARTER OF THE BOOK lays out Schiavone's conception of social justice unionism and its major elements. His two main examples of steps toward social justice union-

ism are the Teamsters in the 1990s, mentioned above, and the Canadian Auto Workers. To write about the labor movement is to choose a moving target. So, as Schiavone acknowledges, the Teamsters of today, while not having undone all the reforms and changes of the Carey era, have regressed — although TDU still provides a break on the retreat. So, unfortunately, have the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) on which much of Schiavone's examples rest. Herman Rosenfeld, who until recently worked for the CAW, reported in *Labor Notes* (February 2008):

The CAW has given ground in all areas. Their auto campaign centered on handing subsidies to the Big 3, encouraging greater worker dependence on their employers rather than creating the confidence to challenge them, . . . accepted local workplace concessions, . . . shifted away from broad political contests in favor of lobbying politicians.

This only indicates, as Schiavone acknowledges, that social justice unionism is not the easy path to success. It is particularly difficult when your union is one of the few that has taken this path, while others follow more conventional business union methods. As Rosenfeld says of the CAW's retreat, this reflects "the need for a larger renewal movements across all of Canadian labor." How much truer this is for American labor.

What follows in *Unions in Crisis?* is a useful and critical look at labor-community alliances, the role of Central Labor Councils, and the problems and potential of workers' centers. Despite what he sees as the weaknesses in these efforts, his view is that unions will do best if they engage on all these fronts. This means taking up issues not always addressed by union, such as housing. He calls some of these issues, "non-class" issues. Looking at urban America today, however, it is hard to imagine housing or health care as anything but a class issue. It's not clear why he makes this distinction. In any case, his basic point is right. To turn things around

we need a broad class movement in which unions, with power on the job, play a central and leading role.

To address the problem of new organizing, Schiavone proposes the formation of a modern-day Trade Union Educational League (TUEL). The TUEL was an organization that functioned in the 1920s largely under control of the Communist Party. It was first formed by William Z. Foster in 1920 while he was still a syndicalist. Initially, it was based on existing rank and file oppositions within several AFL unions and advocated amalgamation toward industrial unionism, union democracy, a labor party, and defense of the Soviet Union. It enrolled tens of thousands of activists, gathering hundreds of thousands of signatures on petitions demanding amalgamation. By the late 1920s, it became the basis of CP "Third Period" efforts to form industrial unions, at first inside and beginning in 1928 outside the AFL. Despite leading some spectacular strikes, none of these succeeded. Some locals and many activists, however, went on to play a role in the early CIO. It is the example of unions digging in without formal recognition, acting like a union despite this, and eventually winning recognition and collective bargaining that Schiavone finds useful for today. Usually called "non-majority unionism" these days,

this approach is practiced by the UE (plastics in Erie, PA, University of North Carolina), CWA (GE, IBM, Microsoft), and UFCW (North Carolina meatpacking) as a way to get a foothold where unions have failed in the past. Using the concerted action clause of Section 7 of the NLRA, "non-majority" unions organize actions and pressure for improvements even without formal recognition. It is a promising approach and a departure from the "blitz, lose, and leave" approach that characterized much past organizing. A contemporary TUEL, in this case not controlled by any political group, could coordinate such efforts and provide education and training that unions typically don't. It could be backed by those unions interested in this long-term strategy. Would the AFL-CIO and/or the CTW allow this? While it may seem a long shot today, continued frustration in making sustainable gains might just make such a step more attractive.

Unions in Crisis? presents union activists, leaders, and supporters with a lot of thought-provoking ideas and analysis. It should be read by those who want to make organized labor in the United States a powerful force for social change. In fact, it wouldn't hurt those pursuing some of the dubious directions Schiavone is critical of to read it as well.

Albert Shanker: Ruthless Neo-con

VERA PAVONE AND NORMAN SCOTT

WITH PUBLIC EDUCATION, teacher unions and classroom teachers under one of the most severe attacks in history by corporate funded think tanks, education profiteers, self-proclaimed pundits, and politicians from both parties, along comes a hagiography of Albert Shanker by Richard Kahlenberg, to add to the drumbeat.

Kahlenberg's *Tough Liberal* purports to demonstrate the consistency of Shanker's ideology over time — support for democracy, union militancy, teacher rights, civil rights, equality, strict national educational standards and accountability for teachers — with the massive changes in education that have swept the country.

Kahlenberg lauds Shanker for starting the ball rolling on many of the ideas that ultimately generated No Child Left Behind — federal mandates imposing market-driven forces and enforcing a factory model of schools, with a rigid test-driven agenda where rewards and punishment are based on the degree of success in car-

rying out these mandates. States, local school districts, schools, school leaders, and teachers are expected to adhere to a protocol that includes high stakes testing, frequent and heavy-handed monitoring, pre-approved educational programs, closings of public schools, hiring and firing teachers and supervisors based on a narrow judgment of student achieve-

ment, dumbing down assessments, and forcing school systems to adopt longer school days and years. The initiatives that Shanker claimed would save public education have ended up punishing senior (higher paid) teachers, victimizing struggling students, shifting students to private and charter schools, and hiring private contractors to take over functions formerly under the purview of public systems.

These initiatives unleashed a throng of self-proclaimed educational reformers, few of whom were experienced educators, coming instead from the ranks of lawyers, corporate executives, and think tank researchers. They and their cheerleaders in the news media paint teachers as the enemies of reform. They complain that unions are major obstacles to reform, and they attack contracts that call for limits on class size, limits on time teachers spent in the classroom, allowances for preparation time, and on the traditional union's role in protecting teachers accused of incompetence and malfeasance. They charge teachers with putting their own self-interest ahead of caring about children or education.

The stated rationale behind these drastic changes, beginning with the report *A Nation at*

Tough Liberal: Albert Shanker and the Battles Over Schools, Unions, Race, and Democracy

RICHARD D. KAHLENBERG
N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 2007,
524 pp, \$29.95

VERA PAVONE taught in Brownsville in the mid-1960s. While raising a family, she completed a Masters Degree in Political Economy at The New School. She returned to the NYC school system as a school secretary and retired in 2002. She is one of the founding members of the Independent Community of Educators (ICE), an alternative caucus in the UFT. NORMAN SCOTT spent 35 years in the NYC school system, 30 of them teaching elementary school in Brooklyn. A former chapter leader and delegate at the UFT Delegate Assembly, he began publishing Education Notes, a newsletter for NYC teachers in 1996. A founding member of the Independent Community of Educators (ICE), he writes a daily blog at Ed Notes Online (<http://ednotesonline.blogspot.com>.)

Risk in 1983, is that our education system is failing too many children and requires a top-down overhaul. Kahlenberg praises Shanker for being “astute” enough to jump on board. “Shanker’s embrace . . . represented an enormous departure from past AFT policy. Here was a major labor-union leader endorsing a report that said public education was in trouble, proposed merit pay, had the strong backing of business, deemphasized the importance of labor’s equality agenda, and put emphasis on all kids rather than the poor.” (p. 278)

Rather than marshalling the forces to attack these ideas, Shanker bought into many of them, arguing that teacher unions needed to be part of the reform effort in order to gain a seat at the table. Shanker used the concept of professionalization to win union members over to reforms, but didn’t put up any resistance when it became clear that these very reforms were leading to the marginalization and de-skilling of teachers. Shanker even took part in the assault on teachers when he said “a lot of people who have been hired as teachers are basically not competent” and hinted there were a lot of dumb teachers in American classrooms and “defending teacher incompetence was . . . intolerable and politically unacceptable.” (p. 284) Shanker laid the groundwork for the UFT to allow contractual protections to slip to the extent that even the innocent and competent are sent to teacher detention centers, or so called rubber rooms.

Kahlenberg notes, “The AFT was generally supportive [of NCLB] . . . far more . . . than the NEA, which later sued to have the program halted. This support was consistent with Shanker’s call for greater accountability, and for the federal government to invest in high levels of education for all children. It was also consistent with Shanker’s view that as a political matter, teachers needed to embrace reform and help shape it rather than be seen as obstructionist.” (p. 378)

With NCLB coming under severe criticism

from educators and the general public, Kahlenberg spends the last third of the book justifying Shanker’s views — claiming they were distorted (charter schools) or misunderstood:

Kahlenberg refers to Ocean-Hill Brownsville as a “liberal assault on organized labor.” People on the other side of the issue view the same events as an assault on the parents and communities of people of color by Shanker.

He was really trying to save public education, not contribute to its demise.

In April 2008, on the 25th anniversary of *A Nation at Risk*, educational researcher Richard Rothstein wrote:

A Nation at Risk was well-intentioned, but based on flawed analyses, at least some of which should have been known to the Commission that authored it. The report burned into Americans’ consciousness a conviction that, evidence notwithstanding, our schools are failures, and a warped view of the relationship between schools and economic well-being. It distracted education policymakers from insisting that our political, economic, and social institutions also have a responsibility to prepare children to be ready to learn when they attend school.

By signing on to *A Nation at Risk* in 1983, Shanker created an alliance with the business community, misdirecting the teacher union movement towards a package of misleading reforms. Kahlenberg notes that many of Shanker’s colleagues were dismayed at first, as he portrays him as a lone visionary who had to bring them along. The irony of the lack of an internal democratic debate over these crucial issues in the AFT and the UFT escapes Kahlenberg and he makes short shrift of the fact that Shanker’s Unity

Caucus machine exercises absolute control over the UFT and AFT.

As retired educators who worked in New York City schools through the period when Shanker, followed by Sandra Feldman and Randi Weingarten, ruled the United Federation of Teachers in NYC, we were particularly interested in how Kahlenberg could square Shanker's reputation for militancy with support for a regime that has weakened teacher unionism, demeaned teachers, and undermined public education.

Kahlenberg's re-writing of history gives Shanker the last word on every decision he made, painting him as a realist who knew when to compromise. In Kahlenberg's view Shanker was consistent and tough. In opposition to the soft-hearted liberals in the left-wing of the Democratic Party, he was right: to oppose community control despite the long-lasting rift it caused between teachers and black parents and community members; to oppose affirmative action (quotas) and bilingual education; to support back-to-basics curricula, the war in Vietnam, unlimited military spending, and a hawkish foreign policy.

But we see Shanker's consistency and toughness in a different light. A critical review limits the space to analyze all of his positions, but suffice it to say that Shanker's role vis-à-vis civil rights, equality, and the union movement, was problematic for those involved in these struggles. The foundation of his tough liberalism was an extreme form of anti-communism, which evolved into anti-socialism, anti the New Left, anti half the Democratic Party, anti-anyone or any group that didn't share his antis. This ideology was developed and promoted by Shanker and his close friends and comrades, all followers of Max Shachtman and members of the right-wing branch of the Socialist Party, then the breakoff group Social Democrats-USA (SDUSA).

After the initial formation of the UFT, which in itself is a story that is far more compli-

cated than the grade-school level account given by Kahlenberg, there was a period when Shanker was one of several leaders who forged ahead in uniting teachers into one big union that took on the task of not only defending the rights of teachers, but also addressing the growing civil rights movement that was to have an enormous impact on schools throughout the country.

SHANKER AND OTHERS IN THE LEADERSHIP of the UFT participated in projects to aid the civil rights movement in the south. He allied himself with the most moderate wing of this movement (Bayard Rustin, Roy Wilkins, A. Philip Randolph, and Martin Luther King Jr.), which focused first on integrating public institutions and then on addressing issues of poverty. This approach failed to address the growing anger and militancy of blacks and Latinos who were questioning the systematic social and economic oppression that affected every facet of their lives. Despite his frequent mention of Martin Luther King's relationship to Shanker throughout the book, Kahlenberg doesn't mention the growing gap between their viewpoints during King's last year of life when he began to emphasize a broader view of critical issues — the immorality of the war in Vietnam and the responsibility of corporate America in the continued oppression of minorities. Throughout the early days of Shanker's rule over the UFT, his vaunted militancy was always reserved for the battles that served to justify and bolster his own power and personal trajectory for the union.

In April, 2008, a standing room only crowd of various ages and ethnicities attended a Brecht Forum sponsored event which revisited the 1968 Ocean-Hill Brownsville dispute between the Shanker-led UFT and the local community, evidence of the enormous interest in the events of 40 years ago. It has been argued by many that Shanker's hostility to the community control initiative in the late 1960s, the prolonged series of strikes in 1968, the role of Shanker

and other union leaders in provoking and exacerbating tensions, had consequences for the labor movement and the relationship between teachers and parents/communities, consequences that have lasted up to the present. Ocean-Hill was a seminal event, resulting in changing the political landscape in NYC and beyond. As the key player in the dramatic events, the prolonged work stoppages led by Shanker were the most controversial and commented aspects of his life, and Kahlenberg presents many of the post-1968 moves Shanker made as an attempt to repair his severely damaged reputation.

Kahlenberg refers to Ocean-Hill Brownsville as a “liberal assault on organized labor,” mainly about due process rights and the abandonment of “the idea that race should play no part in who is hired and fired,” an extreme oversimplification. People on the other side of the issue view the same events as an assault on the parents and communities of people of color by Shanker and the UFT. Kahlenberg judges the impact of Ocean-Hill-Brownsville as a “politically disastrous direction for liberalism: a coalition between wealthy whites and angry blacks.” One would be hard put to find people in the black community who feel they have or have ever had the support of wealthy whites.

There is no way to discuss the full ramifications of events of 1968 in this space, but Kahlenberg’s total alignment with Shanker’s actions and positions does an injustice to the vast complexities and implications of the Ocean-Hill Brownsville dispute. Contrast that to the balanced and nuanced account offered by Gerald Podair in *The Strike That Changed New York*, a resource cited by Kahlenberg, but none of the nuances, insights, and analysis Podair brings to the table are reflected in *Tough Liberal*.

Shanker’s true interests became evident during the 1975 New York City financial crisis. There were cataclysmic cutbacks in all city services. For public education this meant the clos-

ing of nearly 100 schools, shortened school days, layoffs of nearly 10,000 teachers, and large salary deferrals. When confronted by an angry membership, Shanker allowed a strike to begin, but his intent was to do nothing to insure its success. Instead of leading a struggle against the financial blackmailers and rich real estate interests that had caused the crisis, he put his main effort into convincing the demoralized membership to accept that there were no alternatives to the massive cutbacks. After the strike’s failure, he even agreed to loan the city hundreds of millions of dollars from the Teacher’s Retirement System. The long lasting impact of his sellout of the strike was that more than 30 years later the UFT has never called another strike and never misses an opportunity to remind teachers of what happened during the 1975 strike as a lesson to be learned.

If Kahlenberg had been a teacher from the late 1960s through the 70s, he would have seen first hand how Shanker used every trick in the book to shut out all opposition voices that called for alliances with other municipal unions to fight against cutbacks in services and fight for an overhaul of municipal tax policy that gave away tax abatements to wealthy corporations, while the city’s bondholders got away with usurious interest rates. Shanker’s maneuverings prevented thousands of teachers opposed to the Vietnam War from debating the UFT and AFT policy of backing the huge military budget and the war, money that could have been used to fully fund every school system in the country; and from debating Shanker’s push for AFT/AFL-CIO involvement in foreign interventions to undermine unions that were considered “too left.” Kahlenberg would have missed discussions an informed, engaged, and militant union should have been having; he would have missed them because they never took place.

Following the banking crisis and settlement, which left teachers and schools reeling, Shanker continued to be a shill for the business

community, as he allowed the union contracts of the 1960s and early 70s to erode incrementally, leading to the present contract which is beyond recognition. Class size was no longer to be negotiated, and supportive services were increasingly optional. With each contract negotiation came the admonition from Shanker and his assistants: If we want higher paychecks we can't ask for better working conditions. Through the next two decades, through upswings and downswings in the national economy and rises and falls in New York City's financial health, there was never enough money for providing schools the basic funding needed to make all schools function successfully.

On a rainy recent March afternoon, a UFT organized demonstration at city hall protested millions of dollars in budget cuts by a dictatorial mayor with a strangle grip on the NYC schools that has shunted aside educators and parents. Thousands of teachers and other school workers were joined by a wide variety of community organizers and politicians. Some of the community organizers said this was the first time since 1968 they had felt comfortable working with the UFT. Although the UFT has had opportunistic relationships with some community groups in the past for a variety of reasons, that has not been viewed by many activists as building real alliances with the community and other unions.

A few blocks away, at the very same moment, the Federal Reserve was handing over billions to bail out brokerage firms that had played fast and loose with money in the

subprime mortgage crisis. In all the speeches by UFT leaders and politicians calling for the restorations of cuts to education, no connection was made to the events taking place just a few minutes' walk away. That a teachers' union refuses to challenge the concept that billions can appear for bailouts and for wars, while accepting the limits put on the piece of the economic pie assigned to education that can never be enough to fix the schools, is Albert Shanker's true legacy.

In his acknowledgements to financial supporters for his book, Kahlenberg lists the Hewlett, Broad, Century, and Thomas B. Fordham Foundations. He states: "Albert Shanker did not fit neatly into existing ideological boxes, so it is perhaps unsurprising that a work to describe his life drew financial support from foundations across the spectrum." We view this support as a very narrow spectrum. It is important for Kahlenberg and his backers to show that everyone who matters is on board — business leaders, foundations, and "responsible" union leaders like Randi Weingarten and Albert Shanker before her. But there is a broader spectrum beyond the NCLB supporters — the vast undercurrent of parents, teachers, students, and independent researchers who are becoming increasingly active in exposing the real crisis in education. Albert Shanker was part of the problem, not the solution.

Michael Hirsch, a member of our editorial board, will be responding to this review in our next issue.

Re-Inventing Goldwater Conservatism

ELIZABETH TANDY SHERMER

BARRY GOLDWATER IS BACK, but his champions today are coming from both the liberal side of the political spectrum as well as the right. If this dynamic seems odd, well it is, for the Arizona Senator's rehabilitation is only possible because of the redefinition that has taken place over the last thirty years in the very meaning of political conservatism, a redefinition in which liberals, who should know better, have been all too complicit.

This recalibration of Goldwater's memory comes to us in two forms. In 2006, C.C. Goldwater, the late Senator's granddaughter, filmed and produced a new documentary, *Mr. Conservative: Goldwater on Goldwater*. Then, in 2007, Princeton University Press reissued Goldwater's *Conscience of a Conservative*, which sold three million copies after its publication in 1960. This slim volume, so instrumental in boosting Goldwater's presidential fortunes, arrives under the editorship of the well-known liberal historian Sean Wilentz, who recruited George Will and Robert Kennedy, Jr. to frame the volume with a foreword and an afterword.

Goldwater is best remembered for his disastrous 1964 presidential campaign, which

challenged the ascendant and seemingly invulnerable liberalism of that era. The Arizona Senator had never been at peace with that progressive order. He had forged his political identity in Depression-era Phoenix, when Goldwater used his influence as a leading retailer to build opposition to the New Deal and the new unions within the city's social clubs, news outlets, and business organizations. In one famous *Phoenix Gazette* editorial, "A Fireside Chat

with Mr. Roosevelt" (1938), the future Senator argued that FDR "turned over to the racketeering practices of ill-organized unions the future of the working man. Witness the chaos they are creating in the eastern cities. Witness the men thrown out of work, the riots, the bloodshed, and the ill feeling between labor and capital and then decide for yourself if that plan worked."

This indictment of New Dealers and their labor politics proved to be Goldwater's political bread and butter. His conservatism was tinged with a pointed economic libertarianism, which rejected the New Deal's effort to build an American version of European social democracy. After World War II, he built his career, first in the city council and then in the U.S. Senate, by denouncing powerful progressive unionists like UAW President Walter Reuther, whom he once declared to be "more dangerous to our country than Sputnik or anything Soviet Russia might do." Goldwater did not like the corrupt Teamster unionist Jimmy Hoffa either,

Mr. Conservative: Goldwater on Goldwater

DIRECTED BY JULIE ANDERSON
Sweet Pea Films, 90 minutes, \$29.99

Conscience of a Conservative

BARRY GOLDWATER
Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press
reissued 2007, 160 pages, \$14.95

ELIZABETH TANDY SHERMER is finishing her dissertation on the history of modern conservatism, focusing particularly on its economic agenda. She is a member of UAW Local 2865, which organizes the UC's teaching assistants and tutors, and also the administrator for the Center for Work, Labor, and Democracy at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

but he told the Senate, "I would rather have Hoffa stealing my money than Reuther stealing my freedom."

Goldwater's increasing notoriety made *Conscience of a Conservative* a best seller in 1960. He and his ghostwriter L. Brent Bozell, William F. Buckley's brother-in-law, offered a

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powerful restatement of the conservative worldview: "The radical, or Liberal, approach has not worked and is not working." The pair condemned New and Fair Dealers as well as moderate Republicans, such as President Dwight Eisenhower, because they allowed "socialism" to subordinate "all other considerations to man's material well-being." All of the chapters touched on issues dividing the nation: the balance between states' rights and civil rights, the increase in taxes and farm subsidies, as well as the expansion of the labor movement and the welfare state. But the villains were not Soviet commissars or domestic Communists. Instead, Goldwater and Bozell trained their fire on laborites and liberals, including those who called themselves moderate Republicans. Targeting these liberal wolves in GOP sheep's clothing was a shift in the Right's strategy, which directed political firepower away from the McCarthyite witch-hunts and towards a political message that sought to undercut postwar

liberalism more directly.

Ronald Reagan's presidency opened the door to a redefinition of the Goldwater legacy. Reagan's accommodation to social-issue conservatives vastly expanded the right-wing voting bloc in U.S. presidential politics and pushed the agenda of the Religious Right much higher on the GOP agenda than it had been in Goldwater's heyday. From this point on the very meaning of conservatism tilted toward a patriarchal gender politics and an overt religiosity alien to the Arizona senator. Liberals were eager to endorse this conservative redefinition, if only because it marginalized issues of economic power, class inequality, and continuing racial injustice. Thus liberals, including Walter Cronkite and Hillary Clinton, have come to argue either that the Arizonan became an actual liberal or charge that the contemporary GOP has shifted far to the right of one of its most dynamic, pioneering figure, whereas conservatives, such as John Dean, celebrate that Goldwater stood up to Richard Nixon during the Watergate scandal, arguing that the Arizonan was a paragon of political virtue. Abortion rights proponents laud Goldwater as an unwavering champion of a woman's right to choose, while LGBTQ advocacy groups evoke the Senator as a critic of the fanatical religious right and a defender of their right to privacy.

These fights to reinvent, rename, and recast Goldwater conservatism give us little insight into the Senator's philosophy but do offer a troubling glimpse into contemporary political debates. *Mr. Conservative* and the new edition of *Conscience* are no exception. Both ignore the core of Goldwater's politics, which was tied to repealing the economic pillars of modern liberalism, because in an era when the Right has invaded American bedrooms, the labor movement is struggling, the New Deal order is in tatters, the civil rights impulse has collapsed, and state's rights racism has been normalized, Goldwater, whose voting record matched that of some of the worst Dixiecrats, looks better or

even benign when compared with contemporary Republicans. For the documentary, C.C. Goldwater recruited a few conservatives, most prominently, John Dean, John McCain, Sandra Day O'Connor, and George Will, and a cavalcade of liberals, including Madeline Albright, Julian Bond, James Carville, Hillary Rodham Clinton, Walter Cronkite, Al Franken, and Ted Kennedy. All of the film's commentators argued that Goldwater would be unhappy with George W. Bush's wing of the Republican Party. Cronkite claimed that the Arizonan "became a liberal." Will maintained that Goldwater did not change. The political agenda changed its focus; the Senator just adapted his libertarian beliefs to the new political reality. While Albright argued, "Today, he looks liberal to me."

THE BULK OF THE FILM focused on Senator Goldwater's post-1964 political grandstanding against the extreme religious right. C.C. juxtaposes footage of Goldwater arguing in the 1980s that "the religious right has no place in politics" with liberals and libertarians celebrating his stance on social issues. C.C. delved deep into her family's personal history to explain the Senator's social politics. The film discussed, at length, the Senator's response to his grandson Ty coming out of the closet. In an interview, Ty explained that his sexuality never bothered the elder Goldwater. According to family members, his grandson led the Senator to recant his opposition to gays in the military. But the emotional climax of the film was C.C.'s interview with her mother, Joanne, about her choice to have an abortion in the 1940s. In a heart-wrenching scene, a teary-eyed Joanne read a letter from her father aloud in which he promised to support her decision.

Startlingly, the film pays scant attention to the elder Goldwater's unfaltering support for American capitalists and undying loathing of American trade unionists. In lieu of engaging with his economic policies, C.C. attempts to explain away his Cold War politics and states'

rights advocacy. Her exploration of his politics begins in 1964. During the election, she suggests, the famous daisy commercial, in which an innocent little girl counting the petals that she pulled off a flower coincides with a countdown to an atomic bomb blast, maligned Goldwater. Her grandfather, she maintains, was not a reckless, trigger-happy cowboy. Yet, she makes this claim with no discussion of his support for strategic bombing and blockades to prevent furthering a land war that he did not believe would subdue the Viet Cong. C.C. goes so far as to suggest that her grandfather would somehow have not escalated the conflict, saving the United States from worsening the imbroglio in Southeast Asia.

The film also goes to great lengths to explain away the Senator's refusal to sign the 1964 Civil Rights Act, putting forth that he was an advocate for equality both when hiring employees for his department store and in state and local efforts to end segregation. His refusal to endorse the bill, the experts in the film claim, was an example of his principled libertarian politics, not overt racism, an argument that highlights how much we have forgotten about the true meaning of "states' rights."

The documentary, as a whole, is disheartening. First, it fails to capture Goldwater's politics, which was as much about stopping the government from policing corporate power and protecting trade unionism as it was about keeping the state out of its citizens' personal affairs. Second, the commentators fail to put Goldwater in the proper context. The Republican Party has steadily worsened on social issues but the GOP was much more divided on civil rights and women's issues when Goldwater was squaring off with the religious right. Most troubling, the liberals involved with the project ignore Goldwater's conservative economic politics outright when they claim that he is one of them, which seems to suggest liberals have no interest in an economic agenda opposed to the contemporary Right's allegiance to disaster

capitalism. *Mr. Conservative*, then, does more to shed a window on contemporary concerns about the Far Right's social agendas and the sad state of modern liberalism than capture the politics of one of the Right's leading figures.

The commentaries in the new edition of *Conscience* are equally maddening. Will's foreword is, unsurprisingly, an unabashed celebration of the statesman. Will offers readers a populist hero, who would cringe at being called "bookish" or an intellectual. This conservative cowboy, jet pilot, renowned photographer, and ham radio operator from Arizona, Will argues, did not look backwards to the conservatism of Edmund Burke or T. S. Eliot but foreword to building a dynamic Republican Party that rejected New Deal liberalism and the old Northeastern GOP which had come to accept it. Moreover, Will celebrates what Goldwater achieved, reminding readers that "In 1960, the top income tax rate was 91 percent, there was a lifetime entitlement to welfare, the economy was much more regulated than it is now, and the Iron Curtain looked like confirmation of George Orwell's image of totalitarianism—'Imagine a boot stamping on a human face—forever.' That 'forever' expired twenty-five years after Goldwater's presidential campaign." Will uses the Senator to advance his concerns about contemporary conservatives, including those in the Republican-controlled Congress, who passed the No Child Left Behind Act, added the prescription drug entitlement to Medicare, and voted for the largest farm subsidies. Moreover, he tries to make a strong case that social conservatives are not Goldwater's heirs, for, Will contends, the Senator believed "that limited government by its limitations nurtures in men and women the responsibilities that make them competent for, and worthy of, freedom."

If Will stands for those contemporary conservatives desperate to stem the tide of voters turning away from the GOP at the polls, then Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., embodies those liberals searching frantically for a con-

servative they can call their own in an age when "liberal" has become the epithet "conservative" once was. The Senator, Kennedy writes, "was neither mean spirited nor racist. Nor was he a mere shill for Wall Street or the wealthy elite. Uncle Jack considered Goldwater a friend and admired him for his many virtues. These included patriotism, courage, humor, his sense of duty and ferocious loyalty to principle, his civility, decency, and his integrity." Kennedy claims, Goldwater "opposed welfare not because he wanted to enrich the wealthy, but because he saw it as a cleverly baited trap that would erode individual self-reliance, subdue the hunger for freedom, subvert character, foster dependency, and dangerously expand government power." According to Kennedy, a select few of Goldwater's followers "auctioned off the planks of Goldwater's conservative platform and sold the soul of the Republican Party to big business and the Christian Right." Now, Kennedy asserts, the GOP dominates politics through "authoritarian preachers, mean-spirited cable-TV bully boys, and AM hate-radio jocks, who gull the movement's foot soldiers with the reliable chestnuts of demagoguery: flag waving, faux morality, scapegoating, and fear." Goldwater and his *Conscience of Conservative*, to Kennedy at least, are reminders "of a political age we have lost—and of a conservatism lost as well."

Kennedy's ham-handed attempts to resurrect Goldwater as an ally of contemporary liberals are ridiculous. Goldwater was not a liberal. He was not a friend to the millions of Americans without health insurance, job security, fair wages, safe working conditions, or access to quality education. His record in the Senate, his remonstrations against the most progressive, social Democratic unions in the country, and his all-out assault on the economic pillars of the New Deal order eroded the legitimacy of and public support for a well-organized, secure trade union movement as well as efforts

to build a social safety net for all Americans. Liberals, who ignore the core of Goldwater's politics in an effort to claim him for a new political constituency based on social pluralism, leave the Democratic Party without an eco-

nomie policy to correct the ills of more than twenty years of destructive, conservative governance. Leading Democrats and liberal pundits should be burying Goldwater, not praising him.

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Requiem for a Nation

REGINALD WILSON

RANDALL ROBINSON HAS WRITTEN a searing, unforgiving expose of the forcible abduction, in February, 2004, of the democratically elected president of Haiti, Jean-Bertrand Aristide, and the consequent deepening wretchedness of its citizens. But he does more than that. In just 270 pages of text, he depicts Haiti from the triumph of the slave revolution in 1804 to the installation of Rene Garcia Preval as president in May, 2006, while thousands of the dissident black population shouted their displeasure and could be heard outside the gates of the presidential palace during the inauguration. Thus, the title, 200 years of unbroken agony.

One would have thought that the president of the United States, Thomas Jefferson, having won his nation's freedom through revolution and having penned those glorious words, "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal . . ." would have welcomed another revolution in the Americas from a despotic foreign colonial ruler. But instead, unsurprisingly, Jefferson, a slave-owner himself, said, "If this combustion can be introduced among us . . . we have to fear it." His fellow revolutionary, George Washington added, "[It is] lamentable to see such a spirit of revolution among the blacks." Imagine!

From 1791 to 1804 the African slaves of Haiti, under the brilliant generalship of

Toussaint L'Overture, himself a former slave, fought and defeated the armies of France, England and Spain. Over 150,000 slaves of about

465,000 fighters died in the war — one third of the African fighters were killed! This was a more costly war and a more auspicious victory than the American rebellion! "How did a force of ill-

equipped ex-slaves defeat the best that Europe could muster against it?" Robinson quite rightly asks. "[A] great many had served in African armies prior to their enslavement . . . sixty to seventy percent of the adult slaves listed on . . . inventories in the late 1780s and 1790s were African born . . ." (John K. Thornton, "African Soldiers in the Haitian Revolution," *Journal of Caribbean History*, 25, 1993). It was the only successful slave rebellion in the history of the world, with black slaves defeating three European armies and losing a third of their fighting manhood! The winners of this magnificent achievement lay prostrate despite their victory — penniless, their educated classes fleeing, without an economy and ripe for exploitation or help from the developed nations of the world.

I

"IN THE WAKE OF THE BLOODY twelve-and-a-half-year revolt, thousands — French colonial officials, dispossessed white planters, middle-class free Haitian coloreds — fled . . . Haiti for 'safety' [mostly to the eastern end of the island which later became the Dominican Republic] . . . and beyond, thus roiling slave plantations as far afield as Jamaica, Louisiana and South Caro-

An Unbroken Agony: Haiti, From Revolution to the Kidnapping of a President

RANDALL ROBINSON

New York: Basic Books, 2007
280 pp., \$26

REGINALD WILSON is a member of the editorial board of *New Politics*. He is Senior Scholar Emeritus of the American Council of Education.

lina," reports Robinson. Immediately, President Jefferson proposed an embargo on the island, and refused to extend diplomatic recognition to the new nation, though it immediately extended recognition to the new revolutionary nation of France. Indeed, France itself demanded \$21 billion (2004 dollars) in reparations from Haiti for the loss of its most profitable foreign colony!

"For the next two hundred years, Haiti would be faced with active hostility from the world's most powerful community of nations . . . [as] late as 1915, 111 years after the successful slave revolt, some 80 percent of the Haitian government resources were being paid out in debt service to French and American banks on loans that had been made to enable Haiti to pay reparations to France." Besides this, "The Haitian economy has never recovered from the financial havoc France and America wreaked upon it during and after slavery." And, indeed, in 1915 Haitians suffered under occupation by American Marines for 22 years and Haiti was required to pay \$16 million of a loan from the U.S. government for its "debt" to France. Haiti itself was ruled by a string of U.S. imposed and armed, black and mulatto dictators: Francois "Papa Doc" Duvalier, Jean Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, Henry Namphy, Leslie Manigat, and Prosper Avril. Haiti has long been viewed by the world, and indeed by blacks in the United States, on seeing blacks ruled by blacks, as nothing but "that black mess." In fact, in my talking to a few Jamaican Americans, they expressed the view held commonly by fellow islanders: "they just need to get themselves together," "they are mostly ignorant peasants," "they need to be more like us."

It was revealing to me to accompany a group of presidents from historically black col-

It was the only successful slave rebellion in the history of the world, with black slaves defeating three European armies and losing a third of their fighting manhood!

leges to Haiti, in 1981. I went along as an observer for the American Council on Education. It was evident that the presidents were more comfortable dealing with the mulatto, educated elites than with the throngs of black peasants

who followed them everywhere and tried to talk to them. Indeed, the attitude of Americans, and especially black Americans, requires an extensive quote from Randall Robinson's book in partial explanation of this phenomenon:

The Bush administration knew that when it came to Haiti, which was commonly perceived to be uniformly black and poor, it could do virtually anything that it wished, without political or strategic consequences. In the eyes of the administration, no one who counted would suffer in Haiti, and no one who counted in the United States would care. Black Haitian democrats had no force or friends in America who mattered to the Republican president or to the U.S. Congress.

As a matter of fact, Robinson mentions that when he urged a protest in front of the South African embassy, many prominent blacks, including several black Congresspeople, joined him and eagerly went to jail. They saw that they were protesting white oppression of blacks. But when he urged a hunger strike to protest the oppression of blacks in Haiti, no one joined him in what was perceived to be, that "black mess." An understanding of that common perception of Haiti is necessary to understand the fate of President Jean Bertrand Aristide.

II

ON JANUARY 1, 2004, on the National Palace grounds of Port-au-Prince, Haiti, President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa gave an address in celebration of Haiti's bicentennial of free-

dom. The Haitian president, Jean Bertrand Aristide, began to speak and thousands of Haitians began to roar. They surged forward, overcoming the security guards, and came to the foot of the platform. ("They're going to riot," said someone). But instead, the thousands gathered clapped and cheered for their president. Robinson, who was on the platform, leaned over to his neighbor and said, "No one can say he does not have the support of the people." The neighbor said, "Well, eighty to ninety percent [of the people may support him] but they're not the ones who count."

When Aristide was elected president by popular vote, he promised modestly to bring the poor blacks "from misery to poverty with dignity." The rich, for the first time, would be required to pay significant taxes for electricity and telephone services. Before he became president, Haitian citizens were described by birth in two separate categories: the status of those reserved for whites, mulattoes, and the city born minority were citizens; the majority of blacks born in the countryside were designated as peasants. Aristide vowed to change that to one category of citizenship. He promised to raise the pittance the workers received to a modest wage. The plant and field owners howled. This was more than the white plant owners and their American overseers could stand. "Washington responded by stoking violence which it then used to label Haiti and its bicentennial celebration unsafe for Americans and foreign visitors" to attend, Robinson reports.

"They're planning a coup, you know," said Maxine Waters, congresswoman from California. "I've been going to receptions [and over-hearing] at various hotels over the past few days." The United States, through every means, tried to keep the world away from Haiti's bicentennial celebration. "It warned the world away from a Haitian celebration that it had calculatedly endeavored to ruin."

Guy Phillipe, a Haitian thug and former policeman, had been selected by the CIA for

military training in Ecuador. He led a small group of rebels who, despite their size, were heavily armed, uniformed, and trained by the U.S. army in the Dominican Republic, which had "long enjoyed a warm working relationship with the United States." Phillipe and his band of rebels were marching across Haiti, killing the poorly armed government troops, and vowing to kill the president upon arriving in the capital. Phillipe was supported by Andy Apaid, a Syrian American, who operated several large sweatshops in Haiti. He was not a Haitian citizen, but he was a member of Group 184, a wealthy antidemocratic group "that had been demanding the president's resignation and exit, as if two decisive and undisputed nationwide presidential elections had not occurred."

Before the president's election, Haiti was similar to racist South Africa. In exchange for the trappings of state power, the dictator Duvalier and his successors gave to the white and mulatto upper class *carte blanche* to suppress and exploit the largely poor and illiterate black labor force in anyway it saw fit. "This was the Faustian bargain that Aristide threatened with his stunning first election victory." He threatened to empower the poor to take their fate in their own hands and to rule themselves. Neither the Americans nor their white and mulatto satraps could allow this to happen. This was similar to the attempt to organize a coup against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela. American power and control in Latin America and the West Indies was maintained by having compliant local rulers while the wealth and resources flowed to the United States. Aristide did not fit that mold and had to be deposed.

III

AS THE REBELS GATHERED MOMENTUM in their rampage across Haiti and vowed to topple the national government, Ron Dellums, former American congressman and advisor to president Aristide, received a call from Colin Powell, the U.S. Secretary of State. Powell told Dellums that

the rebels were coming to kill President Aristide, and that the United States would do nothing to protect him. Again, Randall Robinson:

Colin Powell, the secretary of state, and Condoleezza Rice, the national security advisor, were among the most respected people in America. More importantly, they were black. If they didn't care what was happening to Haiti's democracy, why would an archly conservative white American president, at whose small-minded pleasure they relished to serve, care? After all, the machinations of the two of them together were largely the reason what was happening to Haiti was indeed happening.

Colin Powell's attempt to frighten Aristide to abdicate his legitimate presidency and flee the country did not work. The French foreign minister, Domonique de Villepin, publicly criticized Aristide and "called for a new government in transition" that would not include Aristide. Jamaican Prime Minister Patterson threatened to "impose sanctions on Aristide." Louis Moreno of the U.S. embassy, said to the president, "Mr. President . . . it's too bad that I'm the one who has to announce to you that you've got to go." But, Aristide was determined to stay in Haiti and support his people no matter what the consequences. So a more drastic solution to the United States problem would have to be found.

On February 29, 2004, at 3:15 A.M., two U.S. Special Forces soldiers appeared at the president's home. They carried M16s and wore full battle dress. Outside, there were twenty or thirty soldiers on the walls that surrounded the house. President Aristide and his wife, Mildred, were escorted to a waiting SUV and joined a convoy of suburbans going straight to the airport. They were boarded on an unmarked plane with the shades drawn for the long flight to the Central African Republic. Why the Central African Republic, halfway around the world? Because the rulers of the CAR had been pressured by the United States and France to grant the Aristides exile status, and the heads of the

Caribbean nations had been threatened not to give the Aristides assistance.

The Bush administration immediately began to demonize Aristide. They stated, falsely, that Aristide had voluntarily left Haiti, that his

"Mr. President, it's too bad that
I'm the one who has to announce
to you that you've got to go."

government was corrupt, and that the majority of the Haitian people were glad to see him go. The American media overwhelmingly touted the administration line and the American people were either indifferent or accepted the administration's position.

Yet this was about a president "of a country, who opened schools and clinics for the poor . . . who opened his home on Fridays, without fail, to scores of homeless and poverty-stricken children — a man such as this . . . was seen as a hero by the vast majority of his people."

Senator Jesse Helms called Aristide "a psychopath" on the floor of the Senate. The media portrayed Aristide as "dictatorial," "tyrannical," and "corrupt." Colin Powell called Aristide's claim that he had been abducted "absurd . . . he was not kidnapped. We did not force him onto the airplane." Senator Christopher J. Dodd, Democrat of Connecticut, was at least, more honest. He later said, "We had interests and ties with some of the very strong financial interests in the country, and Aristide was threatening them."

Randall Robinson:

I was ashamed. Ashamed of my country. Ashamed of official America, crouched cruel and hiding behind the curtain of public ignorance. Ashamed of the Colin Powells and the Condoleezza Rices who, steeled by unmerited prestige, took full advantage of an American civil rights movement they never participated

in, to become their own people's worst enemies.

The book concludes with the inauguration of Rene Preval, sitting beside Jeb Bush, governor of Florida. The shouts of disapproval, for the unpunished anti-Aristide members on the rostrum, could be heard by the thousands of black peasants outside the national palace gates — still tenacious, still determined.

A few criticisms of the book: Robinson never treats Aristide as anybody other than as a martyred saint. We need to know of any political mistakes Aristide made. We need an explanation of the damning claim of “necklacing” (burning rubber tires around the necks of foes) that was made against Aristide. Perhaps Aristide had nothing to do with this practice, but it does deserve comment because of its notoriety. When and why did Aristide leave the priesthood?

Robinson doesn't tell us. The book itself could be better organized. It consists of pithy, brief chapters, but their dates jump from a date in 1492, to a date in 2003, to a date in 1804, etc. This is somewhat confusing to the reader.

Nevertheless, Robinson's book illustrates, in its most blatant form, the imposition of American imperial power on a small, defenseless nation that was struggling to lift its people out of poverty. It further illustrates that both Democrats and Republicans of the American ruling class have a common interest when their international economic and power interests are threatened. And, perhaps most sad, the skin color of the servants who carry out the orders of their masters is irrelevant.

In the larger context, the United States has always considered Latin America its particular colony. Through various stratagems — both economic and military — the United States maintains control over the countries but prefers that its authority be exercised through native puppets to give some pretense of democracy. The Organization of American States, the United Fruit Company, the World Bank, and so forth, are some of the means used to achieve United States control. A wealthy native upper class that enriches itself and is all too willing to carry out the suppression and impoverishment of its lower and working classes is easily found. Thus, the Latin American countries stand by, impotent, as Woodrow Wilson sends the marines to take over the government of the Dominican Republic or the CIA topples the elected government of Guatemala or Reagan invades Grenada, and on and on, with impunity. Consequently, the abduction of President Aristide and the suppression of Haiti's nascent democracy was particularly swift and ruthless, to serve as a lesson to other countries. But other countries are tentatively showing their independence: Morales in Bolivia, Chavez in Venezuela, Lula in Brazil. We wait with curiosity to see what the future brings.

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Interview with Kevin Pyle

KENT WORCESTER

KEVIN PYLE is a cartoonist and graphic novelist whose work regularly appears in *World War 3 Illustrated*, the long-running magazine of political comics. His first book, *Lab U.S.A.* (2001), used disturbing imagery to reveal the hidden history of medical and scientific experimentation on human subjects. His most recent book, *Blindspot* (2007), is a graphic coming-of-age story about a group of boys who play war games in the woods beyond their suburban homes. His illustrations have appeared in the *National Law Journal*, the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, and other publications. In January 2008, Kevin sat down with Kent Worcester to talk about comics, art, and political activism.

KW: Where did you grow up?

KP: I was born in California, but didn't live there very long. I was raised in a suburb outside of Philadelphia, and then in a suburb outside of Chicago. I went to the University of Kansas for college. My father passed away while I was in college and my mom moved back to California, so I pretty much left for college and lived in Kansas after that. In some ways I grew up in Kansas.

KW: What led you to Kansas?

KP: In researching colleges, I wanted to study painting and drawing, and my parents wanted me to study advertising, so this was a compromise. It was about as far as they would let me get



Taken from Blindspot



Taken from Katman



Taken from Prison Town

away from home — a twelve-hour drive. Apart from its location, I mainly picked Kansas because of its program in art and design. When I started I was focusing on painting, and the department was filled with abstract expressionists. I wanted to do figurative work. I was into punk imagery and there wasn't any place for me in the painting program. I drifted into illustration, and I was lucky because there were a couple of illustrators who had done interesting work. When I moved to New York I had some contacts and was able to get into the business.

KW: Why did you move to New York?

KP: To become an illustrator. Mind you, I really enjoyed living in Lawrence, Kansas. It was the first place I lived, after growing up in suburbs, where there was a distinctive local culture. The places where I lived never really had any sort of history.

KW: Was it music that turned you onto politics?

KP: In some ways it was. The only images I responded to as a kid were record covers. I'd see these elaborately painted covers for heavy metal covers and so on. I relied on music stores for my aesthetic sense. And punk rock got me interested in larger social questions. Many people don't realize that heavy metal has a strange political dimension as well. It is very apocalyptic. But punk was

key. When I first started seeing work by artists like Sue Coe, and other contributors to *Raw* magazine, I was struck by the affinity between their work and punk iconography. Stuff like Winston Smith's *Dead Kennedys* cover artwork got me excited by the word and picture interface.

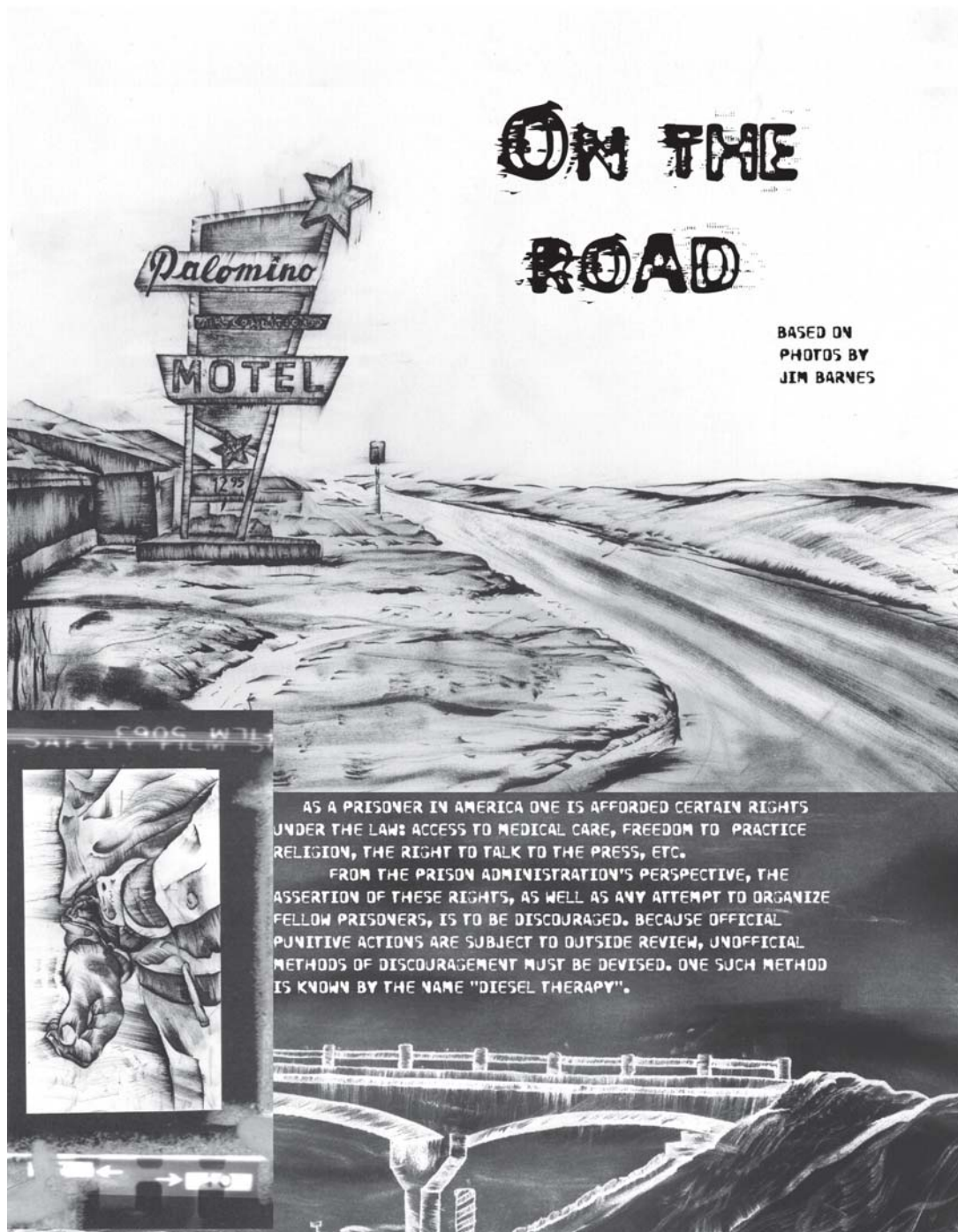
There was quite a lot of radical politics in Lawrence. I knew some folks, for example, who were very involved in anti-Contra activities, and I was impressed by their commitment. I was there when they thought they had achieved this great success through Congressional legislative action, but it wasn't long after that that the Iran-Contra scandal broke. As a kid growing up in the Midwest, I hadn't really thought there would be that level of corruption or injustice in the system. That started to get me politicized.

KW: Were you interested in underground comics?

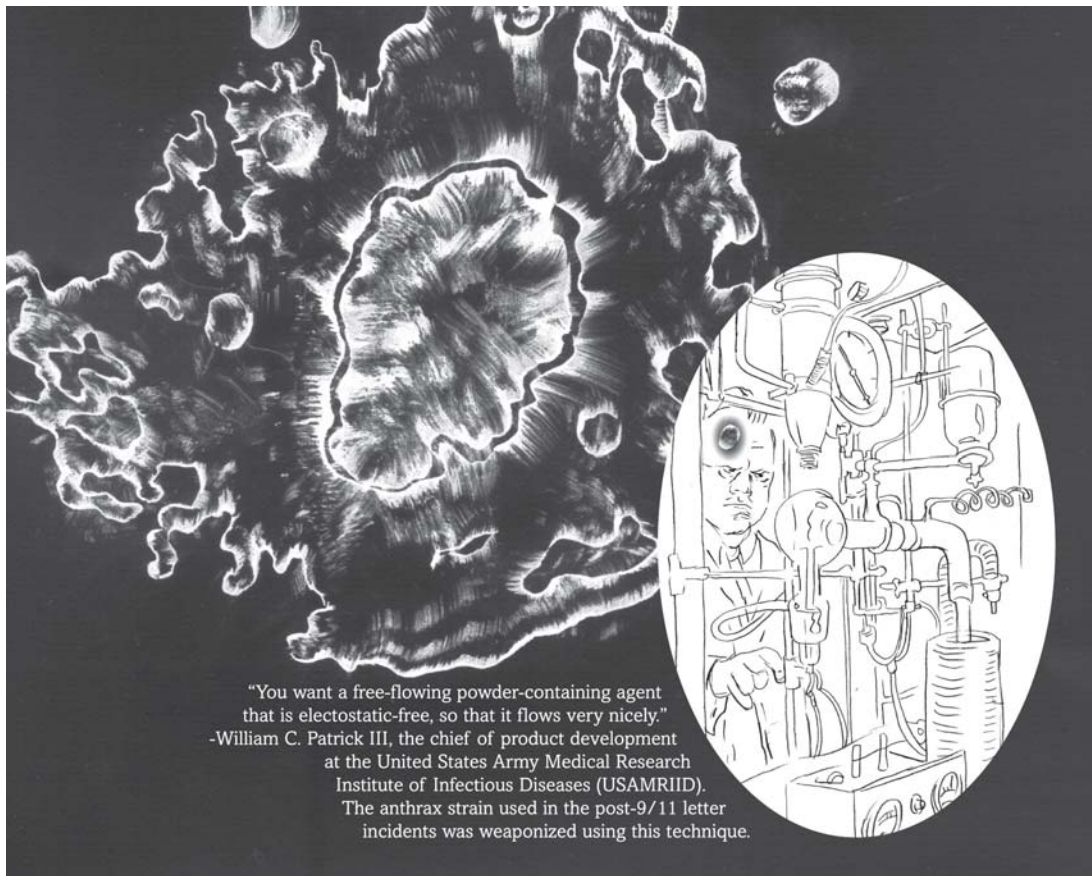
KP: I'd seen some of that stuff in record stores and so on, and I wasn't that engaged by it. But at college I was interested in the connection between dada and punk. I was thinking about posters and stencils rather than comics.

KW: What sorts of comics helped change your mind?

KP: *Raw* magazine. I particularly loved Gary Panter's work, including his comic *Jimbo*. *Raw* also got me excited about moving to New York. Part of growing up in the suburbs is that I was



Taken from Lab U.S.A.



Taken from Lab U.S.A.

drawn to the city because I wanted to experience a different way of living.

KW: How did you become involved in the World War 3 Illustrated collective?

KP: I'd seen the magazine in Kansas, and saw it as part of the zine culture that I was interested in. I even started drawing some comics in my last year in Kansas — very stream of consciousness. When I moved to New York I moved to Williamsburg, and I started doing a comic for a local arts newspaper called *The Worm*. My comic was called the *Bonduras Baby*, which was a non-sensical comic. The comic was always a three or four panel comic that ended with the punch line "Bonduras Baby," which never made any sense. While I was doing that, I became active in the

local arts scene, and there was a space called Minor Injury Gallery that I was asked to direct in 1990. I brought in stuff that I liked, as well as locally curated shows. I met *World War 3* folks through the gallery, and the first issue I worked on was devoted to the first Gulf War.

Initially, the comics I published in *WW3* had a Brechtian quality. I created a character called the Odious Omnivore, who was a greedy capitalist without pants who would run around eating and excreting while giving speeches about the importance of free markets and so on. At the same time, I was also creating collages that incorporated narrative elements as well as aesthetic choices. This laid the basis for the artwork that appeared in *Lab U.S.A.* I found incriminating documents on the Department of

Energy website and used their language in the book. It became an investigation into how scientific language can be used to objectify people, and how the individual would become subsumed into these ideological imperatives like racism and paranoia. Because the material is so shocking, I did not want to come across as conspiratorial. So I used objective reportorial language, and the pictures were almost always based on photographs. I came to think of *Lab U.S.A.* as a docu-comic that focuses on death and exploitation.

At the same time, seeing the paintings of Leon Golub and how he handled political violence had a big influence on my approach to the *Lab U.S.A.* material. His “Interrogation” series has the quality of being both expressionistic and reportorial, which for me makes them more effective than the sort of raised fist iconography you see so much of.

KW: Lab U.S.A. sounds like a return to the heavy metal themes of your adolescence.

KP: In some ways I thought of the book as a horror story. I also thought of it in the context of punk. It is an incredibly angry book. And a lot of it is gruesome. To really understand the horror of things like the Tuskegee syphilis experiments you have to see what was actually done to the victims. Several of the chapters deal with attempts to control the behavior of prisoners — behavioral modification. That led to my involvement in efforts to use comics to talk about conditions in prison and the impact of the prison economy on individual families and local communities. This work overlaps with my graphic novels *Blindspot* and the forthcoming *Katman*. I’ve become interested in how to draw comics where the setting is an actual character in the story. Just by putting words and pictures together you can place characters in settings that reflect and deepen the story.

KW: Comics are already maps.

KP: Yes. They are like maps that you can put stories on. *Blindspot* started with a map, in fact.

Both *Blindspot* and *Katman* include nods to history. Ideas of history permeate both books. A lot of comics exist in a world that is completely separate from the world we live in. I’ve done comics on institutional violence, and the prison economy, but I also like the idea of placing fictional stories in the context of a politicized environment.

KW: You seem to be emphasizing the continuity between Lab U.S.A. and Blindspot, whereas for many readers these would appear to be very different books.

KP: The connections are there, as is the underlying sensibility. But the books are also quite different. When I was finished with *Lab U.S.A.* I wasn’t even sure that I would want to read it! It’s like that first punk rock album that is relentless. There was no effort on my part to seduce the reader — the book doesn’t even have characters. I’m proud of the book, but now I’m taking the same sensibility and weaving it into narrative stories.

KW: Is there a label for what you do? Are you a political cartoonist, or an editorial cartoonist?

KP: Right now I’m a graphic novelist who wants to produce stories that have a moral center to them. *Blindspot* and *Katman* both have this twisted or dark after-school-special quality to them. But they don’t shy away from themes of abandonment, masculinity, and so on. It’s hard to classify myself as a particular type of artist.

KW: Have you had much feedback from readers of Blindspot?

KP: The best feedback I’ve had is from kids in my neighborhood, including one kid who told his parents, “This is how I feel.” I was supposed to set up a MySpace page to engage teen readers, but I haven’t done so yet. I’ve also received some encouraging letters from younger readers.

KW: Do you find it therapeutic to work on stories that overlap with your own adolescence?

KP: Well, not too much. I look at it more this way. I was a kid who got into a fair amount of trouble, but I never thought of myself as a bad

person. I'm trying to tell stories about kids who are risk-takers. I'm just mining the valuable experiences I've had and using them to tell larger stories. Less than fifty per cent of *Blindspot* is autobiographical. I don't feel like I have unresolved issues from my childhood. But I like telling stories about the transitional moments that shape people's lives.

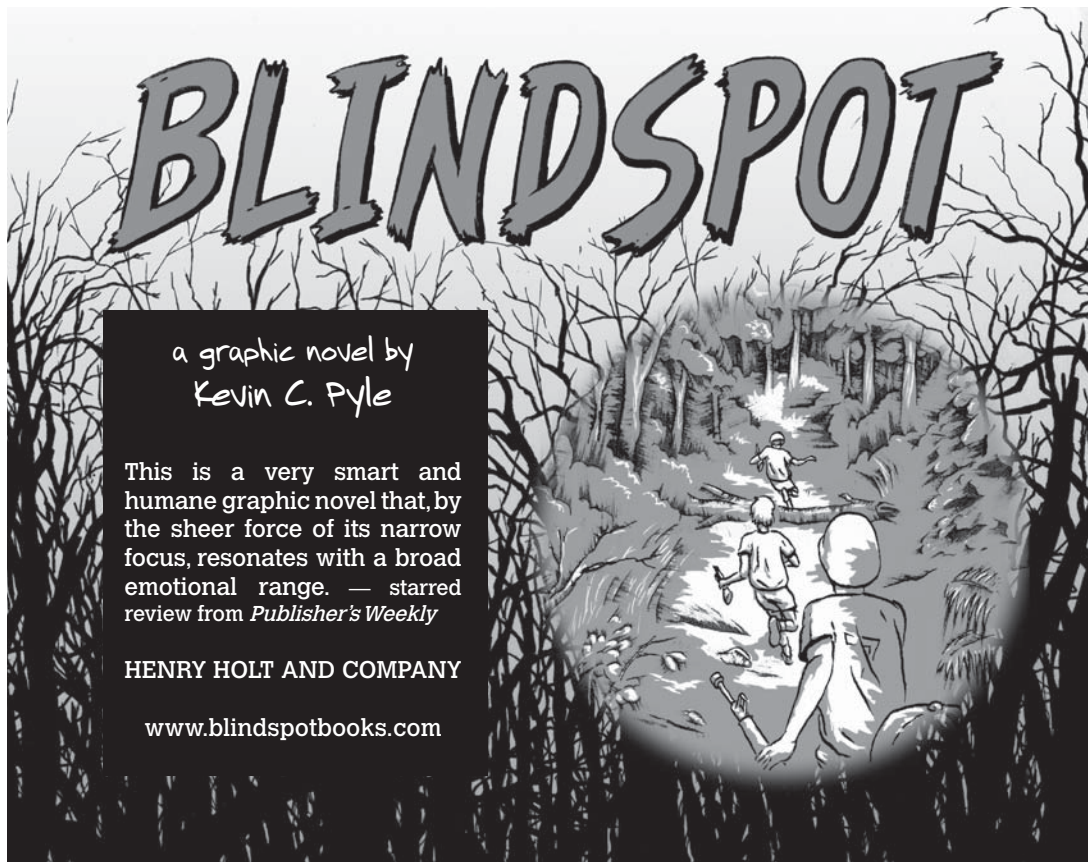
I find a lot of inspiration in the work of contemporary fiction writers. For example, I really like the short stories and novels of Russell Banks, such as *Rule of the Bone*, as well as books by Haruki Murakami. I often like stories written for adult readers that include younger characters.

KW: Who else is doing cartooning with a moral/political center whose work excites you?

KP: I'm often attracted to stuff that doesn't look

like my own work. For example, I really liked *Aya*, which was published last year by Drawn and Quarterly; it has a strong humanity to it. I love James Romberger's stuff. His graphic novel *Seven Miles a Second* is a touchstone for me. One of the founders of *WW3*, Seth Tobocman, is doing strong work about post-Katrina housing issues in New Orleans. Another *WW3* regular is Susan Willmarth. She recently created a great comic on the impact of criminal justice on women and children. It's called *Prisoners of a Hard Life*. Her work has a particular raw and yet detailed quality that I really like. I also enjoyed Alison Bechdel's *Fun Home*, which is beautifully written.

KENT WORCESTER is the co-editor (with Jeet Heer) of *The Comics Studies Reader* (University Press of Mississippi, forthcoming).



New Politics
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The liberal adoption of “the privacy principle” is an effective shield against letting too much subversive information get through, the equivalent of building a wall between gay and straight.

MARTIN DUBERMAN
GAY LEFTIE SEEKS STRAIGHT FRIENDS



The question for Israel is whether they can in fact count on continued U.S. total (or near-total) support. I doubt it.

IMMANUEL WALLERSTEIN
THE UNITED STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST



Perhaps the most disturbing trend is the rise in the dropout (or pushout) rate in many districts.

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