

C o n t e n t s

DISCUSSION: THIRD PARTY POLITICS	5
David Reynolds/Eric Chester/Thomas Harrison	
Jane Slaughter/Paul Buhle	
IN DEFENSE OF SOCIAL SECURITY	21
Marvin Mandell	
TAXATION AND THE DEFICIT SCAM	30
John Chiaradia	
ECOLOGY AND SOCIAL CHANGE	35
Lorna Salzman	
ENGLAND: THE RETURN OF HOPE	38
Sean Matgamna	
BAYARD RUSTIN AND THE BLACK PROTEST MOVEMENT	41
Stephen Steinberg	
ALBERT SHANKER: NO FLOWERS	51
Paul Buhle	
EUGENE GENOVESE AND SOUTHERN CONSERVATIVES	59
Alex Lichtenstein	
NATHAN GLAZER AND MULTICULTURALISM	69
Barry Goldberg	
SOCIAL SCIENTISTS AND WAR CRIMINALS	77
Martin Oppenheimer	
MEXICAN STANDOFF	88
Phillip Smith	
THE EAST GERMAN CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT	98
Hanna Behrend	
DEMONIZING THE GERMANS	109
Horst Brand	
KAFKA AND LIBERTARIAN SOCIALISM	120
Michael Löwy	
NO! IN THUNDER: ALLEN GINSBERG 1926-1997	132
Scott McLemee	
THE ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENT IN VIETNAM	135
Loren Goldner	
ON BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISM	142
Barry Finger	
THE RUSSIAN QUESTION AND AMERICAN SOCIALISM	151
Julius Jacobson	
BOOK REVIEWS	175
Steve Vieux\Phyllis Jacobson\Thaddeus Russell	
Stephen R. Shalom\Kent Worcester\Raymond Challinor	
EXCHANGE	192
Edward S. Herman/Jesse Lemisch	

DISCUSSION

What follows is a discussion of Third Party Politics initiated by Thomas Harrison's article "Angry Voters with No-where to Go" that appeared in the Winter 1997 issue.

Angry Voters Do Have Somewhere to Go

David Reynolds

IN THE WINTER 1997 *NEW POLITICS*, THOMAS HARRISON ELOQUENTLY identified the changing political environment which has made third party politics not just desirable but actually possible. Today, progressive activists must not only take seriously the prospects for a left political movement, but place their actual time and effort into organizing it. Unfortunately, Harrison follows his excellent analysis with misconceptions about current third party efforts.

In his article, Harrison should have distinguished between running candidates in elections and building a political movement. For example, the "common sense" mainstream wisdom defines politics in the narrow terms of electioneering. Indeed, both major parties offer only candidate-centered, vote-getting machines. However, progressives cannot afford to aim for a left version of mainstream politics by focusing simply on how to run candidates. For one thing, the media on which mainstream candidates rely is quite hostile to progressives. Furthermore, we do not have access to corporate campaign donations. Nor do we really want to focus on the candidate's personality and image appeal used by the two major parties. In short, to be successful, progressives cannot afford to simply run left candidates. We need to build a political movement.

A political movement is, in the broadest sense, a social movement. That means coalition-building among progressive organizations. It means converting the laundry lists of left ideas into comprehensive plans for actually governing. With such a new vision, progressives can redefine the political discussion so that the right debates our agenda rather than the other way around. Most important, progressive independent poli-

DAVID REYNOLDS teaches in Labor Studies at Wayne State University. His book on current third party organizing, *Democracy Unbound: Progressive Challenges to the Two Party System* is published by South End Press.

tics must be a movement of ordinary people politically active 365 days a year and not just during an election season. Such a movement must foster lasting political organizations that serve as living and breathing parts of people's communities.

By focusing on how to run left candidates, Harrison does not raise the more profound issue of how we can build a viable political movement. As a result, he prioritizes the relative merits of local versus national races in the wrong direction, incorrectly frames the issue of interaction with the Democratic Party, and completely misrepresents the strategy of the New Party. Harrison suggests reversing the order of progressive priorities by looking toward a high-profile national race such as Nader's bid for the presidency. This strategy, however, replicates mainstream politics by relying on charismatic candidates running in big-name races and winning sufficient national media coverage to actually inform people about the campaign. It also requires unions and other progressive organizations to take a high-profile leap of faith into political independence behind a bid for an office that conventional wisdom would say is hopeless.

Progressives cannot use mainstream methods to promote left politics. To overcome media hostility, the left has to use the one resource advantage it has: grassroots "people power." Progressive campaigns that mobilize hundreds and thousands of volunteers in their individual communities have a proven track record of success but they take time to develop. "Big name" races are not the place to start. Nor are progressives going to overcome people's cynicism about the prospect for change by running for offices for which they currently do not have the grassroots capacity. Winning five percent or less of the vote inspires no one. It simply confirms their skepticism.

In doing research for my book, *Democracy Unbound*, I traveled throughout the country interviewing activists involved in various kinds of independent progressive politics. The groups that have done the best jobs of building real grassroots organizations — ones that last over time, utilize ongoing coalitions, and involve ordinary, previously apolitical Americans — have relied first on entering winnable local contests. While the left does not yet have the grassroots capacity to elect Ralph Nader as President of the United States, we can elect people right now to school boards, city councils, and county commissions. Harrison argues that these races are less important. I disagree. The Christian Right has effectively demonstrated that these local offices make decisions which have a real impact on people's lives.

For example, the future of public education is being fought out right now in the nation's local school boards. Progressives can easily show how local governments hand over millions of taxpayer dollars every year to companies on rather vague promises of creating jobs. Most important, both the Christian Right and progressive groups have used local contests to build effective grassroots organizations.

Bernie Sanders did not become the sole independent in the U.S. House of Representatives by leaping into Congressional elections. During most of the 80s he led the Progressive Coalition's takeover of politics in Burlington, Vermont's largest city. He also gained the grassroots network built by the Vermont Rainbow Coalition's years of running insurgent Democrats for the state legislature. Sanders was able to win Congressional office in 1990 because his proven track record and grassroots capacity meant that he entered the race as

a serious contender rather than a hopeless spoiler who would permit the Republican candidate to win. By contrast, among the diverse Greens we can identify some fledgling local and state groups that chose to leap immediately into state and Congressional battles, neglecting less flashy local contests. Winning only a small percent of the vote and attracting, at best, only modest numbers of new recruits, such groups remain small groupings of Green activists, rather than growing community organizations.

OF ALL THE NATIONAL THIRD PARTY GROUPS, THE NEW PARTY has clearly emerged as most effective at grassroots organizing precisely because they understand the wisdom of "thinking global, but acting local." While Harrison may have had some unfortunate experiences in New York, judging from a national perspective and from the experience of their strongest state chapters, I believe that Harrison misunderstands the New Party's use of the Democratic ballot line. He is mistaken when he says that the New Party endorsed Clinton. Such an action is completely out of line with their strategy. With strategic horizons that focus on building a broad political movement, the New Party's tactics revolve around how best to foster active local groups that will sink real roots into their communities. Electorally, it focuses on running candidates in races it can win or demonstrate a strong showing.

Most New Party campaigns have been local and most (80%) in non-partisan contests. When local activists feel that an independent bid for a partisan race is viable they have run third party candidates. Last November, the Minnesota New Party actively backed Cam Gordon's Green Party bid for state assembly. Gordon did well with 25% of the vote. However, when a fledgling local New Party chapter feels that it could gain from winning certain partisan races but does not have the current strength to do so on a third party line, it may enter a Democratic primary. Roughly 15% of New Party candidates have run using the Democrats' ballot line. Harrison confuses this tactical choice with a strategic orientation. Because he defines politics in terms of candidates running in elections, he concludes that any decision to use the Democratic Party label must implicitly involve support for the Democratic Party. There are groups, such as the state level labor-community electoral coalitions found in many New England states, that run progressive activists in Democratic primaries with the strategic goal of transforming the local Democratic Party. The New Party, however, is not a party-within-a-party, but an independent political organization that chooses to run some candidates as Democrats as one way of building its grassroots organization. Indeed, generally speaking, these "New Party Democrats" have come out of grassroots organizing. Their orientation and loyalty is to the broader movement, not to the Democratic Party. Indeed, local New Party groups commonly have their candidates sign contracts agreeing to support movement-building by placing the New Party's name on all their literature, speaking at New Party events, and promoting the New Party's issues.

History suggests that the key guarantee to keeping officeholders accountable to their supporters and independent politics is not necessarily the party label they used to get elected. Early this century, the growing Socialist Party, in cities such as Schenectady, New York, had problems with candidates who were elected as Socialists only to repudiate their radical roots after policy

disputes erupted over how to govern. Candidate loyalty and real public education require an active grassroots base with the power to hold elected officials accountable and to provide the "street heat" needed to overcome the considerable obstacles that any progressive government will face.

FUSION, THE PRACTICE OF TWO PARTIES ENDORSING THE CANDIDATE, is illegal in most states precisely because third parties can use it effectively. One hundred years ago the Populists, in states such as Kansas, used fusion with the Democrats to elect quite radical governments. In cases where they had a strong grassroots base, the Populists succeeded in using fusion while remaining true to their political third party principles. In other states, like Nebraska, where the grassroots movement was weak, fusion politics did open the door for opportunistic politicians, not committed to the roots of populism, to gain elected office with decision-making power within the People's Party. That history indicates that fusion and "New Party Democrats" are not without risk. But it also shows that using such methods do not mean a group has sold out or that these are only "semi-independent semi-alternatives," as Harrison mistakenly says in describing the New Party.

Indeed, what is missing from Harrison's article is any sense of the vast array of grassroots political organizing that must go on outside the electoral process. A progressive political movement is built not just by running candidates. Indeed, non-electoral work has proven crucial for fostering ongoing grassroots groups that remain strong regardless of the current election cycle. Had Harrison had available material on the New Party's substantial non-electoral involvement he might have better appreciated its political independence. The New Party has fought for issues clearly outside those either major party wants to consider. Last November, Arkansas and Massachusetts New Party activists won significant support for real campaign finance reform. Nationally, the New Party has been a leading group in establishing local "Living Wage Campaigns."

The New Party must be evaluated in terms of the sum of all its activities, not the ballot line used by 15% of its candidates. Its flagship chapter in Wisconsin illustrates this point. Only a few years old, the Wisconsin group clearly demonstrates the potential for building a progressive political movement. By entering non-partisan races the New Party now has the dominant voice on the Madison City Council and came close to electing the mayor. In Milwaukee, the New Party has elected several members to the county board and the city council. In the last school board race it led a community battle to block the election of business-backed, right-wing, pro-privatization candidates to the Milwaukee school board. To obtain a voice in the state legislature the New Party elected community activist and African American Johnnie Morris Tatum as a Democrat. At the same time, the growing state-wide movement successfully secured state-wide third party ballot status running Kathleen Chung, a member and shop steward of the American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), as a "New Progressive Party" candidate for state treasurer.

All these electoral advances are the result of substantial community work. In Milwaukee, New Party activists were key players in launching an independent coalition called Sustainable Milwaukee. Over a year and a half, the coalition developed a sweeping community-driven plan for the future of the city. The initiative's political independence is not in any party label (Sustainable Mil-

waukee is not an electoral organization), but in the radical agenda it promotes, providing a model of progressive alternatives and sparking considerable grassroots activism. It allowed the Milwaukee New Party to organize the grassroots effort behind an ongoing "Living Wage" campaign which has already won an ordinance requiring companies that contract with the city to pay \$6.05 an hour. The campaign has also raised the minimum wages of 3,800 public school employees to \$7.70. Through electoral and issue work the New Party has built a solid grassroots base. Two summers of campaigning and organizing in targeted neighborhoods allowed the New Party to establish a Precinct Leadership Action Network complete with 86 Precinct Leaders and several hundred volunteers who signed "activists contracts." This is hardly a "semi-independent semi-alternative." Nor is this growing progressive force "more or less invisible."

Progressives have to look beyond quick fixes and toward a 10- or 20-year plan. Creating the left as a serious political force — as a mass social movement — requires the rather unglamorous and painstaking task of pulling people together neighborhood by neighborhood, campaign by campaign. While the real world of grassroots political organizing offers the left tremendous opportunities, it also presents challenges that require creative and flexible tactics. Although the tactical choices need to be debated and constantly reassessed, the left can ill afford to turn them into judgments of strategy. We should avoid bold pronouncements of who is truly "independent" and "significant" and who is not. The debate over third party organizing has to move from the necessary, but often abstract desires for a left political party, to the rather messy details of what actual groups are doing to make it a reality.

Fusion: The Liberal Snare

Eric Chester

THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY IS A CESSPOOL, FUNDED, AND FUNDED MUNIFICENTLY, by huge, global corporations which count on its politicians to discipline, and divide, the workforce. Realignment, the effort to transform the Democrats from within, has proved a total failure. Clinton and his coterie, with their brazen corruption and cynical opportunism, have furnished us with compelling proof of this failure. For two decades and more, the Democratic Party has moved inexorably to the right, destroying the illusion that either of the two corporate parties can become an effective vehicle for social change. As a result, a considerable segment of the left has begun to espouse a position that leaves it on the periphery of the Democratic Party, half in and half out. Proponents of this position in-

ERIC CHESTER is the author of Covert Network (M.E. Sharpe, 1995). He was also the vice-presidential candidate of the Socialist Party in 1996.

tend to support only progressive Democrats, while distancing themselves from mainstream machine politicians of the Clinton-Gore ilk. This strategy encompasses several tactical variations, of which fusion is the most prominent. With fusion, a political party that has gained ballot status endorses selected candidates of another party, thus providing those candidates with an additional line on the ballot. While fusion could conceivably occur when two third parties support the same nominee, the term has come to mean an electoral strategy designed to place Democratic candidates on the slate of a nominally independent party.

The three articles on electoral activity featured in the Winter 1997 issue of *New Politics* either avoid this issue, or debate it on purely tactical terms. In "Angry Voters with Nowhere to Go," Thomas Harrison even goes so far as to argue that the New Party, the leading organizational proponent of fusion, and the Labor Party, which has yet to nominate a candidate, represent "the most promising initiatives [toward independent political action] in more than fifty years." (10) Paul Buhle in "The 1996 Elections in Perspective" contends that it "is too early to speak intelligently about the experiment"(21) in dual endorsements currently being undertaken by the New Party. In fact, fusion is far from a novel idea. Indeed, debates on the merits of this strategy have catalyzed significant divisions within the left for more than 100 years. Several political parties have already "experimented" with fusion, each time with disastrous results.

The Populists served as the electoral expression for a militant social movement of poor farmers centered in the dirt hills of Texas. In the mid 1880s, the Farmers Alliance developed a dense network of local chapters through its efforts to organize large-scale rural cooperatives. The Alliance then began sending organizers to nearby areas, to the plains states and the South. In 1892 the Alliance was instrumental in founding the Peoples Party, with the goal of challenging the hard-money policies of the two corporate parties. Yet as the Populists expanded beyond their home base, they began attracting opportunistic politicians who were ready to forge statewide deals on the basis of fusion. For instance, in Kansas and Nebraska the Populists participated in joint tickets with the Democratic Party in opposition to the Republican majority. These fusion candidates declined to support the radical planks in the Populist platform, especially demands for low interest rates and government ownership of the railroads. This is a recurring theme in the history of fusion politics. Inevitably, the decision to blur the political lines of demarcation brings with it, as one of its consequences, a dilution in program. The passionate debate within the Peoples Party came to an end in 1896 when fusion supporters convinced the national convention to endorse the Democratic presidential candidate, William Jennings Bryan. Soon thereafter, the party collapsed as a viable organizational structure.¹

THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN LABOR PARTY (ALP) IS EVEN MORE INSTRUCTIVE. In the spring of 1936, Sidney Hillman, the president of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, convened a high-level meeting of union officials and leaders of the Socialist Party right-wing, soon to become the Social Democratic Federation. Hillman had previously gained the approval of President Franklin Roosevelt for a quasi-independent third party for the state of New York. The

president was worried, concerned that his electoral base had been eroded, and that many of his potential supporters in New York City would stay at home rather than vote for a Democratic slate dominated by venal Tammany Hall politicians. The ALP was created to help Roosevelt by attracting support from the disaffected, as well as from those current and former members of the Socialist and Communist parties who were unwilling to vote the Democratic Party ticket. Yet the organization was also intended as a pressure group, a point of leverage that would enable progressives to maximize their influence within the Democratic Party.²

Hillman understood that the ALP could only successfully divert votes from Socialist candidates if it presented itself as the nucleus of a third party, an organization that would soon blossom to become a national party of progressive, independent politics. Needless to say, Hillman never had any intention of breaking with Roosevelt, the New Deal, or the Democratic Party. The ALP, as well as its offshoot, the Liberal Party, soon dropped any pretense of independence, serving solely as another line on the ballot for a wide-ranging array of politicians.

The similarities between the ALP and the current Labor Party are striking. Again the organizational structure of a nominally independent party has been initiated from the top by the more progressive elements within the union leadership. Once again rhetorical calls for an independent party of labor are proclaimed, the plan to be implemented in that murky, still to be determined future. In one aspect the ALP actually represented a step beyond the current Labor Party, since the ALP at one point presented a slate of its own candidates for the state legislature and the city council, while the Labor Party leadership has so far balked at such an undertaking.

The 1936 election campaign would see another interesting experiment in fusion politics. In Minnesota the Farmer-Labor Party (FLP) had been building an electoral base for 15 years. Very much a party of moderate reform, it had maintained its independence in part because Minnesota law prohibited fusion, and in part because the state Democratic Party had been controlled by conservatives who refused to cooperate with Farmer-Labor. Once again, Roosevelt, in his eagerness to improve his reelection prospects, opted to shift the terrain. The Democratic candidates for governor and senator withdrew, leaving Farmer-Labor nominees a clear path. In return, the FLP candidate for governor joined the president in stumping the state. The Farmer-Labor Party swept the state in 1936 as it never had before, and yet this case of tacit fusion contributed to the demise of the Party. In 1938, the Democrats again fielded their own candidates, splitting the progressive vote, thus allowing the Republicans back into office. Demoralized, and confronted with a state Democratic apparatus controlled by liberals, Farmer-Labor leaders soon entered into a series of discussions with Democratic politicians that ultimately led, in 1944, to the creation of a merged party, the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party.³

A final test case in fusion occurred in 1948, when former Vice-President Henry Wallace coalesced the progressive opposition to the Cold War hysteria of the Truman Administration. Although the Progressive Party once again advanced the rhetoric of independent political action, it remained well within the orbit of the Democratic Party. The party gained most of its strength in New

York, where its affiliate, the American Labor Party, continued to engage in fusion politics, endorsing the more liberal Democratic candidates. In Minnesota, the Progressives sought to implement an extreme version of fusion, hoping to run an independent candidate for president as the official Democrat. The state's Democrats were divided, with many former Farmer-Labor Party members backing Wallace, while the party stalwarts, led by Hubert Humphrey, remained committed to President Truman. When the state convention refused to seat several delegations pledged to Wallace, two separate conventions were convened, both seeking to nominate the official Democratic presidential ticket. Only after the state Minnesota Supreme Court ruled in favor of Truman did the Progressive Party finally decide to abandon its effort to capture the Minnesota Democratic Party, and to qualify Wallace as an independent candidate.⁴

The Progressive Party did not survive the 1948 election as a significant force. Certainly the Progressives had an array of serious problems. The party was built around the personality of a single individual, who soon deserted the party, while its most committed members came from the Communist Party, which exerted a heavy-handed influence in blocking any criticism of the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the Progressives' flirtations with fusion, as well as its cautious platform of reform, contributed to its rapid demise.

FUSION HAS A LONG AND SORDID PAST. Parties pursuing this strategy have not provided a first step toward a genuinely independent politics. On the contrary, these formations have acted as a safety valve, directing popular discontent into the framework of liberal reform, before collapsing into the mainstream of two party politics. Yet there is an alternative. There is no inescapable logic compelling a third party to slide back into the mainstream. It can be avoided but only if the third party follows an uncompromising policy of total independence.

In the early 1900s the Socialist Party grew to become a mass party, with significant roots in the working class. Its base of activists had observed the recent collapse of the Populist Party, and had drawn the appropriate lesson. In 1904, the party convention voted that "no state or local organization shall under any circumstances fuse, combine, or compromise with any political party or organization," nor "shall any candidate of the Socialist Party accept any nomination or endorsement from any other party or political organization." The next year Victor Berger, the leader of the party's right-wing, tested the limits of this resolution by publicly endorsing a progressive candidate for judge. Although the election was nonpartisan, the candidate was a prominent member of the Republican Party. Berger's endorsement nearly cost him his position on the national executive committee. After that, neither he nor the Milwaukee party endorsed candidates from the two corporate parties, even in nonpartisan elections.⁵

The three writers in the *New Politics* symposium start from a very different perspective than that held by the Socialist Party majority in its heyday. They share a common agreement that the recent wave of electoral activity situated on the edge of the two-party mainstream represents a significant step toward a genuinely independent politics. In essence, the underlying argument holds that a viable third party can be built through a continuing process of incremental stages, each taking an additional step in the direction of a total

break with the Democratic Party. From this perspective, the Labor Party, the New Party, and even the Ralph Nader presidential campaign constitute first steps in this continuing process. Yet the history of fusion politics demonstrates the exact opposite. The break with the establishment parties must be final and definitive to be lasting. Tentative, fainthearted measures lead only back into the quagmire of two party politics.

Harrison is the only one of the three who directly tackles the issue of fusion, and he chides the New Party for its willingness to endorse liberal Democrats. Yet Harrison accepts the essential premises of the fusion argument, while opposing it on tactical grounds. The New Party sees its threat to run independent candidates as a powerful weapon, cajoling the Democrats to be more responsive to progressive demands. Harrison argues that actually running a slate of independent candidates would be an even more productive tactic, maximizing progressive leverage on the Democratic machine. Thus "in fact, to the extent that an independent party were truly independent and did pose a threat to these [liberal] Democrats, activists would be much more effective in wringing concessions from them." (11) This tacitly accepts the underlying argument that pressuring Democrats constitutes the primary purpose of electoral activity. Once having conceded that, it is difficult to consistently oppose those Democratic politicians who are most likely to be responsive to this pressure. Certainly Ron Dellums is more likely to vote for limited reforms than either Clinton or Dole.

Electoral politics should not be focused on wresting reforms from the Democrats. Systemic social change can only be won through militant direct action, and even then the limits of reform are tightly constricted, and continually narrowing. Socialists engage in electoral politics to articulate a radical critique of capitalism, and a coherent vision of an alternative, cooperative society, not to figure out the best method of convincing Democratic politicians to grant a few insignificant reforms.

In contrast to Harrison, who stresses the positive aspects of the New Party and the Nader campaign, Jane Slaughter seeks to provide a positive spin to the Labor Party. While not unaware of its limitations, she remains hopeful that the organization can break with the two party system. The Labor Party refused to endorse Nader, she concedes, because to do so "would have run directly counter to the Party's leadership strategy, which is based on not alienating union leaders." (27) In fact, the leaders of the Labor Party are themselves union officials anxious to maintain their close ties to the many loyal Democrats within the AFL-CIO leadership. Far more likely than any genuine effort at independent political action, the Labor Party is on course to repeat the history of the ALP before fading back into the two party mainstream.

The Labor Party has been funded and controlled by top officials in the Oil and Chemical Workers (OCAW) and the United Electrical Workers (UE) in the same way top officials in the Ladies Garment Workers and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers funded and controlled the American Labor Party in the 30s. Slaughter argues that Labor Party officials, unlike Hillman, are sincere in their public statements urging the creation of an independent third party. Perhaps, but even if true, it hardly resolves the critical questions. The Labor Party leaders certainly view a social democratic party along the lines of the British Labour Party as an attractive option. (Considering the recent collapse of the

Labour Party as even a moderate party of social reform, it would seem that radicals should be highly skeptical of such an option.) Yet these union officials remain pragmatists to the core. Given the specific circumstances prevailing in the United States, they continue to see the labor movement as a pressure group within the Democratic Party. In this context, control of an additional ballot slot provides a certain leverage, with its implicit threat of withholding support for specific, undesirable Democratic candidates. The creation of the Labor Party also provides the union bureaucracy with another means of asserting control over the pervasive, if inchoate, anger of a considerable segment of the rank and file. Thus, as with the American Labor Party, the Labor Party serves both as a point of leverage to pressure the Democratic leadership, and as a conduit for diverting popular discontent into manageable channels.

A GENUINE THIRD PARTY, FREE OF TIES TO THE CORPORATE MAINSTREAM, can only emerge as the outcome of a militant social movement. Yet social movements have their own dynamic, one that inevitably challenges the cautious timidity of the progressive coalition. Instead, Harrison and Slaughter write as friendly advisors to certain sections of the liberal leadership. They hope to coax those who have taken the first steps toward independent political action into a further movement along this trajectory. Once having assumed the perspective of an insider, there is an overwhelming tendency to mute criticisms, and indeed to act as defenders of these liberal leaders.

This can be seen most clearly in the case of Slaughter who supports a crucial deal struck at last year's founding convention of the Labor Party. Instead of approving a clear resolution upholding the right of women to have an abortion, the leadership pushed through a nebulous statement in support of reproductive rights. This left the Labor Party behind the Democrats on this volatile, and yet important, issue. While Harrison criticizes this deal, he praises the Nader campaign while ignoring Nader's decision to entirely duck the question.

As radicals and socialists, we need to remain outside of the progressive coalition as incisive critics of the equivocations and evasions so characteristic of liberal politics. We should be ready to oppose each and every effort at fusion, insisting that meaningful electoral activity outside of the two party system requires a stance of total independence from the two mainstream parties. Finally, we should be prepared to run our own candidates on an explicitly socialist platform. This will not be an easy road to follow, but it is the only one that can lead to the formation of a viable third party that is truly independent of the two party duopoly.

NOTES

1. Lawrence Goodwyn, *Democratic Promise: The Populist Movement in America* (New York: Oxford University Press.)

2. Steve Fraser, *Labor Will Rule: Sidney Hillman and the Rise of American Labor* (New York: Free Press, 1991), pp. 363-64.

3. Millard Gieske, *Minnesota Farmer-Laborism: The Third Party Alternative* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979.)

4. Karl M. Schmidt, *Henry Wallace: Quixotic Campaign 1948* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1960.)

5. Eric Chester, *Socialists and the Ballot Box* (New York: Praeger, 1985), pp. 34-35.

Rejoinder to Reynolds and Chester

Thomas Harrison

I AM GRATEFUL TO DAVID REYNOLDS FOR HIS THOUGHTFUL RESPONSE to my article on the 1996 elections. His piece is useful for, among other things, the information it provides about the growing number of popular initiatives associated with the New Party. These are certainly encouraging, but their continuing political subordination to the Democratic Party is also deeply troubling — to me, though not, evidently, to Reynolds.

Reynolds thinks that running candidates in elections can be somehow distinguished from the task of “building a political movement.” What is at issue, however, is not just movements in general, like the women’s movement or the gay movement — organized groups of people that try to achieve their goals by educating the public and pressuring the powers-that-be through demonstrations and so on — but political parties that can represent the needs of these movements. The idea that parties can be built without running candidates flies in the face of common sense.

Just because I think the New Party should put up its own candidates doesn’t mean I want it to become a “candidate-centered, vote-getting machine” like the two old parties. I agree with Reynolds that we need a movement-type party, filled with activists, and democratically controlled by its membership. It should campaign systematically for its views through demonstrations, literature, speakers’ bureaus, and by using forums of all kinds — not just campaigns for elective office. I would add that it should beware of what socialists used to call “parliamentary cretinism” — the illusion that the fundamental inequities and injustice of the profit system can be abolished by legislation.

But elections can and must be used precisely as a way of educating people to *join* the party and to vote for candidates who represent *their* interests. In fact, I would argue that putting up candidates and running for office is *the* most effective way to bring new people into involvement and activity and to carry the party’s program to a wider audience. It builds the party and it is an indispensable means of demonstrating the party’s seriousness. It also gives deeper meaning and support to people’s non-electoral activism. An electoral party could provide a continuous, national political voice that would speak for movements, sustain them through the inevitable ups and downs, and connect them to each other. It would enable movements to be more than pressure groups.

Actually, it’s Reynolds, not me, who conceives of electoral politics primarily in terms of vote-mongering and *winning* — rather than consciousness-raising and movement-building. If the New Party were to run candidates now for congressional, gubernatorial and mayoral offices, it hardly needs to be said

THOMAS HARRISON is on the editorial board of *New Politics* and is associate director of the New York-based Campaign for Peace and Democracy. He is a member of both the New Party and the Labor Party.

that we probably would not win a single one the first time around, and maybe not even the second, third or fourth. Initially, NP candidates might not get more than five or ten percent of the vote. Is it better, instead, if the NP endorses liberal Democrats, who garner much larger percentages and even win office? No, because five percent for a third party candidate represents five percent in favor of political independence, five percent who have made the extremely difficult decision to break old political habits, to “just say no” to the crippling addiction of lesser-evilmism and opt for a real alternative — as opposed to fifty percent or whatever for the same old unaccountable “liberals” who remain committed to the Democratic Party even as it moves steadily to the right on issues ranging from welfare to capital punishment, civil liberties, foreign policy and military spending. That five percent would mean tens or even hundreds of thousands of people who have taken a stand in opposition to the Establishment, as compared with the far smaller number who ordinarily take part in movement activities.

So even a relatively small vote for a third party would represent a step in the right direction; it would indicate movement toward our goal. Five percent is a start; it's something to build on. Obviously, if we somehow knew in advance that we would never get more than five or ten percent in *subsequent* elections, then there wouldn't be much point. But we're not clairvoyant. And indeed, there's every reason to believe, as I explained in my original article, that a mass base for a progressive third party already exists. Elsewhere, Reynolds criticizes quick-fix solutions and insists on the need for patience, for a long-term perspective, for ten or twenty-year plans; but his attitude to elections is: either we win right away or forget it.

Of course, Reynolds realizes that any new, radical endeavor, be it a political party or any other kind of movement for social and political change, may have to start small and suffer initial setbacks and disappointments. What seems to concern him most — and this gets to the heart of our differences — is the possibility that third party candidates will function as “spoilers,” taking votes away from Democrats and thereby helping the Republicans. Now to the extent that we win over disillusioned people who formerly voted for Democrats (we would also hope to win substantial numbers of nonvoters), and we are not yet strong enough to get our own candidates elected, then Democrats may lose and Republicans may win. This is unfortunate, in a way, because as bad as the Democrats are the Republicans are generally worse (some of them are a lot worse). But how else can we reach the point where we can defeat *both* Democrats and Republicans?

A progressive third party can only grow by seizing a sizeable chunk of the Democratic Party's current base — I don't see how anything could be more obvious. Clearly, many people will be, at first, reluctant to vote for a third party because they don't believe it can ever become a serious force. Will this defeatism just magically disappear someday, or shouldn't we start confronting it now by giving people a clear electoral alternative? We have to convince people that we *are* a serious alternative, and they should vote for our party *instead* of the Democrats; if we fail to do this (and we may fail — nothing is guaranteed), then this will simply mean that a third party cannot be built. In other words, a progressive third party *must* “do harm” to the Democrats (and Republicans), and it must frankly declare that it intends to do so.

We are living in critical times. There is unprecedented mass disillusionment with politics as usual, and especially disillusionment with Clinton and the Democratic Party among rank-and-file, liberal and left-minded Americans. Yet liberals, trade unionists, blacks, Hispanics, feminists, etc., still cling to the Democrats out of a sense of powerlessness and diminished expectations. Our job is to encourage them to realize their potential power; and this can only be done if they break their ties to the Democrats, as one of the Establishment parties. The New Party can do this job only if it is politically as well as organizationally independent of the Democrats; it has to *oppose* the Democrats by running *against* them (as well as against the Republicans, obviously).

To repeat another point I made in my article, the New Party leaders' (and Reynolds') insistence that we wait to run candidates until we're much bigger is not really an argument about size and numbers, but about the dangers, from their point of view, of directly challenging the Democratic Party as an institution. The New Party did not officially endorse Clinton, and I was wrong to suggest that it did so, as Reynolds points out. However, the views expressed by NP leaders — Joel Rogers, Danny Cantor, and others — did constitute a de facto endorsement of Clinton at a time when many progressives (including many New Party members) were considering other options: voting for Nader or not voting at all. Cantor disparaged Nader's candidacy (*Nation*, July 8, 1996), and the New Party did not call on progressives to abstain or vote for an independent presidential candidate on election day.

THE NADER CAMPAIGN WAS DEEPLY FLAWED, not least by Nader's evasion of issues like abortion, affirmative action and gay rights. But its thrust was clearly radical-democratic and anti-corporate, and it had the obvious advantage of a well-known and widely honored candidate. And, anyway, its programmatic flaws had nothing to do with the reasons why the New Party and Labor Party opposed it. As I argued in my article, the Nader campaign represented a missed opportunity for the emerging third party movement. Had the New Party endorsed Nader, this would have been an important signal to a national audience that a third party movement is in the process of formation and that it intends to put up candidates for the presidency and for every other important office.

Endorsing Nader would have been an unambiguous statement of *opposition to Clinton and the Democratic Party*, something the leaders of the New Party and Labor Party want to avoid — at least for now — partly for fear of displeasing the labor officials and liberal Democratic officeholders they wish to attract (I too hope that lots of union leaders and liberal politicians will join the movement for a third party, as long as it's clear that they're moving toward a break with the Democrats, not merely looking for some halfway house in a futile attempt to apply leverage from the outside). Missing the opportunity to do this has, I think, set us back. During any presidential election interest in political issues is at its height, even among those who are normally apathetic. At the same time, feelings of hopelessness and submissiveness are at their most intense, particularly, these days, among progressives, due to the rightward degeneration of the Democratic Party. It was imperative to challenge those feelings in the fall of 1996, to say: "lesser-evilism is not necessarily our fate, an alternative is possible, let's start making it happen." Instead, the New Party did nothing to dissuade progressives from voting for Clinton; and this

simply reinforced the sense of despair and weakness that prevails among those who constitute the potential base for a third party. As a result, our job today is just that much harder.

As for "thinking globally and acting locally," I can only repeat that the issue is not local *versus* global or national. Reynolds tries to counterpose them in this way not because running candidates for state legislatures or even Congress is so much harder than running them for school boards or city councils (though of course it is harder), but mainly because local offices are nonpartisan. The New Party's leaders want to focus on local elections because this enables them to avoid challenging the Democratic Party directly. Reynolds goes on for paragraphs about the importance of local initiatives and grassroots activity, sentiments with which I couldn't agree more. But campaigning for high-profile offices is, as I've already argued, a very effective way of recruiting and training people at the grassroots. And most importantly, taking on Democratic congresspersons, state legislators and governors is the only way we can clearly convey our third party message to voters.

Whatever the motives, the effect of counterposing local community action to national politics is to forego any real challenge to the centers of power, which are, of course, national and indeed increasingly international. Fighting to keep fundamentalists off school boards is important. But is there any hope for our schools without a national fight to shift resources from the military to education? Only a fool would look to the Democrats for such a benefaction. One reason the far right is so strong at the local level is that it has national leaders and spokesmen like Pat Buchanan, who can demagogically excoriate corporations, and pundits who denounce liberal "elites." Nothing would more effectively sow confusion among the rightists and expose their pretensions than the appearance of a third party that was in no way constrained, as the Democrats are, in its ability to condemn corporate power and champion working people.

Reynolds blesses with equal fervor the Minnesota New Party's support for an independent Green candidate for state assembly (who got 25 percent of the vote, please note) and efforts by labor-community coalitions in New England to work within the local Democratic organizations, and he treats the question of whether or not to run in the Democratic primaries as merely a matter of which "label" you want to use. I see no point here in going back over all the reasons why the Democratic Party is not just some "label," but rather a powerful and highly efficient machine for bolstering corporate power and for coopting and neutralizing potential opposition. The Democrats used to do a better job of concealing their real nature; in the age of Clinton, though, the mask has become so transparent that there's no longer any excuse for not seeing through it.

But I do want to address one common, related misconception which Reynolds seems to share. One often hears progressives say that we should imitate the rightwing Christians who, starting at the grassroots, settled into a long-range boring-from-within strategy and succeeded over the years in permeating and eventually winning decisive power within the Republican Party. The problem, however, is that while the Republican Party is accessible to the far right, the Democratic Party is not, by its very nature, accessible to those who do not accept the priorities of corporate America. Outlawing abortions,

imposing school prayer, persecuting homosexuals — these things, and much worse, are quite compatible with a corporate agenda. An anti-imperialist foreign policy, massive cuts in military spending, a real war on poverty and racism, full employment, national health insurance, a shorter work week are not. These things can only be won by mobilizing, in open political struggle outside and against the two parties, those (the vast majority) who do not have a vested interest in the status quo. So, yes, the strategy of building a third party is totally incompatible with that of using Democratic primaries and trying to transform the Democratic Party from within. You really can't have it both ways.

ERIC CHESTER'S REVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF FUSION is a useful antidote to the New Party's cheerful nonsense on this subject. His discussion of the Populist Party's experience in the 1890s is particularly telling. Reynolds, while allowing that the Populists' use of fusion was "not without risk," completely fails to understand that fusion, as Chester notes, is precisely what destroyed the Party in 1896. But Chester goes much further and basically writes off budding third party movements like the New Party and the Labor Party; I think this is a terrible mistake.

While every effort should be made to repeal the undemocratic anti-fusion laws, using fusion to endorse Democrats is wrong, in my view. I believe my article made it abundantly clear that I'm against fusion with Democrats because it compromises a third party's political independence — not on "tactical grounds," as Chester charges. And suggesting that a third party might push the Democrats to the left is not the same thing as saying that putting pressure on the Democrats should be "the primary purpose of electoral activity." I was merely making a prediction: to the extent that a third party succeeds in drawing away Democratic voters, the Democrats will probably attempt to win them back by shifting somewhat leftward — just as they did in response to the Populist threat in 1896 and the British Liberal Party did to meet the challenge of Labour after the turn of the century.

Chester thinks the New Party and Labor Party are "on course" to fade back into the two party system. This may happen eventually, and probably will unless they alter their course, but it's not inevitable. There's no reason at this stage to foreclose a different outcome. I know from contact with rank-and-file members of the New Party and Labor Party that there's considerable impatience with the leadership's reluctance to run candidates — which, as I've argued, would be the clearest statement of the parties' intention to break away from reliance on the Democrats.

Fairly few activists in the third party movement would call themselves socialists today. But to the degree that a progressive third party emerges, it will create a new and vital political space in which, for the first time in 60 years or more, socialist ideas will have relevance for millions of Americans, and not just minuscule sects. Inconsistent and hesitant though they are, the New Party, Labor Party and other third party initiatives have the potential to develop further in an independent direction. As long as independence is their declared aim and is an actual possibility, socialists can and should take part in them as loyal and active members, arguing for a clean break with the Democrats and criticizing every backward step away from that goal. To criticize from the *outside*, and to counterpose to this living movement of people in po-

litical transition a set of “explicitly socialist” candidates is, in effect, to say — what you’re doing is worthless; drop it and adopt socialist politics now!

Jane Slaughter Comments:

I FOUND ERIC CHESTER’S ARTICLE ON THE HISTORY OF FUSION quite instructive, although I am not a proponent of that strategy. On first reading, I thought that Eric and I agreed that the Labor Party should run candidates of its own. But apparently Eric believes that even if the Labor Party were to do so, those candidates would be worthless because they would not run on an explicitly socialist platform. Perhaps Eric thinks that the campaign of his own tiny Socialist Party last year is a viable model. Or perhaps he doesn’t, since he doesn’t mention it.

Eric says that the leaders of the Labor Party have rotten politics; therefore, no matter what, the Labor Party is doomed. He relies instead on “a militant social movement,” here left vague. Somehow he discounts the notion that militancy could *also* come from within the Labor Party, from rank and file workers who appear nowhere in this article except as “inchoately angry” dupes who will easily be “diverted” by their opportunist leaders “into manageable channels.”

Eric’s brand of fearful rhetoric bespeaks a deep cynicism and pessimism: don’t associate with that group; their leaders are bad! With zero faith in rank-and-file workers/members of the Labor Party, it’s understandable that Chester ends up with such a sour and isolating stance.

Paul Buhle Comments:

IF NEW YORK’S LIBERAL PARTY WERE TO BE OFFERED AS PROOF of the moral bankruptcy of fusion or third party endorsements of major party candidates, Eric Chester would have his case secure. Unfortunately, since the suppression of Socialist Party campaigning by various legal and illegal means during 1917-20, the odds against Left candidates winning have been so long that liberal-leftish Democrats with good records on U.S. intervention, labor, women’s issues, racism and the environment have drawn leftwing support and almost certainly will continue to do so—irrespective of arguments against the ultimate logic of such support.

The Supreme Court has recently made Chester’s case stronger, ruling that states may properly bar third party endorsements or fusion tickets. But experiments will continue, and at best will provide useful lessons, good and bad. More than that we cannot say without resorting to dogmatic pronouncements.

In Defense of Social Security

Marvin Mandell

"They are other and odder and after us."

— Louise Bogan

ON AUGUST 28, 1997, THE DAY AFTER PRESIDENT CLINTON signed the Welfare "Reform" Act, the *Wall Street Journal* editorialized that Social Security* would be next. Realizing that it is not as easy to smash the middle class as it was the poor, those leading the attack on Social Security are masking the struggle. Following the advice of Frank Luntz in his memorandum to the Republican Conference (Jan. 9, 1995), conservatives of both parties have cast the debate in *moral* terms, that is, in terms of "the American dream" and "our children's future." But let us not forget the real intention of conservatives, candidly expressed by David Stockman, President Reagan's budget director: "There are no entitlements, period."¹ Conservatives of both parties want to dismantle what is left of the welfare state.

Social welfare programs have always had philosophically opposite approaches: that of *residualism* and that of *social insurance*. Residualists believe that social welfare should be a safety net with very modest benefits for those who have fallen. They would means test aid applicants, that is, make sure they are truly needy. Food stamps, Medicaid, the former Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) — now called Temporary Assistance for Needy Families — are examples of means tested programs. Where residualism is reactive, social insurance is preventive: by universalizing financial security, it prevents collapse of a family's living standards. With contributions during one's working life, Social Security is a nearly universal program, our best example of social insurance.

Why not do away with universality and structure a program to give money only to people who need it? Why not reduce or eliminate S.S. tax contributions? Why give money to rich people who surely don't need it? Well, there are several problems with means testing:

*Throughout this article I use the term "Social Security" to refer to Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance, not including Medicare or Medicaid.

MARVIN MANDELL is a retired English professor and a member of the New Politics editorial board. His last article in New Politics "Canon on the Left" appeared in #21.

(1) It would encourage fraud, since beneficiaries would be tempted to hide or transfer their assets.

(2) Related to this, administrative costs would be much higher than the eight tenths of 1% of benefits that Social Security is running now. Compare that to the astoundingly high 34% administrative costs of means tested 1995 welfare (Aid for Families With Dependent Children) benefits!²

(3) Once you set the limit at, say, \$40,000 and decree that those earning above it are ineligible for some or all of Social Security benefits, that limit can — and surely will — be changed to \$30,000, then \$20,000, etc., until Social Security is destroyed. Remember the words of David Stockman and those of *The Wall Street Journal*.

(4) It would discourage savings since many would want to qualify for the means test, and the nation needs more, not less, savings, a point Robert Ball made in his testimony before the Bipartisan Commission on Entitlement and Tax Reform (July 15, 1994).

(5) Once the middle class and the rich are excluded from Social Security they will no longer support it and it will be doomed.

(6) Means testing always involves stigmatization and that alone assures Social Security the same fate as that of A.F.D.C. As Richard Titmuss and Wilbur Cohen both said, programs for poor people end up being poor programs. What has helped make Social Security such an extraordinary success for 60 years is its universality.

Perhaps one reason for the continuing debate between residualists and advocates of social insurance is that Social Security has always lacked the theoretical framework of, say, a social democratic society like Sweden. To be sure, Swedish social insurance has been under attack, but the attack has had to contend with tenets of the entire social democracy.

Social Security's Successes and Problems

FIRST, A BRIEF HISTORICAL NOTE: WITH THE TRANSITION from an agrarian to an industrial society, social insurance became a reality first in Bismarck's Germany and then in several Western European countries. Except for some benefits to Civil War veterans as well as to some ex-slaves under the Freedman's Act (minimal and short-lived) and later some workman's compensation, means tested widows' pensions and means tested old age pensions, the United States did nothing until the Social Security Act of 1935, an act that was not initially supported by labor or by employers. The CIO did not see the point of building up reserves when the needs of the elderly were so pressing. (Labor and business leaders did support Social Security by the time of the 1950 Amendments.) The only pressure from below was from the elderly, organized into a mass movement by Dr. Francis Townsend.

Social Security has been a success. In the 58-year period from 1937 to 1994, Social Security collected about \$4.9 trillion and paid out about \$4.5 trillion, with administrative costs, as I have said, only 8 tenths of 1% of benefits. In March, 1995, 43 million received benefits, including 3 million children (mostly children of deceased workers) and 5 million disabled. The lifetime value of Social Security and Medicare benefits is close to one-half million dollars for an

average couple retiring today (one-half due to Old Age and Survivors' Insurance and one-half due to Medicare). About 92% of those aged 65 and over are receiving benefits with another 3% eligible to do so when they retire. The average pay is \$8,400 for a single person and \$14,100 for a couple. This is hardly handsome, but without Social Security, one-half of the elderly would have incomes below the government's rock bottom definition of poverty; with Social Security, the poverty rate among the elderly is about the same as it is for the rest of the population. Retirees average 40% of their pre-retirement incomes, with lower income retirees, of course, getting a higher percentage of their former earnings. In 60 years, Social Security has never missed a payroll. And contrary to the shrill tocsins sounded by residualists, Social Security is in good shape, "an island of budgetary surplus in the midst of an ocean of red ink," as some Brookings Institute economists put it.³

Here are the reserves the Social Security Trust Fund has built up:

1983.....	\$12 billion	(then the '83 Amendments brought increased revenue)
1989.....	\$163 billion	
1990.....	\$226 billion	
1994.....	\$436 billion	
1995.....	\$483 billion	
1996.....	\$550 billion	

And here are the reserves estimated for the near future:

2010.....	over \$1 trillion
2018.....	\$2.8 trillion
2020.....	\$3.3 trillion

Not only does the Social Security Trust Fund now have over \$500 billion in reserve today, but we should also remember that the Fund, like other Trust Funds, has been raided for well over \$300 billion by the federal government, first by President Johnson to help finance the Vietnam War, then by other presidents to finance other misadventures (e.g. Star Wars). We are not in a crisis now, as the residualists claim, but if we were, perhaps it should be thought of as a crisis in war spending rather than in Social Security spending. In the 1996 debate on the proposed Balanced Budget Constitutional Amendment, the Republicans balked when Senator Tom Daschle offered to support it if the Social Security surpluses were kept separate from the budget. No wonder they wanted to keep them as part of the budget. Otherwise they would not be able to disguise war spending and might even have to lower it in response to a public outcry. The relevance of war spending to the debate on Social Security is something Social Security analysts — both left and right — seldom even mention.

Despite the spate of alarms, 97% of Americans in 1992 favored maintaining or increasing Social Security benefits.⁴ Nevertheless, many, especially the young, do not believe that the benefits will be there for them. Some Social Security analysts have studied this paradox of strong support for the system but low confidence. When focus groups were convened, they began with the assertions that Social Security benefits would not be there, but, after thoughtful discussion, people became less cynical about the Program and wanted to be reassured that they would. As the pollster Daniel Yankelovich has maintained,

polls often capture quick reactions rather than informed judgment.⁵

Of course there has been a well financed attempt to scare people, and alarms always get more attention than sober discussion. And Social Security administrators, with their low administrative costs, spend for public information a tiny fraction of the amount of investment counselors, who must sell their products. Moreover, the news media thrives on “news” about problems; an analysis of print media revealed that “On proposals involving reducing benefits, financial restructuring, and reducing eligibility for benefits, paragraphs supporting such proposals outnumbered those opposing such proposals by about two to one.”⁶

ALL THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT SOCIAL SECURITY IS WITHOUT PROBLEMS. The main one is that by 2011 baby boomers will begin to retire, and this will put a strain on Social Security finances. If nothing is done, income (revenue plus interest on accumulated funds) would exceed expenses only until 2020; by 2030, it would not be possible to pay full benefits. But this is not the catastrophic problem the residualists would like to scare us with. As projected by the 1995 Trustees’ Report, the deficit over 75 years of the Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance Program (Social Security excluding Medicare and Medicaid) amounts to 2.17%. (Some analysts peg it at 1.9 % and others at 2.2 %.) At present, employees pay 6.2 % of their income in S.S. taxes, and their employers match it with 6.2%; there is a wage cap of \$65,400 so that no one pays S.S. tax on earnings above that amount. (Another 1.45% each is paid into Medicare, for which there is no wage cap.) If worst came to worst — and, as I shall show, it needn’t! — the rates would increase by 1.1 % each for employee and employer. Hardly catastrophic.

When one compares the percentage of population age 65 and over of the United States with Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the U. K., it will be the smallest in 2000 and even smaller than that, comparatively speaking, in 2020 (16.3% against Japan’s 24.2%).⁷

Once Congress passed the ‘83 Amendments to make Social Security viable, the residualists shifted the debate to one of generation equity, and they have mounted a determined campaign to convince the young that “greedy geezers” are shafting them. This has been a major theme of the Concord Coalition, founded by former senators Warren Rudman and the late Paul Tsongas and led by millionaire investment banker Peter Peterson, Secretary of Commerce under President Nixon. What residualists don’t want to talk about is the *dependency ratio*, which would include more than the ratio of retirees to employees: it would include children. “Although the number of elderly Americans is increasing and will continue to increase, the number of infants and school-age children is *decreasing* even more rapidly. By 2040, the dependency ratio is expected to be even lower than it was in 1960.”⁸ As economist Frank Ackerman has put it, “If we could afford to live through the childhood of the baby-boom generation, we can afford to live through their retirement.”⁹ With this in mind, a rational society in the future might well consider cutting property taxes, since fewer schools will be needed, and increasing aid for the elderly (e. g. Medicaid, Medicare).

Though a large part of the federal budget — one-third — Social Security

(Old Age Survivors Disability Insurance-OASDI, again not including Medicare or Medicaid), in 1995, was only 4.8% of the Gross Domestic Product. Estimations are that it will rise to 6.75% in 2030. But compared to other developed nations, these rates, real and projected, are not off the wall:

Pensions' Percentage of Gross Domestic Product (1994)

Austria	15.03%
Sweden	11.87%
Japan	4.97%
U. S.	4.8%

—Source: *New Orientations for Social Policy*, Paris, 1994

The federal government's war spending (misabeled "defense" spending) in 1996 was \$303.3 billions (265.6 on national "defense" plus 37.7 veterans' outlay).¹⁰ This amounts to 16.9% of the federal budget — over half of the entire Social Security OASDI — and 3.6% of the Gross Domestic Product. Just think: war spending alone constitutes 3.6% of the GDP as compared to S.S.'s 4.8%, which includes all the money going to the elderly, the disabled, and survivors (excluding, again, Medicare and Medicaid). That is a startling comparison, again one virtually ignored by Social Security mavins, left and right, as I have already indicated.

I do not wish to end this section without mentioning a problem of the Social Security Program not related to the financial one: since aged survivors of retirees get the full benefit of their deceased spouses as long as they live, widows of poor men receive less money, as survivors, than widows of richer men. Social Security is work-related, and they may have worked harder (for example raising more children or running a household more efficiently with less revenue than richer widows), but their S.S. benefit does not reflect this. The cost of changing this would not be great; the problem is that American society views unpaid housework and childcare as unproductive work.

Solutions

RESIDUALISTS, THEN, ARE USING A MINOR GLITCH IN THE FUTURE FINANCING of Social Security — 2.2% over 75 years — as an excuse to try to dismantle it. In addition to the Concord Coalition, there was the Americans for Generational Equity, which folded in the wake of Senator Durenberger's financial scandal; and there is the former inner-city activist Sam Beard's Economic Security 2000; and there are younger groups such as American Association of Boomer, Lead — or Leave and the Third Millennium. What they all have in common is their desire to ditch Social Security and privatize. While they give all kinds of reasons — the future "bankruptcy" of S.S.; the freedom of being allowed to invest your money where you want to; etc. — what they really don't like about S.S. is its redistributive aspect. Pete du Pont was a member of the affirmative team in William Buckley's Firing Line debate "Resolved: Social Security Should Be Privatized," aired recently on PBS. Perhaps he spoke for all of the privateers when he wrote this about the income tax system: "It is a politicized method of unequally extracting income from people who have earned it to people who

haven't but who the politicians in Congress think have a superior claim to it."¹¹ (A du Pont heir *earned* money?) Social Security is a social contract, and today's millionaires are increasingly trying to withdraw from *communitas*.

While each group has its own version of privatization, let us look at proposals put forward in the 1994-96 Social Security Advisory Council. The 13 panel members were divided into three groups. The largest and the most moderate of the three — known as M.B. (Maintenance of Benefits) — was led by Robert M. Ball, former Commissioner of Social Security (1962-73) and comprised six panel members, including three labor union officers, a feminist lawyer, and the president of Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association College Retirement Equities Fund (TIAA-CREF). This group advocated an increase in income taxes on S.S. benefits, coverage of newly hired state and local government workers, and "consideration" of a plan allowing the Government to begin investing a portion ("up to 40%") of trust fund assets directly in common stocks indexed to the broad market. The second faction, comprising two panel members, supports an I. A. (Individual Accounts) plan, which would include a raise in the employee's S.S. tax of 1.6% added to the 6.2% employee-6.2% employer tax, totaling 14%; this account would be a mandatory savings held by the Government but with investment choices for individuals; it would also entail scaled back S.S. benefits, that, presumably, would be made up by the I. A. investment. The most extreme proposal is the P. S. A. (Personal Security Accounts), proposed by five panel members. This would slash Social Security benefits by about half, providing full-career workers with \$410 monthly; workers would direct 5 percentage points of the current payroll tax into a P. S. A., which would be managed privately.

OF COURSE, BEYOND THE DITCHING OF THE SOCIAL CONTRACT, the main trouble with privatization schemes, despite all the snake oil promises, is that there will be winners and losers. Many middle class and low income workers have had no experience with investments. High risk outfits are sure to offer the kind of returns with which advertisers of State lotteries and casinos now bombard us. And if the market tanks or goes into a bear market of the kind experienced from 1968 to 1982, what happens to retirees? And what happens to the disabled, who were unable to be "full-career" workers? And what happens to survivors, if their spouses (or parents) should die before building up a P. S. A.? William Buckley would let the churches take care of the poor, as they did or didn't do in the 19th century.

If you listened to the Firing Line debate's affirmative side, you might have been inclined to believe that these men, like cargo cultists, are waiting for a force — the stock market — to lift all Americans and transport them to the empyrean of the millionaires' circle. But on reflection you knew that they couldn't have believed this. They are cynical men who know very well that many, perhaps millions, would become serious losers in any privatization scheme. And when you looked at the thuggish behavior of John Goodman, of the National Center for Policy Analysis, you realized he has lost all capacity to care. At one point in the debate, after interrupting, jeering, and hectoring, Goodman asked a member of the team against privatizing (Theodore Marmor of the Yale School of Management), what he would do with the Social Security Trust Fund credit account, which he felt was worthless ("Can you sell it on

Wall Street?"); provoked, Marmor cried out, "Stuff it in your mouth ... I'm in a period of my life where I still do not like being bullied." (To be fair, Peter Peterson, a colleague of Goodman on the debate team, behaved nothing like him.)

In addition to the objections to privatization I have raised above, the public should be aware that there is a transition difficulty that would affect present retirees and older workers. To solve this, the P.S.A. approach would raise the payroll tax by 1.52% and have the federal government borrow heavily. "To pay full benefits to present retirees and to those retiring soon would require borrowing about \$1 trillion." (my emphasis)¹² Conservatives, as everyone knows, are against high taxes and high deficits (some more against one than the other but all against both). What is interesting here is that, in their eagerness to dismantle Social Security, conservatives are willing to raise taxes and to jack up the deficit with huge borrowing by the federal government. So in order to stop "entitlements" from contributing to the national deficit — and, recall, S.S. "entitlements" don't, they are in fact surpluses — conservatives would increase the deficit. This is the topsy-turvy world of Humpty Dumpty.

Currently 85% of Social Security benefits are taxable only for those with incomes above \$25,000 if single, \$32,000 if married. This threshold is low enough and should not be lowered in any case; if anything, it should be raised. But if the Ball faction proposes raising the percentage of higher income retirees' taxability, say to 100%, that would not be a regressive tax. But it may not be necessary, as I shall show.

While the Ball faction opposed privatization, it did join the other panel members in at least considering investment in the stock market, except that for the Ball group, the Government would do the investing. There are some possible drawbacks.

- As I have said, Social Security operates with administrative costs of less than 1% of benefits paid. With privatization, those costs would rise dramatically. Chile's privatized retirement is much admired by most of those trying to dismantle Social Security, but that plan has administrative costs of at least 15%. Even if administrative costs rise 1% (as many say they will), that is more than a 100% rise. Ball's group would avoid high administrative costs by investing in common stocks indexed to the broad market.

- Everyone in the stock market knows that past performance is no guarantee of future returns. What if we go into a long bear market? The Japanese market, the second largest in the world, is down more than half from its 1988 peak. Certainly there have been winners, but let us not forget Orange County, California, which applied for bankruptcy in December, 1994. (It has since been allowed to exit bankruptcy, due to bonds issued.) And the state of West Virginia lost \$280 million due to the mishandling of its investment funds by nine major securities firms (yes, they were "reputable" firms). If these things had happened on a much larger scale to the Social Security Trust Fund...! With investments indexed to the market, that would be unlikely, but it certainly could happen to several individual investors, if the I. A. or the P. S. A. approach is tried.

- There would be a conflict of interest. Suppose the Government wanted to ban a dangerous product. Could it do so knowing it has money invested in it? Could it supply peace forces to a troubled area if it knew the market would be affected?

• Currently the Social Security Fund invests in low yield (but very safe) Government treasury bonds. If it pulled out a considerable amount to invest in the market, the Government would have to raise the price of bonds to attract investors away from the market. No one knows how that would affect the market. In any case it would not affect national savings,¹³ the raising of which is an important goal.

• We are already a nation of gamblers with billions going to casinos and lotteries. Would stock market gambling be salutary?

Of course many private and state and local pension funds are heavily invested in stocks, but the federal government should be wary. I would not invest more than 10% of assets.

After 2003 the retirement age is scheduled to increase gradually to 67 over 22 years. Some would like to hasten this as another factor contributing to the viability of Social Security. The problem is that not all jobs are equally difficult. It might be easy for a college professor to retire at 67 but difficult for a miner or an assembly line worker. Moreover, low income men — especially blacks — have a shorter life expectancy. To shrink their few years of retirement even by months would be cruel. Postponing the retirement age is not necessary, as I shall show.

There are many other proposals. Edith Fierst, the feminist lawyer in the Ball group of the Advisory Council, wants to tax medical benefits over \$300 or \$400. However, this would clearly be regressive. Although all members of the panel gave at least lip service to a commitment to the Cost of Living Adjustment for retirees, some liberals and conservatives both on the panel and like Senator Daniel P. Moynihan off it, are looking with eager anticipation at Michael J. Boskins' probably spurious "correction" of the Consumer Price Index.¹⁴ This would get them off the hook with the voters, if they are politicians, and it would hurt retirees. ("What can we do? Our hands are tied by the CPI.") And there are other backhanded ways of hurting retirees, for examples, fiddling with methods of calculating retirement benefits, extending the period which average wages are computed from 35 to 38 years (resulting in an average of 3% reduction of benefits), etc. Alas, these proposals come not from the residualists, who want to junk Social Security, but from those committed to S.S. They are unnecessary and should be opposed but perhaps not as energetically as we oppose residualism.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE? I HAVE FIVE PROPOSALS:

(1) Stop the federal Government from raiding the Social Security Fund. (Senator Moynihan thinks it is illegal.) Keep the Fund separate from the federal budget. State and local government keep their pensions separate from their budgets, many by state law.

(2) Nearly four million state and local government workers are not now covered by S.S. Bring all newly hired ones into the Social Security system. This alone would account for .22 of the 2.2% needed to bring Social Security's long range revenues and expenses into balance.¹⁵ This has been proposed by both the Ball and the I. A. factions of the Advisory Council.

(3) Remove the \$65,400 cap on income taxed by Social Security so that the rich would pay S.S. tax on *all* their income, as they do now for Medicare. At present, those earning less than \$65,400 pay 6.2% of their income in S.S. tax

(and their employers match this), whereas those earning a little over \$400,000 are paying less than 1%. (There are over 800,000 taxpayers reporting income of \$200,000 or more.) Removal of the cap would generate more than \$80 billion annually.¹⁶ After the Advisory Council's report was published, I wrote to all members of the Ball group and asked them why they failed to advocate this. Neither Ball nor the labor leaders answered, but Edith Fierst wrote that "We are concerned lest the high earners cease to support Social Security."¹⁷ The American Association for Retired People (AARP), the largest organization supposedly for the elderly but very conservative, gave practically the same reply, albeit with considerably more double talk.¹⁸ Since the rich would be offended, hit the poor and the middle class.

(4) Let the Government pay back every cent it has "borrowed" from the Social Security Fund. How? In the 1950's the rich paid an income tax of 90-92% on top brackets (amount over \$200,000 or \$400,000 income depending on the year). Today, thanks to the Kennedy and succeeding administrations, it is 39.6%. Raise it.

(5) If #4 is impossible to achieve in the current political climate and if #2 and #3 do not quite cover the expected shortfall, then raise the taxing of S.S. benefits of those retirees with incomes over \$25,000 (single) or \$32,000 (married) from 85% to 100%.

I realize that proposals #3 and #4 might be very difficult to accept, but what bothers me is that almost none of the well known Social Security defenders are even mentioning them as possibilities. Nobody in the Firing Line debate, for example. Eric Kingson and James Schulz, leading S.S. advocates, suggest that "the maximum tax ceiling could be lifted on the employer's portion of the payroll tax,"¹⁹ but why only the employer's portion? And why not lift the cap completely, just as the Medicare cap has been removed, rather than just raise it? Most disheartening is that the last two proposals — removal of the cap and payment of the S.S. Fund debt — are excluded from the parameters of discussion by the media. I had a very difficult time getting the *Boston Globe* to publish my letter on removal of the cap; previously, they had never mentioned the possibility of doing that or of paying off the federal debt to S.S. And *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Yorker*, and — yes! — *The Nation* have also not allowed those two proposals on the table. Could it be that editors and publishers, let alone advertisers, make more than \$65,400 and feel no civic responsibility?

MEDICARE HAS BEEN BEYOND THE SCOPE OF THIS ARTICLE, BUT ITS PROBLEMS are more urgent than those of OASDI: Medicare will be able to pay full benefits for only a few more years unless something is done. Examples: radiologists earn more than \$200,000 annually, and surgeons average even more; Richard Gelb, CEO of Bristol-Myers Squibb made \$12.8 million in 1992;²⁰ many hospital executives are gouging the system for multi-million dollar wages; etc. This cannot continue. A single payer plan, like Canada's, with salaried doctors and with stricter cost regulation of hospitals, drug companies, etc., seems essential. The Canadian system is available to all citizens; patients choose doctors; doctors decide treatment; fees are set for each service. Canada pays much less for health care than the U. S. per capita, and Canadians live longer.²¹ It was a huge mistake — even a betrayal — for supporters of this plan, like Senators Wellstone and Kennedy, to ditch it in favor of the Clinton plan, which offered little and was doomed anyway. Obviously, we need a grass-roots campaign for a single payer plan.

We have two struggles to save OASDI without hurting the middle class

Taxation and the Deficit Scam

John Chiaradia

THE UNITED STATES IS THE LEADING PARADIGM OF THE MARKET economy at its “successful best”; yet both Republicans and Democrats have made the national debt a pivotal national issue. Why a successful market economy should not generate enough revenue to allow this government to cover domestic social needs that are quite modest when compared to modern Western nations, without having to borrow, remains unanalyzed. Both Republicans and President Clinton insist that seven hundred billion dollars *must* be cut from the federal expenses between 1997 and 2002 to reduce spending to anticipated tax receipts. With predictions of dire consequences if the federal budget is not balanced, they have zealously advanced legislation that, in the first instance, has or will savagely cut welfare provisions — those already skimpy forms of public assistance that provide a last guard against homelessness, hunger, despair, unnecessary suffering, moral degeneration, and premature death.

One must go back to the Reagan years to understand fears raised by deficits in present domestic politics. Prior to his election in 1980, the two-hundred-year-old American republic had amassed a national debt of less than one trillion dollars. Basing himself on a wealth-friendly “supply side” economics, Reagan, a parroting ignoramus in most disciplines, espoused the view that large tax cuts on the wealthy and corporations would produce an economic boom of such magnitude that new tax receipts would cover the lost revenue and even pay for huge new armament spending. The “tax reforms” of 1981 and 1986, passed by a Democratic-dominated Congress, slashed rates on top incomes from 70 to 28 percent;¹ consequences included the acceleration of mega-concentration of total U.S. wealth in a few hands, towering deficits, and the actual raising of taxes on the middle and working classes. By the end of the Republican Reagan and Bush presidencies in 1992, the national debt had leaped to over \$5 trillion, a quintupling in 12 years, and by then consuming 18 percent or more (depending on source) of all federal tax returns.

In reality, one explanation for Clinton’s victory in the 1992 election was his promise to reign in these deficits. By then, right-wing politicians had learned the advantages of using the deficit in pursuit of an

JOHN CHIARADIA is a longtime leftist and educator. His article on the United Federation of Teachers appeared in New Politics, Volume III, No.3.

old right-wing goal. Begun in the Reagan years but not successfully attempted in national politics until later, conservatives realized that popular social programs such as aid to the disabled, old-age pensions, and medical coverage for the elderly under Social Security and Medicare could not be attacked directly. The same might be accomplished by offering tax cuts, exaggerating their pay-back advantages, and by denouncing government as wasteful and bureaucratic to undermine both the ability and expectation of government-sponsored help. This tactic first worked in California,² but singularly failed for the Republican presidential candidate Bob Dole in the 1996 election. Nevertheless, the tactic remains in the political limelight, and received additional backing when Clinton, socially more conservative than the Richard Nixon of a generation earlier and in the same sleaze category, endorsed the balancing of the budget by 2002. A note of hysteria was added with the assertion that the Social Security pension fund will "go broke" when the postwar "baby boomers" begin retiring in a few years.

The obverse side of the deficit problem is taxation, that is, government revenues. When one looks at this underside with its many never publicly-explained or -understood statutes, statutes of special interest, statutes purposely cast in arcane and almost incomprehensible legalese, then the more accurate explanation emerges: the economy does not suffer from deficits, but from a tax system that has abandoned all pretense of progressivity and fairness, tolerates and encourages the shifting of taxation from the wealthy to the bottom 80 percent of society, limits the flow of tax revenue, and forces the most needy to survive in increasingly Spartan conditions.

THIS ARTICLE IS NOT A RESTATEMENT OF TESTED FORMS OF TAX AVOIDANCE. For example, the tax-free interest of "\$18 millions to more than \$87 millions" by Ross Perot in 1991 alone,³ and the nearly \$65 billion in tax-free interest paid between 1987-1991 to some 300,000 persons with incomes of over \$200,000; or that the 7.65 percent direct annual Social Security deduction on wages up to \$65,400 falls overwhelming on the working majority, whereas income above that figure pays nothing; or that for years excess annual surpluses — \$75 billions and above — have been collected from this regressive Social Security tax and used to replace income lost from eliminating progressivity on upper incomes, thus stealthily lifting money from the pockets of the lower classes to the purses of the topmost.

Attention here is on recent techniques — the new industry that has arisen specifically to broaden the tax escape hatches of wealth. One is the rapid growth of "deferred compensation" extended to executives and other high managerial officers. Very simply, some or much of the executive's salary is withheld by the company, guaranteed a higher-than-market rate of interest, and supplemented with additional funds. Thus corporate executive John L. Clendenin, CEO of Bell South, has some \$10 million in deferred compensation, and last year he was credited with nearly triple-the-bank rate interest, plus an additional \$415,700. The mogul of them all is Roberto Goizueta of Coca-Cola, who may have deferred taxes on about \$1 *billion*, after paying \$75 million on other income. Almost always hidden from public view, these arrangements constitute a large withholding from the already burdened public treasury, accelerate the

quest to find ever more legal avoidance, and spur both cynicism and the call for further "deficit cutting." This, at a time when the hard face of "managerial responsibility" is shown to the work force: citing costs, employers constantly cut retirement benefits. By now, half of those privately employed work without any retirement benefits, aside from the federal Social Security which is meager at best.⁴

Nothing, however matches what is being brewed daily in the witches' cauldrons of Wall Street and in bank and lawyers' offices ever avid to serve the wealthy — for an appropriate fee! In the U.S., the capital gains tax — a tax on any gain due to speculation or appreciation — is pegged at 28 percent; much less than the originally progressive income tax. By its very nature, it falls largely on the more affluent upper 20, 10 and especially top 1 percent, and is among the "least painful" of taxes. Amidst property appreciation and soaring stocks, this can be the source of immense additional riches for the very rich who are able to avoid even that minimum 28 percent tax. Hence, meet the new world of "upreits, swaps, DECS, Strypes, ACES, zero-cost collars," not to speak of "ESOP" or the more prosaic "borrowing" and "trusts," typical of the all-new tax avoidance schemes constantly being thought up. They are difficult to understand and, except to the initiated insider, as foreign to a native New Yorker as to a Muscovite. Several examples will limpidly illustrate their function. When the extremely wealthy Estee and Ronald Lauder disposed of their well-known Estee' Lauder stock, they used a system of borrowing that netted them close to \$400 million and (legally) avoided some \$95 million (28 percent) in capital gains tax. Or another: former Treasury Secretary William Simon and partners sold the Avis car-rental agency under an ESOP arrangement for a \$700 million gain, walking away tax-free. Typical of less affluent imitators, a well-to-do couple entrusted their half-million dollar home for 25 years to their children, and will live rent free; whereas the market value of the property may more than double in that time, for tax purposes it will devalue drastically leaving a minimum or no tax obligation at the end. The purpose of all these strategies, noted one banker, is to defer capital gains taxes for as long as needed to avoid them entirely. Indeed, in 1993, the last year of reported capital gains taxes, less was collected in that rising-stock-market year than in 1985, suggesting the degree of tax escape. "You can have your cake," he titillated his appreciative audience by revealing that the market economy had created magic realism, "and eat it, too."⁵ Suspicions are that the amount of taxes not paid to the commonweal may be gargantuan.

Moving to the lower classes, the price to be paid for all these forms of tax avoidance reemerges and may be felt directly by Ms. Abdur-Rahman, a 24-year old African-American mother of 20-month old Alexcya. Alexcya suffers from cerebral atrophy and will never know an independent life. Along with some one million children, she is helped by a monthly Supplemental Social Security (SSI) check, \$497 in this case, sent to her working mother. Recently, Ms. Abdur-Rahman along with 260,000 other parents received notice that this aid may be terminated. New guidelines and the deficit! The same could be said for John Crescenzo, 44, father of two, suffering from a rare cancer. The HMO he was forced to enter, in the absence of universal health coverage, will not pay for an experimental treatment that alone may save his life. Profits count: the HMO is not in business simply to save lives, but to make profit and also save lives!⁶

They would join some 31 percent of the population, roughly between 80-90 million persons, with no medical coverage or who face difficulty paying medical bills. These examples do not even include the common tens of millions who live with low wages, job uncertainty, and are constantly skidding along the edge of personal financial catastrophe. No doubt, a Ronald Lauder would commiserate with Ms. Abdur-Rahman, and most likely William Simon would even open his purse to extend a few dollars to John Cresenzo, but both they and their class live increasingly insulated from the misery left in the wake of the market economy and its drive for personal gain and profit, regardless of the social cost.

THIS MULTI-TIERED SOCIETY, THE EUPHEMISM FOR DESCRIBING a multi-class society shaped by the driving dynamics of the market economy, i.e. advanced capitalism, is reminiscent of the structural physiognomy assumed by society in the last decades of the *ancien regime*: the absolute monarch rested on a social order distended at the top by a handful of nobiliary magnates whose vast landed properties were serviced by an enserved or impoverished peasantry.

Does this Hobbesian scene of *omo omnium lupus* represent the future? Perhaps. The report indicates that the possible loss of aid to her daughter filled Ms. Abdur-Rahman with anger; also, John Cresenzo who paid \$6,000 for his faux coverage is no fool. Despite a legal right to vote, at the moment they have no political means of redress, and for all practical purposes are disfranchised. Given the wiping out and subversion of popular wisdom in the past half century, which must itself be the subject of an intense study, it would be difficult for them to understand at this moment that in the scales of the market economy they are irrelevant, and that their problems are rendered acute by social and economic policies designed by government to favor the privileged few at the expense of the majority. We may have reached the "end of history," but in the U.S. the biased operation of class society remains unchanged, as from the very beginning. In the epigrammatic words of Bartlett and Steele, a two-class, two-tax society. Ninety one million working individuals and families holding their own or losing out, as they pay ever more, and those clustered around the less than one million uppermost elite households enjoying ever more wealth and less taxation, one facet of the political economy of U.S. capitalism. Perhaps the single most Herculean task facing the remnants of the American Left is that of bringing to these two, and the many tens of millions they stand for, a virtual knowledge of how the system exploits, manipulates, and degrades, and once more ask them to give consideration to the only way out. For this, a forthright new politics is required.

Citing the findings of *Top Heavy*, a study sponsored by the non-radical Twentieth Century Fund, Leon Friedman notes that "nearly all the increase in total wealth in the past decade has gone to the top one-fifth of the population"; that a one-time 20 percent tax on the new private wealth would raise \$800 billion, a 40 percent tax would raise \$1.6 trillion, enough to rebalance the system on a fairer basis.⁷ Such a likelihood with this Democratic President and Republican Congress does not exist. In the real world, water never has been known to run uphill.

More likely, there is a clock ticking. It is not heard by the Lauders, the Simons, and the Wall Street gang. A whole system is on the cusp of judgment.

When we read from afar that Massimo D'Alema, a leader of the Democratic Party of the Left, the strongest parliamentary force behind the present ruling coalition in Italy, advised of the need "to move from a welfare of guarantees to a welfare of opportunity,"⁸ we know that a clock is ticking there, too, for he is simply updating in seriousness the tongue-in-cheek observation made by Anatole France about a century ago: the majestic fairness of bourgeois justice prohibits rich and poor alike from sleeping under bridges and on park benches. If the shades from the Court of Versailles could return, they would immediately recognize the sound. Who amongst the haughty present lords of wealth espy their future in that past?

NOTES

1. As with much economic data, this is well-known. Ample studies have been devoted to these changes, perhaps the best being Donald L. Bartlett & James B. Steele, *America: Who Really Pays the Taxes?* (New York: Simon & Shuster, 1994). See especially the role of Majority Democratic leader Representative D. Rostenkowski; symbolic were his tax savings for wealthy breeders and racers of horses. Today he sits in prison for embezzlement, among his several malpractices. Aptly, George Bush called them "supply side" "Voodoo economics," and then opportunistically applied them.

2. This subject is treated in detail by Harvard professor Theda Skocpol in *Boomerang* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1995), as part of the analysis of Clinton's 1993 failed universal coverage proposal.

3. *America: Who Really Pays the Taxes?*, pp. 95-136. The law allows the taxpayer to indicate non-specific income range.

4. *The New York Times*, October 13, 1996, and editorial October 18.

5. *The New York Times*, December 1 & 22, 1966. Often referred to as the "fourth branch of the U.S. Government," it is not without significance that the *Times* has highlighted these legal tax evasion practices. See also p. 1, "Money & Business" section, *Times*, December 3, 1995.

6. *The New York Times*, December 23 & 28, 1996; also, October 23, 1996.

7. *The Nation*, January 6, 1997.

8. *America Oggi*, October 4, 1996. Formerly, the Italian Communist Party (PCI), in the last decade, it has moved from "moribund Marxism" to social democracy and beyond. Its present stance approximates classical liberalism.

Ecology and Social Change

Lorna Salzman

AS THE RECENT BACKLASH FROM DEVELOPERS, EXPLOITERS and certain government officials indicates, environmental values, principles, laws and regulations have become the absolute final bastion between democracy and total economic/political domination by special interests and corporations.

Demolition of this bastion has been accompanied by attempts to dismantle not just unions and social welfare programs but the hard-fought health and safety laws that have heretofore protected workers and consumers. Although exploiters throw around terms like home rule and homeowner compensation, in fact environmental and land use laws are only extensions of the traditional home rule concept that assures towns and municipalities of zoning powers.

Environmental laws, however, protect not just workers but entire communities, public amenities, natural resources and the global commons; subversion of these laws means subversion of the basic integrity and functions of natural systems and resources: farmland, rivers and lakes that provide drinking water and recreation, forests, wetlands, air quality and the oceans. After the dismantlement of social justice laws and structures, including unions and the advancement of minorities, environmental laws still stand in the way.

Moreover, they represent a serious threat to all political parties because they command respect and loyalty from a broad spectrum of citizens apart from traditional political affiliations, hence the reluctance of even the Democratic Party to align itself forcefully with environmentalists or advance a truly progressive environmental agenda.

Until recently, environmentalism has been defined primarily as those aspects of life that have an immediate effect on human health and welfare. Hence, the path was an easy one: recycling, bicycle paths, returnable bottles, in brief, programs that are easily implementable within the present system and which cause no disturbance to the established order.

LORNA SALZMAN, long active in the ecology movement, has taught energy and environment courses at Rutgers University Human Ecology Program, served as Mid-Atlantic Representative of Friends of the Earth and was wetlands/natural resources planner at the New York City Department of Environmental Protection.

But replacement of the word environment by the word ecology has broadened what was originally a white middle-class movement saving aesthetic amenities and preventing eyesores like litter; it now encompasses ethical and biological concerns for non-human species, habitats and ecosystems.

This broadening of concerns, recognizing the need to preserve the natural systems upon which all human endeavor depends for survival, also broadens the threat to special interests and corporations. It goes far beyond those problems that can be accommodated and remediated within the existing system, the problems whose solution will cause minimal disruption, if any, of the established economic and political order, and involves the whole global commons and genetic heritage. In so doing, it raises issues that threaten the accelerating trend toward a world economic order that increasingly depends on first world capital and technology but also on third world resources, labor and markets (that is, middle-class consumers).

Those familiar with the struggles in Central America and the writings of Noam Chomsky will immediately understand the connection between democracy, social justice and ecologically sustainable development. It is not for nothing that this country, through both overt and covert means (the CIA and AID, among others, including some parts of the U.S. labor union movement), supports dictatorships to insure that third world land redistribution, labor union organizing, tribal peoples' rights, and self-managing agrarian communities are ruthlessly suppressed. As Chomsky has so admirably documented, U.S. support for repressive regimes in Latin America has been given primarily to insure stability for investment and to provide cheap resources and labor for the benefit of American consumers. Thus, third world democracy threatens not just managerial and technocratic elites in these countries but foreign capital and multinationals; furthermore, these elites are increasingly faced by insurgencies in the third world demanding ecologically sound as well as socially just development policies, as witness the struggles in India against giant hydroelectric dams, in Indonesia against forcible resettlement in Borneo, in Sarawak against corrupt regional and Malaysian government selling off indigenous peoples' lands to Japanese timber companies, in New Guinea against foreign mining companies . . . the list goes on and on and on.

HERE IN THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL LAWS AND POLICIES HAVE SERVED TO DEMOCRATIZE the process of managing, utilizing and protecting natural resources and lands for an equitable and sustainable future. Those efforts include inner-city movements for environmental justice, native American efforts to protect tribal and religious lands from mineral exploitation, water diversion and military use, movements to fend off nuclear waste dumping, movements to preserve forest ecosystems from short-term non-sustainable exploitation, movements to protect public lands from ruinous grazing policies subsidized by taxpayers, struggles by small fishermen against high-tech mechanized fisheries that vacuum the seas, and so forth. Worse still, neither the Republican nor Democratic party has ever questioned the extensive public subsidies given to the energy/minerals/cattle/forestry sectors, without which their ecologically disastrous policies could never have been implemented.

But even if social welfare programs are not dismantled, the impact of weak-

ening environmental laws on food, soil, wetlands, water and air will ultimately have the same effect because dismantling environmental laws is just another way of reaching the same objective: total economic domination of public lands and resources, and exclusion of the general public from policy- and decision-making.

Public participation in the environmental process has in fact had a profound democratizing effect on our society. It has made information freely available, it attracts widespread media attention, it integrates broad social concerns into the regulatory and enforcement process, it enhances public oversight of administrative and enforcement agencies, it activates the citizenry and in general has functioned to take environmental awareness and concern far beyond the classroom, hearing room or court room.

The rollback or elimination of environmental laws and regulations will therefore reduce citizen involvement drastically, and all the other benefits of public participation spelled out above will disappear. Environmental oversight, utilization of natural resources and land development will become part of a strictly private domain of investor-owned utilities, energy corporations, agribusiness, ranchers, loggers, mining conglomerates and land developers, who will have free rein without concern for either nature or local communities. If they succeed they will not only decimate the environment but will have destroyed democracy. When one recognizes this fact, it becomes clear that the ecological paradigm promoted by environmentalists in fact subsumes virtually all the social justice and equity issues of concern to social change movements.

Social justice is a necessary but insufficient condition for a sustainable society; it needs to be accompanied by the ecological dimension that places humans and their needs within the biosphere, without regarding nature only as a fount of resources and a foundation of human wealth. Indeed, human and societal wealth do not exist apart from ecological wealth.

Protection of ecosystems and their components necessarily requires many paradigmatic changes: redistribution of wealth, democratization of planning and decision-making, a wholesale revision of the dominant economic paradigm of untrammelled economic growth, consumption and exploitation, and above all new relations not only among humans but between us and the rest of nature. The conclusion is inescapable that we need to radically revise our values and objectives, voluntarily, peacefully and equitably, rather than waiting to be forced to do it in unpleasant ways.

ENVIRONMENTALISM IS A BROAD SOCIAL MOVEMENT THAT CALLS INTO QUESTION all of our traditional political and economic arrangements and relationships. It addresses policy-and decision-making, investment criteria, the price versus the cost of goods, ethics, distribution of wealth and power, the questions of who benefits, who is at risk, who is in control, who decides what to manufacture, how, where and at what scale, and for what purpose. The interest group served by environmentalism is ultimately that remarkable assemblage of living organisms, species and ecosystems that we call Life.

Ecology thus forms the basis for inquiry and social change by posing new questions about how institutions should function, new definitions and criteria for judging progress, new ways of assessing risks, new parameters for investment and pricing, etc. As such, ecological thought poses the most broad-based challenge to our entire societal paradigm. It is precisely this fact that has produced the anti-environment backlash. Developers, corporations and government bureaucrats long ago recognized the radical threat of ecology; now the progressive sectors of the U.S. need to recognize this too.

The Return of Hope

Sean Matgamna

IT IS MAY 2, 1997, THE DAY AFTER THE VOTERS BURIED the Tories in a landslide of popular revulsion and gave New Labour an enormous and unprecedented majority in Parliament. A large crowd is standing in bright sunshine in and around Downing Street and down in a sizeable patch of Whitehall watching the comings and goings, hoping for a glimpse of the new Prime Minister.

Everyone is exuberant, enthusiastic, happy, like people celebrating victory in a long and terrible war. Or people from whom a great weight has been lifted.

Some — but only some — of it is orchestrated by New Labour apparachiks — entrance to Downing Street is by ticket only, compliments of New Labour. But nobody could generate or artificially concoct this crowd and this mood.

With them, as with vast numbers of people throughout the country, the weight of a hundred years of political tradition of what “labour” meant in politics for so long, outweighed the bleak “New Labour” message Blair spent most the campaign spelling out. They still hold to the image of Labour that Blair and his group have been working so hard to banish from public memory.

All our reports suggest the scenes in and around Downing Street on May 2 were representative of feeling throughout the country. Many “Old Labour” people who have no illusions about Blair share it, though they know they will have to fight him to win free trade unions. People who had long felt in their bones that after four general election victories, the sleazy and vicious Tories simply could not be beaten, feel a correspondingly intense surge of joy and relief now that they have been thoroughly beaten.

The death of the Tory government has given birth to hope, and released much pent up feeling. People want change. They expect change. They expect *better* from Blair.

They have put their own interpretation on Blair’s rhetoric. They have picked up the notes of sincere hostility to the ruling Tories in New Labour speeches and woven them into their own fiercely anti-Tory tune.

They blame the Tories for doing to Britain things Blair has said explicitly he will not attempt to reverse. In an unfocused way, millions of people seem to want Blair to do what he spent much of the long election campaign telling them he would not do. Thus, an election which was democracy at rock bottom, where little of substance — except getting the Tories out — was put to the electorate, has produced a wild upsurge of hope and expectation and attached it to the Tories’ Blairite understudies.

The fall of the Tories has unleashed what is, for the ruling class and the

SEAN MATGAMNA is the editor of the British socialist publication, *Workers Liberty*.

new government, a dangerous mood of expectation.

Possibly that is the most important political fact in British life now. It is, as the *Guardian's* liberal columnist Hugo Young said on May 2, the big contradiction facing the Blair government:

Tony Blair had two objectives during this election. The first was to win, the second to minimize every expectation of what would happen then. Now he has got a totally unforeseen result. The strategy turns out to have produced a triumphant contradiction. Blair has given rise to massive hopes and dreams far exceeding what he promised in order to secure his victory. The voters have steamrolled over his hesitations, declaring for a landslide that's wholly at odds with what he can deliver.

Nobody had any reason to believe that Blair would prove untrue to his own nature and his own politics, and go on to satisfy the hopes of all those enthusiastic crowds celebrating the fall of the Tories. The release of hope is what is important here.

Those of us who have been paying attention to what Blair says and what he wants to do to the political labor movement may be in danger of missing the significance of what has happened. It is important that we do not miss it.

Hope is a commodity more precious than government promises, or, for that matter, government deeds. When those raised up now to unwarranted hope in the new government learn that they can't rely on Blair, they may carry that hope over into doing things for themselves and develop out of it a belief that it is possible to do things. That many things, long thought impossible really are possible now that the heavy tombstone of Tory rule has been shifted.

Hope will stimulate and liberate desire. Desire and hope stimulate action. Ideas like the defense of the welfare state which fell on ground sterilized by despair will now begin to flourish.

Those who hated the Tories hated them for reasons. They want Labour to do the opposite — and in ways in which Blair cannot be the opposite of the Tories without abandoning the New Labour project. Thus on the day of the election an opinion poll reported that over 80% of habitual Labour voters are in favor of the redistribution of wealth, and 65% of “switchers” share this view. What is really to be expected of Blair is indicated by his appointment of the crypto-Tory Frank Field as Social Security Minister. Among his other peculiar views, Field, a few years back, even floated the idea of lowering the minimum age for leaving school. God knows what he will try to do.

The contradiction between mass hope for betterment and a government committed to bleak neo-Tory policies can prove tremendously fruitful for socialism.

In the aftermath of the great Liberal landslide of 1906, the disappointment of popular hope — including the hopes vested in the 40 Labour MPs then elected — helped produce a tremendous wave of industrial direct action within a couple of years.

In France, in 1936, the election of a “Popular Front” government that intended to do little for its supporters, triggered a semi-revolutionary general strike. The working class in one bound forced tremendous concessions from the bourgeoisie, and its state. History does not repeat itself, but unleashed hope does work wonders.

Much depends on what the socialists do. If socialists remain sourly unresponsive and “sectarian” toward the mood around them, they will achieve less

than well might be achieved.

The fight for free trade unions can now be put on the agenda for every trade unionist in Britain. The expansion of the unions into the unorganized industries can be attempted.

The fight to restore the welfare state and the National Health Service can be put on a new footing. The Tories never had a mandate for what they did to the National Health Service. Even New Labour speakers during the election felt obliged to give half-promises to restore it. Will they?

Now the campaign for the NHS and the welfare state has a chance to go on the offensive, recalling what Labour seemed to say in the general election campaign.

Blair has put up Field to redesign the welfare system: that is not by any means the end of the affair. The working class will speak in the period ahead, as we have not spoken since the early 80s.

THE MASS FEELING THAT BURST OUT ON MAY 2 and after was benign and complaisant and happily expectant. Other feeling is there too — pent up anger and indignation and hate at what the Tories have done. An awful lot of workers in the 80s especially in the old coalfields and steelmaking areas, felt the Tory heel on their necks and knew helpless rage as they listened to the triumphant cackles of yuppies and rip-off merchants and other opulent robbers who had, for so long, what seemed to be an unshakable grip on their lives. Hoards of young people had their lives blighted and their youth taken from them. That anger expressed itself too on May 1, and some of it tapped into a joyful rejoicing on May 2. It has not gone away. Hope will turn back into anger as the Blairites in office try to be the neo-Tories they are.

Millions of people want a life of human solidarity and mutual care. They hate the ethos of Toryism. What they want can only be achieved by socialism. They can learn to understand that in the period ahead.

Hope that so unexpectedly came back into British public life on May 2 is the prerequisite for everything else.

Bayard Rustin and the Rise and Decline of the Black Protest Movement

Stephen Steinberg

"THERE HAS BEEN . . . A NEGRO REVOLT in every decade of this century," Lerone Bennett wrote in 1963. "Each revolt failed, only to emerge in the next decade on a higher level of development."¹ If there is a single person who served as the nexus between these decennial revolts, it was Bayard Rustin. This is one of the important lessons to be drawn from Jervis Anderson's recent biography: *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I've Seen*.² Indeed, if Anderson had his politics right, the subtitle would have read: *Troubles I've Caused*.

Rustin is to be remembered as a political gadfly who, more than any other single person, was a catalyst behind the various stages of the civil rights movement as it evolved from individual acts of resistance, to fledgling organizations that forged a praxis for challenging the Jim Crow system in the South, to a full-fledged political movement that not only overcame seemingly insuperable odds to achieve its immediate objectives, but also ushered in a period of extraordinary progressive transformation. This is Bayard Rustin's incontestable political legacy. Unfortunately, Rustin must also be remembered for his political perfidy, beginning in 1963, when he made a fateful shift "from protest to politics."

Anderson's rich biography sheds light on the formative influences that shaped Rustin's sensibilities and politics. Rustin was raised in West Chester, Pennsylvania, by his maternal grandmother, who was a Quaker in her youth, and became a charter member of the NAACP in 1910. These two political strains — pacifism and racial activism were to become the leitmotif of Rustin's life, though as we shall see, they at times coalesced into a potent amalgam but at other times were fatally at odds with one another.

STEPHEN STEINBERG writes frequently for *New Politics*. His book, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy*, received the Oliver Cromwell Cox Award for Distinguished Anti-Racist Scholarship by the Race and Ethnicity Section of the American Sociological Association.

Rustin's career as political activist began in high school when he was arrested for refusing to sit in the balcony of the local moviehouse, dubbed Nigger Heaven. As offensive lineman on the football team, he instigated a revolt among his black teammates to their Jim Crow accommodations. He led a group of classmates in acts of defiance to Jim Crow practices in restaurants, soda fountains, movie houses, department stores, and the YMCA. Graduating with honors in 1932, Rustin was class valedictorian and received a prize for excellence in public speaking. If this were the first act of a play, one would applaud the playwright for skillfully weaving together the various elements of personality and intellect that would drive the narrative.

Rustin did two short stints at black colleges, Wilberforce and Cheyney State Teachers College. In the spring of 1937, he returned to Cheyney for a two-week training program as a peace volunteer, sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee. Here peace volunteers were trained in the tactics of opposing war with courage and goodwill, and then dispatched to towns and cities across America. That winter Rustin abruptly packed his bags and moved to Harlem, where he lived with his aunt, a public-school teacher, on Sugar Hill. The Communist Party had a conspicuous presence in Harlem. As Rustin would comment later, it was the one organized group speaking out about the Scottsboro case and the ravages of Jim Crow in the South. It was apparently at the behest of the Young Communist League that Rustin enrolled as a student at CCNY in 1938. There he played a leading role in the Communist takeover of the student senate, its campus newspaper, and the American Student Union. In 1941 the YCL commissioned Rustin to organize a campaign against segregation in the armed forces, but that directive was abruptly withdrawn when the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941. Disillusioned, Rustin quit the YCL, and on that very day walked down the hill into A. Philip Randolph's office. In short order Rustin was assigned to head the youth arm of Randolph's emerging March on Washington Movement (MOWM).

According to Anderson, Rustin registered "explosive dissent" at Randolph's decision to call off the march after Roosevelt issued his executive order desegregating defense industries. He and other "radical youth organizers" were also disappointed that no concessions had been won concerning the desegregation of the armed forces. With the MOWM in remission, Rustin shifted his allegiances to the pacifist movement, and began working for the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). As field secretary for youth and general affairs, Rustin crisscrossed the country, organizing new chapters, lecturing on college campuses, addressing civic and religious groups — in short, honing his skills as a political organizer.

FOR WAS A BREEDING GROUND FOR RADICAL IDEAS AND LEADERS, most of whom were disciples of Mahatma Gandhi. With James Farmer as its race relations secretary and Rustin as field secretary, FOR was the progenitor of the Congress of Racial Equality, founded in 1940 with Rustin as its first field secretary. CORE combined the racial militancy of Randolph's MOWM with the tactics of the pacifist movement, thus forging a new praxis, centered around non-violent direct action, for challenging Jim Crow in the South. Although CORE's experiments with sit-ins and boycotts were minimally effective in the 1940s,

they constituted a political legacy that was readily adopted by the evolving civil rights movement in the 1950s.

As a conscientious objector, Rustin was exempted from the draft on the condition that he enlist in the Civilian Public Service. He refused. Like the radical activists in the War Resisters League, Rustin regarded the civilian work camps as aiding the war effort, and he was sentenced to three years in a federal prison. There he joined other conscientious objectors in hunger strikes against segregated seating in the dining hall.

Emerging from prison in June 1946, Rustin went back to work for the Fellowship of Reconciliation as race relations secretary, a position that he shared with George Houser. Together they planned a Journey of Reconciliation to demand enforcement of a recent Supreme Court ruling against Jim Crow in interstate buses. Thurgood Marshall warned that a "disobedience movement on the part of Negroes and their white allies, if employed in the South, would result in wholesale slaughter with no good achieved."³ Marshall was not entirely wrong, at least measured by the short term. Rustin narrowly escaped violence, was arrested and sentenced to a harrowing 22 days on a chain gang, and the buses remained segregated. On the other hand, the Journey was a precursor to the freedom rides of the 1960s. As Rustin commented in 1948: "the Journey of Reconciliation was organized not only to devise techniques for eliminating Jim Crow in travel, but also as a training ground for similar peaceful projects against discrimination in such major areas as employment and in the armed services."⁴ Rustin's political genius was his ability to simultaneously pursue short-term and long-term objectives, without allowing one to eclipse the other.

It is noteworthy that Rustin's activism on behalf of civil rights was grounded in a broader matrix of ideological principles, and his activism found varied outlets. Indeed, Rustin was the peripatetic organizer who over a lifetime of activism would gravitate to whatever struggle emerged for peace, democracy, or racial justice. In 1946 he travelled to India to meet with Gandhi intellectuals, stopping in Britain to address various pacifist groups. Then he worked for several years in a campaign against America's development of nuclear weapons and its programs for war preparedness. Soon after the abortive Journey of Reconciliation he travelled to Paris and Moscow with David Dellinger and other pacifists. In Paris he learned about the emerging anticolonial struggles in Africa, and in 1952 travelled to Africa on a mission sponsored by the Fellowship of Reconciliation and the American Friends Service Committee, with the purpose of linking American pacifist movement with leaders of West African independence. After a humiliating arrest for a homosexual incident in 1953, he was ejected from the Fellowship of Reconciliation. But a year later he was appointed executive secretary of the War Resisters League, a position that he retained for 12 years, though he was frequently "released" to work with the evolving civil rights movement.

RUSTIN'S RENDEZVOUS WITH DESTINY CAME IN DECEMBER 1955, when Rosa Parks's act of courage precipitated the Montgomery bus boycott which would catapult Martin Luther King into a leadership position. By February Rustin was summoned to Montgomery. At 44 he was a seasoned organizer; King, at 27, was a neophyte who by sheer accident was drawn into the swirling vortex of black

revolt. King had previous academic exposure to Gandhi, but according to Anderson, it was Rustin who prevailed on King to dispense with armed guards and to embrace nonviolent action as the trademark of the budding movement. It was also Rustin who forged links to radicals in the North. In April 1956 *Liberation* carried King's first piece of political journalism, and Rustin and the War Resisters League mobilized leading pacifists and radicals into a Committee for Nonviolent Integration which funneled aid to King. Rustin helped to organize yet another group, In Friendship, which sponsored a rally at Madison Square Garden that raised some \$20,000 for the Montgomery Improvement Association. There was always nervousness among King's advisors about Rustin's Communist past and his homosexuality, but his organizing skills and political savvy proved indispensable.

It would be difficult to exaggerate Rustin's contribution as the Montgomery boycott evolved into a broad strategy for protest. According to Anderson, Rustin "conceived and charted" the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, along with Ella Baker and Stanley Levison. This was to serve as the organizational mechanism for King's ascent to national prominence. Over the next decade Rustin remained a close advisor to King, especially during moments of crisis. Rustin was the chief organizer of the Prayer Pilgrimage — a precursor to the March on Washington. Held at the Lincoln memorial on the third anniversary of the Brown decision, the Pilgrimage drew some 30,000 participants from labor, student, religious, and civil rights organizations. This was King's first major protest event outside the South, and his oratorical gifts captured the attention of commentators both inside and outside the movement. Rustin also had a hand in drafting King's first book, *Stride Toward Freedom*, which reached a national audience with the riveting story of the Montgomery boycott. In 1958 Rustin organized yet another mass demonstration in Washington — the Youth March for Integrated Schools. These were the feats of creative organizing through which the civil rights movement grew from a regional protest against Jim Crow to a national movement for racial justice.

Again it is noteworthy, especially as a foreshadow of Rustin's later deviation, that even during this period of heightened racial conflict, Rustin never abandoned his pacifist crusade. As Anderson put it, Rustin was "a leading member of the radical jet set," flying off to conferences in Europe, India, and Africa. In late 1959 Rustin was abroad protesting France's first nuclear test in the Sahara, and was absent from the planning for the 1960 national conventions, much to the ire of Randolph. According to Anderson, "Rustin therefore found himself in the middle of a tug-of-war between the two political causes to which he was equally committed, pacifism and black protest activism."

Yet it was Bayard Rustin who emerged as the chief organizer and tactician for the climactic 1963 March on Washington. Despite the qualms of some civil rights leaders, Rustin was named Randolph's deputy director. The march was originally conceived, not as a demonstration for civil rights, but as a demonstration around economic issues, particularly the need for jobs and a higher minimum wage. It was to be sponsored by the Negro American Labor Council, the association of black trade unionists that Randolph formed within the AFL-CIO. According to an internal memorandum that Rustin prepared for Randolph, the march would entail "the co-ordinated participation of all progressive sectors of the liberal, labor, religious, and Negro communities." It was King who

insisted that the march focus on civil rights as well as economic issues, and to appease King the march was renamed as a March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

The March is remembered as the epitome of protest politics. It was, after all, "the biggest, and surely the most diverse, demonstration in history for human rights." In retrospect, however, the March was the glorious finale of the protest movement, and embodied the seeds of an imminent transformation "from protest to politics," for Rustin personally and for the movement as a whole.

THERE WAS A POLITICAL PRICE TO THE COALITION that Rustin so actively sought. In order to enlist the support of hundreds of civic, labor, and religious organizations, the politics of the march had to be confined to what was politically safe. As Milton Viorst comments in *Fire in the Streets*, "the March increasingly adopted the posture of a moral witness against evil; participation became not a matter of politics but of conscience, and support swelled."⁵

Thus, while the March had all of the earmarks of "protest," it actually represented the ascendancy of a new brand of "coalition politics," the antithesis of the politics of confrontation that were at the core of the black protest movement. Nothing better illustrates this than the well-documented muzzling of John Lewis. According to Viorst:

Lewis had planned to denounce Kennedy's civil rights bill as inadequate, and declare that SNCC could not support it. He saw an opportunity for SNCC to shatter an illusion that the palliatives of liberal America could achieve the goals of racial justice. SNCC's rhetoric was now of revolution.

Rustin required all speakers to hand in the text of their speeches the night before, and Lewis's touched off an acrimonious debate. James Forman, who helped draft the speech, insisted that it was "a dynamite speech" that "would puncture the tranquility of the march and the efforts of the Kennedy administration to make this look like a popular uprising in favor of his civil rights bill."⁶ On the other hand, Robert Kennedy and Burke Marshall were determined that Lewis be muzzled, and they enlisted the support of Bishop Patrick O'Doyle who was scheduled to deliver the opening invocation.⁷ Even as the ceremonies were about to begin, O'Doyle threatened to withdraw. At a hasty conference behind the Lincoln Memorial, Randolph and Rustin prevailed on Lewis to excise the controversial passages.

Thus did a mass demonstration at the apex of the black revolt against America's racial tyranny proceed without so much as a discordant note that might rankle the political establishment. King's celebrated I-have-a-dream oration was embraced precisely because it vented no anger, cast no aspersions, but on the contrary, invoked America's ideals and substituted utopian reverie for political action. It is worth noting that King's oration had another message: "There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges." But if these words were heard at all, they were instantly expunged from collective memory.

After King spoke, it was Rustin who took the microphone, asking for verbal ratification of the goals of the March: passage of Kennedy's civil rights bill,

a \$2.00 minimum wage, desegregation of schools, a federal public-works job program, and federal action to bar racial discrimination in employment. Later that evening Rustin and the other civil rights leaders were received at the White House, remuneration for keeping within the bounds of political acceptability.

Whether the March, with its decorum and stirring oratory, helped to build momentum for the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act is open to question. Malcolm X's appraisal is memorable: "Who ever heard of angry revolutionists all harmonizing in 'We Shall Overcome' . . . while tripping and swaying along, arm-in-arm, with the very people they were supposed to be angrily revolting against?" Even the *New York Times* concluded that the demonstration "appeared to have left much of Congress untouched physically, emotionally, and politically."⁸ To say, as Anderson does, that "in November 1963, the spirit of the March on Washington was dealt a severe blow by the assassination of President Kennedy" is to miss the point. It was Kennedy's assassination and Johnson's subsequent landslide that secured the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

ACCORDING TO ANDERSON, IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE MARCH Rustin "began emerging as a political figure in his own right, not simply an intellectual factotum of the protest movement." No longer the outsider, the gadfly, the troublemaker, he was photographed alongside Randolph on the cover of *Life*. Whether such personal blandishments played a role in Rustin's move toward the respectable center is difficult to say. What is clear, though, is that the 1963 March marked a decisive turn in Rustin's politics. It would be followed in short order by three events that would complete his political metamorphosis:

1) At the 1964 Democratic National Convention Rustin was drawn into the imbroglia over the challenge by the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party, organized by SNCC, to unseat the party regulars. At Johnson's behest, Walter Reuther and Hubert Humphrey brokered a compromise that would have given the FDP two seats alongside white supremacists in the Mississippi delegation. Rustin opted on the side of compromise. This, from the man whose credo as both pacifist and civil rights activist was *never* to forego principle for expediency, *never* to back down even if one had to endure the blows and the retribution of the oppressor.

It is one thing, predictable and even pardonable, that pragmatists within the Democratic Party would seek a compromise to avoid a fissure that could bring the party down to defeat. But it is quite another thing when Bayard Rustin — the personification of resistance — capitulates to Dixiecrats from a state infamous for racist violence and the murder of civil rights workers. According to Anderson, this episode "marked the virtual end of the popularity Rustin had once enjoyed among young militants of the protest movement."

2) Rustin's next act of political perfidy took the form of an article that he published in the February 1965 issue of *Commentary*. Aptly entitled "From Protest to Politics," the article was a manifesto in reverse. Now that the structure of segregation had been destroyed, Rustin reasoned, the politics of confrontation had outlived its purpose. Future progress would depend not on the tactics of direct action, but forging a progressive coalition that would seek power through the Democratic Party. To quote Rustin:

The future of the Negro struggle depends on whether the contradictions of this society can be resolved by a coalition of progressive forces which becomes the *effective* political majority in the United States. I speak of the coalition which staged the March on Washington, passed the Civil Rights Act, and laid the basis for the Johnson landslide — Negroes, trade unionists, liberals, and religious groups.⁹

In the abstract, this might well seem a plausible political stratagem. The reality, however, was quite otherwise. In the first place, Rustin's strategy was predicated on blind faith in the labor movement. Rustin wrote: "The labor movement, despite its obvious faults, has been the largest single organized force in this country pushing for progressive social legislation." However, the pervasive racism in labor unions can hardly be wiped away with a parenthetical phrase: "despite its obvious faults." In an article in the Fall 1966 issue of *New Politics*, ironically entitled "From Protest to Politicking," Julius Jacobson derided Rustin's starry-eyed depiction of organized labor in terms that are instructive to those who today look to labor for a resurgence of Left politics:

... the coalitionists who preach the vital necessity of a Negro-Labor alliance today and are guided in their actions by coalitionist concepts, never give an idea of what the Labor half of this partnership-to-be looks like! It is an extraordinary omission, especially since most of them will admit that there are "obvious faults" and "inadequacies" afflicting the labor movement. Exactly what and how extensive are these failings? What is its vision? What are the internal practices of labor organizations? What is their record in action? Are they democratic organizations? Etc., etc. These are questions assiduously avoided by most coalitionist theorists, for good reason. . . . *To reveal the trade union establishment as it actually is would not only embarrass their patrons but expose the central fallacy of coalitionism.*¹⁰

Jacobson went on to review the sorry record of unions with respect to blacks, especially the systematic and near-total exclusion of blacks from craft unions, and the failure of the AFL-CIO even to endorse the March on Washington.

Rustin's coalitionism required yet another leap of faith: that the Democratic Party would serve as the venue for a progressive politics. In "From Protest to Politics," Rustin claimed that "the Johnson landslide proved the 'white backlash' to be a myth." We now know that this was a profound miscalculation, that Nixon would soon be swept into office on a white backlash that reached deep within the ranks of organized labor, and that the Democratic Party would renounce its own liberal traditions and gravitate fatally toward the political center. This we know with the benefit of hindsight. However, in his 1966 critique of coalitionism, Jacobson prophetically denounced the idea that Rustin's liberal coalition could ever reshape the Democratic Party into "a truly progressive people's party." To quote Jacobson:

It is a utopian scheme. No such coalition is going to capture the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party has its own coalition: a network of hardened political machines which is not going to permit itself to be taken over by Freedom Budget visionaries or permit the Party to be torn apart, with its consequent loss of political power, prestige, patronage, etc.

Rustin's faith in religious groups (read: Jews) also turned out to be misguided. One month after *Commentary* published Rustin's article forswearing "protest," its editor, Norman Podhoretz, presided at a symposium at New York's Town Hall on "Liberalism and the Negro." In his opening remarks Podhoretz

alluded to "a widening split between the Negro movement and the white liberal community." The problem was that "over the past two or three years a new school of liberal (or perhaps it should be called radical) thought has been developing. . . [that] insists that radical measures are now needed to overcome the Negro's inherited disabilities." These "radical measures" included proposals for "a domestic Marshall Plan" and other "crash programs" to address the inequalities between white and black America. What most disturbed Podhoretz, however, was the specter of "preferential treatment for Negroes" to compensate for patterns of entrenched racism in hiring, housing, and other institutions. Podhoretz's message was clear: as far as "traditional liberals" were concerned, their support for the liberation struggle ended with the dismantling of the legal structure of segregation.

AS DERRICK BELL HAS POINTED OUT, WHITES NEED BLACKS to provide ideological cover for their racially regressive policies, and it is difficult to avoid this judgment with respect to Rustin. Like William Julius Wilson today, Rustin helped to legitimate the jettisoning of race-based politics and race-based public policy. There are other similarities as well. Both Rustin and Wilson had a liberal rationale for their retreat from race. Both proposed a multibillion-dollar federal public works program to reach blacks on the fringes of the job market. Both embraced a social democratic politics that would offer economic redemption for blacks, not directly, but through utopian schemes to create full employment and a social democratic utopia. Like Wilson's patrons, Podhoretz was willing to indulge Rustin in his utopian fantasies. What he got in return was a prominent black protest leader who sought to bring the liberation movement back within existing structures of race, power, and class. Above all, Podhoretz got Rustin to utter the magic words, later to be regurgitated by Wilson as well. Alluding to unskilled blacks on the bottom of the labor market, Rustin wrote: "Preferential treatment' cannot help them."⁴

Again, Jacobson provides an astute rejoinder:

Of course, preferential treatment does not go to the root of the Negro job problem! Neither will a 10¢ an hour raise for any working man provide him with all the comforts of the good life. Only socialism will do all that. But the 10¢ an hour raise will help. . . . And that is why we support preferential hiring; not because it is the ultimate answer but it is at least a small democratic step in the direction of social justice.

Actually, the "step" turned out to be larger than anyone could have anticipated, inasmuch as "preferential hiring" evolved into affirmative action programs that effectively desegregated major labor markets, in blue-collar as well as white-collar industries.

3) The third and least explicable act of political perfidy was when Rustin became an apologist for Johnson's Vietnam policy. Anderson puts a sympathetic spin on it: "his new role in the building of coalition politics had helped him to recognize that absolute pacifism was no longer politically effective." Needless to say, Rustin's erstwhile allies in the pacifist movement were outraged when Rustin echoed the Administration's line on Vietnam. In "An Open Letter to Bayard Rustin," Staughton Lynd had this emotional reprimand:

Why, Bayard? You must know in your heart that your position betrays your essential moralism over the years. The lesson of your apostasy on Vietnam appears to be that

the gains for American Negroes you advise them to seek through coalition within the Democratic Party come only at a price. . . . The price is to make our brothers in Vietnam a burnt offering on the altar of political expediency.¹¹

A remarkable flip-flop from a man who had chosen prison over the Civilian Public Service, and who had been a leading crusader for nonviolence in international affairs.

WHAT EXPLAINS RUSTIN'S POLITICAL METAMORPHOSIS? According to Anderson:

Rustin's argument in *Commentary* was influenced partly by his colleagues in the democratic socialist movement, including Tom Kahn, Michael Harrington, and Max Shachtman. "Max was critical to the analysis in 'From Protest to Politics,' Kahn said later. "He felt that the socialist movement ought to reorient itself to the mainstream of the labor movement. And he supplied a similar analysis concerning the civil rights movement, which by itself could not go very far in meeting the deep economic obstacles to racial equality. Shachtman and A. Philip Randolph played key roles in helping us to understand why it was necessary to have a coalition of liberals, trade unions, and other progressive democratic elements."

Actually, the logic of coalitionism was not so discrepant with Rustin's previous politics as might appear at first blush. Remember that Rustin's political career began as a pacifist. Pacifism was the moral and political framework in which he honed the organizing skills that he applied so brilliantly to the nascent civil rights movement. Even as the movement reached full bloom, Rustin continued to devote himself to such issues as non-alignment and nuclear disarmament, shifting back to the civil rights struggle as circumstances unfolded. Not long before he died, Rustin said of himself: "My activism did not spring from being black. Rather, it is rooted fundamentally in my Quaker upbringing and the values instilled in me by my grandparents who reared me." In short, Rustin was a humanitarian and a pacifist even before he was a civil rights activist, and this is why, ultimately, he was able to subordinate the struggle for racial justice to a larger political agenda. Of course, there is paradox and tragedy that in his pursuit of utopian ends, Rustin betrayed the principles and the movement that he had done so much to advance.

There is a second and related factor. Together with Randolph, Rustin was in the tradition of socialists who regarded the struggle for racial justice as secondary to class struggle. Even in the 1940s there were black socialists like Ralph Bunche who pooh-poohed the NAACP's legalistic approach because it failed to address issues of political economy that were at the root of the black plight. In "From Protest to Politics," Rustin also wrote: "I fail to see how the movement can be victorious in the absence of radical programs for full employment, the abolition of slums, the reconstruction of our educational system, new definitions of work and leisure." His error was not in his analysis, but in his praxis: that blacks must enter into a coalition that would seek redemption within the framework of the Democratic Party. This is where he swallowed the Shachtman bait, hook, line, and sinker.

A caveat is in order. In positing "protest" in opposition to "politics," we must beware of a false dichotomy. Clearly, *both* are necessary in pursuit of racial justice. Johnson's 1964 triumph, though short-lived, did raise the possibility of achieving important ends through the Democratic Party, and certainly the War on Poverty was a major step in that direction. On the other hand, the

liberals who planned the war on poverty would have made little headway had it not been for the pressures that were exerted from the revolt: both the organized campaign of the civil rights movement and the unorganized protest that was played out in the ghettos across America — the so-called “riots” that galvanized political action and frightened white America into funding a war on poverty.

IN SHORT, “PROTEST” AND “POLITICS” ARE MUTUALLY DEPENDENT. But herein lies the tragedy of Rustin’s defection. Rustin was the man, second perhaps only to King, who personified the protest movement. For Rustin to cross that fateful line from protest to politics threatened to take the steam out of the protest movement, and at the very least, denied it of its most effective organizer and tactician. In the final analysis, Rustin’s most grievous transgression was that, by his example, he was willing to *substitute* politics for protest.

Furthermore, once Rustin committed himself to the false god of coalition politics, all of his lifelong principles went asunder. Rustin aligned himself with “the conservative wing of organized labor,” as James Farmer commented in a 1989 interview. When Arthur Fletcher and George Shultz prevailed upon Nixon to resurrect the Philadelphia Plan, originally conceived under the Johnson Administration, Rustin ardently espoused labor’s position in opposition to a policy that mandated desegregation of the building trades. When the unions in New York opposed an experiment for community control of schools in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville district of Brooklyn, Rustin again took the side of the unions. Rustin looked to the labor movement as an instrument for black progress, and it was with a founding grant from the AFL-CIO in 1965 that Rustin was ensconced at the A. Philip Randolph Institute. However, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the labor movement used Rustin as cover for its refusal or inability to address *its* racially regressive practices.

The early Bayard Rustin remains an inspirational figure, all the more so at a time when the radical tide is in such low ebb. Let us return to Lerone Bennett’s perspicacity: that the black revolt failed in each decade only to re-emerge on a higher level of development. Rustin’s example testifies to why this is so. Because there are people in the trenches who keep the radical faith. Who are there to resuscitate flagging movements. Who function as purveyors of radical ideas and a radical praxis, even at times when their impact is minimal. Who develop incisive and uncompromising critiques of the political establishment. Who place honesty and principle above winning elections. And who are there when . . . when the conditions are ripe for radical ascendancy.

This is the lesson to be drawn from Bayard Rustin’s remarkable personal odyssey: to stay the course even when the radical tide is in low ebb. There is also a lesson to be drawn from Rustin’s political fall: to resist the blandishments of power during those rare moments of radical ascendancy.

NOTES

1. Lerone Bennett, “Tea and Sympathy: Liberals and Other White Hopes,” in *The Negro Mood and Other Essays* (Chicago: Johnson Publications, 1963), p. 22.

2. Jervis Anderson, *Bayard Rustin: Troubles I’ve Seen: A Biography* (New York, HarperCollins Publishers, 1997).

3. Quoted in Anderson, *Bayard Rustin*, p. 114.

4. Bayard Rustin, “Civil Disobedience, Jim Crow, and the Armed Forces,” talk delivered on April 11, 1948, in *Down the Line* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), p. 50.

5. Milton Viorst, *Fire in the Streets: America in the 1960’s* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 226.

Albert Shanker: No Flowers

Paul Buhle

OUTSIDE THE WASHINGTON BELTWAY AND WEST OF THE HUDSON, one image of the late American Federation of Teachers (AFT) president Albert Shanker is most likely to remain in memory: Shanker, on the 1995 convention dais, fairly choking with rage and frustration, handing over leadership of the AFL-CIO to the reform forces in the person of John Sweeney. The Kirkland clique of autocratic functionaries, heretofore failures at almost everything except retaining power, was in disarray. Their credibility had been undermined and with it, the presumed legacy of Albert Shanker as a historic labor figure as well.

The story of Albert Shanker and the teachers union goes back to Depression days and further, to the movements of high school instructors in the 1910s golden days of Debsian Socialism. In Chicago and New York among other cities, teachers led by the left sought desperately to establish their professionalism, while seeking just as urgently (albeit with more ambivalence) to ally themselves with the labor movement.

The AFT's true if unacknowledged precursor is the Teachers Union (TU), originally an AFL body led by Communist regulars, Lovestoneites, Trotskyists, Socialists and other leftwingers in New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago and elsewhere, encompassing college instructors and public school teachers. During the dynamic later 1930s, the TU influence was disproportionately New Yorkish, as well as Jewish, and especially strong among the terribly exploited substitute teachers. With the union split on a handful of issues (including philosopher John Dewey's bold defense of Leon Trotsky against Stalin's charges), the socialist/anti-Communist faction first seceded to form the Teachers Guild, and then successfully arranged the expulsion of the TU from the AFL in 1941. The Guild, subsequently reorganized as the AFT, had all the respectability that the isolated TU lacked, and might have had the field to itself when the latter gave up the ghost in 1964 but for the competitor National Educational Association's own quasi-unionist professionalism and the bad blood left behind by decades of fierce red-baiting.

The TU, for all its weaknesses (most of all, a weakness toward things Russian), had often exemplified the democratic impulses of the teachers. Anyone who enters a classroom today to teach American history or gov-

PAUL BUHLE's latest book, a collection of his labor history essays, *From the Knights of Labor to the New World Order* was recently published by Garland.

ernment should gaze back with wonderment at the early struggles for antiracist curricula highlighting rather than demeaning abolitionist John Brown or race leader W.E.B. DuBois, for the determined inclusion of minority populations in a broadened social history at a time when civics was equated (as those of us remember so well from public schools of the 1950s) with a recitation of the presidents.¹

The AFT, meanwhile taking over TU members as much as possible and conditioned by a certain social democratic bearing, sought to maneuver teacher unionism around the challenge of the civil rights movement. Just as the AFL-CIO perennially urged Congressional action while ignoring the blatant racism in its own ranks, so the AFT filed friend-of-the-court briefs for school desegregation and simultaneously resisted organized efforts to administer integration of the student body and teacher staffs. This calculated ambivalence would characterize the AFT's main unit, the United Federation of Teachers, more than anything else during the racial storm ahead.²

The complexities of teacher union history during the 1960s-90s cannot be explored at any length here. The role of lobbying state legislatures for permission to organize and for larger benefits on the one hand, and the relationship of teachers with their students (and the communities from which they come) on the other, is far too localized for easy generalization in any case. On occasion (as in a 1996 Oakland teachers strike) the community was mobilized to good effect; too often, AFT (also NEA) leaders invited the portrayal of their organizations' members as agents of "special interests" through closed-door deals with local or state elected officials and business elites. Rather than generalizing the issues of public resources, they narrowed the terms of negotiation to their own welfare, effectively cutting themselves off from potential allies and making fiscal counterattacks inevitable.

More than a single union or profession, in fact an entire historical view of American labor, is at stake on this point. A recent "revisionist" labor history (looking a great deal like the "old" pre-1960 labor histories endowed by union leaders to celebrate their accomplishments) suggests the AFT/UFT's lobbying model as the logical successor to historic mass mobilization and final outcome to the CIO experience. According to this reading, the Taft-Hartley Act, the expulsion of Communists and the suppression of internal dissent at large was a necessary and logical price to free union leaders' hands and to pay in kind for the assistance of the state in sustaining white collar unionism.³ The state and the business community rewarded order, as they punished the movements from below characterized as disorder.

This might, indeed, properly be described as the Shanker Narrative. But along with recklessly mangling labor history, it mistakes the wheeling-dealing of leaders for the sacrifices of union activists who urgently wanted to be good teachers and good citizens, in the inner cities quite as much as the suburbs. Like the parson's wife and the town atheist, the teacher was the small-town radical of many generations, the first socialist voice heard by many a youngster growing up outside a leftwing family (in my own case, the first black voice I'd ever heard on the subject of American history: the very inspiration to become a historian). Children of blue collar unionists or of those crushed during the Depression years lived their jobs without any of the homage toward hawkish weapons-industry politicians that Shanker so admired or the meanness toward disadvantaged

students that his leadership more and more came to epitomize. Despite all the heartbreak of sharpened class divisions, drugs and gangs, "White Flight" from public schools and drastically diminished resources, many thousands of them still do.

ALL THIS PLAYED VERY STRANGELY IN THE LATER 1960s, as the War on Poverty was being junked for the Vietnam War and a generation of African American (along with white working class) male youth was sent half-way across the world to kill and be killed. As AFT/UFT dissident Steve Zeluck keenly observed, the very victories of the UFT and then the AFT for union recognition through the 60s, placed the two bodies in the paradoxical position of having won a crucial base in the cities just as the cities themselves drastically changed. Only 10 or 15 years earlier, teachers had been more leftwing, and blacks less numerous, sustaining many tender pedagogical (as well as parent-teacher) relationships and the hope of political coalition to come. As union bargaining power became real, a new and hostile relation set in; the consumer society offered new temptations and the black community simultaneously began to make long-postponed demands for recognition and influence. This baneful shift mirrored, and for a time dramatized, the collapse of American liberalism.

The social-democratic background of the UFT (giving it the appearance of the left within the AFT) was one unique factor. Jewish garment union leaders who left the old Socialist Labor Party and Daniel DeLeon back in the 1890s or early years of the new century, spoke warmly about socialist ideals and meanwhile savagely attacked the Industrial Workers of the World for threatening their power base. They remained in office long enough to repudiate Communist rank-and-file insurgency movements of the 1920s as "gilgul DeLeonism," creatures of disruption, and to meet the deformations of Stalinism with bureaucratic deformations of their own. Always, throughout this history, there has been an enemy on the left to excoriate, just as despised and much closer to attack than the exploitation and inherent unfairness of capitalism. Indeed, when the very category of "exploitation" disappeared as *unearned wealth* (it sometimes reappeared as "excessively" low wages), the problems of capitalism were attributed more and more exclusively to the wildly varied "enemies of democracy."

The lineal successors to David Dubinsky squeezed the New Left and Black Power into a pre-fit mold, adding far-off Palestinians for good measure. All of these were enemies, just as all serious criticisms made of UFT and AFT leadership were treated as "blood libels" outside the bounds of proper discussion.⁴ Thus dissenters like highschool teacher and dissident Steve Zeluck were not only to be denied the normal means of communicating democratic opposition, but cursed in official resolutions as "antiunion." The Communist Party bureaucrats had never done any better for themselves, which is to say, any worse for movements that they claimed to represent and so often badly misled.

Historian Jerald Podair has brilliantly captured the ambience of the social democratic milieu under pressure. UFTers of the middle 1960s determinedly insisted, for instance, upon a racially inclusive curriculum, but with entirely predictable contours. The union's Committee on African-American History seemed to bury the old mint julep version of slavery and reconstruction. But it just as effectively buried Malcolm X (indeed, Shanker seized and destroyed

thousands of copies of a curriculum guide which credited Malcolm's historical contribution) and any approach which placed the black experience outside the melting pot that usefully melts all the unfortunate group traits of worthy aspirants in the process of a cheerful upward mobility.⁵

For this worldview, closely reflecting the pseudo-sociology of Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a "culture of poverty" rooted in a matriarchal black community rather than the repressive social conditions of the rural south or the increasingly jobless north was the real hindrance to African American advance. Such cultural determinists prided themselves upon banishing genetic theories of inferiority, but by assuming that youth could be remolded without broad changes in the property relations of society, they substituted a subtextually race-linked hypothesis just as virulent for the new era. Rising neoconservative operatives, like Shanker ally (and Reagan Administration official) Diane Ravitch, naturally used the cry of "competence" as a meritocratic club over the heads of victims in the failing systems, as if all school systems or individuals had access to the same resources or as if the ability of a talented and fortunate tenth of a talented tenth demonstrated the hopelessness of the 99 percent.

Ironically, the most articulately ferocious opponents of the UFT, the black middle class, shared this ideology to a very large extent, although with a difference. It wanted and demanded an affirmative action adjustment of available resources, exactly what the ideologues of meritocracy could never grant.

BLACK/JEWISH TENSIONS MEANWHILE FLARED, and not only in New York or among teachers, students and parents, but in the general population. Ranging from the emerging Jewish institutional support for the Vietnam war (which, it should be noted, ordinary Jews overwhelmingly opposed), subsidies to suburbanization alongside the abandonment of the inner cities, and the all-too-familiar black street rage at the Jewish teachers, lawyers, landlords, employers and case-workers (many of whom warmly assisted African Americans, while others coldly cheated or demeaned them), the temperature rose.⁶ Power-seeking nationalists, most if not all of them thoroughly regressive, seized the moment on both sides — notwithstanding the media spin that portrayed one side of the polemic as civilized discourse and the other as barbaric noise.

Albert Shanker's chief historic role was to pour gasoline on the spreading fire.⁷ Another, very different kind of leader might have taken early pride in the levels of teacher unionization achieved, and spent the next era striving to cool tempers. It would have been an honorable if not morally unmarred history, and a very unlikely one in this case. Shanker had a personal stake in the spotlight, according to friend and foe, amounting to megalomania. Like the calculating Vietnam hawk-propagandist-priest John O'Connor who raised himself through connections within the post-Vatican II's New Right Church leadership into Cardinal status, Shanker was not just fighting for his political life. In his mind's eye, he saw his name carved upon the historical record.

Joining the inner circle of George Meany's AFL-CIO cronies who regarded Martin Luther King, Jr., as an ingrate for pressing too hard on integration and for coming out against the Vietnam war, and shunning even the cautious reformer Walter Reuther for the hawk faction gathering politically around Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson, Shanker made himself a national labor figure.

A major element in his emerging labor statesmanship was his handling of

race issues in the approved AFL-CIO fashion. As Maurice Berube explained so clearly in these pages, in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville crisis Shanker was encouraged by a group of self-proclaimed "democratic socialists" including, among others, Michael Harrington, Tom Kahn and Bayard Rustin, with Max Shachtman in the background as the powerful grey eminence. They considered parents' "interference" to be intolerable for teacher-unionists, but they had a purpose far beyond the districts of Greater New York. By 1968, they envisioned themselves the heirs to the Meany labor empire. To demonstrate their capacity to deliver the labor support and labor votes for a greater coalition, however, they had to keep order — at any cost.⁸

Even then the disaster might have been avoided through careful negotiation. But Shanker called "his" teachers out on strike. Yesterday's socialists who have become today's Manhattan Institute operators correctly describe that moment as a turning point in New York City's history. But they are most unwilling to see the complicity of their mentor/allies in the bitter, destructive outcome.

And so Shankerism, hammered out against a background of both middle class yearnings and ghetto rage, became the oddest possible American-style parody of "democratic socialism." The debates raged from *New Politics* and *Dissent* to the *New York Times*, with curious undertones which formal politics alone cannot fully encompass.

NEW LIGHT CAST UPON SHANKER'S INTERNATIONAL INVOLVEMENTS greatly aids our understanding of his milieu. Eric Chester's important recent volume, *Covert Network: Progressives, the International Rescue Committee and the CIA*, offers a well-researched perspective on one of the most interesting Cold War (and post-Cold War) operations linked on one side to favorite causes of prominent liberals and on the other to assorted intelligence agency projects. Founded to assist refugees of the Second World War, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) became a central mechanism — through its spin-off American Friends of Vietnam (AFVN) — for selling the impending Vietnam War to the U.S. public and especially to liberals like Shanker during the later 1950s and early 1960s. The young Daniel Patrick Moynihan, working as its public relations officer, had described the IRC as the "ideal instrument of Psychological Warfare." The "psy-war" actually conducted by IRC leader Joseph Buttinger and evidently assisted by the CIA, even fooled aging Norman Thomas into making flattering public statements about the viciously repressive Diem regime under more pressure from its own beleaguered citizens than from the feared North Vietnamese.

By the time the bombs began to fall in huge numbers on Vietnamese civilians, Buttinger and a few cohorts had resigned from the IRC, but the devilish work of the propagandists had been done. The American public, its politicians and its journalists, had been prepared for the outright lies about the Gulf of Tonkin. The key converts to "counter-insurgency," for their own reasons, stayed converted. Like George Meany, Albert Shanker believed, evidently to his last breath, that the U.S. should never have left Vietnam. Like the Civil War for the American South, it remained the great Lost Cause and the source for binding emotional ties between the cerebral neoconservatives and the AFL-CIO Executive.

The IRC was subsequently involved directly or indirectly in a sheaf of other operations, some of them genuinely humanitarian (always with the intention of also advancing U.S. interests). But perhaps the most characteristic for the years of Shanker's IRC involvement was its Central America teams. As during the U.S. saturation bombing in Southeast Asia, the IRC followed U.S.-trained and funded military forces decimating large districts of El Salvador, driving peasants out of their homes and into makeshift camps. There, amidst the misery American foreign policy had created, the IRC offered enough logistical support to make a favorable (i.e., pro-American) impression on the survivors. Those who had not already died or were not scheduled to be dragged away for torture and "disappearance," could rejoice in the charitable side of counter-insurgency.⁹

The IRC was headed for 40 years, it might be remembered, by one of Albert Shanker's greatest admirers, Leo Cherne. An all-out supporter of the Vietnam War, Cherne most bitterly opposed George McGovern's peacenik campaign of 1972, serving as vice-chair of Democrats for Nixon. Like Albert Shanker and the AFL-CIO leadership, the IRC under Cherne found in the Reagan Administration nearly all one could hope for in foreign policy, including the best of companions. Future spymaster William Casey, the president of IRC in 1970-71, who played a major role in the organization's Asian affairs, predictably joined Reagan as campaign director in 1980. Casey fathered the Iran-Contra operators' deceptions of Congress (as well as violations of the U.S. Constitution), and apparently carried the secrets of U.S. dealings in assorted war crimes with him to the grave. Until his death Bayard Rustin remained a vice president of IRC, and Albert Shanker remained on its board, both of them in lockstep with the Contra wars and "low intensity" (but extremely high civilian casualty) episodes in Southern Africa and elsewhere. If this story begins to grow as familiar as a spy novel, that is because it should be.¹⁰

THIS INTERNATIONAL WEST-OVER-EAST, NORTH-OVER-SOUTH DETERMINATION had its clear domestic counterparts. "Nothing could damp[en] Shanker's commitment to civil rights," exclaimed an unintentionally comic eulogist in the *Jewish Forward*.¹¹ Shanker's commitment could be measured, in later years, in his virulent opposition to "world history" efforts which he described as "a travesty" for failing to accord a central heroic place to the West at large and America in particular. Diane Ravitch, Reagan's Secretary of Education and touted educational ideologue, naturally saluted Shanker's "intellectual courage" in standing up against multi-culturalism.

This ideological cul-de-sac was not a tragedy like a civil war or military invasion, with thousands dead or maimed. But it was a tragedy of striking proportions nevertheless, with long-range consequences. The liberal "socialists" or "social democrats" with large influence in some of the major unions could not imagine (or had ceased to imagine) the poor as a force acting on its own; for them the desperately impoverished, at home and abroad, seemed more and more a sort of sidebar/exemplar lumpen proletariat of human devastation. Behind this thesis was a large historical-philosophical assumption which Albert Shanker's paid newspaper columns often reflected. History had been moving gradually toward human freedom, thanks in very large part to industrial capitalism. African Americans and indeed the bulk of the world popula-

tion (i.e., non-whites) had been left behind, most unfortunately. Now, however, "development" was going to bring the best of them up to the level of the West — if only they learned the skills of self-discipline and patience.

Did Western history have its bad moments? Yes — and this was passed over as quickly as possible — slavery was a blight, the dispossession and large-scale extermination of native peoples, really unfortunate. But even while enslaving, expropriating and exterminating, the West had raised the *ideal* of freedom and abundance. That should be convincing enough proof for anyone. Whoever disagreed, as Shanker argued in his last published column, was an enemy of democracy — and a friend of multiculturalism.¹²

Perhaps most remarkable in this subtle and not-so-subtle alchemy was the way in which oldtime socialist ideals had been turned into something nearly approaching their opposite. On the occasion of Shanker's death, a resolution for the Workmen's Circle (an organization still usefully active in many cities, with a real commitment to the socialistic tradition of secular *Yiddishkayt*) closed, "Our continuing commitment to equality of opportunity for all people was shared by Al Shanker. He and we recognized that *any effort to equalize results* was doomed to fail" (my emphasis, PB).¹³ Equalize results? This phraseology would have been baffling to Eugene Debs, to whom personal upward mobility was never the goal of socialists and the permanence of capitalism never the solution. The very point of socialism was, naturally, real equal opportunity for humankind to live and work together in cooperative spirit, peace and prosperity — through the expropriation of the bloody-handed expropriators. "To make it within our society," as Shanker often described the primary purpose of education, served better as the slogan of Norman Podhoretz's lifetime self-devotion; but then, the unembarrassed careerists of Podhoretz's circle had never been so far from Albert Shanker after all.¹⁴

Somehow, all the hopes raised for social progress during the 1960s have been poisoned, the promised accomplishments of a Great Society lost within decaying inner city neighborhoods and sprawling suburbs, the arrogance of the new rich matched with the deepening despair of the growing poor. Viewed from the more distant hopes of the 1940s, urban working class America had gone pretty much to hell. With well-paying industrial jobs gone and services crumbling, drugs (whether or not actually supplied by CIA's noted "assets" in assorted parts of the world: profit requires no conspiracy) found a natural home in the merchandizing of misery. Somehow, even the traces of the older, moderate socialism whose hopes had continued to play a symptomatic role in Jewish life had meanwhile vanished into a morally tainted meritocracy. No one person is nearly large enough to blame for this social tragedy, but Albert Shanker occupies a considerable role, as symbol and substance, within it.

NOTES

1. For background history, see Marjorie Murphy, *Blackboard Unions: The AFT and the NEA, 1900-1980* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1900); and Celia L. Zitron, *The New York City Teachers Union, 1916-1964: A Story of Educational and Social Commitment* (New York: Humanities, 1968). The stories of left-led teachers' unions outside New York from the 1910s onward have yet to be told fully, but would surely be revealing.

2. Various essays in *New Politics'* "old series" constitute the very best guide to the internal politics of the UFT/AFT, with so many rich details and so much insight that to

attempt to summarize would do damage to the originals. See, for instance, Steve Zeluck, "The UFT Strike: A Blow Against Teacher Unionism," NP #25 (Winter 1968); Maurice Berube, "'Democratic Socialists' and the Schools," #31 (Summer 1969); Lois Weiner, "Cracks in Shanker's Empire," #44 (Fall 1976), and an exchange between Albert Shanker and Herbert Hill, "Black Protest, Union Democracy and the UFT," #32 (Fall 1970).

3. Melvyn Dubofsky, *The State and Labor in Modern America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

4. See "Herbert Hill Replies," NP #32 (Fall 1970), 33-35, for documentation of this bit of skullduggery.

5. Jerald Podair, "'White' Values, 'Black' Values: The Ocean Hill-Brownsville Controversy and New York City Culture, 1967-1975," *Radical History Review*, #59 (Spring 1994), 36-59, remains, in many ways, the most sensitive and up-to-date account of the subject.

6. See several essays in Jack Saltzman and Cornel West, eds., *Struggles in the Promised Land: Toward a History of Black-Jewish Relations in the United States* (New York: Oxford, 1997), especially Earl Lewis, "The Need to Remember: Three Phases in Black and Jewish Educational Relations," 231-56; and Paul Buhle and Robin D.G. Kelley, "Allies of a Different Sort: Jews and Blacks in the American Left," 197-230.

7. Close watchers of the controversy about the blatantly anti-Semitic leaflet reprinted and widely distributed by Shanker's machine during the turbulent Ocean Hill-Brownsville events will want to consult Earl Lewis's conclusion that the leaflet identified a non-existent group, that no one has ever claimed credit for it and consider seriously his suggestion that, in this era of many thousands of disguised police agents engaged in provocative actions, it may well have been a COINTELPRO project. Recent revelations about the Anti-Defamation League's secret activities to discover and make available damaging data on Martin Luther King for J. Edgar Hoover's purposes, point to some of the still murkier, intelligence-related sides of contemporary controversy. It would be shocking but not surprising to learn that Shanker's office concocted the "perfect" anti-Semitic document to crystalize support for the UFT leadership. See Lewis, "The Need to Remember," pp. 254-55, n.51 (op. cit.); and Robert I. Friedman, "The Enemy from Within: How the Anti-Defamation League Turned the Notion of Human Rights on its Head," *Village Voice*, May 11, 1993.

8. Berube, "'Democratic Socialists' and the Schools," *New Politics*, (Summer 1969), p. 60. Berube argues interestingly that Shanker, the hard-nosed business unionist, was drawn into the race narrative by liberal-socialist intellectuals and in doing so had "come home" to the labor establishment which relished its intellectual apologists.

9. Erich Thomas Chester, *Covert Network: Progressives, the International Rescue Committee, and the CIA* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1995). Chester notes that under Reagan, the National Endowment for Democracy took up some of the tasks earlier conducted by CIA and IRC operations. Supporters of the IRC will eagerly claim, as did Shanker in his lifetime, that liberal anti-Communists had played a vital role in supporting Polish Solidarity; many members of Solidarity would note that the real purpose of such support was to undermine the movement for workers' control no less than to undermine the Communist government, and that IRC leaders proudly claimed to have "brought together" Solidarity leaders with American investors — along with their Polish counterparts, the new elite class to rule ordinary Polish workers.

10. Understandably, Cherne is one of those most fervently devoted to Shanker's memory, along with Diane Ravitch and the disgraced Elliot Abrams. Jonathan Mahler, "How Albert Shanker Set the Agenda for a Generation," an excellent if ironic title, indeed, *Jewish Forward*, February 28, 1997. Sadly, Irving Howe, too, remained on the IRC board, but that at least he opposed both the Central American adventure and the warm sponsorship of major Angolan war criminal Jonas Savimbi by Freedom House and AFL-CIO operatives around Jay Lovestone's equally oily protege, Irving Brown.

11. Jonathan Mahler, "How Albert Shanker Set the Agenda for a Generation."

12. "Albert Shanker's Last Stand," *Jewish Forward*, February 28, 1997, taken from a 1996 address in Prague. Thankfully, the decades of paid advertisements whose cost to AFT members could easily have saved a large redwood grove from destruction seem to have ceased at last. Shanker's potential successors have not rushed to mimic him. Indeed, Edward McElroy, Jr., a decent and honest unionist and AFT Washington underling with a genuine pro-peace background, was said to have a shot at the presidency. The mendacious Sandra Feldman, however, gained the office in May.

Right Church, Wrong Pew:

Eugene Genovese & Southern Conservatism

Alex Lichtenstein

IN HIS STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS OF 1993, Governor Zell Miller reminded Georgians that the Confederate battle flag had first adorned the state flag in 1956 expressly to "identify Georgia with the dark side of the Confederacy," the defense of slavery at the expense of the nation. The flag's resurrection after its bloody demise nearly a century before had coincided with Georgia's desire to defy the national state again and preserve segregation. Miller's impassioned plea to expunge this official iconography went unheeded, and indeed provoked a bitter response from "Southerners who admire and cherish our traditional Southern culture," as one writer to an Athens newspaper proclaimed. Defenders of the flag claimed to stand up to efforts of "neo-abolitionist historians, egalitarian utopians, and militants of many stripes" to defame the Southern heritage and to associate it unfairly with racial hatred.

As far as I know, although residing in Atlanta at the time, former Marxist historian Eugene D. Genovese did not take a public position in this debate. But if he had, it is not hard to divine the side on which he would have intervened. Much of Genovese's work in the 1990s has sought explicitly to specify and defend an ideal of "traditional southern culture" against its detractors, to cleanse this ideal of the stigma of slavery and white supremacy, and to offer it up as something that speaks to the modern condition in general and the perceived crisis of the left in particular.

For the Brooklyn-born Genovese, one of the foremost historians of the slave South, this is not as peculiar a project as it might sound. Born in 1930, raised in an immigrant community, and nurtured politically in the comradely climate of Brooklyn College in the late 1940s, Genovese

ALEX LICHTENSTEIN teaches American history at Florida International University in Miami and is the author of *Twice the Work of Free Labor: The Political Economy of Convict Labor in the New South* (Verso, 1996). Most recently he has written a new introduction to a reprint edition of Howard Kester's *Revolt Among the Sharecroppers* (University of Tennessee Press, 1997).

was hardly a typical student of the region below the Mason-Dixon line. As a self-consciously proletarian member of the Communist Party, and then an independent Marxist, Genovese's decision to devote himself to the study of the plantocracy of the Old South at first seemed an anomaly. But, as he remembers today in an essay published in his recent collection *The Southern Front: History and Politics in the Cultural War* (1995), this offered him an unparalleled opportunity to "study how a ruling class really rules."

He did so throughout the 1960s and 1970s in a series of brilliant, linked works which explored the thought, political economy, and "paternalistic" ethos of the slaveholding class in the 19th-century South, including *The Political Economy of Slavery* (1965), *The World the Slaveholders Made* (1969), *In Red and Black* (1971), and *Roll, Jordan, Roll* (1974). Genovese's Marxism, informed by his astute reading of Gramsci (long before this was fashionable), helped him delineate how the slavocracy developed a hegemonic world view in defense of a social order based on human bondage. Most provocatively, Genovese insisted that his readers take the southern defense of slavery seriously as an authentic expression of class rule, rather than as a hypocritical pretense designed to paper over naked human exploitation and greed. Further, in the pro-slavery ideology he detected a marked hostility to the emergent market-based bourgeois society of the antebellum North: in short, a constellation of values that developed in self-conscious opposition to the world-view associated with the expansion of modern capitalist social relations.

WHEN I FIRST ENCOUNTERED GENOVESE'S BOOKS AND ESSAYS as a left-wing graduate student in the 1980s, they left me stunned. Coming to terms with his account of slavery and the Old South required one to think historically, rather than to impose contemporary values on human beings who lived in the past, as the academic left is sometimes wont to do. Moreover, in recognizing the slaveholders as authentic bearers of an ideology, Genovese's work forced one to reckon with the South as a qualitatively different kind of American civilization. Especially in *The World the Slaveholders Made*, Genovese took issue with the condescending view of neo-abolitionist historians like Kenneth Stampp that the pro-slavery argument constituted nothing more than "sterile rhetoric and special pleading" designed to "justify the institution upon which they lived." His willingness to take slaveholders seriously, to recognize in their "special pleadings" a coherent ideology that illuminated 19th-century class relations on both sides of the Mason-Dixon line, proved tremendously refreshing to anyone dissatisfied with the application of knee-jerk leftist politics to historical circumstances.

Most importantly, as a vindication of Marxist scholarship, Genovese's work demonstrated that slaveholder ideology rested solidly on a peculiar material foundation. For many scholars, including myself, in addition to confirming the profound link between ideology and relations of production this had the felicitous effect of moving slavery to the center of the American historical narrative, where it properly belonged, particularly as the primary cause of the sectional conflict. After all, as Genovese repeatedly asserted, the southern ruling class would hardly have staked their lives and honor to defend an institution in which they did not thoroughly believe.

At the same time, despite his unbridled admiration for the slaveholders' ability to recognize, express, and act on their own class interests, Genovese never lost sight of the fact that these achievements rested on the enslavement of another people. In his brilliant account of the paternalism that inextricably bound master and slave together, an idea most fully developed in his account of "the world the slaves made" in *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, Genovese recognized that slavery, even at its most patriarchal, always rested on physical compulsion. In its complexity, historicity, and sheer dialectical power Genovese's account of how a ruling class did in fact rule in a markedly unjust system proved compelling. Nevertheless, even among his admirers, there was always a nagging doubt that he was somehow letting the slavocracy off the hook just a little too much. Even then he claimed that slaveholders "stood for a world different from our own that is worthy of our sympathetic attention" and that "the values they held still have something to offer."¹

Much of this early work now can be reread in light of Genovese's recent repudiation of Marxism, his turn to the right, and his excoriation of his comrades on the left. I suspect he might actually deny the first two charges, while gladly pleading guilty to the third. Genovese's recent political notoriety rests primarily on his spirited (but qualified) defense of conservative tomes like Dinesh D'Souza's *Illiberal Education* and Murray and Hernstein's *The Bell Curve*, and his related attacks on the multiculturalism, feminism, and "radical egalitarianism" of the campus left; his unabashed admiration for modern southern conservative thinkers like Richard Weaver and M.E. Bradford; and his post-Stalinist *mea culpa* in the pages of *Dissent* in which he condemned, in sweeping terms, the entire project of human liberation upon which socialist thought has rested. Those familiar with his work will recognize in these engagements Genovese's love of polemical provocation and the glee he takes in *épater les gauchistes*; others who were around in the late 1960s may see recapitulated an old battle between Genovese and liberationists in the New Left, in his view the precursors to today's multicultural horde. As Genovese sees it, the personal liberation championed by sectors of the New Left and the tradition this has bequeathed to today's social movements, is nothing but the other side of the false coin of radical individualism embedded in the market-oriented capitalist society radicals claim to abjure.

RATHER THAN ENGAGE IN A PARTISAN POLITICAL ATTACK THAT SMEARS GENOVESE for having suspect allies, perpetuating a quarrel with the New Left, or failing to toe the current line of identity politics (with which many principled leftists disagree), I want here to critically evaluate his recent scholarly work on what he calls, without irony, "the southern tradition." The book of this title, based on a series of lectures he gave at Harvard University in 1993, is an excellent indicator of the relationship between Genovese's recent political thought and his historical evaluation of the southern mind, the very project he began as a graduate student almost four decades ago. Above all, *The Southern Tradition: The Achievements and Limitations of an American Conservatism* (1994) reveals that without a firm basis in historical materialism, Genovese's account of southern conservative thought has become rudderless, and as a result drifts perilously close to apologia.

What Genovese does in this book, and in the related essays collected in

The Southern Front, is extend in time his sophisticated exposition of the critique of industrial capitalism that emerged in the Old South. Though brief, the intellectual scope of the three essays/lectures in *The Southern Tradition* is remarkable. In them, Genovese attempts to do three things. First, he wants to suggest a timeless continuity in southern conservative thought, to reconstruct a lineage running from John Calhoun in the antebellum period, to the Nashville Agrarians in the interwar years, to the post-World War Two conservative thinkers Richard Weaver and M.E. Bradford. (Oddly, he has no representative figures from the years immediately after the end of the Civil War). Second, he hopes to discover in this intellectual tradition a set of values to offer as an alternative to the bourgeois individualism of market society, the radical egalitarianism of the left, and the bureaucratic collectivism that he sees as the necessary corollary of both. Finally, since he continues to insist that he speaks to the left from within the circle, he struggles to disassociate the southern conservative tradition, which he claims has been "wrongly equated with racism and white supremacy," from a set of racist principles he would be the first to disavow. And this is just the problem: he can't. Genovese appears to have squandered the original boldness of his thinking by abandoning its initial Marxian impulse, and thus detaching the anti-bourgeois, anti-market virtues of the southern hostility to modernity from their source in the defense of a slave society.

And what do the pro-slavery theorists, the Southern Agrarians, and the post-1945 Southern conservatives all have to offer, and to offer the left in particular? While always swimming against the main currents of their time, these thinkers have called attention to the corrosiveness of the cash nexus and the substitution of material acquisition for spiritual satisfaction, abetted by a market society; to the destruction of widespread, small property-holding by large accumulations, finance capital, and the corporation; to the personal alienation that attends the absorption of human beings into bureaucratic and centralized forms of collective association, found especially in the modern state; to the exploitation inherent in wage labor; and to the threat modernity poses to the organic social relations of family, church, community, and town square.

Of course, this is a jeremiad hardly alien to the left, as a quick glance at the program of SDS, circa 1962, will confirm. Genovese's goal, however, is to retrieve this critique from the right and use it to batter both right-wing free marketeers, who preach the virtues of tradition while embracing the economic forces that do most to dissolve it, and left-wing personal liberationists whose radical egalitarianism is incompatible with the necessity for social discipline. The antidote to these heresies he finds in the southern tradition is best expressed by Richard Weaver's term "social bond individualism," which Genovese claims lies at the heart of southern conservative thought. Social bond individualism posits an individualism based on religious faith, rather than bourgeois acquisitiveness, affirms the inviolability of human personality against the state, and is rooted in a "community to which one owes allegiance and accepts duties and responsibilities."² Skeptical of science, technology, and material progress, Weaver, Bradford, and their acolytes adamantly reject visions of personal liberation of both left and right, of social egalitarianism and the market.

WEAVER, A SOUTHERNER WHO WROTE DURING THE 1940s AND 1950s from his perch at the University of Chicago, not only developed his own critique of modern society, but rooted it in values he traced back to the Old South, rediscovered half-buried in postbellum southern culture, and sought to revive. In his classic work, *The Southern Tradition at Bay* (written as his dissertation in 1943, but published posthumously in 1968), Weaver argued that the slave South constituted "a rooted culture which viewed with dismay the anonymity and social indifference of urban man." As "the last non-materialist civilization in the Western world" the Old South contained values which could be reclaimed in opposition to modernity. With the defeat of the Confederacy, Weaver claimed, "the last barrier to the secular spirit of science, materialism, and democracy was vanquished." As for Reconstruction and its overthrow, Weaver denied outright that "a feeling of vindictiveness conditioned the general attitude toward the Negro." Instead, "the chief obstacle to Negro-white rapprochement was the outbreak of crimes against women."³ For Weaver, then, "the study of southern history was...a road to the right."⁴

Much the same might now be said of Genovese, even though he would certainly refuse to endorse Weaver's racial politics. He claims to still be speaking the language of the left, but what once could be defended as an honest account of pro-slavery thought as a genuinely held anti-bourgeois world-view commanding the attention, if not the admiration, of the left, has devolved into special pleading. For Genovese appears now to believe that southern conservatism can be cut loose from its moorings in the defense of slavery and racial inequality. Back in 1968, when he was unambiguously a Marxist, Genovese had no doubts about the "essential thrust of southern development." Then he claimed it was "the rising self-consciousness of the planters and their growing knowledge that *southern community values rested wholly on the plantation-slave nature of their regime*."⁵ When southern conservative M.E. Bradford, whose thought Genovese much admires, respectfully reviewed *The World the Slaveholders Made* in 1970 for *National Review*, he understood Genovese's point precisely, even while he recognized the potential affinities between his own thought and that of someone on the other side of the barricades. "He imagines," Bradford wrote of Genovese, "that the precapitalist ingredients in Fitzhugh and southern apologists of the same 'descent'[like Calhoun] proceed from the slavocracy of their allegiance, not the culture from the intellectual antecedents." Genovese's recent work, in choking off southern conservative thought from its material base in the defense of racial inequality and the exploitation of black labor, betrays no such imagination. "If this is a Marxist," crowed the reviewer of *The Southern Front* in *The American Spectator*, "then we really must have more of them."

Now Genovese, like the rest of us, is entitled to change his mind or modify his views over a period of three decades. And of course, an abandonment of Marxism would entail a repudiation of the idea that a world-view is necessarily shaped, if not determined, by its material basis in ruling-class power. But Genovese was right the first time. He continues to applaud certain values of southern conservatism that he — correctly, I think — regards as anticapitalist, but now regards slavery and a defense of racial inequality as incidental to these values as they sprang from southern soil. In *The Southern Tradition* he dutifully repeats his earlier assertions that "slavery made possible the de-

fense and preservation of a system of values that was unraveling in a North based on bourgeois social relations," but his effort to extend that system of values into the 20th century makes the claim ring hollow. Despite Genovese's best efforts to suggest otherwise, without its social basis in slavery, southern conservatives have had to struggle to recreate their tradition out of thin air or else have wedded their cause to demagogic uses of that tradition in defense of white supremacy. Although Genovese does not quite say so, this is the obvious reason for the inability of this strain of thought to free itself from nostalgia and mythmaking about slavery, about Reconstruction, and about the race relations of the pre-civil rights South.

Genovese's account of intellectual continuity thus leaves much to be desired, for it ignores the historical rupture of the War Between the States. The affinities between postwar and prewar southern conservatism are there, to be sure. But the point of reference for all southern conservative thought after 1865 was failed nationhood, defeat in war, the moral reckoning of emancipation, and the "tragic error" of Radical Reconstruction, when African-Americans briefly achieved a degree of political power and federally protected citizenship. Since none of these elements were present prior to the war, postbellum thought took on both a decidedly more elegiac and defensive tone than its prewar predecessor. There is an enormous difference between defending a world that one thinks one has lost and defending one that exists as a genuine lived alternative to the regnant values, as any former partisan of "actually existing socialism" well knows.

GENOVESE'S EAGERNESS TO RESCUE THE SOUTHERN CONSERVATIVE TRADITION from the racial injustice carried out in its name stands in sharp contrast to his unwillingness to do the same for the socialist project. He repeatedly draws the parallel, equating the lost cause of the Confederacy with that of the USSR, the failed anti-bourgeois values of the Old South with the shipwrecked radical dreams of socialists. Ultimately, however, in attempting to chart a third way between the free market conservatism of today's ascendent right and a discredited collectivism of the left, Genovese finds inspiration now in a Southern tradition associated with slavery and racism, rather than the socialist tradition compromised by Stalinism. In the former instance, he argues that the tradition still can be a source of critical values if divested of its racialist components, seen as incidental to its past. In the latter, however, we must discard the baby with the bath water, since the socialist (and liberal, for that matter) delusional faith in human perfectibility will inevitably lead to a "totalitarian" outcome.

In a desperate effort to retain his Marxist analysis while repudiating socialism as an ideal, Genovese admits that "the recreation of tradition requires new forms of social relations appropriate to the complexities of the modern world." But, as a bid to preserve or restore a set of ideals, this puts the cart before the horse; it betrays Genovese's fantasy that the southern tradition he upholds can be reclaimed while abandoning its inheritance, repeatedly demonstrated, of racism. If new forms of social relations emerge to challenge the current triumphalism of bourgeois individualism, the free market, and global capitalism, presumably they will generate their own alternative world view which may or may not have affinities with that championed by Genovese. But

anyone on the left would have to agree that explicit anti-racism will be a central component of that challenge. The Southern tradition promises just the opposite.

Despite Genovese's noble efforts to demonstrate otherwise, each of the key concepts associated with southern conservatism derives its initial rationale from the defense of an ideology compatible with and complicitous in slavery and racial subordination. The inegalitarianism Genovese sees as so necessary a bulwark against the imposition of a totalitarian leveling impulse (whether of the market, ideologies of personal liberation, or the state) *always* rested on racial hierarchy in the South. Indeed, it was the fundamental assumption of fixed racial inequality that guaranteed whatever social stability existed among whites in the rural South, and allowed agrarian values to flourish, both during slavery and after. The ethic of obligation that made (and perhaps still makes) southern social relations more personalistic and less anonymous than those in the urban industrial environment derived first from the paternalistic ethos of slaveholding, and then from the elaborate network of patron-client relations binding blacks and whites together in the system of white supremacy blanketing the South after the Civil War.

The ardent defense of states' rights against the encroaching power of the federal government and the social engineering of liberals never moved much beyond the realm of constitutional theory until white southerners faced coherent challenges to their racial order, whether in the form of abolitionism, Radical Reconstruction, New Deal liberalism, *Brown v. Board of Education*, or the "invasion" of Mississippi in 1964. The hostility to the tendency of modern industrial society to weaken traditional social bonds is hard to separate from the perpetual fear that the dissolution of agrarian social relations would undermine the props of white supremacy. And when convincing themselves of the impossibility of human perfectibility, most white southerners simply glanced at the poverty, misery, and what they saw as the ineradicable social pathology on the other side of the tracks.

AS AN INTELLECTUAL PROJECT THEN, GENOVESE'S REHABILITATION OF SOUTHERN CONSERVATISM proves unconvincing, for the defense of racial inequality has repeatedly been an inseparable part of that thought in nearly all of its incarnations. As an exercise in intellectual history, however, Genovese at least has reason to try to make a case, for the currents of southern thought have admittedly created eddies in other places. For example, it may only be a slight exaggeration, as he insists, that in strictly ideological and constitutional terms the defense of states' rights had "nothing to do with slavery." Early defenders of local autonomy against the centralized state could be found in the antebellum North; southern pro-slavery advocates of a strong national government had their say as well. As a doctrine of regional autonomy in opposition to the centralized power of the national state, the localism embodied in states' rights theory has its appeal, even to some sectors of the left. Yet states' rights, as Genovese cannot help but admit, has only become a serious *political* vehicle for the defense of slavery and white supremacy. It seems more than an unfortunate coincidence that this doctrine has taken on life only when animated by the southern desire to preserve racial inequality.

Whether its intellectual champions like it or not, southern conservatism

has been used politically to defend racism. Tradition is a living thing that only takes on meaning when deployed by human beings defending or challenging a particular social order, as the debate over the Confederate battle flag demonstrates. Because he wants to reject emphatically the legacy of southern racism, in the end Genovese must retreat to a rather essentialist account of southern thought, a view which suggests that its values emanate from a free-floating Southern "culture" disconnected from the region's politics or political economy. This is nothing more than a distorted mirror-image of Southern identity that Yankee liberals have consistently misprised as backward and benighted; both versions remain divorced from material reality. In his groundbreaking essay on George Fitzhugh 30 years ago, Genovese showed how this avatar of southern conservatism eschewed such essentialist thinking about what came to be called the "southern way of life." Upon visiting the North and finding its ruling class to be decent fellows after all, Fitzhugh realized that, in Genovese's words, "the great difference between the two sections and the two peoples lay not in any difference in human feeling and decency but in the fundamental difference in social structure and its attendant values."⁶

Without slavery as a social system southern conservatism could hardly have developed in the first place; without the violent overthrow of Radical Reconstruction in the 1870s, it could not have been rescued from the ashes of the Civil War; without segregation, disfranchisement, and the plantation economy, it could not have been preserved; without a refusal to knuckle under to New Deal liberalism it could not have survived the 1930s; without massive resistance to the civil rights movement, it could not have been renewed. The "southern tradition" almost always transcends the confines of intellectual or cultural history as an overt or covert defense of white supremacy, not as laconic chats at the country store or pleasant afternoons at the church social. To wish this unpleasant fact away is to substitute the cultural for the political, a tendency which Genovese has elsewhere deplored. I think it was Richard Weaver who famously said "ideas have consequences."

Genovese is quite justified in seeking to nourish an alternative vision on which the left can draw. With the final, ignominious death of state socialism we will have to look elsewhere for alternatives to the market-driven society, as many on the left always have. The question is where. Genovese is hardly the only leftist historian to seek solace in anti-modernist prescriptions drawn from pockets of opposition to the modern state, the spread of market values, and the secular faith in progress. In many ways the direction of his current political thought follows the well-worn paths trod by William Appleman Williams (1921-1990) and Christopher Lasch (1932-1994), leftist historians of the same generation as Genovese. Williams, in his critique of empire and the modern American bureaucratic state that was its constant partner, looked to the small-town and organic communities of his midwestern upbringing as the source of alternative values. Lasch, especially later in his life, laid claim to a "populist" tradition of community, family values, the proprietary ideal, and human limits. These petty-bourgeois values, he averred, stood as a bulwark against the false prophets of liberalism and boundless progress, the soullessness of modern life, and the overwhelming power of the corporate state, liberal elites, and the marketplace to shape the American self.

Genovese yearns for the same set of lost values as Williams and Lasch did

— organic community, the traditional stability and local allegiances associated with family, religious belief, and civic obligation, and a social order predicated on personal interdependence rather than the abstract relationship of citizens to the centralized state or consumers to the unlimited market. That Genovese chooses to find these values in the culture and intellectual tradition of the Old South and the lost cause is what makes him unique. Of the three, it seems to me that Genovese's project of distilling anti-capitalist values the left might embrace from the less admirable features of the essentially conservative traditions they champion is the least plausible. The left can and should debate whether to seek the sources of its potential renewal in a parochial or cosmopolitan ethos. But if the former, it can find little of value in a tradition fatally compromised by a racial intolerance integral to its creation and perpetuation, not just unfairly imputed to it by opportunistic detractors, as Genovese claims.

BUT WHY LOOK TO SOUTHERN CONSERVATIVES FOR OPPOSITIONAL VALUES, when the region has had its fair share of dissenters, many of whom drew on a similar critique of modern capitalism and bourgeois individualism, many of whom confronted the modern world with religiously based values — but who chose to repudiate racial inequality, rather than accept it as an unfortunate consequence of their world-view? Southern conservatives tend to lay the region's historic racial intolerance at the feet of the Bilbos, Rankins, and Wallaces, racial demagogues who allegedly horrified them even while parroting the language of states' rights, strict constitutionalism, and community values. But the southern radical tradition that constitutes the real alternative to the heritage championed by Genovese has challenged racial demagoguery while attempting to redeem southern values with interracialism.

In its best-known 20th-century incarnation, as Genovese suggests, southern conservatism emerged at Vanderbilt University in the 1920s and 1930s with the Agrarians' anti-modernist intellectual revolt. Yet at the same time and place a very different group of thinkers and activists recast southern social values in a socialist mold, even while defending many of the same "agrarian" traditions as their more reactionary brethren. For Vanderbilt was also the birthplace of what Anthony Dunbar calls, in his fine book, *Against the Grain: Southern Radicals and Prophets, 1929-1959* (1981), "the radical gospel." Under the influence of preachers of a renewed Social Gospel at Vanderbilt's divinity school, Howard Kester, Don West, Ward Rodgers, Claude Williams, Myles Horton, and James Dombrowski developed a far more radical critique of the ills of the modern South and embraced an ideal of dramatic social transformation. Like their conservative counterparts, these students sought a renewal of spiritual values, questioned the material benefits of capitalist and industrial society, and believed in the viability of rural life and local community, but they did so from a socialist perspective.

While Richard Weaver abandoned his youthful flirtation with the Socialist Party, other southerners of his generation reconciled their increasing commitment to social justice with their profound religious beliefs. The prophets of the southern radical gospel grew up in the small-town or rural South and witnessed the impact of modernization on a bucolic world; they found themselves drawn to religious training in mainline protestant churches; and with

the coming of the Great Depression they dedicated their lives to helping the dispossessed sharecroppers, textile and mine workers, and unemployed of the South, who bore the brunt of the economic collapse. Unlike the Agrarians, they found segregation incompatible with Christianity, and tended to practice what they preached in racial matters. Though maintaining a healthy skepticism about the promise of New Deal liberalism, during the 1930s and 1940s these southerners helped organize the interracial Southern Tenant Farmers' Union, supported CIO organizing drives among black and white workers, sought to repeal the poll tax, founded the Highlander Folk School which trained a generation of southern social activists, and desired to rebuild southern communities across racial lines. They took these bold actions on the basis of what they too understood to be a regional agrarian tradition of personal obligation, mutual cooperation, and humility before limits. Much of the best recent work on the political history of the South in this period demonstrates conclusively that these men and women, native southerners, helped pave the way for the civil rights movement even while they failed to check the immediate upsurge of southern reaction.

THE SOUTH HAS ALWAYS CAPTURED THE AMERICAN IMAGINATION and been used as a screen on which to project ambivalences about the repeated triumph of the modern values that still regulate our lives. More often than not liberal intellectuals have constructed an image of the "benighted South" in order to congratulate themselves and the rest of the nation for the march of enlightened progress, despite all of its obvious ills. This is anathema to Genovese, and quite properly so, for it represents a gross distortion and leads to profound illusion (and disillusion) on the part of its advocates, as the black liberation movement of the late 1960s demonstrated in the urban North. The alternative image might be called the "redemptive South," and at least in the version offered by Genovese, this proves an equally imaginary projection. The redemptive South of southern conservatism can only claim the allegiance of the left, if not others, through a profound misreading of the past and a willingness to overlook the key element in that particular tradition's perpetuation: the power of whites to dominate blacks. Even Allen Tate, one of the original Agrarians of the 1930s, noticed during the civil rights era that the defense of southern tradition always seemed to crest whenever the tide of liberalism threatened to sweep away formal white supremacy. "If there isn't more to the southern way of life than this," he wrote somberly to an old comrade in 1962, "it is not worth fighting for."⁷

Mid-century Southern radicals, however, and their heirs in the grassroots southern civil rights movement, represent another aspect of the redemptive South to which leftists can proudly adhere. Equally committed to agrarian values, to localism, to community, even to Christianity, theirs was a tradition that truly sought to redeem the soul of America and to recreate a "beloved community." They did so by challenging southerners to live up to their better natures and to abandon racism, not by allowing them to overlook it or explain it away.

NOTES

1. *The World the Slaveholders Made: Two Essays in Interpretation*, 2nd ed., (Hanover, NH, 1988), p. 136.
2. *The Southern Front: History and Politics in the Cultural War* (Columbia, MO, 1995), p. 124.
3. Richard Weaver, *The Southern Tradition at Bay: A History of Postbellum Thought*

Let Them Eat Multiculturalism

Barry Goldberg

FOR OVER THIRTY YEARS, NATHAN GLAZER HAS OFFERED academic legitimization for abandoning the struggle for racial equality. His books and essays, most notably *Affirmative Discrimination*, offered a rationale that allowed the American mainstream of centrist liberal/neo-conservatives to reject government policies that directly challenged the invidious consequences — on all our lives — of historic and contemporary American racism. His most notable target has been affirmative action, but he has also criticized school busing and proactive policies to foster residential integration. He eschewed the blunt free-marketeering of Thomas Sowell as well as Charles Murray's and Richard Herrnstein's return to biological racism. Instead, Glazer provided a line of "conservative" argument more consistent with a postwar liberal imagination that accepted the semi-welfare state and prided itself on opposition to personal prejudice and de jure white supremacy.

Without denying the history of intense and longlasting racial subjugation, he confidently predicted that "blacks would follow the path of European immigrants, now that state-imposed restrictions were lifted and private discrimination in key areas was banned." Glazer's faith in the future did not rest on a denial of the many seamy and brutal faces of ethnoracial diversity in American history; it rested on his faith in the assimilative power of what Gunnar Myrdal called the "American Creed." Myth-history, sociology, social policy: for Glazer, they were all bound in a seamless rhetorical fabric.

Now in a short, occasionally redundant, reworking of essays,* Glazer tells us he was dead "wrong." His sociological imagination had failed him — and the nation. Looking back over the past twenty years, he writes, "The American blacks, it turns out, were not like the immigrants of yesterday, or like the immigrants of today who have become so numerous in the wake of immigration reform in 1965. . . [We] are still, in some key respects, two nations." To put it mildly, this admission is of

*Nathan Glazer, *We Are All Multiculturalists Now*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997. 179 pp., \$19.95

BARRY GOLDBERG teaches American history at Fordham University at Lincoln Center. His article "The Abandonment of Black America" appeared in *New Politics*, Volume V, No.4, Winter 1996.

more than passing interest. After all, the most prominent neo-conservative/liberal analyst of race and ethnicity is telling friend and foe that the theory he has been pushing for the past few decades cannot explain the "hard reality" of our still racially separate and unequal society. The significance of his admission appears even more striking when at the same time — and at greater length — he advises fellow-travelling defenders of the assimilative powers of our unifying civic culture to stop their overheated polemics and adjust to the institutionalization of multicultural education. While an upbeat saga of core values and dreams fulfilled might work for most of us, Glazer now argues that "the great majority of blacks are not immigrants or the children of immigrants, but are the descendants of slaves, and do not share the same experience or dreams." Of course he does not go so far as to refer to blacks' American "nightmare," as Malcolm X did. And he certainly avoids Malcolm's call for revolutionary nationalism. But in the context of our own times, he certainly concedes ground to an ideological current anathema to those who share Glazer's politics. He tells his readers that, like him, they must learn to live a bit more gracefully with "multiculturalism." At a minimum, they need to accept his basic proposition: "Multiculturalism is the price America is paying for its inability or unwillingness to incorporate into its society African Americans, in the same way and to the same degree it has incorporated so many groups."

But in spite of his confession of error and challenge to overzealous crusaders against multiculturalism, Glazer's revisionism is, at best, partial. While he will probably receive criticism from cultural conservatives (and some democratic socialists) for being soft on multiculturalism, his own tolerance is at best grudging. It is after all a "price" to be paid, not a vision he has come to share. He is more tolerant of other contrarian voices, but he remains hooked on the confident Americanism he says he imbibed as a youth in the New York public schools. But even more important, it is the only "price" he is willing to pay. He is still opposed to any state action to lessen racial separation and subordination. He remains convinced that anything less than "color blind" social policy and legal reasoning is, even when not "reverse discrimination," bound to fail.

INDEED, RATHER THAN A TESTAMENT TO GLAZER'S OWN WILLINGNESS to change course or a sign of coming change in the loud majority's social policies and racial consciousness, the book is a morbid symptom of our political culture's ability to live with racial inequality. Glazer is certainly chastened. His faith in our common destiny across the color line has been weakened. But, unwilling to make a material and psychological investment in building a racially egalitarian democratic society, Glazer offers a relatively low cost solution for white Americans repelled by black rage and political mobilization: Let them eat multiculturalism!

The tone and structure of Glazer's argument suggests he believes he is demanding a good deal of his intended audience. He is probably right. These readers, one suspects, are convinced that multicultural education subverts historical "truth" and will shatter national unity, "Balkanizing" the republic. The book is intended to help this audience adjust to its current pervasiveness. As he rather glibly puts it, "multiculturalism in education . . . has, in a word, won." This alleged victory is not as bad as it seems. It does not warrant a

kulturkampf. He points out that some forms of multiculturalism emphasize the unity in American diversity. But even in forms he cannot silently accede to, he takes pains to argue that curricula change is hardly a major threat to the republic. There is no need to exaggerate its likely consequences, conflating the curriculum wars with more substantive policy issues. Significantly, in the very first chapter, Glazer criticizes the neo-conservative Marc Gerson for turning multiculturalism into "an all embracing ideology encompassing every aspect of policy about race and ethnicity that he opposes." For Gerson, racial "quotas" for law school admissions and curricula units on African kings and queens are aspects of the same subversive "multicultural" crusade. But for Glazer, "when one finds affirmative action encompassed in multiculturalism, one feels that the malleability of words has been taken to a useless extreme." Maintaining this categorical distinction is crucial to his argument. Glazer has not adjusted to "affirmative discrimination" and he is not asking his readers to. But he is asking them to tolerate, even empathically understand the needs of many of multiculturalism's defenders.

To "live with" and "understand" does not mean to "agree with." While Glazer "would reject a curriculum that gives the same place to European history that it held in the 1940s" he still believes "a good part of the Eurocentric curriculum that the critics of multiculturalism want to hold on to is indeed crucially relevant to our world today." (My guess is, so do most "multiculturalists.") Even more important, he makes it clear that he remains loyal not so much to a particular slice of the curriculum, as to a specific ideological narrative:

I feel warmly attached to the old America that was acclaimed in school textbooks and that is now passing — at least in textbooks. Despite all its faults and errors and prejudices and, if you will, crimes, it did after all, bring into its fold over time, though not without political conflict and even Civil War, the peoples and races it had rejected; it did offer them opportunities; it did correct its errors and faults and to some extent make reparation for the harm its laws and practices had imposed.

But his creed is no longer a fighting faith. Alternative less rosy accounts can have their place, even a more prominent place in the education of the young.

Given Glazer's personal preference, why does he differ from, for example, the notable spokesman for the "vital center," Arthur Schlesinger. As you may recall, Schlesinger had penned an equally skimpy book on multiculturalism. But his had been a fevered jeremiad predicting the "disuniting of America." On one level, as a sociologist of education, Glazer does not take debates over the content of the curriculum as seriously as the highbrow academic participants. Nor do most teachers and parents. They, according to Glazer, hope the kids in their charge learn to read — anything. Given the widespread inadequacies of public education they are willing to try anything — as long as change is not so frequent as to overwork or confuse all concerned. In any event, the polemical extremes will be muted in the normal local attempts of myriad districts to find something that works. At the higher levels of state or national policy, while he himself has confronted educators who object to what he sees as banal declarations of integrative American values, he is not so much taken with their potential to warp the minds of the young, as he is by the mere fact that they exist. Some Americans experience a different America and construct their own convincing narrative. In fact, unlike Schlesinger, for Glazer, "truth in history" is

hardly the central issue. At best, he writes, "Truth is an uncertain and incomplete guide." He frankly acknowledges that children and adolescents "in the past, have been told stories that were not quite so, but they were nevertheless told the stories either for their own good or for the good of society. . . We are now told we should tell other stories with other moral lessons." Such relativism can be intellectually sloppy, but in the context of battles over the suppression of history in classrooms and the Smithsonian, Glazer's openness to other perspective is welcome.

Equally important to his capacity to live with other narratives is Glazer's continuing faith in the integrative power of American society for the overwhelming majority of its people. Ominous forecasts of the "disuniting of America" ring hollow to someone who believes that most kids, including those of ethnoracial minorities, will experience acceptance in society and an improvement in their condition. Frank accounts of the exploitation of Chinese workers or of Japanese internment will not, he predicts, "affect Chinese and Japanese students much." Indeed, he is in favor of a "balanced treatment" of the nation's "crimes" against many of its people:

We have to tell the story of slavery, discrimination, and prejudice, and how the United States annexed half of Mexico, and Puerto Rico. But in any scale of serious disaffection and disloyalty among minority ethnic groups — let us say, on a scale from the Romansch in Switzerland to the Chechens in Russia — I believe one would have to rate the propensity of our major minorities to disloyalty pretty far down, well below the Chechen level.

Indeed, he sees no evidence that, on the whole, the cultivation of "distinctive loyalty" undercuts a commitment to national unity. It may even do the opposite.

Glazer, of course, has his limits. There is no question," he argues, "that the emphasis on oppression, discrimination, prejudice, grievance would" stimulate "civic disharmony." Acknowledging that "the existence of discrimination and prejudice is also reality — truth, if you will," he stresses that its meaning derives from its contextualization in the national narrative.

Ethnoracial oppression could not be ignored, but . . . if one looked at the larger picture of the history of the United States, one sees greater and greater inclusion, less and less discrimination, a steady increase in the protection of the rights of minorities, and constitutional protections and guarantees becoming more and more effective.

That is Glazer's truth, though he is willing to admit evidence to the contrary. But, more important, he argues that it is a useful story that, even if only partially true, induces "civic harmony" and individual advancement. He asks rhetorically,

What would it be better for young blacks to believe: That everyone is against them? That all their protections are shams? That whites will always stop them from getting ahead? . . . For their own good, their own progress, I believe that it would be better for young blacks to believe that there has been improvement in their situation, that their opportunities are greater than before, rather than the reverse.

(For a different answer, keep reading.) But as much as he opposes the disruptive consequences of a focus on racial subjugation, he is not eager to search it

out and exorcise it.

We cannot be certain how Glazer came to hold his benign view of multiculturalism, seemingly so out of keeping with his other positions and the stance of his neo-conservative allies. But his own explanation, if arrogant and self-serving, is certainly revealing — and probably accurate to a degree. At a minimum, it provides a crucial argumentative bridge between his essays on multiculturalism in education and his bold acknowledgment of his grand mistake. As he presents it, he, unlike all the other protagonists has a unique combination of historical knowledge and autobiographical insight. He understands the “murky prehistory” of the multicultural debate. According to Glazer, “Advocates of a multiculturalist curriculum, often do not know they have forebears, while opponents often do not realize that the education they experienced was the expression of an age singularly free of conflicts over issues of cultural pluralism or multiculturalism.” In fact, the history he goes on to recount is, if not common knowledge, hardly arcane. As his own citations indicate, it is the common resource of numerous historians of ethnicity in America. As he tells his readers, the waves of European immigrants between 1840 and 1924 generated their own “school wars.” In the 1840s, Catholic leaders attacked Protestant hegemony in public education. A half century later, German parents pressed for German language instruction. In each case, words, legislation, and bloody violence played a part. In the early 20th century, wary of the rapid increase in immigration, “hyphenated Americans” came under attack. The nativist triumphs during and after World War I are noteworthy in part because of the sophisticated defense of cultural pluralism made by Horace Kallen, Randolph Bourne, and the nation’s preeminent philosopher, John Dewey. As Glazer correctly stresses, on both sides it remained a debate by Euro-Americans about Euro-Americans. For Glazer, the most important fact is that the pluralists lost. “In the public schools, Americanization was the order of the day and prevailed without check through the 1920s, ’30s, and ’40s while the children of the last great wave of European immigration were being educated.” Glazer was one of those children. He recalls, “I attended the schools of New York City from 1929 to 1944 (I include the public City College in that stretch), and not a whiff of multiculturalism was to be found.” The school population was at least two-thirds Jewish or Italian. “But no Jewish figure was to be found in our texts for reading or writing, for literature, for social studies, for history.” Columbus, Garibaldi and Mazzini appeared, but not “to contribute to the self-esteem of Italian American schoolchildren.” Then he makes the crucial point:

This background, which most of my generation has experienced, of a strong, unself-conscious, self-confident Americanization, in which all cultures but that of the founding English and its American variant were ignored, and in which students were left to assume that the cultures of their homes and parental homelands were inferior, is crucial to the current debates over multiculturalism.

But why? Unquestioned Americanism, Glazer observes, “deposited a uniform silt over our past, leaving only fossil remains of that earlier diversity.” While there is a hint of multicultural outrage in his language, Glazer is hardly an ethnic revivalist. Americanization was unproblematic because assimilation occurred. But what is important to current debates and his own intellectual biography, is that in the crucible of a war affirming the common American

creed a growing intercultural education movement began to preach tolerance across the color line. The promise of assimilation was extended as never before to blacks, Asian, and Latinos. Change did not occur overnight or without conflict, but looking back on the progression of liberalizing legislation from the McCarran Walter Act of 1952 (which eliminated the category of "alien ineligible for citizenship"), the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the Voting Rights Act and Immigration Act of 1965, Glazer and other Americans "could believe that American blacks would follow the path of European immigrants." Like other "students of race and ethnicity" he "held that assimilation — or, if one prefers the term, integration, was what happened to ethnic and racial groups in America . . ." To put it crudely, he was the product of the times in which assimilationist visions did not mask ethnoracial domination, but pointed toward egalitarian unity out of diversity.

The history of the past 20 years shattered confidence in this vision. In hindsight, black progress came to a halt in the 70s. Glazer minimizes the fact that he was already embroiled with critics who were quicker to question his teleology, but now he acknowledges he was "wrong." To drive home not simply the importance of the error but to impress upon us his intellectual integrity, he writes, "Nothing concentrates the mind on an issue more sharply than discovering one has been wrong about it."

Undoubtedly Glazer has thought a few things over. The optimistic integrationist of old would not have written,

... the difference that separates blacks from whites, and even from other groups "of color" that have undergone a history of discrimination and prejudice in this country is not to be denied. It is this separation which is the most powerful force arguing for multiculturalism and for resistance to the assimilatory trends of American education and American society.

But in spite of his admission and tone of concern, this thin book is hardly a concentrated reconsideration of the ideological convictions of an Americanized child and influential academic. It reads more like an effort at damage control.

RECALL, FOR EXAMPLE, THE LIMITED ALTERNATIVE VISIONS of history he offers to black youth. He gives them a stark choice: nihilistic disharmony or the passive acceptance of an unfolding American promise. Excluded from the available narratives is an engagement with close to four centuries of struggle. "Our" creed has been contested and, thereby, rewritten on plantations and city streets, in factories and schools, and at lunch counters with blood, sweat and tears. There have been smiles and laughter, and dancing too, at blessed moments of "Jubilee," such as the defeat of the slavocracy. Such victories have been hard won and incomplete — and under constant threat. Glazer may mention the "assimilationist" vision of Fredrick Douglass and Martin Luther King, but he forgets that their rhetorical appeals asking Americans to live up to their creed demanded that Americans rewrite the texts of the white republic. They are not the slaveholder Jefferson's progeny (though others of dark hue may have been). In expropriating master Jefferson's intellectual property they created themselves, their brothers and sisters, and the nation anew. How about teaching those conflicts, encouraging students to enter the loud and hopefully not too bloody "conversations" of our culture. Their voices may yet change the terms of

debate and the conditions of their lives. If that is "civic disharmony," so be it. All power to the discordant voices.

Or take another historical issue that has not been central to curricula battles but that is connected to his theoretical vision: the meaning of the experience of European immigrants and their children for African Americans. Glazer is willing to concede that the European immigrant experience did not foreshadow that of blacks. But he never alludes to the growing scholarship that explores the ways that Euro-American assimilation was predicated on gaining access to the material and psychological "wages of whiteness." There were recurring moments in which the struggles of white ethnics also benefitted black workers. Ideological challenges against the ethnocentric reasoning of Anglo-American nativists could, in the long run, contribute to challenges to racial oppression of "non-whites." But immigrants benefitted from the initial advantage of not being black and in a series of struggles and renegotiations parlayed their relative paleness into the profound advantage of becoming "white." During the years Glazer learned his American creed in the New York City schools his elders fought to put Ellis Island on a par with Plymouth Rock. At the same time, their votes built the welfare state and their actions forged the industrial union movement. They wrote a new American script by changing the rules of the market but not the rules of race. As Herbert Hill, Thomas Sugrue, and Arnold Hirsch have shown, these ethnic working-class Americans defended their turf — jobs and neighborhoods — with votes, epithets, and brickbats. During the 40s and 50s, the backdrop for Glazer's optimistic forecasts, this more inclusive liberal state helped build the "new ghettos" that exploded in the 60s and simmer to this day.

THE STULTIFYING WEIGHT OF GLAZER'S IDEOLOGICAL BAGGAGE also constricts his treatment of those Americans who are neither black nor white: Latinos, Asians, Amerindians. Glazer's newfound willingness to concede the distinctiveness of black experience, comes at the expense of "whitening" other "people of color." What does he mean when he writes, "... [T]he demands of Native American activists pose no challenge to any major tenet of American ideology and can be accommodated with little strain on the values of the traditional curriculum[?]" Of course "as less than one per cent of the population" their condition and protests have less capacity to disrupt the nation. Blacks may be the "storm troops in the battles over multiculturalism," but given the centrality of "Manifest Destiny" to the nation's myth-history, debates over the "invasion" of America and the resulting "genocide" have remained central to curriculum wars. By a variety of social indices — rates of intermarriage, residential patterns, income, and occupation — the unequal separation of African Americans stands out. But are Mexican garment workers and Korean factory owners in Los Angeles simply new American immigrants whose fate has been foreshadowed by Glazer's parents? Their varied pasts and present conditions remain invisible. They are bit players in Glazer's historical sociology, useful for validating the transhistoric significance of his father's generation. Nowhere does he entertain the possibility that in different ways, but no less than African Americans, they offer a "different mirror" on our past and present. It is one thing to accentuate the historically specific condition of African Americans; it is something altogether different to present them as the sole exception to an otherwise

celebratory American saga. It is a theoretical and political dead end.

Especially for African Americans. Acknowledging their exceptional predicament, Glazer concedes the psycho-cultural value of their "stories" and is more tolerant of alternative histories. But he does not engage them, and remains tied to his "story" of gradual, voluntary, and individual advancement that, after all, worked for everyone else. This evasion makes it all the easier to reassert his longstanding political agenda. In spite of having admitted making a grave error, he concentrates on reaffirming his minimalist social policy. The causes of "our" failed expectations are "obscure," he says. He briefly lists the standard set of social pathologies, including the "disaster that encompassed the black family." He admits to "other factors of infinite regress, among them prejudice and discrimination which, while declining are still evident." He even euphemistically alludes to the firm resistance of whites to any change in the racial composition of their children's schools and their neighborhoods. But having conceded some empirical ground to scholars who have mapped persistent racial separation, he returns to the ideological trenches and digs in:

However wrong I was in expecting more rapid social change to result from the civil rights revolution, a greater measure of government effort to directly promote residential integration and school integration is not the answer. The forces that will produce the changes we are looking for are individual and voluntaristic, rather than governmental and authoritative.

Change, if it comes, will come "individual by individual, family by family, neighborhood by neighborhood. Slowly as these work, there is really no alternative." How slowly, he does not venture to say. But he is willing to wait. Then, accentuating his own empathic concession to those who must bear the brutality of "hard reality," he quickly adds, "In the meantime there is multiculturalism."

In other words, "Let them eat multiculturalism." Am I being uncharitable by translating his words into the callous condescending bark of someone living in safety and privilege? Perhaps. This tortured, at times meandering and repetitive, work does suggest a growing uncertainty. But he cannot let go of the confident Americanism of his youth. In the end he refurbishes the myth-history and policy he helped define. In the meantime, he will let his black fellow citizens tell their "stories." He and other Americans can listen and empathize in the comfort of their neighborhoods — on the cheap. After all, *their* "stories" will set policy.

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Social Scientists and War Criminals

Martin Oppenheimer

THE 49TH CORPS OF THE GERMAN ARMY REACHED THE CAUCASUS and took the city of Mikoyan Shakhra in August, 1942. Professor Nicholas Poppe, a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, was living in Mikoyan Shakhra and working at the Pedagogical Institute. Poppe, a linguist, had taught Mongolian at Petrograd University in the 1920s, and was an expert on Soviet nationality groups. Profoundly anti-Stalinist, Poppe had decided that the way to flee the Soviet Union was by joining the Germans. He thought they would ultimately lose the war, but if he evacuated with them as they retreated, he would somehow find his way to Britain or the U.S. after the war. So he willingly became an interpreter for the Germans, and when the Soviets retook the area, Poppe left with the Germans. He understood, of course, that his "few stints as an interpreter *in the interest of the local people*," as he put it in his *Reminiscences*, published in 1983, could be called collaboration, sufficient grounds for a death sentence from the Communists should they ever apprehend him.

While still in the Caucasus, Poppe claimed, he was sufficiently influential to save some Jewish children in a sanatorium (by deliberately mistranslating a statement by the director), and the entire tribe of so-called "Mountain Jews," a Caucasian ethnic group of Persian background that practiced the Jewish religion. Poppe claimed that he "wrote a memorandum in which I pointed out that Tsarist laws had not treated them as Jews but as Caucasian mountaineers. Furthermore, their real name was Tat, and scholarly literature had indicated that the Tat were people of Iranian origin who spoke an Iranian language...[even SS Obersturmbannführer Major] Pesterer himself said, 'we're not interested in their funny religion. If they want to be Jewish in religion, we don't care. It's the racial Jews we're against.'" This has got to be one of the more bizarre anecdotes in the entire insane epic of Nazi anti-Semitism.

By the Spring of 1943 Poppe was in Berlin, assigned to work at the Wannsee Institute, a component of SS chief Ernst Kaltenbrunner's in-

telligence operation. His job, he claimed, was research on Siberian history, ethnography, and the like. The Institute should not be confused with the Wannsee Conference, at which, the previous January 20, 1942, the Nazis determined on the "Final Solution of the Jewish Question." In any case, Poppe was not in Berlin then.

Christopher Simpson tells us in his book *Blowback: America's Recruitment of Nazis and Its Effects on the Cold War* (1988) that the Wannsee Institute's ethnic reports, "which were the most accurate information available to the SS concerning locations of concentrations of Jewish population inside the USSR, provided a convenient road map for the senior SS leaders assigned the task of exterminating the Jews." Although there is no hard evidence that Poppe was directly involved in this aspect of Wannsee's "research," it would have been unlikely that as an expert on Soviet ethnics he would have had no part in this work, although he consistently denied it. He claimed that the Wannsee Institute was merely one of several institutes that collected materials on various regions of the world, all supervised by a foundation headed by an SS officer, who in turn reported to the Intelligence Section, which in turn reported to Kaltenbrunner, so that he, Poppe, was many steps removed from the SS.

By May 1945, the Russians were closing in on Berlin. A spinoff of Wannsee, the East Asia Institute, with Poppe in it, had been evacuated to Marienbad, Czechoslovakia in 1944. There Poppe encountered General Andrei Vlasov, who had been captured by the Germans and had organized an army for them. The Vlasov army, a brainchild of SS Chief Heinrich Himmler, consisted of a mix of Soviet prisoners of war faced with a choice of joining or starving to death, and volunteers motivated by hatred of the Soviet regime and/or opportunism. The Vlasov army fought only briefly as a unit for the Nazis, but a number of Vlasov's men had not only fought with SS units prior to the formation of Vlasov's army, but had been part of SS extermination units. Poppe claimed he stayed aloof from Vlasov, though he clearly sympathized with him.

After the military collapse of Germany Poppe, fleeing the advancing Soviet armies, made his way to an estate belonging to a maternal great-aunt near Herford (he had some German ancestry on his mother's side), and hid there. The U.S. Army Counter Intelligence Corps was soon hunting him for extradition to the Soviet Union, but a British Counter-Intelligence Corps agent located him first, and Poppe went to live at his house for several months. By the Fall of 1945 Poppe was in touch with several U.S. scholars at Columbia and Harvard who had known him prior to the war. At one point he posed as an Estonian Displaced Person; at another, British intelligence took him out of a DP camp and kept him under wraps for several months to evade a Soviet extradition application. Early in 1947 he was informed that he would not be permitted to enter Britain. The British continued to hide him from the MVD (the Soviet secret service later known as the KGB), provided him with a cover identity, and used him to teach Russian to British officers. However, he seemed to be an embarrassment to the British, so they handed him to the Americans. By May, 1948, Harvard's Russian Research Center (HRRRC) as well as the State Department's Policy Planning Staff, then headed by George F. Kennan, indicated strong interest in obtaining his expertise.

At the end of the war an estimated 5.5 million Soviet citizens, most of

them forced laborers or prisoners, lived in Germany. Of this large number, tens of thousands had collaborated with the Nazis in various capacities, among them Vlasov and his people. Not a few were wanted as war criminals. None of these tens of thousands could safely return home. However, as Charles Thomas O'Connell put it in a doctoral dissertation on the Harvard Russian Research Center (*Social Structure and Science: Soviet Studies at Harvard*, 1990), in the new climate of the Cold War "the realization grew that the Soviet nonreturners might be a valuable political resource." The use of Soviet DP's "to fill in the gaps in our current intelligence" (in the words of a State Department paper) became a desirable strategy. Nicholas Poppe, a sophisticated intellectual well-versed in Soviet affairs was a star in this respect.

There were a number of others. Another former professor of languages, Leo Dudin, from the University of Kiev, had also been in Berlin in 1943. During the German occupation of Kiev, Dudin helped put out two propaganda newspapers for the Nazis, one in Ukrainian, one in Russian. In Berlin he worked for the Propaganda Ministry (Goebbels) writing radio scripts for broadcast to the Soviet Union. At some point Dudin joined the Vlasov army. As a Vlasovist, Dudin was also wanted by the Russians and was also semi-underground in West Germany. By 1948 Dudin was working for U.S. Army Intelligence doing "political orientation work."

By the end of the war, General Vlasov himself had become little more than a burned out alcoholic. He and a number of his top officers were turned over to the Russians, and were executed as traitors. But a large number of Vlasovists escaped the firing squad and made their way to West Germany. Besides Dudin, there was also a Colonel Vladimir Pozdnyakov, who had been General Vlasov's aide-de-camp and chief of security for the Committee for the Liberation of Russia, Vlasov's political arm. The Soviets had him on a list of 73 alleged war criminals and collaborators because of his pro-Nazi activities, which were said to include having been chief of police in a P.O.W. camp in Poland. A more interesting Vlasovist was Boris A. Yakovlev, actually Nikolai Troitsky, who had once been arrested as a saboteur and "wrecker" during the Stalinist purges. He was, however, released, joined the army, and subsequently was taken prisoner by the Germans in late 1941. After a year as a P.O.W. he decided to collaborate and also worked for the Nazi Propaganda Ministry, editing a newspaper in occupied Russia. In May, 1944, he joined the Vlasov army, and then attended the Nazi intelligence school organized by Richard Gehlen. After that, he edited the Vlasovist newspaper from May 1944 to April 1945, at which point he changed his name and fled to Munich.

SINCE THE WAR THERE HAVE BEEN A NUMBER OF ATTEMPTS to rehabilitate or sanitize the Vlasov movement, although there is wide agreement that its personnel were a mixed bag. Various sources claim that the Vlasov army existed as such for only a few months in 1945 and fought only briefly for the Germans, that it actually engaged the SS in combat in the closing days of the war in Prague, that many were actually anti-Stalinist bolsheviks or democrats who naively believed that a Hitler victory would enable them to restore genuine socialism, that they were connected with anti-Nazi groups in the German Army, including those who attempted the coup against Hitler in July 1944, and that in any case they were not in a position to commit war crimes. Christopher

Simpson calls these attempts to whitewash the Vlasovists "bogus." His verdict: "In reality, Vlasov's organization consisted in large part of reassigned veterans from some of the most depraved SS and 'security' units of the Nazi's entire killing machine, regardless of what Vlasov himself may have wanted. By 1945 about half of Vlasov's troops had been drawn from the SS Kommando Kaminsky, which had earlier been led by the Belorussian collaborator Bronislaw Kaminsky." And he adds, in a footnote: "These troops were among the actual triggermen of the Holocaust..."

What Poppe, Dudin, Podzniakov, Yakovlev, and a cluster of their Vlasovist friends had in common, and what was more interesting to U.S. authorities and their closely-linked academic collaborators, was their presumed (and certainly auto-certified) knowledge of Soviet affairs, and their desperation to stay out of Soviet hands. Since intelligence about the Soviet Union was, after the outbreak of the Cold War, worth its weight in gold, or at least immigration visas, it made sense for these people to promote their expertise, real or not, and for U.S. institutions, especially certain university think tanks, to go after them.

JUST ABOUT THE TIME PROFESSOR POPPE WENT TO WORK at the Wannsee Institute, the U.S. War Department's Civil Affairs Division was beginning to set up training programs for the people who were to run the Allied occupation of Germany once the war was over. One of these programs was set up at Harvard, in the form of the School for Overseas Administration. A well-known Harvard sociologist, Talcott Parsons, became part of the staff, wrote a memo on possible sociological contributions to the training, and later chaired the Planning Committee of Harvard's "Foreign Area and Language Program, Central European Program." In 1944 he represented sociology in a multi-disciplinary academic conference on the prospects for the democratization of Germany. The conference was heavily biased toward psychological and national character studies of German mentalities, about which Parsons had done some writing.

Parsons' work at the School for Overseas Administration at Harvard, one of his admirers, Professor Jens Nielsen has written, "brought (him) in contact with governmental and intelligence institutions in Washington, especially the OSS, which was the forerunner of the CIA. Many of his Harvard colleagues also worked for the OSS . . . at the end of the war, William L. Langer, Director of the Research and Analysis Section of the OSS, offered Parsons a job in that organization . . ." Langer joined Harvard's History Department in 1947, and Parsons, too, had other plans. In 1947 he became Chairman of Harvard's increasingly distinguished Department of Social Relations. Parsons was by now arguably America's leading mainstream sociologist. (Two years later he would be elected President of the American Sociological Society.) But first Professor Parsons' and Professor Poppe's paths would cross.

It had become increasingly clear to the internationally-oriented Eastern corporate and government establishment even before the war, and more so in the context of the new Cold War, that traditional scholarship had little to contribute to understanding the Soviet bloc. Hence a growing interest in multi-disciplinary area studies. The Carnegie Corporation, an East Coast establishment foundation, soon assumed a leading role in promoting area studies, and its Vice President, John Gardner, took on the task of involving the behavioral sciences in this project. The Carnegie Corporation was not entirely a dispa-

sionate funder of educational and scientific projects. Its charter permitted it to take an active role in "defining research needs and creating programs to fill those needs," as James O'Connell wrote in his 1990 study, and it did so now. In July 1947, Talcott Parsons, who had gotten wind of Carnegie's interest, wrote Gardner suggesting that Harvard be involved.

But the Carnegie Corporation and its backers were not alone in promoting research on the Soviet Union. At a September 1947 dinner of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), of which Allen Dulles, soon to head the CIA, was President, Carnegie's ideas for a Russian Center, possibly at Harvard, were discussed with former OSS officer (by now Harvard professor) Langer. The Council was and is a powerful institution with strong links to corporate and political elites. The Carnegie Corporation had been instrumental in funding the Council, and several Carnegie Trustees served as its Directors and officers. It was already playing a major role in the formation of U.S. foreign policy and would be fully involved in plans for a Russian center through its interlocking personages, from here on in.

Washington was soon directly involved as well. In July 1947 Carnegie V.P. Gardner visited the capital to assess the quality of government research on the Soviet Union. There wasn't much. He came away with indications that the State Department, as well as the Central Intelligence Group, forerunner of the CIA (Allen Dulles, Wall Street lawyer and President of the CFR, consultant), would be cooperative in the creation of a Russian center. Gardner remained in close touch with the Russian Section, European Division, Office of Intelligence and Research at State, especially later, when it came to recruiting personnel for Harvard's center.

Shortly after, Gardner's choice for the location of a Russian Research Center settled on Harvard. Gardner proposed an executive committee to direct the program: the anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn as Director, and a "core" group that included Parsons and Alex Inkeles, an expert on the Soviet Union. Kluckhohn, the elected President of the American Anthropological Association in 1947, had "top secret" security clearance from the R&D Board of the (now renamed) Department of Defense and was actively involved in Air Force Intelligence projects. He was not selected for his expertise on the Soviet Union; neither he nor Parsons even spoke Russian.

The Harvard Russian Research Center formally came into existence in February 1948, after the Carnegie Corporation's Trustees, at Gardner's bidding, granted it \$100,000 for the first year of operation, with another \$640,000 in readiness for the following five years. Between 1947 and 1957 Carnegie would give it a total of \$875,000.

There were several reasons for locating the Center at Harvard, not the least of which was the close linkage between the State Department, the Carnegie people, and Harvard's leadership (including its Board of Overseers). Between October 1947 and the formal beginning of the Center in February 1948 a number of scholars were recruited. Carnegie's Gardner shuttled between Washington, New York, and Chicago (where he interviewed such leading academics as Louis Wirth and Robert Redfield about potential candidates). Gardner was also in contact with the CIA. Boston CIA field agents would soon become the conduits for "conveying the research needs of Washington officials to the Director of the Russian Research Center, who in turn relayed the questions and

problems to the scholars of Harvard's Center," as O'Connell describes it. In January 1948 John Paton Davies, a member of George F. Kennan's Policy Planning Staff at State, visited Harvard and met with Director-to-be Kluckhohn, further cementing the relationship between Washington and the Center.

In March 1948 Davies wrote a paper (classified "Secret") outlining a covert plan to use Soviet emigrés living in Germany as intelligence sources. The plan was approved by Undersecretary of State Robert A. Lovett on March 15. From Lovett's desk the plan went via various bureaucratic routes to the National Security Agency for transmission to the CIA. There were two components to Davies' plan: to increase defections from the USSR, and to utilize Soviet refugees to obtain intelligence about the USSR. The latter objective involved a massive research project that would interview Soviet refugees, and would then bring a limited number of emigré Soviet social scientists to the U.S.

The Davies project fit in well with what the Carnegie people had in mind for the Harvard Russian Research Center. A reconnaissance of various potential sources of data (the refugees) needed to be undertaken. Shortly after the formalization of the HRRC, Director Kluckhohn dispatched Executive Committee member Talcott Parsons to carry out this mission. Parsons travelled in Germany, Austria, England and Sweden from June to August 1948, during which time he was in touch with diplomatic and military officials, intelligence personnel, scholars, and a few Soviet displaced persons in order to identify those who might be useful in various ways to the HRRC. He also wrote approximately ten letters to Kluckhohn describing his travels and his contacts. (Two scholars have seen these letters and quote from them in their work: O'Connell, and Sigmund Diamond, the Columbia sociologist and historian, whose *Compromised Campus*, 1992, devotes several chapters to the HRRC.) Some interesting names appear in these letters. Nicholas Poppe is one of them.

PARSONS WAS IDEALLY SUITED FOR THIS "RECONNAISSANCE" TRIP. He had studied at Heidelberg in the late 20s, had translated the German sociologist Max Weber into English, and by the late 30s was not only politically involved in campaigns against isolationism and (after 1939) in favor of U.S. intervention in the war, but was also writing fairly extensively about the threat of Naziism. Parsons and a number of other Harvard social scientists organized discussion groups focusing, among other topics, on Nazi propaganda. One participant in these groups was Parsons' close friend and sociological colleague Edward Hartshorne, an expert on the German educational system. Parsons and Hartshorne were about to collaborate on a book dealing with the psychology of Naziism when Hartshorne took a job in Washington in the intelligence field. Immediately after the war Hartshorne, by then an officer attached to the Psychological Warfare Division of Allied Supreme Headquarters in Europe, helped to reorganize the German educational system and was a key figure in the rebirth of the German Sociological Society. He was murdered on August 28, 1946 in Germany under mysterious circumstances, an event that greatly distressed Parsons.

It is widely believed, especially in radical sociology circles, that Parsons was a political conservative committed to a sociology that advocated value neutrality, not unlike Max Weber. This is a misperception. Parsons held that

indifference to values was impossible for the "liberal scholar." The values he advocated publicly had to do with "the search for truth" but he also believed that "antiliberal," that is, totalitarian, views in the academy should not be tolerated. This explains his waffling on McCarthyism later. His writings, insofar as one can penetrate his obscure prose, make it clear that he was opposed to Nazi totalitarianism, and, by implication, Soviet totalitarianism as well.

In short, Parsons was a paradigmatic Cold War liberal. From his perspective it was not inconsistent for him to engage in scholarly pursuits helpful to the intelligence community. Parsons was, by 1948, a highly political animal, and had been for some years. He was neither naive nor likely to be manipulated. As one of his admirers, Robert Bannister, has written, "Parsons was fully aware that Harvard's RRC was closely integrated with governmental intelligence..." This is echoed by another scholar sympathetic to Parsons, Jens Kaalhaug Nielsen: "There is no doubt...that he was fully aware of the integrated network involving the RRC and the intelligence community and that he knew a lot about Kluckhohn's strong involvement in intelligence activities."

On his arrival in Germany on June 20, 1948, Parsons made his way to a U.S. Army Intelligence officer, Colonel Henry Newton, presumably because Newton was one of the "gatekeepers" to Soviet emigré intelligence sources. Newton was not available, but one of his employees, Leo Dudin, the Vlasovist, was, and Parsons spent the night at Dudin's house. The following day Parsons and Dudin were taken to Garmisch to meet with another intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel Theodore Hoffman. A few days later Parsons saw Colonel Robert Schow, Deputy Director of Intelligence in the European Command. (A year later Schow became Assistant Director of CIA, working in clandestine operations.) Parsons described these meetings, and some of the emigrés he met in the letters he wrote to Kluckhohn. Besides Dudin, Parsons described and apparently met at least two others: Vlasov's former aide-de-camp Pozdniakov, and one Ivar Nyman, a former Soviet Foreign Office official. All three were working for U.S. Army Intelligence by that time. Parsons broached to Kluckhohn the possibility that these three be brought to work at Harvard. (They were not, ultimately, but were employed by the RRC as contacts for obtaining research reports from Soviet Displaced Persons in Germany until 1950, when it became clear that their intelligence was low quality.)

On June 30, 1948 Parsons wrote Kluckhohn from Berlin. There, a Harvard professor, C.J. Friedrich, an adviser to General Lucius Clay, had put him in touch with an intelligence officer named Lawrence De Neufville, Deputy Director of the Office of the Military Government (for the U.S. Zone of occupied Germany). De Neufville told Parsons that the British had put a number of Nazi experts on Russia to work, and then De Neufville "came up with the name of our friend Poppe. He told me that P. was under the protection of the British Intelligence people but they want to get him to the United States. He is very hot for them because he is explicitly wanted by the Russians..."

Parsons and the RRC knew about Poppe beforehand. Kluckhohn had been made aware of the fact that John Paton Davies of the State Department wanted to secure an academic position in the U.S. for him. A tentative appointment as Research Associate at Harvard had been authorized, but a hitch developed, probably because more data on his past had come to light. In Germany, Parsons became privy to confidential information shared between British and U.S.

intelligence agencies. In a letter of June 30, 1948, Parsons tells Kluckhohn of meeting with a British intelligence man named Rhodes, who had Poppe's dossier, marked "Top Secret" on his desk. Parsons tells Kluckhohn that if a way can be found to get Poppe into the U.S., the British will take care of letting him out of Germany.

There is no evidence that Parsons actually met or talked with Poppe. Nor can we tell how much Parsons knew of Poppe's past (particularly since Poppe was not necessarily giving every detail, logically enough). However, Parsons knew enough to voice some doubts about this crew: "Perhaps I was a little hasty in my recommendations on the Dudin group. I don't know. Certainly they aren't the only ones and their political inclinations may be extreme — and yet — I want to go back to them with the wider perspective." We do not know what he meant by "extreme," or what "the wider perspective" may have meant. Parsons does not seem to have had anything further to do with getting Poppe to the U.S. Parsons' wife Helen, who was administrative director of the RRC, was aware, however, that Harvard's tentative offer to Poppe was in jeopardy. She wrote to Poppe in Germany telling him not to count on an appointment due to "complications."

On Parsons' return he met with Carnegie's President Charles Dollard and V.P. Gardner, who were much encouraged about the prospects of further, and closer cooperation between the RRC and official U.S. circles in Germany. Parsons' own relationship with the intelligence community continued over the years. As late as 1974 he was a consultant to the CIA on student protest movements, and on personality aspects of potential CIA recruits.

Poppe does not mention Parsons in his *Reminiscences*, but he does say that Kluckhohn informed him he could not get the Harvard appointment because, Poppe thought, he had stayed in Germany "as a refugee from the Soviet Union and worked for the German government." Anyway, Poppe was flown to Washington in 1949 under the name of Joseph Alexandros, and debriefed by Carmel Offie, of the CIA-funded Office of Policy Coordination in the State Department. He had in the meantime landed a job at the University of Washington (Seattle), in its Far Eastern Institute, where he wrote several books on Asian linguistics. He died in 1991 at the age of 88. Poppe continued, for the rest of his life, to deny any involvement in war crimes. He feuded with Owen Lattimore, who had accused him of being an SS officer, and later went to the trouble of obtaining a sort of clearance from the Archive of the Federal Republic of Germany, which wrote to him in February 1963 that based on the available documentation "it would appear that you were not a member of the SS."

After Parsons' "reconnaissance," the coast was clear for the Harvard Russian Research Center to proceed full speed with the collection of scholarship and/or intelligence. The Harvard Refugee Interview Project of 1950-51, directed by Alex Inkeles, an original member of the RRC, and Raymond A. Bauer, senior research staff member of RRC, was funded by the Air Force. (It eventually conducted over 700 interviews, administered over 2,000 questionnaires, and resulted in four books, 35 articles and 53 unpublished reports.)

However, before the Project could get underway it was necessary to locate and organize an influential group of Soviet emigrés in order to legitimate this and subsequent research among the understandably suspicious Soviet refugee population. This group came to be known as the Institute for Research on the

History and Institutions of the USSR, or, more popularly, the Munich Institute. The Institute was funded at first by Harvard, and later by the CIA [February, 1951 until 1971, when Senator Clifford Case (R, N.J.), blew the whistle]. Harvard maintained a liaison, Professor George Fischer, and there was a CIA adviser, Leon Barat. It pretended to be an autonomous group of scholars that ran a library, conducted conferences, operated a summer school for Sovietologists, and otherwise behaved like many other scholarly institutes. However, its real function was to act as a contact organization through which Harvard's RRC could obtain access to Soviet D.P.s and other Soviet emigrés for research (and intelligence) purposes. The RRC, working with Boris Yakovlev, founder of the library, selected an "academic council" from among emigrés employed at the U.S. Army Intelligence schools in Germany. All had security clearance.

Although full information is not available on all eight members of the council, or executive committee of the Institute, we know that four of them were clearly Vlasovists and/or Nazi collaborators. Yakovlev, the Director, had had some 33 aliases, and had worked for the Vlasovist newspaper under the direction of the Nazi Propaganda Ministry. Michael Aldan, actually André Nerianin, former chief of staff of the Soviet 20th Army, had been Assistant Chief of Staff, Operations, for Vlasov. He was wanted as a war criminal by the Soviets. Abdurachman Kunta, originally Avtorkhanov, had organized a "white" partisan group for the Germans, and had worked as a propagandist in Berlin. Konstantin Shteppa also worked in propaganda for the Nazis. Pozdniakov, the Vlasovist whom Parsons met in 1948, was ousted from the Institute due to personality difficulties. The evidence on the other four is more circumstantial. The degree to which any could have been considered serious scholars is open to debate, since the written reports they sent to Harvard were not highly regarded there. In March 1951, Harvard cut off funding and the CIA picked up the tab via its conduit, the American Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, also called Radio Liberty. It became a propaganda mill under the guise of a research institute that had been legitimated to varying degrees over the years by the Harvard imprimatur.

The process that led to the creation of the HRRC in the first place, and then to Parsons' mission, and later to the Munich Institute, is not how most people view the way universities and scholars work. Here a private foundation with major links to corporate, university and governmental circles (themselves linked to each other) not only determined research priorities and funded a research institution to carry those priorities out, but even named the personnel who would operate the institution, and vetted its scholars. Then those scholars pursued a research agenda largely funded and determined by government agencies, particularly in the intelligence community, utilizing sources the access to which was also provided by intelligence agencies. In turn those sources had a political agenda, rooted in their own history. One cannot help but suspect that the results may have been at least a bit skewed due to that bias.

But a more important bias was the source of those research priorities: the U.S. Air Force. That priority, regardless of what else may have come out of the research (much of it fairly conventional, noncontroversial social scientific descriptions of the Soviet system), was to study the Soviet Union as a potential target of U.S. air power (bombing), specifically the selection of targets based

on analyses of the psychological vulnerability of the population. These analyses were based on the kind of social scientific methodology being promoted by major U.S. universities, with Harvard very much playing a star role.

The research, in short, was rooted in the political (especially foreign policy) assumptions of the U.S. government, and more broadly the establishment network that had created the instrument for carrying that research out. No alternative assumptions were entertained: the historian H. Stuart Hughes, HRRC's initial assistant director, was ousted at the order of a Carnegie trustee because Hughes supported the Henry Wallace campaign. From beginning to end, from the Carnegie Corporation and its corporate sponsors to the State Department to Harvard to the CIA and the Air Force, the Cold War and full-scale armament was the order of the day, and given that perspective, the fact that some sources of intelligence may have been war criminals in a previous war became at worst a minor inconvenience.

THERE IS AN ODD EPILOGUE TO THIS STRANGE cloak-and-dagger-meets-Harvard respectable-social-scientists chapter in the history of the Cold War, one that speaks volumes about what is and is not "politically correct."

In 1993 a German sociologist, Uta Gerhardt, edited a book called *Talcott Parsons on National Socialism*. The book consists of a 78-page introduction, which is a biography of Parsons and a discussion of his views on Naziism, and 14 essays by Parsons, some never before published, dealing with a range of topics from academic freedom, propaganda, and anti-Semitism to concrete discussions of Naziism and German social structure, the nature of fascist movements, and even a radio script (from September 1940) that is a thinly disguised argument for intervention in the war. They are not uninteresting but they are of secondary importance to the present story.

Gerhardt, clearly an admirer of Parsons and his anti-totalitarian views, tells us that her volume will cover the period to 1951, the publication date of Parsons' *The Social System*. Her biography stops in 1946, however. Parsons' political activities after 1946, and well before 1951, are completely absent from her book. The HRRC is not mentioned. If we did not know better, we would assume from her book that Parsons absented himself from political involvement in Germany following 1946 and never set foot in that country again.

But we do know better. University of California (Irvine) historian Jon Wiener stumbled upon Charles O'Connell's doctoral dissertation, then still in draft form, and wrote an article for *The Nation* (March 6, 1989) describing in some detail Parsons' involvement with trying to smuggle "Nazi collaborators" into the U.S. as Soviet studies experts. Gerhardt, it turns out, was aware of Wiener's article when she wrote her book.

Then a sociologist, Jack Nusan Porter, who is a Holocaust researcher and himself the child of survivors, wrote an extremely favorable review of Gerhardt's book for *Sociological Forum* (September 1994), the journal of the Eastern Sociological Society. The book, he felt, shows Parsons in a new light, that of the anti-totalitarian activist, thereby undermining new left critics who, like C. Wright Mills, had painted Parsons as a conservative. "...in our youthful certainty," Porter wrote, "we were too hard on him...Far from being the 'reactionary' that the 1960s antiwar activists thought of him...this book makes it clear that Parsons was a strong supporter of human rights in the fight for democ-

racy against the onslaught of Nazism." Unfortunately, Porter was unaware of Wiener's *Nation* piece at the time and when he found out about it (from me), he was understandably upset. He (and I) tried to have a correction to his review published.

The sociological establishment then circled the wagons to protect Parsons. The journal refused to publish any amendment to Porter's review, much less any letters about it, for about two years. Finally, in December 1996 it published a long, somewhat rambling, essay by Porter expressing both dismay about and admiration for, Parsons. It also published, in the same issue of *Sociological Forum*, what amounted to two lengthy defenses of Parsons, one by Gerhardt, and one by N.Y.U. sociologist Dennis Wrong, whose piece is entitled "Truth, Misinterpretation, or Left-wing McCarthyism?"

In this essay, self-described social democrat Wrong attacks Wiener's *Nation* piece as a hatchet job, attacks *The Nation* for having espoused an anti-Cold War ideological line "and even printing the occasional outright Stalinist, including several suspected Soviet agents," and boasts of his own funding by Carnegie, and his connections to the late Dean Acheson of the State Department, and George Kennan. He accuses critics of the Cold War of viewing matters "through the distorting lens of the slogans and cliches of the late 1960s New Left," and of being antagonistic to liberalism and social democracy, and therefore of playing into the hands of right-wing ideologues. Almost needlessly to say, he defends Parsons' activities in Germany. He also defends the journal in its prior decision not to publish any amendment to Porter's effusive book review. Wrong seems to believe that a historical description of Parsons' involvement with the HRRC project and with the intelligence community constitutes being soft on Stalinism. And he links a defense of Parsons to a defense of Cold War strategy as promoted by Kennan and others.

The first of these assumptions is not tenable: no one who has been involved in describing the history of the HRRC, and Parsons' mission to Germany in 1948, is in any sense an apologist for Stalinism. Most are old enough to be innocent of New Leftism anyway, and some have solid credentials in the anti-Stalinist left. However, it does seem that many of Parsons' advocates defend him (insofar as they are willing to concede that the events described here, or by Diamond or O'Connell did in fact take place, which is not always the case) on the basis of the historical "necessity" of defending the West from Soviet imperialism. The notion that it is possible to be anti-Stalinist, to be entirely clear on the nature of the Stalinist state and the dangers that it constituted in 1948 (e.g. the Czechoslovak coup in February of that year) and at the same time opposed to U.S. foreign policy (which included sheltering Nazis and their collaborators, supporting all sorts of dictators around the world from Spain to Indonesia, and contemplating the incineration of civilian populations "in defense of freedom") because one is antitotalitarian seems hard for him to grasp.

Wrong's simplistic Cold Warriorism and old-fashioned red-baiting aside, why are so many sociologists apparently enlisted to defend Parsons' reputation at this late date? The matter of Talcott Parsons' "missing years" is known, though not widely. It would seem that there are people who prefer to keep it that way. Still, what harm would it do to satisfy historical objectivity nearly 50 years later? Is it that Parsons' many sociological disciples, people whose careers are based on "Parsonian sociology," are embarrassed by these disclosures and feel they must therefore either deny Parsons' role, or somehow justify it as a matter of saving face? Or are Parsons and the HRRC really not the issue? Does a description of power structure networks and their responsibility for

Mexican Standoff

Phillip Smith

MEXICO'S OLD ORDER IS DECOMPOSING. The party-state regime that guided the country for the last seventy years is at the end of its road, and the historical parallels are ominous. As at the end of the 18th and 19th centuries, the nation's rulers are inadvertently paving the way for fundamental social and political reshuffling. In the 1790s, Bourbon economic reforms and peninsular haughtiness laid the groundwork for the Wars of Independence. And this century's Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) gestated during the 35-year *Porfiriato*, when sclerotic, authoritarian rule and savage capitalism produced the worst communal blood-bath in the nation's history. Now, through its embrace of global capitalism (or neoliberalism) while failing to adequately open the nation's political processes, the ruling Revolutionary Institutional Party (PRI) has created the conditions for its own demise. But such an event is by no means a done deal. What comes after the PRI — or whether the party can adapt and survive — will be determined by the mobilization of national and international political forces.

Much depends on the PRI's willingness and ability to share political power, for it is no longer the sole master of Mexico's house. While the party's steps toward democratization have been, at best, half-hearted, its monopoly on politics is now irretrievably broken. New social and political forces, emerging to a large degree from the ravages of neoliberalism, are challenging the PRI-state and fighting to create a new regime responsive to popular demands for economic and political justice. These forces are embodied in an array of organizational forms ranging from political parties to labor and peasant organizations to the grassroots groups broadly known as "civil society" or the "social left" to armed formations such as the Zapatistas and the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR). At the same time, PRI hard-liners, powerful national economic interests, and the international financial system all oppose one or another of the concessions the regime must make if it is to reach an accommodation with the popular opposition.

The next few years will likely determine Mexico's direction well into the next century. The opportunities are great, but so are the dangers.

PHILLIP SMITH, a writer living in Washington D.C., writes frequently for *New Politics*. His most recent article "Mexico: A Society in Turmoil" appeared in #20, Winter 1996.

While the PRI-state has traditionally preferred cooptation to repression, it has not hesitated to exterminate opponents when necessary. If things reach a point where the regime believes it is about to be swept away, it could well unleash a massive counterrevolutionary repression that would make the current grim human rights picture appear positively rosy. With guerrillas already in the hills (and the shanty towns), revolutionary war would then become a distinct possibility. And the adherents of socialist revolution via the gun notwithstanding, the end result of a full-blown civil war is by no means clear. What is certain is that it would be very, very bloody.

The Continuing Crisis

IF 1994, WITH ITS UPRISINGS, ASSASSINATIONS, AND FINANCIAL DISASTERS, was Mexico's year of living dangerously, three years later the nation has yet to recover its balance. The twin forces driving the upheaval then — the protracted, painful, and by no means assured birth of a democratic politics, and the imposition of neoliberal economic orthodoxy — continue to propel Mexico along a dangerous and uncertain path. Although Mexico paid back early (with funds borrowed in Europe) the emergency loan engineered by Bill Clinton after the peso collapse, and the GDP shows healthy growth in recent quarters, cheers for the Mexican recovery resound much more loudly in the boardrooms of New York, Paris, and London than in the *barrios* of Mexico City or the highlands of Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca. While international investors have recovered their losses, the majority of Mexicans have not. Thousands of businesses failed and more than a million workers lost their jobs in the depression that followed the peso's implosion. At the same time, peasants, increasingly hard put to compete with international agribusiness under the NAFTA rules, were being driven off the land and into the cities by the thousands.

In fact, the "recovery" is extremely localized — and tied almost exclusively to the export sector. Mid- and small-scale industry geared to the domestic market has largely vanished, its products replaced by imported goods from even lower-wage countries. The much-lauded growth in GDP can be traced primarily to the boom in *maquiladoras*, the border-region assembly plants tied to the U.S., not the Mexican, national economy. *Maquiladoras* now account for almost all new manufacturing jobs. The other bright spot in the Mexican economy — the auto industry — is also almost entirely export-driven, and the profits go to Detroit or Tokyo, not Mexico.

Mexican economists estimate that a third of the work force is unemployed, and even those fortunate enough to retain jobs have seen their real wages plummet. In fact, their earning power has declined to only two-thirds of what it was twenty years ago. Half of all Mexican families now live below the official poverty line.

In the face of widespread poverty and joblessness, the government appears to have abandoned job creation to the "safety valves" of immigration and the informal sector. With traditional manufacturing unable to deliver new jobs and peasants being pushed off their lands, the government has effectively written off the domestic market in favor of an export-driven economic policy.

Narcoeconomy

ALTHOUGH NOT COUNTED IN OFFICIAL STATISTICS, ANOTHER EXPORT-DRIVEN INDUSTRY is booming: the illicit drug trade. With an estimated annual income of roughly \$30 billion, the four leading Mexican drug cartels have become a major — and highly destructive — force in national politics. Beneficiaries of sustained assaults on their Colombian competitors and the insatiable *gringo* appetite for their illicit wares, the cartels are largely above the law. With their wealth and ruthlessness, the cartels make an offer Mexicans cops can't refuse: *plata o plomo* (silver or lead, bribery or the bullet). Whether murdering uncooperative peasants in Sinaloa, assassinating federal drug agents in Tijuana (fourteen since 1996), or buying protection with massive bribes, the cartels have found virtual impunity — although, when pressure from the U.S. grows too unbearable, the Mexicans will serve up a human sacrifice to temporarily appease the *gringos*.

Along with Colombia, Mexico is bearing the brunt of American efforts to displace what is fundamentally a U.S. problem. Not only is the U.S. the world's largest drug market, it is also almost single-handedly responsible for imposing the disastrous regime of global prohibition. (It is ironic that the cheerleader of the global free market fails to understand supply and demand when it comes to illicit drugs.) The cartels are Frankenstein monsters created by the American response to its drug problem, but it is nations such as Mexico that most suffer their deeply corrosive effects.

The drug trade has unleashed corruption on a scale never before seen in Mexico, which has been no stranger to corruption. One sign of the moral rot emanating from efforts to stem the trade was the firing last summer of a full third of the Federal Judicial Police (the dreaded *federales*) for corruption, or as the then attorney general (since fired, the latest in a long line) delicately put it, "failing to meet the required ethical profile." More spectacular was this year's arrest of Mexico's drug czar for being in the Juarez cartel's pocket. These and countless other similar incidents have only deepened widespread popular cynicism about law enforcement, which further delegitimizes the PRI-state regime.

The increasing involvement of the Mexican military in the drug war raises more concerns. Supposedly incorruptible, the military is rapidly proving that it, too, can be bought off, as dramatically indicated by the case of the arrested drug czar, a Mexican army general. Of equal concern, however, is the growing resort to the military to solve law enforcement and political problems. A chilling example of the nexus between the drug war and politics was the military's anti-marijuana campaign in Chiapas. Ignoring veritable marijuana plantations controlled by the cartels in the north-central states, military "anti-drug" units instead sweep down on small patches grown by peasants on the fringes of the Zapatista zone, in a clear effort to increase tension among the insurgent population. (And, incidentally, another instance of the state supporting agribusiness over small producers.)

Unfinished Business

AS IF RAMPAGING DRUG TRAFFICKERS, CROOKED POLITICIANS, ECONOMIC catastrophe,

and creeping militarization weren't enough, a trio of unsolved high-level political assassinations continue to fester in the national psyche. Multiple investigations into the murders of the Archbishop of Guadalajara (1993), PRI presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio, and PRI party head Jose Francisco Ruiz Massieu (both killed in 1994) have failed to resolve these headline-producing cases. Along the way, however, the investigations have opened a window into violence and corruption at the very top of the political system. Most sensationally, Raul Salinas, brother of the now widely-despised ex-president, is in jail on corruption charges, with murder charges pending in the Ruiz Massieu case. Salinas' wife was briefly jailed in Switzerland as she attempted to withdraw \$80 million from a secret account.

In another sensational case, Ruiz Massieu's brother, who for a short while headed the investigation into his death, fled the country after decrying obstructions in the investigation. His claims, however, were undercut when a federal court in Houston seized \$11 million from his bank accounts after finding that it was drug money. The net result of this lethal politicking — and the state's inability or unwillingness to resolve these murders — is a tremendous popular cynicism, along with a growing acceptance of conspiracy-style explanations. Neither bodes well for the continued health of the political system.

Meanwhile, President Zedillo's much-touted transition to democracy moves at a glacial pace. Even so, it has provoked turmoil at the heart of the ruling PRI, as well as pitched battles between PRI militants and activists of the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD), which has seen hundreds of its militants killed in the last few years. The talk of democracy has also invigorated local efforts to redress grievances across the country, whether about land, crime, work conditions, or any number of other issues. As a result, outbreaks of political violence, usually orchestrated by landowners or state authorities against land-hungry peasants, have claimed hundreds of lives. Likewise, the overall human rights picture is deteriorating, with an increasing number of "disappearances" (some linked to the military's anti-drug campaigns), political murders, violent evictions, and instances of torture being reported.

The social and political problems that exploded so dramatically in 1994 continue to fester and even worsen. Their effects are as sparks from a pin-wheel, any one of which could ignite a conflagration. Mexico slouches toward the millennium as a nation divided — by race, class, region, and importantly, access to the global economy. With the common understanding that they have reached the end of an era, Mexicans on all sides are mobilizing, some to defend their wealth and power, others in self-defense against the ravages of neoliberalism or the barbarisms of the recalcitrant rich.

The array of opposition to the current regime is vast and differentiated — and increasingly organized. It includes the electoral opposition, labor and the peasantry,* civil society (or the social left), and reformist or revolutionary guerrillas. These groupings are not, of course, mutually exclusive; one may be a unionist, a PRD activist, and a member of a neighborhood association, and

*"The peasantry" is a necessary shorthand for a widely variegated rural population including communal landholders, individual smallholders, tenant farmers, sharecroppers, wage-earners and combinations of the above.

even the guerrillas support electoral political action to varying degrees.

The Party of the Aztec Sun

AND WITH REASON. ALTHOUGH MEXICO'S POLITICAL SYSTEM wouldn't qualify as democratic until the PRI actually lost a presidential election, electoral politics has proven useful for the Mexican left. PRD members sit in the congress, and the party controls hundreds of municipalities across the country. Even defeats such as the stolen presidential election of 1988 have had their silver linings, namely an increasing clamor for real democracy and a shrinking space for the PRI to practice its traditional election frauds. After reaching a nadir in the disastrous 1994 presidential elections, the party's fortunes are improving. It put up strong showings in state elections in Morelos and Guerrero this spring, and Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, the party's most popular figure, is leading the polls in the race for mayor of Mexico City, probably second only to the presidency as the most important political office in the land. That there will be an election for mayor at all is a novelty; one more indication of the PRI's loosening grip. Past mayors were imposed by the president

The party has also laid the groundwork to do well in the July congressional elections. Together with the rightist PAN (National Action Party), it could deny the PRI a congressional majority for the first time ever. Since the 1994 debacle, the PRD has worked to broaden its alliances and rein in bureaucratic tendencies. Although a proposed PAN-PRD coalition to defeat the PRI was stillborn (probably a good thing since they are ideological opposites), more tenable coalitions have formed. In the state of Nuevo Leon, for example, the PRD has joined with the Mexican Green party and the debtor's group *El Barzon* to support a joint senatorial candidate. *El Barzon's* national leader, Juan Jose Quirinos, is also running for the senate under the PRD banner.

The party has also made serious efforts to reach out to the grassroots organizations sprouting throughout the nation. Members of these "social left" groups have places on the PRD's electoral lists, and the party insists it is making a real effort to address their demands and aspirations. But it may find itself hard-pressed to do so if and when it wields power, for it presents no radical alternative to Mexico's place in the international order. As the strongest electoral force on the left, all it can promise is a kinder, gentler neoliberalism.

The Social Left

THAT MAY NOT BE ENOUGH FOR SOME OF THE PEOPLE with whom it is working in the upcoming elections. Perhaps best defined as grassroots organizing independent of the state or the party system, "civil society" is rapidly emerging as a force in Mexican politics. In Mexico City, *Asembleas de Barrios* (neighborhood assemblies) take on local authorities over housing and safety issues. In rural Mexico, peasants band together in marketing co-ops to strengthen the weak hands they hold in the international economy.

But probably the most powerful example of the emergence of civil society is the debtors' movement known as *El Barzon* (the yoke). With a rhetoric remi-

niscent of American agrarian Populists of a century ago, *El Barzon* has now garnered nearly a million members and forced its way into the anterooms of power. While its core membership is among small capitalist farmers and small business owners, *El Barzon* also counts hundreds of thousands of middle-class homeowners and credit card debtors. Using imaginative tactics — everything from road blockages to semi-nude demonstrations (“this is all the bank left us”) to voluminous legal challenges to adroit use of the mass media — *El Barzon* has blocked foreclosures, thrown the banking system’s very legal basis into doubt, and forced the government to at least pay lip service to its demands for debt relief.

Despite its earlier refusal to have anything to do with political parties, *El Barzon* is now moving closer to the PRD. (This is partially related to a change in the movement’s leadership. Original leader Maximiliano Barbarosa was a disaffected *priista*, while current leader Juan Jose Quirino is a long-time PRD member.) *Barzonistas* now hold several places on the PRD’s July election lists. The organization has also been busy cementing an alliance with the Zapatistas. Last summer in Mexico City, the two groups organized a meeting, the “Convergence,” around two broad demands: against neoliberalism and for an authentic democracy. In addition to the debtors and the guerrillas, a broad spectrum of civil society groups, including human rights organizations, various civic leagues and alliances, feminists, and peace groups, also attended. Here we are seeing the seeds of a potent new progressive social and political force.

Workers and Peasants

WHILE THE PRI HAS TRADITIONALLY CONTROLLED BOTH THE LABOR MOVEMENT AND the peasantry through sectoral organizations integrated into the party, its economic policies have both created huge fissures in official labor and peasant organizations and opened up space for independent dissident groups. The PRI’s labor central, the CTM, is symptomatic of the party’s internal rot. Led by one man, 90-something Fidel Velasquez (aka the mummy) for the last half-century, the CTM lately serves more as a tool of labor discipline than as representative of its workers. For the last decade, its main achievement has been the signing of a series of “pacts” with the government in which Velasquez pledged to hold down labor costs in return for very little. When it could deliver the goods, workers could overlook the CTM’s authoritarianism and corruption, but with the free fall that began in 1982 and has intensified since 1994, the mummy’s grip grows ever more feeble.

Dissident independent unions are emerging (or reemerging) in the *maquiladoras*, in traditional manufacturing, and among historically combative groups such as the teachers. The dissidents’ umbrella organization, the May 1 Interunion Coordinator, managed to put 100,000 people on the streets of Mexico City on May Day 1996. Even more ominous for the old regime, the independents were joined by a like number of CTM dissidents marching in defiance of official orders to stay home. The CTM dissidents have organized into “the forum,” a grouping of ten officialist unions and a handful of independents. Ongoing contacts between dissident official unions and the growing independent unions could augur a new labor militance from the grassroots.

In the countryside, the situation is similar. The PRI monopoly there, never as complete as in labor, is disintegrating. Across the country, a plethora of independent, increasingly radicalized peasant organizations, such as the Peasant Organization of the Southern Sierra (OCSS), are engaged in deadly serious struggles with local authorities and the *priista* rural backbone: the large landowners and *caciques*, or local political bosses, now joined by agribusiness interests eager to gobble up indigenous communal lands made available by the widely-despised repeal of Article 27 of the revolutionary constitution.

As the rural situation deteriorates, land tenancy conflicts simmer everywhere, and in the southeastern states of Chiapas, Guerrero, and Oaxaca, violent clashes are now a chronic condition. These are the states — poor and heavily indigenous — where guerrillas flourished in the 1970s, and now the guerrillas are back.

Guerrillas I

PRIOR TO LAST SUMMER, THE ZAPATISTAS WERE THE NATION'S only serious armed opposition (there are at least a dozen self-proclaimed guerrilla movements, but they seem most practiced at combat through manifesto), but that changed when the political heirs of the 1970s rural guerrillas emerged. After making an initial appearance last June at the anniversary commemoration for 17 peasants massacred in Guerrero, the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR) burst into the spotlight in August with a night of coordinated military actions across central and southern Mexico, including the luxury tourist resort town of Huatulco, thus guaranteeing international press attention. The initial toll was a relatively small 12 dead, but the reverberations from the attacks have been profound.

The government's response was massive and immediate. Tens of thousands of army troops poured in to Guerrero, Oaxaca, and the Huasteca region northeast of Mexico City, where they joined various state, local, and federal police forces. Hundreds of residents have been arrested, others have been "disappeared," and especially in the indigenous communities of Oaxaca, whole village councils have been swept up as EPR members or sympathizers.

For the Mexican government, the emergence of the EPR is a nightmarish return of the repressed. The EPR is the lineal descendent of such legendary rural guerrillas as Lucio Cabanas, leader of the Party of the Poor, and Genaro Vasquez, head of the Guerrero Civic Alliance, both of whom were hunted down and killed in the 1970s, their organizations largely dismantled. Unlike the Zapatistas, who reveled in being called post-modern, the EPR is old school. Unifying within a single armed organization a number of small guerrilla fronts and clandestine political parties such as PROCUP (the Revolutionary Workers and Peasants Party — Popular Unity), the EPR is unabashedly Marxist and espouses the doctrine of prolonged popular war to seize power and institute a socialist revolution.

The organization is the result of twenty years of clandestine organizing, and it has shown that it has a national clandestine infrastructure. In fact, the Mexican military admits to at least twelve *focos rojos* (red zones) in Mexico City and the southern states. The massive military response, however, has

largely forced the EPR back underground. Since its coordinated attacks last August, there have been only sporadic clashes. Clearly, the EPR does not yet represent a military threat to the regime, but its emergence is a dark omen — yet one more sign that the countryside is close to catching fire.

Guerrillas II

THE ZAPATISTAS, MEANWHILE, ARE IN A DAILY MORE PRECARIOUS SITUATION. They remain at root a small guerrilla movement, impoverished, geographically isolated, and surrounded by thousands of Mexican army troops. In fact, it is difficult to argue that the Zapatista uprising has improved the lives of its members or of neighboring communities. After three years in rebellion, the Zapatistas are ever more tightly hemmed in, with constant military and police pressure on their perimeters and without delivery of material and financial assistance promised by the government. The rebellion has, however, sparked a sharp increase in land conflicts just outside the rebel-controlled zone. Nervous landowners, their hired thugs, and the state's repressive apparatus regularly attack land-hungry leftist peasants and their sympathizers. Tit-for-tat reprisals have left dozens dead and hundreds of families homeless.

Where the Zapatistas are unarguably successful is the national stage. Other than the fact that the government is talking to them instead of wiping them out, the rebels have won few concrete concessions. Still, the interminable negotiations between the masked *comandantes* and the government negotiators have kept the Zapatistas — and their progressive democratic agenda — on the front pages. Despite some sniping from cafe society, the Zapatistas continue to excite popular fervor. Last year's anti-Columbus Day march in Mexico City, with its crowd of a 100,000, was a virtual Zapatista rally. The fledgling national political movement of their supporters, the Zapatista National Liberation Front (FZLN) continues to mature. Despite a past coolness toward the PRD, the Zapatistas have announced that they will work with the party of the Aztec sun in the July elections.

The PRI Responds

BATTERED BY ECONOMIC DEBACLES, BESET BY DEMANDS FOR DEMOCRACY and economic justice, tarnished by scandal after scandal, the ruling PRI is in deep crisis. The party is decomposing under the strain, degenerating into competing factions in a dog-eat-dog struggle to end up on top of whatever new system emerges.

As President Zedillo and his supporters within the party stubbornly attempt to continue and deepen neoliberalism, they paint all party opposition as “dinosaurs,” their name for the old-style, authoritarian, anti-democratic party bosses. But that moniker only covers one of the anti-Zedillo party factions. Certainly, some PRI machine bosses, such as insurgent Tabasco governor Roberto Madrazo and Agriculture Secretary Carlos Hank Slim, and their clients oppose Zedillo because they rightly fear that even his timid, halting moves toward democratization will destroy their power bases.

But much of the PRI's internal opposition is motivated not by fear of de-

mocracy but by rage. Rank-and-file *priistas* have not escaped the rigors of the economic crisis; in fact, the privatization of state assets has especially wounded loyal militants who have lost their sinecures and party bosses who have lost their sources of patronage. It is precisely PRI dissidents opposed to neoliberalism who have most effectively challenged President Zedillo, and in so doing, exposed the growing chasm between Zedillo's technocrats and party militants. In a slap in the face to their titular leader, last fall PRI militants pushed through a resolution at the party conference expressly repudiating neoliberalism. The rebellious *priistas* added insult to injury by amending party rules to require a long history of party militance in order to be nominated for national political office, a measure that would have prevented the last three presidents — technocrats all — from being nominated.

As disturbing to party loyalists is the steady erosion of their monopoly on national elected office. While not a sudden, dramatic collapse, the party's electoral strength grows weaker by the day. Recent elections in Morelos, Guerrero, and the state of Mexico saw significant gains for both the right opposition PAN and the center-left PRD. Now party militants are beginning to whisper about the prospect of losing control of the national congress in the July mid-term elections

Even so, reports of the party's demise are exaggerated. For seventy years, it has maneuvered around crisis after crisis, displaying a flexibility surprising in such an authoritarian party. The party also represents significant sectors of Mexican society and still maintains the ability to mobilize its sectoral organizations as a potent counterforce to its opponents. The PRI may decompose and recompose, but it will, in one form or another, remain a force to be reckoned with.

Prospects

MEXICO APPROACHES THE MILLENNIUM GROPING FOR A NEW social and political order. Its current rulers have before them the tricky task of revamping the political system with a democratic facade while replacing the statist-populist economy with one aligned with global capital. It's a tough act to pull off, and so far the PRI has not been up to it. The party leadership has delayed or watered down widely-demanded democratic reforms, and still, the opposition parties stand a good chance of gaining control of the lower chamber of congress in July.

Whether the party can yield power gracefully or instead resorts to blatant fraud in July will be a key early indicator of the prospects for reform within the existing political system. Even if that hurdle is passed, the struggle for electoral democracy will be long and uncertain.

And as violence flaring in the countryside and on the main squares of Mexico's towns and cities augurs, reform of the political system is necessary but not sufficient to forestall social chaos. A formally democratic system that ignores economic justice will not quiet the clamor among Mexicans; it will only inspire acts of greater frustration and desperation.

All of the popular ferment has not benefitted the parties of the left. In fact, the opposite is occurring. Popular energy is manifested in alternatives — the social left, the PRD, labor and peasant groups, and especially the guerrilla

movements — spawned by the PRI's forced opening and the economic crisis. A decade ago, the revered and recently deceased socialist leader, Heriberto Castillo, brought the descendants of the Mexican Communist Party into the PRD, arguing that they could swing the latter to the left. He was wrong. Instead, the PRD pulled the socialists toward the center, leaving them in the awkward position of defending a "kinder, gentler" neoliberalism.

Still carrying the red banner, however, is the Workers' Party (PT), a left nationalist refuge for those socialists who couldn't swallow the PRD's equivocations. The PT has managed to win a few seats in the congress, and shows its electoral flexibility by participating in local coalitions with the PRD and the social left. The Trotskyist Revolutionary Workers' Party (PRT), led by Rosario Ibarra, continues its long trek through the wilderness. But between them, and even adding in votes for puppet socialist parties linked to the PRI, the electoral left has never managed more than roughly ten percent of the vote. The "new" party on the left is the Party of the Democratic Popular Revolution (PDPR), the political arm of the EPR guerrillas. Because of its associations, however, the PDPR exists in clandestinity, its estimated 20,000 militants staying close to ground and its actions limited to spray paint and manifestos.

Mexico is at the fulcrum. If the Mexican elites are far-sighted enough to willingly cede *some* power, both the PRI and its high-rolling allies can survive as players in a new, more equitable, perhaps social democratic, but essentially capitalist Mexico. But if they attempt to reverse the irreversible, they could reap the whirlwind. The Mexican southeast is already in a state of low-level civil war. A full-blown outbreak of revolutionary and counterrevolutionary violence — with all its horror and uncertainty — looms in the medium term. It is up to the popular opposition to keep the pressure on for meaningful reform to prevent it. The alternative is the cataclysm.

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The Rise and Fall of the East German Civil Rights Movement

Hanna Behrend

ON DECEMBER 17, 1996, SEVEN PROMINENT FORMER EAST GERMAN civil rights activists left Bündnis 90/Grünen (the affiliated civil rights alliance and Green party) and the Social Democratic Party, (SPD) — the political parties they were attached to — to join the ruling conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU). Another former civil rights campaigner defected from Bündnis 90/Grünen on December 24, and four more in January 1997, all five party officials on the regional level. One of the converts explained this astounding step by alleging that Bündnis 90/Grünen and the SPD were moving toward an alliance with the Democratic Socialist Party (PDS) which they felt was an unacceptable development. They said their change of allegiance was perfectly consistent with the democratic movement they had once initiated, identifying with the hoary Bavarian Christian Socialist Union (CSU) slogan of the 1970s, "Freedom or Socialism."

These events had been foreshadowed by a tea party which took place on August 23, 1995 in the home of one of the best known former civil rights activists, Bärbel Bohley. There, in the East Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg, both famous and notorious as the residence of former dissident writers, some of whom were later found to have been Stasi (East German secret police) agents, German Chancellor Kohl partook of Ms. Bohley's tea. He had asked to meet six civil rights veterans, all of them by then dyed-in-the-wool right-wing conservatives. It was, incidentally, the place where, five years earlier, Bohley had welcomed Dr. André Brie, PDS national committee member, acting on behalf of Gregor Gysi, then chairman of that party. The purpose of that meeting was to discuss an election alliance of civil rights groups and the PDS which, however, never materialized.

The meeting with Kohl took place in 1995 with elections to Berlin's

HANNA BEHREND, former senior lecturer in English literature at Humboldt University, Berlin, has written on feminist theory and cultural studies. Her most recent book is *German Unification. The Destruction of an Economy*, Pluto Press, London, New Haven, 1995. Her article, "Dismantling Germany's Welfare State," appeared in *New Politics* #21.

parliament looming ahead. Kohl, Bohley and her other guests agreed that public support for German unification was at a low ebb. Particularly in East Germany, the debate on the defunct German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the clearly very much alive PDS was going the wrong way: "We must get people to regain the correct view of the GDR," was their joint conclusion. By this, they meant that people's belief that nothing relating to the GDR was worth preserving was on the wane and needed to be reinforced. For this purpose a Citizens' Advisory Office was founded under Kohl's patronage. Apart from providing jobs for acceptable former dissidents it was to advise and assist people with hitherto unattended claims for compensation for discrimination or persecution under the East German Communist Party (SED) regime in the GDR. The institution's chief assignment was, however, to draw attention to the crimes of the former regime and counter the general trend in East Germany toward a more balanced evaluation of both systems.

The August 1995 tea party drew public attention to the shift away from the democratic left by a considerable number of prominent former civil rights campaigners. It inspired a public protest by a group of 63 former GDR dissidents against the new political stance of their former prominent leaders, revealing the chasm developing between most of the prominent civil rights activists and the rank and file. The protesters issued a statement elaborating their views on the developments in East Germany.

It was, they said, the result of a deliberate policy. With the assistance of old established and newly formed power structures, GDR national property has been frittered away to benefit the established wealthy and the newly rich. Social and civil rights achieved in the GDR in 1989 are being gradually abolished. Not only is compensation withheld or inadequately granted to the victims of the old regime but the revision of property rights of the East German people, rent rises, fundamental cuts of basic social services, rising commercial handicaps and legal restrictions of the freedom of opinion and of the press, new police legislation and expanding privileges for the secret services are again depriving people of civil rights. This spells hardship for many, and again allows the state to control its citizens. In addition, the Bundeswehr takes an active part in global military intervention, refugees claiming asylum in Germany are sent back to their persecutors, the arms trade is booming and dictatorships receive economic and political backing. We take exception to people who provide the Chancellor with the blessing of the GDR civil rights movement.

Opposition to the SED regime which had promised the people democracy and socialism and gradually ruined the chances of establishing either was part and parcel of GDR history from the very beginning. Time and again, people expressed their opposition to the totalitarian features of the GDR. The party leadership's official pronouncements always clashed with the actual political practice of a bureaucratic dictatorship. The earliest political opposition came from old socialists and communists in the ruling party. Many newly recruited and often young members of the party opposed the official course because they wanted a socialist system in keeping with their understanding of Marx and Engels, untainted by arbitrariness, bureaucracy and corruption.

Gerhard Zwerenz, a Member of Federal Parliament for the PDS, one of these early dissidents in the SED who left the GDR in the late 1950s, said:

Long before civil rights activists or the church dignitaries became vociferous, comrades whose original dream of socialism was dearer to them than party discipline,

were risking their liberty and sometimes their lives. Nobody, then, in the East or West gave them the least support.

The 1953 anti-SED rising, which was put down by Soviet tanks, was largely an East German working class protest against the attempt of the authorities to cut their wages by raising production targets. It did not have the overwhelming support of intellectuals. The cuts, incidentally, were withdrawn on the eve of the rising. The GDR Government was careful after that not to antagonize the industrial workers by any onslaught on their wages or working conditions. All subsequent political opposition was initiated by middle-class intellectuals.

Those who still figure prominently in the media as representatives of the former GDR opposition generally became civil rights campaigners in the 1970s and 80s. In the late 1960s, the Prague Spring — the attempt in Czechoslovakia to reform the system which was brutally suppressed — had filled many middle-class intellectuals, artists and writers with great hope. Those who publicly expressed their admiration for the Czechoslovak reformers were discriminated against and often persecuted.

The dissident movements of the 1970s and 80s, whose criticism focused on the retrograde GDR environmental policy, its military and foreign policies, the militarization of public education, and generally on curbing civil and human rights incompatible with the government's official pronouncements, consisted largely of middle-class intellectuals. Their policy was to insist on the implementation of the various international agreements, e.g. the 1975 Helsinki Accords, which the GDR government signed, tongue in cheek, to improve its international reputation. Protests against the regime, particularly among writers, scholars and artists, also flared up when the popular dissident songwriter Wolf Biermann was deprived of his GDR citizenship in 1976. The ban on any publicity relating to environmental pollution in the GDR aroused the legitimate wrath of dissidents who collected and clandestinely published relevant data.

By 1981, A RELATIVELY STABLE DISSIDENT GROUP HAD RALLIED around chemistry professor Robert Havemann who had been condemned to death by the Nazis and survived only because of the national importance of his research work. After the defeat of the Nazis, he was prominent in the SED. In the mid-1960s, he was expelled from the SED and lost his professorship for attacking the dogmatic features of GDR scholarship and the undemocratic policies pursued by the Political Bureau of the SED. Under constant surveillance by state security officers, confined to his house near Berlin and deprived of the right to travel, he was nevertheless able to retain contact with his friends in the GDR, with the West German media and with his West German publishers. After his death in 1986, his friends and followers continued their opposition to the regime. West German radio and television popularized his and his friends' pronouncements which, thereby, also proliferated in the GDR. They demanded disarmament not only in the West but also in the East and popularized the peace movement's slogan, "Swords to Ploughshares." After 1986, the Havemann group cooperated with other dissident organizations and established the autonomous peace movement in the GDR. They addressed an open letter to GDR State Council Chairman Erich Honecker enjoining him to grant GDR citizens civil rights; they criticized the economic and ecological policies of the GDR and

warned of the growing neo-Nazi menace.

The Protestant Church in the GDR which, subsequent to a phase of uncompromising anti-Communism, had reestablished itself as a basically loyal if critical Church within East Germany, provided most of the dissident groups with a certain amount of protection. Under this umbrella, Women for Peace was founded in 1982, with Bärbel Bohley, Katja Havemann and Ulrike Poppe as founding mothers. Along with other autonomous peace groups they formed the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights (IFM) in 1986. This organization, supported by the autonomous Environmental Library, published an illegal paper, *Grenzfall* (Bordercase), which was very critical of the system.

Another initiative was geared to the Rejection of the Principle and Practice of GDR Isolation (from the West). The campaigners tried to mobilize as many Protestant parishes as possible to support their demands for unrestricted travel and other civil liberties. The writer, Christa Wolf, and the Protestant churchman, Manfred Stolpe, present Prime Minister of the State of Brandenburg, were involved in publishing the Appeal to Interfere on our Own Behalf on September 12, 1989 which became the inaugural manifesto of the civil rights group Democracy Now. The group, among whose leading lights were a physician, a professor of theology and a film producer, demanded that "the socialist revolution which had not gone beyond mere nationalization of private enterprise be continued and made viable." They also called for a "socialist alternative to West German consumer capitalism."

DURING THE TERMINAL PERIOD OF THE GDR'S EXISTENCE, the dissidents became more daring. All the while, dissident groups were undermined by agents provocateurs and informers working for state security, nearly always recruited from among their ranks. State security continued to keep the dissident groups under surveillance, subjecting them to discrimination and collective and individual repression. They raided the Environmental Library on November 25 and 26, 1987 confiscated *Grenzfall*, and arrested campaigners who were later released. On January 17, 1988 a number of dissidents planned to unfurl a banner at the traditional Luxemburg-Liebknicht demonstration with the caption: "Freedom Is Always Freedom for the Dissenter," a quote from Rosa Luxemburg. They were about to put their plan into action when they were rounded up, arrested and indicted for rioting. Some were expelled from the country and allowed to depart to Britain or West Germany, a punishment which many GDR people then considered a reward.

The civil rights activists were in contact with the major dissident group of Czechoslovakia, Charter 77, and with the Polish Solidarnosc movement. They carried on a correspondence with refugees from the GDR in West Germany and elsewhere, and were in touch with leading members of the West German Green Party. As the GDR weakened, the dissidents cooperated more closely with the West German media, particularly the broadcasting companies and certain television channels. A prominent former dissident, Werner Fischer, recently told the media: "We asked them (a particular West German television channel) to be on the spot when we planned any activity and then told them what to say about it in that day's news report."

A dissident cameraman, though also under Stasi surveillance, toured the country photographing and filming refuse dumps where toxic waste was dis-

posed of, or woods where trees were withering as a result of air pollution. He provided the evidence which enabled West German television to draw attention to the derelict urban areas in the GDR where houses were crumbling, and to GDR neo-Nazi activities. Thus, with the help of the Western media, the cameraman was able to make public the skeletons in the GDR closet. Certain dissidents also maintained close relations with VIPs in the CDU, the FDP and the SPD.

ON SEPTEMBER 9-10, 1989 — WITH THE GDR IN ITS DEATH AGONY — the major dissident group, New Forum, was formed in Grünheide near Berlin. Its founders were Bärbel Bohley from the IFM, Rolf Henrich, a lawyer who had been expelled from the SED for writing a book very critical of the regime, and Hans-Jochen Tschiche, head of the Evangelical Academy at Magdeburg, who had belonged to Professor Havemann's circle. The New Forum snowballed, becoming the most popular and widely known opposition group; within two months, it collected 200,000 signatures in support of its inaugural statement. Two more groups were formed in September 1989. On September 3, a left-wing group of Christians and Marxists emerged calling for state enterprises under workers' and employees' control and for a planned economy without bureaucracy. They subsequently became the United Left Party which faded away after the 1990 elections. The other new group was the right-wing Democratic Awakening founded in Berlin on October 29, 1989. It established itself as a political party in December. Among its founders were the Reverend Eppelmann, the lawyer, Wolfgang Schnur, later ousted as a state security informer, and the Rev. Friedrich Schorlemmer, who was soon to convert to the SPD. The East German branch of the last-mentioned party, which first called itself SDP,* was founded on October 7, 1989 by Ibrahim Böhme (also later compelled to retire from politics because of his contacts with the Stasi), Stephan Hilsberg and Markus Meckel, two more Protestant clerics, and by Angelika Barbe, now in the Christian Democratic Union. In its inaugural address, the SDP called for "an ecologically oriented social capitalism" but also for the continued existence of two German states.

In October 1989, escalating mass protests were met by police repression. It was feared that the GDR authorities might make an attempt to put down mass opposition by armed force. This seemed likely in view of the authorities' public approval of the bloody suppression of the mass protests in China. But it did not happen. The opposition remained non-violent and the authorities, who no longer had the support of the Soviet Union, refrained from armed interference. Moreover, SED members at branch meetings indicated their collective unwillingness to support any such attempt. Also, the regime's armed and secu-

*This stood for Social Democratic Party, not including the attribution "German" and thus indicating the founders' disinclination for unification.

** November 9, 1918: Revolution in Germany; November 9, 1923: Hitler's failed putsch; November 9, 1938: anti-Jewish pogrom initiated by the Nazis, the Kristallnacht, named for the smashing of shop windows by Nazi thugs. See my articles in this journal, particularly in Vol.III, No.4, 1992, "East Germany under the Federal Eagle," and Vol.IV, No.2, 1993, Germany: "The Stage is Reset." See also Hanna Behrend (ed.), *German Unification. The Destruction of an Economy*, Pluto Press, London, East Haven CT 1995.

rity forces had practically disintegrated. On October 18, 1989, a faction of the SED Political Bureau compelled Honecker to give up his post. On November 4, more than half a million people rallied at Berlin's Alexanderplatz to demand democratic reforms. On November 9, a date of great and many-faceted historical relevance,** the SED Central Committee virtually pulled down the Wall by granting unrestricted transit from East to West to all GDR citizens. Hoping to retain power by easing the political tension in the country, they actually not only put an end to their own rule but, unfortunately, eliminated the possibility of any independent development in East Germany.

At that time, most of the GDR opposition was still in favor of retaining an independent GDR state and reforming East German society. New Forum declared in an Open Letter of October 1, 1989: "Reunification is not our aim, we want to retain the two German states since we do not want the capitalist system." This was signed by Professor Jens Reich, one of the New Forum leaders. He added: "Most of our followers are opposed to capitalism. They are committed to the reconstruction and reform of socialism to make it acceptable to the majority of people in the GDR." Reformers in the established political parties agreed. Prominent among them was a group of reformers from the SED who established the Party Democratic Socialism in December 1989, electing Gregor Gysi as chairperson. Neither the weekly demonstrations in Leipzig which had continued since September 1989, nor the rally on November 4 of that year in Berlin, called for an end to socialism or for unification.

After the opening of the Wall, however, the tide turned and a wave of anti-socialist nationalism set in. The slogan "We Are the People" became "We Are One People." Left-wing activists and supporters of a reformed socialist GDR were attacked at the regular Monday night mass demonstrations by people who had never before been politically active or had ever had any pre-Wende connection with dissident groups. The writers Christa Wolf, Stefan Heym (he later became, for a brief period, Acting President of the Bundestag as its oldest member) and dissident film producer, Konrad Weiss, initiated an appeal, "For Our Country," in support of the continued independent existence of the GDR, which was signed by over a million GDR citizens.

The civil rights movement, among whom the Independent Women's Federation (UFV), founded in December 1989, played a very active role, joined the reformed or newly formed political parties at the Central Round Table, a newly established democratic institution rallying representatives of all major political parties and civil rights groups which acted as a plebiscitary element to ensure that the (provisional) government pursued the reform policies demanded by large sections of the electorate. They filed more than one hundred bills, among them a Social Charter and a Draft Constitution — among the most democratic documents in German history.

Early in December 1989, prominent Social Democrats in West Berlin and West Germany suggested forming a new provisional government composed of former civil rights activists, Provisional Prime Minister Hans Modrow, Gregor Gysi, then Chairman of the reformed SED-PDS, and the writer Christa Wolf. This suggestion came to naught since the reformers were too divided to come to an agreement. Above all, the civil rights campaigners did not realize that a completely new situation existed which called for new strategies and an end to fighting the battles of yesteryear.

EARLY IN 1990, CHANCELLOR KOHL SUCCEEDED IN OVERCOMING foreign and domestic opposition to a merger of the two German states and started promoting an Anschluss-type unification. By March 1990, when the last GDR general elections took place, that country's first and only unmanipulated ones, all contestant political parties but the PDS and certain left-wing civil rights organizations had turned coat and supported speedy unification. The Democratic Awakening allied to the CDU approved of Herr Kohl's policy. The SDP gave up its affiliation to the civil rights movement and eventually merged with the West German SPD. In their election addresses early in 1990, however, the New Forum, the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights (IFM), Democracy Now, the United Left Party, the (GDR) Greens and, allied to them, the Independent Women's Federation (UFV), still demanded an independent, reformed and democratized GDR with a social and ecological market economy.

Convinced by a barrage of propaganda that unification would turn the GDR into thriving lands, 40 percent of the GDR electorate voted for the East German branch of the Christian Democratic Union, trusting that party to provide them with the coveted Deutschmark. This gave the CDU the necessary majority to form a coalition government with the Social Democrats.

The triumph of the East German satellite of Kohl's party in the March 1990 elections eliminated all options but the Chancellor's policy. Ms. Bohley then commented as follows on the election results: "The process of democratization has come to an end because the people have lost confidence in their own power and exchanged the hegemony of the SED for that of the CDU."

Under the de Maizière Government, that last GDR coalition cabinet's policy was determined in Bonn by the West German government with little parliamentary opposition. The majority of the spokespersons of the civil rights movement by then also approved of or had resigned themselves to the Anschluss-type merger, giving up their former political vision of a democratic and socialist GDR. A minority continued to demand the implementation of democratic civil and human rights.

The New Forum, once so popular in East Germany, dissolved into factions with its following dropping to less than 3,500 by 1991. By that time, Democracy Now had dwindled to 650 activists and Initiative for Peace and Civil Rights to a mere 200. One section of the civil rights movement affiliated to the West German Green Party which thus became the Bündnis 90/Grünen party. The new party offered no appreciable resistance to government policy. Another group of former civil rights campaigners remained outside the newly merged party. The independent section of New Forum declined and finally dissolved itself in 1996; other groups have likewise become politically insignificant.

In September 1990, a number of civil rights activists staged a sit-in in the former headquarters of the GDR Ministry of State Security (Stasi) in Berlin to prevent their records from being moved to West Germany. They also went on a hunger strike to compel the authorities to keep these records accessible to the public. The Reverend Joachim Gauck, a former civil rights activist from Rostock, was appointed by the Kohl government to head the very generously staffed Office for the Records of the GDR Ministry of State Security and the records were handed over to him. Through the authority's arbitrary interpretation, those records became an instrument for incriminating and discrediting GDR

citizens, ruining the reputations of many prominent academics, writers and artists and depriving many people of their jobs often merely because their names were found on some Stasi record. While Gauck's office is supposed to release information on individuals to third parties, only at the request of authorized personnel managers in connection with the screening of East German civil servants and others in the public service, unauthorized and often incorrect derogatory information about left-wingers and others critical of the establishment are leaked to the media. On the other hand, Stasi records on Nazi criminals are kept under lock and key.

IN THE 1990 FEDERAL GENERAL ELECTIONS, THE BÜNDNIS 90/GRÜNEN PARTY won 1.6 percent of the national and 6 percent of the East German vote. Since then their popularity in East Germany has steadily declined. Many former civil rights activists and sympathizers were disappointed with the outcome of German unification. They also resented the civil rights movement giving up its uncompromising opposition to infringements on civil and human rights and merely continuing to focus on its former vanquished enemies. Although a Grass Roots Round Table was initiated, committed to dealing with social problems and to demanding a new democratic constitution for the whole of Germany, it failed to get the necessary public support to implement any of its demands. Meanwhile many former civil rights campaigners in leading positions were actively supporting the Government's policy of discriminating against and expropriating East Germans. Increasingly, their chief political enemy became the PDS and Brandenburg's very popular Prime Minister, Manfred Stolpe (SPD). They engaged in indiscriminate red-baiting and publicly slandered leading PDS officers. This became the favorite pastime particularly of Konrad Weiss who had adopted an extremely right-wing stance. He demanded that the PDS dissolve itself, denying that it had, in any way, reformed. He and certain others attacked the writer Stefan Heym, a former dissident himself, and a man kept under surveillance by the Stasi for years, when he was selected for a PDS mandate in the Federal elections in 1994. They also demanded that the former SED leadership and the Ministry of State Security be prosecuted as criminal associations, equating them with the major Nazi and war criminals at the Nuremberg Trial. Konrad Weiss even suggested the German Government send a commando unit to Moscow to capture Honecker who had taken refuge there.

Bärbel Bohley, Reinhard Schult and Wolfgang Templin, himself a former Stasi informer, and Marianne Birthler, then Minister of Education in Brandenburg, tried to unseat Prime Minister Stolpe by alleging that he had not served his church, as he claimed, but the unjust state. They also alleged that records held by Gauck revealed that he had been a Stasi informer and had harmed civil rights campaigners. When Stolpe denied the allegation, Günter Nooke, then chairperson of the Brandenburg state parliamentary party of the Bündnis 90/Grünen, publicly called him a liar. This incident did not lead to the downfall of the Prime Minister but to a split in the Bündnis 90/Grünen. Birthler relinquished her post in protest against the Prime Minister's refusal to resign from office and Nooke formed a new party with the right wing of the Bündnis 90/Grünen. When this splinter organization eventually faded away for lack of public support, he joined the CDU.

Red-baiting went hand in glove with a generally reactionary stance. Thus

Weiss attacked a bill to legalize termination of pregnancy supported by members of his own parliamentary party. He asked Ms. Süßmuth, Chairperson of the Bundestag, to disallow the bill as incompatible with public morality. He personally apologized to the Chancellor for Bündnis 90/Grünen deputy Ms. Köppe's intervention. She had accused leading CDU/CSU politicians of complicity and corruption in connection with illegal East-West contacts organized before the fall of the Wall by former Stasi Colonel Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski. Another former civil rights activist, Werner Schulz, leading Member of the Bündnis 90/Grünen parliamentary party of the Bundestag, defended Bonn's policy of eviscerating GDR industry, alleging that there was no alternative to it. Wolfgang Templin, another former civil rights activist who turned right-wing, indiscriminately supported the claims for compensation by former prisoners detained at Buchenwald concentration camp by the Soviet military authorities in the immediate post-war period. While some were, without doubt, innocent victims of Stalinist repression, many were confirmed Nazi activists and war criminals.

INCREASINGLY, HOWEVER, SUPPORT FOR PROFESSED RIGHT-WING and anti-communist ex-civil rights activists waned in their own party and among the general East German public. Thus, Werner Schulz canvassed in vain for an alliance with the conservatives. The Bündnis 90/Grünen lost all their seats in East German state parliaments except for Saxony-Anhalt. There, the SPD formed a coalition government with them in 1994 under Prime Minister Reinhard Höppner supported by the PDS. This support was essential for a viable alternative to an SPD-Conservative coalition. The legitimacy of such a political structure became a bone of contention for all German political parties. The Federal parliamentary party majority of the Bündnis 90/Grünen realized that former civil rights campaigners who continued to focus on red-baiting would lose what was left of the bonus provided them for their opposition to the GDR regime in East Germany during the *Wende*. They therefore confirmed the legitimacy of the so-called Magdeburg model, as did the SPD leadership, emphasizing their acceptance of it for Saxony-Anhalt only, and not for other states or for the German Federation.

The Bündnis 90/Grünen Party, anxious to ally itself to the SPD also on the national level, pursued an increasingly pragmatic policy. It gave up many of its former demands, e.g. for Germany to resign from NATO, for shutting down the nuclear power plants, and for banning genetic manipulation. In addition to the support by certain former civil rights activists for the Conservative Party's campaigns against the PDS, right-wing trends have generally increased since the 1994 Federal elections. On December 13, 1995, Bündnis 90/Grünen deputies, among them formerly rigidly pacifist civil rights activists, voted jointly with the coalition parties and the SPD in favor of Bundeswehr participation in NATO intervention in Bosnia. This provided the ruling coalition with an overwhelming majority in favor of the first foreign military assignment for the Bundeswehr.

Bündnis 90/Grünen leaders also contributed to the dismantling of the German welfare state. In September 1995, spokespersons of the Federal parliamentary party agreed that it was necessary to reduce social services in order to consolidate Germany's economic position. Moreover, tax reductions for in-

dustrial enterprises and investment bonuses were proposed as a method to boost German industry's international competitiveness. Werner Schulz insisted that the German level of social security was excessive and that net incomes of wage/salary earners needed downscaling. He pleaded for relaxing the "rigid regulations which obstruct the enterprises' upswing" and advised the "consistent elimination" of obsolete or unprofitable enterprises in accordance with Treuhand Holding practice in East Germany. He also called on the trade unions to accept voluntary wage freezes, not only for the East, but for the whole of Germany. Party budget expert Oskar Metzger and Margarete Wolf of the Federal parliamentary party advocated slowing down the adaptation of East German wages to the higher West German level.

Leading parliamentarians of the Bündnis 90/Grünen thus agreed with what the employers' federations had been saying all along, that welfare state provisions were becoming an intolerable burden on production costs and should therefore be "reformed." Like the SPD, their policy differed only modestly from the government's.

On the other hand, the Bündnis 90/Grünen Federal Assembly held in Mainz in March 1996 adopted a policy of Solidarity. Delegates called for a taxation system subordinated to the ecological needs of the country, shorter working hours, an active labor market policy and a public employment sector to stave off mass unemployment. The forthcoming 1998 general elections obliged Fischer and other party luminaries to focus on unseating the Kohl Government and shelve all contentious problems until after that event.

In November 1996, Dieter Schulte, the first ever DGB (German Trade Union Federation) chairperson to be invited to a Federal Assembly of the Bündnis 90/Grünen, called upon the delegates to resist the further dismantling of the welfare state and to defend "the foundations of our democracy and of the welfare state."

A NEW INITIATIVE FOR BRINGING ABOUT A RADICAL CHANGE of policy in Germany was attempted on January 10, 1997 when 36 public men and women published the so-called Erfurt Declaration. The first signatories were prominent former East German civil rights activists, dissident scholars, writers, artists and teachers and trade unionists. They were joined by West German writers, scholars and trade union officials.

The Declaration is highly critical of the present government's policy and advocates a new concept of gainful employment geared to social usefulness and ecologically sustainable development. The signatories call for radical cuts in working hours without loss of pay, and a guaranteed independent minimum income for every man and woman to be achieved by an effective and ecological taxation policy geared to raising revenue from money transfers, profits, estate duties, property, and land speculation rather than from those in the lower income bracket. They want to revive the tradition of the 1968 reform movement in West Germany and promote an alliance for social democracy in the spirit of the civil rights movement of 1989 in the GDR. They also plead for unconditional cooperation between all sections of political opposition. Although most of the leading lights of the established political parties have ignored or rejected the suggestions put forward in the Erfurt Declaration, many more individuals, trade union and civil rights organizations have since signed or are

otherwise supporting it.

The civil rights movement in the GDR made an important contribution toward mobilizing masses to oppose and finally eliminate the repressive Honecker regime. In the aftermath, however, the movement began to disintegrate. In contradiction of its former aims, most of its prominent spokespersons eventually pursued a policy which more or less approved of, or at least tolerated, Anschluss-type unification. Meanwhile, the most ruthless faction of West German capitalism destroyed or took over the GDR economy and the most conservative neo-liberal elements in West Germany eliminated whatever achievements were worth preserving, just as they sought to dismantle the West German welfare state.

As the movement declined, the bulk of its component civil rights organizations affiliated to established political parties, and the small factions which remained independent eventually faded away. While most of the prominent spokespersons of the former civil rights movement are now part of the conservative and right-wing establishment, there are others who have not betrayed their vision of a democratic and socially just social system and who remain active at local, regional and even state levels in urban or rural councils, parliaments and in tenants' organizations, women's centers, refugee committees, citizens' initiatives against the destruction of the natural environment and in other civil rights struggles.

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A DAY WITHOUT THE PENTAGON



OCTOBER 24, 1997

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Demonizing the Germans: A New Mythology of Collective Guilt

Horst Brand

THE VICTORY OF HITLER'S NATIONAL SOCIALISTS (NAZIS) IN 1933 was the victory of political antisemitism. As such, however, it was but part of the victory of counterrevolution — of the drive to eradicate the constitutional state embodied by the Weimar republic, but that had existed in the united Germany since 1871, and in its component provinces, such as Prussia, since the early 19th century. It was the destruction, not only of that state, but of the emancipatory social movements and institutions that were part of the bourgeois democracy that safeguarded them, however ineffectually much of the time. It was the stifling of the spirit of 1789 proclaiming human rights — the reactionary undertaking openly declared by Joseph Goebbels. Reading Daniel Goldhagen,* one would scarcely know any of this; one would remain ignorant of the historical defeat those movements and institutions suffered as the essential prerequisite for the ascendancy of German fascism to power. The postulates for the preconditions of the Holocaust which he attempts to establish pay little if any attention to the key political events, in the absence of which the Holocaust would never have occurred.

Weimar was the work of the German working class — an attempt to establish a democratic republic, and rid Germany of its authoritarian hierarchies in government, factories, and universities. Weimar ultimately failed. It underwent relentless attacks from the right. Its extension of workers' rights was resisted by industry, often bitterly. The left remained deeply divided, in large part because the German Communists were beholden to the dictates of Moscow, resulting in policies unacceptable to the German Social Democrats. The greatest threat to Weimar proved to be the 1930s worldwide depression which caused the immiserization of great masses of people everywhere — and which multiplied the dangers facing German democracy from the nationalist, anti-republican Right. German democracy could not overcome these dangers.

*Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's Willing Executioners: Ordinary Germans and the Holocaust*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1996. 622 pp.

HORST BRAND, who writes frequently for *New Politics*, is a lifelong socialist and sometime lay teacher of Jewish history.

Leon Trotsky thought, at the time, that the great workers' organizations, although weakened by mass unemployment, still remained "gigantic obstacles" to a Nazi victory; and that the Weimar state, however compromised, afforded the necessary framework for those organizations' struggles. But their leadership lacked audacity and determination. It recoiled from brute force. Nevertheless, in the last multiparty elections tolerated by the Nazi regime in March 1933, elections already far from truly free, the German Left still received 12 million votes (the Nazis 17 million). The Social Democrats were the only party — the Communist Party had been prohibited — to vote against the enabling law which, in effect, allowed Hitler to emasculate the Reichstag (parliament). The Social Democrats' leader, Otto Wels, solemnly affirmed the values which his party defended — humanity, justice, freedom, and socialism. Its historical defeat notwithstanding, German social democracy endured as the fundamental alternative to fascist dictatorship.

Reading Goldhagen, we would remain ignorant of the possibilities of this alternative, and what it reveals about a large and significant part of German society. One would not know about the universe of discourse — of the rational cognitive approach to politics and the understanding of capitalist society — which the movements and institutions of the German Left, with the exception of Stalinist ideologues, embodied and which were mercilessly suppressed by police terror, and the murder or forced exile of their protagonists. Goldhagen is unconcerned with these matters. He even tends to dismiss them as of little if any significance to his argument, even though he claims to "explain" the Holocaust.

BEFORE TURNING TO HIS EXPLANATION, WE WILL BRIEFLY RECALL some of the features of the Nazi regime as the destructive agent of German civil society. It permanently suspended all civil liberties following the Reichstag fire in early 1933. It created the secret state police (Gestapo) as one of its major instruments of political terror, with all actions of this body immune to judicial review. It abolished the principle of "no punishment outside the law," as well as the judiciary's autonomy; the Fuehrer's edict could overrule the law as well as impose the degree of punishment. It created concentration camps — "emblematic institutions of Germany during the Nazi regime," as Goldhagen correctly states — where, until the late 1930s, i.e., prior to the establishment of work and death camps outside Germany, no fewer than 200,000 non-Jewish Germans were incarcerated for alleged political, racial, or "asocial" offenses. The regime dissolved all political parties other than its own, rendering parliament an empty shell, notwithstanding the fact that more than half of the German electorate had voted for parties other than the Nazis in the March 1933 elections. As a result of the suppression of civil freedoms and of all opposition (including, of course, the opposition press and publishing houses, and the banishment and burning of their earlier publications), the regime attained the monopoly of information, which facilitated the calumny of the Jews and the measures taken against them. These lay at the core of the regime's racist policies. But they were by no means their only component. Among its objectives was the creation of a racially "homogeneous" class of overlords, a new aristocracy as represented by the S.S. (defense squads), the innermost core of the regime (Bracher). These overlords were in charge of accomplishing the

regime's imperialist aims, and hence the subjection or destruction of the "racially inferior" people who inhabited the "living space" required to fulfill those aims.

The regime's monopoly of information (or propaganda) was not merely designed to stifle opposition; it was used to attain its racist objectives, in particular, to indoctrinate younger Germans with its racist ideology who would in time serve in German military organizations. It imparted distorted views of reality which contributed to the unspeakable inhumanities perpetrated upon the peoples of Eastern Europe, not least by the German armed forces of Germany. (Omer Bartov). The role of Nazi ideology, no longer exposed to competing ideas but propagated within contexts ever more carefully insulated from differing intellectual or spiritual tendencies, is completely disregarded by Goldhagen. (The exclusion of competing ideologies lay at the root of the 1937 encyclical by Pope Pius XI, "With deep anxiety" (*"Mit brennender Sorge"*), in which the Pope complained about the increasing repression of Catholic youth education by the Nazis despite assurances of non-interference contained in the earlier Concordat.)

AS IS KNOWN BY NOW BY MANY WHO HAVE READ OR HEARD ABOUT HIS WORK, Goldhagen attributes the Holocaust solely, and with single-minded conviction, to what he alleges to have been the pervasive antisemitism of German society — an "eliminationist" antisemitism, merely intensified under the Nazis, but not qualitatively different from what it had been prior to their ascendancy, and since the early 19th century, when the religiously motivated antisemitism tended to turn political. The argument is powerfully and wrathfully presented. In its simplicity, compulsive repetition, and documentation that extends over 20 percent of the vast 600-page work, it has strong appeal to readers, many of whom will be inclined to believe that more "complex" explanations are needless at best, exculpatory at worst. However, Goldhagen's approach essentially forecloses historical analysis. I will return to this problem further on.

The German historian Hans Mommsen has written that, while Nazi propaganda was savagely directed against the Jews, this cannot explain why so many people who were directly or indirectly involved in the destruction of the Jews, did not find some way to withhold their cooperation. Officials of the Reich railways and the Reichsbank, the diplomatic service, the civilian administration in the occupied territories, the German and non-German police forces — all contributed actively to the Holocaust in some form. The crucial question is why they were able, with such strange consistency, to suppress such knowledge as dawned upon them.

It is a question Mommsen proves unable to answer. Answers have, of course, been attempted, such as the secularization of social organization and the resultant amorality; the social distance sedulously created between the bureaucracy that implemented the Holocaust and the victims; the large-scale murder of people by quasi-industrial methods, again neutralizing contact between executor and victim; in sum, the obliteration of the victim's "face." This was of prime concern to the Nazis in regard to the Jews: the burning of synagogues, the arrest of Jewish men, and the destruction of Jewish property on November 9, 1938 was, for the most part, carried out by Nazi storm troopers from *outside* given localities, ensuring that they were strangers to their victims, that no familiarity would interfere emotionally with their destructive

role.

The Mommsen essay cited here is titled, "The Realization of the Unthinkable." For Goldhagen, the Holocaust was neither unthinkable, nor inexplicable. The title of his book summarizes his indictment — ordinary Germans, represented by a few battalions of middle-aged policemen, willingly, even eagerly, killed Jews in occupied Eastern Europe, their voluntarism evidenced by their having been otherwise free to desist from the killing, had they so desired — and desist without prejudice to their status or the need to fear punishment.

What motivated the perpetrators, what fueled their voluntarism was, writes Goldhagen, "a particular type of antisemitism that led them to conclude that the Jews *ought to die*." (Emphasis in original) Their antisemitism was shared by other "ordinary" Germans — the Holocaust was "a German national project"; the Germans' antisemitic beliefs were "the central causal agent of the Holocaust."

Goldhagen stresses the ordinariness of the police battalion members time and again: only one third of them, he reports, were members of the Nazi party; they had not been selected for their military or ideological fitness; their weapons training had been "poor"; they had had no preparatory training for their genocidal tasks. Moreover, the civilian police from which they had been recruited was not specifically a Nazi institution. Furthermore, as noted above, "the men knew they did not have to kill," i.e. they were not coerced into killing Jews. Goldhagen's case rests on his claim, bolstered by intensive research from court records assembled over the 1962-72 decade, of the "ordinariness" of the police battalion members, which meant that "the regime proceeded as if any German was fit to be a mass executioner."

Statements like these cannot be either accepted or dismissed lightly; they require exploration, which cannot be done here. Suffice it to note that beginning in 1933, the police in German cities and rural areas were "assisted" by auxiliaries recruited from Nazi Storm Troopers. The demise of the Storm Troopers, who represented a radical threat to the regime, came in 1934 with the murder of their chief, Ernst Roehm, and many of his associates. Thereafter, according to K.D. Bracher's authoritative work on the German dictatorship, there was the "revolutionary regrouping of the police" which, in time, and within the organizational framework of Heinrich Himmler's S.S., made them fit to participate in ruling the occupied territories of the East. The police were perhaps not subject to the same selection process as members of the S.S. but were under the general command of the S.S., with Himmler as the supreme police chief, in addition to heading the S.S. It is not entirely credible that the members of the police battalions Goldhagen researched were quite as "ordinary" as he views them.

The police battalion members Goldhagen studied were presumably representative of the German population at large. Goldhagen, of course, does not (and would hardly be able to) defend this inference on statistical grounds. He does so in light of his larger argument, that "Nazi antisemitism was integral to the beliefs of ordinary Germans"; that it constituted "an axiom of German culture throughout the 19th and 20th centuries"; and that the antisemitism of the Nazi period represented "a mere accentuated and elaborated form of an already broadly accepted basic model." This was the "cognitive model" of the Jews as pernicious and malevolent, unassimilable into, and corruptive of Ger-

man culture which, being socially generated and diffused, became part of the structure of the German mind. Hence, the *emblematic character* of the police units and of their behavior.

THE GERMANS' ANTISEMITISM IS CONSTRUED BY GOLDHAGEN AS DIFFERING SO WIDELY from the antisemitism of the "West" that he believes that anthropological methods are required to comprehend it. He imputes a generic murderousness to the Germans — to be sure, to generations preceding the present one — that, as Omer Bartov has observed, bizarrely inverts the Nazis' portrayal of the Jews.

It is beyond dispute that antisemitism was widespread in Germany, particularly among those who were academically trained. Although antisemitism was far more virulent in Eastern Europe and possibly also in France, "Death was a Master from Germany." No other state lent itself fully to murdering Jews. But, again, it took the virtual destruction of the basic civil institutions in Germany, and certainly the war, to carry out the Holocaust.

There is also the more banal question: why, if killing Jews was so popular in Germany, did Himmler and his henchmen attempt to keep their murderous actions secret? Was it because the German people were not sufficiently "mature" to accept their actions with equanimity? (Bracher.)

GOLDHAGEN CONSISTENTLY DISMISSES OR BELITTLES German opposition to the Nazi regime. Such opposition, he says, was hardly ever directed against the Nazis' treatment of the Jews. Referring to the men who plotted to kill Hitler in 1944, he writes that they were "not moved ... by a principled disapproval of the elimination of the Jews from German society." It is an astonishing statement, attesting to the author's incomprehension of anti-fascist politics whose first imperative was the overthrow of the Hitler regime. He gives no credence to the motivation of those men, which was to stop the war and restore Germany as a civil society. Reading such testimony as Helmuth von Moltke's (executed by the Nazis as one of the hundred men accused of having plotted against Hitler) and other pertinent works, who would doubt that the murder of the Jews would have stopped, and antisemitic decrees been nullified, had they succeeded.

Goldhagen asserts that the Nazis might have moderated their anti-Jewish measures, had the German churches protested. Perhaps. It is true that the German churches, with rare exceptions of courageous individual clergymen, did not play an honorable role in Nazi Germany. They never inveighed against the militarization of the country. They conformed to the Nazis' "Aryan" standards of race "purity," dismissing pastors not meeting them. Converted Jews could not expect the Catholic Church's fidelity to its own teachings. The churches remained silent when, in November 1938, synagogues were burned, and Jewish men were incarcerated and killed; and largely silent about the deportations of Jews. Goldhagen points to the protest of the bishop of Munster, von Galen, in 1941 against the euthanasia program (which was meant to eliminate "life without value"). The program was stopped as a result of the protest. Hence his belief that similar protests might have cautioned the Nazis about their anti-Jewish policies. Here again, the underlying argument is that the churches, like all Germans, were too possessed by antisemitism to venture such protests.

Goldhagen misreads the implacable hostility of the leading Nazis to all

contesting views. The euthanasia program he cites had been operating for years before Bishop v. Galen rallied himself to oppose it publicly; thereafter, he remained under close Gestapo surveillance. (Sarah Gordon) Nor was the exception the churches took to the Nazis' racist doctrines, however circumlocutious such exceptions were, countenanced by the Nazis. For example, a lengthy, theologically-based protest against Nazi "paganism" and racism by a synod of the German Confessing Church in 1935 was answered by the imprisonment of 500 pastors; they were soon released, except for 27 of them who were sent to concentration camps. Protestant magazines were prohibited. The writers of memoranda to Hitler protesting concentration camps were severely punished. The Nazis' response to the encyclical of Pope Pius XI, mentioned earlier, was to accuse hundreds of Catholic clergy and monks of moral turpitude, incarcerating them, and closing many convents and theological institutions. (NS Dokumente)

The churches were caught up in their own tradition-sanctioned anti-Judaism, as well as in the Lutheran doctrine, largely also abided by the Roman Church, of keeping the affairs of religion separate from the affairs of the state — a pernicious doctrine under which immoral actions by the state would remain unquestioned. (Of prominent churchmen, only Dietrich Bonhoeffer, executed in 1945 for participating in the plot against Hitler, protested this stance.) The churches failed to intercede for the Jews, and were Hitler's allies in the war against the Soviet Union ("godless Bolshevism"). They remained suspect nonetheless. Serious protests against Nazi racist policies might be met by harsh anti-Church and antisemitic measures — as the examples cited show and as also occurred in Holland during World War II. When, in 1942, Dutch bishops protested the antisemitic "excesses" perpetrated in their occupied country, the Gestapo arrested a number of Catholic priests and religious of Jewish descent (including the nun-philosopher Edith Stein), and sent them to Auschwitz, where they were murdered. (New Catholic Encyclopedia)

Hitler's Willing Executioners features a lengthy chapter on the evolution of "eliminationist" antisemitism in modern Germany. The chapter reflects the author's "understanding of 19th-century antisemitism," and "emphasizes the underlying continuity of German antisemitism and asserts its ubiquity." It is thus meant to reaffirm his thesis that the Holocaust was the outcome of the Germans' demonic conception of the Jews. This conception, however occasionally modified by circumstances, Goldhagen believes to have been integral to the social and political evolution of modern Germany. Antisemitism underlay not only the resistance to the emancipation of the German Jews, but its very understanding and the conditions implicitly attached to its fulfillment. The secularized image of the Jew as unassimilable alien, formulated by various academic writers early in the century, gradually took on political weight, especially during and after the 1870s, and was heir to the "ubiquitous and profound hatred of the ghettoized Jewry" in Germany during medieval and early modern times.

TO ANYONE ACQUAINTED WITH THE HISTORY OF THE GERMAN JEWS, Goldhagen's description of the evolution of antisemitism in Germany is both puzzling and questionable. It is puzzling because he ignores the political functions of antisemitism, which were not directed against the Jews alone but sought to

integrate anti-enlightenment and anti-emancipatory tendencies deliberately directed against the rise of social democracy, workers' rights movements, pacifism, and the rights of minorities, such as the Poles who resided in much of northeastern Germany. (Zmarzlik) It is questionable because the struggle for emancipation ultimately succeeded. In 1870, the constitution of the German Empire incorporated the emancipation law that had been passed in 1869 by the (unified) Germany's predecessor, the North German Federation.

Emancipation lifted all special laws imposing disabilities upon Jews and restricting the rights of citizenship. It did not eliminate social discrimination. Jews could not become officers (except during World War I). They were unable to advance in the judiciary or in the civil service. Few Jews became full university professors; none has been known to be appointed a teacher in a primary school prior to Weimar. Emancipation progressed but haltingly. In France, it was proclaimed in 1789; in Germany, it took on a "probationary" character. Hundreds of petitions opposing emancipation were filed with provincial diets throughout much of the 19th century. They remained rearguard actions; the opponents of emancipation impeded but could not stop it. (Ruerup)

It is true that the non-Jewish proponents and supporters of emancipation expected the Jews to assimilate; many, perhaps most of them, presumed that assimilation ultimately entailed baptism. (Stern) Such ideas flowed from a conception of the nation as a historically homogeneous organism, homogeneity being also defined in terms of adherence to Christian beliefs. Such monolithic conceptions of the nation were subscribed to in most continental countries, and became a source of virulent antisemitism late in the 19th and during the 20th centuries. It should be noted here that the German Jews did not generally compromise their religious beliefs. Quite the contrary. For example, Leopold Zunz, an outstanding scholar and, co-founder of the Science of Judaism, opposed all discussion of matters of Jewish faith in demanding emancipation; not an inch should be yielded to the adversaries of emancipation when they accused the Jews of separatism or of adhering to parts of the Talmud or the Thora supposedly not in accord with "morality." Gabriel Riesser, an uncompromising fighter for emancipation, and 2nd vice president of the 1848 preparliaments, published a periodical provocatively titled, *The Jew*, and, wielding an eloquent pen, would allow no one to doubt the right of the Jews to full citizenship in "their fatherland." Similarly, to the reproach of certain editors of the German liberal press voiced in 1893, that the Jews were still teaching the Talmud (widely viewed as obscurantist and anti-Christian), a spokesman for the Jewish community responded that German Jewry would not abandon its historic tradition, including the oral law, in order to achieve complete equality in Germany. (U. Tal)

If antisemitism in Germany prior to the Nazi regime was as "eliminationist" as Goldhagen contends, then we cannot account for the social and political advance of the German Jews — their virtual "eruption," as one historian has termed it, into German culture, commerce, journalism, the natural sciences, and (although decreasingly) finance. It isn't possible here to list even the more representative names of the participants in those fields and what they achieved, or the data documenting their rising occupational and economic status. It is worth noting, however, that during the era of the Wilhemine monarchy, some 4,000 Jews were elected to town councils — indicating the confidence of broad

layers of the public in Jewish citizens as public officials, a confidence that lasted throughout much of the Weimar period. (Zmarzlik)

THE RAPID EXPANSION OF INDUSTRIAL CAPITALISM, THE ECONOMIC EFFECTS OF IMPERIALIST CONQUESTS, and a disproportionately high attendance at high schools and universities, were the essential conditions for the Jews' advance (as was true for the Western and Central European middle classes generally). The spread of mass production, department stores, and free international trade, however, threatened the existence of smaller craftsmen, retailers, and peasants, disturbing the balance of their small-scale lives. These factors, along with the heightened visibility of the Jews, fueled antisemitism (not only in Germany), and permitted politicians to use antisemitism to rally support. However, the antisemitic parties which arose in the 1870S and persisted into the early 20th century remained weak. The integrative force of antisemitism — by which it joined anti-republicanism, anti-socialism, and a populist nationalism — did not fully mature until after World War I, largely as the result of defeat and profound crisis.

Prior to the Nazi regime, outbursts of antisemitism were usually suppressed by the police or, where needed, the military. The courts did not countenance the violation of the persons or property of Jews, or the desecration of Jewish cemeteries and sanctuaries. (Niewyk) The "populist" antisemitic disturbances during the 1848 upheavals, serious as they were, were virtually dismissed by Zunz; like other "mischief," they would leave no trace, and "freedom would endure." He was similarly "unconcerned" about the emergence of political antisemitism in the 1870s; in 1881, he thought that world literature and the press were more powerful than the "blockheads" who sought to imitate the middle ages. Zunz's firm belief in social progress was unshaken.

Heinrich A. Winkler, the outstanding historian of the Weimar republic, doubted that the world economic crisis that so severely affected Weimar gave rise to "spontaneous" antisemitic outbursts. A number of antisemitic disturbances occurred between 1930 and 1932, but all of them were organized by the Nazis; calls for boycotting Jewish businesses went unheeded prior to 1933. Eva Reichmann, a onetime high official of the largest association of German Jews, held that the success of the Nazis with the German electorate reflected the desperate search for a way out of the crisis; and that it was the Nazis who gave impetus to antisemitism, not the other way around.

Ernest Hamburger, in his magisterial essay, "One Hundred Years of Emancipation" (*Yearbook XIV*, 1969, Leo Baeck Institute), writes that in 1932, as in the earlier years of the Weimar Republic, "the incidents of which the Jews were victims, often of a grave nature, did not become the norm ... (N)umerous non-Jews also, whether active in public life or not, were exposed to violence ... In 1932, the Jewish press continued to appear. Jewish associations operated freely, their members could meet and defend their rights ... and fight for their ideas and interests. Jewish firms were threatened only in exceptional cases ... and newspapers whose publishers or editors were well-known Jews had more readers and subscribers than the *Voelkischer Beobachter* and its provincial derivatives." (The *Voelkischer Beobachter* was the mass circulation newspaper of the Nazi Party.)

"Anti-Semitism was essentially absent from the labor movement," Ham-

burger writes. True, a strain of antisemitism has been traced among German workers. But, while the German Communist Party often made opportunistic use of antisemitism, hardly ever ran a Jew as candidate for the Reichstag, and among its 100 Reichstag delegates in 1932-33 did not count a single Jew, the Social Democrats never compromised their stand in upholding the civil equality of the Jews. According to Robert S. Wistrich, writing in his authoritative *Socialism and the Jews*, the Social Democrats "even put up Jewish candidates in areas where antisemitism was well-entrenched. Thus, Paul Singer was nominated in Berlin (1884) at the height of the Stoecker movement, as a deliberate gesture of defiance," as were Jewish candidates in Breslau and Dresden — "centres of the German antisemitic movement. Forty-three out of the 417 Reichstag deputies between 1881 and 1914 were Jews — a figure representing ten times their proportion of the population as a whole." The Social Democrats' electoral practice — which continued during the Weimar era — starkly contrasted with the fecklessness of the German Liberal and Progressive parties which, although programmatically in support of equal civil rights for the Jews, would not run Jewish candidates after the 1880s for fear of losing votes.

The Social Democrats, in the late 19th-century pronouncements of some of its leaders, held that antisemitism represented a species of anti-capitalism, i.e., that it was a phase of populist thinking that would in time lead to the realization that the true "enemy" was the bourgeoisie, Jewish or non-Jewish. Such views, never accepted by thinkers like Kautsky or Bernstein, or such leaders as Bebel or Liebknecht, lost validity when the Russian pogroms occurred in 1906, and the realization dawned that a vast Jewish proletariat existed and struggled in Eastern Europe. The Weimar constitution, guaranteeing "full freedom of faith and conscience," and "admission to official posts ... independent of religious creed" was, in its time, unanimously accepted by the parties of the Socialist and Liberal Left (the Communist Party did not yet exist then) and the (Catholic) Center. The Social Democrats had become aware that the struggle for civil rights was unceasing; the full attainment of these rights could not wait for the advent of a socialist society.

Hamburger writes that "under the center, left-center and center-right governments which ruled the Reich and most of the Laender (provinces) until 1932, the provisions of the Constitution were, in general observed ... Jews were admitted to public office without any restrictions: to the Executive, all branches of the administration and the courts, a noteworthy accomplishment since ... the majority enjoyed by the parties of the Weimar coalition in the National Assembly was not reaffirmed" after the 1920 elections. Thus, the record of German Social Democracy as far as upholding the German Jews' civil rights is concerned, must be judged to have been unblemished.

Nevertheless, the often but reluctant acceptance, and cool rejection of the Jews by their fellow citizens was a melancholy experience for them. It fed self-doubt and ambivalence. It also spurred achievement in nearly all fields of culture and in physics and chemistry. Fritz Sternberg has written that German-Jewish scientists — and it applies to Jewish men and women in other fields as well — "thought Germany their only and best home, despite the antisemitism that crawled all around them. They may have loved not wisely but too well, and yet their sentiments are perhaps not so much an indictment of themselves, as a tribute to the appeals of Germany."

IT IS DIFFICULT TO COUNTERPOSE THE "ELIMINATIONIST" CHARACTER OF ANTISEMITISM postulated by Goldhagen to the findings sketched in the preceding passages. Nor did the "illusions" supposedly held by German Jews, blind them to the dangers of antisemitism. They desired, as a leader of their association stated, "an open, and liberal society" in order to attain "the full and final achievement of social emancipation" — a promise which the Weimar republic held, and a vision shared by large sectors of non-Jewish Germany. The Holocaust darkened this vision. It did not extinguish it.

Goldhagen, however, views the victimization of the Jews as a permanent condition, notwithstanding the fundamental changes over the post-World War II period in the situation of world Jewry, as well as in the attitudes of non-Jews or at least of public institutions. Antisemitism, he says may fluctuate in intensity but is not eradicable.

A major substantive notion about antisemitism informs this study. . . . Over a period of years, antisemitism — composed of a set of beliefs and cognitive models with a stable source metaphor and understanding of the nature of the Jews' putative perniciousness — does not appear, disappear, then reappear in a given society. Always present, antisemitism becomes more or less manifest. Its cognitive salience, emotional intensity, and expression increases or decreases. The vagaries of politics and social conditions account for these swings.

In effect, Goldhagen thus retrojects the situation of the Jews, particularly of the German Jews, from 1945 back, as if all the strands of that history led to the Holocaust. It is inevitable perhaps that the Holocaust thus casts its shadow. Yet, this approach, which is not unique to Goldhagen, stamps the history of the Jews as a history of victims and victimization. It deprives the past of its integrity. If it were true that the Jews were forever victimized, their survival, the survival and vigor of Judaism, their acculturation in the most diverse political and cultural circumstances without surrendering the core of their teachings — none of this could be understood. They would have disappeared long ago. Goldhagen's insistence upon the "ubiquity" of "eliminationist" antisemitism in Germany prior to the Nazi regime, and on his more general thesis of the fluctuation of antisemitism between latency and recrudescence are of no help in understanding the history of the Jews and the causes of the Holocaust.

As noted, Goldhagen infers a genocidal antisemitism to the perpetrators whom he investigated. But he has little if anything to say about the commanding forces which legitimated the murder of the Jews (i.e., made it state policy). Such legitimation was sustained by ideological indoctrination within a monopolized framework of information, which portrayed the Jews as subhuman. Deviation from views of the Jews as racially inferior were considered traitorous by the Nazis and subject to severe punishment (see below). It is hard to believe, given these social-psychological pressures, that the perpetrators preserved autonomy in their thought or action, as Goldhagen argues. Omer Bartov has shown such impairment of autonomy in his analysis of the behavior of German troops in Eastern Europe and Russia in World War II toward unarmed civilians, as has Christopher Browning in researching the same police battalion as Goldhagen.

Again as noted, Goldhagen projects the perpetrators' antisemitism and willingness to kill Jews onto all Germans — an argument he bases on his

conception of antisemitism in Germany rather than on factual evidence. As one piece of such evidence, Goldhagen adduces the behavior of Germans during the Kristallnacht assaults on Jews, Jewish-owned businesses, and the burning of synagogues. He writes that "Kristallnacht was ... but the crowning moment in the wild domestic terror that Germans perpetrated upon the Jews." But it was almost entirely the Storm Troopers (S.A.) who perpetrated Kristallnacht. The Germans according to him, did not, in principle, oppose what was done to the Jews but merely opposed the destruction of property or feared revenge by the Jews. "The criticism of Kristallnacht's ... violence and ... destruction ... should be understood as the limited criticism of an eliminationist path that the overwhelming majority of Germans considered to be fundamentally sound." But principled opposition to the Nazis' antisemitic policies was at best dangerous to voice. Goldhagen remains virtually silent about this fact.

According to Sarah Gordon whose research was in large measure based on Gestapo files, and other Nazi sources, The Propaganda Ministry tried to create an abstract image of the Jews as demons, while the Gestapo and S.S. instilled terror among actual and potential opponents of persecution by interrogation, arrest, imprisonment, torture, concentration camps, and murder. In a sense, both Goebbels's extensive censorship and police terror were a measure of his failure to achieve a consensus on racial policy. Had the German people accepted Nazi anti-Semitic propaganda, terror would have been unnecessary. Gordon presents details supporting these conclusions which cannot be repeated here. Goldhagen's discussion of the Kristallnacht is shaped to bolster his general argument of the virtually generic antisemitism shared by all Germans; and their consequent accord with the Nazis' "eliminationist" goals.

Goldhagen's view presents two mysteries which his argument cannot resolve — one, the history of the German Jews prior to Hitler's ascent to power, noted earlier; and two, the resurgence of social democracy and the successor parties to the former center, and the restoration of German democracy after World War II along with the end of all antisemitic policy (and even constitutionally anchored laws prohibiting antisemitic statements and Holocaust denial).

It is possible, as Goldhagen implies in the passage quoted above, that antisemitism will reassert itself. There is, however, no dearth of experience which teaches that antisemitism cannot threaten the civic rights of Jews (or other minorities) where democracy governs. After much searching for an answer to the question of why the Holocaust occurred, Zygmunt Bauman concludes, "If we ask now what the original sin was which allowed this to happen, the collapse (or non-emergence) of democracy seems to be the most convincing answer." Goldhagen ignores the forces that might have safeguarded democracy in Germany but failed to, and that might have made so monstrous an event as the Holocaust impossible. Those forces, however, have been reasserting, themselves on a world scale. They alone are capable of rendering antisemitism politically irrelevant.

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Franz Kafka and Libertarian Socialism

Michael Löwy

CLEARLY, THE WORK OF FRANZ KAFKA CANNOT BE REDUCED to a political doctrine of any kind. Kafka did not give speeches but fashioned individuals and situations. In his work, he expressed a *Stimmung* or sense of feelings and attitudes. The symbolic world of literature cannot be reduced to the discursive world of ideologies. Literary work is not an *abstract conceptual system* similar to philosophical or political doctrines but rather the creation of a concrete imaginary universe of individuals and things.¹

However none of this should be an obstacle to making use of the passages, bridges, and subterranean links between his anti-authoritarian spirit, his libertarian sensibility, and his sympathies for anarchism on the one hand, and his principal writings on the other. These passages provide us with privileged access to what can be termed the *internal landscape* of Kafka's work.

Kafka's socialist leanings were evident very early on in his life. According to his childhood friend and schoolmate — Hugo Bergmann, they had a slight falling out during their last academic year (1900-1901) because "his socialism and my Zionism were much too strident."² What kind of socialism are we talking about?

Accounts by three Czech contemporaries document Kafka's sympathies for Czech libertarian socialists and their participation in some of their activities. During the early 1930s, Max Brod was conducting research for his novel *Stefan Rott* which would be published in 1931. In the course of his investigations, one of the founders of the Czech anarchist movement — Michal Kacha — informed Brod that Kafka used to attend meetings of the *Mladych Klub* (Youth Club) which was a libertarian, anti-militarist, and anti-clerical organization with which many Czech writers including Stanislav Neumann, Michal Mares, and Jaroslav Hasek were associated. This information was later "confirmed by another source" and he incorporated it into his work. In his novel, Brod

MICHAEL LÖWY is the Research Director of the National Center for Scientific Research in Paris. He has written widely on political philosophy and intellectual history. His article "Socialism and Christianity in the Work of Ignazio Silone" appeared in *NEW POLITICS*, #20.

recounted that Kafka:

often attended the meetings of the circle and sat there without saying a word. Kacha liked Kafka and called him "Klidas" which can be translated as "taciturn" or, more precisely in the Czech vernacular, the "colossus of silence."

Brod never doubted the veracity of this account which he once again cited in his biography of Kafka.³

The second testimony comes from the anarchist writer — Michal Mares — who had gotten to know Kafka from frequently running into him on the street since they were neighbors. According to Mares' account published by Klaus Wagenbach in 1958, Kafka had accepted his invitation in October 1909 to come to a demonstration against the execution of the Spanish libertarian teacher — Francisco Ferrer. In the course of 1910-1912, Kafka attended anarchist conferences on free love, the Paris Commune, peace, in opposition to the execution of the Paris activist — Liabeuf, which were organized by the Youth Club, the anti-militarist and anti-clerical Vilem Koerber Association, and the Czech Anarchist Movement. Mares also claims that Kafka had posted a bail of five crowns to get his friend out of jail. Like Kacha, Mares stressed Kafka's silence:

To the best of my knowledge, Kafka belonged to none of these anarchist organizations but, as a man exposed and sensitive to social problems, he was strongly sympathetic to them. Yet despite his interest in these meetings, given his frequent attendance, he never took part in the discussions.

This interest is evident from his reading — Kropotkin's *Speech of a Rebel* which was a gift from Mares, and the writings of the Reclus brothers, Mikhail Bakunin, and Jean Grave. It also extended to his sympathies:

The fate of the French anarchist, Ravachol, or the tragedy of Emma Goldman who edited *Mother Earth* touched him very deeply.⁴

This account initially appeared in a Czech journal in 1946 in a slightly different version and passed without notice.⁵ In 1958, Karl Wagenbach published his remarkable book on Kafka's youth which was the first to shed light on the writer's ties to the Prague libertarian underground. The book reprinted the account of Mares in the form of an appendix but on this occasion, the information sparked a series of polemics which questioned the credibility of its claims.

The third document is *Conversations with Kafka* by Gustav Janouch which first came out in 1951 and was republished in 1968 in a considerably enlarged edition. This account relates to meetings starting in 1920 with the Prague writer during the last years of his life and suggests that Kafka retained his sympathy for the libertarians to the very end. Not only did he describe the Czech anarchists as "very polite and high-spirited," "so polite and friendly that one is obliged to believe their every word" but the political and social ideas he voiced in the course of these conversations retained the strong influence of libertarian thought.

Take for example his definition of capitalism as "a system of relations of dependence" where "everything is arranged hierarchically and everything is in chains." This statement is typically anarchist because of its emphasis on the authoritarian character of the system and not on economic exploitation as in

Marxism. Even his skeptical attitude toward the organized labor movement seems inspired by his libertarian suspicions toward parties and political institutions. Behind the marching workers:

there are the secretaries, bureaucrats, professional politicians, all the modern sultans for whom they are paving the way to power. . . The revolution has evaporated and all that remains is the mud of a new bureaucracy. The chains of tortured humanity are made of the official papers of ministries.⁶

In the 1968 second edition which was supposed to have reproduced the complete version of Janouch's notes, lost after the war and recovered much later, he recalled the following exchange with Kafka:

You have studied the life of Ravochol?

Yes and not just Ravochol but also the lives of various other anarchists. I have immersed myself in the biographies and ideas of Godwin, Proudhon, Stirner, Bakunin, Kropotkin, Tucker, and Tolstoi. I have made contact with various groups and attended meetings. In short, I have invested a great deal of time and money on this. In 1910, I took part in meetings held by Czech anarchists in a Karolinental tavern called *Zum kannonenkreuz* where the anarchist Youth Club met. . . Max Brod accompanied me to these meetings many times but, in the main, he did not find them very agreeable. . . For me, it was very serious business. I was on the trail of Ravachol. He led me straight to Erich Muehsam, Arthur Holitscher, and the Viennese anarchist — Rudolf Grossmann. . . They all sought thanklessly to realize human happiness. I understood them. But. . . I was unable to continue marching alongside them for long.⁷

In the general view of commentators, this second version is less credible than the first owing most conspicuously to its mysterious origins in notes once lost and now found. We must also point out an obvious error on a specific point of interest to us. By his own admission, Max Brod not only never went along with his friend to meetings of the anarchist club but was also totally unaware of Kafka's participation in the activity of the Prague libertarians.

THE HYPOTHESIS SUGGESTED BY THESE DOCUMENTS — Kafka's interest in libertarian ideas — is confirmed by some references in his private writings. For example, we find this categorical imperative in his diary: "Do not forget Kropotkin!"

In a November 1917 letter to Max Brod, he expressed his enthusiasm for a project of the journal *News of the Fight Against the Will of Power* proposed by an anarchist Freudian — Otto Gross.⁸ Neither should we overlook the libertarian spirit which seems to inspire some of his statements. One example would be the terse, caustic remark that he uttered one day to Max Brod while talking about the place where he worked — the Social Security Bureau where workers who were accident victims went to plead their cases:

How humble these people are. They come to beg at our feet instead of taking the building by storm and stripping it bare. They come to beg at our feet.⁹

Very probably, the various accounts — especially the last two — contain inaccuracies and exaggerations. With respect to Mares, Klaus Wagenbach acknowledged that "certain details are perhaps false" or, at least, "overstated." Similarly according to Max Brod, Mares like many other contemporaries who knew Kafka "tend to exaggerate," especially as regards the extent of their close

friendship with the writer.¹⁰

It is one thing to notice contradictions or exaggerations in these documents but it is quite another to *reject them in their entirety* by characterizing the information on the ties between Kafka and the Czech anarchists as "pure legend." This is the attitude of some specialists including Eduard Goldstücker, Hartmut Binder, Ritchie Robertson, and Ernst Pawel. The first is a Czech Communist literary critic and the other three are authors of Kafka biographies whose value cannot be denied.

According to Goldstücker, "the principal reason for my skepticism on the legend of a prolonged and close contact between Kafka and the anarcho-communists is the fact that in no part of the work of Kafka does one find indications that he was familiar with their thought." In his view, Kafka's attitude toward the working class was not that of "modern socialism" but rather that of the utopian socialists "who long preceded Marx."¹¹

A few remarks on this strange reasoning:

a) the term "anarcho-communism" is far from adequate to describe clubs of such diverse orientations ranging from anarcho-syndicalism to libertarian pacifism.

b) Anarchism is not defined by a common attitude toward the working class (different positions exist on this subject in the libertarian tradition) but by its rejection of all authority and the state as instituted authority.

c) Anarchist doctrine was conceived before Marx and libertarian socialism is not constituted in relation to his work.

Hartmut Binder is the author of a very detailed and erudite biography of Kafka. He is also the most energetic proponent of the thesis that the ties between Kafka and the Prague anarchist community are a "legend" which belongs to the "realm of the imagination." Klaus Wagenbach is accused of having utilized sources "congenial to his ideology" such as Kacha, Mares, and Janouch which lack "credibility or are even deliberate falsifications."¹²

In the opinion of Binder:

the mere fact that Brod did not learn of these alleged activities until several years after the death of Kafka . . . weighs heavily against the credibility of this information. Because it is almost unimaginable that Brod who had gone on two holiday trips with Kafka during this period and with whom he met daily . . . could have been ignorant of the interest of his best friend in the anarchist movement. . . If this is really unimaginable (the "almost" leaves a margin of doubt . . .), then why is it that the central figure, i.e., Max Brod, considered this information perfectly reliable since he used it in both his novel *Stefan Rott* and in the biography of his friend?

Much the same criticism applies to another of Binder's arguments:

Listening in a smoke-filled pub to the political discussions of a group acting outside the law . . . This is a situation unimaginable for somebody with Kafka's personality. However this situation did not seem strange to Max Brod who also knew a few things about Kafka's personality. . . In fact, nothing in Kafka's work leads us to believe that he had such a superstitious respect for the law!¹³

IN AN ATTEMPT TO DISPOSE, ONCE AND FOR ALL, of the testimony of Michal Mares, Binder refers insistently to a letter of Kafka to Milena Jesenska-Polak in which he refers to Mares as a "nodding acquaintance." Binder makes the following argument:

Kafka expressly underscores that his relation with Mares is only that of a *Gassenbekanntschaft* (nodding acquaintance). This is the clearest indication that Kafka never went to anarchist meetings.¹⁴

The least one can say about this line of argument is that an obvious *non-sequitur* lies between the premise and the conclusion! Even if their encounters were limited to meetings in the street because Kafka's house was close to Mares' place of work, this does not preclude Mares passing on literature and inviting Kafka to meetings and demonstrations, confirming his presence at some of these activities, and even making him a present of a book by Kropotkin on one occasion.

As material proof of his ties to Kafka, Mares had in his possession a postcard sent to him by the writer which was dated December 9, 1910. While this is impossible to verify, Mares also claimed that he received several letters from his friend which had disappeared during the numerous house searches to which he was subjected during this period. Binder does not deny the existence of this document but, pouncing on the fact that the card was addressed to "Josef Mares" and not Michal, he claims to have uncovered new proof of the "fictions" concocted by the witness. It seems totally improbable that a year after meeting Mares and attending several sessions of the Youth Club along with him, Kafka "does not even know his proper given name." This argument does not hold water for a very simple reason. According to the German edition of the correspondence between Kafka and Milena, the original given name of Kacha was not Michal but . . . Josef.¹⁵

The entire discussion in Hartmut Binder's book gives the painful impression of being a deliberate and systematic attempt to seize upon every minor pretext. His aim appears to be to eliminate from Kafka's image what conservatives would deem the dark shadow of suspicion that he took part in meetings organized by the Prague libertarians.

A few years later in his biography of Kafka which, by the way, is a book very worthy of interest, Ernst Pawel seems to uphold Binder's thesis. In his words, it is high time that we "laid to rest one of the great myths" about Kafka. This would be the "legend of a conspiratorial Kafka working within the Czech anarchist group called the Youth Club." This legend is the product of the "fertile imagination of the ex-anarchist Michal Mares who in his somewhat fanciful memoirs published in 1946 describes Kafka as a friend and comrade who participated in anarchist meetings and demonstrations":

This narrative is completely belied by all that is known of his life, friends, and character. Why would he have wanted to conceal his commitment from close friends whom he saw on a daily basis.¹⁶

This "legend" is easy to debunk because it bears no resemblance to what any of the sources in question claimed. Mares, Janouch, and Kacha (who goes unmentioned by Pawel) never said that Kafka was a "plotter within an anarchist group." Mares explicitly insisted on the fact that Kafka was a member of no organization. In any event, Kafka was not engaged in a "conspiracy" but taking part in meetings which were in most cases open to the public. As for "keeping things secret from his close friends" meaning Max Brod, we have already demonstrated the inanity of this line of argument.

Ernst Pawel provides another argument to bolster his thesis. Prague po-

lice records "do not contain the slightest allusion to Kafka."¹⁷ The argument is inadequate. It is not very likely that the police would have held onto the names of all those people who attended public meetings organized by the various libertarian clubs. They would be interested in the "ringleaders" and heads of the associations rather than people who listened and said nothing. . .

Pawel differs from Binder in his willingness to recognize the validity of the facts suggested by these accounts in a more diluted version. Kafka really did take part in these kind of meetings but only as "an interested spectator." Moreover he sympathized with the "philosophical and non-violent anarchism of Kropotkin and Alexander Herzen."¹⁸

We will now examine the point of view of Ritchie Robertson who is the author of a remarkable essay on the life and work of the Prague Jewish writer. In his opinion, the information furnished by Kacha and Mares must be "treated with skepticism." His principal arguments on this point are borrowed from Goldstücker and Binder. How would it have been possible that Brod was in the dark about the participation of his friend in these meetings? How much value can one attach to the testimony of Mares since he was only a *Gassenbekanntschaft* (nodding acquaintance) of Kafka? There is no point in repeating my earlier rebuttal to these kinds of objections which lack any real consistency.

Entirely new and interesting in Robertson's book is the attempt to put forward an alternative interpretation of Kafka's political ideas which, according to him, would be neither socialist nor anarchist but *romantic*. In Robertson's opinion, this anti-capitalist romanticism would be of neither the left nor the right.¹⁹ But if romantic anti-capitalism is a matrix common to certain forms of conservative and revolutionary thought — and in this sense, it does effectively transcend the traditional divisions between the left and the right — it nevertheless remains a fact that romantic authors clearly positioned themselves around one of the two poles of this vision of the world: reactionary romanticism or revolutionary romanticism.²⁰

In fact, anarchism, libertarian socialism, and anarcho-syndicalism provide a paradigmatic example of a "romantic anti-capitalism of the left." As a result, defining Kafka's thought as romantic seems to me entirely pertinent but it does not mean that he is not "of the left" or, more concretely, a romantic socialist of a libertarian tendency. As is the case with all romantics, his critique of modern civilization is tinged with nostalgia for the past which, for him, is represented by the Yiddish culture of the Jewish communities of Eastern Europe. With notable insight, André Breton wrote that "in marking the present minute," Kafka's thought "turns symbolically backwards with the hands of the clock of the synagogue" of Prague.²¹

THE INTERESTING THING ABOUT THE ANARCHIST EPISODE IN KAFKA'S BIOGRAPHY (1909-1912) is that it provides us with one of the most useful keys for illuminating our understanding of his work, especially his writings from 1912 onward. I make a point of saying *one of the keys* because the charm of this work also comes from its polysemantic character which makes it irreducible to any univocal interpretation. The libertarian ethos is manifested in different situations which are at the heart of his principal literary texts but, first and foremost, it can be found in the radically critical fashion in which the haunting and terri-

lying face of unfreedom is represented: authority. As André Breton put it so well: "No other work militates so strongly against the admission of a sovereign principle external to that of the person doing the thinking."²²

An anti-authoritarianism of libertarian inspiration runs through Kafka's novels in a movement toward "depersonalization" and a growing reification: from paternal and personal authority toward an administrative and anonymous authority.²³ Yet once more, he is not acting out of any *political doctrine* but from a state of mind and critical sensibility whose principal weapon is *irony, humor*, that *black humor* which, according to André Breton, is "a supreme revolt of the spirit."²⁴

This attitude has intimate personal roots in Kafka's relations with his father. For the writer, the despotic authority of the pater familias is the archetype of political tyranny. In his *Letter to the Father* (1919), Kafka recalled that "in my eyes, you assumed an enigmatic character like a tyrant for whom the law is not based upon reflection but his own person." Confronted with the brutal, unjust, and arbitrary treatment meted out to employees by his father, he instinctively began to identify with the victims:

What made the store insufferable for me was that it reminded me too much of my own situation with respect to you . . . This is why I belong, of necessity, to the employees' party.²⁵

The principal characteristics of authoritarianism noted in Kafka's literary work are:

1) *Arbitrariness*: decisions imposed from above without any moral, rational, or human justification while often making inordinate and absurd demands upon the victim.

2) *Injustice*: blame is wrongly considered to be self-evident with no need for proof, and punishment is totally disproportionate to the "mistake" (non-existent or trivial).

In his first major literary piece, *The Verdict* (1912), Kafka focuses on paternal authority. This is also one of his rare works where the hero (Georg Bendemann) seems to submit wholly and without resistance to the authoritarian verdict: the order given by the father to his son to drown himself in the river! Comparing this novel with *The Trial*, Milan Kundera observes:

The resemblance between the two accusations, condemnations and executions betray the continuity which ties together the closed familial "totalitarianism" with Kafka's grand visions.²⁶ The difference between them is that in the two great novels (*The Trial* and *The Castle*), there is a perfectly anonymous and invisible "totalitarian" power at work.

In this respect, *Amerika* (1912-1914) represents an intermediate work. The authoritarian characters are either paternal figures (Karl Rossmann's father or Uncle Jakob) or the top hotel administrators (the head of staff or the chief porter). But even the latter retain an aspect of personal tyranny in combining bureaucratic indifference with a petty and brutal individual despotism. The symbol of this punitive authoritarianism leaps up at you from the first page of the book. Demystifying American democracy represented by the famous Statue of Liberty standing in the entrance to New York harbor, Kafka replaces the torch in her hand with a sword. In a world without justice or freedom, naked force and arbitrary power seem to hold undivided sway. The

hero's sympathy goes out to the victims of this society. The driver in the first chapter is an example of "the suffering of a poor man at the hands of the powerful." There is also Thérèse's mother driven to suicide by hunger and poverty. Karl Rossmann finds his only friends and allies among the poor: Thérèse herself, the students, the residents of a working class neighborhood who refuse to turn him over to the police because, as Kafka discloses in a revealing aside, "workers are not on the side of the authorities."²⁷

THE MAJOR TURNING POINT IN KAFKA'S WORK IS THE NOVEL, *Penal Colony*, written shortly after *Amerika*. There are few texts in universal literature which present authority with such an unjust and murderous face. Authority is not bound up with the power of an individual such as the camp commandant (old and new) who plays only a secondary role in the story. Instead, authority inheres in an *impersonal mechanism*.

The context of the story is colonialism — French in this instance. The officers and commandants of the colony are French while the lowly soldiers, dockers, and victims awaiting execution are the people "indigenous" to the country who "do not understand a word of French." A native soldier is sentenced to death by officers for whom juridical doctrine can be summed up in a few words which are the quintessence of the arbitrary: Guilt should never be questioned! The soldier's execution must be carried out by a torture device which slowly carves the words: "Honor thy superiors" into his flesh with needles.

The central character of the novel is not the traveler who watches the events unfold with mute hostility. Neither is it the prisoner who scarcely shows any reaction, the officer who presides over the execution, nor the commandant of the colony. The main character is *the machine itself*.

The entire story is centered on this sinister apparatus which, more and more in the course of a very detailed explanation given by the officer to the traveler, comes to appear an *end-in-itself*. The apparatus does not exist to execute the man but rather the victim exists for the sake of the apparatus. The native soldier provides a body upon which the machine can write its aesthetic masterpiece, its bloody inscription illustrated with many "flourishes and embellishments." The officer is only a servant of the machine and is finally sacrificed himself to this insatiable Moloch.²⁸

What concrete "power machine" and "apparatus of Authority" sacrificing human lives did Kafka have in mind? The *Penal Colony* was written in October 1914, three months after the outbreak of the Great War.

In *The Trial* and *The Castle*, one finds authority to be a hierarchical, abstract, and *impersonal* "apparatus." Despite their brutal, petty, and sordid characters, the bureaucrats are only cogs in this machine. As Walter Benjamin acutely observed, Kafka writes from the perspective of a "modern citizen who realizes that his fate is being determined by an impenetrable bureaucratic apparatus whose operation is controlled by procedures which remain shadowy even to those carrying out its orders and *a fortiori* to those being manipulated by it."²⁹

Kafka's work is deeply rooted in his Prague surroundings. As André Breton remarked, Kafka's writings "encompass all the charms and magic of Prague" but are at the same time perfectly universal.³⁰ Contrary to what is often asserted, his two major novels are not a critique of the old Austro-Hungarian

imperial state but deal with the most modern state apparatus. Kafka's critique of the state touches upon its anonymous impersonal character insofar as this alienated, hypostatized, and autonomous bureaucratic system is becoming transformed into an end-in-itself.

A passage from *The Castle* is particularly illuminating in this regard. In a scene which is a masterpiece of black humor, the town mayor describes the official apparatus as an independent machine which seems to work "by itself":

One might say that the administrative organism could no longer put up with the strain and irritation it had to endure for years because of dealing with the same trivial business and that it has begun to pass sentence on itself, bypassing the functionaries.³¹

Kafka had a profound insight into the way the bureaucratic machine operates like a blind network of gears in which the relations between individuals become a thing or an independent object. This is one of the most modern, topical, and *lucid* aspects of Kafka's work.

THE LIBERTARIAN INSPIRATION IS INSCRIBED INTO THE HEART OF KAFKA'S NOVELS. When he speaks to us of the *state*, it is in the form of "administration" or "justice" as an impersonal system of domination which crushes, suffocates, or kills individuals. This is an agonizing, opaque, and unintelligible world where unfreedom prevails. *The Trial* is often presented as a prophetic work. With his visionary imagination, the author had foreseen the justice of the totalitarian state and the Nazi or Stalinist show trials. Despite being a Soviet fellow traveler, Bertold Brecht made a telling remark about Kafka in a conversation with Walter Benjamin in 1934 (even before the Moscow show trials):

Kafka had only one problem, that of organization. What he grasped was our anguish before the ant-hill state, the way that people themselves are alienated by the forms of their common existence. And he foresaw specific forms of alienation like, for example, the methods of the GPU.³²

Without casting any doubt on this homage to the prescience of the Prague writer, it should nevertheless be kept in mind that Kafka is not describing "exceptional" states in this work. One of the most important ideas suggested by his work, bearing an obvious relationship to anarchism, is *the alienated and oppressive nature* of the "normal" legal and constitutional state. It is clearly stated in the early pages of *The Trial*:

K. lived in a country with a legal constitution, there was universal peace, all the laws were in force; who, then, dared seize him in his own dwelling?³³

Like his friends among the Czech anarchists, he seemed to consider *every form of state*, and the state as such, to be an authoritarian and liberticidal hierarchy.

By their inherent nature, the state and its justice are both systems founded on lies. Nothing illustrates this better than the dialogue in *The Trial* between K. and the priest on the subject of the parable of the guardian of the law. For the priest, "to question the dignity of the guardian would be to question the law." This is the classic argument of all the representatives of order. K. objects that if one adopts this view, "we have to believe everything that the warder

tells us" which to him seems impossible:

— No, says the priest. We are not obliged to accept everything he says as true. It suffices that it is accepted as necessary.

—A mournful opinion, said K.... It elevates the lie to the stature of a world principle.³⁴

As Hannah Arendt rightly observed in her essay on Kafka, the priest's speech reveals:

the sacred theology and innermost conviction of bureaucrats to be a belief in necessity for its own sake. Bureaucrats are, in the last analysis, the functionaries of necessity.³⁵

Finally, the state and judges administer less the management of justice than the hunt for victims. In imagery comparable to the substitution of a sword for the torch of liberty in *Amerika*, we see in *The Trial* that a painting by Titorelli which is supposed to represent the Goddess of Justice becomes transfigured in the right light into a celebration of the Goddess of the Hunt. The bureaucratic and judicial hierarchy constitutes an immense organization which according to Joseph K., the victim of *The Trial*:

not only employs venal guards, stupid inspectors and examining magistrates . . . but also sustains an entire magistracy of high rank with its indispensable retinue of valets, clerks, gendarmes, and other auxiliaries, perhaps even *executioners*. I do not flinch before the word.³⁶

In other words, state authority kills. Joseph K. will make the acquaintance of executioners in the last chapter of the book when two functionaries put him to death "like a dog."

For Kafka, the dog represents an ethical category — if not a metaphysical one. The dog is actually all those who submit slavishly to the authorities whoever they may be. The merchant — Block — forced to his knees before the lawyer, is a typical example:

This was no longer a client. This was the lawyer's dog. If the lawyer had ordered him to crawl under the bed as if it were a kennel, and bark, Block would have done so with pleasure.

The shame which must outlive Joseph K. (the last word of *The Trial*) is death "like a dog," submitting without resistance to the executioners. This is also the case with the prisoner in *The Penal Colony* who does not even make an attempt to escape and behaves with "dog-like submission."³⁷

The young Karl Rossmann in *Amerika* is an example of somebody who attempts — not always successfully — to resist the authorities. For him, this means not becoming a dog like "those who are unwilling to offer any resistance." The refusal to submit and crawl like a dog appears to be the first step toward walking upright toward freedom. But Kafka's novels have neither a positive hero nor future utopias. They only try to show the *facies hippocratica* of our epoch with irony and lucidity.

IT IS NO ACCIDENT THAT THE WORD "KAFKAESQUE" HAS ENTERED our current vocabulary. The term denotes an aspect of social reality that sociology and political science tend to overlook. With his libertarian sensibility, Kafka has suc-

ceeded marvelously in capturing the *oppressive* and *absurd* nature of the bureaucratic nightmare, the opacity, the impenetrable and incomprehensible character of the rules of the state hierarchy as they are seen *from below and the outside*. This runs contrary to social science which generally confines itself to examining the bureaucratic machine from the "inside" and taking the point of view of those "at the top," the authorities, and institutions: its "functional" or "dysfunctional," "rational" or "pre-rational" character.³⁸

Social science has not yet formulated a concept for the "oppressive effect" of a reified bureaucratic apparatus which undoubtedly constitutes one of the most characteristic phenomena of modern societies which millions of men and women run across daily. Meanwhile, this essential dimension of social reality will continue to be conjured up by reference to Kafka's work.

Translated from the French by Patrick Flaherty

NOTES

1. Cf. Lucien Goldmann, "Materialisme dialectique et histoire de la littérature," *Recherches Dialectiques*, Paris: Gallimard, 1959. pp. 45-64.

2. Hugo Bergmann, Memories of Franz Kafka in *Franz Kafka Exhibition (Catalogue)*. The Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem. 1969. p. 8.

3. Max Brod, *Franz Kafka*, pp. 135-136.

4. Michal Mares, "Comment j'ai connue Franz Kafka, published as an appendix to Klaus Wagenbach. *Franz Kafka: Années de jeunesse (1883-1912)*, Paris: Mercury of France, 1967). pp. 253.

5. Michal Mares, "Meetings with Franz Kafka," *Literarni Noviny* no. 15 (1946). p. 85 and after. This version is cited in the Klaus Wagenbach's other book, *Franz Kafka ins Selbstzeugnissen und Bilddokumenten*, Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1964. p. 70.

6. G. Janouch. *Kafka M'a dit*, Paris: Calmann-Levy, 1952. pp. 70, 71, 135, 107, 108, 141.

7. G. Janouch, *Conversations avec Kafka*, Paris: Maurice Nadeau, 1978. pp. 118-119.

8. F. Kafka, *Diaries und Briefe*, Frankfurt: Fischer Publishing House, 1975. p. 196. See on Kafka and Otto Gross, G. Baioni, *Kafka: Letteratura ed Ebraismo* Turin: Einaudi, 1979. pp. 203-205.

9. M. Brod, *Franz Kafka*, Paris: Gallimard, 1945. pp. 132-133.

10. See K. Wagenbach, *Franz Kafka: Années de jeunesse . . .* (1958) p. 213 and *Franz Kafka in Selbstzeugnissen*, (1964) p. 70. and Max Brod, *Streitsbares Leben 1884-1968*, Munich-Berlin-Vienna: F.A. Herbig. 1969. p. 170. and *Ueber Franz Kafka*, Frankfurt: Fischer Library. p. 190.

11. E. Goldstücker. "Über Franz Kafka aus der Prager Perspektive" 1963 in Goldstücker, Kautman, Reimann (ed.) *Franz Kafka aus Prager Sicht*, Prague, 1965. pp. 40-45.

12. H. Binder. *Kafka-Handbuch*, volume 1. *Der Mensch und seine Zeit*, Stuttgart: Alfred Kroener. 1979. pp. 361-362.

13. Ibid. pp. 362-363. The notion that Kafka could have concealed some information would not have been surprising to Brod who emphasized in his biography:

Unlike myself, Kafka had a closed nature and did not open up his soul to anyone, not even to me. I knew very well that he sometimes kept important things to himself.

Nax Brod. *Streitbares Leben*, pp. 46-47.

14. Binder, *Kafka-Handbuch*, 1. p. 364. Cf. Kafka. *Lettres à Milena*, Paris: Gallimard, 1988. p. 270.

15. M. Mares in Wagenbach, *Franz Kafka: Années de jeunesse*, p. 254. H. Binder, *Kafka-Handbuch*, 1, pp. 363-364. F. Kafka, *Briefe an Milena*, Frankfurt: S. Fischer, 1983. p. 336 (editors' note).

16. Binder, op cit. p. 365.

17. E. Pawel, *ibid.* p. 162.

18. *Ibid.* pp. 162-163. In another chapter of the book, Pawel refers to Kafka as a "meta-physical anarchist not much given to party politics" — a definition which seems to me very much on the mark. As for Janouch's memoirs, Pawel considers them as "plausible" but "subject to caution." (p. 80).

19. R. Robertson, *Kafka, Judaism, Politics, and Literature*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985. pp. 140-141:

If one is inquiring into Kafka's political leanings, it is, in fact, misleading to think in terms of the usual antithesis between left and right. The appropriate context would be the ideology which Michael Löwy has labelled "romantic anti-capitalism." ... Romantic anti-capitalism (to use Löwy's term, though "anti-industrialism" might be more accurate had many different versions. . . but as a general ideology, it transcended the opposition of left and right.

20. I attempted to analyze romanticism in my book *Pour une sociologie des intellectuels révolutionnaires. L'évolution politique de Lukacs 1909-1929*, Paris: PUF, 1976 (cited by R. Robertson in the English translation published in London in 1979) and more recently with my friend Robert Sayre in *Revolte et mélancholie. Le romantisme à contre-courant de la modernité*, Paris Payot, 1992.

21. A. Breton, Presentation of Kafka in his *Anthologie de l'humour noir*, Paris: Sagittarius: 1950. p. 263.

22. A. Breton, *Anthologie de l'humour noir*, p. 264.

23. For a more detailed analysis of anarchism and romanticism, I refer you to my book *Redemption et Utopie: Le Judaïsme libertaire en Europe central*, Paris: PUF, 1988. chapter 5.

24. A. Breton. "Lightning Rod," Introduction to *Anthologie de l'humour noir*. p. 11.

25. Kafka, *Letter to the Father*, 1919, in *Préparatifs de nocce a la campagne*, Paris: Gallimard, 1957. pp. 165, 179.

26. M. Kundera, "Something left Behind," *Le Debat* no. 6. June 1981. p. 58.

27. F. Kafka, *Amerika*, Frankfurt: Fischer Publishing House 1956. pp. 15, 161.

28. F. Kafka, "In the Penal Colony," *Erzaehlung und kleine Prosa*. New York: Schocken Books, 1946. pp. 181.

29. W. Benjamin, Letter to G. Scholem, 1938. *Correspondance*, Paris: Aubier. 1980. II. p. 248.

30. A. Breton. *Anthologie de l'humour noir* Paris: Sagittaire, 1950. p. 263.

31. F. Kafka, *Le Chateau*, Paris: Gallimard. 1972. p. 562.

32. Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Essais sur Brecht*, Paris: Maspero, 1969. p. 132.

33. F. Kafka, *The Trial*, New York: Schoken, 1970. p. 4; *Der Prozess*, Frankfurt: Fischer, 1979, p. 9].

34. F. Kafka. *The Trial*, p. 220.

35. H. Arendt. *Sechs Essays*. Heidelberg: Lambert-Schneider, 1948. p. 133.

36. *The Trial*, pp. 45-46. My emphasis ML.

37. F. Kafka. *The Trial*, p. pp. 193-194, 227. *Le Procès*, Paris: Gallimard, 1985. pp. 283, 309, 325, and "In der Strafkolonie," p. 181.

38. As Michel Carrouges has perceptively emphasized:

Kafka renounces the corporate perspective of the men of law, those educated and very eminent people who believe they understand the whys and wherefores of the law. He considers them and the law from the viewpoint of the masses of poor subjects who submit without understanding.

But since he is Kafka, he raises this ordinary naive ignorance to the stature of supreme irony overflowing with suffering and humor, mystery and clarity. He unmasks all that there is of human ignorance in judicial knowledge and of human knowledge in the ignorance of the downtrodden.

M. Carrouges. In the Laughter and the Tears of Life. *Cahiers de L'Esprit* 1957, no. 131
J.L. Barrault, Paris, Julliard, October 1957, p. 19.

No! In Thunder: **Allen Ginsberg 1926-1997**

Scott McLemee

*I search for the language
that is also yours —
almost all our language has been taxed by war
— “Wichita Vortex Sutra”*

Only in its minute particulars is this memory strictly personal; thousands of people share it, in some form or other. I was fourteen, living near Dallas (gun holster of the Bible Belt), locked in mortal combat with parental sensibilities (Southern Baptist, to be precise). The combined influence of Bertrand Russell's essays and a PBS broadcast of *Waiting for Godot* had transformed me into a godless existentialist. And I was ready, even desperate, to read anything whatsoever by Allen Ginsberg. In the preface to an anthology of modern British and American poetry, the editor quoted a little of “Howl.” It was like starving to death and being offered exactly one bite of a sandwich. The opening lines —

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness,
starving hysterical naked
dragging themselves through the negro dawn looking for an
angry fix
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly
connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of
night ...

— were instantly burned into my brain. The high school library contained the collected works of J. Edgar Hoover, but no Beat literature. And then (oh, the cultural contradictions of capitalism!) the commercial ritual of Christmas was my salvation.

At the chain bookstore in some ghastly shopping center, I noticed it: *Howl and Other Poems*. That afternoon, as the rest of the nuclear family unit wandered the mall, I sat in the car, inspecting the booklet, chanting the title poem. Its anaphora and obscenity and very long lines were exhilarating. So was its apocalyptic quality: Ginsberg embraced the very people damned from the pulpit, and in civics class. Oddly enough, though, the radicalism evoked in the poet's memory —

SCOTT MCLEEMEE is on the editorial board of *NEW POLITICS*. His most recent book is *C.L.R. James on the “Negro Question,”* published by the University Press of Mississippi, 1996.

America Sacco & Vanzetti must not die
 America I am the Scottsboro boys
 America when I was seven momma took me to Communist Cell
 meetings they sold us garbanzos a handful per ticket a ticket
 cost a nickel and the speeches were free everybody was
 angelic and sentimental about the workers it was all so
 sincere you have no idea what a good thing the party was in
 1835 Scott Nearing was a grand old man a real mensch Mother
 Bloor the Silk-strikers' Ewig-Weibliche made me cry I once
 saw the Yiddish orator Israel Amter plain. Everybody must
 have been a spy.

— had once even reached Texas. Decades before, Socialist Party “encampments” drew thousands of people to hear about the democratic alternative to capitalism, and the IWW (“America I feel sentimental about the Wobblies”) organized farm workers not that far from where we lived. All of which had long since been forgotten. Reading the poems of a gay, Jewish red-diaper baby was the first step to recovering that history.

The little black-and-white pamphlet followed me to school. I sneaked it in concealed inside a zippered Bible, and sat at the back of the church, reading it during the sermon. Rebellion intensified, deepened, acquired a sense of history. Now I was carrying a concealed weapon.

SOME YEARS LATER, THERE WAS ANOTHER, LESS AGREEABLE ENCOUNTER with the poem — this time, in an annotated edition. The effort to explain the private subtext of “Howl” was commendable, but seemed curiously inappropriate. Despite the poet’s cryptic allusions to friends and lovers, this “Howl” was not the cry of any specific individual. (You might as well read *Leaves of Grass* as if its “I” were Walt Whitman himself). The poem did indeed speak of personal experiences — chronicled in recent years by his (so far, rather mediocre) biographers — but Ginsberg used them

to recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose and
 stand before you speechless and intelligent and shaking with
 shame, rejected yet confessing out the soul to conform to the
 rhythm of thought in his naked and endless head

His verbal alchemy “made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through images juxtaposed, and trapped the archangel of the soul”

The result was, to use William Blake’s term, *prophesy*. (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: “As I was then perswaded & remained confirm’d, that the voice of honest indignation is the voice of God, I cared not for consequences, but wrote”). Another word for prophet, in this sense, is “troublemaker.” The literary historians of another century will be able to assemble a useful anthology of documents from the secret police of various countries (including, yes, these United States), demonstrating just how worrisome a prophet Ginsberg became. The San Francisco police confiscated the first printing of *Howl*. Ginsberg’s candid sexual radicalism got him thrown out of Czechoslovakia and Cuba. He wrote one of the best poems against the Vietnam war, “Wichita

Vortex Sutra.” And in later years, he made an effort to reach a younger audience by composing lyrics for rock bands.

That was perhaps not his best moment. But, doggerel though it may be, his song “Capitol Air” (1980), was at least a good manifesto:

Truth may be hard to find but Falsehood's easy
Read between the lines our Imperialism is sleazy
But if you think the People's State is your Heart's Desire
Jump right back in the frying pan from the fire.

Or as he wrote in another poem: “When Communist and Capitalist assholes tangle the Just man is arrested or robbed or had his head cut off.”

THERE WILL, OF COURSE, BE READERS FOR WHOM GINSBERG is the prophet of a utopia now already dimly visible. For after all, Stalinism is in terminal decline, and life in America is not (as before) *perfectly* hellish for gays — while the slaughter of Iraqi civilians was done quickly, and with international support, not like the slaughter in southeast Asia some while ago. And the culture industry now secretes rebellion in a dozen flavors (advertising research having become considerably more sophisticated since the early fifties, when Ginsberg quit his job conducting market surveys). So really, what's to howl about?

millions of tons of human wheat were burned in secret
caverns under the White House
while India starved and screamed and ate mad dogs full of
rain
and mountains of eggs were reduced to white powder in the
halls of Congress
no godfearing man will walk there again because of the stink
of the rotten eggs of America
and the Indians of Chiapis continue to gnaw their vitaminless
tortillas

wrote the poet in 1957, as if to denounce the celebration now in progress. And then added:

the governments of Russia and Asia will rise and fall but Asia
and Russia will not fall
the government of America also will fall but how can America fall
I doubt if anyone will ever fall anymore except governments
fortunately all the governments will fall
the only ones which won't fall are the good ones
and the good ones don't yet exist
But they have to begin existing they exist in my poems ...

The Anti-Colonial Movement in Vietnam

Loren Goldner

NGO VAN IS A VIETNAMESE REVOLUTIONARY, LIVING TODAY AT AGE 84 in Paris. When his book* appeared in France in 1995, it immediately created a sensation, and the aim of this review is to bring it, however modestly, to the attention of an American audience¹. Ngo Van's book is unique, as his life has been unique; his book is the first full account of the anti-colonial movement in Vietnam from 1920 to 1945, by someone who lived much of that period as a Trotskyist militant. With all the contemporary post-modernist hue and cry about listening to "other voices," here at last is a Vietnamese revolutionary Marxist telling his story, not to assert his irreducible difference, but rather, quite the contrary, to contribute to a reconstitution of the kind of real internationalism that was buried in the 1960s and 1970s under Stalinist hoopla and flag-waving for the National Liberation Front (NLF), helping to set the stage for subsequent disillusionment and the resigned, comfortable cynicism of the academic post-modernists who have managed, at least in U.S. academia, to constitute themselves as the authentic voice of the Third World. Ngo Van paid his dues, not in the hustle for tenure on some Ivy League campus, but against the successive waves of French, Japanese and Vietnamese Stalinist repression of those, like himself, who launched a movement for the emancipation of workers and peasants against both the colonial powers and then against the totalitarian nationalist bureaucracy of Ho Chi Minh, which eventually won out.

Ngo Van is, moreover, something of a Renaissance figure. He was born outside of Saigon in 1913, went to work in 1927, and in 1932 became involved in anti-colonial, and ultimately Trotskyist politics. He was in jail with Ta Thu Thau, the Vietnamese Trotskyist leader, but unlike Ta Thu Thau, he survived the Stalinist massacre of the Trotskyists in Vietnam in 1945. He made his way to France in 1948, and for the next 30 years earned his living there as a factory worker. During that period he moved away from Trotskyism and into the orbit of the councilist

*Ngo Van, *Vietnam 1920-1945, Revolution et contre-revolution sous la domination coloniale*, Paris, L'insomniaque, 1995, 444 pp.

LOREN GOLDNER is a writer living in Cambridge, Mass. His most recent article in *New Politics*, "The CIA and the Portuguese Revolution" appeared in the Winter 1997 issue.

Information et Correspondance Ouvrières (ICO), in whose press he published articles on developments in Indochina through the years of the Vietnam War. He also managed, while still a factory worker, to write a study on divination, magic and politics in ancient China. In 1978, he was finally able to retire, and threw himself into 17 years of research and writing that resulted in this book. For good measure, the cover is a beautiful expressionist painting called "Saigon In Insurrection," by Ngo Van.

Readers of Ngo Van's book who lived through the peak years of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, and the anti-war movement here and in Europe, will bitterly regret that it appears some 25 or 30 years too late to have its maximum political impact. (When I asked Ngo Van, perhaps impetuously, why he did not write it at that time, he replied that his factory job made that impossible.) The Third Worldism of the Western left of the 60s had as its idols Mao-tse Tung, Ho Chi Minh, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro, and awareness of the history of left oppositions to these Stalinists was almost specialist knowledge. In the case of Vietnam, in particular, the situation was complicated by the Western Trotskyists² themselves (above all in France and in the U.S.), who were so eager to appear as the "best builders" of the pro-NLF anti-war movement that the real story of their Vietnamese comrades was almost an embarrassment, "ancient history" of no relevance to the demands of the present.

What makes the case of Vietnam³ so interesting is that it is the one country where the Trotskyist movement, in the late 1930s, actually out-organized the Stalinists in mass politics.⁴

NGO VAN PROVIDES A LONG AND DETAILED ACCOUNT OF THE 1920S FERMENT in the Vietnamese intelligentsia⁵, much of it in Paris exile, in their evolution (common to a number of Asian countries) from nationalism to communism. The Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) was founded out of this ferment in 1930. Thus the history of the anti-colonial movement in Vietnam, as in most other countries, became necessarily tied up with the vicissitudes of the Communist International (CI). The CI's debacle in China in 1927⁶ set the stage for the Comintern's so-called "Third Period" (1928-1934), "a class against class" policy portraying Social Democrats and other reformists as "the main enemy," which in the colonial world, after the previous period of excessive flirtation with bourgeois nationalism, sent the Communist parties off on aggressive adventurist policies. The Yenbay insurrection of February 1930, organized by bourgeois nationalists, allowed the ICP to throw itself into three years of these types of actions, all drowned in bloody repression, which almost led to the party's disappearance. All in all, the balance sheet was 4,000 arrests and 1,760 killed in repression. In the course of the 1931-33 period, a dissident current, influenced by the International Left Opposition, solidified around Ta Thu Thau, in opposition to Third Period putschism.

Just as the Shanghai massacre of 1927 had set the stage for the "Third Period," the catastrophe of Hitler's triumph in Germany marked its end. Following the fascist riots in France of February 1934, a new phase of Comintern collaboration with bourgeois parties against fascism, the Popular Front, was under way. In Vietnam this period was the backdrop of the unusual condominium between Stalinists and Trotskyists⁷ around the newspaper *La Lutte*,

until in 1937 a directive from Ho Chi Minh brought the ICP militants into line against the "twin brothers of fascism," setting aside all anti-colonial agitation in the service of the Popular Front. This period saw a phase of electoral activity in which both Stalinists and Trotskyists won seats on the Saigon city council, a powerless body which nonetheless afforded them a certain public tribunal, while obliging them to tone down their politics. In 1936-37, however, the massive strike wave in France had its counterpart in Vietnam, where workers won the largest gains ever under the colonial regime. This worker explosion engendered a more radical Trotskyist current around a new paper, *Le Militant*. Ho Chi Minh's May 1937 directive ordering the ICP to break with *La Lutte* was a direct response to the radicalization of the strike wave, and in lockstep with the conciliatory orientation of the Popular Front and with the French Communist Party (PCF) in the metropolis and general Comintern policy. In 1938, after the Stalinists regrouped around their own newspaper *L'Avant-Garde*, the Trotskyists, riding the energy of the strike wave, won the Saigon municipal elections, and in 1939 won 80% of the vote for the Cochinchina Colonial Council, the high-water mark of their influence prior to the 1945 insurrection. To my knowledge, this constitutes the only instance prior to 1945 in which the politics of "permanent revolution" oriented to worker and peasant opposition to colonialism won out, however ephemerally, against the Stalinist "stage theory" in a public arena.

THE OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR II PUT AN END TO THIS PERIOD of legal opposition. The French colonial authorities ruthlessly repressed the ICP and the Trotskyists alike. After the fall of France, the Japanese took control of Vietnam but allowed the pro-Vichy police and military to continue to administer the colony. In December 1940, the ICP attempted another insurrection, like those of 1930-31, which was again bloodily put down. For various reasons, the ICP survived World War II more intact than the Trotskyists, who had no international resources to fall back on. (By 1945, on the other hand, Ho Chi Minh's forces were working with the American Office of Strategic Services (OSS).)

With the impending defeat of Japan, Ngo Van's story arrives at its dénouement, the Saigon insurrection of August-September 1945. (It is also at this point that his book overlaps with David Marr's,* to be discussed momentarily). In the vacuum of power at the end of the war, the Vietnamese population thought the hour of independence had struck. In this mood, two perspectives collided: that of the Trotskyists, who attempted to apply a policy of "permanent revolution," based on the workers and poor peasants, and that of the Stalinist ICP, now reconstituted as the Viet Minh, who believed, or at least said, that independence could be won through negotiations. The concrete question, in August-September 1945, was armed resistance to the Chinese, English and French expeditions sent to restore Allied colonial authority. (It must be remembered that with Communist ministers in the provisional government in Paris, the ICP could plausibly argue that independence was negotiable, at least before the massacres in Algeria and Madagascar carried out by this same government showed the PCF's true stance on the colonial question. The ICP must also have known that there was no stipulation for Indochinese independence

*David G. Marr, *The Quest for Power*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995.

in the Yalta agreements.)

Although the Trotskyists had been weakened by the war, they re-emerged in the streets directly expressing a powerful popular mood for immediate independence and armed resistance to colonial restoration. The Viet Minh resistance movement, however, had seized local government in much of the country, and was maneuvering for position against all comers. On September 2, 1945 the Viet Minh declared independence, and a week later welcomed the arrival of British troops.⁸ On September 23, the Saigon population rose up, and for days had the foreign forces surrounded in the center of the city, cut off from supplies, but by October the French had fought their way out and re-established control. During this period Viet Minh hit squads were eliminating Trotskyists, their main serious left-wing rival, wherever they could find them. Months of international maneuvers followed, during which French control was re-established over Indochina. The Viet Minh strategy of negotiated independence had been a failure. Ho Chi Minh travelled to France for further negotiations, which also failed. In March, 1946, Ho had to confront a crowd in Hanoi, stunned by the re-establishment of French power, crying out "I swear, I have not sold you out!" Almost immediately thereafter, 30 years of war, first against the French, then against the U.S., began.

Ngo Van's book is above all a homage to several generations of anti-colonial fighters and revolutionaries, now forgotten, or calumniated as "traitors" in official Stalinist history, or relegated to footnotes in more academic studies. Its narrative is heightened by the (unobtrusive) autobiographical backdrop. One can only hope for a complete English translation, for there is no better book on the Vietnamese revolution up to 1945.

NGO VAN'S BOOK ALSO OFFERS A PERSPECTIVE FROM WHICH TO CONSIDER, in counterpoint, an altogether different kind of study written by the Australian professor David Marr, *Vietnam 1945*. While it would be quite unfair to criticize Marr for not being a Vietnamese revolutionary, it is certainly remarkable that he is able to write a 600-page book on many of the same events recounted by Ngo Van (although, of course, much more focused on the crucial year 1945, and on the international context) while making a grand total of 20-odd references to Vietnamese Trotskyism, virtually none of substance. The dust-cover photo of the author in amiable conversation with the Stalinist bureaucrat, Tran Van Giau, who organized the Viet Minh takeover of Saigon and who ordered the physical elimination of many Trotskyists, also gives pause. Marr's book will therefore be considered, in this review, primarily as it bears upon the political questions raised by Ngo Van.

Marr had previously written two quite interesting studies on the formation of a nationalist intelligentsia in Vietnam and its subsequent history up to 1945.⁹ His new book presents a mass of equally interesting material on this one decisive year and the relevant immediate background. The author has consulted sources in all relevant languages, including Vietnamese, Chinese and Japanese. He is certainly no naive fellow-traveler of the current Vietnamese regime, and says flatly that the great majority of Hanoi's official historical sources "spun angel hair" in their presentation and interpretation of these events. Probably the most original part of Marr's book is his social history of the 1945 insurrection outside Hanoi.

Marr's book begins with the Japanese "coup" of March 1945, in which Japan put an end to French police and military administration of Indochina, in effect since 1940.¹⁰ A situation of social crisis and impending collapse was created not merely by the looming defeat of Japan, but also by the massive famine during the unusually cruel winter of 1944-45, which Marr estimates killed one million Vietnamese, largely due to the breakdown of transport under Allied bombing and also to the indifference of both Japanese and French authorities.

Marr also provides interesting material on the attempts of the Japanese to present themselves to the Vietnamese as liberators of Asia from "white" colonialism, and the profound impression the state-of-the-art military technology and dynamism of an Asian power made on a long-colonized population. He devotes a long chapter to the wartime activities of the ICP and the Viet Minh, particularly in the run-up to the August-September insurrection. As social history drawing on many original sources, this account, like his subsequent account of the insurrection itself, is probably unsurpassed in breadth and depth in contemporary writing on the subject¹¹ (it is hard to imagine too many other writers having access to sources in as many languages as Marr). Yet it is precisely here that one feels the acute absence of the "partisan" viewpoint of Ngo Van, not to agree or disagree, but merely to be aware of the issues as they were posed for many actors. Marr is not, as shall be seen in a moment, writing the kind of contemporary "new social history" which relegates all politics to epiphenomena and footnotes, but one has the sense (assuming good faith) that he has simply never considered, or been confronted with, the idea that there was another current of serious dimension among the anti-colonial forces in Vietnam, and that the destruction of that force by the Viet Minh decisively shaped the whole history he is narrating. Thus, in a couple of paragraphs, he refers to the execution of Ta Thu Thau "by a local Viet Minh group,"¹² and says that "his frantic efforts to mobilize an anti-imperialist alternative to the Viet Minh in the north bore little fruit."¹³ And that, with 20-odd other passing references of no import, is all that Marr has to say about the intervention and physical elimination of a political force which in 1938-39 was defeating the ICP in elections and which in 1945 Marr's dust-cover companion Tran Van Giau was rounding up and executing by the dozens.

Marr says in his preface:

History is not all epic events: "small" people doing seemingly inconsequential things can sometimes influence the course of affairs. Even where there is no demonstrable effect, we need occasionally to remember that lives are being pursued...Without by any means endeavouring to write a history of the "underside," I have presented occasional views from below when the sources admit." (p. xxv)

However, in the case of the Trotskyists, there was a visible effect, there are sources (starting with reams of Stalinist vilification of them) and yet they somehow don't make it into Marr's book.

IT WOULD BE SILLY TO SAY THAT MARR'S MASSIVE RESEARCH stands or falls on its failure to show Vietnamese Trotskyism in its true dimension, but that failure does show a lack of political judgment which should raise questions about other sections, about which I have no special competence to comment. His long

chapters on the maneuvers of China, the U.S., Britain and France as they pursued their respective agendas in Vietnam in 1945 are full of rich detail; as indicated earlier, his chapter on the 1945 insurrection outside the big cities (to which most previous accounts have been limited) is probably a real advance in research. Marr thinks, moreover, that if the insurrection had occurred only in Hanoi, it could have been defeated by the Chinese or the French; undoubtedly the ability of the Viet Minh to eliminate the Trotskyists with so few negative consequences for themselves had something to do with the depth of their rural organization (the ICP had in fact always been more effective in the rural population, and the Trotskyists in the cities, prior to the war).

Yet, once again, Marr never confronts head-on the failure of the Viet Minh strategy of negotiated independence in 1945-46, and nowhere mentions the March 1946 Hanoi rally at which Ho Chi Minh had to plead with a skeptical crowd to believe that he had not betrayed them. The Vietnamese Trotskyists may well have been wrong to think that it was possible, in August-September 1945, to carry through "permanent revolution" against the combined force of the Allies, but the Vietnamese Stalinists were certainly wrong to think that they could negotiate independence with the French provisional government and its PCF ministers. That Marr never considers the rich material at his command in light of this problem is a sure sign that he has not sought out all the "demonstrable effects" of the thoughts and actions of Ngo Van 's forgotten revolutionaries.

NOTES

1. A very abridged version of Ngo Van's book, lacking much of the rich historical background and detail, and never correcting the impression that the author is an orthodox Trotskyist, is available in English under the title *Revolutionaries They Could Not Break: The Fight for the Fourth International in Vietnam*, (London, Index Pr. 1995). The subtitle alone, quite foreign to the spirit of the French original and to Ngo Van's current political viewpoint, says everything.

2. It should be made clear that neither the author of this review nor Ngo Van is a Trotskyist. Ngo Van was a Trotskyist prior to 1945, i.e. in a situation where international Trotskyism, still living on the energies of Trotsky himself, seemed to be virtually the sole left opposition to Stalinism, particularly in the colonial and semi-colonial worlds. Although Trotsky was wrong on a number of questions in the last phase of his life, starting with the nature of the Stalinist bureaucracy in Russia, he never sank to the level of the proto-Stalinist hurly-burly that Trotskyism became in the epoch of Mandel, Frank and Hansen.

3. It should be pointed out that in the 1930s, the area today known as Vietnam was made up of three distinct areas: Annam, Tonkin and Cochinchina, all under French administration. This review will use the name "Vietnam" throughout. (Indochina, of course, refers to Vietnam, Laos and Cambodia).

4. Trotskyists also made a serious impact in Ceylon (now Sri Lanka), Bolivia, and Argentina; prior to 1945, however, the case of Vietnam was unique, to my knowledge.

5. The core of this group was the so-called "Five Dragons," Nguyen ai Quoc (later famous under the name Ho Chi Minh), Phan van Truong, Nguyen an Ninh, Nguyen the Truyen, and Phan chau Trinh.

6. Under the leadership of Stalin and Bukharin, the CI pushed the Chinese Communist Party into a close alliance with the bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang of Chiang Kai-Shek who, in 1927, disarmed the Shanghai working class and massacred thousands of workers there.

7. As Ngo Van put it in an interview after the publication of his book, "Indochina under the French was a prison, and there was nothing to do but unite against the jailer." It has also been suggested that the influence of the independent Marxist, Nguyen an Ninh, one of the "Five Dragons," made possible this unusual collaboration, as both the Stalinist and Trotskyist intellectuals had been deeply influenced by him.

8. One criticism that can be made of Ngo Van's book is the absence of discussion of the confusion of some of the Trotskyists about the Stalinist repression against them, possibly having its roots in the 1933-37 period of collaboration on *La Lutte*. Here was a case where theoretical disarmament preceded literal disarmament. The backdrop of this confusion was the Trotskyists' belief that the Stalinists were "Mensheviks," to which they were the Bolsheviks. On September 12, 1945, for example (an incident not related by Ngo Van) the Viet Minh police in Saigon surrounded the headquarters of the pro-Trotskyist People's Councils. The Trotskyists surrendered without a fight. "We conducted ourselves as true revolutionary militants. We let ourselves be arrested without using violence against the police, even though we were more numerous and well-armed. They sacked our office, breaking furniture, ripping our flags, stealing the typewriters and burning all our papers." (quoted in R.J. Alexander, *International Trotskyism*, Durham 1991, p. 970).

9. These are *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885-1925* (1971) and *Vietnamese Tradition on Trial, 1920-1945* (1981).

10. Japan's aim in 1940 was mainly to close off the border with China to prevent supplies from reaching Chiang Kai-Shek's armies, without having to shoulder the full costs of an occupation. The French thereby continued to administer Indochina much as the Vichy regime administered the "free zone" of France after June 1940. After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, the tables were turned and the Japanese army was used by the Allies to police parts of Indochina.

11. I must point out, for clarification, that I am no specialist in Southeast Asia and know its history only from standard accounts available in English and French, and from the debates in the 1960s anti-war movement mentioned earlier. I was similarly motivated to write this review not for scholars but in the light of the political questions, of international interest, raised by Ngo Van's book.

12. There are conflicting versions of the death of Trotskyist leader Ta Thu Thau. Ngo Van only says (p. 344) that he had probably been killed by a local people's committee by September 9; Marr has him (pp. 434-435) arrested and executed in Quang Ngai after a "perfunctory trial"; Alexander has him tried and acquitted three times by people's committee's and finally "executed on orders from the southern Stalinist leader Tran Van Giau" (op. cit. p. 971), (the latter being the same figure appearing on the dust cover of Marr's book in conversation with the author). Better known and documented are the comments of Ho Chi Minh on Ta Thu Thau's death during his trip to Paris for negotiations at the end of 1945. Asked about it by French Trotskyist Rodolphe Prager, Ho "replied that Ta Thu Thau and the other Trotskyist leaders were really revolutionaries and that it was a great shame that they had been killed, but that it was done by local Viet Minh officials under conditions in which it was impossible for those in Hanoi to control what all the local leaders were doing." (ibid.) Later during the same trip, however, Ho was asked the same question by Daniel Guerin. Guerin recorded Ho's reply: "Thau was a great patriot and we mourn him," Ho Chi Minh told me with unfeigned emotion. But a moment later he added in a steady voice: "All those who do not follow the line which I have laid down will be broken." (ibid.)

13. Marr, p. 137. Marr's 90-page chapter on the ICP and the Viet Minh, while naturally focused on the war and above all 1945, makes no mention of the complicated history of relations between Stalinists and Trotskyists in Vietnam before 1939, nor any mention of Trotskyist dominance in the 1938 and 1939 elections. Throughout, the Trotskyists are merely mentioned as another current.

On Bureaucratic Collectivism

Barry Finger

THE WHOLESALE EXTINCTION OF STALINISM FROM THE EUROPEAN CONTINENT and its dramatic organizational transformation elsewhere has lent impetus to the resurrection of long dormant anti-statist themes in the capitalist West. Rather than having the salutary effect of clearing a path to the Marxian idea of remaking society from below — of dispensing with the need for modernizing elites, of educational dictatorships from on high, and of permanent dependence on self-perpetuating bureaucracies — the demise of Stalinism has had the corrosive consequence of thoroughly discrediting both revolutionary change and socialist aspiration itself. That this is so testifies to just how tightly identified Stalinism has been in the popular mind with revolutionary socialism, and how socialism itself has been seen as having maintained a diluted Western expression in the social-democratic welfare state. However unwelcome, this consequence can not be said to have been unanticipated. For whatever else so murderously separated capitalism from Stalinism, they remained unified both in their overarching fear of the revolutionary, democratic ideals which gave birth to the Russian revolution and to a working class whose latent power, once awakened, threatens the continuation of minority class rule, no matter the form. The opprobrium with which socialism is now so deeply stained is the unsavory dividend of decades of Stalinist ideological collaboration with the housebroken legions of the western intelligentsia — both of the right and “left-wing” variety — ever eager to adorn the latest Stalinist outrage with the patina of socialism.

In *Neither Capitalism nor Socialism*,* a volume painstakingly put together from obscure journals and bulletins now virtually unattainable, Ernest Haberkern and Arthur Lipow introduce and place into political context the emergence of a unique and dissident political and intellectual current from the Trotskyist movement which, from its in-

*Ernest E. Haberkern and Arthur Lipow editors, *Neither Capitalism nor Socialism*, Humanities Press, Atlantic Highlands, 1996.

Barry Finger is a member of the New Politics editorial board. His last article on this subject, “Was Russia a Workers’ State?” appeared in Volume V, No. 2, Winter 1995.

ception, wrestled with the issues that shaped and defined the past 60 years of world history. The book is divided into four sections which roughly correspond to the political chronology of "bureaucratic collectivism" from its embryonic beginnings. It ranges from the rejoinders to Leon Trotsky by James Burnham and French Trotskyist Yves Craipeau, through the conquest of new political and theoretical departures against the backdrop of the Hitler-Stalin Pact World War II and the post-war extension of Stalinism throughout Eastern Europe and China. Written from a revolutionary socialist perspective, it contains contributions from Max Shachtman, Hal Draper, Dwight Macdonald, Joseph Carter and Jack Brad. In their introduction, Haberkern and Lipow assess the significance of bureaucratic collectivism — a third form society, neither capitalist nor socialist — not only in historical perspective, that is, in its Stalinist form, but as a continuing challenge for socialism in the emerging post-Cold War world.

The Yugoslav revolutionary Ante Ciliga expressed the problem in its full profundity.

The enigma of the Russian revolution that humanity and the international workers' movement must solve is exactly this: how has it come about that all that constitutes the October revolution has been entirely abolished, while its outward forms have been retained; that the exploitation of workers and peasants have been brought back to life without reviving private capitalists and landowners; that a revolution, begun in order to abolish the exploitation of man by man, has ended by installing a new type of exploitation.

Others, including Ciliga offered explanations and some in the narrowest and most formal sense approached political conclusions arrived at by the Workers Party-Independent Socialist League (WP-ISL), from whose pages or under whose inspiration, this book is largely culled. Trotsky himself came to the precipice, conceding that the trajectory of revolutionary degeneration might well hurl society back beyond capitalism to a new form of class slavery. The question of whether the burgeoning Soviet bureaucracy was best understood as "class" or "caste" was ultimately fended off by Trotsky who anticipated a revolutionary upsurge at the end of World War II which would reduce the issue to one of historic curiosity without practical significance.

This was a dodge which could not be sustained by the end of the war. A sober response to Ciliga's question required transcending the type of analysis by platitude which satisfied itself by characterizing Stalinism as merely a form of "totalitarianism" and that explained its genesis by the outcome of "crimes and excesses," or "mistaken policies" that were the inevitable result of immutable historic phenomena. The theory of bureaucratic collectivism argued, to the contrary, that the tendencies which give rise to this new form of class society, once understood, could only be combated and eradicated by a self-organized and politically conscious working class; that socialism, in other words, cannot be achieved without the full and active participation of the working class in building its new social order. And this is what distinguishes the precursors of the theory such as Bruno Rizzi or James Burnham — who insisted with a dogged determination reinforced by their own rich but nonetheless one-dimensional insights into the phenomenon, that the historic moment for socialism had passed — from the independent socialist tendency of the WP-ISL

for whom bureaucratic collectivism became the anteroom to a *reorientation* of socialist theory. In the hands of the latter, bureaucratic collectivism facilitated the cleansing or jettisoning of the most mistaken views of revolutionary socialism and became a vehicle for the forceful reassertion and amplification of that cardinal principle of Marxism, namely, the fundamental inseparability of socialism and democracy, and for the repositioning of that understanding at the very heart of the revolutionary socialist program.¹

It is moreover to the lasting credit of the WP-ISL that they drew an understanding from this premise that the production relations of a state collectivism without democratic feedback from below, that is of totalitarian collectivism, would eventually engender insurmountable impediments to the continued viability of the system itself. That they were at first overzealous in this regard, believing that Stalinism was nationally confined, does not detract from the essential breakthrough provided by the theory. It does place them light-years ahead of that long list of learned folk who saw, for good or ill, humanity's future tied to one variant or another of bureaucratic collectivism.

Other tendencies and political currents on the left, such as social democracy and "orthodox" Trotskyism, also profess hatred of Stalinism, but lack even the most rudimentary understanding of it. They have remained, at best, non-Stalinist, powerless to contribute — much less enrich — a broader *anti*-Stalinist current. It is precisely in their lack of understanding of bureaucratic collectivism that they remain, for all their otherwise demonstrably robust distinctions, symmetrical political entities. It is not merely that both have historically "defended" socialism by acting as ideological agents of reconciliation between the Western working classes and the ruling classes of one of the two contending imperialist forces. That they also did so, despite urging the working classes to remain politically independent of the Stalinist parties and movements, where this was still possible, was equally an imperative of organizational self-justification as it was a symptom of anti-Stalinist insight and therefore no more laudable for that pretext alone.

THE LARGER ROOT OF THE NON-STALINIST LEFT'S ideological confusion, however, lies rather in the differing weight assigned by it and the independent socialist tendency to the connection of socialism and democracy. Irresolution at this fundamental level has time and again rendered the non-Stalinist left ideologically susceptible to a weakened contagion of the same strain of bureaucratic collectivism which it opposes in its most virulent form. This manifests itself in the continuing "discovery" of some purported underlying socialistic dynamic to existing class societies as justification for their respective political capitulations: social democracy identified this momentum in the growth of public enterprises under capitalism, as well as in the state management of demand and the broad administrative regulation of corporate behavior; Trotskyism² (and the Stalinoid wing of social democracy, for that matter) in the enlargement of nationalized industry and state planning under Stalinism. Either way, socialism is found to have emerged through bureaucratic labyrinths, behind the backs and without the active stewardship of the working class — indeed regardless of whether the working class, however large its social weight, plays any active political role whatsoever in society or is even, for that matter, the beneficiary of the most elementary of political rights.

The collapse of state collectivization in the East and its parallel shrinkage in the West is of comparatively recent circumstance. As a social tendency, however, the rise of the bureaucracy as a third social force in contemporary society had its roots in the mounting inability of inter- and post-war capitalist accumulation to maintain social cohesiveness. In the Stalinist social system, bureaucratic collectivism emerged full blown from the defeat of the Russian working class and the annihilation of the Bolshevik party. It was historically rooted in the very backwardness of Russian capitalism, yet had as its precondition the successful revolutionary destruction of capitalist power. But where a doddering capitalism was limping along — still profitable perhaps, but plainly incapable of maintaining social coherence on its own accord — reliance on bureaucratic crutches was a painful yet unavoidable concession to reality.

This social tendency forced its way through different channels than those experienced in Russia. Clearly bureaucratic intrusions especially in post-war European society, but paralleled by the burgeoning permanent arms economy and nascent welfare statism of America, were historic innovations signifying something other than the mere bolstering of capitalism. These departures inoculated capitalism with the germ-cells of a unique and unprecedented set of social relations. Personnel from the disintegrating managerial and administrative strata of capitalism — enlisted both to oversee the state sector and to reassure and thereby fracture the resistance of capital to it — merged with breakaway sections of the labor bureaucracy. Superimposed and crowding against the dynamic of capital self-expansion, there was now an ever-expanding state bureaucracy, drawing its strength increasingly at the expense of the two contending classes and against the social alternatives which they represented.

This project assumed a variety of national experience, from overt statist planning in France, to the functional merger of the state with leading cartels in Japan. National peculiarities aside, the mixed economies found their common attribute in the permanently sustained increase of the proportionate size of government expenditure. This gave the state a propulsive role not only in determining the volume, but in shaping the composition of overall demand. Demand management at the state level fundamentally altered certain characteristics of the business cycle and, moreover, suggested a back door by which it could begin to supplant the capital market as the primary allocative mechanism of investment. This was a tendency not only foreseen, but welcomed by Keynes as foreshadowing the “euthanasia of the rentier.”

Haberkern and Lipow unfortunately locate the bureaucratic collectivist inroads to capitalism elsewhere — not in the rise of an ever more autonomous state bureaucracy, but in the corporate form itself. This is a relapse into Burnham's theory in the *Managerial Revolution* and a retreat from the analysis that stems directly from Marx. For the latter, the modern joint stock company is notable precisely because shareholders collectivize risk and profit and thereby, by degrees, negate the anarchy of the marketplace. This expresses the self-collectivizing tendencies within a healthy and dynamic capitalism. It is a step further in organizational modification well beyond the earlier transformation of the capitalist pricing system into a redistributive mechanism allocating surplus-value in accordance with average profit rates. By these means, capitalism, in its corporate form, is able to vastly augment its ability to accu-

multate, to rationalize its existing production facilities and to avail itself of technological advances which, together, marked capitalist production as truly synonymous with mass production. The corporate bureaucracy, moreover, fails to evolve in the direction of class autonomy, because as soon as it acquires capital it is reabsorbed into the preexisting network of social relations and is subject to the same social parameters as the organizational property form which gave birth to it.

THOSE COLLECTIVIZING MEASURES, ON THE OTHER HAND, WHICH AROSE from the need to hold a disintegrating capitalism together — which were not, in other words, an organic outgrowth of capitalist accumulation itself, but of its mounting difficulties — represented an internal adaptation and concession to a rising third social force operating on a world scale. The very permanence of supplementary state interventions signified a tacit acknowledgement of the immanence of crisis conditions simmering below the surface of post-war prosperity. But because the state sector is so completely entangled with the modern market economy, it is impossible, as a practical matter, to anticipate what adjustments a shrinkage in the state sector could generate in any concrete situation to offset the slack in demand. Nevertheless, the continued recourse of capitalism to the adjunct of a mixed economy signifies a continued process of internal decay, of a capitalism unable to utilize the very economic resources that it, itself, generates. Even in the midst of relative affluence, American capitalism has proven chronically incapable of solving the economic question for millions of workers, above all for black and minority communities which continue to exist in a Lazarus-like economic twilight.

The problem is that although state production detracts from capital accumulation, it is also possible that economic activity would be even more depressed in the absence of state-induced production. This is because when the state borrows *idle* capital it mobilizes assets which would not be otherwise used and absorbs them into its own sphere. Markets are thereby cleared, but without system-wide accumulation and, moreover, without the imperative improvement in overall profitability previously required for self-resolution in the classical form of capitalist crises. The state simply places into circulation a chain of inputs from intermediary suppliers that can now be individually realized as profits through the issuance of state contracts. State activity, under such circumstances, extends economic activity beyond the point where it is *capitalistically* justifiable. Any future deterioration in the level of state demand can then only be offset by an invigorated accumulation process if the conditions of profitability have already been reestablished; if the previously existing idle capital could now, in other words, be capitalistically employed. Should real accumulation actually resume this would be attributable not to the actions of the state, either in priming the pump or in relinquishing its control over economic resources, but because excess capital values have previously been purged and an overall improvement in the extraction of surplus value has already been attained — in short, because a massive restructuring of the system has improved the prospects for self-expansion on the part of the surviving capital values.

THE *STATE BUREAUCRACY* IN MODERN CAPITALISM, as opposed to the corporate bu-

reaucracy, has built into it an autonomizing dynamic. This is entirely distinct from Bonapartism, to which the capitalist class occasionally seeks recourse in periods of revolutionary turmoil and which may, in its extremes, attain political independence. This independence does not tend to class autonomy insofar as the Bonapartist bureaucracy does not struggle to define a separate economic role for itself in society. Its functions are confined to reinforcing and enhancing the repressive functions of the capitalist state — functions which may require the curtailment of political rights even for bourgeois parties, but not the abridgement of bourgeois property rights, beyond the costs of repression itself. This engorged bureaucracy is an *ad hoc* inconvenience for capitalism to be dispensed with when its services are no longer required, as illustrated most recently by the grisly Chilean experience.

The modern administrative state bureaucracy, on the other hand, is a permanent feature of capitalism, grounded in the fundamental economic deficiencies of capitalism rather than in any acute political crisis. This state bureaucracy, even if marketing no values of its own, has no means of exchange other than what it *expropriates* from the private sector through its taxing or borrowing powers. (And, insofar as loans are payment through installment, debt retirement presupposes additional future taxes on capital.) For what appears to be accumulation on the part of capitalists operating under state contracts is in fact realized through the *withdrawal of surplus value from the system as a whole*, that is by deductions from the accumulation fund which would otherwise be available to expand the two major departments of capitalist production. The fundamental distinction between capitalist production and economic activity per se is thereby effaced. The difference between outright nationalization which, under some circumstances, can be clearly seen as anti-capitalist, and the massive state interventionism undertaken by the bureaucracy is therefore, too, an artificial one. Although clouded by the formal change in property relations, the fact remains that state-induced economic activity is fundamentally anti-capitalist in scope — even if it provides a measure of economic stabilization — without being socialist in content. The mixed economy may have been conceived, and is still touted, solely as a full-employment program realized through state intervention to enhance the private enterprise system. But the price paid for this temporary stability is an entrenched state apparatus which secures and expands *its* control over economic resources *bureaucratically* and wields that control both without opportunity for direct, private ownership and without relinquishing that control to democratic participation from below.

As long as capital is accumulating, the state can expand proportionally and, in tandem with the private sector, lift the economy to levels approaching full capacity employment. In such periods of relative prosperity, the tendency of the state sector to encroach beyond the established baseline level of economic involvement remains latent. So too, the revolving door that exists between the upper tier of state bureaucracy and ever more lucrative positions in the corporate bureaucracy acts as a retardant to the evolution of a solidified, institutional class consciousness on the part of state administrators. This is reinforced by the political control exercised by the bourgeois parties over large swaths of discretionary fiscal policy.

Nevertheless, “welfare statism,” as such, certainly became the expression,

if not the ideology, around which this new class-in-the-making began to coopt and dominate mass movements for change, promising identification with labor and reformist aspirations without actually strengthening the forces of opposition. Their support was reconfigured, not as active participants for social progress, but solely as the objects of bureaucratic action. Welfare statism offered the prospect of countering, as if class consciously, the weight of big business and big labor in the "public" interest, an interest which it so fortuitously claimed to embody. On this basis it continually expanded its mass base by uniting a cross section of class and community interest groups into unified patronage constituencies, whose continued prosperity was dependent on a corresponding growth of bureaucratic influence and power. Yet its mental horizons remained remarkably limited, as evidenced by its glaring inability to definitively advance the national integration of administrative structures.

With the end of post-war prosperity, a prosperity limited in capitalist terms both by relatively low profit rates and dependency on comparatively large doses of state-induced activity, the incipient tendency of the state to expand its consumption at the expense of capital accumulation became manifest. Yet because the inherent tendency of profit to fall under capitalism must be contravened by ever more feverish rates of accumulation, the expansion of the state sector in times of crisis threatens to intensify the breakdown of the system. The system, therefore, began to come face to face with a new social dilemma: not only was there a crisis of capitalism, but there was a crisis of the mixed economy itself — of the interpenetration of two competing and, at length, contradictory economic dynamics at work in modern society. For state activity can at length stave off the cumulative momentum of economic contraction solely by imposing a barrier against the very massacre of values, including the value of labor-power, otherwise needed to restore profitability. But circumventing the purgative process that such a deep economic contraction would entail requires a relentless diversion of excess, non-profitable capital to the state sector, a diversion so massive as to threaten an overturn of the established social equilibrium. The elements of the predicament began to unravel in unmistakable terms: either the ever-evolving submission of the existing economy to bureaucratic direction under the auspices of the state or the decisive reassertion of the value-profit relationships of the market sector over a drastically reduced and hence manageable "public" sphere.

To arrest the decay of the private enterprise system would require nothing less than the total overhaul and reversal of the general developmental trend of post-war capitalism. To be sure, there was always a latent tendency residing in the mass base of capitalism to halt and revoke the reliance on stabilizing social forces from without its ranks for a return to traditional forms of repression and market discipline. This sentiment was usually confined to the margins of capitalist parties or beyond. The "Republican revolution," which actually has its roots in the Reagan Administration and its counterpart in the Thatcher regime, is the crowning achievement of a massive, corporately financed ideological retrenchment. Business sponsored think-tanks now offered the hat-in-hand intellectual set, the reserve army of academia, the very security so seldom available through traditional academic pursuits. It is through this conduit that capitalist reaction was sanitized and lifted from relative obscurity to new-found prominence. The taxpaying host, or some equally potent

yet empty abstraction, which the bureaucracy supposedly “exploited” finally became the rallying point of reactionary resentment. The aims of this burgeoning “revolution” were quite simply to replicate through internalization the very dynamic purportedly at work internationally. Yet, this lusty second childhood that capitalism has now apparently lit upon remains recklessly oblivious to the sobering paradox that the collapse of bureaucratic collectivism in the formerly Stalinist nations has yet to offer the West any tangible commercial momentum to displace its own state sector through the export of surplus capital abroad.

Despite the right's scapegoating of the usual litany of social culprits for the hated rise of the welfare state — in a campaign of demonization which, in its vehemence, has brought to the fore every atavistic and retrograde prejudice and paranoid delusion in the American psyche — the fact remains that the rise of the state bureaucracy finds its reason, above all, in the malfunction of private capital production. As a form of collectivization conjured up against a disintegrating capitalist society, the mixed economy has provided the system with a degree of social cohesion purchased on the cheap. For the welfare state dissipated and diffused the oppositional tendencies of the exploited and oppressed, tendencies already long weakened and disoriented by the pall cast by Stalinism over insurgent movements for change, and did so without actual redress of the fundamental social problems which it, too, proved at length powerless to overcome. For this reason alone, the existence of bureaucratic collectivism, although perhaps not in its Stalinist form, will forever be tethered to the continued existence of capitalism in decline. What we are witnessing today is merely the forced renegotiation of the terms of engagement.

BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISM IS SOCIALISM'S DOPPLEGÄNGER. It is a distorted reflection of the fact that real social advance requires some form of collectivization. Where the working class cannot organize its forces to overthrow capitalism and establish the free rule of labor, bureaucracy invariably arises as an independent, substitute social force. The state bureaucracies, Stalinist or otherwise, can address the unengaged historic tasks of labor, but only with reactionary, anti-socialist consequences. The 20th century has verified, in horrific detail, the fundamental truth of that proposition by the manifest failure of these forces, either alone or in combination, to resolve the most pressing needs of humanity. The studies assembled by Haberkern and Lipow which anticipated this conclusion stemmed from an examination of the “Russian question.” The tragic failure of a workers' revolution demanded clarification of the fundamental propositions and purposes of revolutionary socialism with a sweep and urgency that few other issues could claim. Rare were those in the broad revolutionary movement able to rise to the challenge. This contribution from those who did constitutes a unique and enduring addition to the arsenal of socialism.

NOTES

1. In a lamentable subtext to this volume the editors seek to separate Max Shachtman, the leading personality of the WP-ISL, from the independent socialist heritage. It is true that Shachtman did not initially develop the most far-seeing or consistent version of the

bureaucratic collectivist theory. That was done by Joseph Carter, a brilliant theoretician in the early Trotskyist movement. But it must also be noted that the “bowdlerization” of Shachtman’s article, “Is Russia a Workers’ State?”, that the editors make so much of, cannot simply be attributed to his later political collapse. The essay first appeared in that form, cleansed of its semi-Trotskyist conclusions, in the January-February 1952 issue of *The New Internationalist*. It was modified openly, and with an editor’s introduction to avert any confusion as to what the movement stood for. Where Shachtman’s strengths lay and remain overlooked by the editors’ unease with his final, ambiguous legacy was in his development, amplification and application of the theory. It is not merely that he defended the heritage of the Russian revolution and “debunked the claims of several apologists for Stalinism such as Isaac Deutscher,” but that he did so while trailblazing an independent socialist or third camp formulation of that defense. That is also what the essays assembled in the *Bureaucratic Revolution* reflect, and what the *Struggle for the New Course* is all about. Third camp socialism, moreover, provided the context for his remarkable articles on the colonial and national liberation problems which, in turn, became the springboard for his spirited opposition to the competing imperialist camps during World War II and to the post-war division of Europe. The theory of bureaucratic collectivism alone made possible the view best articulated by Shachtman that the Communist political parties were *in* but not *of* the labor movement. And it was this insight that alerted him to other, social democratic roads to bureaucratic collectivism. While the editors provide some worthwhile insights, they should be augmented with “The Two Deaths of Max Shachtman” by Julius Jacobson which appeared in the Winter 1973 issue of this journal and Peter Drucker’s *Max Shachtman and His Left*.

2. It is also of note that all the weaknesses of Trotsky’s theory are augmented in the state-capitalist theory identified with Tony Cliff, leading theoretician of the British Trotskyist movement. Here the Stalinist bureaucracy is assigned the task of completing the historic mission of the bourgeoisie, because the state ownership of the means of production purportedly gives a “tremendous lever” to the development of the productive forces. This preserves Trotsky’s earliest theory that the bureaucracy represented a centrist, i.e., pro-capitalist wing and splices it to the later interpretations dominant in Trotskyist circles which invented the “transitional” character of Stalinist society as a bridge between capitalism and socialism. Thus, far from casting society back to a new form of barbarism, the Cliffites held Stalinism as tracking the highest pinnacle of capitalist development. It followed that the Stalinist parties were viewed merely as a version of social democracy, or labor reformism and a more left-wing version of the species at that. This melange has been offered as a corrective to the “supra-historical” theory of bureaucratic collectivism. Needless to say, history has been less than kind to this theory on every account. (See “The Theory of Bureaucratic Collectivism: A Critique,” reprinted in *Neither Washington nor Moscow*, Bookmarks, 1982.)

It would take this essay far afield from the theme under consideration to deal comprehensively with the theory of state capitalism, one of the most perennially stultifying and disorienting explanations of Stalinism. Marxism is an instrument for interpreting living reality and as such its propositions are provisional, meaning that they must be tested, modified and improved as required by evolving circumstances. State capitalism instead reduces Marxism to dogma whereby the material means of production under Stalinism, a form of society unanticipated by Marx, are treated as capital. They acquire this attribute not because they express a definite social relation between specific classes expressed through the instrumentality of things — this after all being the method of *Capital* and presupposes, reasonably enough, private ownership, i.e. the existence of capitalists — but because the accumulation of the means of production are a precondition of expanded reproduction, and capitalism was seen by Marx as that *form* of expanded reproduction that prepares society for socialism. QED Stalinism equals capitalism. Any other conclusion would, according to the Cliff church, render “Marxism as a method, as a guide for the proletariat as the subject of historical change (...) superfluous, meaningless.”

The Russian Question And American Socialism

Julius Jacobson

IT IS 90 YEARS SINCE WERNER SOMBART POSED THE QUESTION "Why is there no socialism in the United States?" Since then, socialists and sociologists have studied and debated the problem. Was it the lack of a feudal tradition, the myth and reality of upward mobility that was a barrier to class and social solidarity, the polyglot character of a heavily immigrant working class, the unique dynamism and wealth of American capitalism or, as Sombart put it, did socialism founder on the shoals of "roast beef and apple pie"?

One problem with Sombart's suggestion, as with much of his data, is that it was factually misleading. For example, he exaggerated the economic advantages of American workers over their German counterparts which he offered as a major reason why millions of workers rallied behind the red flag in Germany and failed to follow suit in the U.S. Unlike what is implied in listing higher American wages as a factor in keeping socialism in check, the improving living standards of German workers up to the beginning of the Great War was accompanied by a geometric increase in the strength of German social democracy. Actually, the major impetus for German social democratic growth was the swelling popular reaction against Bismarck's violation of democratic rights, above all, restrictions on suffrage rights which the American male citizenry had already achieved.

The Sombart thesis, for all its vulnerability, was provocative. Interest in the question remained long after the book was published in 1906 and grew in prominence with the work of Selig Perlman (along with John R. Commons and Phillip Taft, the encyclopedic deans of the Wisconsin labor school) who placed a cap on socialism's prospects that Sombart did not. Perlman argued that the singular development of American capitalism, making it possible to find redress via the ballot, and the heavy concentration of immigrants in the working class leading to social and cultural diversification would effectively prevent the working class from rising above the level of "job consciousness."

JULIUS JACOBSON is the co-editor of NEW POLITICS.

THE DEBATE CONTINUED TO SIMMER AMONG HISTORIANS and in theoretically oriented circles in the labor movement. But the question was brought to a boil again with the appearance in 1951 of Daniel Bell's *Marxian Socialism in the United States*. His monograph was actually written in 1949 but first appeared in print two years later in a volume that was part of the Princeton University series, *Socialism in American Life*. A second edition appeared in 1967, and once again in 1996 with a new afterword by the author and, appropriately enough, a tribute by Bell, who had moved from a tepid sympathizer of liberal politics to a neoconservative ideologue, "to Irving and Bea Kristol, *respice, adspice, prospice*."

With enviable literary flair and impressive scholarship, Bell selectively recounts the history of American socialism. Although he recognizes its moments of organizational strength and occasional limited political successes, there is a disproportionate and distorting emphasis on the failures, the theoretical shortcomings and eccentricities of American socialism that tends to run to caricature. Bell tips his hat politely to Sombart but is clearly disapproving of the German academic socialist (in later life attracted to Nazism). In Bell's judgment Sombart asks the wrong question. The real question is not, as Sombart put it in his title, *Why Is There No Socialism in America?*, but why there *cannot* be a socialist movement in America. Sombart, after all, was only investigating and analyzing the *past* failure of American socialism to establish itself as a force comparable to burgeoning socialist movements in Europe. But as a formal Marxist, Sombart believed that as capitalism and the working class matured, the objective circumstances which handicapped American socialism in the past would be dissipated. Thus, in the last italicized lines in his book, he underlined his belief "that in the next generation Socialism in America will very probably experience the greatest expansion of its appeal."

Bell would have none of that. American socialism has no past, and could not sink deep permanent roots as a viable mass movement because it has no future. It is simply in contradiction to the unique circumstances and realities of America's political and social development. In the World According to Bell:

American society at the middle of the twentieth century was evolving in a far different direction from that predicted by Marxist sociology. There were not in America an "Army," "Church," "Large Landowners," "Bureaucracy," "Bourgeoisie," "Petty Bourgeoisie," and "Proletariat" — the staple ingredients of European social politics ...

Even without benefit of years of sociological training but with reasonable powers of observation and a modest knowledge of American history, one should clearly see that the past and present realities of American life are at fundamental odds with the breathtaking invention of a

classless society. Bell notwithstanding, there is an all too visible and powerful bourgeoisie (with or without the initial cap), as there is an identifiable exploited proletariat (even when framed in quotes and a cap P). There is a widening and deepening gap between rich and poor, there are greed, corruption, and imperialist impulses surfacing so regularly as to give the impression (at least to the untutored) that they are endemic to the existing social order. Whatever happened to all the robber barons? Though this was argued in 1949, Bell's afterword written last year suggests that this euphoric view of American society needs no amendment even though from then until now we have had all the naked bourgeois depredations of the Reagan counterrevolution and the process of ripping apart the social safety net, which continues under the Clinton Administration.

This fanciful image of a classless America is essential to his argument that American socialism is inherently alien to American life. If the United States has no Army, no Church and no Bureaucracy, as in Europe, and if, above all, there are no social counterparts to Europe's Small Bourgeoisie, Big Bourgeoisie or Proletariat then, obviously, in the absence of contending classes, there can be no class struggle. And without classes and class struggle to complicate social arrangements there is no need for ideologies which correspond to the interests of (non-existent) irreconcilable classes. Thus socialism as the ideology of a (non-existent) Proletariat and the entire socialist project that directs its main fire at a (non-existent) Bourgeoisie is wholly irrelevant to the exceptional American experience.

Bell dismisses class struggle but does not deny that there are conflicts, often quite severe and disruptive of the social equilibrium. But they are conflicts within or between special interest groups, labor, farmers, minorities, the military, sectional interests, etc. These differences and grievances can be negotiated, ameliorated or resolved through the normal channels provided by the American political system and its traditions. And then, of course, there is the polling booth where aggrieved parties can vote for candidates who best represent their interests. Indeed, Bell sounds the alarm that "if a democratic society is to survive ... then some new sense of civic obligation must arise that will be strong enough to command the allegiance of all groups and provide a principle of equity in the distribution of the rewards and privileges of society." All of which might make one wonder what world Daniel Bell inhabits.

THOSE WHO INSIST ON THE RELEVANCE OF SOCIALIST IDEOLOGY are eschewed by Bell for taking on the characteristics of religious zealots; they become "millenarian," "chiliastic," "eschatological." (Ironically, in recent years, neoconservative Bell has associated himself more directly and literally with millenarianism, urging a turn to religion to restore our faith in traditional American virtues and to combat the forces of evil

and spiritual degradation that are upon us.)

For Bell "the socialist movement, *by its very statement of goal* and in its rejection of the capitalist *order* [how can capitalism have an "order" if there is no "Bourgeoisie" or "Proletariat"?] could not relate itself to the specific problems of social action in the here-and-now, give-and-take political world." (my emphasis) Bell proceeds to borrow a famous phrase from Luther: Socialism "was trapped by the unhappy problem of 'living *in* but not *of* this world'."

Daniel Bell, as already acknowledged, is an erudite scholar and most felicitous literary stylist. Thus, some of his crucial formulations, even when extraordinary for their banality and/or lack of historical verisimilitude and/or incoherence, have seduced sections of his wide audience into accepting them as repositories of sociological wisdom. The notion that socialism "by its very statement of goal" and "rejection of the capitalist order" is "living *in* but not *of* this world" is a more notorious example of a would-be pithy phrase that combines all three vices: banality, historical inaccuracy and incoherence. In one sense, I suppose, there is an element of truth in the formulation, but an element that also makes it a bit of a hoax. That is, an American socialist who lives and functions in the U.S. whether engaging in acts of social protest on this or that issue, or involved in a labor struggle, or participating in the electoral process, or protesting the war in Vietnam is, by definition, not *of* a capitalist America or *of* an imperialist America or *of* an America which pursues economic and social policies which violate democratic and socialist values. And if the general public, as is unfortunately often the case, manifests its approval of retrograde governmental social policies, that only makes it all the more incumbent on an American socialist to maintain his or her opposition to prevailing sentiments even if that provides evidence for a neoconservative sociologist that socialism is "millenarian" and "chiliastic."

If to be *of* America requires that one be aware of the social, political and economic realities of American culture, its history, social relations and relations of production, of the nature of what Bell admits is a "capitalist order," of what constitutes the best interests of working people, women, minorities and gays and to participate in elections (in which more than half the electorate chooses not to vote), then I would insist that socialists are far more "*of*" America than all those in and out of the academy who genuflect before an exalted America that exists only in the liberal and neoconservative imagination.

ONE OF THE MORE NOXIOUS FEATURES IN THIS FORMULA is that it inherently trivializes or denies the historical contributions that socialists have made to reform in this country. Bell distorts history as he appropriates the contributions made by socialist "millenarians" and donates them to more moderate reformers dedicated to working within the system. For ex-

ample, Bell writes:

The American labor movement, to complete the logic of the metaphor, learned to live in and of the world and in so doing managed to transform some of the values of the society — most notably in winning the acceptance of collective rights and group action as legitimate norms, as against the older traditions of individualism.

But Bell surely knows that the struggle for a law establishing the 8-hour day had to overcome the resistance of the AFL under Gompers' leadership, just as Gompers and his successor, William Green, and the AFL leadership as a whole, which so impresses Bell as the source of transforming some of the values of the society, were opposed to federally established minimum wage laws and similar forms of government intervention which were precisely in the reactionary spirit of "the older traditions of individualism." This is not to deny that there were ultimatist and impossibilist strains in American socialism that resisted fighting for reforms. Yet, what Bell passes over too lightly is that important reforms for working people and for the populace as a whole might never have occurred — or might have been delayed for generations — had it not been for the courage and sacrifice of early socialists and similar "chiliasts" and "millenarians." I cannot think of a single major reform relating to conditions of labor in this country in the 19th and early 20th centuries that was not initiated by and/or involved the active participation of precisely the "millenarians" and "chiliasts" who Bell would have us believe were removed from the give-and-take of American political life. Was this not true for the struggle against child labor, for the 8-hour day? These and similar reforms did not even threaten the social order of capitalism but that did not stop the (non-existent) "Bourgeoisie" from marshalling much of the forces at its disposal including state and federal (non-existent) "Bureaucracies and even, when hard-pressed, troops of a (non-existent) "Army" to resist the demand for more humane working conditions by a (non-existent) "Proletariat."

Similarly the struggle for industrial unionism could never have succeeded as it did had it not been for the sacrifices of thousands of militants whose commitment to industrial unionism was fired by a no less passionate commitment to basic social transformation. Eugene V. Debs, a revolutionary class struggle socialist, was hardly any less a part of the struggle "to transform some of the values of the society" than Samuel Gompers with his "pure and simple unionism" and his fanatical hatred of socialism.

IN THE WORLD ACCORDING TO BELL, American socialism only hastened its demise as an organizing political force by its readiness to sacrifice position and popularity for the sake of principle, that is, taking principled stands which, in Bell's words, meant moving socialism to "a frame of

reference completely outside the structure of American life." Bell immediately offers a major example of an eschatologically driven impulse to self-destruct: the Socialist Party's opposition to World War I, even after America's declaration of war in 1917. He writes:

By opposing World War 1 (I am not passing judgment but analyzing consequences [!]) the Socialist Party cut itself off from the labor movement and created a widespread distrust of itself among the American people.

Bell's parenthetical denial of passing judgment is, to put it most kindly, disingenuous. Of course, he is passing judgment. In this writer's judgment the courageous anti-war position adopted by the Socialist Party at its St. Louis convention in 1917, which exposed the imperialist nature of the war, proved that the American Socialist Party was far more attuned to "the realities of the world" and of America than the propaganda agencies of the Wilson Administration or the hysterical ravings of Samuel Gompers or the chauvinism of Bell's ideological ancestors, one-time radicals and progressives who turned coat and garnished their support of imperialism with more subtle apologies.

If we take Bell at his word, that he is really not passing judgment, that implies that the opposition of the Socialist Party to the war *might have been* theoretically and morally sound. In which case, if logic still prevails, Bell is saying that even if the war was politically indefensible, violated one's deepest concerns for democracy, and would have added tens of thousands of Americans to the millions who had already perished, socialism revealed other-worldly millenarianism when it refused to abandon opposition to such a war to avoid "creat[ing] a widespread distrust of itself among the American people." By this crude application of "consequences" as the determinant of correct policy, socialists in the American South should not have raised their voices against deeply rooted popular racial prejudices and Jim Crow laws since that, too, would have meant antagonizing the vast majority of its Southern constituency.

The courageous and principled anti-war position of the Socialist Party was a political and moral high point in the history of American socialism. And the irony is that, despite Bell, neither its anti-war position nor the support most Party members gave to the Bolshevik-led Russian Revolution had dire organizational consequences. Instead of widening popular distrust, opposition to the war seemed to have generated greater support for the Party. Its membership and influence actually grew, and not only among foreign-born workers attracted to the Party's pro-Soviet stand. The membership reached 120,000 by 1919 and in municipal elections the SP polled one-fifth of the vote in New York City, more than one-third of the vote in Chicago and Toledo, and came within a few percentage points of winning a majority of the Cleveland vote.

Yet, a few years later, the American socialist movement was indeed in shambles. But this decline cannot be attributed, as Bell insists, to the

"chiliastic" nature of American socialism. The factional struggles within the Socialist Party and the defection of its left wing in the fall of 1919 were, of course, factors in its decline. But the major reason for the collapse was repression. 1919-1921 was one of the darkest periods in American history. It was also a period of enormous working class militancy, an unprecedented number of strikes involving huge numbers of workers in basic industries. All the organs and institutions of "the capitalist order" were brought into play to crush labor insurgency. More than that, the threat posed by the Bolshevik government and the possibility of successful socialist revolutions in Europe were correctly recognized as serious threats to the stability of American capitalism. In addition, socialists and communists played an active role in the strike wave that prompted a level of violent repression that the socialist movement, weakened by the splits in its ranks, could not withstand.

THE MOST FALLIBLE SECTION OF BELL'S BRIEF AGAINST SOCIALISM, is his interpretation of the American Communist movement. It is also of the most interest because of its contemporaneity, and bears most directly on my broader discussion of the "Russian Question."

In his 1967 introduction, Bell sums it up:

The Communist Party, within the metaphor, lived *neither* in the world *nor* of it, but sought to encapsulate itself in a world of its own. It thus faced a peculiar problem of cohesion. Other, earlier alien movements, such as the (sic) utopianism or anarchism, had also rejected existing society completely. But the utopians retreated to an Icarian wilderness which was spatially apart from the world, while the anarchists psychologically suspended time while waiting for the magical "deed" that would instantly transform the world. The Communists, living in the society while seeking to promote a revolutionary movement, sought to maintain their zeal by establishing a psychological distance from the society (by nurturing a wholesale distrust of all institutions as "bourgeois" institutions) and by instilling a combat posture in their adherence. But it was that very distance, and the sense of strangeness it created, which allowed individuals to magnify the fear of Communists and make them such ready targets of hostility during the Korean War and the McCarthyite excesses in American life.

There is not a single phrase in this pompous pseudo-political/psychoanalytical bombast that is accurate or even makes much sense. The Communist Party did not nurture a wholesale distrust of all institutions as bourgeois institutions. How Stalinists responded to bourgeois institutions depended on the political season as determined in Moscow. In the heydays of American Stalinism, the Popular Front era of 1935-1939 and from June 1941 until the end of the war, the Communist Party outdid the bourgeoisie in its feigned solicitude for all bourgeois institutions. Here, is just another crude example of Bell's determination to metamorphose Stalinism into a militant Marxian socialist movement

for the clear purpose of discrediting socialism. And he surely knows that it is preposterous to refer to this Stalinist party as one that "sought to encapsulate itself in a world of its own." That is something the Kremlin would never have allowed and an effort that the American Communist Party would never have made.

But there is method to this nonsense. Bell knows that the American Communist Party was completely dominated by the Soviet Union, that it did not and could not seek "a world of its own." Just as he knows that the American Communist Party had nothing to do with American Marxism. But by treating American Communism as if it had been an independent, legitimate wing of American socialism and by including it as one of the larger parties of American Marxism, he makes it that much easier for himself to tar the entire socialist movement and the socialist project with the terrible brush of Stalinism. And how easy it is to demonstrate the remoteness of socialism from American life if Stalinism is equated with its Marxist antithesis. (Note, also, how Bell suggests that Communists brought "hostility" and "McCarthyite excesses" on themselves.)

In Bell's study there is nothing approaching a serious analysis of the nature of Stalinism or the Stalinist party. In this, there is an interesting parallel with the work of many left historians of American Communism who also treat the party as if it had been an authentic wing of American Marxian socialism. But while they do it for the purpose of portraying the party in a favorable light, Bell does it for the purpose of debasing American socialism.

ONE HISTORICAL REALITY NO LESS RESPONSIBLE than any objective obstacle inhibiting the growth of a mass socialist movement and condemning revolutionary socialism to a sectarian existence for the last 70 years has been the negative impact of a unique, reactionary social phenomenon — Stalinism.

The immediate antecedents of the early Communist movement was the left wing of the Socialist Party which, in 1917-1919, coalesced around several tendencies with different histories and cultural backgrounds. The Socialists at the time had reached an impressive book membership of about 125,000. When this left wing — a majority of the Party — split away it dealt a shattering blow to the Socialist Party from which it never recovered. This was altogether different from the effects of schisms in European socialism. There, the socialist tradition was a long one with deep roots in the native culture and history and, as in Germany, national social-democratic organizations dominated burgeoning trade union movements. In Europe, then, even where Communist tendencies represented substantial portions of official socialism, the Socialist parties remained mass organizations after the splits.

But if the impact of the separation affected socialism differently in

the Old and New Worlds, it was also true that the impact on the respective emerging Communist movements was not identical. In Europe, the Communist parties commanded the loyalty of significant numbers of the proletariat and intelligentsia. On the other hand, in the U.S., the left wing which claimed about 70,000 supporters rapidly dwindled to an embattled fraction of that number. The largely immigrant membership organized in separate language federations, discord between and within newborn Communist parties (there were actually three to begin with), growing conservatism in the country at large, a succession of bitter defeats for organized labor and, perhaps most responsible, government repression (the notorious Red Scare of 1919-1920) all served to reduce the Communist movement in a few years to just a shadow of its peak strength. (Part of that shadow even preferred the subterranean shade of an underground existence when there was no call for it.)

Weak and wracked by factionalism, with a disproportionately large immigrant membership emotionally tied to events in Europe, with the Party as a whole increasingly alienated in a hostile, anti-socialist wasteland and lacking a mass base, the American Communist movement was ripe early on for Stalinization. Its servility to Moscow and the Comintern was probably unmatched by any European affiliate of the Third International. For example, in 1921-22, Paul Levi, the leader of the German Communist Party took issue with the Comintern on fundamental questions of revolutionary strategy. That could never have happened with a humble Charles Ruthenberg or a William Z. Foster who once boasted that in the event he found himself in disagreement with the Comintern, the solution was simple: he would change his mind. Even later in the 20s some prominent leaders of German Communism were challenging Comintern dogma at a time when any faction and all leaders of the tightly leashed Stalinized American party were devouring with relish whatever was tossed to them by their Moscow trainers.

Thus, the early 20s were lean years for American Stalinists and American Socialists. The tragic paradox is that in the short run it was the Stalinist character of American Communism which provided it with advantages over socialists of all tendencies that could never be overcome in the 20s, 30s and 40s. That was the Soviet factor. The respect for the "Soviet experiment" in the liberal and progressive world was considerable. Even socialists who fought bitterly against Communists in the garment unions or on street corners spoke more softly, even sentimentally, about the USSR. Here, then, the CP attachment to the Kremlin proved to be a decisive advantage. While the anti-Stalinist socialist left could win all the political and theoretical debates, it was the CP that won the overwhelming majority of workers moving in a radical direction. We had truth on our side, the CP had the Soviet Union. Our superior theoretical position, even our better trade union approach could not overcome the prestige of joining a party identified with that power-

ful one-sixth of the world where the proletariat presumably governed.

With the Soviet Union at its side and without scruples and principles to interfere with its operations, the CP recruited thousands of workers, many blacks among them. And as the Party grew it was able to provide a social and cultural life for its working-class recruits.

There is a second and contradictory reason why Stalinism inhibited socialist and radical growth. Even in the 30s only a minority of workers were receptive to radical ideas. They were a smaller minority in the 40s, insignificant in the 50s and, except for black workers, virtually nonexistent from then to now. The American working class today is politically conservative, anti-radical and anti-socialist. To think otherwise is delusory. But this conservatism is not innate and is not the result of the proletarian table laden with roast beef and apple pie. Its consciousness and values are largely shaped by experience, perceptions of what is in its best interests and what is most hurtful. And, just as during the 30s the Communists could use the Soviet factor to its advantage in rivalry with socialists to make modest inroads in some working class constituencies, so the traditional conservative and right-wing forces could effectively use the Soviet factor to turn workers against radicalism, against socialism. The right not only accepted but promoted the Communist fabrication that the Soviet Union was a Marxist state, a model of socialism. But the Soviet Union the right described was not a country of happy workers and singing peasants but a land of terror and gulags, where all basic democratic rights were denied and, not least of all, where workers were forbidden to organize authentic trade unions with the right to strike. This was a far more accurate and convincing account than the lies and myths to be found in the Stalinist and Stalinoid press. It paid handsome political dividends to the right among the populace at large and the working class, in particular, which was convinced that the idea of socialism was the reality of totalitarianism, a particularly egregious distortion that Daniel Bell accepts as gospel truth.

Where, for Bell, Stalinism is a condition of Marxian socialism, it was actually a force that was neither *in* Marxism nor *of* it but alien to Marxism and a major cause for the debacle of socialism in America.

STALINISM WAS ALSO THE ACHILLES HEAL OF THE NEW LEFT. Had it not been so indifferent to theory in general and to the anti-Stalinist left's concern with the centrality of democracy to socialism, it might have avoided such self-destructive impulses as offering totalitarian Maoist China as a model of participatory democracy. Perhaps had the New Left made it unambiguous that its disgust with the stifling bureaucratic nature of capitalist domination and its repugnance over America's dirty war in Vietnam reflected a deep and universal commitment to democracy, it might have evolved into a more permanent, effective movement of radical transformation. Not having done so, the New Left was left vulner-

able to the arrows of reactionary archers.

Christopher Lasch, writing at the time in his book, *The Agony of the American Left*, noted that: "The blinding prestige of the Russian and later the Chinese revolution tended to conceal not only the monstrous character of Stalinism but its total irrelevance to the attempt to build socialism in the West." And in relating it to the New Left wrote:

Socialism in the West oscillates between capitulation and a mindless revolutionary militancy based on irrelevant models. The New Left in America, in spite of its ostensible repudiation of Stalinism and other ideologies of the 1930's is no exception to this generalization. It is true that the New Left has articulated values, derived for the most part from an indigenous tradition of radical populism that might become the basis of a new socialism addressing itself to the needs of the twentieth century, not to those associated with the early stages of capital accumulation. In espousing decentralization, local control, and a generally antibureaucratic outlook, and by insisting that these values are at the heart of radicalism, the New Left has shown American socialists the road they must follow. Until American socialism identifies itself with these values, it will have nothing to offer either to black people or to all those others whose suffering derives not merely from the private ownership of the means of production but from the dehumanizing effects of bureaucratic control.

The history of the New Left, however, shows what can happen when the values of local control and "participatory democracy" are not embodied in a coherent program and strategy for change, a theoretical understanding of postindustrial society and an alternative culture and vision.

TODAY'S LEFT, AT LEAST LEFT HISTORIANS AND THE POST-MARXIST academic left, with few exceptions, have no appetite for probing the Russian Question. A number of left historians are deeply involved in researching the history of American Communism but rarely touch upon the Russian Question, and when they do, it is invariably in some abbreviated form with disastrous results. As I wrote in considerable detail in an earlier article, they will often admit that the Communist Party was submissive to the Soviet Union which they concede to have been authoritarian and under the aegis of a dictator who committed many crimes. But the connection between the submissive Party and the dominant state is rarely more than a passing reference which earns another footnote. One inhibition, perhaps, stems from some hidden sense that to examine the nature of the Soviet Union in depth, to discuss Stalin's crimes as the crimes of *Stalinism* and to explain the scope and impact of the Party's subservience to the Kremlin would not be congenial to their misplaced effort to invent a Communist Party that was a legitimate and positive force within the labor and progressive movements. Also, exposing the totalitarian nature of the USSR and its tight grip on its American affiliate would reveal the limits and pitfalls of their predilection for inappropriately

using the methods of social history for studying the role and influence of Communist Party cadres as E.P. Thompson did, properly and on a grand scale, for the English working class. Unlike the English working class which could and did make its own history and culture, the rank and file of the American Communist Party, no matter what some old-timer might tell a well-disposed interviewer, could no more shape the history, politics, and culture of the Party than a popular vote in the Soviet Union could have sent Stalin into retirement.

But whatever the reason for the aversion of these left historians, the academic left appears even more averse to placing the Russian Question or any of its component elements on its theoretical agenda. Even Stanley Aronowitz who is more familiar than most with the literature on the subject has written a substantial volume with many interesting insights, though at times ambivalent even contradictory, on *The Death and Rebirth of American Radicalism* that is mainly flawed by his failure to adequately discuss the Russian question. Early in his account he promises:

What follows is historical, but not a history in the conventional sense. For instance, I leave the Great Debate about the Communist Party's tradition and the lesser discussion of the legacy of American socialism to a separate volume. Instead, after this introductory essay, my story begins with the death rattle of the American Communist movement and the birth of the New Left. I try to make sense of the era of American radicalism following the demise of the Old Left ...

How anyone can "make sense of the era of American radicalism following the demise of the Old Left" without discussing some of the major concerns of what he calls the "Old Left" is difficult to understand. How can a historical study avoid any serious discussion of relevant aspects of the Russian Question as if they had no place in an analysis of the death of American Communism and the birth of the New Left?

"Many intellectuals were obsessed with the Russian Question," Aronowitz announces, obviously determined to avoid the trap of what he calls, a few pages later, "the Old Left's" "preoccupation with the Russian Question and its unadorned statism," two of the "cardinal features of the Old Left."

I am not certain what Aronowitz has in mind about the Old Left's "preoccupation" with "unadorned statism." As part of the Old Left, I remember an unadorned commitment to a stateless society as a cardinal principle. But let that pass. Of more interest here is the alleged preoccupation of the Old Left with the Russian Question. By Old Left, Aronowitz is referring primarily to the Communist Party which he believes, as does Bell, to be its legitimate and strongest segment. But if Aronowitz understood the Russian Question he would be well aware that the Russian Question was never on the Communist Party's agenda because the Party could never brook any question about Russia. What

preoccupied the Party was insuring against any violation of this interdiction.

Most puzzling is that at the very end of his book, Aronowitz writes that "the condition for the emergence of a revitalized radicalism is a searching and fearless examination of the left's current malaise as well as its authoritarian political legacy." With this, I heartily agree, but would it not have been better to have said it in the first pages of his book and then to have followed through with his "fearless examination"?

ALSO WORTH NOTING: IF ARONOWITZ HAD BEEN a little more preoccupied with those debates which only took place in the anti-Communist left he might have avoided the following far-fetched statement in an essay on radical democracy that appeared in *Socialist Review*:

Since the demise of the Popular Fronts and the precipitous decline of the Communist Party in the 1950s there has been no sustained socialist left with a popular following in the country.

It is an intellectual and political offense to use the good or bad fortunes of the American Stalinist party as the measure of the success or failure of American socialism. The successes that the Communist Party had during the Popular Front period and its reverses in the 1950s were not the ups and downs of American socialism but of the Communist movement affiliated and totally subordinated to the anti-socialist, Russian-dominated Comintern. That Stalinism paraded under the banner of socialism no more established it as a legitimate wing of an authentic left than a bloodied axe creates a common bond between the executioner and his headless victim. That the executioner and his victim could be members of the same party only adds to the absurdity and pathos.

For the sake of argument, forget the false note struck in using the waning influence of Stalinism as a yardstick to measure the declining fortunes of the socialist left. What was there about the politics of the Stalinist-created Popular Front which Aronowitz finds so attractive? They were politics determined, not by Earl Browder, but by the Communist International and designed to serve its totalitarian interests. And the politics were the crassest expression of class collaboration, acting as a brake on the developing class militancy of American workers.

In his book, Aronowitz writes:

With the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European Communism, the crisis produced by the calamitous decline of the Old Left in the 1950s and the disappearance of the New Left two decades later was superseded by a death rattle. On the one hand, marxism, while it asks important questions about class and the state and offers valuable, even indispensable categories for understanding the ideology and practices of economic life, can no longer be a master discourse of emancipation. On the other hand, socialism as the ideology of the determined supersession of capital-

ism has been fatally weakened by the record of the countries of “actually existing” socialism.

From a socialist perspective “calamitous” is a strange adjective to describe the precipitous drop in Communist strength and influence. It is “calamitous” only if you find that the American Communist Party was, on balance, a positive progressive force. And *that* political posture is far more calamitous than the Stalinist party’s loss of membership and influence. Of course, it was deplorable that part of this decline was due to the McCarthyite witchhunt that had its counterpart in the unconscionable persecution of Communist trade unionists by the labor bureaucracy. But that is not the calamity Aronowitz has in mind. It is the demise itself that he finds disturbing.

What he has to say about the collapse of the Communist world as proof of the bankruptcy or, as he calls it, “the death rattle” of Marxism and socialism is not new. It has been said over and over by Russian experts who do it a bit more convincingly. In the past, Aronowitz, I am certain, would have repudiated these critics with the obvious retort that what collapsed in the Communist world was not Marxism but a unique form of anti-socialism, exposing the fraud of trying to use the death rattle of Stalinism as evidence that Marxism is no longer a “master discourse of emancipation.”

Aronowitz has things topsy-turvy. It was the *rise* of Stalinism to power *not* its collapse that signified the profound crisis of Marxism. Tracing the origins of the crisis to the post-World War II period is nearly 30 years too late. The crisis of revolutionary socialism revealed itself dramatically and tragically in the crucial years following the Bolshevik-led revolution of 1917 when the European proletariat proved incapable of taking power in the advanced countries of Europe. That not only permitted the reconsolidation of bourgeois reaction on the continent but created the preconditions for the victory of a Stalinist counter-revolution. Out of the ashes of the revolution a new class was created, a historical aberration because it had no roots in the previous class society. The Czarist bourgeoisie was to a significant degree physically liquidated and existed as no more than a memory, or in Western salons and emigré reunions in Paris. The Russian proletariat suffered similar losses on the battlefield in the civil war, it was exhausted and demoralized, and without the support of a victorious Western proletariat it could not possibly fulfill its historic mission as the human agency of socialist revolution. The aberrant bureaucratic collectivism — the Stalinist state — arose out of the defeat of both contending classes. It could only establish its supremacy through the application of historically unprecedented violence. It was compelled to physically uproot and destroy all the residual institutions even faintly reminiscent of authentic working-class institutions just as it was compelled to liquidate all those associated

with Russia's socialist past.

Since all ruling classes, even aberrant and monstrous ones, seek an ideology to justify their rule the Soviet totalitarian ruling class developed an ideology which adopted much of the language of socialism and Marxism as it sought a popular international base in the working class and among exploited people in the colonial world. For all its surface appearance of dynamism the bureaucratic collectivist state was riddled with internal contradictions that it could not resolve.

The above is not even a bare bones account of the nature and origins of the Stalinist state. But it is enough to indicate why I believe that Aronowitz's contention that the implosion of the Communist state signaled the death rattle of socialism and Marxism is utterly false. How can the death of an anti-socialist, anti-Marxist social system which enslaved the working class, destroyed all the institutions and living reminders of the Russian Revolution signal the death rattle of Marxism and socialism? I would draw an opposite conclusion from the implosion of the Communist empire. I am fully aware of the chaos and corruption in the wake of that collapse, nevertheless, the disintegration of the anti-socialist one party system creates possibilities for a rebirth of democratic and socialist movements that were precluded during the existence of the old regimes.

Aronowitz is aware of these objections. "It won't do," he insists, "to say, as many have done that socialism in its historical forms was never tried, that given advanced industrial societies, socialism would demonstrate its capacity to solve most of the problems generated by capitalism. It won't do because historical experience cannot be elided or relegated to the realm of the exotic or the tragic."

To say the least, this is a bit hard to follow. If socialism in its historical forms was never tried, does that mean that socialism in its non-historical forms was tried? What does non-historical socialism look like? Was the Soviet Union an example of non-historical socialism? As for the inability of historical experience to be elided or relegated to the realm of the exotic or the tragic, I will reserve comment until such time that I can figure out what that means. In the meantime I will insist on the obvious: the collapse of an anti-socialist society does not signal the collapse of socialism.

DESPITE THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE COMMUNIST SYSTEM, the annual production of books on the Russian Question appears to have increased several fold. Not a metaphorical page in Russian history from the earliest struggles within Russian social democracy to the disintegration of the Soviet empire and the current crisis in the East has escaped the scrutiny of journalists, historians, and old-time Russian experts. Some of the most challenging and influential of these writers are also ideologues who, far more often than not, use their research and marshall

their arguments for related dual purposes: first, to demonize Marxism and socialism (and, of course, Leninism) as evil dogmas, the ideological precursors of all the perfidies of Stalinist totalitarianism and, second, to demonstrate that the Communist past and the crushing defeat of the Communist world in the Cold War validates their faith in capitalism and its mythicized market economy as the most reliable guarantor of keeping the peace, expanding global freedom, promoting economic well-being and, as the indispensable socio-economic heart of a healthy civil society. That privatization in Russia is marked by chaos and corruption is admitted. But somehow or other, according to those Russian scholars who are dedicated enemies of socialism, privatization is not the problem. The crisis for them remains the legacy of the hyphenated evils of Marxism-Leninism-Stalinism.

That so many Russian scholars effectively use their expertise to trash socialism and to extol capitalism still does not snap the academic left out of its lethargy vis-a-vis the Russian Question. One might assume that what there is of an ideological left in this country, situated primarily in the universities, would react appropriately to the Russian crisis. At the very least, an academic left has the moral, political and intellectual obligation to do what it presumably does best; in this case, to study, write about and debate the Russian debacle, which would, of course, require it to place the crisis in a historical context and to draw theoretical and practical political lessons from their studies guided by internationalist commitment to the struggle for fundamental democratic, social transformation.

This study should be no chore for an academic left, many of whom are intent on "rethinking" Marxism. After all, we are talking about *Russia* whose history has more to tell us about the theory and "praxis" of Marxism than the experience of all other countries combined.

But there is a curious twist in all this: while barely visible in the intellectual rearguard of the debate on the Russian Question, academic Marxists, post-Marxists and rethinking Marxists are in the avant garde of a wider intellectual effort to deconstruct Marxism and the Enlightenment. In sometimes labyrinthine syntax, the universal values of the Enlightenment are interpreted as little more than a facade for white male chauvinism and Western imperialism. And both Enlightenment universalism and Marxism's alleged "essentialist" predilections for spinning "grand narratives" are found guilty of lending credence to conservative (and liberal) assaults today on multiculturalism and identity politics. I do not agree with these interpretations of the Enlightenment or Marxism's supposed "totalism" but I am more concerned here with the anomaly of academic leftists' heavy critical concentration on the sins of the Enlightenment and Marx's essentialism while they all but ignore the ongoing debate about the most significant historical event of this century, at least, the Russian Revolution led by a Marxist party which

paid tribute to the universal values of the Enlightenment, and was wedded to the "essentialist," "grand narratives" of Marxism.

Logically, the link between Enlightenment values and the Marxist character of the Bolshevik-led revolution would mandate the academic left's intense concern with all aspects of the Russian Question. Just as clearly, logic has once more failed to prevail. Lamentably, the bindings of an impressive number of books by post-Marxists (and other left historians) are still bursting under the strain of the many blank pages on the Russian Question even though it is pivotal to their theoretical concerns. Apparently, given post-Marxist priorities, a lecture or a book which competently reviews the mores, customs and class structures of Russian society during the reign of Ivan the Terrible or Peter the Great would be rewarded with louder applause and greater book sales than an even more competent lecture or book on the mores, customs and class structure of Russian society during the reign of Josef Vissarionovich Stalin.

IT IS INSTRUCTIVE TO TAKE NOTE OF A FOUR-DAY CONFERENCE held in December 1996 organized by the journal, *Rethinking Marxism*. There were more than 175 panels and approximately 750 panelists contributing papers supposedly addressed to the conference theme, "Politics and Languages [it was never made clear how many] of Contemporary Marxism."

No doubt the many panels on post-modernism or the theories of Derrida, Foucault, Gramsci and, above all, Althusser provided valuable insights on the conference theme. But in a conference on the politics and languages of contemporary Marxism wasn't there room for just one panel devoted to the background and aftermath of history's only socialist revolution led by a mass-based Marxist party? Weren't there events to be discussed, lessons to be learned, problems to be debated relating to the October revolution that touched weightily on the politics and languages of contemporary Marxism? What of Lenin's famous organizational conceptions, the tumultuous events of the revolution itself, the rise of Stalinism, Trotsky's theoretical contributions to Marxist thought and action? What was the class nature of Soviet society during the Stalinist era? There was Soviet domination of half of Europe, the crumbling of the infamous Wall. And what of the great implosion and its aftermath? Doesn't all this in part or whole have enough theoretical or topical relevance to the politics and languages of contemporary Marxism to merit even one panel? Consider, too, that one of the legitimate theoretical questions on which the academic left is focused is Marx's designation of the industrial proletariat as the human agency for socialist transformation. Why not then consider the role of the working class during the revolt in East Germany in 1953, the Hungarian socialist revolution in 1956, the Prague Spring in 1968, the Solidarnosc movement in Poland that peaked in the 80s? Not worth a panel? Apparently

not in the view of the conference sponsors.

Not to appear a sectarian scold, let us agree that in a conference on the politics and languages of contemporary Marxism with 175 plus panels it was appropriate for one panelist to explore the "Anti-Foundation Epistemology in the Maltese Falcon" and another to investigate "Murder in the Age of Technical Reproduction: Serial Killer Narratives as 'Seminal' Texts," all this and more in a panel on "Detective Fiction from Crime to Serial Killing." Good. But why not, then, at least one panel on the non-fictional crimes of the greatest serial killers in all recorded history, Josef Stalin and his ideological and spiritual soulmate, Mao Tse Tung, whose bloodletting made Jack the Ripper look like a nurses's aide by comparison. And since these exemplars of methodical serial killing on a mammoth scale executed their bloody rituals in the name of human liberation, of socialism, of Marxism and, of all things, even of a Cultural Revolution — no smalltime serial killer to my knowledge ever staked out so high a moral ground — then surely the question of Stalinism and Maoism and their serial killings had as much claim to a panel in a conference advertised as dealing with relevant problems of Marxism as contemplating the metaphysical implications of the fictional and cinematic quest for the prized bird. Were Humphrey Bogart and Mary Astor more connected to the politics and languages of contemporary Marxism than Lenin or Rosa Luxembourg?

But, than, it might be too much to expect a panel on the implications for Marxism of Mao Tse Tung as a mass killer since the late Chairman is still looked upon with favor by many in the left although he was, arguably, an even greater butcher than Stalin.

And remaining in a tolerant mode, I will agree that papers delivered on "The Notion of *Spotemento* in Althusser's Theory of Theatrical Praxis," and the "Charabanc Theater Company and Representation within the State and Political Economy of Northern Ireland" in a panel on Theatrical Politics were also subjects that touched upon the conference theme.

I confess to my ignorance about Althusser's theory of theatrical praxis and admit that I am not as informed as I should be about the state and political economy of Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, I suspect that a panel on the non-theatrical praxis of the Moscow Show Trials for what it revealed of Stalinist terror and the state and political economy of the Soviet Union had more to offer the conference than Althusser's theory of theatrical praxis or an analysis of the Charabanc theater company in Northern Ireland. As did the Maoists' orchestrated Cultural Revolution spectacles in which professors and scholars were costumed with duncecaps, wheeled into stadiums in donkey carts, put on display before madly jeering crowds and summarily executed — a theatrical praxis that could have been reviewed or discussed to great advantage in a conference on Marxism. And Cuba's Maximum Leader, too, revealed his

theatrical penchant for show trials of his critics, as well as his talent as a director of a form of public theater, as homosexuals were humiliatingly paraded through the streets of Havana en route to special camps. In truth, all of Communist society — I can think of no exception offhand — was pockmarked by a chain of allegorical theaters of the Grand Guignol.

My quarrel with the conference sponsors is deeper than the question of priorities. In my view, to deny the Russian Question its proper place in a conference on contemporary Marxism is implicitly to deny the extent of the devastation Stalinism has inflicted on everything it has touched from social movements and working-class institutions to its disfigurement of the politics and language of Marxism.

EVEN MORE SERIOUS, WHAT THIS EVASION OF THE RUSSIAN QUESTION reflects is a denial of the centrality of democracy to socialism. The fact that Stalinism destroyed all democratic institutions in the Soviet Union is not of that much import since, in the view of many of those who sponsored the conference, the destruction of democracy did not mean a fundamental change in the nature of what they still believe to have been a form of socialism. For those readers who think that this might be a polemical exaggeration, I submit below just a sampling from a piece that appeared in *Rethinking Marxism* signed "The Editors."

... From our own beginnings in 1988, we have dedicated our pages to the reformulation of Marxism in order to critically evaluate and develop an alternative to the deterministic, *orthodox Marxism that has reigned supreme in the Soviet Union and elsewhere.* (my emphasis)

Stalin's ghost would be overjoyed to see confirmation from such a learned source that, just as he had always said in his happier days, orthodox Marxism reigned supreme in the Soviet Union.

The *RM* editors are critical of those who believe that Stalinist societies

are found to have abandoned socialism because of the absence of human rights or electoral politics or any number of other "goods" comprising the organic socialist whole.

Here, democracy is reduced to a sarcastically noted "good" which socialism can live with or without. The thought is soon embroidered:

We do not think such studies should be a prelude for a return to an overarching concept of socialism that the Soviet Union and its bloc can be said to have betrayed. Without attempting to prejudge the analysis, we believe that *some* kinds of socialism and communism may have been capable of producing a rise in living standards and new forms of democratic participation and cultural expression. The *same* and *other* kinds of socialism and communism (including in the same countries!) may have created

social misery and political oppression...

So now, there are at least two kinds of socialism: one with democratic participation and the other which has created social misery and political oppression. And occasionally, and mysteriously for this reader, at least, both kinds can exist in the same country. Apparently, where socialism is concerned democracy is purely a matter of taste. The initial German Communist Party, for example, was known as the Spartakusbund reflecting its cadres' identification with the slaves. Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Liebknecht and their comrades could never have organized a party that did not consider as mortal enemies all those who forces which "have created social misery and political oppression."

But given some post-Marxists' definitions there could have been a German Marxist Party called the Caesarsbund to honor the Roman Generals who crucified 6,000 rebellious slaves on the road to Rome. Both Spartakusbund and Caesarsbund could have qualified for membership in some "non-essentialist" and "overdetermined" (post-Marxism's answer to Marxist "totalism") extended family of Marxian socialism; a family that spoke not only different dialects but separate languages ranging from the language of democracy to the tongue of political repression.

This dismissal of democracy which also surfaces in the articles on the economic system in the USSR by RM's Russian experts, Richard Wolff, an editor, and Stephen Resnick (an advisor) is a repudiation of the basic Marxist conception of socialism from below. In one such article there is the wonderful news that:

Workers directly as well as party personnel and state officials struggle almost continuously over the power to determine the size and distribution of surplus labor ...

How can anyone with even the faintest awareness of the realities of class oppression in the Soviet Union claim that workers "directly" and "continuously" carried on a "struggle" with the totalitarian Party/State and its government apparatus? Workers could be and, indeed, were shot if suspected of even dreaming of organizing a union to fight for a more equitable distribution of surplus labor.

The same authors in a follow-up article write:

Arguments and movements for workers' self-management or workers' control have characterized Soviet state capitalism since its conception.

Resnick and Wolff are not talking about arguments for workers' control in the editorial office of *Rethinking Marxism* but in the Soviet Union. And not in a secret meeting place of an underground group in Moscow, but of workers' control that characterized class relations in the Soviet Union "since its inception" which would include those terrible decades when even suspicion of an infraction of labor discipline could mean a sentence to a labor camp from which so many millions never returned.

And what is one to make of this:

Since workers were not properties of any persons or institutions and since workers were free to sell their own labor, no assertion that Soviet exploitation took a slave

form can be sustained.

No comment.

ONE RATIONALE FOR ELIDING THE RUSSIAN QUESTION goes as follows: whatever meaning debating the Russian Question might have had in earlier decades began to crumble with the Berlin Wall. In the absence of a Communist camp in Europe and the near extinction of the Communist Party in the U.S. to debate the Russian Question is to engage in a quixotic battle to "settle old scores" with an enemy long dead.

The premise is not open to dispute; the conclusion does not follow. That Communism collapsed obviously means that the Russian Question no longer has the political urgency of earlier decades. That requires the left to cast the Russian Question in a different light, not to cast it out.

In any case, what is wrong with socialists today "settling old scores" with Stalinism? "Settling old scores" is consistent with sound pedagogical technique. Is it not the responsibility of the historian as a social scientist to examine, study and interpret the past to understand "the development of society" and cross swords when necessary with those who falsify or deny history?

Consider the organizations, research centers, international seminars, monuments, emotional pilgrimages and the vast literature commemorating the victims, as well as the historical studies of every aspect of the Final Solution including combatting the vile network of Holocaust deniers. Does anyone on the left deride this emotionally draining expenditure of time and money as the sectarian preoccupation of old Jews and their progeny, an obsession with the past made politically irrelevant by the fact that Hitlerism was defeated in World War II and the last Holocaust victim was sent to the crematorium more than 50 years ago? Why, then, ridicule an ongoing concern with the even more complex Russian Question and not doubt the propriety and need for an ongoing study of the Holocaust? Actually — and the reader will understand that this is not to question for a moment the immense importance of Holocaust studies — the Russian Question has greater claim on the attention of the left than does the Holocaust, if for no other reason than that the horrendous crimes of Stalinism were committed in the name of socialism while the crimes of Hitlerism were committed in the name of anti-socialism. And while there are illusions and ambiguities in the progressive and left approach to the history and role of a more complex Communism which make debate mandatory, there are no comparable ambiguities in the left and progressive world about the Nazi abomination.

If "settling old scores" with Stalinism is battling windmills, what is to be said about post-Marxists and rethinking Marxists who for years have been exhausting themselves in settling old scores with the Enlightenment (and not doing a good job of it), a much older score to settle than that of Communism which, only a decade back, was still a powerful rival of capitalism while the accounts to be settled with the Enlightenment movements take us back to the French *philosophes* of the early and mid-18th century in France, to their antecedents in England in the previous century and even to the Edict of Nantes at the end of the 16th century?

The "settling old scores" rebuke is reminiscent of the myth which still

reverberates about the self-inflicted wounds the left sustained in the era of "internecine warfare." According to the myth, the U.S. left included socialists, Trotskyists, anarchists, Lovestoneites (for a while), God knows how many even smaller sects and, of course, the larger Communist Party. The smaller groups were constantly battling one another. And that was bad. Most damaging was the intensity of the conflict between the anti-Stalinist left and the Communists who disagreed about everything and fought most fiercely about internal happenings in the distant Soviet Union and over Soviet foreign policy. This led to much foolish squabbling, creating divisiveness within the left, deflecting diverse tendencies from the primary responsibility of finding common ground for waging a joint struggle in the fight for progress and against reaction at home. In unity there is strength. Instead, the left was dragged down by "internecine warfare."

This might be beguiling to the naive but the truth is that there was no internecine warfare in the struggle between Communists and the anti-Stalinist left. "*Internecine warfare*" implies that whatever differences separate competing groups or tendencies there is nonetheless some fundamental, unifying political common denominator that allows for joint struggle on a variety of basic issues against a common enemy. That was not and could not be the case in the conflict between the forces of socialism and Stalinism. To be sure, the anti-Stalinist left did share the aspirations of rank and file members of Communist parties but these aspirations did not determine the social character and role of Communist parties umbilically attached to a reactionary totalitarian power.

Neither was there "*internecine warfare*." The conflict between the socialist left and Communists never attained that lofty level. Warfare, at least in its conventional sense, calls forth images of fierce struggle between contending armies. Viewed thus, warfare is a most inappropriate metaphor to describe the conflict since all the ideological cannonading came from the camp of the anti-Stalinist left, as salvo after salvo of theoretical projectiles were fired into the Stalinist camp in the hope of breaching its defenses. The Communist camp never responded in kind. The social nature of Stalinism was such that it lacked the intellectual and moral capacity to engage in a serious exchange of views. Instead of argument there were venomous denunciations of "Trotskyite-fascist-mad-dogs," and "agents of Hitler" (less so during the Nazi-Soviet Pact). And to illustrate Stalinist funny books there was the popular cartoon of a thickly muscled proletarian in overalls locked in mortal combat with a hideous slimy serpent with the head of a very Jewish-looking Trotsky, venom dripping from his bare fangs. It was a sort of Stalinist agitprop corruption of the glorious sculpted Laocoon of antiquity.

The whole notion of "*internecine warfare*" romanticizes and prettifies Stalinism and Stalinist parties. It assumes that they were what they most definitely were not: socialist and Marxist or in any meaningful sense of the phrase, a legitimate party of the left. It falsely assumes that the Party was possessed of an intellectual vitality in its political life, covering up the reality of a movement that stifled creativity and independent thought, bereft of the ability to debate with an external opposition on the left.

ONE OF THE DEEPER PROBLEMS IN THE ACADEMIC LEFT'S AVERSION to studying the Russian Question is the fear that dwelling on the crimes of Stalinism — the

gulags, the terror, the forced famine, anti-Semitism, national oppression, imperialism — and placing them in a historical context leads to a political/psychological disorder popularly known as “obsessive anti-Communism.”

And the bacillus of “obsessive anti-Communism” can wildly multiply, reducing the afflicted to a state of political dementia well-known in the literature as “virulent anti-Communism” — In the words of Stanley Aronowitz it was “anti-Communism that had infected the entire independent left.” Those diagnosed as “virulent” are confined to a metaphorical ward which allows no distinction among its inmates, whether they are infected with the anti-Communism of a Joseph McCarthy or motivated by the uncompromising anti-Communism of a Marxian socialist. (Actually, knowing Aronowitz, I am not sure that he is aware of the implications of his dire diagnosis.)

To correct the caricature of the paranoid sectarian anti-Stalinist left we need point out that the anti-Stalinist left of which I was a part was involved in American political and social struggles disproportionate to our paucity of numbers and resources. We were active in unions and movements of the unemployed during the Depression years. Debates in the 30s on the Russian Question did not deter Trotskyists from playing a prominent role in the critically important Minneapolis General Strike. We fought the Smith Act at a time when many liberals were shamefaced supporters, and Stalinists, enthusiastic promoters, of this prelude to the McCarthyism that we combatted no less militantly during the Cold War. At the end of the decade the ongoing polemics on the class character of the Soviet Union did not stand in the way of organizing the largest anti-Nazi demonstration this country has ever seen before or since. (A demonstration, incidentally, initially denounced by the Communist Party as a “Trotskyite-fascist maneuver” to advertise and promote the German-American Bund rally at New York’s Madison Square Garden, the focus of the protest.) During the war we fought the good fight for workers’ rights and against the segregated army. In the 50s we fought the persecution of Communists and were active in the civil rights struggles. During the Cold War we exposed the role of American imperialism. We were not, after all, placed on Truman’s infamous subversive list because of our opposition to Soviet imperialism.

No socialist should be intimidated by the accusation of virulent anti-Communism, as if to have really been opposed to McCarthyism one had to be politically supportive of its Communist victims. To expose without equivocation the unconscionable effort of Cold War philosopher Sidney Hook who put his intellectual skills in the service of those who claimed that members of the Communist Party forfeited the right to teach, did not mean that a socialist had to forfeit the right and obligation, also without equivocation, to expose the reactionary nature of the Communist Party. To expose a John F. Kennedy, a Lyndon Johnson or a Richard Nixon for their role in turning all of Indo-China into an imperialist killing field did not mean that socialists did not have the responsibility to expose the totalitarian nature of the North Vietnamese regime and take proper note of the fact that Ho Chi Minh’s political curriculum vitae revealed his part in the assassination of left-wing opponents.

The indiscriminate, reflexive reliance on such epithets as “virulent anti-Communism” is a form of anti-intellectualism and a substitute for reasoned argument.

WHEN THE SOVIET UNION WAS THE WORLD'S SECOND POWER capable of convincing millions beyond its borders that it was the protector of the oppressed and exploited and the guardian of the international Marxist keep, and its obedient American outlet was a significant force in labor and progressive movements, the anti-Stalinist left's concentration on the Russian Question was clearly warranted. While an appreciation of the Russian Question and its lessons were vital to building a revolutionary socialist movement, the anti-Stalinist left did not assume that a correct reading of the nature of Stalinist society would automatically divine an appropriate program, strategy and tactics, in precise detail, for combatting our main enemy, American capitalism and imperialism.

If a socialist program could not have been developed solely around answers to the riddle of the Russian Question in those earlier times it is obviously even less the case today when the American Communist Party has shrivelled to an ineffectual sect, no longer in feudal servitude to the Kremlin only because the countries that emerged out of the imploded Soviet empire are now in the camp of "virulent anti-Communism." To acknowledge the obvious, that Stalinism is no longer the same organized obstacle to radical democratic causes is a far cry from suggesting that history has reduced the Russian Question to an academic exercise, irrelevant to the real world.

But Stalinism continues to haunt the left. For the ignominious "historic mission" was to negate socialism in its own name, to divorce socialism from political freedom, to repudiate "fetishistic" attachments to democracy. While Stalinism did not fully accomplish this mission, neither did it entirely fail. When we are told by presumed advocates of socialism or radical democracy that their vision does not necessarily mean freedom, that it can tolerate repression, that insistence on democracy is evidence of Marx's philosophically flawed "essentialism" and when we are further told that a hideously exploited Soviet working class was exercising workers' control, and that Marxism in fact reigned supreme in the Soviet Union, that means we are contending with an at least incipient neo-Stalinist tendency that justifies our ongoing and deep concern with the Russian Question and its lessons. What is involved is nothing less than the question of self-definition, of fundamental concepts of right and wrong, of what kind of movement for emancipation must be built and, last but by no means least, what vision we have of an emancipated society.

Book



Reviews

Godfather of the American Right

NEOCONSERVATISM: AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF AN IDEA, by Irving Kristol. New York, The Free Press, 1995. 493 pp. \$25.00.

Reviewed by Steve Vieux

THIS IS A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS BY IRVING KRISTOL, FORMER TROTSKYIST and son of a garment worker, who has been for several decades a leading ideological campaigner of the American right. In the 1950s he edited *Encounter*, a CIA-funded cultural journal with a virulent anti-Communist line. In the 1960s he and Daniel Bell founded *The Public Interest*, which began the intellectual assault on the American welfare state. In the 1970s, as the corporate right-turn reached flood stage, he came into his own as the leader and organizer of the attack on government spending, social regulation, environmental protection and progressive taxation. He wrote. He hyped right-wing authors. He channeled funds to allies. These battles were conducted from positions at *The Wall Street Journal*, the American Enterprise Institute and New York University. His eminence as the organizer and director of right-wing ideological combat during this period earned him the title of Godfather of the American right. As he put it: "I am a liaison to some degree between intellectuals and the business community."

This collection is incomplete and, as with most such collections, uneven. Essays cover the future of the Jews, the Republican Party, the Christian Right, the strengths and weaknesses of American capitalism and the sins of the educated middle classes, his "new class," and their supposed enthusiasm for an adversary culture critical of bourgeois society. Some of his zanier works have been excluded, including the famous pro-McCarthy attack on liberals entitled "Civil Liberties': 1952, a Study in Confusion," a piece he has been trying to live down for decades. The exclusion of this article is unfortunate because it sheds

STEVE VIEUX who died an untimely death in September 1996 at age 47 was a visiting professor of sociology at the State University of New York-Oswego. He wrote for numerous journals and co-authored *Neoliberalism and Class Conflict in Latin America* with Henry Veltmeyer and James Petras, published by Macmillan.

light on his claim to have been converted to “neoconservatism” in the wake of the supposed excesses of the 1960s but he was already red-baiting liberals and working for a CIA- financed journal years before anyone had heard of Abbie Hoffman.

Kristol is most energetic and stimulating when he is on the attack, insulting his enemies and calculating short-term political advantage. But even here he has little of the polemical precision, wit and research zeal we are lucky to get in essayists or critics on the American left like Chomsky, Hitchens, Cockburn and Herman. In short, don't expect Kristol to quote his enemies, offer much in the way of fact or cite sources. When Kristol self-consciously turns to Important Sociological Themes his writing bloats up. For example, in “Urban Civilization and its Discontents” he informs us: “For the overwhelming fact of American life today.. is that it is life in an urban civilization.” (334) In “American Historians and the Democratic Idea” he helpfully remarks that: “The political ideas that men have always help to shape the political reality they live in...” (325)

As a sociologist of capitalism, Kristol takes a culturalist line. His guiding idea is that the capitalist economy is stable; its culture turbulent. The economy produces growth and the betterment of everyone's condition. Affluence brings the pathologies which stem from hedonism and the desire for immediate gratification. The educated middle classes — the pampered and babied “new class” — is thoroughly disgusted by modern capitalism, which it finds unheroic and boring impelling it to challenge business leadership of society. The problems of capital are the problems of success: the stable material improvements it offers are a stimulus to moral and cultural rot. The antidote to all this is the reinvigoration of religious orthodoxy and traditional values.

THIS IS A HEAVILY RETRO VIEW, ROOTED IN THE GOLDEN AGE of post-war prosperity. Kristol does not discuss the main features of the current landscape of American capitalism: falling real wages, deindustrialization, the spread of low-wage, contingent work, the facts of income and wealth polarization and so forth. He actually says that the distribution of wealth is “a trivial moral issue.” (437) The link between economic growth and the betterment of the lives of the population is in fact, more than ever, dubious. Economic growth in the 1980s failed to reduce poverty as it had in earlier recoveries. As for the 1990s, in the years of recovery after 1991 the Economic Policy Institute notes that “inflation adjusted hourly wages have been stagnant or declining for the vast majority of the workforce,” including the bottom 80% of men and the bottom 70% of women. Kristol ignores all this and more — twenty years of economic history — and is still taken seriously as an analyst of U.S. capitalism, a feat no leftist could accomplish.

Kristol's picture of the spoiled middle classes is also a tad dated. During the 1980s twenty million workers were displaced from their jobs. By the end of the decade 45% of these were white collar workers. Of the managers and executives among the displaced, fewer than one-half were able to find jobs as good as their old ones. Also, wages for male white collar workers — surely the core of his “new class” — began to fall in the late 1980s in line with, though at a lesser dip than, the pattern earlier established for blue collar workers. Many of these people vote and have contributed to the electoral volatility of recent

years. Kristol's picture of a bratty middle class bored by capitalist prosperity is way off base: American capitalism is unheroic but too menacing to be boring.

Finally, religiosity does not seem to offer much in the way of an exit from these problems. In terms of church-attending, Bible-studying and God-believing, we've gone about as far in the piety department as we can go. Telling Americans to solve their problems through religion is like urging population growth on the Chinese as a panacea.

Much of the God-talk in this collection seems a little forced, a manipulative effort to seem compliant to the Christian Right. As Kristol puts it: "...if the Republican Party is to survive it must work at accommodating these people." (368) Here is a sample of the improbable mixture of calculation and grovelling which pervades parts of the book: "Conservative politicians woo the religious conservatives but only neoconservatives can really speak to them... Many of the neoconservatives are not themselves religiously observant in their private lives — though more and more of them are coming to be." (380-381) Kristol never quite gets around to saying he is a believer though, as this passage indicates, some of his best friends are.

Kristol's hasty and ill-considered efforts in this area are also on display in his attempt to devise an ecumenical definition of religious orthodoxy which conservatives of all faiths — Jews, Muslims and Christians — could accept. Without getting into the details, the definition turns on "virtuous practice in daily life." (431) Most Born Againers would find this sort of definition a boastful, legalistic attachment to good works, alien to the need for a spirit-filled personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This is an elementary point, not requiring intensive study of Ephesians; several viewings of *The 700 Club* might do it. The point is that Kristol doesn't know much of anything about the Christian Right, except that he wants it permanently hooked up to the Republican Party.

Kristol is consistent in little but his politics. His main loyalty is to the latest tactical twists and turns of the Republican Party and the right. Hence the extreme versatility of his conclusions. Populism is bad (321) but right-wing populism is good. (362-363) The welfare state is good for capitalism (308) but the welfare state causes a "long train of calamities." (365) It is impossible to plan or design a good society (272) except when it comes to religion. (379-380)

What is true of this collection is also true of his career as a whole. Take the issue of secular humanism. *Encounter* was a hard-core cold war journal backed by the CIA, and secular humanist beyond a doubt. In his 1950s' contributions, for example, Kristol often favorably contrasts the secularism of the West with the religious impulse at work in fascist or Communist regimes and movements. In one wild article called "The Shadow of the Marquis" Kristol denounces French left-wing intellectuals and the Marquis de Sade as "religious maniacs." He remarks: "In Paris one speaks of la Revolution, quite simply, with that frisson which only the Holy can evoke..." In another piece entitled "Politics Sacred and Profane," he runs on at length about the religious roots of totalitarianism and the danger that such movements may impose the "yoke of salvation." These are aggressively secular arguments. *Encounter* was so relaxed about religion that Kristol felt free in one review to make some wisecracks about the Holy Trinity. Good clean fun of course, though one doubts that Pat Robertson and

Ralph Reed would be amused.

After a couple of decades and the rise of the Christian Right, Kristol comes to believe that the humanist secularism which was a core feature of the civilization of the West in struggle against the Communists has itself become the slippery slope to liberalism and socialism: "It is secular humanism that is the orthodox metaphysical-theological basis of the two modern political philosophies, socialism and liberalism. The two are continuous across the secular-humanist spectrum, with socialism being an atheistic, messianic extreme while liberalism is an agnostic, melioristic version." (447) Kristol has dramatically changed his tune here: he originally used secularism as a weapon against the left; now he's convinced it's a weapon of the left. Of course, people change their minds. But Kristol claims, in a 1995 piece, he's never changed his mind about things religious: "There was something in me that made it impossible to become antireligious, or even non-religious. ...I was born 'theotropic.'" (4) This is an almost comical rewriting of his own past in order to pander to the Christian Right.

THE COHERENCE IN KRISTOL'S WORK IS POLITICAL. The guiding purpose of his work has been to win over or neutralize political forces which might oppose or simply prove troublesome for the right. In the early Cold War he used *Encounter* to campaign for pro-U.S., anti-Communist politics among Social Democratic intellectuals and political elites in Europe. In the 1960s and 1970s he used *The Public Interest* to shake the faith of the middle classes in the welfare state, racial equality and social reform generally, as a sort of retort to people like Rachel Carson, Ralph Nader and their supporters and to the civil rights movement. In the 1990s he is trying to domesticate the Christian Right for the purposes of the mainstream of the Republican Party, to avoid splits, divisions and acrimony.

In each case the strategy is to pander to the target group by posing as the embodiment and most energetic defender of the values it holds dear: high culture and secular humanism in *Encounter*; academic inquiry and technocratic policy making in *The Public Interest*; and anti-humanism and "traditional values" in his current incarnation. Kristol is not really a social analyst. He does not use theories, concepts or evidence to understand social life but as bait to attract whatever constituency the right has designs on at the moment.

Kristol's continued prominence on the right seems a bit iffy. The politicians well understand the need to cater to the Christian Right. It is doubtful that the Republicans need the neoconservatives as a sort of Welcome Wagon for the pious. Further, when the right fully accepts the realities of growing inequality and hardening class relations, it will have to try to explain and justify them. The latest works of Murray/Herrnstein and Dinesh D'Souza suggest the increasingly harsh ideological climate that's on the way. Kristol's rosy view of capitalism covers up all the questions the right will have to deal with.

A Flawed Political Biography

NOAM CHOMSKY: A LIFE OF DISSENT by Robert F. Barsky, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Reviewed by Stephen R. Shalom

IN ONE RESPECT, NOAM CHOMSKY IS AN EASY SUBJECT FOR A BIOGRAPHY. Rarely has there been a person more willing to share his views: he writes — at prodigious length — to anyone asking a serious question, spending some 20 hours a week on correspondence; he keeps up a frantic pace of speaking engagements, submits to innumerable interviews, and participates in *Z* magazine's on-line "ChomskyChat" forum.

But in another respect, a biography of Chomsky is a formidable undertaking, for the biographer has not only to digest a massive oeuvre of published work, but be well versed in linguistics, philosophy, political theory, history, foreign policy, political economy, and sociology of the media, if only to explain what Chomsky has been up to. One could of course narrow the focus, and write a *political* biography of Chomsky, covering *only* his contributions as one of the most important left political figures of the last half century. This is the daunting task that Robert F. Barsky sets for himself in his *Noam Chomsky: A Life of Dissent*. His effort, however, is largely unsuccessful, and an adequate political biography of Chomsky has yet to be written.

The book has some strengths. Barsky doesn't misrepresent Chomsky's views, and is thus light-years ahead of the mendacious commentators over the years who have accused Chomsky of being a Communist sympathizer, an anti-Semite, an America-hater, and the like. Sharing Chomsky's left-libertarian political outlook, Barsky is able to use the biography as an opportunity to present the case for freedom and justice, and is able to show, in a non-reductive way, how Chomsky's views on language as an infinitely creative human capacity are related to his political ideal of social arrangements which allow people to most fully develop their creative potential.

Suspicious of personality cults, Chomsky discourages biographers (he says he hasn't even gone to see the movie about him, *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*). Barsky sensibly decided that by concentrating on Chomsky's political milieu, much of value could be learned without offending democratic principles. And, after all, in writing a biography of Chomsky one is writing not just about a political thinker, but a political activist as well, someone who has lent his tireless efforts to day-to-day struggles for social justice. But to effectively describe and chronicle the events of Chomsky's life and context demands greater familiarity with the U.S. political scene and first-hand knowledge of the relevant years than Barsky, writing from Canada, appears to

STEPHEN R. SHALOM recently co-taught an on-line course on U.S. foreign policy with Noam Chomsky. He is on the editorial board of *New Politics*.

have. (The book includes an odd section on “Chomsky and Montreal” and describes a Montreal political alliance, only to tell us that “Chomsky himself had no contact with the Montreal group”; the people quoted most often in the book, after Chomsky himself, are two Canadians who have had negligible contact with Chomsky.)

Gaps in personal experience, of course, can be filled by the hard work of research, but Barsky seems not to have done very much of that. He interviewed almost none of the people who have figured importantly in Chomsky's political or personal life (Carol Chomsky, Howard Zinn, Louis Kampf, Michael Albert, or Morris Halle, among others). He didn't go through the critical reviews of Chomsky's work written in the United States (every review he cites comes from London); it is true that Chomsky's writings have often been ignored in the U.S. press, but certainly his lengthy exchanges with Lionel Abel, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., Richard Herrnstein, Michael Walzer, and Paul Berman were politically important and worthy of note, as were sympathetic critiques from such people as Brian Morton. Despite the claim on the book jacket that Barsky quotes from Chomsky's “unpublished correspondence, including the author's own long correspondence with Chomsky,” none of Chomsky's letters to anyone other than Barsky were used. And of the many extensive interviews with Chomsky by David Barsamian and Michael Albert available on audiotape, only one is cited.

Early on, Barsky lists some of the organizations, publications, and individuals that have not been adequately discussed in relation to Chomsky's political work that will fill his book. But many of these Barsky barely discusses at all: the Institute for Workers' Control (0 mentions), the Leninist League (0 mentions), *Modern Occasions* (0 mentions), *New Politics* (1 passing mention), *The Spokesman* (0 mentions), and Jerry Rubin (1 passing mention).

Far too often, Barsky quotes a Chomsky letter to him without seeking any corroboration. For example, Barsky says that:

In 1981, an interviewer for *Nouvel Observateur* modified the replies to questions he had sent Chomsky in order, as Chomsky himself put it, “to accord with [the newspaper's] ideological needs.”

It is commendable to allow Chomsky to explain himself in his own words, but the basic job of a biographer, it seems to me, is to check these things out, comparing Chomsky's replies with what appeared in the paper. Barsky doesn't do that. Moreover, although Barsky lists many of Chomsky's published works in his bibliography (omitting the vast majority of his non-book publications), the bulk of his citations come from the handful of letters he received from Chomsky. But, since letters are necessarily less carefully formulated and less well documented or double-checked than published works, Barsky is presenting a far less convincing version of Chomsky's arguments than is already publicly available.

His excessive reliance on these letters leads Barsky to be dependent on Chomsky's unverified memory — which is extraordinary, but not infallible — leading to errors, probably compounded by Barsky's own garbling of what Chomsky told him. *Z Magazine* and South End Press, says Barsky, “were born from the Rosa Luxemburg student group at MIT, for which Noam Chomsky and Louis Kampf were faculty advisers....” The student group (of which I was

a part) was Rosa Luxemburg SDS. SDS is mentioned only once in the book, in a Chomsky quote about its self-destruction, but in fact when national SDS split into its Progressive Labor and Weather factions, many of us in Boston sought an independent course, while retaining the SDS name. At MIT we called ourselves Rosa Luxemburg SDS because we admired Luxemburg's critique of Leninism and rather liked the idea of using a woman's name (we probably didn't pay much attention to her position on nationalism). We were much influenced by the views and example of Chomsky and Kampf, but they were not our "faculty advisers"; we would have sooner gotten haircuts than to have allowed anyone to serve as our "faculty advisers." (Chomsky repeats this error in his interview/essay in *The Cold War and the University* [New York: New Press, 1997].) Mike Albert was a member of RL-SDS and some years after leaving MIT went on to found South End, along with some other people, none of whom had been part of RL-SDS. "Other students," says Barsky, "including Steve Shalom and Peter Bohmer, also went on to participate in the collectives." I have no idea what he's talking about.

THIS BOOK TOO OFTEN GIVES INSUFFICIENT DETAIL to make a convincing case for those who don't already share Chomsky's broad political perspective. So, for example, in comparing Chomsky with Irving Howe, Barsky notes that although Howe criticized the Vietnam War, he did so in deplorably narrow terms. I think Howe's position on the war was indeed terrible, but to convince the unconvinced one needs to cite specifics, which Barsky doesn't do. And major aspects of Chomsky's political analysis — for example, his views on the Israeli-Palestine conflict since the 1950s or on the media or his recent writing on domestic U.S. political economy — are hardly covered at all. So this volume can hardly serve as a basic introduction to Chomsky's politics.

Nor does it offer much sustenance to already committed leftists. Many of the debates *within* the left in which Chomsky has participated are treated much too briefly or omitted altogether. Thus, nothing is said about the question of civil disobedience (the subject of an illuminating exchange in the *New York Review of Books* during the Vietnam War) or the relation of the anti-intervention movement to the Sandinistas (debated in the pages of this journal ten years ago), or on intervention in Somalia, Haiti, or Bosnia, or on a multitude of other issues on which Chomsky has commented.

Chomsky's views on the student movement and the role of the university are discussed, but inadequately. Chomsky tells Barsky that in 1968 he "paid virtually no attention to what was going on in Paris," as could be seen from his writings. But Barsky doesn't press him to explain why. Yet Chomsky's position here certainly raises questions, given that French student leader Daniel Cohn-Bendit wrote one of the most important manifestos for left-wing anarchism, and that, as Barsky notes, for a brief moment it looked "as though the student-worker links that had begun to form could advance the cause of radical social change." But there is no follow-up from Barsky.

MIT was a major military contractor, and much of what happened there was funded by the Pentagon. Even Chomsky's work was supported by the military. In the late 1960s, as the student movement reached its peak, war research on campus came under increasing attack, particularly projects being done at two MIT labs. Barsky quotes Chomsky as recalling the political line-

up: right-wing faculty wanted to keep the labs, liberal faculty wanted to break relations with the labs formally (so that the same work would be done but invisibly), while “the radical students and I wanted to keep the labs on campus, on the principle that what is going to be going on anyway ought to be open and above board...” But this obscures the fact that most radical students, as well as many liberal students, wanted first and foremost to stop the war research and thus to convert the labs to non-military pursuits. We didn't want the war research to go on in divested labs, nor did we want it to go on in affiliated labs. We wanted the war research stopped, period. Barsky's account, characteristically, is too sketchy to enable the reader to grapple with the issue.

Chomsky has always sympathized and stood with those struggling for a better world. He has often criticized movements for social change, but his criticisms have invariably been motivated by the passionate belief that only a movement that can subject itself to ruthless self-criticism has a chance of victory, or is worthy of that victory.

For Noam Chomsky, political commitment has always been combined with independence of mind and tenacious research. Any biographer of Chomsky ought to possess these same qualities.

Two Invented Lives

HELLMAN AND HAMMETT by Joan Mellen. HarperCollins, New York, 1996. 572pp. \$30.00 HB, \$13.00 PB.

Reviewed by Phyllis Jacobson

NOT FOR ONE INSTANT THE CHARMING, DELICIOUSLY INSOUCIANT Myrna Loy and William Powell of legendary *Thin Man* movie fame, Dashiell Hammett and Lillian Hellman were, according to Joan Mellen's scrupulously researched biography, a pair of mismatched lovers; he, a compulsive womanizer, she, a compulsive liar. While most of the book is devoted to an in-depth analysis of their personal/sexual relationship, Mellen is very much concerned with their politics, as well. “A foremost literary fabulator of her generation,” Mellen writes, “Lillian Hellman invented her life, so that by the end even she was uncertain about what had been true.” The first biographer to have access to the Hellman papers which include those of Hammett's deposited in her archives, Mellen was in an excellent position to disprove many of the lies Hellman told about herself during her lifetime.

Hellman said she was never a member of the Communist Party. But she was. Not that that was a crucial bit of information. If she was not a member, she was a dues cheat and my suspicion is that even as a member, given her mythic avarice — she even appropriated the royalties Hammett left to his daughter — she probably didn't contribute that much. But, for years, she and Hammett gave something even more valuable than money to the Communist

PHYLLIS JACOBSON is the co-editor of *New Politics*.

Party: they lent their celebrated names and prestige to every piece of CP skull-duggery requiring a public whitewash.

Both supported the verdict of the 1938 Moscow purge trial as signatories to the petition "Leading Artists, Educators Support Soviet Trial Verdict," that appeared in the *New Masses* (May 3, 1938) which said about the Old Bolshevik defendants:

...they resorted to duplicity and conspiracy and allied themselves with long-standing enemies of the Soviet Union — nationalists who had ties with capitalist, fascist and White Guard Allies, and even with former czarist *agents provocateurs*. Degeneration may therefore be charged to the defendants, and not the Soviet Union, which gains strength internally and externally by the prevention of treason and the eradication of spies and wreckers.

Both signed an "Open Letter to American Liberals" warning them not to aid John Dewey's investigation of the charges against Leon Trotsky because it gave "support to fascist forces" and opposed asylum for Trotsky in the U.S. The statement denounced the "fantastic falsehood that the USSR and totalitarian states are basically alike." A week later the Hitler-Stalin Pact was signed.

The use of the Smith Act, making illegal "teaching and advocating the overthrow of the United States government by force and violence," to indict and jail the leaders of the Socialist Workers Party in 1941, met with CP approval and Hammett/Hellman silence.

In 1949 Hellman was one of the sponsors of the notorious Waldorf Conference, The Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace, a joint Soviet-American venture whose official sponsor was the National Council of the Arts, Sciences and Professions (a CP front which, under a different name had tried to mobilize intellectuals for the 1948 Henry Wallace campaign.) When Norman Cousins attacked the narrow group running the Conference for its refusal to include American intellectuals opposed to Soviet totalitarianism, Hellman replied irrelevantly but in the outraged tones of a *grande dame*: "I would recommend, Mr. Cousins, that when you are invited out to dinner you wait until you get home before you talk about your hosts."

She was still at it in 1969 when, according to Mellen, she told Dorothea Strauss that her husband was a "malefactor" because he published Solzhenitsyn. Mellen quotes her as saying "If you knew what I know about American prisons, you would be a Stalinist, too." Mellen continues, "American justice allowed her now to maintain good faith with the tyrant who had, despite his methods, industrialized the 'first socialist state.'" But her *grande dame* manner vanished when, as late as the late 70s, she said about George Orwell's magnificent Spanish Civil War memoir, *Homage to Catalonia*, that it was "a load of crap."

LILLIAN HELLMAN'S PERFORMANCE before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1952 scripted by her notable social democratic, anti-Stalinist attorney, Joseph Rauh, accorded her iconic status. Rauh prepared a statement for her in which she declared herself ready to answer questions about herself, "But to hurt innocent people whom I knew years ago in order to save myself is, to me, inhuman and indecent and dishonorable. I cannot and will not cut my conscience to fit this year's fashions..." A ringing statement. But she was well aware that the need to answer questions about herself would never arise. To

remain silent about others required the use of the Fifth Amendment against self-incrimination which, of course, she used. "She named no names," Mellen writes, "Otherwise her position was hardly worthy of the mantle of Joan of Arc she assumed after her ordeal was over."

After that, Hellman spent her time courting mainstream intellectuals, indulging her obsession with money. Systematically, Mellen says, she severed her old left-wing connections. "Now she did cut her conscience to suit the year's fashions," as she cut loose from the innumerable CP-front organizations using her name on their letterheads.

Her memoirs, particularly *Scoundrel Time*, published in 1976, Mellen writes,

rained upon Lillian Hellman torrents of incredulity. In this account of her travail under McCarthyism she seemed unregenerate in her Stalinism. Nor would she even now admit that she and Hammett were Communists. Fighting back, she accused liberal anti-Communists of attacking "radicals" rather than capitalists and imperialists. But she was at last being held accountable and it stung.

Hellman's publisher, Little Brown, backed out of its contract with Diana Trilling to publish a collection of her essays in which Trilling replied to Hellman's charges against her and her husband, Lionel. Hellman, the ultimate civil libertarian, demanded that Trilling agree to have her remarks about her edited. When Trilling refused, Hellman persuaded Little Brown not to publish her book. It was later published by Harcourt.

But worse was yet to come in the person of Mary McCarthy who had said publicly, "I think every word she writes is false, including 'and' and 'but'," a statement she repeated on the Dick Cavett show. In a rage, Hellman contacted her lawyer, noted civil libertarian Ephraim London, and demanded that he institute a suit against the Educational Broadcasting Company and Mary McCarthy. Despite warning her that she would lose, Hellman insisted that he proceed. She, after all, was a millionaire and could easily stand the cost of a lawsuit while McCarthy had no money to speak of.

McCarthy started producing evidence of some of Hellman's lies, including her statements indicating that she knew nothing about the Moscow Trials. Hellman had, she pointed out, signed statements applauding the guilty verdict. But then she produced the most damaging of all Hellman's lies, the chapter in *Pentimento*, the second volume of her memoirs (later made into the film, *Julia* with Jane Fonda playing Hellman (Julia) to Vanessa Redgrave's anti-fascist activist), in which Hellman portrays herself heroically carrying money into Nazi Germany for her socialist activist friend. A complete fabrication. Hellman had appropriated the life of Muriel Gardiner who later told her own story in *Code Name Mary*, a story Hellman had learned from their mutual friend, lawyer Wolf Schwabacher. Told by London that she would have to produce evidence of the real Julia to proceed with her case against McCarthy, Hellman was frantic and became tangled in a web of additional lies. She actually had the chutzpah to plan to visit Muriel Gardiner to ask Gardiner to say that she was not Julia, a meeting that never came off. Hellman still hadn't thought her way out of her dilemma when McCarthy's attorneys' motion to have the case dismissed on the basis that Hellman was a public figure was denied. The case was scheduled to proceed. But it never did. Hellman died

before that could happen.

LILLIAN HELLMAN WAS NOT ONLY A LIAR but, despite her disclaimers, an unregenerate Stalinist. In *Scoundrel Time* she wrote,

Communist-haters, particularly among intellectuals, wrote and talked a good deal about the violence they could suffer at the hands of American Communists ... but I think that was a very doubtful charge. About foreign gunmen I know only what I have read, but the American radicals I met were not violent men.

It is hard to believe, for example, that anybody could have thought of V.J. Jerome, the theoretician of the Party, as a man with a bomb or a gun.

To be sure, when Hellman wrote of "radicals" she didn't mean radicals at all. She meant the likes of V.J. Jerome, among others. Why should she have found it "hard to believe" that he could be thought of "as a man with a bomb or a gun"? Hellman admired his European counterparts, after all, and they not only used bombs and guns but were responsible for mass murder in those countries — the Soviet Union, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Poland — where they had power. They were totalitarian ideologues dependent on violence for the retention of power. Why should we believe that the difference between them and V.J. Jerome was anything more than an accident of geography?

Hellman said that "radicals" like herself had done no harm. She was mistaken. By promoting a totalitarian movement in the name of socialism, she and they had done enormous harm. They had impeded the development of an authentic socialist movement by distorting the basic concepts of socialism, promulgating the idea that a society based on the destruction of working class independence, on terror and the liquidation of millions was socialist. They not only distorted history but made a mockery of the American radical tradition.

Joan Mellen's exceptional biography, *Hellman and Hammett*, written from a left viewpoint, chronicles not only the tempestuous relationship of Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett but their love affair with Stalinism, as well.

The Limitations of a Neo-Nationalist

THE NEXT AMERICAN NATION: THE NEW NATIONALISM AND THE FOURTH AMERICAN REVOLUTION, by Michael Lind. The Free Press, New York, 1995.

Reviewed by Thaddeus Russell

MICHAEL LIND IS A STRANGE MAN. He advocates miscegenation but calls for the abolition of affirmative action. He argues that the United States is less free and democratic than the rest of the industrialized West yet presents himself as an unabashed American nationalist. He maintains that the three greatest

THADDEUS RUSSELL is a Ph.D. candidate in American history at Columbia University.

heroes in American history are Alexander Hamilton, Frederick Douglass, and Franklin D. Roosevelt. He claims to present no less than "the most detailed description that has appeared in print" of the present American "third republic" run by an oligarchic "white overclass" and a culturally hegemonic "multicultural left." And, then, how many former protégés of William F. Buckley have become darlings of the American left? Yet what is strangest of all about Lind's young career is that the message of his books isn't strange at all. His political program includes little more than economic protectionism, campaign finance reform, and a welfare state. Underneath all the eccentricities and self-aggrandizing bluster Lind is nothing more than a nationalist social democrat. This is why the Michael Lind phenomenon of the past two years is so puzzling. Perhaps his rapid rise to fame was due in large part to his timing. Having established himself as an up-and-coming reactionary under Buckley's tutelage and as a fellow at the Heritage Foundation, Lind experienced a change of heart sometime around the 1994 elections.

In the winter of 1995 he published an article in *Dissent* in which he declared his break from the right and denounced the hijacking of the Republican Party by the likes of Pat Robertson and Pat Buchanan. Perhaps the left, including the editors of *Dissent*, should have thought twice about rushing to embrace Lind, since the article (and his later book, *Up from Conservatism*) argues that American conservatism lost its way after the golden years of the 1950s and 1960s. But it appears that following the ascendancy of the Gingrichites, Lind was simply too attractive for the Dissenters to pass up. From there Lind set out to build a new career as the leading American apostate intellectual.

Shortly after the *Dissent* article Lind published *The Next American Nation*, which to many represented further proof that he had traveled light years from his intellectual origins. In the summer of 1995, Lind's name was everywhere. Reviews of the book appeared in nearly every mainstream and left journal. Aside from the expected dismissals in *The National Review* and *Commentary* and assorted criticisms of the book's specific proposals, most of the reviews hailed *The Next American Nation* as a profound and provocative contribution to American political thought. In *The New York Review of Books* Alan Ryan called it "a splendid jeremiad." Scott Malcolmson, writing in the *Village Voice*, castigated Lind for his attack on affirmative action but nonetheless labeled him a revolutionary and "our first notable apostate from neoconservatism." Even Christopher Hitchens got into the act, writing an almost entirely uncritical piece in *The New York Times Book Review*.

What is dismaying about the liberal-left reception of *The Next American Nation* is that hardly anyone took on Lind's central argument that American national culture should be celebrated, preserved, and sealed off from the rest of the world. In the future he proposes, "the nation-dividing mixture of racial preference plutocratic politics and free-market capitalism that defines the politics of Multicultural America would be replaced by a nation-uniting synthesis of color-blind individualism in civil rights, equal voting power, and social market capitalism." He wishes to unite the nation around what he sees as a common culture of language, "folkways," and historical knowledge. To protect this common American culture, Lind proposes the abolition of racial preference policies, radical restrictions on immigration, and a "social tariff" against

U.S. companies that move production abroad. Most reviewers, even leftists with an internationalist bent, failed to see how these central conservative assumptions underlay Lind's entire project.

To their credit, several reviewers on the left take a skeptical stance toward many of Lind's proposals. Eric Foner, writing in *In These Times*, flails away at Lind's racial politics, particularly his assumption "that declaring the nation color-blind" by doing away with affirmative action "will make it so." Foner also challenges Lind's top-down view of history and politics, something the born-again liberal no doubt brought with him from the Heritage Foundation. "Lind sees the evolving definition of American nationality as a set of ideas imposed by elites, rather than being continually contested at all levels of society," Foner writes. Foner's criticisms are devastating, yet they don't do justice to the coherence of Lind's thought. The book is presented as an assortment of ramblings by a sort-of conservative, sort-of liberal political novice.

Malcolmson, while more approving than Foner, devotes a similarly disproportionate amount of space to Lind's stand against affirmative action and racial preference policies. He sees Lind's obsessions as products of his age. "He is very much of his (and my) generation in his preoccupation with race and his acceptance of white racism as central to American history," Malcolmson writes, leaving unmentioned Lind's primary preoccupation, American nationalism.

Hitchens, in his review of *The Next American Nation*, seems to have lost every vestige of the democratic, socialist internationalism that animated so much of his writing. He approvingly compares the book with John Kenneth Galbraith's *The Affluent Society*, celebrates its call for "an update of the New Deal," and echoes Lind's paranoid attack on multiculturalism, which "may very well metamorphose into an ugly tribal negation of itself." Surprisingly, Hitchens offers no critique of Lind's idea of a common American national culture.

Even Ellen Willis, whose review in *The Nation* is the best of the left critiques, fails to trace Lind's stealth conservatism to its source. She rightly calls *The Next American Nation* "warmed-over Daniel Bell: liberal in politics, socialist (sort of) in economics, authoritarian in culture." Willis raises a host of important questions about Lind's politics, and, more important, the "unholy alacrity" with which leftists embraced the erstwhile Republican. She faults him for exaggerating the power of the multicultural left, his dismissal of feminism, and his goofy cultural analysis of the white "overclass." Willis also questions the breadth of Lind's notion of American culture and asserts that American workers need an international labor movement, not nationalism.

BUT ALL THESE REVIEWERS FAIL TO UNDERSTAND LIND on his own terms. *The Next American Nation* is not just an odd assortment of racist history, neo-liberal policy positions and screwy cultural analyses. It contains a central, unifying argument, one that makes all his secondary points conservative and unworthy of the left's praise. Yes, he calls for a stronger labor movement, but his only strategy to strengthen the movement is to restrict immigration and penalize runaway corporations. Been there, done that. Why not a militant, international, political brand of unionism? Because that would mean a massive social movement that would divide the American nation. Many leftists, myself included, are skeptical about the progressive potential of affirmative action. Lind, on the other hand, opposes it not because it forestalls a more radical black move-

ment against inequality, but because it sets Americans against one another. And it is hardly surprising that Lind ignores feminism in his survey of American history and mockingly dismisses feminists in the rest of the book as "that other oppressed minority, white women." After all, how could he countenance a movement that challenges the patriarchal family, the very foundation of American national unity?

Lind's nationalism soils every element of his book. Since social movements are ruled out as agents of change because of their divisive effects on the nation, Lind relies on the elites to reconstruct American society. He wants to dismantle the ghetto and relocate poor minorities to the suburbs. Who will do this? Because of the debilitating effects of the culture of poverty, "referring the problem to the black community is not an answer." So naturally, the problem has to be referred to the elites: "If there is to be a liberal nationalist counter-elite, capable of rallying the leaderless Trans-America majority and opposing the white overclass, it would be most likely to coalesce around Congress and the military." As Foner points out, Lind's top-down perspective is especially evident in his historical sections. There, he informs us that the "leaders of the Civil Rights Revolution" included Hubert Humphrey and Lyndon Johnson!

And finally, one has to wonder why leftists wouldn't be repelled by the idea of promoting American culture in the first place. Lind's description of that culture is, of course, highly selective. It includes "the plain just-folks style" but not the anti-intellectualism, "the dislike of ostentation" but not the monuments of capitalist megalomania found in every major city, soul food and jazz but not the soul-crushing shopping malls and faceless suburbs that dominate the American landscape. Lind claims to despise the free market while celebrating a market culture.

Surely nationalism can be and has been a progressive force, usually as a mobilizing ideology against imperial domination. But as a product of this capitalist empire, one has to wonder just how progressive it can be.

Popular Culture with Panache

SMOKE AND MIRRORS: VIOLENCE, TELEVISION, AND OTHER AMERICAN CULTURES by John Leonard. New York: New Press, 1997. \$23 hb.

Reviewed by Kent Worcester

JOHN LEONARD WRITES ABOUT TELEVISION WITH SYMPATHY AND AFFECTION, but he understands that not everything on the tube is worth watching, even from a sociological perspective. Cop shows, tv movies of the week, sitcoms from the 1970s, and *The Simpsons* all meet with his approval. His list of dislikes includes *Punky Brewster*, Halle Berry, and the grotesque *thirtysomething*, about which he says, "Growing up hurts so much you want to suck your big toe."

He thinks that the medium's so-called "golden age" (the 1950s and early

KENT WORCESTER is a member of the New Politics editorial board.

1960s) has been overrated, and that by implication the industry's more recent output has been unfairly scorned. As a professional critic he gets paid to watch a lot of television, but his enthusiasm for what he regards as the best of the medium remains undiminished by insider cynicism.

Leonard's guiding assumption is that television is "full of surprising gravity and grace," and that "we'd actually be a kinder, gentler, healthier nation if in fact we embraced the scruples and imitated the behaviors recommended by most entertainment programs." Just as conservatives fear, television is a liberal-dominated medium that is "more welcoming of diversity and difference" and offers "more of a community" than the turbulent society that spawned it. He spends a lot of time trying to justify these provocative assertions, piling on example after example of television's inclusive humanism and the contrast it provides with the culture at large. "A medium capable of *China Beach*, *M*A*S*H*, *St. Elsewhere*, *Northern Exposure*, *Homicide*, and *The X-Files* has less to be ashamed of than many of its critics do, and most of its competition," he says.

As these examples suggest, Leonard expends a lot more ink on hour-long dramas than, say MTV dance shows or network news programs. His main focus is on big-budget prime time programming, and he mostly thinks in terms of individual shows rather than the relentless, 24-hour "flow" that Raymond Williams identified as the medium's single most important characteristic. He also doesn't have much to say about commercials, which generate roughly 90% of network income and which trivialize even the most innovative programming. In many respects *Smoke and Mirrors* is an optimist's book but for that reason it provides a welcome respite from the usual blather about how there are 57 channels and nothing to watch.

I would take issue with some of Leonard's specific assessments. *Northern Exposure* had its moments but it was by no means the "most remarkable series ever to sustain itself on network television." Early *Star Trek* deserves better than Leonard's abrupt dismissal. It seems churlish to even mention his infatuation with Blythe Danner, of all people. And, most important, he doesn't have a clue about *Babylon Five*. How could a serious critic compare *B5* unfavorably to Fox's moribund *VR5*?

Yet, for some, understandably, it wouldn't matter if Leonard was writing about television or insect mating rituals. His pen is sharper than a razor. Television "resembles a household pet," and is "the most domestic of our distractions." *Homicide* is "*Hill Street* for Baltimore, so fast-forward we'd often wonder just what hit us, with drive-by wisecracks and percussive mayhem, as if not only the cameras were jumpy, but the actors, the director, and executive-producers Barry Levinson and Tom Fontana, too." *Max Headroom* lasted "just long enough on ABC for the network to figure out that this was a series that made savage fun of television itself." *Law and Order*, by way of contrast, "knew every geometric angle of New York City." And in writing about *Miami Vice*, Leonard admits that "as a content junkie, I hadn't failed to notice that Latin America had taken over from Vietnam in the pulp imagination as our pre-eminent third-world hell-on-wheels, with the drug lords as the Viet Cong and the Andes as one big Nose Cone."

Some of his choicest barbs are aimed at the Right. The following is practically hurled at the reader:

Momentarily, after the election of a guns-and-God Republican Congress in 1994 — a Keystone Khmer Rouge pledged in its slash-and-burn Contract on America to cleanse Phnom Penh of every pointy-headed intellectual with a tutu in his closet, every parasitic lowlife painter who ever suckered a dime from the National Endowment, every third-world wetback here to steal a job and every child who was ever “difficult,” not to mention their welfare mothers, crackhead fathers, shyster lawyers and other inconvenient codependents who ought instead to be growing rice and eating fish paste in the boondocks — the focus of tube-bashing switched from network and cable, where “hidden persuaders” were accused of exploiting our vulgar appetite for blood and semen, to the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, where ‘liberal elitists’ were alleged to promote their ulterior agenda of multiculti/feminazi/gay-pride/socialized medicine/performance art.

I would not suggest that Leonard’s prose be used in first-year composition classes as a template for inexperienced writers. This kind of manic assault is best left to the experts. But there’s no denying that Leonard’s sharp tongue packs a kick; and his dry CBS Sunday morning commentaries are pretty funny too. If the Right has anyone who writes about popular culture with as much panache and energy, then all I can say is that their work hasn’t appeared in the *American Spectator*, *Weekly Standard*, or *National Review*. We should all take pleasure in the fact that Leonard is one of ours.

The Uniqueness of Scottish Dissent

THE VERY BASTARDS OF CREATION: SCOTTISH INTERNATIONAL RADICALISM, 1707-1995: A Biographical Study by James D. Young, published by the Clydeside Press, Glasgow, 340 pp.

Reviewed by Raymond Challinor

LET ME START WITH A CONFESSION. Though I live close to the England/Scotland border, sometimes I find it extremely difficult to fathom what a Scot with a broad accent is saying. But the differences do not end there. We live in a period of growing divergence, an accentuation of a distinctly Scottish culture and politics.

How and when did this process begin? In 1707 the two countries officially combined. Yet, the ordinary Scot can see that few if any benefits came from the Act of Union. There was the savagery of the Highland clearances. Vast tracts of land were depopulated, crofters made to flee or were burnt alive in their cottages, just to make them the playgrounds of the aristocracy. Then the Irish troubles spilled over into Scotland: the potato famine, rack-renting and op-

RAYMOND CHALLINOR, a lifelong British socialist, has been working for a number of years on a study of World War II. His book, *The Struggle for Hearts and Minds: Essays on the Second World War* was published by Bewick Press in 1995.

pression of the native population led to a mass exodus from Erin.

Angry Irish immigrants and dispossessed Highlanders mingled in Central Scotland, where the tensions were heightened by the Industrial Revolution and the fact that pay and conditions were worse than in the rest of the United Kingdom. No wonder, to quote the title of James D. Young's book, in London's high society, they were regarded as "the very bastards of Creation."

BUT THIS HOSTILITY TO THE REBELLIOUS SCOTS sometimes extended to relatively progressive counterparts. Indeed, the expression "the very bastards of Creation" was coined by John Wilkes, a pioneer in the struggle against the English state's despotic power. Still Wilkes identified himself with the English Establishment he loathed, unwilling to struggle for those of the border to enjoy the same human rights as himself.

Edward Thompson acknowledges implicitly even in the title of his classic work, *The Making of the English Working Class*, that the Scots are a separate race with a different outlook and development. While James D. Young's book does not attempt to cover the same vast terrain as Thompson, it nevertheless provides some new, valuable insights. He selects a clutch of radicals from the 18th Century down to contemporary times, using them to illustrate the uniqueness of Scottish dissent.

His impressive portrait gallery includes J.T. Callender, Alexander Rodger, Alexander Robertson and John Murdoch, as well as people like Keir Hardie and John Maclean, much better known to contemporary socialists. Combined, this collection of talent and anger explain how the author can argue that Scotland, quite perversely in a British context, has bucked the trend. While other parts of the United Kingdom have meekly submitted to the Thatcherite counterrevolution, north of the border a Celtic kick back has taken place.

Now suffering from a serious illness, James D. Young could be forgiven if he spent the rest of his life in pleasurable relaxation. But he is made of sterner stuff: a socialist in the same mold as Hal Draper, a believer in socialism-from-below, he feels his duty is to recount the past struggles of working people to create a new society. Though it is unclear how long he will be able to continue, one thing is certain — James D. Young will die with a pen in one hand, his other raised in a clenched-fist salute.

C O R R E S P O N D E N C E

Taking Issue with Lemisch's Article

To the Editors:

IN HIS REVIEW OF OUR SOCIALIST SCHOLARS CONFERENCE PANEL on "The Dominant Ideology: Power and Vulnerability" (New Politics, Winter 1997), Jesse Lemisch says that he "grew increasingly uncomfortable" with the drift of Richard Cloward's and my remarks, which showed "no way out." On the other hand, he was greatly uplifted by Elaine Bernard's "acute analysis" that pointed tellingly to the vulnerability of the system and the positive signs of resistance.

Lemisch was clearly unaware that there was a planned division of labor among the panelists, with Cloward and I responsible for dealing with the dominant ideology and its sources of power, Bernard the counter-ideologies and varieties of resistance. But this only dramatizes Lemisch's double-standard. As regards my and Cloward's talks, Lemisch says "what kind of analysis ignores agency and resistance, and how can analysis pretend to validity without them?" That is, one is not even allowed to spell out the characteristics and strengths of the dominant ideology without in the same remarks pointing up its weaknesses. On the other hand, Elaine Bernard, who addressed the sources of vulnerability of the dominant ideology and forms of resistance is not criticized for having failed (quite reasonably) to discuss the power of the ideology and its ability to counter resistance.

The deriding of the one set as lacking validity for ignoring the resistance, the other enthusiastically applauded as "acute analysis" despite the lack of attention to the rather potent dominant ideology, indicates that both the derision and applause are badly tarnished and lack scientific integrity. (I should mention that I thought Bernard's talk was very good, though this judgment is based on standards different from Lemisch's.) Lemisch's bias here reminds me of conservative criticisms of "liberal" media programs for an alleged lack of "balance," a standard which the critics never apply to ideologically correct programs. It also reminds me of a certain form of criticism of *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*, by me and Noam Chomsky; namely, that its model and illustrations, emphasizing the power of the corporate system, failed to give enough attention to the bright side, and would therefore produce discouragement and apathy. This was the minority view among activists and radicals, most of whom valued the book as contributing to their understanding and vindicating their beliefs as to the true state of affairs. I am sure Lemisch would take the minority view.

Lemisch says that "I have often been critical of a hortatory left culture that shows up in such places as left film, song, and history, and I think it's the job of left intellectuals to tell the truth, even when the truth is uninspiring." Lemisch implies that he is not a member of the hortatory left culture. But his double standard in evaluating our panel — and his own concluding sentence, which describes "our job" as including many things, such as "to imagine and invent resistance," but does not mention "telling the truth" — shows that Jesse Lemisch

doesn't know himself. In his reply to my criticism of his remarks in the *Radical History Review Newsletter* (Dec. 1996), Lemisch says that "any analyst is free to focus on one side or the other...but the overall picture [and "hard radical analysis"] has to include resistance,..." But if each individual paper must include resistance, doesn't it also have to include the power of establishment forces and their ability to counter resistance to be serious "hard radical analysis"? If not, why not?

EDWARD S. HERMAN

Jesse Lemisch Replies:

ED HERMAN STILL DOESN'T GET IT. If we are to have any hope of changing things in democratic ways, we must scrutinize the ideologies and systems that oppress us from a point of view which assumes the potential of agency from below, and looks for points of vulnerability in the oppressing systems. Herman is responding — but not really responding — to this passage in my article:

I have often been critical of a hortatory left culture that shows up in such places as left film, song and history, and think it's the job of left intellectuals to tell the truth, even when the truth is uninspiring. Our goal is not uplift, but rather solid social science and a better understanding of how capitalism works and might be opposed. *But what kind of analysis ignores agency and resistance, and how can analysis pretend to validity without them?* Putting aside the notion of social science as inspiration, how *accurate* is a social science which . . . abandons the quest for sources of tension within and against the system? . . . Our analysis has to address questions to the established order on the assumption that there might indeed be effective resistance if the points of vulnerability could be found.

So, to begin with, let's throw out Herman's red herrings about my supposed quest for "uplift" and "the bright side" — as if I came to the Socialist Scholars Conference with the expectations that I might bring to a Pete Seeger concert. What I asked for was clearly not some hortatory or moralistic imperative about balancing "strengths" with "weaknesses," but rather tough left analysis, which of course includes deep, holistic examination of dominant ideology.

Herman chastises me for my supposed lack of awareness that "there was a planned division of labor among the panelists" in the *Monthly Review* panel that I criticized. Under this division of labor, Herman was dealing with "the dominant ideology and its sources of power," so it was okay for him to leave it to Elaine Bernard to handle "the counter-ideologies and varieties of resistance." It is this very separation that I am criticizing. As I'll show, capitalists themselves don't make this separation. I expressed satisfaction with the focus on agency in Bernard's talk, and dismay over its absence in Herman's and Cloward's talks. Left social science is not blindly empirical; rather it works from some set of analytical categories, and it analyzes dominance through categories which aim at finding the weak spots and, finally, at overthrowing dominance. (As Bernard put it so nicely, mobile as capital may be, it must put its foot down someplace, and our job is to grab hold of that foot and break it: why, she asked, had not Herman concluded that we must *oppose* and *break* the system that oppresses so many?) So I am not assigning Herman to "cover" the entirety of both dominance and resistance; I am simply saying that our analy-

sis of dominance has to build in, and search for, opportunities for resistance. It's a gross oversimplification for Herman to translate this to, "one is not even allowed to spell out the characteristics and strengths of the dominant ideology without in the same remarks pointing up its weaknesses." Of course we need analyses of dominant ideology. But finally what I am asking for is a little asymmetrical: my aim is to get rid of capitalism, and I analyze it with that in mind.

Interestingly, capitalists, who want to preserve their system, often build more awareness of agency into their analyses than does Herman. You can't talk sense about capitalism without taking account of opposing forces, and capitalists know it. Look at them, in their institutes, sniffing for breaches in their walls, and constructing defenses. Consider Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan's sensitivities as he determines the prime rate. His concern about inflation is not a mere abstraction from above, but rather has to do with his perceptions of the strength of worker agency, predictions about their strength or weakness in demanding higher wages, their fears of losing their jobs, etc. Greenspan's analysis of how to strengthen capitalism builds in forces from below. He's way ahead of Herman.

As for Herman's idea that my critique reminds him of conservative criticisms of lack of "balance" in the liberal media, etc., this is another red herring. It would be about as relevant for me to say that his critique reminds me of *tiramisu*. I'm not talking, formalistically, about lack of balance, but rather about the analytic categories through which we view capitalism.

1997 SSC. This year's Socialist Scholars Conference (March 28-30) was in many ways better than last year's "*No Exit*." This year's theme was "Radical Alternatives on the Eve of the Millennium" (compare with last year's: "Two Cheers for Utopia!"). The introduction to the program booklet listed various struggles for social change in the U.S. and around the world and said that the SSC aimed "to develop strategies against the forces of global capitalism." Often program themes are just window dressing, but this one described the conference pretty well; I did not hear once the frequently mentioned phrases of the 1996 SSC, "no exit," or "no way out." (Borrowing from the British usage, Daniel Singer attacked "TINA" — the notion that There Is No Alternative.)

Angry White Men on the Left. I heard no attacks on feminism, gay liberation, etc. as "identity politics" this year, and Todd Gitlin wasn't on the program. Although these themes were not pervasive, they were nonetheless present in a different form. I heard what sounded to me like a revival of a heavier old Marxist version which, I think, adds up to pretty much the same thing. For instance, in a session sponsored by *Monthly Review*, Ellen Meiksins Wood noted that capitalism is "universalist" (she failed to note that most social systems, e.g. Catholicism in the middle ages, looked the same way in their time), and therefore it needs a universalist rather than "particularist" response; we must not allow ourselves to be fragmented into particular identities. In the abstract, this has a neat sound. But finally, it's just words, i.e.: a universalist system needs a universalist response. Why? Words don't make reality, or dictate strategies. To me it sounds like the classic left ranking of race and gender below class, and an exhortation to subordinate struggles around race and gender to an imposed notion of universalism. (No wonder, in response to this hoary Marxist theme, some feminists, like Ellen Willis, have mistakenly turned to post-structuralism, culture studies, etc.) I think this year's attack, from commanding Marxist heights, on independent organization of various oppressed groups, is the Higher Gitlinism.