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NEW POLITICS

P.O. Box 98

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What follows is a discussion of NATO and Kosovo by four members of the NEW POLITICS editorial board. We invite our readers to join the discussion in our next issue.

Reflections on NATO and Kosovo

Stephen R. Shalom

THE U.S.-LED NATO WAR AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA has caused much confusion on the left. Many, moved by the evident suffering of the ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, have supported — with varying degrees of reluctance or enthusiasm — the NATO assault. A few, moved by the outrage of NATO's attack, have chosen to defend Milosevic. Both of these approaches are deeply flawed, politically and morally.

U.S. Motivations

TWO MILLION REFUGEES! 2,200 VILLAGES DESTROYED! At least 2,000 civilians slaughtered by government-backed killers!

In the face of these abominations, the United States government decided to act, with the help of its NATO allies. U.S. fighter-bombers and helicopters and U.S. and NATO small arms, tanks, armored personnel carriers and artillery were all brought to bear on the situation.

But these weapons of war were not used to attack the perpetrator of the atrocities. Instead, these armaments were provided, often free or at bargain-basement prices, to the killers for them to use in carrying out their atrocities.

The killers I am referring to, of course, are the security forces and deaths squads of the Turkish government that have been waging a

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scorched-earth campaign against the country's Kurdish minority for years, and the numbers above come from a 1995 report by Human Rights Watch, which also notes that weaponry from the United States has made up 80 percent of Turkey's foreign-source arms and has been directly implicated in attacks on civilian villages, extrajudicial executions, torture, and indiscriminate fire.

This horror story, showing the total lack of humanitarian concern on the part of U.S. policymakers, can be repeated many times over.

Sometimes the United States has simply ignored mass murder. In Rwanda in 1994, for example, the extermination of more than half a million people did not induce Washington to employ even modest diplomatic means to restrain the slaughter. In other cases, the United States has not just been oblivious to large-scale killings, but has been directly complicit. During the anti-communist massacres in Indonesia in 1965, for example, Washington provided weapons, diplomatic support, and even lists of names of people to liquidate. When Pakistani troops went on a rampage of murder and rape in 1971, sending millions into exile, U.S. policy was (in Henry Kissinger's words) to "tilt in favor of Pakistan." In Guatemala during the 1980s, 200,000 people were killed by government forces, backed by Washington. And this year, Colombia is the third largest recipient of U.S. military aid (after Israel and Egypt), as its counter-insurgency war has displaced over a million people. Despite Colombia's appalling human rights record, "a U.S. Defense Department and Central Intelligence Agency team worked with Colombian military officers on the 1991 intelligence reorganization that resulted in the creation of killer networks that identified and killed civilians suspected of supporting guerrillas" (Human Rights Watch, *Colombia's Killer Networks*, 1996).

And in some cases, the United States doesn't just support killers, but does the killing itself, as in the current sanctions regime imposed on Iraq, that, coupled with the wartime targeting of civilian infrastructure, has led to perhaps more than a million excess deaths.

So the claim by Clinton and company that they have been moved to action over Kosovo because of their humanitarian concern has not the slightest shred of credibility. Before the bombing began, estimates of the civilian death toll in Kosovo were in the range of 2,000 and the number of refugees (most of them still within Kosovo) somewhat over three hundred thousand. These are terrible numbers and they are an indictment of Milosevic's brutality. But they are hardly different from — and in some cases they hardly compare with — atrocities around the world that have

1. Nor have leading NATO members been significantly more humanitarian in their foreign policies. Britain has become Indonesia's chief weapons supplier (with Blair having granted more weapons export licences to Jakarta than did the previous Conservative government), France supported the genocidalist regime in Rwanda, and Germany is Turkey's second largest supplier of arms.

elicited not a peep of humanitarian concern from Washington.¹

It is important to make clear that the argument is not being made here that because the United States failed to act humanely in some or in many cases, it should therefore never act humanely. Rather, the argument is that U.S. policy in the face of other humanitarian crises tells us something about U.S. motives, and U.S. motives are relevant for our understanding of *how* the United States will act in this case, *what ends* it will seek, and *what precedents* will be established.

Some on the left who support the U.S./NATO intervention in Kosovo have put forward their view of the particular way the intervention ought to be carried out so as to achieve humanitarian ends. Thus, Bogdan Denitch has backed the intervention while opposing the bombing of Belgrade and other Serbian cities and urging that ground troops rather than bombing be employed since the only way to stop the ethnic cleansing is on the ground. But when the left lends support to U.S. intervention, the White House doesn't then turn over command of the operation to the left. Rotten governments pursuing policies for their own reasons and interests, rather than for humanitarian reasons, will carry out those policies in a manner designed to serve their interests, not those of the left or of humanitarianism.

To use an analogy suggested by Gar Lipow, if a terrorist is holding people hostage in the living room of a house and the police charge in wildly, they will be putting those hostages at risk. Even more reckless would be to charge into another room of the house (because it's safer: there's no terrorist there) and start destroying things of value to the terrorist. Such a strategy would seem ideally designed to put the hostages in the greatest possible danger. No one concerned about the well-being of the hostages would behave in this way, but this is exactly the strategy followed by NATO (regardless of what Denitch may have wished). A cynic might suggest that Washington in fact didn't mind giving Milosevic time to destroy the KLA (Kosova Liberation Army) before forcing him to back down (armed Albanians can be a destabilizing force). But even if (as is likely) this interpretation goes too far, it is clear that Clinton has not acted as someone who places the welfare of Albanian Kosovars very high on his list of concerns. And everything we know about Clinton and U.S. foreign policy should have left us in no doubt about this. If you don't care about Kurds or Timorese or Palestinians or Iraqis on humanitarian grounds, you probably are not going to care very much about the Kosovars.

A ground invasion of Kosovo, it should be noted, while not as obviously oblivious to the Albanian's plight, would hardly have served them much better. The Yugoslav army is no push-over and NATO forces could not possibly have occupied Kosovo before the ethnic cleansing that we've witnessed since March 24. Milosevic clearly wouldn't want a disloyal Albanian population behind his lines, and refugee flows would disrupt any

NATO offensive. In addition, there would be horrific “collateral damage” to Kosovar civilians from NATO attacks. (The U.S. record in conquering territory containing “friendly” civilians has not been inspiring. In the battle of Manila in February 1945, for example, as many as 100,000 non-combatants died — from rampaging Japanese troops, but also from U.S. artillery fire.)

Many of the left interventionists insist that they have been outspoken critics of U.S. policies in Turkey and Timor. They want humanitarian policies followed in all these cases, they declare, but in Kosovo too. We can take them at their word, but the moral consistency or motives of the left interventionists are not what is at issue. Rather it’s the moral consistency and motives of those running the intervention.

The motives for this war have nothing to do with humanitarianism and everything to do with asserting U.S. power, with maintaining U.S. and NATO credibility, with creating a military instrument that Washington can use in Europe and beyond, free from any UN restraint. (Despite the end of the Cold War, the NATO military alliance has recently been expanded at U.S. urging.) And these motives, not those of the left, determine how the United States has acted and will act regarding Kosovo.

As long as Milosevic could oppress the Albanian minority without creating large refugee flows that might destabilize the region, Washington was uninterested in the Kosovo issue. (Thus in 1995, the United States excluded the Kosovo issue and Ibrahim Rugova, the Albanian Kosovar leader and advocate of non-violence, from the Dayton negotiations; with Rugova’s approach bearing no fruit, the KLA soon emerged.) Once significant fighting began in 1998, the Kosovo question became a test of wills between NATO and Milosevic. At Rambouillet, Milosevic was told “sign or be bombed” — a demand ideally suited to flexing U.S. muscle, far less to reaching some kind of agreement. The diplomatic route might strengthen the UN and international law and make Russia a player, all of which would interfere with U.S. freedom of action. Bombing, on the other hand, leads with the U.S. strong suit and enhances the U.S. reputation for toughness. (“That the U.S. may become irrational and vindictive if its vital interests are attacked should be a part of the national persona we project to all adversaries,” declared a 1995 Pentagon planning document.) Once threats are made, of course, they must be carried out if the credibility of future threats is to be maintained. (“What good is this marvelous military force,” Albright asked General Colin Powell a few years back, “if we can never use it?”) And, likewise, threats carried out but not yielding total victory need to be escalated until the adversary is crushed. (And, thus, diplomatic proposals and cease-fire offers are dismissed out of hand.)

There are other motives, as well, for the bombing. There is the boost it provides to military spending — not so much because of the ordinance expended, but because attacks on Yugoslavia (and Iraq) “draw attention

to the sad fact that peace on earth is not here,” in the words of one Wall Street analyst (*NYT*, April 11, 1999). Higher military budgets mean higher profits for defense contractors and, as important, government-funded research and development which benefits all the high-tech sectors of the economy. And getting NATO members to appreciate their need for more weapons will provide an added bonanza for U.S. arms companies.

Consequences

THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE NATO BOMBING HAVE BEEN HORRENDOUS, first and most tragically for the Kosovo Albanians.

Serbian security forces were not benign before March 1999, but the bombing unleashed a barbaric outburst of ethnic cleansing on a large scale. At this writing a million Kosovars have been uprooted and the level of killing — although unknown — surely exceeds the 2,000 of the past year and we can only hope it is not many times higher. Responsibility for the atrocities rests clearly on the Serbian military and paramilitary forces and those who lead them. But NATO actions have contributed to the catastrophe in four ways. First, the bombing required the removal of the international observers and relief workers whose presence provided some restraint. (“The Serbs were spring-loaded to go when the last observer left Kosovo,” said a NATO intelligence official quoted in the *Washington Post*, April 11, 1999.) Second, the bombing incensed many even in Serbia’s democratic movement, so one can only imagine how it must have affected Serbian security forces in Kosovo; unable to retaliate against NATO missiles and warplanes, they could be expected to lash out at those most vulnerable. Third, mass expulsions would benefit the Serbian military, who hoped a flood of refugees would “overwhelm and distract NATO forces stationed on the other side of the border” (*WP*, April 11, 1999, citing Western officials). And fourth, if NATO was going to try to force a settlement militarily, there was considerable incentive for Milosevic to make sure he was in the strongest possible bargaining position when the fighting ended: i.e., to try to totally wipe out the KLA, uproot its mass base, and remove Albanians from as much territory as possible in preparation for any partition. Whether Milosevic has also calculated that many military-aged males can be neutralized *before* they become potential KLA fighters, and intellectuals eliminated before they can provide their skills to the Albanian cause remains unknown amid the wartime propaganda.

What were U.S. officials thinking? There are two possibilities. Either they were stupid for failing to realize that Milosevic was not going to fold up after the first few bombs fell or else they anticipated events and yet followed a course that they knew would cause an immense humanitarian crisis, for which they had not even prepared adequate relief supplies.

To have expected a brief bombing to get Milosevic to reverse course

was a total misreading of Balkan history. Milosevic had come to power in Serbia precisely by exploiting the issue of Kosovo — he had declared himself the champion of the Kosovo Serb minority oppressed by the Albanians — and thus he was far more likely to hang tough over Kosovo than he had been over Bosnia. Rather than acknowledge this incredible misjudgment, many officials have been rushing to the media to explain that this is all exactly what they anticipated. “I can’t say I’m surprised by any of this,” stated NATO Supreme Commander General Wesley Clark. “The military authorities fully anticipated the vicious approach that Milosevic would adopt, as well as the terrible efficiency with which he would carry it out” (*Newsweek*, April 12, 1999). It is a measure of the current moral climate that policymakers are more worried about appearing stupid than immoral.

The Albanian Kosovars have not been the only victims of the U.S. bombing. Serbian democracy has been set back substantially. Milosevic has been able to use the war as an excuse for further clamping down on the independent media. More depressingly, however, many who were in the streets two years ago in pro-democracy demonstrations have rallied to the flag. As Zoran Djindjic, the leader of Serbia’s Democratic Party and an organizer of pro-democracy demonstrations in 1996-97 put it, the “bombs have marginalized any dissenters here.” Washington, he said bitterly, has spent more on one day’s bombs than it ever spent helping the democracy movement in Yugoslavia (*NYT*, March 29, 1999). In addition, Montenegro, the smaller of the two Yugoslav republics, had previously passed a resolution questioning Milosevic’s Kosovo policy, but the bombing has muted its criticisms as well.

Left supporters of the bombing argue that the opposition in Serbia had not been very outspoken on their government’s oppressive policies in Kosovo. There is considerable truth in this claim, as in their observation that “Serbia cannot have democracy *and* Kosovo” (Denitch and Ian Williams, *Nation*, April 26, 1999). But cruise missiles and bombs hardly inspire the Serbian population to thoughts of John Stuart Mill. I support a Palestinian state. Most Israelis — whether Labor or Likud — oppose meaningful Palestinian self-determination. Does anyone think that NATO surgical strikes on Tel Aviv would improve the prospects for Israeli democracy or reduce the influence of anti-democratic forces in Israeli life? Would NATO bombardment of downtown Jakarta over the issue of freedom for East Timor strengthen the hand of Indonesian democrats?

NATO “has not deliberately targeted Serbian civilians,” insists Branka Magas, another left interventionist (<http://www.bosnia.org.uk>). But these sorts of wars, particularly those fought by governments who rank their credibility above all else, follow a deadly dynamic. The first bombs hit military targets outside the cities. But when there is no surrender, it becomes necessary to up the ante, and then military sites in Belgrade are struck. Three days into the attacks, Anthony Lewis wrote in the

March 27 *New York Times* that the “scale of the operation so far has been nowhere near large enough to make Mr. Milosevic believe we mean business.” And when this doesn’t yield the desired results, targeting restrictions are increasingly relaxed. “We have to drop the bridges and turn out the lights — there should be no more outdoor rock concerts in downtown Belgrade,” Senator John McCain declared (*Newsweek*, April 12, 1999). “Twelve days of surgical bombing was never going to turn Serbia around,” wrote *New York Times* columnist Thomas Friedman on April 6. “Let’s see what 12 weeks of less than surgical bombing does. Give war a chance.”

Smart bombs are technologically remarkable, but still often miss their targets. So far the bombing has caused several hundred civilian deaths, a toll that will surely go up, perhaps exponentially as U.S. frustration with Milosevic grows, but this isn’t the main catastrophe that threatens. *That* will come *after* the war when the wartime targeting of the civilian infrastructure — the power plants, the fuel supplies, the bridges — leaves the civilian population without adequate means to sustain decent lives amid a ruined environment. And this will have the same disastrous impact on democratic prospects in Serbia as U.S. policy has had on Iraq, where a ruthless leader has been able to turn the devastating economic assault on the populace to strengthen his position.

A letter-writer to the *New York Times* (March 31, 1999) wrote:

. . . just as the Holocaust could not have taken place without the acquiescence of the German public, the Serbian people clearly bear responsibility for the actions taken by their Government. Consequently, NATO should cease what appears to be its policy of avoiding all but highly targeted attacks on Serbia.

Concurring, Thomas Friedman wrote in the *New York Times* (April 23):

Like it or not, we are at war with the Serbian nation (the Serbs certainly think so), and the stakes have to be very clear: Every week you ravage Kosovo is another decade we will set your country back by pulverizing you. You want 1950? We can do 1950. You want 1389? We can do 1389 too.

What is needed, says Friedman, is a “merciless” air war, targeting “every power grid, water pipe, bridge, [and] road. . . .”

This indeed seems to have become U.S. policy, and it is the moral logic of Milosevic. In the view of the Yugoslav leader (1) the KLA has committed terrorist acts, (2) much of Kosovo’s Albanian population has acquiesced in those acts and supports the KLA and thus bears responsibility for the terrorism, and therefore (3) military actions against the KLA need not worry about harm to civilians; dual use facilities — things of benefit both to the KLA and the civilian population, such as villages — are thus fair game.

The other major consequence of the NATO attack is that the fragile structures of international law have been seriously weakened and the precedent established that U.S. and NATO military power may be de-

ployed — not where international law or the United Nations dictate — but wherever Washington chooses.

Left interventionists reject this argument, claiming instead that the precedent is being established that ethnic cleansing is impermissible and that the international community will stop it when it occurs. But this is another place where moral consistency and motives matter. Had the United States acted to stop atrocities in Turkey and Pakistan and El Salvador and many other countries (where, of course, no military intervention was required — it would have been enough to end U.S. support for the butchers) and then acted to stop atrocities in Kosovo as well, the precedent might well have been established that severe human rights abuses will not be tolerated. But it is a very different precedent that follows from a United States which ignores some atrocities, participates in others, and intervenes against only those where some other U.S. interest is at stake.

What lesson do we think Turkey's leaders are learning from the attack on Kosovo? Surely not: "This shows what happens to all who commit atrocities against ethnic minorities." Isn't it more likely that their conclusion is going to be — as will that of anyone who considers cases like Turkey, Timor, Palestine, and Iraq pre-1990 (when Saddam Hussein was a U.S. ally and murdered Kurds) on the one hand, and cases like Iraq post-1990 and Kosovo on the other — that serving U.S. interests allows you to do whatever you want with your ethnic minorities and opposing U.S. interests will get you attacked, regardless of your human rights record?

The real precedent of the NATO assault on Yugoslavia is that a U.S.-dominated military alliance may arrogate to itself the right to attack another country, bypassing international law and the United Nations.

International Law

DENITCH AND WILLIAMS CLAIM THAT IN FACT THE NATO ACTIONS diminish the United Nations less than would leaving Milosevic to stand in violation of more than 50 Security Council resolutions. But would they also consider it a contribution to world law and the UN if Russia or the Arab League decided to attack Israel so that that country's brazen defiance of countless Security Council resolutions would not stand? Would Japanese bombing of Jakarta for its flouting Security Council resolutions on East Timor promote the rule of law? Or perhaps Libya or Iraq or Osama Bin Ladin could be encouraged to set off some bombs in New York City to enhance the prestige of the World Court, whose ruling against the United States on Nicaragua has been shamelessly ignored by Washington. No, vigilantism does not heighten respect for law.

The Security Council of the United Nations, say Denitch and Williams, was blocked from action by the prospect of Chinese and Russian vetoes. Twelve out of the fifteen members, they note, refused to support a

Russian draft resolution on March 26 condemning the bombing. But a vote after the fact, particularly after the stepped up ethnic cleansing that the bombing had set off, on a resolution that crassly included no condemnation of that accelerated ethnic cleansing, is not the same as prior Security Council authorization for the bombing. The UN Charter is quite clear in prohibiting enforcement action by regional organizations without the authorization of the Security Council. (The Rio Group, an organization of Latin American countries, issued a communique on March 25, 1999 regretting the recourse to the use of force in the Balkan region in contravention of the UN Charter.)

To be sure, the Security Council is a terribly undemocratic body, with five countries having permanent membership and the right of veto. But the answer to the undemocratic nature of the Council is not to resort to an organization that is even less accountable to world opinion, namely NATO. The value of the United Nations is that it places some small check on unilateral big power actions. Sometimes (as during the Gulf War) the United States will be able to bribe, cajole, and intimidate the UN into going along with it, but not always. To bypass the UN for NATO is to unleash big powers, particularly the biggest of them all, to act without restraint.

Of course, socialists and democrats do not consider law to be sacrosanct. Civil disobedience is often a moral imperative and revolution is sometimes necessary. But the story of democracy has been the struggle to get governments to obey the law, both domestic and international — not because the law is unproblematic, but because the alternative is arbitrary power. We don't want the government to protect us from crime by engaging in illegal searches or by denying defendants a fair trial — not because we fetishize law, but because we fear arbitrary power. To give the United States *carte blanche* to violate international law will increase human suffering. Sure, if Washington were run by angels we might be less concerned about the need for law. But — and here the discussion of moral consistency and motives comes in again — there are no angels inside the Beltway.

National sovereignty, say Denitch and Williams, is a “dubious” right. But while certainly not an absolute, it does provide some measure of protection for the weak. When Latin American countries pressed the United States in the 1930s to give a pledge of non-intervention, they no doubt realized that some hypothetical interventions could be beneficial. But counterposed to those theoretical possibilities was the grueling reality of U.S. marines landing whenever U.S. interests were threatened.

There is a tension in international law between the right of national sovereignty and the individual rights of human beings: governments are supposed to refrain from intervening in the internal affairs of other countries, but at the same time governments have international obligations to respect the human rights of their people. What should a government

do when some other government is violating its people's rights? It should urge the violator to adhere to its international human rights obligations; it should use its diplomatic influence to try to end the abuses. Certainly, it should avoid supporting oppressive regimes. But generally it should not begin bombing the other country to punish human rights violations.

This is so for at least three reasons. First, because outsiders can rarely bring people freedom; freedom comes from one's own activity. Second, because violence is so often counter-productive. And third, because the right of humanitarian intervention is an asymmetrical right — it is the right of the powerful to intervene in the affairs of the weak, and not vice versa. Humanitarian intervention, Richard Falk has reminded us, is like the Mississippi River: it only flows from North to South. Uruguay cannot use B-52s to punish Britain for its policy in Northern Ireland. Yemen cannot launch cruise missiles on Washington out of solidarity with the oppressed in U.S. cities. So we need to be very careful about a right that can be enjoyed only by the powerful.

From the point of view of the powerful, the humanitarian rationale for intervention has great appeal. Because *every* country violates human rights to some extent, if the United States were allowed to decide which human rights abuses were most serious and which warrant intervention, Washington would have a built-in rationale for intervening wherever and whenever it wanted. Again, given the motives of U.S. foreign policy, this cannot be a welcome prospect.

Genocide, of course, is different. There the human stakes are so high that our general presumption against non-intervention may be overridden. But what was going on in Kosovo before March 1999 was not even close to genocide.² The two thousand Kosovar deaths, most at the hands of Serbian security forces, between March 1998 and March 1999 were appalling and inexcusable, as were the several hundred thousand displaced persons. But this was not genocide. We cheapen the term if we use it to characterize every atrocity. Nor is ethnic cleansing, despicable as it is, the same as genocide. When in 1948 Israel expelled three quarters of a million Palestinians, propelled by a massacre here and there to speed the flight, this was ethnic cleansing; it was not genocide.

Writing in *The Nation* of March 30, 1998, when the death toll was a small fraction of 2,000 and the refugee count in the tens of thousands, Ian Williams declared that Belgrade's behavior was "on the verge of trig-

2. Note that many of those who defend the NATO intervention point to the savagery following March 24 as justification for the bombing. But this makes no moral or logical sense. What would we think of an apologist for Japanese militarism who defended the attack on Pearl Harbor by pointing to the fact that Washington responded by forcing Japanese-Americans into concentration camps? Worse yet, what would we think of this justification for attacking Pearl Harbor if the attackers reasonably expected that the result of the attack would be precisely the stepped-up oppression of Japanese-Americans?

gering the duties of signatories to the Genocide Convention.” But if these atrocities approached genocide, then the term had no meaning at all, and dozens of countries would be engaging in genocide every year. The Genocide Convention requires signatories to act to stop genocide — though it doesn’t specify how the existence of genocide is to be decided and what actions should be taken. Does Williams really think that China should have intervened (indeed, was duty-bound to intervene) in India to stop “genocide” in Kashmir (where the toll far exceeded that of Kosovo)? According to Amnesty International, in June 1997, 40,000 people fled their homes during Philippine army counter-insurgency operations against the Moro Islamic Liberation Front. Should North Korea have intervened? Was North Korea *obligated* to intervene?

In 1994, actual genocide took place in Rwanda — the goal of the Power Hutu regime was not to drive the Tutsi out of the country, but to kill every Tutsi man, woman, and child they could lay their hands on — and the world stood by. The U.S. State Department even prohibited its officials from using the word “genocide” to describe the situation, despite clear information that this is precisely what was going on. Many people, including many on the left, seem to have drawn the wrong lessons from this horror story. The lesson is not that every atrocity should be called genocide. (Genocide should be called genocide; lesser crimes should be called what they are — which doesn’t preclude the most vigorous condemnation.) Nor is the lesson that humanitarian concerns require the United States to side-step the United Nations and international law. (The UN could have acted — it had a peacekeeping force in Kigali — but the force was downsized when the killings began *at the insistence of the United States*; and all further UN action was blocked by Washington.) Nor is the lesson that military intervention is the only way to deal with such crises. (Various non-military measures could have helped immensely — such as threatening the killers with a loss of aid and being held accountable, or pressing France, which had much influence in Kigali, to restrain its ally.) Nor, finally, is the lesson that any military intervention is better than nothing. (The UN finally authorized the French to intervene, a move cheered by the killers; perhaps 20,000 Tutsis were saved — more than half a million had been slaughtered — but because France had its own dirty motives it helped the killers regroup over the border, which has led to a continuing human rights catastrophe in the entire Great Lakes region of Africa.)

Glib use of the term genocide causes another problem. During World War II, when it was proposed that the United States Air Force bomb Auschwitz or the rail links leading to the death camp, Assistant Secretary of War John J. McCloy refused, saying that it “might provoke even more vindictive action by the Germans.” This was morally abhorrent, given that the Nazis were already doing the worst; there was no “more vindictive action” possible. To argue in early March 1999 that Milosevic

was committing genocide against the Kosovar Albanians encouraged the view that nothing could be worse and that therefore NATO bombardment couldn't hurt. But much in fact could be worse, and NATO bombing has led to just that.

Milosevic

SOME ON THE LEFT HAVE GONE FROM THE CORRECT OBSERVATION that there was no genocide in Kosovo to a position whitewashing Milosevic's very real crimes, including the savage ethnic cleansing now going on. For example, Diedre Griswold of the International Action Center criticizes those who demand that Milosevic cease his horrific policy of ethnic cleansing, declaring that such a demand is tantamount to "blaming the victim" (<http://www.iacenter.org/blamvict.htm>). It is no wonder that well-meaning people are confused by events in Kosovo when they hear leftists propounding such morally obtuse nonsense.

To be sure, the U.S. government is doing all it can to demonize Milosevic and U.S. government claims and those of much of the lock-step media need to be examined with an extremely critical eye. But that enemy leaders are demonized by U.S. propaganda does not make those leaders victims. After all, U.S. propaganda also sought to demonize Hitler during World War II and Stalin before and after the war, two gentlemen about whom the first word that comes to mind would not be "victim." So we mustn't take official U.S. claims on faith, but nor should we be blind to overwhelming evidence of criminal behavior.

Our argument against the NATO assault on Yugoslavia is not that the United States is attacking the innocent Milosevic, but that the attack will do nothing to help and much to hurt those whom Milosevic has been victimizing, as well as undermine the prospects for democracy in Serbia (which is, of necessity, an anti-Milosevic force) and, by legitimating U.S. power unrestrained by law or the UN, worsen the prospects for Kurds and Timorese and so many other of the world's victims.

The NATO attack has recklessly unleashed Serbian forces to escalate the level of ethnic cleansing in Kosovo. But this does not absolve Milosevic of his criminal responsibility. The International Action Center asks why thousands of civilians are now "reportedly fleeing Kosovo":

The explanation carried by the media comes completely from U.S. and NATO military authorities, who claim the refugees are victims of a Serbian "ram-page." No really independent reporting is allowed. The possibility that they

3. Diana Johnstone, writes in *In These Times*, May 16, 1999, "Kosovo's ethnic Albanian civilians have been trapped between devastating NATO bombing raids, KLA thugs and Serbian police." That she can describe the bombing as devastating and the KLA as thuggish, but yet find no adjective to characterize the Serbian police is revealing, as is the fact that she resolutely denounces the first two but not the third.

may be fleeing because their villages are being destroyed by U.S. and NATO missiles and bombs is curtly dismissed (<http://www.iacenter.org/liesfcts.htm>).

No mention is made of why there are no “independent” Yugoslav reporters on the scene now that Milosevic has silenced the country’s independent media. Nor is there any consideration as to why there were several hundred thousand refugees before the bombing began. No doubt some refugees are fleeing the bombing, but the overwhelming thrust of refugee accounts indicates a rather different source for their flight. Indeed, there were massive refugee flows in the first days of the bombing when NATO planes were barely active in Kosovo.³

Milosevic is no innocent victim. Even in 1997, before the fighting began in earnest in Kosovo, the UN General Assembly called on his regime to “take all necessary measures to bring to an immediate end all human rights violations against ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, including, in particular, discriminatory measures and practices, arbitrary searches and detention, the violation of the right to a fair trial and the practice of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, and to revoke all discriminatory legislation, in particular that which has entered into force since 1989,” the year in which he rescinded Kosovo’s autonomous status. The General Assembly further called on Yugoslavia to “release all political prisoners and to cease the persecution of political leaders and members of local human rights organizations,” and to “allow the return in safety and dignity of Albanian refugees from Kosovo to their homes” (Resolution 52/139).

Milosevic was no less an innocent victim during the war in Bosnia. Monstrous crimes against humanity were committed by Serbian forces in Bosnia and, if the perpetrators are ever brought to trial for war crimes, Milosevic deserves a prominent place in the dock.

Alternatives

THE PEOPLE OF KOSOVO ARE ENTITLED TO SELF-DETERMINATION. It would have been wonderful if the ethnic Albanians could have established ties with democratic forces throughout Serbia to fight for a multi-ethnic state fully protecting minority rights. But long years of oppression and a perceived lack of response from the Serbian side made the Kosovars eager for independence, and the ultimate judgment must be theirs. So leftists should support an independent Kosovo, insisting of course that in turn it recognize full democratic rights and protections for the Serbian minority.

But supporting something in principle and getting there are two different things. The strategy pursued by Ibrahim Rugova — nonviolent resistance to Serbian rule, with the building of democratic counter-institutions — seemed to me to offer the best hope for achieving a just result, given the realities of the power imbalance and the need to minimize the hostility between the ethnic communities. But Rugova and

the cause of the Kosovar Albanians was ignored by the United States as it put together its Dayton Accords in 1995, discrediting the nonviolent route. In these circumstances the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA, or UCK in Albanian) emerged. They undertook some attacks on Serbian police, Albanian “collaborators,” and sometimes Serb civilians, including Serbian refugees from the Yugoslav wars whom many Albanians viewed as colonizers intended to shift the demographic balance. These were not the first acts of violence — they were preceded by the daily violence of Serbian rule — but the remarkable self-restraint of the Albanians was coming undone. Serbian security forces responded with great brutality to KLA attacks, which in turn drove thousands of Albanians into the KLA, and though still called terrorists by the Serbian authorities, they became a serious guerrilla army, with mass support. But attacks on civilians have continued, though not approaching the scale of atrocities committed by Serbian forces. The KLA claims not to target civilians, while acknowledging that abuses are committed by fighters in the field; I have seen no KLA statement, however, endorsing a multiethnic Kosovo. And while popular backing of the KLA is extensive, threats and possibly attacks against Rugova’s associates suggest that democratic persuasion is not the only factor in KLA growth (see Tim Judah in *The Observer*, September 27, 1998).

Should the left have urged the United States to support and arm the KLA prior to March 1999?⁴ I am sympathetic to the argument that says that if people want to fight for their rights, if they are not asking others to do it for them, then they ought to be provided with the weapons to help them succeed. Such an argument seemed to me persuasive with respect to Bosnia. But I think there are four good reasons to reject this argument with respect to the KLA.

4. Some on the left claim that the KLA was already being armed by U.S. and German intelligence, but the evidence is extremely dubious (apart from the fact that it would make no sense given that Washington denounced the KLA as “without any question a terrorist group” in February 1998). For example, Michel Chossudovsky of the University of Ottawa claims CIA backing for the KLA on the basis of an unsupported claim by right-wing conspiracy nut John Whitley (who says that the Bilderbergers planned, financed, and started the Kosovo war) as quoted by another right-wing source, “Truth in Media,” which reprints “for what it’s worth” an alleged letter from a KLA soldier claiming that the KLA has been dressing up as Serbs and then ethnically cleansing Albanians. (See Chossudovsky at <http://www.globalpolicy.org>; Truth in Media at <http://www.truthinmedia.org/Kosovo/day10up2.html>.) For a trenchant critique of leftists mucking about with rightwing conspiracy theorists during the Gulf War, see Chip Berlet, *Right Woos Left: Populist Party, LaRouchian, and Other Neo-Fascist Overtures to Progressives, And Why It Must Be Rejected*, Cambridge, MA: Political Research Associates, Oct. 7, 1992.

Funding for the KLA seems to have come from the Albanian diaspora and possibly drugs — what revolutionary movement can apply for foundation grants? — and their weapons from underground arms markets, facilitated by the collapse of the Albanian government in 1997.

First is the nature of the KLA. Given the frightful ethnic violence in the Balkans, endorsement of an organization lacking a clear commitment to ethnic tolerance seems highly dangerous. (In Bosnia, on the other hand, there was a strong commitment to a multiethnic state, though reduced as the war and the ethnic cleansing wore on and as dependence on Islamic arms — because of the Security Council's arms embargo — grew.) Surely the lesson of conflicts from Palestine to Northern Ireland is that attacks on civilians set off a cycle of violence and hatred that undermines the prospects for peace or justice.

The ideology of the KLA is difficult to pin down. Knowledgeable observers describe its leadership as split, with “hints of fascism on one side and whiffs of communism on the other,” and with both factions having “little sympathy with or understanding of democratic institutions” (Chris Hedges, *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 1999). The fact that the KLA has gained the support of most Kosovars has surely made the organization more democratic than its origins would suggest, but its politics are still troubling.

Second, the KLA had no credible chance of military victory. To have provided arms in such a situation would have encouraged suicidal efforts. (Even with the mammoth NATO bombing, the Serbian military still seems to have the upper hand vis-a-vis the KLA in Kosovo.) Of course, one can argue that if people want to engage in a suicidal struggle, that's up to them. But the price would be paid not just by the KLA fighters, but by the Albanian civilian population, not all of whom were freely choosing such a course of action. Nor is it clear that even the KLA would choose such a suicidal course if it were not for the expectation of being able to draw in foreign military assistance. Supplies of arms create the expectation of further help (even if explicitly denied): had the U.S. provided arms, many Kosovars would no doubt have concluded that if they got into trouble, the U.S. military would come to their rescue. And just because people who are oppressed believe that the U.S. should intervene to assist them, the left doesn't automatically have to support such intervention. Palestinians may want the United States to bomb Tel Aviv; Timorese may want the U.S. to bomb Jakarta (or even Washington). But the left doesn't have to defer to their wishes or agree with them that social justice would best be served by such actions.

Do people have the right of armed resistance against oppression? Not being a pacifist, I believe they do have such a right. But surely we need to consider the likely consequences of armed struggle in each particular situation. The KLA has correctly pointed to the lack of progress under Rugova's non-violent approach. But KLA killing of Serb police led predictably to atrocities against ethnic Albanian civilians. And the flow of KLA arms and recruits over the Albanian border led predictably to Serb clearing of border areas of civilian villages. Just as NATO actions do not provide any moral justification for Milosevic's atrocities, so too KLA ac-

tions do not justify the brutal Serbian attacks on Kosovo civilians. But just as NATO bears responsibility for the foreseeable consequences of its actions, so too does the KLA. And for the left to have urged arming the KLA in 1998 would have made it responsible as well for the larger scale atrocities that the Serbs would have let loose against a still relatively defenseless civilian population.

A third problem with having urged the arming of the KLA is that the same rotten motives that make U.S. military intervention dangerous make its supplying arms dangerous. Washington supplies arms not out of humanitarian concern, but to further its own interests. So when it helped arm the Kurds in Iraq in the early 1970s, it was not with the intention of supporting the Kurdish goal of an independent state, but simply to destabilize Iraq. According to a classified report by the House Select Committee on Intelligence leaked to the press, U.S. officials “hoped that our clients [the Kurds] would not prevail. They preferred instead that the insurgents simply continue a level of hostilities sufficient to sap [Iraqi] resources. . . . This policy was not imparted to our clients, who were encouraged to continue fighting. Even in the context of covert action, ours was a cynical enterprise.” Then, in 1975, aid to the Kurds was suddenly cut off, and as Saddam Hussein massacred the rebels, Washington denied them asylum. “Covert action,” explained Henry Kissinger in secret testimony, “should not be confused with missionary work.”⁵

Finally, for the United States to arm the KLA sets a very different precedent from arming Bosnia (leaving aside the Security Council arms embargoes in both cases). Bosnia was an independent country, a member of the United Nations. That states may defend themselves is an internationally recognized right. But to arm the KLA means that the United States is deciding which rebel movements in which countries should receive weapons. This seems an awfully dangerous precedent, because we know that Washington will decide not on the basis of justice (let alone socialist principles), but on the basis of U.S. interests. Thus, in the U.S. view, the Salvadorans being slaughtered by death squads were not worthy of outside support, while the Contras attacking Nicaragua were.

SO IF NATO'S BOMBING WAS UNACCEPTABLE and arming the KLA was inadvisable, what could have been done to protect the Albanians of Kosovo?

“We had to do something!” insist the interventionists. This is not a compelling argument. One should do something only if so doing is likely to improve things. In this case, the bombing decidedly made things worse. True, no one will doubt Clinton's determination and toughness, but this has been a disaster for the people supposedly being helped.

5. House of Representatives, Select Committee on Intelligence, 19 Jan. 1976 (Pike Report) in *Village Voice*, 16 Feb. 1976; William Safire, *Safire's Washington* (New York: Times Books, 1980), p. 333.

In March 1999 there were no good choices, no policy that would have brought immediate security and justice to the Kosovar Albanians. But where some policies — like NATO bombardment — could have been predicted to make things worse, others had a chance of mitigating the suffering. In particular, continued negotiations — diplomacy — was the best of the bad choices.

On March 23, the Serbian Parliament voted to reaffirm Milosevic's rejection of foreign troops as part of the Rambouillet agreement. (The agreement provided for three years of autonomy for Kosovo, the withdrawal of most Serbian forces, the disarming of the KLA, the presence of 28,000 NATO troops, and final status to be negotiated later.) But the parliament also stated that Serbia was willing to “examine the character and extent of an international presence in Kosovo” immediately after the signing of an autonomy accord ‘acceptable to all national communities in Kosovo,’ the local Serb minority included.” (Vesna Peric Zimonjic, Inter Press Service, March 23, 1999) This formulation had many problems, but was worth pursuing, not because Milosevic was a man of honor whose word could be trusted — he’s a gangster — but because pursuing it offered the best chance of saving lives.

Would Milosevic have continued his attacks on Albanian villages while negotiations continued? Presumably, but one needs to realize the dynamic that NATO bombing threats had created. In October 1998, NATO had agreed to suspend the order authorizing air strikes in return for Milosevic's agreeing to withdraw the bulk of his forces from Kosovo. But, as the *New York Times* reported on April 18, 1999:

The Kosovo Albanian rebels were pushing ahead with their own war aims. Sensing that the [October 1998] deal essentially placed the world's most powerful military alliance on their side — despite NATO's continued assurances that it did not want to become the guerrilla army's “air force” — the rebels quickly reclaimed territory abandoned by the Serbian forces and mounted a continuous series of small-scale attacks.

None of this justifies the criminal Serbian attacks on civilians. The bombing threats, however, encouraged KLA actions at a time when they could not defend themselves from the expected Serbian reaction. “Diplomacy backed with force” makes for ineffective diplomacy.

What Now?

WE ARE NOW IN THE MIDST OF A HORRENDOUS BOMBING CAMPAIGN said to be for the protection of the Kosovar Albanians which has set off massive ethnic cleansing and probably not stopped a single atrocity. On April 13, NATO commander Clark acknowledged that there were then slightly more Serbian troops in Kosovo than when the bombing began. At the same time, Clinton tells us that there are hundreds of thousands of Albanian refugees within Kosovo without adequate food. NATO, he assures

us, is thinking very hard about how to get food to them, but air-drops are ruled out because of the danger to NATO pilots.

To continue this strategy is morally grotesque. Even if it finally gets Milosevic to capitulate (though many NATO planners are skeptical that air power alone can do this) the ethnic cleansing — along with large numbers of killings and deaths from starvation and disease — will already have taken place. And, as the Associated Press reported (Newark *Star Ledger*, April 18, 1999),

Now that NATO's air campaign in Yugoslavia is taking aim at bridges, roads and rail lines used by civilians, it will be harder to bomb Serb forces without killing ethnic Albanians fleeing Kosovo, U.S. defense officials and military analysts say.

To switch to a ground war would likely be just as bad. No one knows for sure what would happen of course. It is possible that the Serbian military will surrender quickly, but this outcome is not suggested by either the history of Yugoslavia's resistance movement in World War II or the rallying around the flag that we've seen in Serbia under the U.S. bombing. In the more probable event that the Serbs put up a fight, the consequences for the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Albanian civilians still in Kosovo will be grim, given the brutishness of Serbian forces and the extremes to which U.S. forces will go to avoid harm to their own soldiers. (We've seen the accidental, but reckless, attacks on civilians in cases where NATO pilots were not under attack; it would surely be worse when NATO forces were drawing fire.) Moreover, the number of troops that NATO considers necessary for a ground invasion would take a considerable time to deploy — time during which the plight of the ethnic Albanians will grow worse.

Arming the KLA in conjunction with NATO air (and maybe ground) attacks can have no quick impact on the situation. By the time KLA forces in Albania or elsewhere outside Kosovo could be armed and trained, the worst would have happened to those within Kosovo. And, of course, the incentive for the Serbians to kill all potential KLA fighters would be even greater.

Arming the KLA without continuing the NATO war would take even longer to have any positive effect inside Kosovo, surely too long to prevent appalling human costs to the ethnic Albanians there. If NATO stopped bombing and proceeded to build up and equip a KLA force on the border, the provocation to atrocities in Kosovo would be maximized.

Thus, the solution now is the same as it was on March 24: pursue diplomacy. This is not an ideal solution; it is just the best among miserable choices. The first step must be to accept a cease-fire, the stopping of

6. Needless to say, Russia no more has clean hands here than does NATO. But it might nonetheless be able to use its leverage with Yugoslavia to contribute to a diplomatic solution.

NATO bombing and of Serbian military and paramilitary operations in Kosovo. Then humanitarian relief agencies and international observers — from the United Nations or from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) — must be deployed. Peacekeepers too, again from the UN or OSCE, not NATO are needed. If Russia is involved in the process, rather than being slapped in the face, some kind of arrangement in this regard seems possible.⁶ All refugees who wish to return to Kosovo must be permitted to do so, with funding from the NATO powers who were so eager to spend money on an irresponsible military operation.

The people of Kosovo still need self-determination. That they are less willing than ever to be part of a Serbian-dominated Yugoslavia is understandable. The international community should use its diplomatic efforts to encourage this result in a way that causes the least harm to the Albanian and Serb people of Kosovo. Ousting Milosevic is also a crucial requirement for social justice in Serbia, but it can't be accomplished by NATO bombs. That, the people of Serbia will have to do themselves.

For the left in the United States, the need to oppose oppressive regimes is critical. Many of these can best be combated by working to get the U.S. government to stop supporting them. But when this isn't enough, we shouldn't be looking to the United States or its military alliances to pursue justice or humanitarianism. We need to build the movements and the institutions that can challenge both the Milosevics and the NATOs of the world.

A Response by Barry Finger

Kosovo—Between NATO and Milosevic

THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF STEVE SHALOM'S "Reflections on NATO and Kosovo," as I understand it, is the utter betrayal of principle by the left — fractured on the one side, by an obscene pantomime of anti-imperialist politics, in support of Milosevic and his thugs; while aligned on the other, in defiance of all experience rooted in historical reality, with NATO out of solidarity with the beleaguered Kosovars. He poses the question bluntly, demanding, in effect, to know what politics this war is a continuation of and concludes that this "humanitarian intervention" has "nothing to do with humanitarianism and everything to do with asserting U.S. power, with maintaining U.S. and NATO credibility, with creating a military

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instrument that Washington can use in Europe and beyond, free from U.N. restraint.” We read along the same lines later that the ends of “legitimizing U.S. power unrestrained by law or the U.N. worsen(s) the prospects for Kurds and Timorese and so many other of the world’s victims” and deftly pierces the pretexts behind which the administration selectively exploits human rights abuses as a “built in rationale for intervening whenever and wherever it want[s].”

The misgivings I have with this approach run along two lines. Steve’s explanation for this war fails to descend from the stratosphere to embrace the facts on the ground. One cannot answer the questions about why this war, and why now, by airily counterposing an abstract American predilection for unilateralism over diplomacy. This false polarity understates the degree to which America acts as the general representative of capitalist interests when it acts unilaterally and understates the degree to which it dominates the very institutions it contritely “submits” to when seeking its ends through international platforms. One should, instead, look to the roots of this war in the desire of the West to contain the chaos, wrought in the wake of Stalinist decay, of national and ethnic reconfiguration in Eastern Europe until market relations take seed and knit together both ends of Europe into a unified economic field.

Which brings me to the second and more serious reservation I have with his approach. In his attempt to discredit the American case for intervention, Steve scrupulously avoids declaring his unequivocal support of the oppressed Kosovars, lest valuable ground be thereby conceded to NATO’s anti-genocidal rationale for intervention. This lends his approach an unintended air of insensitivity. Logic chopping about the legal and moral definition of genocide misses the point. The confusion of the left interventionists cannot merely be dispelled by exposing the definitional mischaracterization of Kosovar *suffering*. Let us simply conclude that it is a national pogrom, the result of a two-pronged assault on the national aspirations of the Kosovars: Milosevic’s war to preserve a greater Serbia and NATO’s “humanitarian” intervention, which merely seeks the perpetuation of that oppression under less onerous, provocative and disruptive arrangements. The answer to the left interventionists can only be found in an alternative explanation of the *war* and the politics which flow from that analysis.

In defiance of *both* these assaults, socialists and consistent democrats have the fundamental obligation to declare our forthright solidarity with the Kosovo victims. With respect to the first war, Kosovo is an ethnic colony of Serbia, which in its overwhelming majority, no longer wishes to continue enjoying the benefits of that dubious relationship. Their secessionist impulses, including the rise of an armed resistance movement — the KLA — are the inevitable product of conditions imposed on the Kosovars by Milosevic. While no fans of small states, socialists cannot but champion the right of the Kosovar resistance to arm it-

self by any means available and with no strings attached in pursuit of its democratic right to self-determination. This is the approach that revolutionary socialists have always taken with respect to colonial revolts and one would be hard pressed to conjure a compelling reason to depart from that now.

We must further warn the Kosovars against reliance on NATO. The U.S. and NATO never had any commitment to Kosovar independence. In this principle, Belgrade and the Western alliance are in total agreement. The problem was in the details. No Serbian nationalist leader could “willingly” accept the presence of foreign troops (as proposed at Rambouillet) on sacred “Serbian” soil. The bombing of Belgrade is aimed at the imposition of a diktat and — however understandable the refugee belief in the beneficence of NATO — was never intended to advance the cause of Kosovar self-determination. That is why Clinton reassured the Serbian regime that “the NATO allies support the Serbian people to maintain Kosovo as part of your country.”

The NATO expedition was designed not to vanquish Milosevic, but to bring him to his senses and thereby salvage him as a regional junior partner. That this strategy has become a complete disaster for Clinton is beside the point. Serbian interests were never threatened by American war aims. The U.S.’s concern is solely with Balkan stability and the path to that is over the corpse of Kosovo. That is also why NATO does not want the Kosovars to become a power able to insist on their own independence and why they are so adamant about not “arming” the refugees, an attitude utterly consistent with their prior demand at Rambouillet that the KLA disarm. The presence, after all, of armed refugees would be destabilizing to the integrity of the states in the region and would establish an unwanted beacon of inspiration for the oppressed throughout Eastern Europe. These concerns are understandably important to capitalism which has been less than stunningly successful in reconciling national minorities on a consistently democratic basis; a tad less, I think, for socialists who champion the cause of national equality as a step toward relaxing national animosities, building mutual confidences and preparing for a future socialist federation based on national equality.

And that is the point. Opposition to NATO involvement must stem from the fact that it is an impediment to the realization of democratic rights in the region whenever and wherever those rights come into conflict with capitalist interests. It is for that reason as well that we cannot call for nor have confidence in either NATO or any NATO policy in which bombings or troop landings are a part. For the likely outcome of any such involvement will be at best a miserable swindle for Kosovo and most likely its partition into a rump Bantustan. Steve therefore only creates a straw man by his discussion of arming the KLA in conjunction with NATO air attacks. American purposes can only be served by keeping the Kosovars in a state of perpetual military and political dependency

incompatible with this hypothetical perspective. Only such a Kosovo can be delivered, subjugated and policed by a compliant Serbian overlordship. Why, given Washington's perspective would they agree to arm the Kosovars? The left must demand, on the contrary, that any arms embargoes directed against the Kosovars be lifted precisely so that they may arm *themselves* and *break* the stranglehold which both Serbia and NATO exercise over their aspirations. Otherwise Kosovar independence will disintegrate into a wholly owned subsidiary of Western imperialism, reserved as an occasional irritant to keep Serbia in line.

WORSE STILL, HOWEVER, IS THE ARGUMENT PROSCRIBING SOCIALIST ENDORSEMENT of the KLA on democratic grounds, since it is "an organization lacking a clear commitment to ethnic tolerance." The Kosovars are under a state of siege. It is highly unlikely that a plenum can be held so that the KLA can properly and thoroughly thrash out its political principles on the national question and it would be foolish of socialists to demand that they do so. Would any serious socialist withhold support from Cuba, in the teeth of an imminent U.S. occupation — unless they allowed, say — an opposition press? What we have every right to demand of the Kosovars, as of the Palestinian "rejection front," or the Kurdish Workers' Party in "normal" times, we have no right to demand under circumstances of impending and immediate disaster. Is it really so difficult to understand why the Kosovars, at this moment, may not be in a reconciliatory mood given the deplorable role so many of their Serbian neighbors have played as murderous adjuncts to the Serbian death squads?

The Kosovars are urged instead to rely on diplomacy. Although the likely outcome, it is conceded, is a "miserable" prospect for the Kosovars, any limited success for diplomacy, it is implied, would be welcomed as a substitute for American unilateralism. But this again misstates the issue. Such "victory" for diplomacy as Steve envisions — by two sides joined in fundamental agreement over their *opposition* to the principle of self-determination — is also and at the same time an utter defeat for democratic principle. It signals the oppressed throughout Eastern Europe that they are isolated and powerless, without recourse to national redress of grievances and utterly at the mercy of local overlords in good stead with American imperialism.

The left can and must demand that NATO cease its bombing in conjunction with the Serbian military and paramilitary operations in Kosovo. But while the peace movement can pressure the former only, the Kosovar resistance can enforce the latter. Lack of clarity on this can only lead to a retreat from socialist responsibility. For it is our obligation to fight American imperialism by *supporting* the democratic struggle of the Kosovars. The NATO alliance is desperate for a diplomatic solution to a quagmire, which in its blind arrogance, it failed to anticipate. But the demand to stop the bombing should be accompanied by a demand to arm

the Kosovar resistance. Clearly Steve's perspective is decidedly agnostic on this point which weakens his perspective and renders a consistently socialist opposition to this war impossible.

Negotiations may, alas, be the only immediate resort for the Kosovars as Steve seems to aver, but in the end, diplomacy merely provides the janitorial services of imperialism, mopping the mess left by Milosevic and by NATO interventionism. It may offer the Kosovars a chance to return to their homeland, to regroup and to begin their struggle anew. For that we must be hopeful. And if it comes to pass we accept it as a concession to a hideous and seemingly intractable reality, but never, as Steve's article invariably directs, as a profession of faith in the lesser evilism of international diplomatic institutions under capitalism.

A Response by Joanne Landy

Self-Determination and Diplomacy

THE BEGINNING OF STEVE SHALOM'S ARTICLE contains an extremely lucid anti-interventionist argument, which serves as an example to the left for how to present anti-imperialist arguments to the American people. The article is also very strong in its anti-Milosevic stance, and in its sharp criticism of many anti-war elements who whitewash Milosevic, wrongly thinking that an anti-intervention position is somehow weakened if one allows that Milosevic is a truly vicious, repressive and monstrous figure.

The problem with Steve's piece is in the way it approaches the question of self-determination and the KLA, and in its orientation toward the U.N. Security Council, diplomacy, and involving the Russians. Steve says that he favors self-determination for the Kosovars, yet he seems to see conciliating Milosevic and the Russians at the expense of Kosovar self-determination as the basis for a resolution of conflict. In March 1999, Steve suggests, the West should have gone beyond Rambouillet to pursue further diplomatic solutions, by which he means that the U.S. and Europe should have made Russia "a player," and should have built on the stated willingness of the Serb parliament to accept some kind of international presence in Kosovo. In March, however, the only meaning Steve's approach could have had was to further water down the Rambouillet agreement and make it even less consistent with democratic principles and even less palatable to the Kosovars than it already was. The Rambouillet agreement was already a reactionary solution: it quite deliberately excluded the right of the Kosovars to vote on their own status and

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called for the disarming of the KLA, while allowing the Serbs to permanently keep their troops in Kosovo, even if in reduced numbers. No wonder Clinton begged Milosevic to accept the agreement with the argument that it offered the best way for Serbia to maintain its control over Kosovo! Rambouillet was hardly the basis for a democratic peace, even if it weren't altered to give Milosevic even greater concessions. Steve's implicit suggestion that the U.S. should have offered to weaken it still further is a dead-end, or worse. (In the face of their brutal defeats, the Kosovars may now feel compelled to accept a terrible deal, and my argument is not that they should be condemned if they do follow this course. I simply want to argue that progressives should not contribute to or support the pressures that push them to make such a decision.)

Steve is absolutely right, of course, in arguing that for both general global reasons and because of the specific consequences in Kosovo, NATO military intervention — whether from the air or on the ground — is a disaster. His point is reinforced by Steven Erlanger, who in his May 2, 1999 *New York Times* article says that the Kosovo war is becoming a “model for NATO's future” that projects the alliance as “an aggressive arm of U.S. foreign policy.” Indeed, Kosovo is widely seen as an important precedent for the U.S. as it presses to expand NATO's “out-of-area” reach while preserving American preeminence. However, Steve is mistaken in seeing either great power diplomacy or the U.N. Security Council as the source of a progressive alternative solution, though ultimately the great powers and the Security Council might be pressured from below to back a principled settlement of the conflict.

The practical democratic answer to Milosevic would have been, from the start, an alliance of the various targets of his aggression — including Slovenians, Croatians, Bosnians, Kosovars, and Montenegrins — who could have responded to Milosevic's force with combined forceful resistance. For short-sighted, or in the case of Tudjman in Croatia, reactionary, reasons, these immediate and potential victims of Milosevic's aggression never really came together, allowing themselves to be picked off one by one. (The case of Croatia is a grotesque partial exception of sorts: at first the U.S. strongly opposed its secession, as well as that of all the other breakaway republics, orienting toward Milosevic as the key to Balkan “stability.” This position simply encouraged Serbia to attack first Slovenia, then Croatia and Bosnia. After several years of Bush and Clinton blaming the victims and shrugging over the alleged impossibility of stopping “centuries-old ethnic conflicts,” the carnage in Bosnia so thoroughly discredited the crude pro-Milosevic “tilt” that the U.S. switched to backing Croatia, going so far as to actually help Tudjman expel virtually the entire Serb population of Croatia.)

The responsibility for the failure of Milosevic's targeted victims to coalesce lies in part with the misguided victims themselves, each of whom thought they could do better without involving themselves with the oth-

ers. It also lies with many of their supporters in the West, who encouraged them to believe that the U.N. or NATO would intervene to stop and reverse ethnic cleansing. Both failed to see the reality behind Western governments' humanitarian rhetoric: their worship of power, contempt for weakness, deep hostility to the principle of self-determination and hysterical fear of the disruption of borders — i.e. disruption of the status quo. But Western governments bear the lion's share of the responsibility, since until yesterday (and perhaps even now and tomorrow) they viewed Milosevic as the "key to peace," and pressured his victims in the region to come to terms with him — witness their imposition of the arms embargo against Bosnia in the face of Serbia's enormous military superiority, and their obscene disregard for Rugova and the Kosovars in their many years of struggle against Serb repression. (Croatia again, being a partial exception.)

TODAY, WHEN THE OPTIONS HAVE NARROWED, the best hope for an acceptable peace still lies in the empowering of Milosevic's victims and in strengthening their power to resist with force. That's why the question of arming the KLA is so important. Of course if the KLA is itself a determined and intractable force for ethnic cleansing, then arming them would be problematic. But no one has provided evidence that this is the case, though Milosevic makes the claim. The real complaint of the U.S. against the KLA has been that it has demanded the right of the Kosovars to vote in a referendum for independence. The U.S. has never said that it would support and arm the KLA on condition that it would guarantee democratic rights to the 10% Serb minority in Kosovo. In effect, the KLA position has never been probed or tested.

While there is no rule that one must support any given military resistance to aggression — the clearest case in point being one imperialist power resisting another — nonetheless, the "tilt" should be toward giving such support. In the case of the KLA, we clearly have a broad, popular movement. Its supporters include nearly all those Albanians who want to fight for their freedom. Our best information tells us that the KLA's leadership is composed of a fluid combination of nationalists, Stalinists and ex-Stalinists, and an uncertain number of fundamentalists. As far as we can tell, no one group has gained decisive control — which leaves the ultimate nature of the KLA up for grabs. That the KLA has killed Serb policemen tells us nothing about whether they are committed to ethnically cleansing Serbs from Kosovars — after all, those police were the instrument of vicious repression and were used to keep ethnic Albanians totally subjugated for more than ten years.

Steve asks for super-guarantees that the KLA will do the right thing, rather than trying to see if it would be possible to arm them. Many of his arguments against giving weapons to the KLA have highly conservative implications. He suggests that to arm the KLA is necessarily to give the

Kosovars the impression that military intervention will follow. Rather than saying that the U.S. and other potential arms suppliers should make it very clear that they do not plan to send troops or air power into the conflict, Steve says don't arm the Kosovars at all because they will inevitably believe that physical intervention will follow and will therefore engage in adventurous confrontation. This approach takes decision-making away from the Kosovars themselves; they need to be armed, and to make their own judgments about how to conduct themselves and whether the supplying of weapons means that troops and air intervention will be sure to follow if things get tight.

Steve makes another argument against arming the Kosovars: that it is dangerous because the U.S. has its own sinister motives when it provides weapons. Steve is certainly right about the motives, and has a point about the dangers. But taken to its logical conclusion, this would mean that no resistance movement in the world should ever take arms or material support from any of the great powers. The classical socialist reply to such an approach is the case of Lenin accepting a ride in a German train in order to get back into Russia in 1917. In this case it was argued, and in my view convincingly, that regardless of their motives and hopes, the Germans did not gain control over Lenin or succeed in making him an instrument of German imperialism. To the contrary, the Germans' scheme completely backfired on them, as Lenin believed it would, since the Bolshevik Revolution inspired mutinies and revolts in Germany and led directly to the overthrow of the imperial government. Clinton is not as naive, or desperate, as the Kaiser: generally the U.S. knows (not always, e.g. Afghanistan) that simply arming resistance movements, rather than going in and taking over, runs counter to its interest in domination and global control. Applying this same method of thinking to the question of weapons, there is, as a rule, an important distinction between great power weapons and great power troops. While the powers will always try to attach strings to their weapons, they are often not successful — whereas great power troops inevitably call the shots.

In cases where it seems possible to maintain a significant measure of independence — which is more likely to be the case if arms come from multiple sources — it is generally wise to take the weapons and take the risk. (Tragically, if understandably, the KLA may be so battered by its recent experiences with the Serbs and so disoriented by the position it finds itself in that it does not even try to assert its independence from Western governments when and if those governments give weapons. They may end up as mere puppets of NATO. If this were to happen, it would, of course, no longer be possible for progressives to support them.)

Steve holds the KLA morally responsible for the repression that came upon the Kosovars because the KLA killed Serb police and has gathered its resistance force in areas over the Albanian border. Steve goes so far as to analogize the KLA's moral culpability to U.S. and Serb responsibil-

ity for suffering in the region. But whether or not these KLA actions were unwise — and I would argue that they were integral to any kind of resistance against Milosevic's forces — they are of a very different nature from those of the U.S. or the Serb leadership, who are not wrestling with decisions of how to resist injustice against terrible odds, but rather are weighing how to carry out their respective reactionary agendas.

Instead of looking to resistance forces in the region, Steve looks to the UN Security Council for a resolution of the conflict. But while we agree on condemning U.S. and NATO military intervention, and while it is conceivable that the Security Council could, under pressure, come up with an acceptable solution, Steve seems to go beyond this to argue that Council approval ought to be necessary to legitimize national governments' course of action. Given the nature of the Security Council, this should not be the case.

Take, for example, the arms embargo on Bosnia. For typical Great Power reasons, the members of the Security Council, including the U.S., imposed this undemocratic and unfair embargo, thus depriving the Bosnians of the right to defend themselves and perpetuating the military advantage of the Serbs. Many of us campaigned in this country for the U.S. to stop complying with the embargo, unilaterally and against the will of the Security Council if necessary. (As it happened, a majority of U.N. members also opposed the arms embargo, and took votes to that effect several times in the more democratic body, the General Assembly.) Does Steve think that our campaign was a mistake?

Steve concedes that “. . . the Security Council is a terribly undemocratic body, with five countries having permanent membership and the right of veto,” and goes on to add: “But the answer to the undemocratic nature of the Council is not to resort to an organization that is even less accountable to world opinion, namely NATO.” And of course he is right that the elite-dominated NATO holds no progressive answer to the problem of elite domination of the U.N. But he goes beyond that to suggest the need for all to respect those aspects of international law that elevate the Security Council into a lawful power — except in extreme cases requiring civil disobedience. However, for socialists and democrats, Security Council measures should have absolutely no force of law or moral legitimacy, though we might favor particular measures. We need to encourage people to see the Council as a mechanism for strengthening and perpetuating the hegemony of the Big Powers — even if we appreciate the fact that at times the Council has the beneficial effect of reining in one or another of those powers.

In arguing for the primacy of the Security Council, Steve says “the story of democracy has been the struggle to get governments to obey the law, both domestic and international — not because the law is unproblematic, but because the alternative is arbitrary power. We don't want the government to protect us from crime by engaging in illegal

searches or by denying defendants a fair trial — not because we fetishize law, but because we fear arbitrary power.” But what is the permanent core of the Security Council except for arbitrary power? It does not have even the problematic legitimacy of courts and laws within a bourgeois democratic nation, since it was elected by no one and is accountable to no one.

CLOSELY RELATED TO STEVE’S U.N. SECURITY COUNCIL ARGUMENT is his suggestion that the answer to the dreadful situation in Kosova lies in diplomacy with the Russians and Milosevic. He laments that the Russians have been “slapped in the face” — but what can one say about the campaign to lift the arms embargo on Bosnia, or many other principled positions such as support of the independence of Chechnya or, in the days of the Cold War and to an extent even today, the self-determination rights of the Baltic states. These all are, in a sense, a “slap in the face” to the Russian government and to reactionary Russian imperial popular sentiment. But why should we cater to either? In the case of Kosova, “involve the Russians” was shorthand to everyone for saying “deny the Kosovar Albanians their right to self-determination.” There is no way to secure popular power from below without slapping the powerful in the face. The problem in the current confrontation over Kosova is who is doing the slapping, and to what ends. (Of course the brunt of U.S. foreign policy: relying on bombs and missiles, pushing for the preservation and expansion of NATO, and imposing a catastrophic market-driven agenda on the former Communist countries along with the Third World — is legitimately seen as dangerous by ordinary Russians and other people around the world. A democratic and peace-oriented U.S. foreign policy would be a very different one, and might have succeeded in averting Milosevic’s successful rise to power. But this is not the point that Steve is making when he castigates Clinton for not bringing in the Russians as another great power to resolve the Rambouillet stalemate with Milosevic.)

A democratic resolution of the crisis in Kosova would require giving the Kosovars the right to self-determination, which the Russians don’t support (and neither did the West, for that matter.) The fact is that Milosevic can only be stopped by force, and the question for us is how to go about gathering the right kind of force, one that doesn’t strengthen U.S. and Western imperialism. Steve says “The people of Kosovo still need self-determination. That they are less willing than ever to be part of a Serbian dominated Yugoslavia is understandable. The international community should use its diplomatic efforts to encourage this result in a way that causes the least harm to the Albanian and Serb people of Kosovo.” My sentiments exactly — but we should not fool ourselves or others into thinking that making the Russians “players,” giving the Security Council the last word, or (as others have suggested) unleashing NATO, are the way to accomplish this.

Admittedly, I don't have a solution to offer the Kosovars, apart from a general perspective of strengthening their hand in shaping whatever solution is arrived at. But at least I am not looking for progressive answers to originate in the Security Council, which has played such a retrograde role in the region, or from the Russians, who are likely either to give up any real opposition to NATO's role in exchange for IMF assistance, or to propose a carve-up of Kosova that once again rewards Milosevic for ethnic cleansing, and in so doing will once again empower him to go on to the next victim.

Despite my disagreements, I am glad that Steve wrote this piece. I think it provokes an important discussion of critical issues. And again, let me repeat, I thought much of the article was really very fine and an example to all of us about how to make basic anti-imperialist and anti-interventionist arguments while at the same time sharply condemning despots like Milosevic.

—May 5, 1999

Response by Julius Jacobson

Self-Determination Without Strings

IN HIS "REFLECTIONS ON KOSOVO AND NATO," Steve Shalom makes clear in his opening paragraph his judgment that those on the left who either endorse NATO bombings or rally to the defense of Milosevic have adopted approaches which are "deeply flawed morally and politically." That position, rooted in a commitment to democracy and socialism, and argued forcefully in his essay is a rare and much-needed contribution to the discussion.

Laudable as Steve's opening paragraph is, I believe his formulation would have been considerably stronger if accompanied by an equally unambiguous endorsement of the Kosovars' right of self-determination which is inseparable from their right to bear arms to defend themselves from Milosevic's assassins and to win independence. Steve does come out in favor of Kosovo's right to self-determination but it arrives late in his essay and here, I believe, placement reflects his tepid and inconsistent support.

In the long history of movements claiming the right of self-determination there have been many grey areas. There are no such grey areas in Kosovo where 90 percent of the population consists of a persecuted

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people with a distinct culture, living in a geographically designated area, and who, in their vast majority, have made clear their aspiration for national independence from a cruel and alien despotism. This fails to come across loud and clear in Steve's article.

If the Kosovars are entitled to self-determination as Steve formally recognizes, then they are entitled to struggle for it by all means necessary and consistent with the democratic nature of that just cause. They will never gain their freedom except through their own struggle. Obviously, it will never come from Milosevic but neither will it come from Clinton and his similars who are clearly prepared to cut a Rambouillet-like deal with Milosevic in which that tyrant remains in power, the alleged "integrity" of Yugoslavia is guaranteed at the expense of the Kosovars' right to self-determination, and their popularly based fighting force, the KLA, is disarmed. Under these circumstances, I do not understand any of Steve's arguments in opposition to the KLA arming itself. He makes the argument that it is too late for the KLA to use arms effectively against the national oppressors, that it would be suicidal. Perhaps so. But that is really for the KLA to decide, not either Steve or me. And if it is too late today, it will not, I hope, be too late tomorrow. For the sake of that tomorrow, I believe it is essential that the left support arming the KLA today.

Steve is also reluctant to see the KLA armed for fear that those weapons might be used to terrorize Kosova's Serbian minority. But if one opposes arming the KLA for fear it might engage in its own ethnic cleansing then logically one should be opposed to the Kosovars' right to self-determination. For, if the Albanian majority, in an independent state of its own, falls victim to a revanchist virus, then whether or not the KLA is armed, the Serbians would be victimized. The absence of an armed KLA would provide little assurance of safety for the Serbian minority.

In any case, the KLA, no matter what its origins, from all evidence I have seen, is not a narrow terrorist group but a mass movement that is diverse and enjoys the growing support of the Kosovars. That it has killed Serbian policemen — that is, the thugs who have been murdering and plundering the ethnic Albanians — is hardly surprising and no cause for upset. That the KLA has also committed atrocities against Serb civilians is probably true and deplorable but such random killing is definitely not a pattern of KLA operations.

Steve appears to want the equivalent of a guarantee from the KLA that in the event it achieves its military and political objectives, it will respect the rights of the Serbian minority. I don't know what could be given as a meaningful guarantee. Actually, an important KLA official, Jakup Krasniqui, was quoted in the May 7, 1999 *New York Times* recognizing that the Serbs in Kosovo deserve the same rights as "every other minority in democratic Europe." Nevertheless, it would be foolish for anyone to deny that an enraged Kosovo populace might commit acts of

violence against Serbian civilians. But that possibility, not to be dismissed lightly, cannot be used as a pretext for denying arms to the KLA. It is just as reasonable to posit the possibility that a well-armed KLA would be a moderating influence in an independent Kosovar state, restraining violent manifestations against the Serbian minority.

Remember that in Kosovo there were 1.8 million ethnic Albanians and less than 200,000 Serbs. More than half the Albanians have already been forced out of their homes, thousands (perhaps tens of thousands) murdered, women beaten and raped, homes and villages looted and burned, a vast army of disoriented exiles threatened by disease and malnutrition in camps not equipped to cope with their basic needs. These and all the other attendant horrors of Belgrade's ethnic cleansing have been carried out by 30-40,000 Yugoslavian troops barracked in Kosovo. But not by them alone. There are also thousands in paramilitary units drawn from the small Serbian population of Kosovo who have proved themselves no less savage than the Belgrade legions. In addition to the Serbian paramilitaries, all the evidence reveals that thousands of local Serbian civilians have also engaged in the most wanton acts of destruction. Statistically, then, a significant proportion of the small percentage of Serbs in Kosovo has participated in the massacres and pillaging. To insist, under these circumstances, that the KLA must give convincing assurances that it will be scrupulous in defending the rights of the Serbian minority in Kosovo is simply not a reasonable criterion for its right to bear arms. This is especially true since the Albanian victims of ethnic cleansing cannot point to any significant movement of Serbian democrats who have denounced Milosevic's gangster regime for its crimes in Kosovo and expressed solidarity with the Kosovo people's fundamental democratic right to self-determination. However, understanding the rage in no way suggests condoning violence against innocent Serbian civilians.

A question to Steve: if you consider it wrong for the KLA to expand its arsenal, do you believe it should be obliged to surrender the arms it already has?

I was also made a bit uneasy by the emphasis that Steve places on the distinctions between genocide and ethnic cleansing. The point is a legitimate one but it need have been made only once. In repeating the point, the differences between genocide and ethnic cleansing tend to be exaggerated and the very real horror of ethnic cleansing minimized.

ONE FINAL POINT, less a criticism of Steve's article than an observation about the mournful state of the U.S. left. There has been little effort, if any, to place the terrible events that have wracked Yugoslavia for most of this decade in any meaningful historical context. More than a few in the left involved in the discussion on Kosovo believe or believed that for 40 years or so Yugoslavia was a socialist state, enjoying at least a kind of

socialism which, by definition, should have heightened people's consciousness and humanity. If that is or was so, how explain the regressive history of Yugoslavia in this decade: a corrupt and criminal regime in Belgrade, ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, Bosnia littered with mass graves of thousands, a resurgence of fascism in Croatia where wartime collaborators and puppets of the Nazis have been rehabilitated with honors.

In my view, this is part of the legacy of Titoism, a less brutal version of Stalinism which was thoroughly anti-democratic, anti-socialist and effectively set itself the task of destroying the political culture of socialism. What is the view of those who were supporters of Titoism? No less important, what do the horrors of this decade in Yugoslavia reveal to the left about the nature of those societies which masqueraded as socialist? And what lessons are to be learned for building a movement for democratic social transformation?

Stephen R. Shalom Replies

I THANK JOANNE LANDY, BARRY FINGER, AND JULIUS JACOBSON for their thoughtful comments on my article. I think I share the political impulse behind their major criticisms of my piece, but believe that in the end it is my position, not theirs, that would best achieve our common goals and values.

Joanne wants the NATO countries to stop their military actions, and then arm the KLA, without gaining any influence over them. Barry asks, correctly, why would NATO do this? Instead, Barry wants NATO to stop its military actions and allow arms from others to get to the KLA. (I guess this means Iran and Saudi Arabia — who else is there?) But how can arms from such countries shift the military balance in favor of the KLA? In particular, how can they do so in the short term, before the ethnic cleansing is completed?

Barry says that “under circumstances of impending and immediate disaster” we cannot demand of the KLA what we have the right to demand of them in “normal” times. But it is precisely because the Kosovars are “under circumstances of impending and immediate disaster” that proposals that cannot protect the Kosovars *now* must be rejected.

Julie says the KLA may not win today, but perhaps it can tomorrow. It is certainly true that the longer the NATO bombing goes on, the greater KLA prospects become. But my critics and I all want the NATO bombing to cease now. I believe that the longer the bombing continues, the greater the danger to the Kosovar population before any settlement. If the KLA can't win today but can tomorrow, then the incentive on the Serbs is to reduce the number of tomorrow's KLA fighters (which is a death warrant

for those Kosovar males currently interned or within the reach of Serbian forces) and to minimize tomorrow's mass base of KLA support (which means further ethnic cleansing).

My critics insist that the question of whether to wage armed struggle is for the Kosovars to decide, not me. But many Kosovars call for NATO intervention, and my critics don't conclude that we must adopt the Kosovar point of view here. Of course, the Kosovars have no right to tell others they must risk their lives for the Kosovar cause, but my critics would rightly object even when NATO is eager to intervene; they object because they believe that, despite the Kosovar's opinions, NATO intervention will not lead to their salvation. The Kosovars might say to them, "Look, we hear your argument, we understand the dangers that NATO will sell us out or subvert our struggle, but we still want NATO intervention." Nevertheless, uncomfortably but rightly, the critics oppose NATO intervention. But the same logic applies to arming the KLA too. The critics don't clearly say whether they think the KLA alone — armed by NATO or Iran — can win and can do so before the national catastrophe in Kosovo is complete. I don't think they can. In my view, calling for arming the KLA leads to suicide, rather than justice. Negotiations and diplomacy, on the other hand, while selling the Kosovars out in many ways, is the most likely way to stop the disaster.

What do the people under siege actually want? The answer is not so obvious. By the nature of the situation we speak only to those who are out of danger (in the United States or in refugee camps or bases outside Kosovo). But the people who are at risk from various strategies, whether bombing, invasion, or arming the KLA, are within Kosovo. (I had a recent argument with an Albanian-American who was urging a NATO ground attack. When I warned of the disaster this could mean for the civilians in Kosovo, he replied that there's no risk since there's no one left there anyway, they've all been driven out. But when we spoke, the majority of the displaced Kosovars were still in Kosovo. I don't doubt his concern for his compatriots there, but I'm afraid his bravado outweighed his judgment.) My guess is that if we were able to poll those hiding and starving in the hills of Kosovo as to their preferences, most would choose survival over suicide. Accounts of forcible KLA conscription suggest caution before concluding that all Kosovars are eager to fight to the death.

The Kosovars have surely supported the KLA. They did so because they believed that it offered a hope of protecting them from Serbian depredations, not necessarily because they wanted to see it as their next rulers. (See, for example, Robert Marquand's report in the *Christian Science Monitor*, April 27; or the remarks of Baton Haxhiu quoted by Michael Ignatieff in the *New Yorker*, May 10, 1999.) But their belief that the KLA could protect them was wrong, disastrously so.

Eventually, some deal will be struck, perhaps before this issue of *New Politics* comes out, perhaps not for months. There is no doubt that

the deal will short-change the Kosovars. But it will mean the end of the immediate calamity. What would calling for arming the KLA mean in that context? Obviously, the call will not be heeded, and it is put forward not with any expectation that Clinton and Milosevic will say “Oh, so that’s what *New Politics* advises us to do.” It is intended to make a political point. But the political point, I’m afraid, will not be understood by the public as my critics intend. The point will be seen as either a call for NATO to fight on for better terms or a call for the KLA to continue fighting, which means a call for the Serbs to continue fighting as well. The slogan “No to NATO! No Negotiations! No Cease-fire!” is a call for disaster, and no amount of Iranian weaponry will avert this disaster within any meaningful time-frame.

Barry says socialists don’t have the same concern for stability as capitalists do. True enough. But regional war is not something to sneeze at. If NATO declares hands off but pours in weapons, a wider conflagration seems inevitable, what with the KLA based in Albania, and volatile ethnic mixes and refugee camps in Macedonia and Montenegro. “Turn the world war into a class war!” was an admirable left slogan. “Turn the Kosovo cease-fire into a regional war!” is rather less compelling. And why stop there? Should we call for arming the Kashmiris — whose right to self-determination I support — risking the setting off of a South Asian war? What about arming the guerrillas in Lebanon who — rightly — want Israeli troops out of their country? I must confess I was never a great fan of the view that we would “bring to birth a new world from the ashes of the old.”

And how *new* that world would be after a KLA victory still worries me. The KLA statement on respect for minorities that Julie quotes (issued after my original article was written) was welcome, but I remain concerned, given their prior treatment of Serb civilians as documented by human rights groups.

The human consequences of strategies need to be thought through, and it is not enough to say “people have the right of revolution” before starting on a course of armed struggle. Of course, Joanne is right: our moral assessment of those wrestling with the question of how to find a path to freedom is different from that of those seeking to oppress others. But the justice of one’s cause, it seems to me, does not eliminate one’s obligation to think through the likely consequences of one’s actions and accept the moral responsibility for those consequences.

I know, of course, that daily life under oppressive systems is violent, so that revolution, even a violent one, may represent less net violence. A successful movement for social change may need to defend itself by force of arms if it is to survive. For these reasons, I am not a pacifist. But a rejection of pacifism can’t lead us to such faith in armed struggle that we reject the slower route — with its compromises and retreats — regardless of the human costs.

Calling for arming the victims of oppression is an appealing strategy:

it can offer the prospect of obtaining justice by empowering people rather than depending on or becoming controlled by powerful and reactionary governments. But I think that we shouldn't treat this as an automatic principle to be applied in every case. Instead, we need to examine the particulars of a situation, and where it seems likely to increase, rather than decrease, the suffering of the victims and others, we need to support alternative options.

By all means, let us criticize the ways in which international agreements compromise justice. But, like it or not, calling for the arming of the KLA — which has unfortunately now hitched its wagon to NATO — will be seen as calling for the war to continue.

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Third Party Perspectives: 3 Views

Are the Greens Ready for Success?

Howie Hawkins

WHEN RON DANIELS WAS TRYING TO PULL TOGETHER an independent rainbow coalition around his presidential campaign in 1992, he would extol the Green stripe of the coalition he envisioned by saying that “the Greens were the best kept secret in American politics.” Daniels was more perceptive than many on the left in realizing that the Greens were becoming a viable independent political movement. Indeed, of all the stripes in that coalitional vision, the Greens have come the furthest in establishing themselves as a permanent fixture in American elections.

By 1992, the Greens had been organizing for eight years in the U.S. They had scores of local groups active in a wide range of environmental, peace, and social justice campaigns. They had elected dozens of Greens to local school boards, planning commissions, and municipal and county councils. Alaska Greens had a ballot line and California and Hawaii Greens were about to acquire them. What was perhaps most significant was that the Greens were taking root in communities where there had not been any independent left in generations, if ever. The Greens were having an impact, even electing people, in places like Bayfield County in northern Wisconsin, the big island of Hawaii, and Gloucester, Massachusetts, as well as the college towns and the liberal enclaves of metropolitan areas that one might expect.

The Greens were no longer a secret once Ralph Nader became the Green Party presidential candidate in 1996. What started out on Nader's part as a willingness to enter the California Green Party primary to send a message to Clinton and the Democrats quickly mushroomed into a nationwide effort on the part of Greens to draft Nader to run a national campaign. The pre-existence of a network of grassroots Green groups enabled the Draft Nader movement among the Greens to put him on the ballot in 22 states and the District of Columbia. Spending less than \$5,000 in order to avoid filing with the Federal Elections Commission (FEC),¹

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Nader nonetheless received over 680,000 votes, the most for an independent party candidate to the left of the Democrats since the Wallace campaign of 1948.

Having made it on to the national media radar screen, subsequent electoral achievements by the Greens began to receive national media attention. The Greens made a minor media splash in the wake of the Nader campaign when, in November 1996, the first Green-majority city council in the U.S. was elected in Arcata, a college town in the heart of "ecotopia" in northern California redwood country.

More attention was given to the 17% that Carol Miller received in May 1997 in a special election to fill the northern New Mexico congressional seat vacated by Bill Richardson when Clinton appointed him as UN Ambassador. Miller's 17% was far more than the 2% margin of victory for the Republican in what was considered a safe Democratic district. Miller's "spoiler" role in this election followed up on the 1994 gubernatorial race where the Green candidate, Roberto Mondragon, had received 10% of the vote, which was more than the Republican's margin of victory over the Democrat. Then in June 1998, Bob Anderson, running in another congressional district special election in the Albuquerque area, polled 15% of the vote, again far more than the Republican's 6% margin of victory. Even though New Mexico Democrats have a two to one registration advantage over the Republicans, since 1994 they had now lost the governorship and two congressional seats to Republicans due to the substantial Green vote.

At this point, not only was the media paying attention, so were the highest councils of the Democratic Party. Both Miller and Anderson were campaigning for U.S. Representative in their respective districts for the November 1998 general election. Richard Gephardt called Bob Anderson personally and appealed to him without success to withdraw from the race. Hillary Clinton and Al Gore came out to New Mexico to campaign for the Democrats, with Clinton instructing voters that "this is a race between the Republican and the Democrat," which, of course, was like saying don't think about pink elephants. The Democrats also approached Ralph Nader and urged him to use his influence to stop the New Mexico Greens from "spoiling" more races for the Democrats. Nader responded

1. Soon after Nader announced he was going to enter the California primary, *The Wall Street Journal* editorially goaded the Democrats about investigating Nader's nonprofits as they had just done with Newt Gingrich's GOPAC, suggesting that the "more than 20 non-profits with combined revenues of more than \$100 million a year.... would indirectly benefit a Nader political agenda or candidacy in some ways, the issue that is at the heart of the ethics complaint against Mr. Gingrich." While Nader made a virtue of necessity by promoting the political merits of a no-money campaign built on volunteers, a major concern was clearly avoiding an expensive and time-consuming defense from a congressional fishing expedition into the public interest nonprofits Nader had established. See the Editorial, "Nader vs. Clinton?" *The Wall Street Journal*, January 3, 1996.

by going to New Mexico to campaign for the Greens. As he had often said during his presidential race in 1996, "You can't spoil a system that is already rotten."

In New Mexico itself, the Democrats responded to the Green specter by putting their more liberal faces forward. Fred Harris, the former "new populist" senator and presidential candidate, was appointed the chair of the state Democratic Party. In Carol Miller's race, the Democrats replaced Eric Serna, a former Corporations Commissioner widely regarded as a corporate lap dog, with Tom Udall, son of Stewart and nephew of Mo, whose name gave him a liberal veneer if not substance. But in Anderson's race, the Democrats stuck with Phil Maloof, the 31-year old scion of one of New Mexico's wealthiest families who had spent \$3.1 millions of his own money on the first race. The Democrats' tactics did succeed in the Miller race, where her total dropped from 17% to 4% and the Democrat Udall won. But Anderson still received 11%, far more than the 3% Republican margin of victory.

The Power of "Spoilers"

THE NEW MEXICO EXPERIENCE TAUGHT THE GREENS THE POWER of "spoiling" races. Not only can the Democrats no longer take their left for granted and not only do the media begin to report on the Green candidates and their political message with more than token coverage, but it has also begun to force the Democrats to support legislation to change the winner-take-all electoral system. In the mid-90s, the New Mexico Greens were calling for election reforms that would allow fusion in New Mexico (but not without controversy in the Green movement which had generally dismissed fusion as a fatal compromise of independent political action). The New Mexico Greens had a test case beginning to wind its way up the courts. But the Democrats didn't want to consider fusion. However, that all changed in May 1997 immediately after Miller had become the second Green to "spoil" a race for a safe, high-profile Democratic seat in New Mexico. The Democratic Party leadership approached the Greens to discuss fusion. The Greens told the Democrats that it was too late for fusion and that now it was time to talk about proportional representation. The result of these discussions was legislation to establish instant run-off voting in New Mexico. Instant run-off voting, also called majority preference voting, is where voters rank their choices in order of preference. If no candidate wins over 50% of the first count, the second choices on ballots for the last place candidate are reallocated to the remaining candidates. This process continues until a candidate receives a majority of votes. Instant run-off voting is not proportional representation, but it does eliminate the calculus of lesser-evil voting, allowing voters to make third party candidates their first choice without feeling that they are wasting their vote and helping the greater evil. The instant run-off vot-

ing bill passed the New Mexico Senate 22-1 in February and is pending in the House.

Greens made the supermarket tabloids for the first time in 1998 when Al Lewis, known to most as “Grandpa” on the TV sitcom “The Munsters,” was nominated by the Green Party of New York for governor. A sad but true observation about the state of the corporate mass media is that the tabloid stories told more about Lewis’ platform than most of the campaign stories in the mainstream corporate papers. Nonetheless, voters soon found out that Lewis was an 88-year-old lifelong radical who had demonstrated for Sacco and Vanzetti and was still demonstrating, now for Mumia Abu-Jamal. Running for Lieutenant Governor was Alice Green, an African-American activist well-known for her work against police brutality, racism in the criminal justice system, and the growing Prison/Industrial Complex. The prize in the 1998 election for New York Greens was the 50,000 votes needed for a ballot line for the next four years. But even though attempts were made to build a united electoral front for the governor’s race, there were six parties to the left of the Democrats on the ballot. Spending only \$15,000, the Greens had to rely on their grassroots network of 22 local chapters across the state to pull 52,478 votes on election day. By comparison, of the other two parties to the left of the Democrats who secured a ballot line, the Liberal candidate spent \$2.3 million and the Working Families candidates, the Democratic ticket, spent tens of millions of dollars on their campaigns, while Working Families itself went \$100,000 into debt and still finished behind the Greens in the gubernatorial vote.

The most recent media splash for the Greens was the March 30, 1999 election of Audie Bock in a special election to the California State Assembly in a stunning victory over the liberal Democratic machine in Oakland and Berkeley, California. Beating a 12-year state assemblyman and two-term Oakland mayor named Elihu Harris, Bock became the first third party state legislator in California since 1914. A close political ally of San Francisco Mayor and former State Assembly Speaker Willie Brown, Harris took his victory for granted during the campaign. While Bock and her volunteers hit the streets, Harris barely campaigned, avoided debates, and indulged in speculation that he might become the Speaker once elected. In the Democratic primary, Harris had hurt himself by insulting black voters when his campaign offered free chicken dinners in the black community to anyone producing a voting stub. The race had opened up when Congressman Ron Dellums retired, sparking a re-shuffling of seats by politicians in the East Bay Democratic machine. Harris’s assumption of the now vacated Assembly seat was the last move. But Bock hammered away on her campaign issues of more school funding, universal health care, and closing corporate tax loopholes, and built a grassroots organization that won 50.5% to 49.5% on election day.

Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

THESE ELECTORAL ACHIEVEMENTS ARE STILL QUITE MODEST. They are not about to shake up the system. Yet they are more than any independent left has been able to achieve since the Farmer-Labor Party movement of the 1920s and 1930s. The Greens' electoral activity is not riding on any massive movement like the farmers' revolt that sparked the populist People's Party or the labor movement that sustained the Socialist and Farmer-Labor parties a few generations ago. Two factors are sustaining the U.S. Green movement, which has been burrowing away in communities for 15 years now.

One is the international scope of the Green Party movement. With Greens sitting in the national legislatures of 12 European states and participating in governing coalitions of the "plural left" with socialists, communists, and/or others in Germany, France, Italy, Finland, Poland, and Georgia, Greens in the U.S. and around the world have had their spirits sustained as they organize in more trying circumstances. Greens in the U.S. have also been inspired by the election to national legislatures of Greens in Brazil, Mexico, New Zealand, and Australia. U.S. Greens have joined with Greens throughout the Americas to form the Federation of Green Parties of the Americas. They have observed meetings of the European Federation of Green Parties and of the Federation of Green Parties of Africa. They are participating in the discussions and organizing leading up to the first world conference of Green Parties slated for Canberra, Australia in the spring of 2001. When U.S. Greens were resisting the proposed dumping of radioactive waste from nuclear power plants in Vermont and Maine in a low-income Chicano community in West Texas 15 miles from the Rio Grande last year, it was heartening to be able to join with Partido Verde Ecologista de Mexico in joint statements and demonstrations against the radioactive waste dump. Even when the Greens here sent an open letter of protest to Joschka Fischer, the German Green serving as Foreign Minister, appealing to him to withdraw support for the NATO bombing campaign in Yugoslavia, it gave Greens a feeling that they were no longer shouting protests from the margins but had a standing that made their voices count.

The other factor sustaining the Green Party movement in the U.S. is several thousand Green activists and the widely varied community-based movements in which they participate. The Greens do not have the institutionalized union base of the Labor Party or the community organizing base of ACORN sustaining the New Party, not to mention the corporate financing of the "Dumublicans and Repugnocrats," as the major parties are known among Greens. What the Greens do have is a grassroots network of a few thousand activists who are engaged in broader community-based movements. Most of these Green activists have roots in social movements, most often the environmental, peace, and women's move-

ments, less often the labor, community organizing, and people of color movements. A sprinkling of Green activists have come out of various currents of the ideological left and a few out of Democratic electoral politics. For most Greens, however, the Green Party is a logical extension of their movement activities and their first serious participation in electoral politics.

Non-electoral "movement" education, organizing, and actions are seen as the foundation for effective Green electoral campaigns. The range of this movement work is wide. The activities I heard about in the four days before I sat down to write this will give a sense of this non-electoral work, even though it can be assumed to be just a fraction of what Greens were doing. On Friday, Greens in St. Louis dumped milk with recombinant bovine growth hormone at the annual shareholders meeting of Monsanto as part of a Global Days of Action Against Genetic Engineering sponsored by Greens and other groups in Europe and North America. In Syracuse, Greens joined with the local Black Radical Congress and Peace Action groups in issuing an anti-NATO, anti-war statement. Other Greens were demonstrating on the same theme in New York and Washington, DC while the NATO countries held their 50th anniversary meeting. On Saturday, many Greens attended the Millions for Mumia Marches in Philadelphia and San Francisco, while others participated in a caravan through New Jersey protesting the Mobile Chernobyl of radioactive waste shipments. On Sunday, Greens from New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania met in Philadelphia to discuss national Green Party organizing problems. On Monday, Greens in New York were lobbying the New York State Legislature on Earth Day Lobby Day. Throughout the country in these four days, Greens were active in local Earth Day events.

A Ballot Line in 50 States?

AS THE 2000 PRESIDENTIAL RACE APPROACHES, THE GREENS STAND POISED to establish themselves as the ballot line independent party to the left of the Democrats in nearly all of the states. Eleven state parties already have ballot lines. Forty-eight states have organized Green groups and in about 35 states there are parties or statewide networks of locals. A strong presidential campaign in 2000 should be enough to secure ballot lines in most of the remaining states. Although an early draft Angela Davis effort created both excitement and controversy, Davis declined, saying that prior writing, teaching, and anti-Prison/Industrial Complex organizing commitments left her no time for a presidential campaign. Ralph Nader is seriously considering another run with Anishinabe activist Winona LaDuke as his running mate, this time spending some money, addressing the full range of issues in the Green platform, and working with the Greens, in contrast to his 1996 no-money campaign which required an arms length relationship to the Greens in order to keep his spending

below the \$5000 threshold that would have required FEC filings. There is also talk, as the NATO bombing campaign exacerbates problems in the Balkans and threatens to instigate a new cold war and arms race, of drafting a prominent peace activist. The Greens now have the base and capacity to get a presidential candidate easily on the ballot in over 40 states and, with a modicum of cooperation, to succeed in the very difficult states, and even in all 50 states. With a good candidate and a well-organized campaign, the Green presidential candidate might receive more than the threshold of 5% of the vote which would endow the Green Party with several million dollars in federal funds for its next presidential nominating convention and campaign.

But are the Greens ready to handle such success? It is no secret among independent political activists that Greens have been squabbling on the national level since they began organizing in the U.S.. While local Green groups and many state parties have functioned well without debilitating power struggles, the same cannot be said for the Greens nationally. Today there are two national Green Party organizations, The Greens/Green Party USA (GPUSA) and the Association of State Green Parties (ASGP), reflecting a split that has been developing since the mid-1980s.

The split is not particularly about the programs and platforms. Both organizations and their affiliates support the same basic platforms: single-payer health care, jobs for all, guaranteed minimum income, reduction in work time, no nukes/renewable energy, progressive income and wealth taxes combined with eco-taxes to discourage pollution and depletion of resources, deep cuts in military spending, opposition to financial and trade deregulation, an end to the war on drugs and alternatives to incarceration for nonviolent offenders, citizen review boards to oversee police, rewriting corporate charters to restrict capital mobility and introduce forms of economic democracy, and so forth. While NATO's bombing campaign in Yugoslavia has created enormous controversy and contention inside European Green parties, both U.S. groups have come out clearly opposed to NATO's intervention. If there is any difference in politics, it is over the vision of a Green economy. Within the Greens, this vision ranges from an anti-corporate Jeffersonian vision of small property owners to various anti-capitalist visions of decentralized eco-socialism. This range of visions exist within both GPUSA and ASGP. The ASGP draft "Green Platform" does articulate more limited anti-corporate measures, while the GPUSA "Green Program" presents more expansive anti-capitalist proposals. But both groups welcome Jeffersonians and eco-socialists alike within what they conceive of as a broad anti-corporate front.

The split is not about independent politics versus fusion politics. Although the New Mexico Greens flirted briefly with fusion, it never had much support in any section of the Green Party movement. In New York, the only state where fusion is common practice and candidates normally

try to get as many of the eight ballot lines as they can, sentiment is strong that the New York Greens must not become just another ballot line trading favors for endorsements of corporate politicians. The draft bylaw amendments to deal with the Green Party's new ballot status propose limiting the possibility of cross-endorsement with other ballot line parties to no more than 30% of any county's Green candidates.

Nor is the split about movement vs. party. Both groups are on record for building a party that is engaged in movement as well as electoral work.

Participatory vs. Plebiscitary Democracy

PARTY STRUCTURE IS THE PRINCIPLE SUBSTANTIVE ISSUE THAT HAS DIVIDED ASGP and GPUSA. GPUSA took on its current name at the 1991 Green Congress in Elkins, West Virginia when the Green Committees of Correspondence, which had begun organizing in 1984, decided it was time to explicitly become a national party with electoral ambitions. The GPUSA built upon the pre-existing Green Committees of Correspondence structure of individual members grouped in local chapters, which elected delegates to the Green Congress with votes proportional to their members. Although the structure adopted in Elkins was passed by consensus, within six months a group called the Green Politics Network, whose members had wanted to set up a Green Party separate from the existing "movement" of Green Committees of Correspondence, began calling for an Association of State Green Parties outside of GPUSA. Their call went nowhere until 1996 when they encouraged Draft Nader Committees to form outside of GPUSA and the state Green parties in order to insure that their expenditures were independent of Nader to keep his total spending below his \$5,000 limit. Meanwhile, they prepared a meeting for the week after the election to found the ASGP, saying that there was no national Green Party. In fact, state Green parties could have made independent expenditures on behalf of Nader, as the Green Party of New York did.

Some of the state parties were already operating outside the GPUSA framework by 1996. In California and Oregon, for example, when state membership assemblies of the Green Committees of Correspondence decided it was premature to seek a ballot line, groups split off to register voters into the Green Party to create a Green ballot line. When California got its ballot line in 1992, its leaders began demanding more representation in GPUSA's Green Congress and National Committee than their GPUSA members in the state entitled them to on the grounds that they also had 80,000 party registrants. When it formed in November 1996, ASGP organized as a federation of state Green parties. While leaving it to the states to decide what constituted their state party membership, ASGP's leadership promoted a registration-based party model. However, several ASGP affiliates are structured around dues-paying members and

23 states don't even keep party enrollment lists.

The party structure issue came down to GPUSA's participatory democracy of party activists vs. ASGP's plebiscitory democracy of party registrants.² Who gets voting rights in the Green Party: active dues-paying members or whoever enrolls in the party with the state? GPUSA argued that the dues-paying activist model was more consistent with the Green principle of grassroots democracy. A party of active members can build itself around its values, principles, and program, can elect its candidates and leadership by membership convention instead of state-run primaries, and thereby govern itself by a democratic process with grassroots participation and accountability. GPUSA argued that the registrant/primary party would, as it has with the Democrats and Republicans, lend itself to domination by entrepreneurial, personality-based candidacies run by elite cadres of campaign activists who have no direct, face-to-face interaction with the base of party registrants. Anybody can register in the party, regardless of her/his politics. Registrants' only role is to vote for candidate nominations and party committee leaders in primaries and caucuses, which are really just plebiscites where the candidates have been pre-selected by party elites, which means the politicians, their financial backers, and the campaign workers looking for spoils. This uniquely American party structure has historically bred self-seeking, personality-based politicians and undermined principled, programmatic parties. GPUSA also argued that its dues-paying activists model would insure financial democracy by making the party responsible to thousands of small supporters instead of a few fat cats.

ASGP advocates of the registrant party model scorned dues as a "poll tax" and argued that primaries and caucuses open to all party registrants were more democratic because they were more broadly based. ASGP formally expects its state party affiliates to contribute 1% of their state party budgets, but no state party has made this contribution so far.

This issue over party structure is one every third party faces when it begins to acquire ballot lines. When the Socialist Party of Oregon got a ballot line in 1996, it made demands on the Socialist Party USA similar to those the Green Party of California had made on the Green Party USA. The Socialist Party USA stuck with its active membership structure, so the Oregon party disaffiliated. (When they lost their ballot line in the 1998 election, they began merger discussions with the Pacific Green Party of Oregon, which is registrant-based.) In adopting its Resolution on Electoral Strategy in November 1998, the Labor Party answered this question by declaring it would nominate candidates by membership con-

2. For more on the political implications of participatory vs. plebiscitory democracy in political parties, see my "The Greens After the Nader Campaign," *Synthesis/Regeneration* (12, Winter 1997) and Arthur Lipow, *Political Parties and Democracy* (Chicago: Pluto Press, 1996).

vention instead of primary, which means it will have to challenge many state election laws that mandate nominations by primary.³ The Libertarian Party has accommodated itself to state primary requirements, but still allocates votes to its national convention proportional states' dues paid membership. With 26,000 members, the Libertarian Party is able to sustain a fairly effective national organization. Nader told the Labor Party convention in November 1998, "If you were to ask me what it takes in the next two to four years to build a major party in America...I would say the following: a million people contributing an average of \$25 a year each and volunteering an average of 100 to 150 hours a year each, and you've got yourself a major political party."⁴ While the California and New Mexico parties have been militantly anti-dues, several other ASGP-affiliated state parties require dues of voting members.

In an effort to acknowledge the reality on the ground and create a unified national Green Party, "inclusive" structure proposals have been put to both ASGP and GPUSA to adopt a structure that gives state parties proportional representation in the national bodies according to some formula that factors in different measures of membership or support: dues-paying members, party registrants, and/or votes received. While these proposals have wide support among Greens generally, they have not been accepted by either group yet. ASGP has refused thus far to put such a proposal on its agenda or even to discuss structure and unification with GPUSA, which has sought discussions. While GPUSA has instructed committees to prepare inclusive structure proposals, to date they have only narrow majority support in Green Congresses, but not the two-thirds support needed to amend the bylaws. While these structure issues are important for what kind of party the Greens will become over the long run, most Greens would probably accept any reasonable compromise to get all Greens back under one tent.

National Organizational Vacuum

WHICH BRINGS UP THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON WHY THE GREENS are divided at the national level: leadership rivalries. The structural issues could easily be resolved if the rivalry and distrust between GPUSA and ASGP leaders were not so sharp. Over the years, the controversies have become personal and a small number of hotheads have inflamed the differences with ad hominem attacks, accusations of Machiavellian manipu-

3. The Labor Party Resolution on Electoral Strategy answers this question under the heading of Accountability: "The Labor Party is not politics as usual—we are a party of principle. Candidates shall be chosen by the members through convention at the appropriate level, not through primary." This succinctly states the position GPUSA has also held.

4. A videotape of Nader's speech at the Labor Party convention is available from DemocracyU@aol.com or (718) 747-6345.

lation and bad faith, and malicious gossip, speculation, rumor mongering, and occasional red-baiting. Internet forums have been the primary venue for these screeds, but readers of *New Politics* got a small taste of it in a review by ASGP partisan Lorna Salzman of GPUSA member Brian Tokar's book, *Earth for Sale*. Salzman alleges that "the Left, in particular the Green Party USA (GPUSA),... is waging war against electorally oriented Greens." Strange New Left/New Age hybrids called "Marxist-Lentilists" are said to have destroyed the Green Party in the United Kingdom as well. I am identified as "the leading intellectual theorist of the GPUSA," yet Murray Bookchin is said to have "expelled [me] from his presence" [!] because I ran for public office.⁵ Not only was this news to Bookchin and me, but we wondered at how the leftist GPUSA was waging war on electorally oriented Greens and running candidates in elections at the same time. Bookchin, of course, has long advocated an electoral politics of "libertarian municipalism" with a view toward establishing popular, directly democratic assemblies in opposition to the top-down state apparatus.⁶

Most Greens, whether affiliated with ASGP, GPUSA, both, or neither are sick of the infighting and could not care less about who said what to whom years ago. The questions of structure and unity will come up again at the ASGP and GPUSA national meetings this year in June and July respectively. ASGP claims 25 affiliated state parties and GPUSA claims 18 affiliated state parties, along with members and locals in most of the states. Eight state parties are affiliated with both GPUSA and ASGP. The New York party has called for a caucus of dually-affiliated states to take the lead in trying to pull the Greens back together.

Meanwhile, national Green organizing is largely uncoordinated. GPUSA tries to make decisions and carry them out with paid staff and travel subsidies for people doing national or international work, but its resources are so limited that volunteers still do most of the work. From a peak of 2100 paid members in 1991, GPUSA has dropped as low as 550 members partly because of the split, partly because the energy is focused at the state party level in many states, but mainly because dues renewal and solicitation notices have not been going out consistently.

GPUSA maintains a national information clearinghouse, holds an annual Green Congress and three National Committee meetings a year, and publishes a quarterly newspaper, *Green Politics*, and a quarterly magazine, *Synthesis/Regeneration*. But it does not have the resources to support field organizers, issue research, party literature, and other services a national party could provide. ASGP is running purely on vol-

5. Lorna Salzman, "Environmentalism and Electoral Politics," *New Politics* (24, Winter 1998).

6. See "Libertarian Municipalism" in Janet Biehl (ed.), *The Murray Bookchin Reader* (Washington: Cassell, 1997) and Janet Biehl, *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1998).

unteers and mainly through the internet, with one annual meeting of two delegates from each affiliated state party. A newspaper, *Green Pages*, comes out intermittently.

One consequence of this lack of national staff and resources is that people doing national and international work on behalf of GPUSA and ASGP do so largely out of their own pockets, which limits who gets to do it to who can afford to do it. The Green national organizations make decisions, but things tend to happen only when volunteers come forward to do it, which means many decisions are not carried through and sometimes self-appointed people step into the vacuum to make things happen that were never collectively decided.

This free-for-all national Green milieu means the Green presidential candidate(s) will have enormous influence on how the Green Party will look after the 2000 election. Any serious Green presidential campaign will qualify for federal primary matching funds and raise hundreds of thousands of dollars, if not a few million dollars. That means the presidential campaign organization(s) will dwarf the national staff and volunteers working on behalf of GPUSA and ASGP, as well as the state party organizations in most of the states. What the presidential candidate(s) do will probably matter more than what GPUSA or ASGP do in determining what the Green Party looks like nationally coming out of the 2000 election.

Neither GPUSA nor ASGP is going to roll over the other. Since both have the organizational capacity to run their own presidential campaigns with a candidate on at least 20 state ballots, they both have the capacity to spoil the other's candidacy. Although a few partisan voices on both sides have advocated separate candidacies and separate Green parties, the majority of Greens view that prospect as a recipe for marginalizing the Greens.

If the Greens are going to have a unified presidential campaign, at a minimum they need to agree on an inclusive national convention that is legitimate to the state affiliates of ASGP, GPUSA, both, and neither. That convention would need to nominate the presidential ticket, adopt the platform, and at least set in motion a process for coming up with a unified structure in order to take the next step: a unified filing with the FEC for the status of National Committee of the Green Party, which will then qualify the party for federal funding should its ticket receive more than 5% of the vote.

That unified structure could be a variant of the hybrid structure mentioned above. It could also be the traditional party structure of the Democrats and Republicans, where national committees and conventions represent state party delegations proportional to the general populations of the states rather than the party membership (however defined), perhaps with some superdelegates thrown in to insure that politicians and party leadership have extra weight in the process. Indeed, the national convention proposal from an ASGP committee to be considered in June

is along these lines, although a counter proposal supporting a hybrid structure is expected. If the Greens use the conventional American party structure, the rivalry between GPUSA and the Green Politics Network that spawned the ASGP will probably continue in the form of rival political clubs contending for influence within the larger registration party framework set up by the 50 states' election laws and FEC regulations. The third possibility is that ASGP and GPUSA will put forward competing candidates, set up competing parties in the states and nationally, and render themselves marginal. Whether the Greens have the political maturity to set aside sectarian interests and put the larger interests of the movement foremost will determine whether the Greens are ready for the political success they are on the brink of achieving or whether they will squander the opportunity they have in 2000 to establish the Green Party as the independent left alternative on ballots all across the U.S.

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The Labor Party: A New Political Architecture

Sean Sweeney

THE EMERGENCE OF SERIOUS THIRD PARTY EFFORTS has been one of the few bright features of what has been, for the Left, a generally low and uninspiring decade. The agonizingly slow and unspectacular evolution of these parties is one indication that the corporate domination of politics is corroding at the edges, at a time when the new is struggling to be viable. Now that these fledgling initiatives are beginning to make something of a minor impact here and there, many progressives, citing the need for left unity, are urging them to band together in some bigger formation — anything else being a sign of blind sectarianism.

The Labor Party has a lot in common with other third party initiatives like the Greens and the New Party. All are large enough to be taken seriously, but all are presently inadequate to the task at hand. However, unity at this point is not only extremely unlikely, it would almost certainly end in disaster. Of course, third parties can and should work together in certain instances, but their primary responsibility for the foreseeable future is to stick resolutely to the task of building themselves. The fact that they have already done this to some extent, and have something to show for their efforts, goes a long way toward explaining why there is today a growing interest in third parties. And the programmatic differences that to some seem secondary now, will probably become far more significant over time.

But at least now there is something to talk about. A decade ago the discussion in progressive circles on third parties amounted to little more than an exhibition in rival futurologies. Mass-participation politics to the left of the Democrats existed as a thought experiment, suspended in some kind of quantum state waiting to be realized. The debate has moved on precisely because people understood that, while a new political architecture exists in the minds of each and every one of us, the time had come to start laying some foundations. As a result, real options now exist.

The Labor Party option can be understood as an unambiguous declaration of independent working class politics, with no apologies. None of

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the other third party options can, or even wish to, make such a claim. However, my objective is not to make a standard pitch for the Labor Party. The case has been made; the Party has been formed; the work proceeds. Readers of *New Politics* must make their own choices and many have already done so. Some have involved themselves in these efforts; many, no doubt, are stuck in a state of fashionable dissatisfaction with any of the available formations. This said, the story of the Labor Party is perhaps more compelling than the argument that such a party is needed.

The Design

TWELVE YEARS AGO, BILL FLETCHER WROTE IN THE NOW DEFUNCT RADICAL NEWSPAPER the *Guardian* that the Labor Party would never see the light of day. Fletcher, now the Education Director of the AFL-CIO, predicted that the Rainbow Coalition would continue to gather strength. Labor, moreover, was a dying movement isolated from its potential allies. An aging heavyweight pinned on the ropes by raging bull capital, the unions were no place to start an independent political project. According to late eighties parlance, moreover, class had ceded space to identity and, in any case, labor's "patch" just wasn't big enough. At the time, a broad progressive coalition appeared far more viable than a class-based party.

Fletcher was wrong on both counts, but his mistake was understandable. At the time, the Rainbow Coalition was real, the Labor Party seemingly a worn-out 1930s slogan. Fortunately, a small number of union leaders and rank and file activists remained committed to such a party. Spearheaded by the then-Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union (OCAW) and its Secretary-Treasurer Tony Mazzocchi, plans to launch a labor party were cautiously set in motion. As the Rainbow dissipated, thanks in no small measure to its illusions about the Democratic Party, the idea of an independent party began to take hold.

The ten-year story of the Labor Party revolves around five basic principles or key strategic considerations:

First, the Party subscribes to an independent class approach to politics and is emphatically not about trying to reform or pressure the Democrats (although no one knows what effect the Labor Party might have on the existing main parties in the future). This immediately distinguishes the Labor Party from the New Party and its New York sibling, the Working Families Party, both of which rely on fusion or the cross-endorsement of Democrats as a means of building a progressive alternative. There can be little doubt that an independent working class party will prove hard to build in the short term, which is why the Labor Party considers itself to be a long term project, one that is unwilling to pitch its tent in the back yard of the Democratic Party no matter what the perceived immediate advantages. True, many of the unions that support the Labor Party continue to both endorse and actively work for Democrats. The

explicit goal, however, is to build a party that will, over the course of time, confront both existing main parties. Indeed, part of the struggle to build the Party has revolved around the need to convince unions to think beyond the next election cycle and to develop a Labor Party culture that will eventually eclipse the reactive lesser-evilism (to put it charitably) that passes for "political action" in most unions.

Second, Labor Party thinking holds that organized labor is the best place to anchor class-based politics. There are perhaps twenty million workers in unions, and unions are relatively rich in human, financial, and technical resources. Every year, tens of millions of dollars are used to elect and re-elect politicians from the two main parties, to say nothing of the staff time and other in-kind resources that are regularly brought into service. This is enough for labor to sustain a party of some considerable size on its own. In terms of available resources, labor's patch is probably the biggest one around. Moreover, this massive hemorrhage of staff time and money has been allowed to continue without much either by way of democratic input from the rank and file or a serious evaluation of the results. And this at a time when polls consistently indicate that a very large portion of union members firmly believe that the Democrats and the Republicans serve corporate interests at the expense of their own. The Party has encouraged unions to conduct a poll in order to gauge the political sentiments of their own members. When conducted, the results have been strikingly consistent, with close to 50 percent of those responding indicating support for the idea of an independent labor-based party.

Third, a party based on the unions has a greater opportunity to be representative of the working class than one that springs up regionally, is rooted in one racial or ethnic group, or is animated by a single issue. Unions represent high proportions of women and people of color, as well as growing numbers of foreign born. Perhaps more than any other institution, labor is also a place to politically engage large numbers of working class white men, many of whom have been heavily influenced by the right but are simultaneously alienated from the corporate agenda. The Labor Party is determined to reach those millions of working class women and men who have been written off by many on the left as either apathetic or backward.

Fourth, labor unions are ready for political realignment, although the pressure for this realignment is coming from the right as well as the left. Union members have been a primary target of capital's strategic bombardment of working class rights and living standards for more than twenty years now, an attack authorized and facilitated by a bipartisan alliance that pertains to almost all major areas of social and economic policy. As a result, the labor movement has at last become a scene of considerable transition and institutional ferment. The 1995 election of the New Voice leadership under John Sweeney is but one feature of this

change, but not all of the changes are for the good. In an attempt to run for shelter, both public and private sector unions have shown a growing inclination to support purportedly pro-labor Republican incumbents as a means of cutting their own deals on behalf of their members, no matter what the broader implications might be for other unions and the working class as whole. The launch of the Labor Party by a number of unions reflects pressure from the other end, one rooted in the realization that an injury to one is still an injury to the working class as a whole. For a union to cut a deal on behalf of its members is one thing; for it to do so at the expense of other workers is fatal to the basic principle of union solidarity.

IT REMAINS OBVIOUS, HOWEVER, THAT THE TASK OF WRESTING THE LABOR MOVEMENT away from the Democrats and Republicans will probably take a long time and may never be completely accomplished. Strange as it might seem, it is perhaps just as likely that organized labor may split along lines of political affiliation, in a manner historically characteristic of France, Italy, and a host of other countries. Either way, the battle for independent class politics within labor, alongside the struggle for democracy and accountability, constitute the two main fronts where the campaign to truly revitalize the labor movement will be fought in the years to come.

Fifth, the Labor Party is committed to organizing the unorganized — in the sphere of politics. More than 85 percent of workers are unorganized and well over 90 percent of workers under the age of 25 have never been near a union. These figures have been cited as evidence of the futility of building a party based on labor. But who has the capacity to reach the unorganized if not the labor movement? The Labor Party believes that the unorganized may first need to be organized politically before there will any qualitative growth in labor's ranks. The AFL-CIO has put a lot of faith in aggressive organizing as the motor of labor's revival. Here and there the results have been impressive, but union density continues to fall because the anti-union climate, encouraged by both main parties, remains as mean as ever. As long as the implicit message from the White House reads "Your President wants you to bust a union," one that is not likely to change come the likely arrival of Al Gore, then organizing alone will not save the labor movement from further decline. Thus the Labor Party sees itself as both a vehicle and a rallying point for the unorganized, a political bridge between those in unions and those who are not. In this sense, the word labor means much more than those workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement. It's a construct that speaks to a common and all inclusive class perspective, respectful of identity, but driven by a desire for broad-based unity.

Laying Foundations

IF THIS CAPTURES THE BASIC THINKING, what has been accomplished thus far? First and foremost, the Party exists. Two national conventions, each attracting more than 1400 participants, have taken place and a third is scheduled for early 2002. At present the Party has the support of unions with a combined membership of over one million, and membership chapters are active in a string of cities and states from Portland, Maine, to San Diego, California. The number of full-time staff is small, but the Party's field capability continues to grow. In addition to unions and membership chapters, there are a few affiliated bodies known as "worker supportive organizations" or WSOs. The WSOs presently represent some of the poorest in society, such as welfare recipients and undocumented immigrants. Claiming to represent more than just unions is one thing, stitching together the institutional pieces requires a political mechanism that allows full rights of representation while at the same time preserving autonomy is another proposition entirely. The notion of a party as a "permanent coalition," one that endures beyond any single campaign or struggle, is central to the Labor Party approach.

Perhaps one of the most significant aspects of the Labor Party story is its pre-history as Labor Party Advocates (LPA). Launched in 1991, LPA started as little more than a list of sympathizers who had shelled out twenty bucks to demonstrate their commitment to, or at least their interest in, building a working-class party based on the labor movement. LPA grew at a steady clip for a few years but then began to level off. In 1994, responding to considerable pressure from its base, Mazzocchi and the leadership of LPA agreed to recognize chapters in a number of cities and states. By the time the founding convention met in Cleveland in June 1996, 36 chapters would send delegates. The shift in direction allowed space for activists, many of them long-term socialists, to put a positive mark on the process. At the same time, however, the length of the preparation period drove home the need for patience and tenacity on the part of individuals and groups eager to make the party real.

Organizing from below paralleled a different type of organizing from the top. Mazzocchi understood that a labor party would never be launched if it failed to acquire a solid institutional base. With OCAW serving as a launch pad, the message of LPA journeyed from local to local, picking up endorsements and some precious in-kind support here and there. By 1996, endorsements for the founding convention were coming in at a steady pace. OCAW had been joined by the Longshoremen's union on the West Coast, legendary for its militancy and its unwavering commitment to internationalism. Another left union, the United Electrical Workers, put serious resources into the effort. The rail workers union (BMWE), the California Nurses Association, and the mid-west based Farm Laborer's Organizing Committee joined the action. It became clear by the range and character of the unions involved, that the Labor Party was more than the reconfigured remnants of the old CIO left. Furthermore, many

individual locals in a large cross section of unions endorsed the Labor Party as a result of a debate and a vote by delegates or rank-and-file activists.

By the time of the founding convention, hundreds of locals and a dozen or so national unions were on board. This tally represented only a fraction of today's labor movement, but it allowed the Party to claim a legitimate space within labor and paved the way for an enormously successful founding convention. Over 1400 delegates debated, amended, and finally adopted the Labor Party's program and constitution. As the Party's pre-history drew to a close, one thing became clear: both the activists and the institutional base were essential ingredients; one without the other would have led to a dismal and lifeless beginning.

In the wake of the 1996 launch, progressives cited any number of reasons why it would go nowhere; indeed, more than a few Party members felt this way. The program was allegedly pie-in-the-sky, workerist, neglected social issues, and color blind. For many, the Party simply shied away from supporting the right to an abortion, adopting instead the now notorious language in its program that called for "informed choice and unimpeded access to a full range of family planning and reproductive services for men and women." (This language was changed at the convention in November 1998) Others criticized the new Party for being too top-down, too old-white-left, so 1930s you could almost smell the CIO mothballs. Peculiarly, it was a party that was not even planning to run any candidates. A party without candidates? Surely its days were numbered.

A Construction Project

AFTER THE CLEVELAND LAUNCH, THE PARTY WORKED HARD to turn paper endorsements into paid affiliations to the Party. This almost invariably required a level of follow up that taxed to the limit the resources available. But the job was done, and the Party generated some income and consolidated its connection to a network of unions. In June 1997, the United Mine Workers affiliated, under the leadership of the dynamic Cecil Roberts, successor to Richard Trumka. New affiliations, however, have proven hard to come by. The leaderships of most of the larger AFL-CIO internationals, such as AFSCME, the UAW, and the AFT, are clearly not interested in supporting the Labor Party and look to be ready to make an early endorsement of Al Gore. The locals affiliated to these internationals will be under pressure to toe the line. But the problem for the Labor Party is still essentially one of organizing. The task of reaching out to potentially supportive locals and to do the necessary follow up requires a monumental commitment of time and energy. The Party remains confident, however, that its message will continue to resonate with both leadership and rank and file. As Tony Mazzocchi is fond of

noting, when given the opportunity to present its case, the Party has seldom been rejected.

For a small party, a grueling amount of time has been spent on constructing a skeletal party apparatus. State, city, and neighborhood-level structures have been encouraged. To be officially recognized, each body must submit a clear organizing plan. At the state level, by-laws must be drafted by a representative committee, circulated, and approved. Since 1996, five such state Labor Parties have been recognized by the national office, although they remain for the most part rather large committees of union staffers and activists. To become “fully chartered” state parties, these bodies must comply with another set of criteria that speaks to a whole new level of development. The criteria itself took more than a year of committee discussions within the Party before agreement was reached. Boring as these details may be to some readers, they capture an altogether different approach to the challenges presented by the historical moment. A new political architecture requires builders if it is ever to see the light of day. Most construction projects involve routine, repetitive, and unglamorous forms of labor. And so it is, fittingly, for the Labor Party.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the Labor Party’s form-before-substance methodology has been criticized even by some Party activists and other progressives. Many feel that the Party would do better if it were “on the streets” doing what needs to be done to “get the name out there.” Others suggest that the Labor Party should involve itself in a range of struggles in order to win the confidence and support of those who lead or are heavily involved in single-issue movements. This, however, is not the direction the Labor Party is taking. It is true, however, that local membership chapters in particular have established a fine record of solidarity with those in struggle, (Detroit newspaper strike, Liverpool dockers’ lockout, Decatur “War Zone”, and so on). But an awareness has begun to develop within the Party that customary struggle-to-struggle activity, while winning the Party respect among those embroiled in a dispute, is only one aspect of party building. A party that wishes to bring about a qualitative shift in the balance of forces between the contending classes, that wishes to take power, needs to move into an entirely new political territory and adopt a whole new mind set.

The building of the Labor Party or, for that matter, any serious third party effort, will almost certainly require a clear change in the way our politics is conducted. In a nutshell, protest politics must give way to a systematic approach to party building. It’s time to stop pulling together ad hoc coalitions that quickly fall apart, only to then have to pull them back together again a year or two later for some other issue or struggle. It’s time to focus less on organizing demonstrations that frequently attract pitiful numbers, and to quit launching campaigns that are designed solely to put pressure on those presently in office. Time consumed tak-

ing “positions” on every conflict or struggle internationally, although of some educational value, does little to change one’s own position in politics as a whole, which, for the left, can politely be described as barely marginal. And, most critical of all, today’s protest politics has failed to inspire young people and thus replenish the stock of activists, and failed to provide an enduring framework or a common identity that can sustain struggle over the longer term.

The Labor Party’s building approach amounts to an attempt to break free of the protest paradigm. Now more than ever, a party is needed that will take power, not to wave a placard at those who already wield that power. Constructing a party does not mean an end to protest, but it does require an entirely different political regimen, one that dissuades people from “wearing many hats” as if this were something of a virtue, the way-of-life signature of the free radical.

Arranging the Furniture

AS THE LABOR PARTY HAS GROWN ORGANIZATIONALLY, it has begun to develop a real internal life. The perception that the Party is run in an autocratic fashion by a few union tops is woefully wide of the mark. Veteran labor activist and commentator Staughton Lynd recently criticized the Labor Party for being top down and bureaucratic, implicitly characterizing the Party as something like the left flank of business unionism. Sadly, such a view has probably been forged in the heat of rapid-fire e-mail denunciations, and reveals a shallow understanding of the Party’s mode of operation. Of course, tensions have existed between chapter-based activists from a left tradition and some of the union officials involved with the Party. Priorities differ, and there are genuine ideological differences as well as “institutional considerations” that impress upon the relationship. But in any case, disagreements and a struggle around program and strategy should be part and parcel of any working class party worthy of the name. There has, however, been considerable give-and-take, motivated in part by the sense that both sides are committed to building the Party, even if their reasons for doing so may differ over the longer term. Many socialists are constructively engaged in building the Labor Party as committed foot soldiers and chapter leaders, which is consistent with the experience of workers’ parties internationally for a century and a half. Whether explicitly or implicitly, socialist ideas are embedded in class politics. Thus the involvement. Over time, however, the Party will need to develop a new generation of cadre, and work has proceeded in this direction with a series of all-day “train-the-trainer” sessions held across the country.

The Labor Party’s handling of the highly charged issue of electoral activity actually serves as something of a lesson in consensus building and internal education, and how the presence of a party frequently leads

to a level of qualitative development that only becomes apparent over time. LPA always presented a non-electoral face, and maintained that, once formed, the Labor Party should not be electoral until such time as it had developed into a much larger force. Activists frequently took a completely opposite view, arguing that the Labor Party should use elections as the primary means to build the Party, or run the risk of being seen as either irrelevant or simply as a pressure group set up to pull the Democrats a little to the left. The floor fight at the founding convention was an absorbing spectacle, full of life-or-death pronouncements from both sides. Most LPA chapters, the Longshoremen of the West Coast and, less emphatically, the United Electrical Workers, wanted some kind of electoral commitment. OCAW and most of the endorsing bodies, as well as a number of chapters, were happy with an open-ended non-electoral "organizing approach to politics." Thanks to their institutional weight the non-electoral camp won the vote at the convention, but the debate revealed clear divisions within the new Party on this critical question. Moreover, the debate failed to clear up the issue of the Party's relationship to the Democrats.

During Fall 1997, the Party established its own Electoral Strategy Committee which met for a total of four full days. The Committee's report recommended that the Party adopt clear criteria for running its own candidates. In January 1998 the Party's national body, the Interim National Council, met in Washington. The report was adopted and later published in the Labor Party Press. A debate ensued, one that heard the views of those on all sides of the issue. By the time the First Constitutional Convention convened in Pittsburgh in November 1998, it was fairly clear that the Party would adopt some version of the report and declare its intention to be electoral. The floor debate was again passionate, but the report had addressed the concerns of both sides of the argument. The convention voted overwhelmingly to adopt clear criteria for electoral activity. A Labor Party electoral campaign must be able to demonstrate real support from both labor and the community sufficient to run a credible race. There will be no "protest" candidates, and no "fusion candidates," and all candidates will be held accountable to the Party's program.

As a result of this internal debate, the Labor Party now has a far more developed approach to electoral work. This illustrates the point that the presence of a Party allows for qualitative growth at the level of ideas and discussion, and presents a clear and ongoing need to weigh up any conclusions in terms of their practical implications for the Party. The Party has also grown qualitatively in terms of its own program. The Party has established a number of national task forces to research and develop its own program and deepen its own analyses. In New York, a number of well-known economists and labor-based researchers have established an Economic Forum and plan a one-day conference on the

economy in the name of the Labor Party later this year. At MIT, intellectuals have established a Labor Party Science and Technology caucus. Cultural workers and artists have started the group known as CWAC, the Cultural Workers and Artists Caucus of the Labor Party, in order to both attract these workers to the Party and to involve their skills and insights in building the Party.

The slogan on the podium at the Labor Party's First Constitutional Convention in Pittsburgh last November read "Let's Hammer It Out Together," words that aptly describe the Labor Party's approach to its own program and internal life. Of course, it takes more than good slogans to build a party. But the process of creative construction going on inside the Labor Party should be a reminder to us all that this effort is a work in progress. Progress, however, also requires work. The task of re-building a new working class politics from the ashes of Stalinism and traditional social democracy will probably require more work than any of us can possibly imagine. This is not the history of our choosing, but when is it ever?

Beyond Impeachment: **The Need for a Political Alternative to Clintonism**

Thomas Harrison

THE CURRENT POLITICAL SCENE PRESENTS A STRANGELY BIFURCATED PICTURE. At the top, among the elites, a bitter struggle for power rages, reaching bizarre extremes in the recently concluded impeachment battle. In the world of politicians, pundits and the news media, something like a civil war atmosphere prevails. Meanwhile at the bottom, the mass of ordinary citizens look on in horror and utter bewilderment. Polls showed strong support for the President, but mostly out of revulsion for his attackers. Most Americans probably felt embarrassed to be defending a man whom almost everyone recognizes as an amoral, shifty, self-aggrandizing skunk — not because he committed adultery and then fibbed about it “under oath,” but because he is a monster of egoism who treats people and principles like so much kleenex. Far stronger than any salacious interest in the President’s sexual escapades was a widespread, fervent wish that the whole grotesque carnival of lying and sanctimony would soon end. When it did, however, the public was left more confused, disoriented and passive than ever.

Increasingly, what happens in Washington seems to have no connection with the concerns of most Americans, while at the same time, the uncomfortable feeling persists that behind the scenes decisions are being made — concerning the fate of Social Security, for example — or not being made — global warming, environmental devastation, world financial instability — that jeopardize all our futures. At the center of American politics is a yawning abyss. The deepening depoliticization of the citizenry is only hinted at by the continuing decline in voter participation; even those who still vote, many of them, wonder why they bother. And politicians, who only need the votes of about 20 percent of a passive, atomized electorate to win office, can operate in blissful indifference to public opinion. The need for a political alternative is palpable, but the Left is either stampeding toward the Center in fear of a rightwing “coup,”

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or seems paralyzed by a failure of nerve.

Symbols and Substance

THE SYMBOLIC ELEMENTS IN THE IMPEACHMENT MELODRAMA have been frequently noted. Certainly, for the Right Clinton came to symbolize the permissiveness and supposed moral decline of the Sixties. But their holy war against the President masks what was and is really at stake: government regulation, taxes and corporate America's determination to free itself once and for all from any restrictions on its pursuit of power and profits. Thomas Ferguson in *The Nation* (March 8, 1999), argued that "the high drama of impeachment looks like an extraordinary case of business as usual," this time with the Republicans resorting to highly unusual tactics. Even though his is the most overtly pro-business Democratic administration since Grover Cleveland's, Clinton has been marked for destruction by much of the business community since his first years in office. Proposals for modest increases in taxes on the rich, the Clintons' health care initiative, the global warming treaty, new energy taxes, raising the minimum wage, the attack on the tobacco industry — no matter how weak some of these gestures were, they convinced corporate types that the President was thoroughly untrustworthy, even dangerous. Ferguson shows that Kenneth Starr, who had represented tobacco firms when he worked for a prominent Washington law firm, was appointed special prosecutor by a panel headed by a judge who is a protégé of Jesse Helms. Despite all the trappings of a religious crusade, the assault on the President has been sponsored by Big Business for very worldly motives.

The repressive puritanism of the religious Right perfectly complements the business-sponsored assault on welfare and entitlements and the demand for deregulation, while in no way threatening corporate hegemony. The zealotry, ineptitude and outright nuttiness of the fundamentalists undoubtedly create frequent embarrassment in boardrooms and among "moderate" Republicans. But they provide badly needed moral legitimation to policies that are all about greed and self-interest and devil-take-the-hindmost, and therefore don't automatically generate broad appeal. Fundamentalist Protestantism and rightwing Catholicism were particularly useful, of course, during the 50-year-long Cold War against "godless" Communism, but their fanatical legions continue to supply essential shock troops for the Republicans — the capitalist party par excellence.

But what about the other capitalist party? With the forces of religious obscurantism and sexual repression massing behind the Republican banners, it was tempting to see the Democrats and our embattled President as the champions of freedom. Those who viewed the conflict as a struggle between democracy and authoritarianism, or even fascism,

were mistaken, however. In constitutional terms, what the Republicans tried to do was no more a “coup” than any other impeachment. In a sense they sought to overturn an election, but that is what an impeachment does, in effect — though even that only partially, since the vice-president takes over. In this limited sense, forcing Nixon from office had the effect of “overturning” the election of 1972. If the Democrats had attempted to impeach Reagan over the Iran-Contra scandal, as they should have done, this would have, if successful, “overturned” the 1984 election; what’s more, it would have flouted public opinion, which was still largely on Reagan’s side. Of course, if the Democrats had not already capitulated to the essentials of Reaganism themselves, they might have realized that a determined prosecution of Reagan and his advisers would have educated public opinion and perhaps turned it around by exposing the White House’s lawlessness.

Clinton’s Real Crimes

THE OBVIOUS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE RECENT IMPEACHMENT BID and the two other cases is that Clinton’s enemies were only able to adduce essentially trivial charges, while the crimes for which Nixon and Reagan were, or might have been, charged were real and struck at the very heart of democracy. And, of course, had the Republicans succeeded in removing Clinton from office, this would have greatly encouraged the far Right and thus accelerated the growth of authoritarianism, the steady assault on rights and freedoms, and the removal of all fetters on corporate power. But these trends would only have been accelerated, for they have been powerfully fostered by Clinton and the Democratic Party themselves. Clinton’s real crimes were never under consideration. And that is why it was important to fight the impeachment by pointing to those crimes and by calling for a left opposition — not by rallying around Clinton, as many liberal and leftist academics did by signing the statement by Arthur Schlesinger and Sean Wilentz. An attempt to create such an alternative concretely was made by Jesse Lemisch and Joanne Landy, who circulated a statement at the American Historical Association convention, and then more widely among academics and intellectuals, calling for Clinton’s impeachment for the bombing of Sudan, Afghanistan and Iraq — not for Monica Lewinsky. In this way, many progressives who had signed the Schlesinger-Wilentz statement were reminded of Clinton’s serious misdeeds, forced to confront the implications of defending him uncritically, and given a chance to differentiate themselves from the pro-Clinton forces without giving aid and comfort to the Right.

It’s also important not to idealize the general public’s response to the Clinton impeachment. Most Americans had the good sense to oppose a sexual witchhunt, true. But how would they have reacted if Clinton were caught having an affair with a male intern? What if Hillary had been

carrying on a dalliance with a young White House employee? These considerations — not to mention the widespread demonization of Monica Lewinsky — should remind us of the gender and heterosexist biases implicit on both sides of the affair.

Exaggerating the threat from the Right — talk of a coup d'état and so forth — only plays into the hands of Clinton and the Democrats. There certainly is a potential in American society for a violent, ultra-authoritarian current to emerge and seek power. Right now, however, there is no obvious demagogue on the horizon and it will take much more than a few militias and neo-Nazis to create a fascist movement of any significance. Nor do the Republicans have a clear alternative program to Clinton's — not even in the more limited way in which Reagan stood for an alternative in 1980 in terms of massive military buildup, a major redistribution of wealth through tax policy and a direct assault on the labor movement. Impeachment, as already noted, only showed the Republicans targeting a President who has antagonized Big Business, though in this case they made a gross miscalculation about the political benefits of sexual scandal; it also demonstrated, once more, the Republicans' capacity for fierce, no-holds-barred partisanship — as opposed to the Democrats' customary decorum and "statesmanship" whenever Republican malfeasance is in question.

The "Reagan Revolution" of the early 1980s was the realization of a kind of corporate utopia — the final abandonment of even mildly redistributive politics in favor of the politics of investment and trickle-down economics. Democrats, with very few exceptions, embraced the New Order and became part of an anti-liberal consensus at the top, which has since proved as solid and durable as the liberal consensus created by the New Deal. Given the triumph of free market ideology at this level (even though it disguised the reality of military Keynesianism under Reagan), it is almost miraculous that most ordinary Americans retain any sense that wealth may need to be curbed and that the state can still play a progressive role in providing material assistance to the weakest members of society and some minimal security for all. But they do. As far as public opinion is concerned, freedom has not yet been redefined solely in terms of property rights and the absence of regulation.

Except on a few issues — abortion rights, school prayer, etc. — Clinton has fully consolidated the Reagan revolution. He has increased military spending, ensuring that the end of the Cold War would bring no basic change to the disastrous misallocation of national resources, pushed through NAFTA, and abolished welfare. His "don't ask, don't tell" policy toward gays and lesbians in the military, his advocacy of "abstinence education" for welfare recipients, his endorsement of homophobia by supporting the Defense of Marriage Act — these have done nothing but encourage the "family values" claptrap and sexual hypocrisy that nearly destroyed him. Clinton's foreign policy differs in no essential respects

from Reagan's or from any policy the Republicans might pursue if they controlled the White House today. U.S. imperial power, not human rights, is the only thing that counts. A monster like Milosevic is perfectly free to terrorize Kosovar Albanians for years, but he cannot be permitted to defy NATO.

Saving Dead Souls

AND STILL, EMANATING FROM THE PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS IN CONGRESS, from the AFL-CIO leadership and from the editorial pages of the liberal magazines, come the tired old appeals to try once more to "save the Democratic Party's soul." Katrina vanden Heuvel (*The Nation*, Dec. 7, 1998), for example, calls for a "third force" rather than a third party — a "values-based electoral organization, customarily operating in nonpartisan elections and inside Democratic Party primaries," a "progressive equivalent of the Christian Coalition." This new coalition would train thousands of people to run for office, organize ballot initiatives, coordinate national issue campaigns, build a network of pundits and talk-show guests — all to reform the Democratic Party. But we've been down this road over and over again, most recently with Jesse Jackson's campaigns; it's been proven to be a dead end. If, by some miracle, the Left did capture the Party, that would simply mean that the moneyed interests and political hacks who comprise its very essence had been driven out; in other words, the Left would have succeeded in capturing itself. The point is, the Democratic Party is not accessible to progressives in the way the Republican Party has been accessible to the Christian Coalition and other elements of the far Right. The demands of Christian extremists are compatible with a pro-business agenda; things like an anti-imperialist foreign policy, massive cuts in military spending, full employment, a shorter work week, are not. They can be won only in open struggle against the two-party system. For progressives to imitate the Christian Coalition's prolonged boring-from-within strategy, as vanden Heuvel proposes, would be an immense waste. Why not, instead, devote all that time, energy and ingenuity to building something new: an electoral organization without ties to corporate interests, one that is truly free to use elections and public office to crusade for a progressive program?

In fact, many of the liberals and labor officials who now urge a fight to transform the Democratic Party will probably figure that, with the Republicans chastened and discredited, the Democrats have a chance not only to keep the White House in 2000, but to regain control of Congress; they will be easily persuaded to silence themselves and put their program in mothballs for the sake of unity — just as they did in 1996. Many have already done so. Apparently, the AFL-CIO has decided to drop labor law reform for the time being so as not to "embarrass" the Democrats before the next election. And the labor federation has already more or

less endorsed Al Gore two years in advance of the presidential race. Of course, Clinton and Gore are less rather than more likely to respond to pressure from the Left after receiving its unconditional endorsement. Consequently, progressive issues will not be part of the national debate in 2000 unless a third party puts them there.

Third Parties: A Failure of Nerve

AT THE MOMENT, HOWEVER, THE PROSPECTS FOR an independent electoral force in 2000 appear quite dim, mainly because those who are engaged in building such a force still lack the nerve to challenge the Democrats. This cannot be said of the Greens, who have run candidates against both parties, and even recently won an assembly seat from Oakland, California. But while the Greens' initiative and independence are exemplary, they lack support from significant popular and progressive organizations, like labor unions, and this seriously limits their ability to mount the kind of electoral efforts that would create the critical mass for a major third party of the Left.

The New Party is a small-scale version of vanden Heuvel's third force, focusing on nonpartisan local races, supporting liberal Democrats in partisan elections and running issue campaigns, with participation from union and community activists. So far it has rejected a strategy of challenging the Democrats, preferring to act as a pressure group. The recently-formed Working Families Party in New York, with some significant labor backing and the endorsement of many of the state's liberal political figures, is similar. Even more than the New Party, though, the WFP defines itself exclusively as a pressure group, not even the nucleus of a third party. In the 1998 election, it barely won enough votes to receive a line on New York's crowded ballot after endorsing an utterly traditional middle-of-road Democrat, Peter Vallone, for governor.

The only group that has both a significant organizational base and shows some signs of moving toward electoral independence is the Labor Party. The Party has about 10,000 individual members and its affiliated and endorsing unions — including the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers, United Mine Workers, International Longshore and Warehouse Union, California Nurses Association, and American Federation of Government Employees — represent around one million workers. At its second national convention in Pittsburgh last November, the Labor Party voted to reverse its previous opposition to electoral action and voted, in principle, to run candidates at some point in the near future. But will it? At the convention, criteria were imposed for electoral campaigns that make them extremely unlikely: candidates must have the prior support of “a significant portion of the area's union membership” and can be vetoed by the Party's Interim National Council (INC). There has been considerable sentiment among the rank and file in favor of running Labor

Party candidates for office, and there is good reason to believe that the national leadership's endorsement of it was actually meant to appease the pressure from below while effectively thwarting an electoral strategy by erecting insurmountable obstacles to its practical implementation. Even within the affiliated unions, many officials are afraid of rupturing their ties to Democratic politicians. The INC's strategy seems to be to draw in other, bigger unions by being careful not to directly challenge their leaders' alliances with Democrats.

But the fact is, the Labor Party has not grown much in the two years since it was founded, and it is almost invisible as far as most Americans are concerned. Running candidates for office would seem to be the only way to heighten the Party's profile and thus begin to attract masses of new members and supporters, including currently unaffiliated unions. Contesting elections, even if initial vote totals were relatively small and even if it resulted in sometimes electing Republicans, would demonstrate that the Party is serious in rejecting the two-party system and has a long-range goal of winning political power. The Labor Party is not yet *the* Labor Party, but only the organizing committee for such a party. As such, however, it should field candidates now, not with the expectation of winning immediately but in order to show the way. Labor Party candidates could bring the Party's program — including single-payer health insurance, a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to a job at a living wage, stopping the privatization of Social Security — to millions.

Eventually as the Labor Party spreads the message of independent political action, it may need to coalesce with other progressive movements — environmentalists, women's and civil rights groups, anti-interventionists and gay rights activists — in creating a new party framework. A third party based in such groups may not call itself a labor party, but the LP should make itself available for such a development, as well as for independent candidacies like that of Ralph Nader and the Greens in 1996. So far, it has not. At the Pittsburgh convention, a motion was made from the floor by representatives of the New York City local of the Communications Workers who are involved in the WFP to permit endorsement of candidates who "support the Labor Party program." Opposed by the INC, it was defeated; and while this makes cross-endorsement of Democrats impossible, it also rules out endorsing Greens or any other independent candidates that might emerge in 2000.

A serious progressive party will need to take on the military budget in a big way. Amazingly, the subject is not even mentioned in the Labor party's program. As long as a colossal portion of the nation's wealth is diverted to arms, the kinds of social programs and public works that would make it possible to wage war on poverty, racism and crime simply cannot be realistically envisioned. And proposals for massive reductions in military spending would have to address questions of foreign policy: nuclear arms, intervention, NATO, foreign bases, and so on — in other

words, the whole rationale for empire and militarism. This subject, too, goes unmentioned in the LP's program. A progressive party that is taken seriously by voters will need to explain how global peace and security can only be brought about by promoting democracy and humane economic development throughout the world.

Any "political party" that merely tries to apply pressure on the Democrats from outside is doomed to failure. As long as progressives, workers and minorities remain a captive electorate for the Democratic Party, it will have no incentive to cater to any constituencies other than those to its right. Just as the formation of the British Labor Party at the turn of the century pushed the Liberals leftward, forcing them to sponsor Britain's first major series of social legislation in order to retain the loyalty of working-class voters — so too the birth of a progressive third party in the United States will almost certainly reverse the rightward direction in which American politics have been moving. This, not futile efforts to transform the Democrats into a "people's party," is what will bring about a true political realignment. The building of such a party will require the breaking of decades-old political habits, and this will certainly not happen overnight. But it will never happen if we do not begin now.

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Black Resistance in the Age of Jim Crow

Barry Goldberg

ON APRIL 23, 1899 A SPECIAL EXCURSION TRAIN LEFT ATLANTA to bring some eager citizens to the small Georgia town of Newman. There, joining about 2,000 other excited white men and women, they watched as Sam Hose, a black man, was stripped naked, chained to a tree, and surrounded with kerosene-soaked wood. They had been informed that Hose had brained the planter Alfred Cranford with an ax and then raped Mrs. Cranford. Given the alleged crime, his executioners were not content to merely set the torch to the pyre and watch his oil covered body burn. They first cut off his ears, fingers and genitals, and skinned his face. Some of the spectators joined the action, plunging knives into his body. Then, after the torch had been set, the searing heat of the flames forced his eyes to bulge out of their sockets and his veins to burst. When Hose's agonized contortions loosened his bonds, the flames were doused so he could be rebound. With the blaze raging once more, Hose's cry, "Oh, my God! Oh, Jesus," mingled with the sound of his sizzling blood. Once dead and lying on the ground, eager souvenir hunters dissected his still warm body, taking slices of his heart and liver. Not all of the vultures were greedy. One of the butchers reportedly left to deliver a slice of Hose's heart to the governor, as if this act of generosity would confirm the state's approval of lynch law as a bulwark of white "civilization."

Governor Allen D. Candler never acknowledged the gift and there is no record that he even received it. But he did provide public sanction for Hose's torture and execution. Calling the alleged murder and rape "the most diabolical in the annals of crime," he denounced the black community for failing to assist in the capture of what one newspaper called "a monster in a human form." According to Candler, black critics were "blinded by race prejudice, and can see but one side of the question." Candler, on the other hand, spoke for his apparently colorblind and, therefore, clear-sighted white constituents. The leading Atlanta newspaper

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described the state's white citizens as pillars of the republic. "The people of Georgia," it declared, "are orderly and conservative, the descendants of ancestors who have been trained in America for 150 years. They are a people intensely religious, homeloving and just. There is among them no foreign or lawless element." Fusing state pride and American nationalism, the paper saw its citizens as quintessential Americans. Once proud secessionists and then defeated rebels, Georgians reclaimed their commitment to home grown Americanism. After all, what else should civilized white folk do to a fiend who sneaked up and buried an ax in his employer's skull and then proceeded to repeatedly rape the widow "[w]ithin arms reach of where the brains were oozing out of her husband's head[?]" An editorial defending the sadistic lynchers advised their squeamish readers, "Keep the facts in mind."

But there was one crucial fact that they would choose to ignore. After southern justice had taken its course, Mrs. Cranford told a white detective that the circumstances surrounding her husband's death were quite different than the version spread by word of mouth and reported in the press. She described how when Hose and her husband quarreled over wages, Mr. Cranford went for his pistol. Only then did Hose grab the ax that he hurled with such deadly effect. Far from sexually emboldened, he did not touch Mrs. Cranford or even enter the house. He fled. His feelings – and those of other black southerners who knew of similar events – still resonate in the lyrics of the legendary blues singer Robert Johnson:

I got to keep moving, I got to keep moving . . .
there's a hellhound on my trail,
hellhound on my trail,
hellhound on my trail.

By the time a reader of Leon Litwack's *Trouble in Mind** is forced to bear witness to Sam Hose's horrifying last moments, he or she will have already read through 280 pages chronicling the black experience of white "civilization." Then, after regaining her/his composure, the reader will have to digest over 200 additional pages describing other horrific spectacles, summary executions, pervasive intimidation, daily insults, and thwarted possibilities black southerners endured — and resisted — during "the Age of Jim Crow." And then, just before the Epilogue, the final chapter ends with Johnson's haunting lyrics. The song (more in the listening than in the reading) conveys, says Litwack, "a lonely and terrifying sense of personal betrayal and anguish that transcended both time and location." It is then that you realize that Litwack had already linked the experience of these two southern blacks (and countless others) when

*Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble In Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1998).

he entitled his chapter on lynching “Hellhounds.” Litwack is convinced that the music critic and historian Robert Palmer got it right when he wrote, “How much history can be transmitted by the pressure on a guitar string? The thought of generations, the history of every human being who’s ever felt the blues come down like showers of rain.” It is a testament to Litwack’s expansive humanism that he appreciates the timeless and universal resonance of Johnson’s lament. But equally important, he understands the historically specific lives and deaths of the men and women who created the form, wrote the lyrics, and heard the pain and dignity and anger of their lives transformed into art. We all might have the blues, but we are not all “blues people.”

As important, not all “blues people” sang the blues. Others sang the spiritual “sorrow songs” from which Litwack drew his book’s title. Hose and Johnson, as representative and subtly linked as they are, are only two of the black southerners who provide the blood, sweat, tears, humor, anger, and social commentary about those who populate this book. Indeed, *Trouble in Mind* is an ambitious work that seeks to do no less than convey “the experience of being black in the late-19th — and early-20th — centuries.” It takes scholarly erudition and purpose — should I also say chutzpah — to attempt such a book. And you have to be a mensch to pull it off. In retrospect, Litwack spent his entire life preparing for this task.

HIS PARENTS WERE RUSSIAN IMMIGRANTS who lived in New York’s Jewish and Italian working class neighborhoods before hitchhiking to Santa Barbara, California. In autobiographical reflections he first shared with undergraduates and faculty at Fordham University as he was completing *Trouble in Mind*, Litwack recalled growing up in a predominantly Mexican-American neighborhood. His father was a gardener; his mother a seamstress. Like his historical subjects, “they left no diaries, journals, or letters.” They did introduce him to a “cultural world” that included the life and ideas of Eugene Debs, William D. Haywood, and Emma Goldman. Even before he entered Berkeley as an undergraduate in 1948, his precocious left intellect and life experience led him to question the official story of American liberty taught in public schools. After reading his textbook’s account of docile slaves and duped freedmen, he asked his teacher for the opportunity to respond to what he perceived to be its distortions. Permission granted, he visited the Public Library and became the rare (scholarly discretion keeps me from saying, “only”) Santa Barbara high school student who read W.E.B. DuBois’ *Black Reconstruction in America* in order to challenge his teacher’s — and the nation’s — thrall to Southern white mythology. The budding young historian had his moment in class, but when he finished addressing his fellow eleventh graders, he recalled how “the teacher looked at the class and said, ‘Now students, you must remember that Leon is bitterly pro-labor.’” By his junior year, when he was introduced to a curious DuBois as a speci-

men of a history major, things were not quite as bleak. His college textbook was as bad as the one in high school, but his teacher, the young Kenneth Stampp, presented a non-racist revisionist account of slavery and Reconstruction in the classroom. His life as social activist and membership in the Marine Cooks and Stewards Union (so he could earn money during school breaks) complemented his hours in the library studying the historical record. He had become acutely aware of the “uses and abuses of the past.” In particular, he became convinced that black Americans bore the brunt of the nation’s glaring “contradictions.” Not surprisingly, like some of the best and brightest historians of his generation, this transplanted child of the immigrant left, began to rewrite American history as part of the struggle to reshape its future. Much of his career as a scholar and teacher paralleled the dismantling of the Jim Crow regime he analyzes in *Trouble in Mind*. By exposing racism in the antebellum north in his first book, and then giving a magisterial overview of southern blacks in the aftermath of Emancipation, Litwack helped set racist historiography on the run. He helped to expose the “incredible atrocities and repression” endured by black Americans. But, as important, his research and writing supported Ralph Ellison’s insight that the black experience in America “is obviously more than the sum of its brutalization . . . [T]heirs has been one of the great human experiences and one of the great triumphs of the human spirit in modern times.”

These days, Litwack is not an academic outsider. He is a past President of the Organization of American Historians. *Been in the Storm So Long*, his study of black southern life in the immediate aftermath of slavery, won the Pulitzer Prize. But the triumph of the academic historiographical “left” has not stemmed the tide of racial reaction. By recovering the world of black southerners during what Rayford Logan once called the “nadir” of African-American life in the United States, Litwack has not only served his dead constituents, but provides a troubling service to the living.

It is hard to imagine any roughly 40-year period as static, particularly the decades between the Gilded Age and the Great Depression. And like any historian, Litwack is attentive to change over time. Such topics as the passage of the state statutes regulating segregation and the migration of black Southerners to the north during and after the First World War provide the text with traditional temporal benchmarks. But Litwack has deliberately chosen not to tell his story of black southerners through a traditional diachronic narrative that takes the reader from the 1880s through the 1920s. The result is one of the longer works of American history that does not derive its narrative drive through an account of individual or social change across time. Justifying this approach, he writes in the introduction, “Through the first four decades of the twentieth century the essential mechanisms, attitudes, and assumptions governing race relations and the subordination of black southerners remained largely

intact." The book, therefore, does not try to document and explain the outcome of struggle, as much as analyze the perpetual struggle across and on either side of the color line. Thus, while Litwack's book is comprised of many stories detailing the humiliations, violence, and exploitation blacks faced in the Jim Crow South, he also documents how southern blacks managed to survive and resist "with extraordinary resourcefulness." How could generations live in a world in which their lives were held so cheaply? Litwack argues that an "interior life, largely unknown and incomprehensible to whites, permitted black southerners to survive and endure" a seemingly unendurable and interminable present. While at times visible in the words of institutional leaders, Litwack "draws mainly from the perspective and experience of people who spent their lives in relative obscurity, who never shared the fruits of affluence, who never enjoyed power." Fortunately they were not mute. And Litwack's uncontestable achievement is recovering and restoring human dignity to so many previously forgotten or despised or pitied voices from our past.

SOUTHERN BLACKS, TRAPPED BETWEEN SLAVERY AND FREEDOM, did not simply face the "human condition." And they also faced more than the insecurity and humiliation of overpowered dependent immigrant workers. They had to endure "gratuitous," to use James Baldwin's word, suffering from the outrages of white folks who denied their common humanity. Their killing was not an industrial "accident" for which employers denied responsibility, nor was it the result of the repression of organized challenges to capital, it was the consequence of any white man's assertion of racial privilege. White power was openly, regularly, and boastfully homicidal. According to Litwack, "Between 1890 and 1917, to enforce deference and submission to whites, some two to three black Southerners were hanged, burned at the stake, or quietly murdered every week." Lynching may not have been a daily occurrence and few were as widely publicized as that of Sam Hose, but, as Litwack explains, "Nothing so dramatically or forcefully underscored the cheapness of black life in the South." While lynching had long been a means of dishing out extralegal justice to whites as well as blacks, "in the 1890s, lynching and sadistic torture rapidly became exclusive public rituals of the South, with black men and women as their principle victims." Of course, white power had long been inscribed on black bodies and both during slavery and reconstruction resistance prompted deadly retribution. But in crucial ways, Litwack argues, the execution of Hose and others was strikingly new . . . To kill the victim was not enough; the execution needed to be turned into a public ritual, a collective experience, and the victim needed to be subjected to extraordinary torture and humiliation. What had been in the past a usually rapid dispatch of the victim, now became part of a voyeuristic spectacle."

Indeed, widely circulated written accounts and photographs – even

early sound recordings — broadened the size of the audience for this racist pornography of alleged crime and punishment. Although associated in the popular mind with the defense of white womanhood, not only were the charges often fabricated, but, in the overwhelming majority of cases the victim had not, in fact, been charged with a sexual assault. Whether it took the form of spectacle or smaller public executions, southern blacks endured a reign of white terror.

Their targets rarely became as well known as Hose, especially when they met a quick death for having the temerity to seek fair and honest treatment. One such victim was Willie Holcombe. His father Charlie's account of Willie's death, is nothing less than a cautionary multigenerational saga. It reveals not merely the relationship between racist violence and black subjugation, it shows how difficult it is to assess, label, and judge the choices black southerners faced during the Jim Crow era.

Charlie had struggled hard to escape the perennial indebtedness of black (and white) sharecroppers and tenant farmers. One year he sold his tobacco and settled with his landlord and actually came out ahead. When "the man" called him back and told him he had miscalculated, Charlie could not contain his anger. He hit him. Charlie was fortunate: he lived and served a year on a chain gang. He had learned a sobering lesson. As he recalled, "... I knowed it wasn't no use for me to try to ever make anything but jist a livin'." But while he had been kept in his "place," he thought his son might go farther. Willie not only graduated high school, he continued his education, eventually getting his degree from the Agricultural and Technical College of North Carolina in Greensboro. But following the advice of Booker T. Washington and success manuals for blacks did not help Willie improve his lot. In fact, Charlie later recalled, that "was when de trouble started." In spite of his education, Willie had no more opportunities than his father, and even less patience. Willie started "settin' around and drinkin' and gittin' mean." One year, already angry at the previous day's visit to the tobacco warehouse, he returned with another load. Told that his son had been in a fight at the warehouse, Charlie arrived in town to find his son lying on the ground, his bashed-in skull surrounded with blood. As Charlie remembered, "Dey was tears runnin' down my cheeks and droppin' on his face and I couldn't he'p it." Charlie had made a fatal mistake: he did not impart the lesson he had learned or the advice his slave-born grandfather had given him years earlier as they sat fishing one day. "Son, a catfish is a lot like a nigger" the older man told him when he was a child. "As long as he is in his mudhole he is all right, but when he gits out he is in for a passel of trouble. You 'member dat, and you won't have no trouble wid folks when you grows up." But for good and ill he hadn't. After his son's killing, he would never forget. His other children lived, but none went to college. "Dey don't hab much, but dey is happy," he said.

Charlie Holcombe's tragic tale spanning four generations of Holcombe

males reveals how how difficult it is to offer a typology of accommodation and resistance. Charlie was born into freedom and tested its limits. He could not temper his anger. He learned a hard, but fortunately non-fatal lesson. Still he encouraged his son to climb out of the "mudhole." But after he paid for his son's unacceptable aspirations he retreated and counseled caution. He had become an "old Negro," but instead of simply sharing folk metaphors, he took younger restless blacks to his son's grave.

PERSONAL STORIES LIKE THE ONE TOLD BY CHARLIE HOLCOLMBE AROUND in Litwack's account. His was not the only response to violence. After the 1906 Atlanta Riot, an educated young black man wrote a friend,

How would you feel if . . . it were impossible for you to walk the street . . . with your sister without being in mortal fear of death if you resented any insult offered to her? How would you feel if you saw a governor, a mayor, a sheriff, whom you could not oppose at the polls, encourage by deed or word or both, a mob of "best" and worst citizens to slaughter your people in the streets and in their own homes and in their places of business? Do you think you could resist the same wrath that caused God to slay the Philistines and the Russians to throw bombs. I can resist it, but with each new outrage I am less able to resist it.

This aspiring member of the middle class was finding it harder and harder to resist violence. The "rage" of the black middle class is hardly new. They faced the taunts of any white who sought to cut him or her down to size. Black women were not "ladies," regardless of dress and demeanor.

Six years earlier, a very different black southerner did not control his rage. Robert Charles was boldly defiant in 1900. After learning of the Sam Hose lynching, Charles had become increasingly angry and channeled at least some of his energy into becoming a subscription agent for African Methodist Episcopalian Bishop Henry M. Turner's nationalist *Voice of Missions*. The paper supported black pride, and advocated a return to Africa. Then one day, while sitting with friends outside one of their homes, he was accosted by three New Orleans' policemen searching for some "suspicious-looking negroes" reported in the area. When Charles rose during an angry exchange of words, he was struck with a billy club, a scuffle ensued and both Charles and the officers grabbed their guns. Each fired and wounded the other. Charles eluded an intense manhunt, until when finally cornered, he killed seven and wounded twenty of his pursuers with his Winchester repeating rifle. Charles himself was shot when he fled his torched hideout. New Orleans white mobs killed a dozen blacks and destroyed a noted school during the next four days. Here was a terrifying symbol of blacks who had none of the alleged vestiges of slavish demeanor.

Others were more cautious, but hardly submissive. Looking back years later, Ned Cobb explained his credo:

In my years past, I'd accommodate anybody, but I didn't believe in this way of bowin' to my knees an doin' what any white man said do. Still, I always knowed to give the white man his time of day or else he's ready to knock me in the head. I just ain't goin' to go nobody's way against my own self. First thing of all — I care for myself and respect myself.

Cobb's rebelliousness became more overt and threatening when he and other black farmers organized in the 30s. That's when he wound up in prison.

THE GREATEST STRENGTH OF LITWACK'S ACCOUNT OF BLACK LIFE in the Jim Crow South is his evenhanded presentation of the voices of "anonymous" as well as noted black southerners. By describing the complementary and competing institutions — churches, schools, fraternal societies, juke joints — and conveying the alternative and competing views of both Afro-American leaders and plain folk, Litwack demonstrates an even-handed empathy for those whose struggle for bread and dignity required constant wariness. Even his portrait of middle class accommodationists avoids glib criticism. He is certainly critical of the Washingtonian program, making it clear that the white South would punish the upwardly mobile black. He points out the almost absurd advice in catechisms of worldly success directed toward black youngsters. But his criticism is most effectively voiced not by his prominent ideological opponents, like DuBois, but in the letters of those who tried to advocate the Washingtonian creed of self-improvement but who then faced indignity, assault, and even death. His accounts of educators, businessmen, and professionals notes their protective illusions and class pretensions, but the reader learns about the indignities they endured and the visibility that made them even more vulnerable to racial taunts — and physical danger. If the poor farm laborer had to be wary asking for a just settlement, a black who could afford a car, new suit of clothes, or home could never appear to aspire to social equality. But at the same time, Litwack reminds us of the myriad forms of resistance. Black domestic workers set limits on obedience. An elderly maid muttered, "I ain't nobody's aunt." Another struck her white mistress. They too had a line they would not cross.

Litwack's account of black behavior and consciousness will be familiar to anyone who has read the literature on the slave community written over the past few decades. While the interpretations vary, and there seems to be a trend to reconsider claims that the slaves could ward off all the inner damage of bondage, we will probably continue to read about the capacity for resistance and humanity in the midst of "social death." In particular, we will continue to read about those who put on the mask of contentment while harboring subversive thoughts and testing the limits of daily resistance. Indeed, one is hardly surprised that the first black voice we listen to in *Trouble in Mind* is that of the dying grandfather of Ralph Ellison's protagonist in *Invisible Man*. Born in slavery, he and his

wife had raised their children to accommodate in order to survive. But his dying advice to his grandson contained a different message:

Son, after I'm gone I want you to keep up the good fight. I never told you, but our life is a war and I have been a traitor all my born days, a spy in the enemy's country ever since I give up my gun back in the Reconstruction. Live with your head in the lion's mouth. I want you to overcome 'em with yeses, undermine 'em with grins, agree 'em to death and destruction, let 'em swoller you till they vomit or bust wide open.

Then, in an intense whisper, he added, "Learn it to the young uns." His children were shocked.

PRECISELY BECAUSE SOUTHERN BLACKS STILL FACED personal and institutionalized white power, especially the deadly violence of both the state and individuals who acted with impunity, it would be misleading to posit a simple divide between those blacks reared in slavery and those born in "freedom." They had participated in the "unfinished revolution" of Emancipation and Reconstruction. Even if some accommodated to the consolidating Jim Crow regime, memories of struggle did not fade. Nonetheless, Litwack provides a compelling argument that the post-Emancipation generation was increasingly unwilling — perhaps unable — to accommodate to the imposition of semi-slavery. Certainly Litwack does not argue that there was a radical generational rupture in the black community. He obviously distances himself from the psycho-sexual phantasms of white mythology, but he does give credence to contemporary reports of the emergence of a "New Negro." Richard Wright, for example, eventually realized that his grandfather, a Union veteran, believed that the Civil War would resume one day. But Wright could not bide his time. Like others, he proved less capable of "grinning," more willing to test the limits of white supremacy, and ready to leave its deadly grip before he would kill or be killed. But if the complex interplay between individual life histories and the racist regime was not new, both blacks and whites sensed increased tension. Although often associated with the Harlem Renaissance, the creative explosion of Afro-American literary expression in the urban north in the 20s, the idea had already emerged in the Jim Crow south. The "New Negro" was the entire generation of blacks born after slavery who chafed at the limits placed on their freedom. Even if they managed to hide their biggest dreams and anger "behind the veil," blacks expressed by word, deed, expression, or manner a rage that was increasingly apparent to whites. And whites responded to the Willie Holcombes and Robert Charles in their midst. The anti-lynching crusader, Ida Wells-Barnett channeled her anger into scathing journalism, and then fled Memphis for her life.

While grounded in a social reality that was palpable to blacks and whites, the "New Negro" was also an ideological weapon wielded in the

battle for the hearts and minds of the nation. For blacks, the term articulated hope. In my reading, it was less a radical new personality than a new historical sensibility. Even as whites used statutes and bullets to reconstruct a racial dictatorship, former slaves and their descendents knew that they were a people with a history – and a future. Jack Johnson proved it. And that's precisely what whites feared. As they searched for a "Great White Hope" to reaffirm the superiority of white manliness and civilization, white supremacy had to be maintained law by law and bullet by bullet. In the struggle for racial order, the memory of Reconstruction had to be contested as forcefully as its policies. Whites, in the North as well as the South, had to be "reminded" that any breach of racial decorum, any hint of black "uppitiness" had to be immediately squelched. If not, white civilization would be threatened, white women ravished. As Litwack stresses, the image of the "New Negro" as "black beast" justified extremism in defense of white supremacy. But as a number of feminist scholars point out, it also served to reassert the dominance of southern manhood threatened by the memory of defeat and impoverishment, a new economic order, and the emergence of the "new woman," even in the South. Nostalgia for "loyal slaves" and nurturing "mammies" helped define the intimate connection between racial and domestic order. Everyone had a place.

The migration of blacks to the North that reached unprecedented heights beginning in World War I is the clearest indicator of black dissatisfaction with southern life. But as Litwack stresses, what disturbed many blacks the most was the growing nationalization of racist ideology. If racist practices and spectacles helped forge white identity in the South, national reunification came at the expense of African-American rights and lives. D.W. Griffiths' "The Birth of a Nation," did more than spread racism nationally. It argued not simply that sectional reconciliation required northern acceptance of white supremacy, but that a new modern nation was to be built on the graves of "New Negroes," rapists and politicians who lusted after white women. The modernizing 19th century capitalist state required a war against southern independence and slavery, but the subsequent consolidation of that state required accommodation of the southern elite and electorate. The 90s witnessed a profound legitimization crisis as farm protests and labor conflict threatened the "search for order." Did "the reconstruction of American capitalism," to use Martin Sklar's phrase, the combination of repression and reform characteristic of the progressive era, require the abandonment of the Negro? Woodrow Wilson's election confirms the move toward a somewhat "new freedom" for whites, and a new slavery for blacks. Sectional reconciliation tightened the "white noose," literally and figuratively, even as the North beckoned "New Negroes." Though a reasonable escape for hundreds of thousands of black Southerners, the "Up South" was part of the problem.

In sum, Leon Litwack has let the words and acts of black Southern-

ers deflate the arrogant pretensions of white supremacy, but shows how they could not dismantle or seriously undermine the system of white supremacy. He recounts the social and cultural creativity of black southerners as well as their ingenuity wielding the “weapons of the weak.” But he never lets us forget the human burden of living under a reign of white terror. The Mississippi Delta bluesmen that he appreciates so much understood that thin line between creativity and despair, rebellion and self-destruction. Compelling compatible and alternative analytical accounts will certainly challenge some of his judgments, but I doubt we will get a more stirring synthetic portrait of black Southerners during what John Cell once called “the highest stage of white supremacy.”

But it is not clear how this and similar acts of remembrance will help us understand and challenge the current racial (dis)order. As he was completing this latest work, he told his Fordham audience,

The study of race relations, however, has not left me an optimist about the eradication of racism in American society. What the civil rights movement achieved was impressive, far-reaching in the ways it changed the face of the South — if not the nation. But it was revealing, too, for the paradoxes and contradictions it exposed . . . Even as the civil rights movement struck down legal barriers, it failed to dismantle economic barriers . . . Even as it ended the violence of segregation by law, it failed to end the violence of poverty . . . Even as it increased the black middle class, it left behind a greater number of black Americans to endure lives of quiet despair and hopelessness.

. . . The brutalizing effects of more than two centuries of slavery and another century of enforced segregation and miseducation continue to shape race relations, continue to hold up a mirror to Americans, to test the democratic experiment, the principles and values Americans embrace . . . The victims threaten to become, if tens of thousands have not already become, a large shadow population of interior exiles, aliens in their own land, locked into a cycle of deprivation and despair, empty of belief or hope, and highly volatile.

LITWACK STILL BELIEVES IN THE HISTORIAN'S CRAFT. He still believes that the record of oppression and resistance can serve as a lever to lift the heavy weight of injustice. But under the circumstances, it is hard to have simple faith in the liberatory politics of history. Indeed, I could imagine smug celebrants of black “progress” embracing Litwack's narrative in order to bolster the new age of malign neglect. (Just as some southern reviewers found comfort in Litwack's exposure of antebellum Yankee racism three decades ago.) More to the point, I would argue, it is our burden to write the history that will illuminate the continuing allure of “whiteness.” To some extent, this means writing critical histories of postwar America such as Thomas Sugrue's analysis of class and racial politics in postwar Detroit. In addition, America's impasse has impelled a new generation to develop theoretically informed but humane explorations of the interrelated meanings of race, class, gender, and nation.

Nonetheless, in an era in which the nation teeters between justifying a “zero tolerance” war on young black youth and moral revulsion at racial profiling and “justifiable” police homicide, Litwack’s “history from the bottom up” will move and hopefully transform readers. As John Womack once said,

History can show that everybody hurts . . . I think it takes instruction to persuade people in safety that people in danger and pain are really suffering. I think it takes instruction to instill sympathy, not to mention solidarity . . . History is deliberately about reality, what really happened. It’s a way of instructing the reader that people who really lived went through a certain pain, which would have hurt the reader as badly as it hurt them. And this is a highly important lesson for the reader to understand and learn because it blocks the instinct to flee and leads to sympathy.

We must learn to sense the “hellhounds” on our trail. It will help us appreciate the “pastness of the past” and feel its still frightening “presence.”

Toward A Strategy for Women's Economic Equality

Chris Tilly and Randy Albelda

WHILE WOMEN'S ECONOMIC ADVANCEMENT OVER THE PAST FOUR DECADES has been tremendous, the agenda of equal opportunity remains far from finished in the United States. It is easier for a woman to get elected to office, hold a full-time job, and support herself without having to depend on a man, but women still face enormous barriers to economic equality. For some educated and accomplished women that barrier is the glass ceiling, but for far too many women—and their children—the barrier is a bottomless pit, with few ladders up and out. In fact, U.S. women have suffered serious economic setbacks in the last few years—notably the 1996 welfare “reform” law, which shredded the safety net for single mothers, and average women's wage rates that have fallen further behind men's once more, ending two decades of relative wage gains. Women, including mothers, are now expected to work for wages, but they face sharply unequal opportunities in the labor market, as well as unequal responsibilities in the home.

Fulfilling an agenda for women's economic equality will take more than debunking myths, explaining realities, and proposing new policies, however sensible they may be. Achieving equality is a question of power; of economic and social power, but most decisively of political power. At this point, the power of low-income women and their allies is at a low ebb. But advocates of equality have begun to form new alliances and hatch new strategies, so the coming years may see some surprising power shifts.

Power Surge: What It Will Take to Reverse Economic Inequality

THERE IS NO MAGIC ANSWER FOR HOW TO REPULSE THE BACKLASH against welfare and women's rights. If there were, the women's rights and wel-

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fare rights movements would have figured it out long ago. But from the long history of struggles for economic and social equality in this country — and from the setbacks as well as the triumphs in these struggles — we can outline the elements of a strategy for change.¹ We focus here particularly on a strategy for winning real welfare reform that can actually help end poverty and enhance economic equality for all women. That's because we believe that the best way to achieve women's economic equality is by lifting up the bottom.

To build the power to advance women's economic equality, we need a strategy with four components.² To start with, the strategy must target power in the workplace — expanding the voice and bargaining power of women and of low-wage workers in the employment relationship. Another key element is conventional politics, encompassing electoral mobilization, lobbying, and litigation (challenging bad laws, or challenging the failure to implement good laws). The power of *protest* has always been and remains important for “outsiders” far from the centers of power. Finally, the ultimate battle involves shaping public opinion, by telling the truth in ways that spark people's imagination, sympathy, and solidarity.

These four strategic elements are by no means separate. Changing laws via conventional politics can widen the scope for power in the workplace or for protest. Protest is a tool for influencing workplace power, conventional politics, and public opinion. Public opinion, in turn, exerts enormous leverage on legislative action and on the effectiveness of protest. But it is helpful to look at the four as distinct, though overlapping and interacting, arenas of action. Through this prism, let's look briefly at the past, present, and possible future of battles for women's economic equality.

Workplace Power Struggles: Past, Present, Future

If we are to become a “nation of workers” which includes even mothers of young children, then the struggle for workplace equality is a vital component for improving the lives of women and their families. The history of workplace-based efforts to win equality for women is largely, for better or worse, the history of unions. As social historian Ruth Milkman points out, there have been four major cohorts of unionism in the United States, and each cohort's attitude toward women at its inception has continued to color its relationship with women.³ Dating back to the 19th century, the earliest stable unions were male-dominated craft unions, such as those in the building trades and printing, which have historically viewed women with suspicion as low-wage competitors, and to a large extent continue to do so. (Other union movements from that era, such as the Knights of Labor and later the International Workers of the World, welcomed women, but did not survive.) A second wave of unionism in the 1910s, especially in the clothing and textile industries, sought to orga-

nize women — who made up a growing portion of the workforce in those industries — but maintained a paternalistic attitude toward them as vulnerable workers in need of particular protection. The reality was more complicated than that attitude would allow: women were particularly subject to employer abuse in the early decades of the century, but also led and took part in militant actions such as the 1909 “Uprising of the 20,000,” a hard-fought 13-week strike of women shirtwaist workers in New York City.

The tide turned for women in the labor movement in the 1930s with the rise of the CIO. Women were integral to the mass production manufacturing industries in the 1930s and 1940s, and the CIO organized them as equals and took a formal stand against gender discrimination — although CIO unions also took part in the displacement of women workers by returning servicemen at the end of World War II. Finally, the service, clerical, and public sector unions that grew after the war have organized occupations that are predominantly female (nurses, teachers, clerical workers), and have been powerfully influenced by the resurgent women’s movement of the 1960s. Unions from this wave, such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), the American Nurses Association (ANA), and the National Education Association (NEA), have promoted women leaders and SEIU and AFSCME have actively campaigned for comparable worth since the 1980s.

At present, workplace efforts for gender equality reflects this mixed legacy. At one extreme, women in the building trades continue to battle against outright exclusion (carried out through informal means, since formal bars are now illegal). On the other hand, “fourth-wave” unions representing service and clerical workers are actively seeking to organize women, win pay equity, and establish more work/family flexibility. Enriching the mix is the sprouting, since the 1970s, of new advocacy groups oriented to women workers, but not directly focused on unionization. The Cleveland-based Nine to Five/National Association of Working Women is perhaps the best known, but numerous other groups such as Boston’s Office Technology Education Project and San Francisco’s New Ways to Work combine education, lobbying, and in some cases, organizing to confront issues ranging from workplace safety and health, to pay equity, to work/family issues. Meanwhile, within the AFL-CIO itself, new leadership elected in 1995 rode into office on a reform platform. After a century of federation presidents from unions representing male, blue collar workers, particularly the building trades, the AFL-CIO elected John Sweeney, then president of the Service Employees International Union — a fast-growing, forward-looking fourth-wave union that mainly encompasses white- and pink-collar workers. In a potent bit of symbolism, Sweeney’s slate included Linda Chavez-Thompson of AFSCME as Executive Vice President, another fourth-waver and the first woman to hold a top AFL-CIO office. While the actual change

delivered to date by these leaders has been limited, they offer an important opening for new activism. At this point, the main obstacle to unions' contribution to equality for women is no longer hostility or indifference within the labor movement (though those problems certainly remain), but rather the unions' shrinking share of the workforce, which continues to dwindle toward the single digits.

And that sets the stage for the future. In our view — and in the view of many innovators in the labor movement — the strategies most likely to succeed in rebuilding the labor movement are those that will increase their involvement in battles for gender equality. Women make up a growing share of the workforce, particularly the barely-unionized service sector, and are on average more supportive of unions than men, so any survival strategy for the AFL-CIO must place a priority on organizing predominantly female occupations and industries. More broadly, in order to succeed, the union movement must reclaim its mantle as the spokesperson for all workers and low-income people, not just the few covered by union contract. From Sweeney down to the local level, much of the labor movement has begun to take on this challenge, championing a higher minimum wage, local living wage ordinances, and other measures that will help the lowest-paid. Though they have not made welfare reform a central issue, the AFL-CIO leadership has taken some progressive stands opposing punitive reform — in part due to the displacement threat that workfare poses to their public employee membership base — and local leaders have in some cases gone beyond statements to play an active role in coalitions defending welfare rights.⁴

In addition, the labor movement of the future is likely to make more use of organizing tools that offer new opportunities to mobilize women. Because labor law itself offers so little protection for unions, they will have to rely increasingly on labor-community coalitions. Women have long played a prominent role in community-based organizations, and community action often focuses on “consumption” issues of particular concern to women as mothers and homemakers: housing, health care, social services and so on. In building bridges with communities, unions will be compelled to take on more of this agenda. Unions will also have to undertake more city-wide, industry-wide organizing — like the Justice for Janitors campaign that has tried to organize janitors across whole cities — rather than traditional shop-by-shop campaigns. Again, since family responsibilities and limited job opportunities make women more likely than men to move in and out of the workforce, and from one workplace to another, this new organizing approach should be a better fit with women's work lives.

Conventional Politics: Unconventional Approaches?

IN SOME WAYS, CONVENTIONAL POLITICS HAS BEEN the “toughest nut to crack”

for low-income women and their advocates. Low representation of women and the political establishment's lack of interest in poor women, have served to cut out effective anti-poverty, employment, and child care policies for women and their children. After all, children can't vote, and low-income people usually turn out at the polls only when there are candidates who excite them and address their issues — which occurs all too infrequently.

Historically women have been largely locked out of conventional political activity, but hammered at the door until they got in. Women's suffrage organizations blossomed after the Civil War as part of a broader women-led movement for social improvement, and finally won the vote nationwide in 1920. Even without the vote, the late 19th and early 20th century saw middle-class organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the General Federation of Women's Clubs, and the National Association of Colored Women combine lobbying with education, charitable work, and in some cases protest. Once the vote was won, the enormous but superficially united women's suffrage movement splintered: the National Woman Party proposed an Equal Rights Amendment in 1923 and pursued it single-mindedly, whereas the League of Women Voters and other women's organizations opposed the amendment on the basis that it would outlaw special protections for women workers, who were particularly vulnerable.⁵ Nonetheless, women had found a foothold, and participated in political campaigns and coalitions from the New Deal of the 1930s to the Great Society of the 1960s.

With the second women's movement of the 1960s came a new growth of women's lobbying and electoral organizations — such as the National Organization for Women and the National Women's Political Caucus — and a surge in the number of women elected officials, including governors and senators for the first time. Despite this, the Equal Rights Amendment fell short of ratification in 1982 and electoral progress has been limited. Women are still under-represented as elected officials at virtually all levels, especially in Congress.

And although the New Left began the mobilization of women, the New Right has also been very effective at organizing women's political involvement around conservative backlash issues — opposing abortion, upholding “traditional” family structures, defending white privilege, and cutting taxes. Conservative women claim that not only has equality for women been accomplished, it has gone too far. For the last two decades much of middle class women's political energies have gone into defending reproductive rights, including supporting primarily pro-choice candidates, regardless of their positions on women's economic equality.

And that's where we stand today — with unprecedented numbers of women involved in conventional politics, but with the legislative agenda for women's equality largely stalled. In 1995 when the Personal Responsibility Act, the harsh, Republican-crafted federal welfare reform, first

came up for a vote, all four white women senators — Democrat and Republican alike — voted for it. (The lone African-American woman in the Senate, Carol Moseley Braun — since defeated for re-election — cast a nay vote.) And the most visible woman governor, Christine Todd Whitman of New Jersey, is a tax-cutting, service-slashing conservative. In fact, given the rush by state legislatures and governors to make welfare stingier, welfare advocates have had to rely primarily on the courts to defend welfare rights. Sitting judges still to some extent reflect the more liberal politics of earlier decades — and also take more seriously the constitutional and statutory guarantees that are often ignored by legislators and administrators anxious to cut costs and score political points. But litigation to defend the rights of poor women can only be a holding action.

Regaining ground for women's equality in conventional politics calls for a four-pronged strategy. First, shifting the balance of power will require registering and mobilizing many who don't vote now, particularly poor people and people of color. Second, any electoral advances will be limited until we reform campaign financing to lessen the influence of rich individuals and corporations. Not surprisingly, corporations and the wealthy have little interest in shifting funding priorities or in empowering low-income people. Progressive candidates rarely can afford to make their way through the electoral process. Third, women in general and low-income women in particular need to consolidate new alliances in the electoral arena. Potential allies include the labor movement (as noted above), communities of color, and churches and religious activists who have often taken a strongly compassionate stand on issues of poverty and human services, despite more anti-woman positions on issues such as reproductive choice. One possible outcome of the alliance-building process is the growth of third parties, and the progress of new third party initiatives such as the New Party, the Labor Party, and the 21st Century Party (initiated by the National Organization for Women) bears watching. Finally, new ways must be found to win the hearts and minds of working people, so many of whom are currently swayed by anti-tax, anti-government, and anti-welfare rhetoric.

Protest and Survive

PROTEST HAS LONG BEEN A POTENT POLITICAL LEVER FOR WOMEN, and particularly for poor women.⁶ The history of protest overlaps intimately with the history of unionism and of electoral politics: unionists organized and struck, but also demonstrated for causes such as the eight hour day; suffragists lobbied, but also rallied and marched. But women and their allies also have a long history of protests focused on issues of family, consumption, and unpaid domestic labor — issues that are typically more peripheral to unions and electoral politics. In the first years of the cen-

tury, women repeatedly organized food boycotts and tenant unions to resist high prices and rents. During the 1920s, women's auxiliaries consisting of the wives of male union members demanded government creation of local health departments and maternal and child health programs. The Communist Party-organized United Council of Working Class Wives mobilized women on issues of cost of living, education, and social welfare, and when the Depression hit, joined the newly formed Unemployed Councils in demanding better relief as well as more jobs. The black Housewives' Leagues launched "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" boycott campaigns in major cities, and also called for job creation during the Depression.

In the decades after World War II, the civil rights movement and the second-wave women's movement cross-fertilized with community organizing, giving rise to new protests. Civil rights activists, realizing that formal legal rights did not guarantee economic equality, broadened their focus once the Civil Rights Act was won in 1964. After all, when Martin Luther King was killed in 1968, he was in Memphis to support a sanitation workers' strike. The Lyndon Johnson Administration's mid-1960s War on Poverty offered an opening for a new wave of organizing in low-income communities. One dramatic outgrowth of this ferment was the National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO), formed in 1967, building on earlier local efforts. NWRO activated poor women to demand AFDC benefits that they were already entitled to, and protested and lobbied to expand welfare recipients' rights. NWRO reached its high-water mark in 1971, with 900 chapters in 50 states, but folded in 1975 as political times changed.

Protests continue up to the present. In 1987 the newly-formed National Welfare Rights Union (NWRU) picked up NWRO's torch; in 1992, the Oakland, CA-based Women's Economic Agenda Project brought hundreds of women together for a Poor Women's Convention. Advocates for more effective welfare policies have devised creative approaches to protest. NWRU has organized welfare office sit-ins and takeovers of abandoned housing. On Valentine's Day 1995, in response to a call by JEDI Women (Justice, Economic Dignity, and Independence for Women) of Salt Lake City, activists in 76 cities carried out actions on the theme "Our Children's Hearts Are in Your Hands," targeting the punitive Personal Responsibility Act then before Congress. Participants in the actions mailed 61,000 postcards to legislators. The JEDI women themselves marched into the Salt Lake City Federal Building to present their legislators with a port-a-crib full of cards colored by children in day care centers.⁷ But in the shadow of the conservative backlash, protests appear less and less effective, and are more likely to mobilize hundreds in a given city than tens of thousands. Ironically, women and men have turned out in hundreds of thousands to defend other rights related to gender equity — reproductive choice, gay and lesbian rights — but have not responded in

large numbers to the welfare “reform” that poses perhaps the sharpest current attack on women’s rights.

Looking to the future, protest can play two important roles in the push for welfare rights and full equality for women. For one thing, protests constitute an ongoing moral presence that can help to shape public opinion and shame legislators. Though protests may not currently seem to move us much further forward on welfare rights, they are most definitely helping to prevent us from sliding further backwards! But protests serve a second role as well, and one where there is room for growth and experimentation: they make an unfair system harder to govern. The National Welfare Rights Organization strategy started by mobilizing poor women to demand rights that were already on the books, exploiting the margin of administrative discretion that already existed; they backed up these demands with the threat of disruption. We can’t apply the same strategy uncritically at a time of cutbacks, but we can apply the same principles. For example, in many states, the executive branch is using administrative discretion to reduce eligibility and benefit levels beyond what’s required by law, so they can boast of reduced welfare rolls and decreased spending. These discretionary actions mark a pressure point where protest can potentially win immediate, material gains for poor women, while exposing politicians’ dishonesty. In many cases social services staff, whose own jobs are threatened by the anti-welfare assault, may be helpful in identifying and acting on these pressure points.

The Battle for Public Opinion

THE HISTORY OF THE TUSSELE OVER PUBLIC OPINION is completely intertwined with the long history of labor, electoral, and protest strategies we have already outlined. But history does hold some important lessons. For one thing, the mobilization of public opinion has often been a two-edged sword. For example, middle class female reformers used arguments about morality and the sacredness of the family to win support for Mother’s Aid, the state-level predecessor to AFDC. But those same arguments, coupled with class prejudice, convinced the reformers and their allies that Mother’s Aid should involve close monitoring of the behavior of recipients, and should only be made available to “morally fit” mothers.⁸ As this example points out, U.S. public opinion — and with it U.S. public policy — have always distinguished between the deserving and undeserving poor.⁹

That distinction continues to haunt us. Sympathy for poor people, especially children, coexists with resentment of “freeloaders.” An expectation that government should make our lives better clashes with cynicism about the willingness or ability of government to accomplish anything constructive. Consciousness of harder economic times does not displace the deeply held conviction that anyone can make it if she/he really tries. And running through it all, in the minds of most Americans, is the

notion that many — perhaps most — of the poor are undeserving. In sociologist Mark Rank's study of welfare in Wisconsin, perhaps his most discouraging finding came when he surveyed welfare recipients about their views of why they and others were on welfare. Rank asked whether recipients believed they were solely responsible for being on welfare, whether it was due to circumstances beyond their control, or some combination of the two. Speaking of themselves, 82 percent of recipients blamed circumstances beyond their control, 12 percent cited a combination, and 6 percent took full responsibility. But as for other recipients, 90 percent of those welfare recipients stated that "people on welfare" are partially or fully to blame for their situation. In short, even most welfare recipients themselves classify other recipients as undeserving.¹⁰

The result of this strong streak of blame is that public opinion victories tend to be narrow and fragile. In the fight against the 1995 Personal Responsibility Act, the struggle for public opinion was critical in securing President Clinton's veto of the legislation. But it appears that what tipped the balance was not the National Welfare Rights Union's street actions, not the National Organization for Women's rally in Washington that defined welfare cuts as violence against women, and not the *New York Times* ad by the feminist Committee of One Hundred Women, who declared that "a war against poor women is a war against all women!" Instead, a leak of the Clinton Administration's internal estimate that the law would plunge one million children into poverty, and a media push focusing on children, spearheaded by the Children's Defense Fund and the National Association of Social Workers, finally achieved a Clinton veto. Of course, concern with the plight of children is an entirely appropriate response to punitive welfare reform proposals. But focusing on children alone minimizes the assault on the rights of women and of poor people, and leaves the door open for policies that control and punish women "for the sake of the children." As the Welfare Warriors of Milwaukee, WI wrote in an angry 1995 open letter, "It is time for our allies to do more than apologize for our existence. It is time to stand up for our right to public support for our children and our right to mother our own children."¹¹ In any case, the appeal for child welfare was not sufficient to stop the same legislation the following year.

In future attempts to move public opinion, the tools used to date will remain important. There is an ongoing need for publications put out jointly by recipients and advocates, such as Boston's *Survival News* and Milwaukee's *Welfare Mothers' Voice*; op eds and cable TV talk show appearances; *New York Times* ads and speaking tours. But many of these media preach primarily to the already converted, while potential allies turn the page or flip the channel. If we acknowledge that the battle for public opinion is actually more like a war of position, we must find ways to use the equivalent of both artillery and house-to-house combat.

The "big guns" consist of advertising, particularly on TV and radio.

When New York Governor George Pataki announced a budget featuring \$4 billion in budget cuts in February 1995, a coalition of unions, students, seniors and others launched a grassroots campaign of lobbying and protest. But at the same time, unions and various institutional interests such as hospitals and home-care associations spent several million dollars on an advertising blitz. Pataki's ratings went from 38 percent negative to 63 percent; 65 percent of survey respondents said the budget fight made them "think less of the Republican Party of New York generally."¹² Of course, advertising takes money, so poor people can only pursue this strategy if they find allies with deep pockets — unions and churches being two key examples.

As for the "house-to-house combat," it translates into one-to-one and small group discussion and education. The issues surrounding welfare are complex; sound bites cannot adequately capture them. Winning support for a full women's equality agenda means challenging deeply held beliefs about family, work, and government, while tapping into and nurturing other, equally deeply held beliefs — working through the contradictions we presented above. Many forums are possible for this kind of discussion: house meetings, churches and other places of worship, PTAs, unions — wherever people live, work, and socialize. Mobilizing the people-power for this kind of effort is even more difficult than mobilizing the millions for advertising campaigns, but it is certain that without this nitty-gritty educational process any leverage over public opinion will remain weak.

Putting It All Together

WORKPLACE ORGANIZING, CONVENTIONAL POLITICS, PROTEST, AND CAMPAIGNS to influence public opinion form a unified package. None will work very well without all the other elements. Furthermore, all of them require building new alliances and strengthening old ones. As with every major advance for women's economic inequality in the past, broad coalitions uniting disparate interests will make the difference. It can be done.

And it has to be done. The costs and the inefficiencies in our current system are keeping many people in this country down. The burden of child rearing is left to individual families, a larger and larger percentage of which cannot find the time or money to do it well. Meanwhile, many families in dire poverty are trapped in unsafe neighborhoods, and a generation of children is growing up with little or no vision of a viable economic future. The costs of poverty, injustice, and inequality corrode the social fabric — sometimes sparking short-term explosions like urban riots, but more important leading to long-term social polarization and decay. Taking into account how costly our current system has become and who is currently bearing those costs, the new costs of fixing the system are a good investment.

We all deserve a better society: one where women and men get equal treatment, where employers and the government recognize family needs, and where poverty is replaced by opportunity. Equality for women and a better life for families of all kinds hang in the balance. It's time to smash those glass ceilings and banish those bottomless pits!

NOTES

1. This discussion of strategy draws greatly on two excellent pieces on political strategy for welfare rights: Mimi Abramovitz. 1996. *Under Attack, Fighting Back: Women and Welfare in the United States* (New York: Monthly Review Press), Part 4; Ann Withorn. 1996. "The politics of welfare reform: Knowing the stakes, finding the strategies," *Resist Newsletter*. Vol. 5, No. 3 (April). In discussions of past political battles, we also draw on the essays in: Louise A. Tilly and Patricia Gurin, editors. 1990. *Women, Politics, and Change* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation). We also thank Ann Withorn, Diane Dujon, and members of the Boston area Academics' Working Group on Poverty for very helpful discussions.

2. This four-part approach to strategy borrows from the Detroit-based National Welfare Rights Union, although we have set a somewhat broader agenda (since the target we focus on goes beyond welfare rights to encompass women's economic equality in general). In 1994, NWRU proposed a four-part strategy involving organizing, legislation, public relations, and legal strategy to combat the wave of punitive welfare "reforms" sweeping the country. Mimi Abramovitz, 1996, op. cit., p.133.

3. Ruth Milkman. 1990. "Gender and trade unionism in historical perspective," in Tilly and Gurin, op. cit., pp.87-107.

4. Ann Withorn, op. cit.

5. Nancy F. Cott. 1990. "Across the great divide: Women in politics before and after 1920," in Tilly and Gurin, op. cit., pp.153-176.

6. This history of protest is based primarily on Mimi Abramovitz, 1996, op.cit., who provides much more detail than is presented here.

7. Welfare Mothers' Voice. 1995. "Fighting back: Welfare 'reform'— JEDI Women spark protests in 76 cities," *Works in Progress* (Applied Research Center, Oakland, CA). April, p.6.

8. Barbara J. Nelson. 1990. "The gender, race, and class origins of early welfare and the welfare state: A comparison of Workmen's Compensation and Mother's Aid," in Tilly and Gurin, op. cit., pp.413-435; and Linda Gordon. 1994. *Pitied But Not Entitled: Single Mothers and the History of Welfare* (New York: The Free Press).

9. Michael B. Katz. 1989. *The Undeserving Poor: From the War on Poverty to the War on Welfare* (New York: Pantheon).

10. Mark R. Rank. 1994. *Living on the Edge: The Realities of Welfare in America* (New York: Columbia University Press), pp. 133, 142.

11. Welfare Warriors. 1995. "An open letter from Welfare Warriors to friends of families who receive welfare child support," *Works in Progress* (Applied Research Center, Oakland). April, p.7.

12. Labor Research Association. 1995. "Case study in the new politics," *LRA's Economic Notes*. May, p.3.

Whose Millennium? An Essay Review

David Finkel

ON THE SURFACE, THE WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA — NATO bombs falling on villages and factories in Serbia and Montenegro, the near-genocidal destruction of the population of Kosova by Serb police and the Yugoslav National Army, the final disintegration of a formerly multinational federal republic — may seem far from the central themes of Daniel Singer's new book, *Whose Millennium? Theirs or Ours?**

Quite the contrary, in this reviewer's opinion: I would argue that this Balkan catastrophe, and the imperialist response that has made the situation in every respect worse, pose in the most intense way the general problems that Singer grapples with in his book.

Let me put the point a little differently. I read this book twice, the first time prior to the NATO bombing and the second time with the war underway, and I found it impossible to read it in the same way, and certainly impossible to review as I had first intended. The following reflections on this war, by way of introduction, are intended not to detract from the importance of Singer's central themes but to highlight them.

The imperial warmakers and the left both must confront the question: Is this war a bloody accidental sideshow, a momentary regression from the main trend of European unification and the universal rule-of-law of the capitalist marketplace? Or is it a central event showing us, among other things, the kind of future that will arise from the global campaign to impose the market's universality?

It may, in fact, be both, which is why Singer's book is so relevant to understanding it. The Kosova war shows little sign of having been anticipated by the United States and NATO well in advance. Indeed there is every indication that they believed a deal with Milosevic could be achieved, at the expense of the Kosovars' aspirations. In that sense the war is an "accidental" product of miscalculation. Yet the war can also be seen as doubly purposeful.

For NATO, the war demonstrates the need for (and reflects the first attempt at creating) a regional policeman, for moving, as *The New York Times* editorial of April 23 urged, from a "defensive" to "offensive" mode of operation. In turn, NATO's war gave the Milosevic regime, and the

*Daniel Singer, *Whose Millennium? Theirs Or Ours?* (New York; Monthly Review Press 1999), 288 pp., HB \$45.00, PB \$17.95.

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gangsters allied to it, the occasion to expand by a factor of 10 to 20 the ethnic-cleansing operations of the preceding year. It is impossible to imagine the future of Europe or the world without putting the war's consequences in a central position.

To be sure, Singer does take note of the Balkan disaster:

If the left fails to provide rational, progressive solutions to the growing economic and social traumas, the extreme right will come up with reactionary and irrational ones, playing on the fears aroused by globalization and on prejudices reinforced by apprehension...The dismantlement of Yugoslavia revealed what a combination of exacerbated nationalism and religious bigotry can still achieve today in the heart of 'civilized' Europe: you start with kith and kin, you move on to the historical recollection of battles between Christians and Muslims, and you end with the slaughter of neighbors, the rape of women, and buckets and buckets of blood. (p. 276)

But this tragedy is not where Singer begins. His starting point is a dual one. It can be summed up, on the one hand, in "The Sad Saga of Solidarity," the failure of the hopes placed by the non-Stalinist left in the rise of the Solidarnosc-led social movement in Poland; and on the other hand "The French Winter of Discontent," the new hopes arising from the French strikes of 1995, when broad sectors of public opinion supported workers' defiance of social security and welfare "reform."

Singer's question "whose millennium," then, is posed between "theirs" — the apostles of the god of the untrammelled market and the doctrine of TINA, "there is no alternative" to the destruction of social safety nets — and "ours," meaning the forces that have begun to resist but have yet to come together around a desperately needed coherent alternative vision.

It is such a vision, a kind of draft manifesto for a grassroots socialist-populist renewal, that Singer lays out in his final five chapters: "Beyond Labor and Leisure," "Internationalism Versus Globalization," "A Society of Equals," "Reinventing Democracy" and "Realistic Utopia."

Compelling as Singer's argument is, it seems impossible at this moment even to consider it without looking at the future that NATO's war and Milosevic's slaughter offer. I would suggest that the last ten years of ethnic cleansing in Yugoslavia, escalating to genocide and imperialist war, make Singer's question if anything more relevant and urgent, but also more complicated.

Whose millennium, indeed? Does the new era belong to the ethnic cleansers or the imperial police, both in the camp of "theirs"? Or may we hope it may be "ours," a camp that must include both the Kosovar refugees and the bombed-out villagers and factory workers of Serbia who have been set at each others' throats by Milosevic's and NATO's war, as well as the democratic-minded forces desperately seeking to find some means of extending solidarity to both?

To further cloud the issue, please note whose war it is: the Clinton

Administration and the EuroNATO social-democratic governments of Blair, Jospin and Schroeder, elected by voters angered by the previous regimes of budget-slashing right-wingers. What are we to make of the German Greens converting themselves in world-record time from the party of denuclearization to a mechanism to rally the peace movement behind the war?

And perhaps the saddest of all spectacles: Vaclav Havel, in his day an authentic if ambiguous hero in the democratic struggle against decaying Stalinism, now president of the Czech Republic, standing on April 29 before a joint meeting of the Canadian Parliament and proclaiming that NATO's bombing campaign in Yugoslavia represents — I am not inventing this — "the first ethical war in history."

FOR DEFENDERS OF SOCIALIST OR DEMOCRATIC VALUES, the immediate picture could hardly seem more bleak. Those of us in the political camp that Singer's question identifies as "ours" — those who oppose NATO's imperialist intervention both as a matter of principle and as a catastrophe in practice, and refuse to participate in covering up Serbian crimes against humanity — seem to have not only no weapons but practically no allies.

Yet surely, at a more fundamental level — and here we come closer to Singer's central themes — the Balkan war bitterly indicts the lie that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the triumph of the market would bring about a glorious transition to a prosperous and harmonious Europe. Ethnic hatreds were to disappear, along with the old-fashioned imperialist wars for markets, as former enemies revelled in the opportunity to get rich together.

That is the market utopia. In real life the International Monetary Fund, already notorious for destroying Third World economies through "structural adjustment programs," also helped to sink the Yugoslav economy in the 1980s, even as a recrudescing Greater Serb nationalism sent Slovenia and Croatia scrambling for the exits. The IMF and Milosevic were in practice partners initiating the collapse.

Daniel Singer identifies the forces that could construct an altogether new Europe and a new world on the basis of a different logic and priorities, an alternative to the unbelievably destructive, symbiotic logic of the universal free-marketeers and the local despots and ethnic cleansers. The question is not whether these elements exist, but whether they can assert themselves, forge connections and develop the necessary vision — in time to avert catastrophe.

"Time indispensable, alas, runs up against time available" (p. 275) — not only in the race against irreversible ecological devastation, but also in the desperate struggle against the Siamese twins of ethnic cleansing and imperialist war. Is enough time left? Singer's answer is one of qualified optimism born of informed partisanship, but by no means a confident certainty.

LET US TURN NOW TO SINGER'S WORK ON ITS OWN TERMS. His readers will fall into two fairly distinct groups. There will be those new readers — many, I would hope — who do not bring with them intimate familiarity with Singer's decades of journalism and his previous books on the French worker-student rebellion of 1968, the rise of the Polish Solidarnosc workers' movement and the short-lived left agenda of Mitterrand's French presidency. There will also be the readers long-familiar with Singer's works, who will want to know what new he has to say.

Let me begin with the cohort of new readers, among whom one hopes will be students introduced to the text by college professors as a highly readable, jargon-free introduction to the argument for a grassroots socialism. For these readers, it might be best to begin with the third and final section, "In Search of an Alternative," consisting of the book's final five chapters mentioned above, "the purpose of which is to help in the resurrection of a left able to shape the future."

These chapters attempt to present for discussion a programmatic framework arising organically from struggle, not from a self-appointed vanguard. As Singer puts it, "(W)hile we have argued that, hopefully, the conception of socialism as a model handed down to an obedient population is forever gone, we have also maintained that people, though they may rebel, will not engage in sustained political action without a fairly clear vision of an alternative society." (p. 152)

With his customary elegance, Singer presents a view of contemporary capitalism that challenges, at every point, the system's insistence that its growing inequalities, and the powerlessness of the majority of the people living under it, are rooted in unchangeable and unchallengeable realities: technological revolution, the global marketplace, human nature.

Rather, "globalization" is outlined as a strategic response by capital to the crisis of profitability that unfolded with the collapse of the regime of American supremacy after 1944, when the world capitalist economy had been denominated in U.S. dollars. Technology did not drive globalization; rather, the decision having been taken "to lift all restrictions on the international movement of capital," the communication and calculational technology evolved to meet the class-determined need.

Arguing from this understanding, Singer lays out the dynamic of a process of financial deregulation run amok, which created the context in which one currency devaluation in a middle-rank Asian country could trigger a massive Asian crisis which would soon threaten to swamp Russia and Brazil and potentially wash up on the shores of the advanced industrial economies.

Singer briefly cites the economic theories of Rosa Luxemburg, who believed that the ultimate collapse of capitalism would have become inexorable once the market and capitalist production had completed its conquest of the world. But the references to this dubious proposition are

too brief to indicate whether Singer actually wishes to rely upon it theoretically.

At the same time (a theme that Singer's experienced readers will recognize from *Is Socialism Doomed? The Meaning of Mitterrand*), the one-sided weakening of the national state forces any popular insurgent movement in any country, at a much earlier stage than previously, to confront the international realities of capital flight, instantaneous financial transfers and the global free-trade regime. The weakening is one-sided in that global capital seeks to make the nation-state weak if not utterly irrelevant in the control of capital; needless to say, the state is expected to be strong and authoritative when it comes to controlling the power of labor!

To meet this challenge — and at the same time, to reverse the discredit brought upon the name of socialism by its identification with bureaucratic tyranny — Singer insists that the movements must embrace democracy, both in principle and in practice, both as a cornerstone of their demands on society and as the guiding imperative of their internal practice.

On these foundations and from the new experiences of revolt, Singer dares to hope: "Tomorrow Moscow, Warsaw and Prague may emerge from the utter confusion following their conversion to capitalism, while after tomorrow explosive struggles may even erupt in the heart of the capitalist fortress from New York to California." (p. 279)

FOR SINGER'S MORE EXPERIENCED READERSHIP, it will already be clear that much of the argument in *Whose Millennium?* reflects his earlier works. Indeed much is familiar, notably his insistence on two central propositions.

The first of these is that socialism cannot be said to have been a failure in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, since the system of Stalinist rule had nothing in common with socialism. The second is that Social Democracy cannot represent the hope of a humane future, having fatally accepted the responsibility first for administering capitalism in order to reform it, and now for actually carrying out the anti-labor imperatives of "globalization."

All this is repeated here, with Singer's usual stylistic grace. And it does bear repetition. But there is at least one new theme, which introduces at least a strong cautionary counterpoint to Singer's optimistic hopes for a "realistic utopia."

In brief, the hopes that Singer placed in the workers' struggles of Eastern Europe (notably in *The Road to Gdansk*) have met bitter disappointment. In the birth of Solidarnosc Singer saw a working class, like Molière's character M. Jourdain who spoke prose without knowing it, perhaps reinventing socialism without suspecting they were in the process of so doing.

Alas, that was then and this is now: In a chapter on Solidarity that may be read as a sad epilogue to *The Road to Gdansk*, Singer concedes that “What I did not imagine is that this sustained mass movement of the Polish workers would lead to political suicide, to the establishment of a new system in which the power of the working class would be smashed, not strengthened. . . .” (p. 127-8)

Solidarnosc had arisen, in 1980, from a revolt against price increases — a revolt that began like many before it but, due to the foundations laid by semi-clandestine organization, unexpectedly mushroomed into a movement for independent trade unionism. Its inception opened a period of effective dual power from Solidarity’s inception till the Jaruzelski coup of December 1981, when the military stepped in to suppress Solidarity and, at the same time, more or less supplant the Communist party political apparatus.

There followed a decade in which Polish society wrestled the military dictatorship into the ground — but also during which the Polish workers lost control of their own struggle. After the regime signed away its power in an agreement to hold a partly-free election in 1990, Solidarnosc swept the vote, and promptly entered a government that embarked on an economic “shock therapy” so brutal that just one year later, Lech Walesa had to throw all his personal prestige into running for President to prevent the union from political ruin.

Walesa himself served one term, only to be turned out by — of all people — the Communists, now trading under a new name and converted to the virtues of market capitalism. What’s left of Solidarnosc parades under the tutelage of one Marian Krzaklewski, organizer of Solidarity Electoral Action (AWS), a coalition of social reactionaries of whom some “would probably suspect Jean-Marie le Pen or Jesse Helms of liberal deviation.” (p. 125)

The debacle of Solidarnosc is so profound that Singer feels it cannot be adequately explained simply by the collapse of its leaders’ perspectives. Considering its hopeful beginnings in the greatest trade union in history, “(i)f Poland proved unable to produce an original, progressive alternative, maybe the time is not yet ripe for it in that part of the world. Thrown into the turmoil of a savage, primitive construction of capitalism, the workers do not yet seem able to clarify and impose their interests on society.

The price we are paying for the Stalinist heritage is bigger than we thought. People are bewildered. They welcomed capitalism as salvation, only to discover that it was cornucopia for the happy few. Many then looked back with nostalgia. They still have to disentangle socialism from its neo-Stalinist connections and to distinguish the freedom they conquered from the new exploitation that went with it...I have the impression that, to use the old-fashioned expression, the light will not come from the east in Europe in the foreseeable future. (p. 128)

From here, Singer proceeds to an account of the 1995 “French Winter of Discontent,” a month-long eruption of worker-student strikes and mass demonstrations against the “Plan Juppé” for cutting the national social services budget. It was not that this movement came anywhere near a revolutionary crisis — indeed, apart from the transport workers, the French industrial workers were not directly affected and didn’t actively participate.

Singer’s point is that the eruption was both so unexpected and so fundamental, a frontal assault on the logic of TINA (“There Is No Alternative”), the catechism of the Church of the Sacred Global Market. With all the movement’s limitations, particularly its short-lived character, it reveals that there is a capacity for revolt and for widespread public sympathy despite the disruptions wrought by a transport shutdown.

One is reminded here, in the U.S. context, of the broad public support for the strikers at United Parcel Service and the General Motors plants, where the issues were conditions of work, the right to full-time jobs that allow rather than destroy the chance to live decently. In short, there is an alternative when the people on the receiving end refuse to take TINA for an answer.

Yes, there is hope. Unquestionably Singer’s book contributes to improving the odds for the hope to become reality. It should be studied by old readers and new, both for its analytic power and for its efforts to derive programmatic conclusions from, rather than impose them upon, real-life movements of struggle.

One is left to ponder, however, the consequences that flow if Singer’s fears prove correct that the “light from the East” has been extinguished for an historic period. Here I return to my own starting point: Yugoslavia’s descent into barbarism, NATO’s almost unbelievably ineffectual yet brutal response, the real-life possibilities of igniting surrounding states and of a ground war and imperial occupation.

If there is no hope of a progressive response to this catastrophe from the working class of the former Yugoslavia, it is difficult to contemplate the depths to which such a war can drag us. It is even less pleasant to imagine a worst-case scenario of a Milosevic- or Krzacklewski-type pseudo-populism taking hold of the working class in a disintegrating post-Soviet Russia.

Daniel Singer, as always, gives us much to think about. If anything were needed to concentrate our minds on the issues he raises, every day’s headlines show them rushing toward us faster than we ever thought.

The Impasse of Market Socialism

David McNally

“Clearly Markets Aren’t Perfect.”

—Canadian Finance Minister Paul Martin
commenting on the global financial crisis

THE MARKET TRIUMPHALISM THAT HAS DOMINATED WORLD POLITICS for at least the past decade is now under serious strain. Beginning with the catastrophic economic meltdown that began in East Asia in the summer of 1997, the ideology of the market has come under repeated assault. Thirty million jobs have been lost across Asia, living standards have plummeted, businesses have collapsed on a scale previously unimaginable.¹ And now the crisis threatens to go global: Russia is already in a state of near-collapse while Brazil struggles to avert a slide into a deep recession. With Japan down for the count and Western stock markets in tumult analysts are now weighing the prospects of a major world recession. For the first time in many years, the assumption that the capitalist market system is a proven road to prosperity finds itself regularly challenged. Even mainstream politicians and commentators can now be found advocating controls on financial flows and currency movements. So worried are many European governments that they have come out in favor of capital controls despite opposition from the Clinton administration in the U.S.² In the same vein, billionaire speculator George Soros has warned that “financial markets are inherently unstable. Imposing market discipline means imposing instability.”³

More significant than waverings in ruling circles, however, has been the emergence of anti-market protest in one country after another with masses of people taking to the streets to protest layoffs, privatization, IMF austerity, and cuts to social programs. In the midst of mass strikes in South Korea and Puerto Rico, upheavals by students and the urban poor in Indonesia, strikes by half a million high school students in France and so on, elements of an anti-capitalist politics are being created.

Ironically, much of the Left has been unable to respond effectively to these new movements. So imbued with the ideology of the market have

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large sections of the Left become, so complicit in neo-liberal reengineering, that they are incapable of engaging these new resistance movements with a real political alternative, with a radical socialist politics of opposition to the market. A significant part of the problem here is the ascendancy of market socialism, particularly among left-wing intellectuals. With the collapse of the Stalinist regimes across Eastern Europe a decade ago, large numbers of Western leftists grabbed onto the idea that if the state was not to be the agency of socialism — a horrible distortion of Marx's views in the first place — then perhaps the market could be harnessed to socialist ends. But the recent left-wing compromise with the market is just as pernicious as was the compromise with the state: in both cases an alienated social institution, one which radically evades popular democratic control, is made the means of social progress. The end result is an abandonment of the heart and soul of genuine socialism: revolutionary democracy.⁴

The current moment of global economic instability seems a propitious one for re-examining the leftist embrace of the market. After all, if anything might be expected to dislodge some of the naïve assumptions that underpin market socialism it is massive and world-wide market instability. But, in the absence of sustained theoretical and political critique, this is unlikely to be the case. For this reason alone, revisiting the debate over socialism and the market is a timely undertaking. More than this, however, the critique of market socialism is also an urgent political task. For, to the degree to which we can undo leftist attachments to the market, we may be able to extend the influence of the socialist critique of the market at a time when anti-market struggles are emerging on a wide scale.

The Real Issue: Social Regulation by the Market

MARKET SOCIALISTS REMAIN REMARKABLY OBLIVIOUS TO THE FULL IMPLICATIONS of their own arguments. They regularly claim that they look to the market merely to find efficient mechanisms by which a socialist economy might allocate goods and services. What they propose, they insist, is to accomplish socialist objectives through market means.

In making this proposal, they accept that the market is a uniquely efficient means of economic allocation because of the automatic process through which it sends price signals to producers and consumers about changes in the supply and demand for goods and services. Whereas social planning allegedly involves an infinitely complex (and ultimately impossible) process of trying to anticipate the demand for finished goods and all their component parts and factors of production, the market is said to do all this through the medium of price signals. Rising prices indicate inadequate supply (and thus tell producers to increase output), while falling prices express oversupply (and instruct producers to cut

back). All of this is accomplished without wasting resources in an immensely complex (and impossible) planning process. Incredibly, some market socialists take matters much further, arguing that markets really do work to increase human freedom. In this vein, Alan Carling claims that "the marketplace really is a free space."⁵ But even those market socialists who recognize inherent problems associated with market regulation (which they would authorize the state to offset through taxation and redistribution of income) share a conviction that allocation by means of price signals is the only rational and efficient system. Diane Elson, for instance, who distinguishes her vision of "socialized markets" from most models of market socialism, maintains that a socialist economy "needs a decentralized price mechanism" and condemns "anti-price Marxists" for failing to recognize this.⁶

Constructed in terms of using the market to socialist ends, the argument often appears innocuous enough. Who could object, after all, to the idea that we should attain socialist objectives through the most efficient means possible? The problem, as I have already intimated, is that things are not so simple. For what market socialists fail to grasp is that an economy governed by price signals can only be one in which market principles determine the value of all inputs and outputs within the economic process. Put simply, true market prices cannot be formed unless the market values all inputs into the production process. And, crucially, this means that human labor-power must be fully commodified and subjected to the laws of the market. Genuine market prices, in short, cannot be obtained without a system of social relations and laws of socioeconomic reproduction which subject economic life to market regulation. And this, the subordination of all economic processes to market regulation, requires renouncing the basic goals of socialism. "If marketization is the right direction of change," writes Włodzimierz Brus and Kazimierz Laski in *From Marx to the Market*, "it must be pursued consistently." And this means accepting not just markets for consumer goods, but capital markets, unemployment and economic crises. As a result, "not only the original Marxist promise has to be cast aside as anachronistic, but also the very concept of transition from capitalism to socialism."⁷ Most market socialists refuse to accept that these are the real terms of the debate. Yet, as I will show, Brus and Laski are right to acknowledge that the logic of the market is an inherently anti-socialist one. Moreover, this should not be a startling claim since it is at the very heart of the essay by Ludwig von Mises that looms so large in many discussions of market socialism, "Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth."⁸

A number of claims about economic rationality run through Mises' argument. First, he asserts that "without economic calculation there can be no economy." By this he means that all economic life entails a means of calculating the costs of producing things. In the absence of such a

means of calculation, he says, “there can be no economy.” Secondly, Mises insists that calculation is impossible without “a pricing mechanism.” He then adds, thirdly, that for a pricing mechanism to exist there must be a free and competitive market (in the absence of which true market prices cannot emerge). To this, fourthly, he joins the insistence that a genuine market economy — which is to say, the only rational economy — requires “private ownership of the means of production” since production goods (machinery, equipment and so on) will not have rational market prices unless they are sold by private producers responding to market signals in a drive to maximize their profits. It follows from these four claims that any rational economy requires private ownership of the means of production, perfect competition, market prices and profit maximization. Little surprise, then, when Mises informs us that socialism would represent a system of economic chaos since “it would be impossible to speak of rational production any more.”⁹

Let us concede one part of this argument: the incompatibility of socialism with market rationality. Yet, as I argue below, what is rational in market terms is in fact socially irrational. Moreover, there is indeed a unique socialist economic rationality which would be inscribed in the logic of a genuinely post-capitalist society.¹⁰ For the moment, however, I want to concentrate upon the reasons why market rationality and socialism cannot be reconciled.

The central issue here has to do with the formation of genuine market prices. After all, the real question for advocates of market socialism is whether it is possible to have an economy regulated by market prices which obeys, at least in part, a non-market logic. It is not the persistence of market transactions that is at issue. Most anti-market socialists accept that market mechanisms would play some sort of role, albeit a subordinate one, for at least a considerable period in the transition toward socialism. The real problem is the socio-economic logic inherent in market regulation of the economy. For, if there is no market rationality without market regulation, it also follows that there is no market regulation without the commodification of human labor-power.

Wage-labor and Market Regulation

ONE OF THE CENTRAL CLAIMS OF MARX’S CRITIQUE OF POLITICAL ECONOMY is that capitalist market rationality — expressed through the law of value according to which goods will tend to exchange proportionate to the socially necessary labor-time they represent — cannot operate unless labor-power is itself a commodity: “only where wage-labor is its basis does commodity production impose itself upon society as a whole.”¹¹ Without the formation of a labor market and the generalization of work for wages true market prices cannot be generated and the law of value cannot operate.

Why this is so can be seen by considering the relation to the market of peasant proprietors whose subsistence is not dependent on access to the market since they possess land and other means of production (e.g., livestock and tools). To the degree to which such a peasant household produces a share of its output for the market, we have production for exchange. The peasants discover the exchange value of these goods once they bring them to the market. But, because the peasant household is not separated from the means of production and subsistence (i.e. they can produce their own basic subsistence goods without entering the market), these commodities will not as a rule exchange at their market values.¹² Since the economic survival of peasant proprietors such as these does not depend upon exchange — i.e., they could withdraw from the market and simply produce directly for subsistence — the labor they devote to commodity production is not regulated by the market. Much of their work is concrete, private labor producing use values for direct consumption. As a result, it is entirely rational for them to produce for the market (in order to procure certain use values available through market exchange) even when the price they receive for their goods in no way corresponds to their costs of subsistence during the time they devote to such production (i.e. when, in market terms, they are taking a “loss”). Similarly, because of the limits of their demand for the use values they procure through market exchange, they may equally refrain from increasing output for the market even when prices for their goods are rising. In short, these peasant transactions in the market are not governed by market prices and market rationality. Operating according to a non-market rationality (because they possess means of production and subsistence) they may choose to continue devoting some of their labor-time to production for the market, or even increase their market output, despite declining prices for their goods, just as they may refrain from increasing market output in the face of rising prices. Since their survival is not market-dependent, their economic behavior is not market-regulated; they are under no compulsion to conform to the standards of the market. Not being separated from the means of production and subsistence, in other words, they can make concrete choices about how to allocate their labor-time, choices which are governed by use-value considerations. As a result, they can engage in economic behavior which defies market rationality by not conforming to price signals. Their labor thus remains predominantly private and concrete, not social and abstract.

Things are radically different, however, where producers are market-dependent, i.e. where they cannot survive except through the systematic marketing of their output and/or their labor-power. Here the products of concrete labor must exchange with money at a price sufficient to enable the producers to reproduce themselves. The option of withdrawing from the market in order to produce use-values for direct consumption no longer pertains. Only now — under circumstances of

systematic market dependence — do we have production governed and regulated by exchange, production where the survival of producers depends upon organizing their concrete labor processes according to the standards of productivity (socially necessary labor) which predominate on the market. All inputs into the production process now pass through the market and are monetized (receive a money price). And only now can it be said that the market regulates the allocation of labor and the goods and services it produces: “the product assumes the form of a commodity only — as a result of the fact that the entire product has been transformed into an exchange-value and that also all the ingredients necessary for its production enter it as commodities.”¹³

This illuminates why Marx laid such stress upon the separation of the producers from the means of production — what he called the primitive accumulation of capital — as the key to the rise of capitalism. Only where millions of people are made market-dependent, only when they have no means of survival beyond the sale of their labor-power, only when a mass market in wage-labor has been created, can the law of value come to determine the economic regulation of society. Only in such social-historical circumstances is the price of labor truly determined by market processes. And only then can we be said to have “rational market prices,” prices based upon the market determination of the values of commodities.¹⁴ The precondition of market prices, in other words, is the formation and existence of a labor market. And this requires an originary, or “primitive” process of accumulation which “is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production.”¹⁵ The unique “rationality” of a market-regulated economic system thus presupposes a whole history of bloody struggle to destroy customary rights and communal forms of property which constitute alternatives to the market, a struggle which continues today in large parts of the world. Consequently, when people struggle for social rights and entitlements, when they try to guarantee non-market access to goods and services, they run counter to the logic of the market.

This is why the rationality of socialism — which grows out of the political economy of the working class — is incompatible with the logic of the market. The political economy of the working class is defined by the struggle against the market in human labor; it is about breaking market-dependence and severing the chain that binds the right to subsist to the sale and purchase of labor-power on the market. And it is about overcoming the separation of the direct producers from the means of production and subsistence.¹⁶ But guaranteeing social subsistence rights and reuniting the producers with the means of production involves a rupture with regulation by the market. This is why the inner logic of socialism, its inherent rationality, is an anti-market one.

Some market socialists do advocate at least partially detaching the economic reproduction of people from the labor market. They talk of

guaranteed annual incomes and/or a “social wage” package that guarantees elements of social consumption. But in so doing, they fail to come to terms with how this conflicts with market rationality. To guarantee subsistence or to subsidize labor with elements of a guaranteed “social wage,” means partly determining the value of labor-power through non-market means; it means in short the partial de-commodification of labor-power.¹⁷ And that, as neoclassical economists never tire of pointing out, is to distort market prices and undermine market rationality. Like socialist planning, this “half-way house” position is susceptible to the criticism that in abandoning market regulation it too renounces all rational means of economic calculation.¹⁸ In such scenarios, market socialism encounters its most basic internal contradiction: the fundamental incompatibility of socialist and market principles.

Most market socialists fail to see this because they have not come to terms with the deep structures of the market. By conceiving the market as merely an allocative mechanism, market socialists engage in a fetishism which treats the market as a thing, as a technical instrumentality of allocation, rather than a necessary form in which alienated social relations manifest themselves. As a result, they end up trying to separate market forms from their substantial content — wage-labor, commodification and exploitation — and their inevitable consequences. Yet, if they truly want a “decentralized price mechanism” which regulates the allocation of goods and services and the labor that produces them by means of price signals, then market socialists must accept market-determined wages and the “market fluctuations” — layoffs and unemployment — that come with them. Little surprise then when Brus and Laski, long-time advocates of market socialism, come to the conclusion that if the market is to regulate economic life then “not only the original Marxist promise has to be cast aside as anachronistic, but also the very concept of transition from capitalism to socialism.”

Social Synthesis and the Exchange Abstraction

TO TALK ABOUT AN ECONOMIC SYSTEM BEING REGULATED BY THE MARKET involves accepting its form of social synthesis, the systemic form taken by the social practices through which a society reproduces itself as a relatively coherent whole.¹⁹ And this has much more systematic consequences than market socialists are usually prepared to acknowledge. To see what is at stake let's begin with the founding moment of social synthesis through market exchange: the transformation of concrete into abstract labor.

Concrete labor refers to the unique productive activity of an individual or a complex of individuals who constitute a given economic unit. Abstract labor, on the other hand, indicates the social value of that labor as it is determined through the exchange of commodities and formation

of prices on the market. Concrete labor discovers its social value only after production, in the course of market exchange.²⁰ Ten hours of concrete labor expended producing a commodity may be worth only eight hours of average (or socially necessary) labor when it comes to exchanging with other products of labor. The market thus translates individual labor into units of social labor, concrete labor into abstract labor. And it does so by abstracting from the concretely unique and sensuous features of each and every act of concrete labor. Market exchange flattens out the qualitative uniqueness of each and every labor process by translating them into interchangeable units of the same homogeneous stuff — human labor in the abstract. A capitalist market economy thus integrates the multiple labor processes that produce commodities through a real process of abstraction which extinguishes the qualitative differences among things (and acts of labor) by transforming them into merely quantitatively distinct units of the same thing: abstract labor expressed in money. According to market principles, all that differentiates things is what they cost; everything has its price; everything is commensurable and exchangeable. Moreover, the basic form of market rationality — the exchange abstraction which measures and quantifies — becomes the ruling conceptual paradigm precisely because it does describe, albeit fetishistically, the real mechanism of social synthesis.

But social synthesis also entails the organized relations between human beings and the larger natural environment. The market, however, can deal with the natural environment in only one way: as a detached object world capable of commodification. Market-regulated economic activity involves abstraction from the qualitatively unique features of the natural environment — lakes, rivers, air, species, minerals — since it is governed by purely quantitative considerations appropriate to minimizing costs and maximizing profits. So, the destruction of whole chunks of the biosphere can be committed according to market “rationality.”²¹ To regulate our interactions with the natural environment on other than market principles — according to some definition of health and needs, for example — would once again be to break from market principles and to undermine the formation of market prices. Indeed, according to market rationality, if we do not have a safe, healthy, biodiverse natural environment it can only be because we don’t in fact need it. Let me pause briefly to consider this often-ignored point about market economics.

According to market economics, need exists in one form and one form alone: market demand. All other talk of needs is idle, indeed metaphysical: no market demand, no need. The sheer absurdity of this view has been pointed out by countless critics: if a shortage of some good drives up prices and reduces aggregate demand and consumption, then this can only mean that the “need” for that good has diminished. Thus, when we find food being exported from a famine region while people starve, this is because the food is going where the need is. The starving

people do not exist from the standpoint of “rational calculation” since they are not market participants. According to market fundamentalism, there is only one way of rationally discussing needs: in terms of the language of the market. What cannot be measured in market terms, in this case the need of starving people for food, cannot be calculated; it is hence irrational, beyond the pale of market logic.²² There is, in market terms, nothing perverse about this. That people may be starving is a non-economic problem; it is not one that enters into the rationality of market calculation.

This brings us to two other points about social synthesis through the exchange abstraction. The first has to do with the human agents who are being coordinated in this way and the type of decisions they are capable of making. Inevitably, these are atomized individuals who can only undertake private (and self-seeking) economic calculations. After all, markets are inherently incapable of providing meaningful information about the social effects of economic transactions. However much people might privately care about these effects, price signals do not relay information about them. Yet, virtually all private economic acts have wider public effects, or what modern economics likes to call “externalities.” But these ostensibly “external” effects — the pumping of tons of pollutants into the air and water systems and the disease and respiratory illnesses thereby created, to take but one example — cannot be calculated in terms of the information that markets provide.²³ When I buy a household cleaning product, the market does not price the cost of the damage production and consumption of this item inflicts upon the environment. This cost is “external” to my market transaction. Yet, even if the decentralized price system cannot calculate these public costs, they are real nonetheless, just like the needs of starving people for food. But these costs, like those needs, necessarily fall outside the system of market rationality. The market thus synthesizes human activity in ways that negate real needs and ignore real social costs which can’t be expressed through the atomized calculation of monetary prices. It is no overstatement, therefore, when two welfare economists claim that “markets bias and obstruct the flow of essential information, promote antisocial incentives over equally powerful motivations that need not be socially destructive, and generate increasingly inefficient allocations of resources.”²⁴

And this brings me to a second point. Markets also provide no information relevant to long-term, large-scale investments. Because they work in terms of short-term price signals, markets do not provide rational criteria which could guide the building of roads, sewers, steel mills, communication networks, schools, theaters, parks, clothing factories, childcare centers, hospitals, bakeries or hydroelectric stations. Such investment decisions require long-run estimates of collective needs. Not only do present prices give us almost no helpful information in that regard, but any major investment decision alters economic data by creat-

ing changes in demand, generating new incomes, potentially altering consumer preferences, and so on. Indeed, this is one reason why great economic crises are generally bound up with the dynamics of accumulation and investment. When capitalists or governments undertake such decisions, then, they turn to a range of sources of non-market information, just as would those engaged in a democratic socialist planning process.

Recognizing that markets negate real needs, ignore precipitous human, social and environmental costs, and cannot provide for long-term investments, Karl Polanyi argued that no society could truly reproduce itself through markets and their ostensible self-regulation. Markets must be embedded in a wider network of social processes and institutions if human beings and their natural and social environments are to survive the effects of the market system itself. But, before market socialists declare that precisely this is their point — that markets can be integrated into different sets of social processes — they ought to remember Polanyi's related point: where the economy is regulated in and through the market, these processes and institutions must inevitably be subordinated to market principles.²⁵

That's why market socialists get more than they bargained for in their compromise with the market. For, as I have shown, inherent in market regulation and its principles of social synthesis is the commodification of labor-power and great chunks of the natural environment; the ever-present threat of unemployment, hunger and poverty; great socially destructive "external" effects which can undermine the quality of human life; and repeated economic crises which entail immense suffering. For market socialists to reply that they intend to "correct" these defects in the market economy through principles of social regulation is to miss the whole point. Genuine social regulation involves the subordination of market transactions to non-market principles. And that means a break with market rationality and the decentralized and autonomous price system it requires. This is the reason so many market socialists regularly collapse back into mainstream market principles, often of the most vulgar kind. And it's why market socialists are presented with a fundamental choice they prefer to evade: capitulate to market principles and, with Brus and Laski, declare the end to socialist objectives; or accept the need to subordinate market transactions to non-market principles and thereby break with the notion of moving toward socialism by market means.

Socialism and the Political Economy of the Working Class

THOSE OF US WHO PROMOTE ANTI-MARKET POLITICS and defend the notion of democratic socialist planning are regularly criticized by market socialists as abstract utopians unwilling to come to terms with the real prob-

lems of any economic system. Alec Nove, for example, castigates anti-market socialists as “wild-eyed dogmatists” clinging to a “fundamentalist-millennarian” worldview.²⁶ There is an irony about this charge, however, given that, from the standpoint of materialist criticism, it is market socialists who are the abstract utopians.

Materialist critique begins with Hegel’s dictum that dialectical theory can only be “its own time apprehended in thought.” In order to avoid flights of fancy and abstract speculation, critical theory must proceed immanently; rather than appeal to transcendent universal principles, it must identify the social movement toward a new society within the framework of the old. “We do not wish to anticipate the world dogmatically,” wrote the young Marx, “but rather wish to find the new world through criticism of the old.” The non-speculative (hence materialist) revolutionary critic develops the most radical possibilities of the future “out of the form inherent in existing actuality.”²⁷ Indeed, only such an approach is consistent with the revolutionary principle of self-emancipation of the oppressed. Whereas purely speculative thought attempts to prescribe abstract ideals to the social world, materialist criticism immerses itself in actual social processes and conflicts in order to bring to consciousness those inner dynamics which signify a rupture with the old order.

Rather than derive basic principles of socialist economy abstractly, Marx thus investigated the actual forms of working class struggle against capital which prefigured the new society. In his Inaugural Address of the Working Men’s International Association (September 1864) he did so by pointing to two recent victories for “the political economy of the working class”: the restriction of the working day through the Ten Hours Bill and the creation of cooperative factories run by workers. Marx argued that both of these victories (however qualified and distorted they would inevitably be within the framework of the old society), embodied principles that pointed toward the social forms of a socialist society. The first principle — reduction in the working day — spoke to the drive of socialist society toward a new economy of time, one designed to maximize time beyond the constraints of socially necessary labor, “free time” which could be devoted to individual self-development. The second principle — cooperative production — prefigured the social relations of a society in which workers collectively manage their labor. Indeed, cooperative production pointed toward the communal exchange relation that would characterize a socialist society; one based on the exchange of activities rather than merely the exchange of things.²⁸ And such a form of cooperative production and exchange entailed the drive toward “social production controlled by social foresight” in opposition to “the blind rule of the laws of supply and demand.”²⁹

Nothing about these principles is abstract and arbitrary, Marx insisted; they are the actual basis of the political economy of working class opposition to capitalism. Every struggle of workers to limit the effects of

market regulation — to stop layoffs, preserve jobs, defend socialized health care and so on — entails an implicit break with the laws of the market. Moreover, again and again, these struggles move working class people toward taking cooperative control of the means of production (in their widest sense). Every such struggle points toward a form of “production controlled by social foresight.”

We can see these social dynamics at work in recent movements. In South Korea over the past year, thousands of workers have been involved in factory occupations to protest layoffs. At Hyundai in August of 1998 between 5,000 and 10,000 workers — children, spouses and parents of the workers among them — seized a plant and staged a dramatic confrontation with riot police. In a similar spirit, in the Lampung area of Indonesia, major struggles over land have broken out. Landless people have seized parts of large estates and, in one case, crowds of people chopped down 75 hectares of sugar cane on an estate owned by the Salim Group, one of Indonesia’s largest business conglomerates, to protest land thefts by the company in 1992. Closer to home, auto workers at Volvo in Halifax, Nova Scotia occupied their plant in October of 1998 to protest layoffs and inadequate severance agreements. Two weeks later, anti-poverty activists in Toronto took over a hospital which had been mothballed as a result of health-care cuts, demanding that it be converted to housing for homeless people.

Struggles such as these reactivate the political economy of the working class identified by Marx. They counterpose a political economy of cooperation and social planning to the devastating effects of “the blind rule of the laws of supply and demand.” They thus prefigure the de-commodification of labor-power and the emancipation of workers from the wages system. To generalize what is implicit in these struggles, to help raise them to the level of a conscious political program, is one of the key tasks of critical theorists. But market socialism, with its fetishistic view of the market as a neutral mechanism (or even as a really free space), is an obstacle to building the kinds of anti-capitalist movements these struggles require.

A symptom of political retreat — of despair at the collapse of the (non-socialist) Stalinist regimes in Eastern Europe and the decline, however partial, of working class movements elsewhere — market socialism represents a contraction of intellectual and political horizons among left intellectuals and politicians. Having abandoned the radical possibility of working class democracy and socially planned production for need, market socialists have tried to find something marginally better than unbridled capitalism. For the reasons I have outlined, they have — necessarily — failed. Today, as the harsh realities of globalizing capital provoke resistance to the market, socialists need to attend once more to one of the tasks outlined by the young Marx: not to “face the world in a doctrinaire fashion with a new principle, declaring, ‘Here is truth, kneel

here!” But, rather, “to find the new world through criticism of the old.”³⁰ But rather than pointing us to the new, market socialism clings to the old. Anticipations of the new world, however, are to be found today in an array of battles against subordination to the world market. The role of critical theory is to assist these struggles as they reach for theoretical and practical formulation, to advance in other words “a self-understanding . . . of the age concerning its struggles and wishes.”³¹ And that can only mean the recovery — and the extension and elaboration under new historical circumstances — of the revolutionary critique of the market in order to assist the actualization of that something of which “the world has long dreamed”: a society of freely associated producers needing neither market nor state to rule them from above.

NOTES

1. See David McNally, “Globalization on Trial: Crisis and Class Struggle in East Asia,” *Monthly Review*, September 1998 and William K. Tabb, “The East Asian Financial Crisis,” *Monthly Review*, June 1998.

2. See, for example, David Wessel and Bob Davis, “‘Chinese Solution’ begins to hold sway,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 4, 1998; Barrie McKenna, “IMF eyes tournament on capital,” *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), October 5, 1998; Paul Krugman, “A Letter to Malaysia’s Prime Minister,” *Fortune*, September 28, 1998; and Alan Freeman, “Schroeder calls for controls on capital flow,” *Globe and Mail* (Toronto), February 2, 1999.

3. As cited by David Crane, “No easy way to curb currency speculation,” *Toronto Star*, February 13, 1999.

4. The classic study of that core of Marx’s socialism is Hal Draper, *Karl Marx’s Theory of Revolution*, v. 1 (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977).

5. Alan Carling, “Rational Choice Marxism” in *Approaches to Marx*, eds. Mark Cowling, Lawrence Wilde and Milton Keynes (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1989), p. 194.

6. Diane Elson “Market Socialism or Socialization of the Market?” *New Left Review* 172 (November-December 1988), pp. 11, 27

7. Włodzimierz Brus and Kazimierz Laski, *From Marx to the Market* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), Preface, n.p., p. 151.

8. For market socialist works that praise the Mises-Hayek critique of socialist planning see Alec Nove, *The Economics of Feasible Socialism* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983); Geoff Hodgson, *The Democratic Economy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1984); and Robin Blackburn, “Fin de Siecle: Socialism After the Crash,” *New Left Review* 185 (January-February 1991).

9. Ludwig von Mises, “Economic Calculation in the Socialist Commonwealth” in his *Collectivist Economic Planning*, ed. Friedrich von Hayek (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1935), pp. 105, 111, 112, 105.

10. See David McNally, *Against the Market: Political Economy, Market Socialism and the Marxist Critique* (London: Verso, 1993), Ch.6.

11. Karl Marx, *Capital*, v. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1976), p. 733.

12. I am at this level of explanation ignoring the conceptual distinction between prices of production and market values as it does not affect my argument. For one helpful explication of the issues see Makoto Itoh, *Value and Crisis* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1980), Ch. 4

13. Karl Marx, *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 3, trans. Jack Cohen and S. W. Ryazanskaya (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), p. 74.

14. Of course, a society dominated by the market and the commodity form is one in which value relations rule within the production process itself despite the fact that the realization of values occurs in the sphere of exchange. As Marx puts it: "their character as values has already to be taken into consideration during production," *Capital*, v. 1, p. 166.

15. Marx, *Capital*, v. 1, p. 875.

16. Inherent in this, I would argue, is a concept of the producers which includes so-called "domestic labor," i.e. one which includes those forms of social labor which have not been commodified. Indeed, this too is what it means to emancipate labor from the commodity form. Genuine decommodification of social and economic life thus raises a series of radical challenges to the gendering of production and gendered divisions of labor.

17. It is important to emphasize that in capitalist societies, much of this partial de-commodification is also functional to capital insofar as some of the costs of reproducing labor-power are socialized. In contrast, socialist de-commodification involves a rupture with the principles of market determination and regulation.

18. As Brus and Laski point out, Preface, n.p.

19. On the concept of social synthesis see Alfred Sohn-Rethel, *Intellectual and Manual Labor: A Critique of Epistemology* (London: MacMillan, 1978), p. 5.

20. As I have pointed out in note 13 above, productive enterprises perform a kind of "ideal commensuration" prior to exchange in which they attempt to produce according to market standards.

21. See John Foster, *The Vulnerable Planet: A Short Economic History of the Environment* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1994).

22. See Amartya Sen, *Poverty and Famines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 161-2.

23. The very language betrays the alienated social relations inherent in market regulation. After all, to treat environmental destruction and the disease and suffering it creates as "external" to individuals is clearly absurd by almost any meaningful criterion.

24. Robin Hahnel and Michael Albert, *Quiet Revolution in Welfare Economics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 218.

25. Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), pp. 71-3.

26. Nove, pp. 203, 42.

27. Karl Marx, Letter to Arnold Ruge, September 1843 in *Writing of the Young Marx on Philosophy and Society*, eds. Loyd D. Easton and Kurt H. Guddat (New York: Anchor Books, 1967), pp. 212, 213.

28. This point is nicely drawn out by Istvan Meszaros, *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1995), pp. 758-60.

29. Karl Marx, "Inaugural Address of the International Working Men's Association" in Marx, *The First International and After*, trans. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), pp. 79-80, translation adjusted. See also Michael Lebowitz, *Beyond Capital: Marx's Political Economy of the Working Class* (New York: St. Martin's Press), Ch. 4, and McNally, *Against the Market*, pp. 184-97.

30. Marx, Letter to Ruge, pp. 214, 212.

31. *Ibid.*, 215.

Radicalism and Indigenous Struggles: **An Interview with Subcomandante** **Insurgente Marcos**

Interview Conducted by Kerry Appel

Note: The sentence structure and use of language of Subcomandante Marcos were translated as directly as possible into English. Some have suggested that I change the sentence structure and idiomatic expressions in order to make them more natural and more easily understood by the U.S. audience. I decided not to guess how Marcos might speak if he spoke English as a first language or to guess what expressions he might use. Besides, I don't believe it is in the best interests of the audience to try to make everything easy. There is a valid need for readers of this interview or for viewers of the video version to step out of the parameters of their own experiences slightly in order to hear and to understand what Marcos is saying.

I went to Chiapas in January 1997 to buy coffee and weavings from the indigenous communities. That's what I do these days. I went to Chiapas three years ago, in June 1994, as an artist who was curious about what an indigenous uprising had to do with a "free trade agreement." I produced a documentary on what I had found, and then I produced a second documentary and a third. I was eventually told by the United States and Mexican governments that I should "stay out of it" and "leave it to them." I was told that, as a private citizen, I had no business discussing economic, social, or political subjects with the indigenous peoples of Mexico or, apparently, discussing anything I had seen or heard in Mexico with U.S. citizens. I could only legally engage in cultural, recreational, health, or sports activities as a "tourist." Excuse me! I thought my activities were "cultural." In my mind I was doing "recreational activities." I was told by the Mexican government that, if I wanted to see Indians, I could see them in the markets or the museums. Then they kicked me out of Mexico.

It wasn't legal for them to kick me out of Mexico, so I have been

KERRY APPEL is Director (in a Fiduciary capacity) of the Human Bean Company. This interview / discussion is from a videotape he shot and conducted. It appears by permission of Appel, who owns the copyright (1997.) Translated by Kerry Appel and Anonymous. Visit www.thehumanbean.com.

returning in order to do business under the “free trade agreement.” My business is to be partners with indigenous people in Chiapas and to develop direct markets in the United States for the coffee and weavings that they produce in their communal villages. If they are going to annihilate the indigenous people of Mexico under the “free” trade agreements of the United States, then they can annihilate me as well. I guess the free trade agreements have, in their own unintended way, united the fates of me and, in various manners, countless other people around the world.

While in La Realidad, Chiapas, Mexico, on international trade business, I received a visit from Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos of the Zapatista National Liberation Army. I don’t know; perhaps I shouldn’t have talked to him. Perhaps I should have said, “I’m sorry. I don’t know if this falls within cultural, recreational, health or sports activities.”

Kerry Appel: *Where are we, what is the date, if you want to say, and what is going on right now with the peace process?*

Marcos: We are in La Realidad in the Lacandon Jungle of Chiapas, Mexico in the first days of January 1997. Approximately fifteen to twenty days ago we received a proposal from the government to modify the general law of the nation, which is the Political Constitution of the United Mexican States [CPEUM], to incorporate the demands of the indigenous peoples [pueblos] of Mexico, principally for autonomy in respect to their customs and their right to be citizens, like any other; because now, in Mexico, the indigenous people are second- or third-class citizens or not even citizens at all. The actual situation of that law is still to be defined. There are some accords that the government signed a year ago, in February 1996, that are still unfulfilled. On the fulfillment of those accords depends the future of the process of dialogue and negotiation. If the government cannot keep their word and their signature, because they did sign the accords, then it will be difficult to continue the process of peace in the long run.

A: *What will the Zapatistas do if the Initiative for Indigenous Culture and Rights is not accepted by President Zedillo and incorporated into the Mexican Constitution?*

M: As I explained before, the initiative to respect the rights and culture of indigenous peoples was signed by the representation of the Federal Government. In this case it is not a matter of whether or not Mr. Zedillo accepts or not a proposition, but whether his decision is to keep his word or not in regard to what he signed. This is not about a new initiative or a new demand of the EZLN [Zapatista Army of National Liberation]. This is about what he already negotiated in 1995 and what was signed by representatives of the Federal Power of Mr. Zedillo in the Dialogue of

San Andres on February 16, 1996. If Mr. Zedillo does not accept to fulfill these accords signed by his representation, then it means that he does not intend to fulfill his pact and that he has used the dialogue of negotiation as a pretext to gain time to seek a military solution to the conflict and to try to provoke the erosion of public opinion of the EZLN nationally and internationally. This strategy, to look for a favorable movement to get rid of the EZLN the fast way, as they call the military solution, is what they have intended for the last three years since 1994, with Mr. Salinas de Gortari, and later in 1995 and 1996 with Mr. Zedillo. Eventually, if they don't fulfill their word, it will put in definite crisis the dialogue of San Andres and the negotiation for peace between our rebel forces and the federal government.

A: *Why is this initiative so important to indigenous peoples and to the general population?*

M: Since Mexico got its independence from Spain it has had a series of conflicts, wars, and social movements that tried to rescue the Mexican nation and the rights of social groups: in the case of 1910, the peasants, when they demanded land, and later the workers movements that also gained great labor victories. But during this course of historical events that has been in practice since the independence of 1810 and until our time, there has been a sector of Mexico that is more than 10 percent of the population, that is, 10 to 12 million indigenous people, that has never been recognized within the nation as citizens. It is pretended that the indigenous are equal to any other citizens of the town or the countryside, and it is forgotten that they have their own culture and history and that they arrived here, or have been here, a long time before the conquest and the colonies and before Mexico's independence and Mexico's revolution. They have never had the opportunity to incorporate their rights. The fact of their demands being recognized in the highest law of the nation would signify the redefinition of the historical pact of the relationship that there is between the Mexican nation and one of its parts, in this case with the most historical and original part that was first in the formation of the Mexican nation. For the indigenous it would signify the culmination of a period that carries with it many centuries, to try to incorporate themselves with the modern world, whatever signifies modernization over history, without renouncing being indigenous, without transformation, converting or rendering, without leaving behind being Indians. And with their demand, the resistance of all these years, and now the armed demand, the other—in this case the government and Mexican society—would have to recognize them as being different and having a place in the national order. In respect to other social groups, not only in Mexico but in the rest of the world, we think that the demands of the EZLN in particular and the Indian peoples of Mexico in general put in first place the problem that's appearing in this time of

globalization. It's neoliberalism. At the same time that it tries to erase borders and globalize economies it begins to exclude social groups that aren't economically productive. And paradoxically, those social groups are the oldest and have the most historical tradition. I'm not referring only to the Latin American Indians but also to those of North America and to the ethnic groups and social groups that are in the rest of the world, the ones called minorities. I'm referring to indigenous people, migrants, homosexuals, lesbians, the youth, the women. Although difficult to categorize as minorities, they are treated as minorities that need to be done away with in different forms, sometimes by police persecution, sometimes by war, sometimes by forgetting them, which is what they are trying to do here and now in Mexico. In another way the demand of the indigenous people of Mexico agrees with universal demands of other social groups that demand respect for the life and way of being of every social group. It is not possible that in the modern world the only way to value a person is by their purchasing power or credit capacity. It is necessary to refer to history as to what makes a human being, or their dignity as we say in the EZLN, without converting them into nothing more than a consumer or producer or another number in profit indexes or the statistics of the multinational corporations. I think that is why many social groups in the world are interested in or attentive to what can happen here but, above all, to the word of the indigenous people of the EZLN in regard to what they have to say to the powers and to neoliberalism.

A: *People often talk about the struggle in Chiapas as if it were just a local struggle between indigenous peoples and the Mexican government in regard to poverty. What is this struggle really about and are there other protagonists involved besides the Mexican government?*

M: Well, lately the protagonism is global. It's not about a national problem. The effect of neoliberalism and the process of globalization is that it erases the borders for money and erases the borders for the problems. With this I mean to say that the fundamental problem that is in the Zapatista rebellion is not just an indigenous problem but also the problem of the excluded in this gigantic genocide that the big money and great financial powers of this world are doing that decides to exclude a part of the population at any cost, even at the cost of human lives. And this is repeated in Europe, in the United States, in Canada, in all the countries of Latin America, in Africa, in Asia, in Oceania; in all five continents there is this process of annihilation to shut out social groups and to concentrate on nothing more than the criteria of economic devaluation or productive devaluation, in this case, the power of purchase. The body of the Zapatista rebellious movement is a body fundamentally indigenous. We are speaking of a civil population that is 100 percent indigenous with four principal ethnic groups of Mexico: the ethnic Chol, the

ethnic Tzeltal, the ethnic Tzotzil, and the ethnic Tojolabal—Mayan peoples of the southeast of Mexico. And 99 percent of the regular combatant forces, the insurgents that we are, are indigenous and a small part of us are Mestizos. That is the body of the Zapatista rebellion, but the heart has to do with the problem of human dignity on the international level. It has to do with the problem of putting value back into one's word and giving feeling to the question of humanity. We insist that whatever defense of humanity is now a struggle against neoliberalism as it was before against fascism in the middle of this, the twentieth century that is about to end. We can say it that way, that the body of the Zapatista rebellion is indigenous and the heart of its rebellion is the dignity of all the "excluded" in the world that encounter power.

A: *Does Mr. Zedillo have the power to implement the accords on indigenous rights that resulted from the dialogue?*

M: He has various problems, no? Mr. Zedillo has the problem of a state party system; in this case it is concentrated in the Institutional Revolutionary Party [PRI], which is in a process of decomposition that is very acute. More than a political organization, it's more like a criminal organization that takes care of its differences and battles through crime and murder. The state party system is corrupt, it is involved in drug trafficking, it has a wake of deceit, of lies, and of loss of legitimacy with the Mexican nation. So Mr. Zedillo has to try to govern with a state party system that hasn't any credibility, and he has to try to convince them that he can govern, and if he can't convince them with reason he has to convince them with blows. So the possibility for Mr. Zedillo to fulfill the accords that came from the negotiations depends a lot on the power of the state political system to transform and to change without dragging the rest of the nation into the process of internal annihilation that it is suffering from. We are very skeptical that this is possible in the sense that there are so many interests in the government power that don't seem willing to do anything in order to transform things.

A: *Against the combined forces of the Mexican and North American governments what chances do the Zapatistas have of achieving their goals?*

M: Well, the opportunity that we have to triumph depends on other social groups in the world understanding the demands of the Zapatistas and understanding in what way they can benefit from living in a world that the Zapatistas attempt to live in. The Zapatistas have said clearly that they don't aspire to take charge of the government or to take power, but they aspire to recuperate the place that they deserve in the world that modern history wants to exclude. Not just the indigenous but other social groups that have been marginalized, excluded, and persecuted, such as the population of color, the black population of the U.S.A. receive that same process of discrimination, of persecution, of racism that indig-

enous people suffered, not just in Mexico, but in the rest of the American continent. It is difficult to say that the indigenous people of the U.S. and Canada have the same rights and prerogatives of other citizens or that they are treated in the same manner. In another manner, they are only accepted if they renounce their cultural values and if they incorporate, as you say, “the American way of life,” you know what I mean? They aren’t accepted as indigenous or with their historical process under the culture that they have. They have to live like “WASPs,” White Anglo Saxon Peoples. In that form they can’t live like their ancestors. They can’t have the same beliefs. They can’t be themselves ultimately. The modern system demands that they renounce their way of being and convert into another that wants to buy and sell, that is, what the modern system and global system produce. If we accomplish that these social groups in all the world, but above all in the countries that sustain the Mexican government which are the countries of the European Common Economy, the American Union [U.S.A.] and Canada—if we could convince these peoples above all, but also those governments, they would demand that the Mexican government adopt, reform, and actualize the relation of the institutions and Mexican society with the Indian people. In regard to our failure. If we were to fail and if we weren’t able to triumph in our demands it would mean a defeat not only for us but for others that are excluded and for other social groups that demand their place in history, and a defeat for humanity and a triumph of the global crime of this Fourth World War that we are now living.

A: *Press and government officials in the United States tell me, sometimes in subtle terms and sometimes not so subtly, that the indigenous peoples in Mexico aren’t ready for democracy as we are in the “first world” but need to establish “market economies” and “prosperity” first and democracy and liberty will someday follow. What’s your opinion?*

M: Well, our opinion is history’s opinion, that economic profits have never been a requisite for democratic rights. The governments and forms of governments and the conduct of politics in indigenous nations in all of the American continent can be a lesson to any modern political system. All the systems of government, the Mexican political system and the rest of the continent, didn’t have to base their development through war, for example, in the annihilation of others, in the market in the buying and selling of human beings. But, in the case of the indigenous people, the decisions are taken in majority accord or collectively in a discussion or communal assembly. Within the social groups of Mexico, the group that has the most economic problems, that is the most miserable, is the indigenous people, and they are the ones that have developed most their forms of government in what is referred to as democracy. The consensus and the search for accord and dialogue are things that are barely being discovered in modern political systems of neoliberalization but are things

that are many centuries old within the indigenous peoples. We think the process runs parallel, or, in any case, the opposite cannot have economic profits or social development if there are not political liberties that make possible the distribution of wealth. The access of social groups to health services, education, and nutrition are only possible in a democratic system that allows to be heard the majority of the population and social groups, but also allows to be heard the minorities, as they are now called, or other groups that are not representative of a social system or a nation but have a place in history. We say that in Mexico it will only be possible—this economic development in regard to treaties like NAFTA—will only be possible as a democratic system that permits participation of humans without losing their dignity and their history.

A: *Recently Mr. Zedillo had a meeting in New York with people from Wall Street, CNN, Chase Manhattan Bank, J.P. Morgan, New York Times, and so on. What did they speak of?*

M: Evidently it's about the Mexican country being up for sale to the "modern world," and Mr. Zedillo has become a sales agent, someone who is visiting other countries and other possible buyers to show a product that includes not just oil, in this case, the case of Mexico, but also the people and the history. What they did in that meeting was to bargain about the conditions of the merchandise that is now offered, which includes almost 100 million Mexicans and many centuries of history and many years of being independent, almost 200 years of independence. This is what was discussed. The big money of North America wants to buy the whole country and wants to know the condition of the merchandise. Mr. Zedillo, is committed to lie to them like any sales agent that knows he doesn't have good merchandise, that knows he has merchandise in crisis that can break down at any moment, and to dress up the product that he wants to offer to be able to put it on the market. It is simply an encounter between buyer and seller, that happened in New York with Mr. Zedillo, that was very well received by the North American press, the ones who didn't get distracted by Lady Diana's visit, so they could pay attention to Mr. Zedillo's visit as a visit by a salesman that comes to offer a product that it seems the big money of North America is interested in buying.

A: *I'd like to get your opinion here about whether the Mexican government is directed to some degree by the government of the United States in regard to the initiative on rights and culture of the indigenous. For example, if Zedillo wanted to give a just response, would the United States allow it?*

M: Well, more than depending on the United States, it depends on the great financial centers that also control that same United States government. The North American government has been converted into the police of a transnational government, the government of financial capi-

tal that is dedicated to obligate the countries and people of the world to comply with the production, payment, and financial quotas that are established in the financial centers. Evidently the global financial powers don't have any interest in a sector that is not productive for them, such as the indigenous sector, in respect to their land and their rights and their form of life, because they are not interested in human beings but in what these lands can produce. And that explains their interest in the oil and uranium that are in the forests of Chiapas, and the wood and the electricity, in all the natural resources that can be exploited at a low price and surrendered to them. If by that the indigenous are converted into an obstacle, large financial capital will try to eliminate them. All they lack is for the rest of the world to permit it.

A: *This struggle is sometimes hard for the average U.S. citizen to relate to personally. Some of the changes proposed by the Zapatistas would lead to profound changes in Mexican society and might also have some impact on U.S. society. Why should the average U.S. citizen support the goals of the Zapatistas?*

M: Well, I'm going to give you an example, the example of migrants in the American Union. A good percentage of inhabitants of other countries who migrate to the U.S.A. to look for work are from Mexico. A good percentage of those Mexicans that cross the border are indigenous. It's like that because, in their land, their communities don't have any rights or any possibility of life and they find themselves without options, they die in their lands, or migrate to other places to look for better economic positions. The ones who can't migrate or the ones taken prisoner by the SIN, the U.S. Immigration Service, or the border patrol have to stay in their communities and begin to convert into an unstable political factor. In no way can it be convenient for the North American people and government to have a country like Mexico that has converted into a time bomb with a possibility of a social explosion. Evidently, to recognize the indigenous rights and to comply with these rights would signify a reduction of the flow of immigrants into the U.S.A. and would politically stabilize the country and would be more productive or would have more possibilities for any economic projects or commercial interchange between our countries. What is occurring with the EZLN would repeat itself in other social groups and other Indian peoples, and would be in the south of their nation, to the south of North America, a process of social decomposition, of civil war very similar to the Yugoslavia of today and to Lebanon of the last decade, where there are so many groups that they don't know who to shoot at, or where, or who to negotiate with or to dialogue with. It starts to be a "scrambled Molotov cocktail" that isn't thousands of kilometers away such as in the case of Europe, of the Middle East, but is located on the other side of the border. The possibility of a civil war in Mexico or a process of decomposition close to a civil war would signify an

increase in immigration to the United States as a consequence, an increase to their police and military to control this immigration, a reduction of welfare, social costs to the American government, and a series of consequences in instability of the markets and inflation; public insecurity that would necessarily touch the American people, especially the middle class. All this could be avoided if Mexico would open the channels of political participation in a way that the differences or the discords that exist in social sectors could have causeways of political participation and wouldn't have to bring about violence or wouldn't have to become criminals or delinquents. That's all.

A: *That's all?*

M: I don't know—the last question?

A: *There are three more questions if you have more patience with me.*

M: OK.

A: *How can people outside of Mexico support the struggle of the Zapatistas?*

M: Well, we think there are many ways. The first and most important is to understand what is going on here. It's not about a political group that has a series of demands and aspirations. We are not a political party. We're an organized people. We represent hundreds of thousands of indigenous, almost a million in the southeast of Mexico, and we also have the message that repeats the restlessness of the other millions of indigenous people of the rest of the country. To understand this is to be able to resist the media campaigns that try to reduce our movement into a movement of political interest or a political group that tries to obtain their own advantages. Another way would be to send economic aid or humanitarian aid to the indigenous communities, not to the EZLN but to indigenous communities that are men, women and children who can be seen in your documentary [*El Viaje del Relampago Rojo*] who are resisting simply because they don't want the problems to continue the same or to be immediately resolved. They want a profound solution, and this is why they decided to refuse governmental aid and to live only with what they have, with what they can work with, and with help that they can get from other villages. And the third way that we say to help is to know or learn that the struggle of Zapatismo is only a symptom of a worldwide struggle that exists, of the excluded groups to recuperate their place in history, and that all these people, men and women, who are in other parts of the world and struggle within their nations and within their social groups, demand also to take back the place that they deserve in the modern world.

A: *There are those who should know, who they say the chief executive officers of multinational corporations don't give a damn about human*

rights but only care about maximizing profits. What could you say to convince them to incorporate more human values into their bottom line?

M: They aren't going to be able to capitalize these profits if they don't respect human dignity. If they are going to encounter that logic of profit in a completely broken or annihilated world they are going to have great riches and no way to circulate them because there will not be any consumers. There will not be any producers. The world will be divided between the dead and the criminals. It would be the worst nightmare that could be imagined in any movie of science fiction. When the big money of multinational corporations bets the annihilation of the people, the rape of human rights, thinking that it will bring profits, it trades the future for a present that will be very apt to fly away like a gust of wind. The moment that all those people revolt or are finally annihilated, no market, commercial or financial, will be able to sustain itself in that way. In reality what they are doing in the long run, the multinational corporations, is sacrificing their success, their prestige, and their economic well being.

A: *This question is more personal. Has living here in Chiapas with the indigenous peoples changed you and, if so, how?*

M: Well, first it was a process of colliding. We came from an urban culture, and the urban culture, above all, teaches you speak, "you must speak, speak, speak and nothing to listen to." You don't learn to listen, only to speak and to impose your point of view. At the time, we came upon a culture that was different, and as much as you spoke and argued no one understood you. You had to detain yourself and learn to hear, to understand, to learn to listen to a language and learn what it had to say. It wasn't just that but to learn the world, how it was organized, and how they explain to themselves their world and their history. The principal result of this encounter was recognizing that we had much to learn, almost nothing to teach, and the possibility of whether the modern world would be able to remember that part of history or that part of their world, of the modern world, that was becoming forgotten but of which it had much to learn. That, finally, the world was sacrificing and was losing a lot at the time it forgot these people, and would gain more by remembering and recognizing that all those people have a lot to teach and from whom they have much to learn. If I could summarize generally what it signifies for Marcos, the encounter with the Indian people, they converted him from teacher to student and they taught him how to listen and to try to understand what is behind words, and not only the sounds.

A: *Is there any message you'd like to give to the audience?*

M: I don't know. Who is the audience?

A: *Well, this could be on TV, it could be transcribed, it could . . .*

Marcos's message to the audience:

What we would like to tell them in the name of the people is to not forget the struggle even though in the media, the Indians are only news when they are dead, armed, or commit a crime. This daily struggle of all these indigenous men and women is a struggle that also has a mirror and dignity in other parts of the world. We are not the only ones. There are other social groups and other people that are struggling. It would also be good if they would pay attention to those social groups, no?

Finally, that our struggle is a struggle for dignity, for human dignity, and that it is also the duty of any human being wherever they are. It is not important the color of their skin, their culture or their language. What is important is to struggle to be better.

Film Review

Chiapas: Foreshadowing a Massacre

Reviewed by Norm Diamond

WHEN THE SLAUGHTER OF UNARMED REFUGEES IN ACTEAL, a village in Chiapas, Mexico, occurred in December, 1997, two motion pictures exploring its roots were already in final editing. John Sayles' *Men With Guns* came out within weeks. Nettie Wild's *A Place Called Chiapas* has now been released.

Although filmed before the slaughter, both movies shed light, albeit of a limited sort, on how we might understand such a horrific occurrence. Some kinds of explanation, those that appeared in the press and in government statements, don't illuminate much. Instead, they feed our hopelessness and form part of a conservative agenda. To wring our hands over human nature, for instance, doesn't get us very far. We already know the beastliness humans are capable of; the question is what conditions bring it out.

Attributing the massacre to longstanding ethnic feuds, "just Indians killing Indians," the Mexican government's first response, promotes a racist stereotype and seems to say that little or nothing can be changed in the world. The cynicism of these "explanations" is a way to avoid examining social and economic forces. The real conditions of people's lives go a lot further toward explaining what happened. They also open the way to seeking alternatives and activities to make things better.

The good bishop of Chiapas, Samuel Ruiz, who also appears in *A Place Called Chiapas*, called the slaughter "a massacre long-announced." Both films provide graphic indications that he was right. The massacre was predictable and could have been prevented. Both films, however, have a cynicism of their own.

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To review the event very briefly, 60 men, armed with heavy-caliber weapons, invaded a refugee camp for families already driven from their villages. For four hours, they hunted people down in the surrounding hills after destroying the plastic tarps that were the only shelter. Then they systematically mutilated the bodies with machetes. 45 were killed, of whom 21 were women and 15 were children. 17 were wounded but managed to hide; 8 of them were children.

We know now it was the Mexican army that trained and furnished weapons to the killers, so-called “paramilitaries.” It’s clear also that the state government was aware of their assault ahead of time. Police set up roadblocks to aid them and keep potential observers away. After an international outcry, some local officials were charged with direct participation in the killing. All of the dead and wounded were Tzotzil Indians. The killers were also Tzotzil Indians.

Tzotziles appear in Nettie Wild’s film, along with four other indigenous groups of the region. If I recognized them correctly, they were Tzeltals, Tojolabales, Zoques and Choles. We see them in the clothing distinctive to each group and overhear snatches of their languages. Oddly, the filmmaker never thinks to ask about their cultures, their ways of life: about how decisions are made in their communities, about how land is owned, about the role of women. Thus we learn next to nothing about what they’re fighting for, about why they’re supporters or opponents of the Zapatista uprising.

Indigenous people are also in John Sayles’ movie. Indeed, it would be difficult to film the rebellion in that region without featuring them. Again we see people in ethnic dress and hear their speech. Sayles, too, is far from recognizing the relevance of their culture. English-speaking audiences tend to think the people on the screen are speaking Spanish when they’re speaking Mayan languages.

BOTH FILMS MANIFEST A NEWLY-FASHIONABLE WAY OF VIEWING THE WORLD, a kind of discouraged leftism. They’re sympathetic to “the people” without really looking at who the people are. And they’re cynical about any organized efforts to improve people’s lives. The title of Sayles’ movie, *Men With Guns*, pretty much equates the liberation fighters with the government soldiers. They’re presented equally as outsiders, with “the people” caught in between.

Sayles’ movie is fictional, meant to generalize about the region as a whole. Wild’s is a documentary, spending time with the Zapatistas in particular. She saw and shows the support they have among the people. But she, too, distances herself from the guerrillas while never really engaging them. She never asks what vision they have for the future, how they would like to see society organized, how the ways they struggle may be shaped not only by some sort of power drive but by their vision. Instead, she implies, almost insinuates, a criticism that they can’t militarily protect their supporters in areas far away from their strongholds. This may or may not have merit, but seems to be in the film mainly so we won’t think she’s a Zapatista fellow-traveller.

For both Wild and Sayles, “the people” form an undifferentiated poor and exploited class. This is what earns the filmmakers’ sympathy and is all the explanation they think they need. There’s a kind of economism at work here, a simplistic reduction of multifaceted people living in complex communities, to narrow ciphers: They’re oppressed and therefore they revolt. (That’s Wild.) Or they’re oppressed, that’s the way things are, there’s no way out, and trying to change things only makes them worse. (That’s Sayles.)

Economic factors are relevant, of course, but they have a qualitative and not just quantitative weight. They work through the specifics of people's lives and social structures. Oppression is textured and nuanced. Sometimes it happens in a way that enables revolt. Sometimes it breeds a relative passivity or even a turning inward against oneself or one's own community.

Exploring what's really going on in the region would have meant taking seriously the rebellious communities and the guerrillas' own self-understanding. It's five years now since the Zapatistas announced their presence. Their rebellion was long-brewing, but they timed it to coincide with the first day of the North American Free Trade Agreement. They did so to call attention to the consequences in their own communities of the economic forces behind NAFTA.

In Chiapas, unleashing those market forces has meant a loss of land for the indigenous peoples. It's meant their crafts have been undercut. It's meant declining wages when they work on the cattle ranches or coffee plantations. It's meant widespread unemployment and the breakup of families and communities.

NAFTA explicitly requires an end to government subsidies of corn, coffee and cotton, the key crops of the indigenous peoples of Chiapas. Having long ago been forced to the rocky soils of the mountain slopes, they are unable to compete with crops produced in the more fertile Mexican valleys or the U.S. heartland or delta. For the Indians, it's harder to sell what they produce and harder to obtain currency to buy what they need.

As a consequence of NAFTA, the *ejidos*, communally-owned land formerly guaranteed by the Mexican Constitution, are being turned into private property. Required by NAFTA, the Mexican Congress rewrote the Constitution. People are being forced to sell their land and wander in search of jobs.

THESE SAME FORCES THAT EXPLAIN THE REBELLION ARE BEHIND THE MASSACRE. The paramilitaries are a new social grouping, the direct result of international capital. They are young men with no land, unable to find work. They are the ones left behind when their fathers have had to migrate. Having neither land nor jobs, they've not been part of communal work. As the *ejidos* disintegrate, they're not being socialized into the collective decision-making that's characterized these communities since long before the European invasion. They are a new phenomenon in the Chiapas highlands: still living in what's left of their family homes but with few roots in their traditions.

They're also being used. The guns and training they've received, the extortion they collect from their neighbors, are part of the Mexican government's agenda in the area. After the Zapatista uprising, the Mexican army moved into Chiapas in force. Since Acteal, they've continued to augment their troops, increasingly with weapons and training supplied by the United States. Their tactics, using the paramilitaries, are to destroy people's crops and tools, to take away the futures of rebellious communities or make them dependent on the state and market.

The Zapatistas continue to sound an alarm against the further spread of the so-called "free market." Movies that miss this point, however attractively packaged, however sympathetic in the abstract to "the people," haven't got much of a clue. As we commemorate Acteal through these films, we should be recognizing forces that affect our own lives, forces here that we need to try to change. The massacre was not just a local event in a far-off place, but a direct consequence of the capitalist New World Order.

A Misleading PBS Documentary

Where Did Paul Robeson Stand?

Barry Finger

The myth of Paul Robeson, heroic defender of his people victimized by the racists ignores a substantial historical record, a record of Robeson's active support over a forty year period of Stalinism and its horrors.

HERBERT HILL, from the PBS cutting room floor

PAUL ROBESON'S TRAGEDY, WHILE NOT QUITE SHAKESPEAREAN IN SWEEP, still has the poignancy of a cautionary tale both for the left that was and the left that is still to be. For, if told honestly, this is an enormously appealing and no less equally disturbing drama of a towering figure of twentieth century cultural life brought low by all the poisons of reaction and racism that still infect the bloodstream of American politics. It is the story of a man who — unlike so many of his contemporaries — refused to temporize, to capitulate, or to apologize in the face of repression and who could answer the impertinence of his tormentors with words which will forever inspire admiration: "Because my father was a slave and my people died to build this country ... I am going to stay here and be a part of it just like you. And no fascist-minded people will drive me from it. Is that clear?" But it is also the story of a man who could heroically face down racism and racist convention in his professional and personal life while at the same time freely compromising his critical faculties and revolutionary instincts by his unflinching devotion to a totalitarian cause utterly unworthy of his loyalties.

Sadly the two hour review of Robeson's career, on the 100th anniversary of his birth, aired by PBS in February 1999 as part of the "American Masters" series, largely contents itself with the history of the McCarthyite assault on liberty, of blacklists and enforced isolation. This documentary, directed by St. Claire Bourne and produced by Chiz Schultz, bears the ominous title of "Paul Robeson—Here I Stand," ominous, that is, because the adoption of the film's title from that of Robeson's own autobiography could only arouse suspicions of a somewhat less than fully balanced review. Such suspicions would be confirmed by the time devoted to the sentimental reminiscences of Ossie Davis, Pete Seeger, Howard Fast, et al., — whose folksy wisdom was redolent of the glory days of Popular Front

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Stalinism. But the task at hand for the honest historian and documentarian was neither celebration nor vindication. It is rather to braid two discomfiting truths: the truth about victimization and the equally important truth about the moral and political turpitude of American Stalinism; the truth about the provisionality of liberty under capitalist democracy and the truth about Communism's totalitarian betrayals. To do less is to relate a half-truth and a half-truth is unavoidably tantamount to a full apologia.

But the presence in the PBS documentary of Herbert Hill, a singular personality of the anti-Stalinist left, long familiar to the readers of these pages as a scourge of racist and reactionary trade union practices, suggested the possibility, however attenuated, of an honest debate and discussion. Hill, after all, established his credentials by championing the cause of black liberation not only against Stalinism, but against the shameful and self-serving impediments erected by anti-Communist and often ostensibly progressive trade union bureaucrats habitually accustomed to an ideological free pass from the left side of the Stalinist divide. Indeed, advance reviews quoting Hill's acerbic observation before the documentary was released that: "we have been given a sanitized myth of Paul Robeson.[*] What we get is the marvelous singer...the great actor, the man who stood up to the McCarthyites. What we don't get is the 40-year history of defense ... for a movement based upon terror and mass murder" — nourished the hope that the history of Stalinist deceptions and betrayals would not be conveniently swept under the rug.

Alas, the apologia mentality has, as it were, built-in defenses against broadening the discussion to include the anti-Stalinist left on an equal footing. This documentary proved no exception. Robeson is character-

*Of course, corporate America had in 1988 already underwritten a sanitized celebration of Paul Robeson's life sponsored by, among others, the American Express Company, General Electric and Phillip Morris. Pepsi-Cola celebrated Black History Month not long ago by naming Robeson as one of the ten "great black pioneers" and offering free posters of him. And why not? Popular Front Stalinism, the era in which the influence of the American CP had reached its zenith, posed no real threat to American capitalism so long as the latter was aligned with Russia against Hitler. It was the CP under Earl Browder that declared Communism to be "twentieth century Americanism" and added that the party was "continuing the great American tradition, ...carrying on the work of Jefferson, Paine, Jackson and Lincoln." Did not the *N.Y. Daily Worker* time and again preach the opinion that "the employers have a right to a reasonable profit; have a right to manage their own plants; have a right to make contributions to the war program out of their own experience; have a right to press their point of view"? (January 17, 1942). Toward that end, the Communists struggled for no-strike pledges in the unions and demanded the purge of socialist militants from union ranks; they broke strikes; called for speed-ups on the assembly lines and forced unions under their influence to sign miserable labor contracts; they supported the National Service Act to conscript labor — all in the interest of "winning the war," i.e., defending Stalinist Russia in WW II. Since this is the period when Robeson earned his political reputation, it is little wonder that the behavior of Stalinist stalwarts can now be remembered with such fondness by a grateful American corporate community.

ized, virtually from the outset, as an ideological romantic, whose understandable, if misplaced devotion to Stalinist Russia had no broader implications. Such loyalties, all too human frailties in the “world of relative evils,” merely rendered Robeson a convenient target of reactionaries. This treatment is all the more remarkable at this late date. For it denies by implication what should be the most self-evident of propositions: that the consistent defense of democratic values against such loyalties concerns the most fundamental problem of socialist political and moral life. To pursue this course of inquiry is to foreclose any illumination as to how proximity to Stalinism debased, twisted and corrupted the ideals of socialism with the authority stolen from the Russian Revolution and to evade how, in particular, this taint disfigured Robeson’s political career.

That, however, would require a credible account of the American Communist Party, under whose auspices and — if current accounts from the CP’s *People’s Weekly World* are to be believed — inspiration Robeson operated. It is to take Manning Marable’s assertion that “we should honor Robeson, because of his radical political vision” as a challenge. The oft-asked question must again be raised: was an association with the CP, a party wholly dominated by the political imperatives of Stalinist power politics, compatible with an “unshakeable commitment “ to civil rights? This is precisely the issue that this documentary dodges and was the very point of Hill’s intervention.

We can skip the effect that Stalin, acting as Mussolini’s quartermaster in his invasion of Ethiopia, had in thinning the ranks of black party members disgusted by the hypocrisy of the Communist International. At about the same time, the search for a “Democratic Front” with Roosevelt, prior to the Stalin-Hitler pact, led in effect to the virtual disappearance of the “Negro Question” from the public facade of the movement. Of course, during this period Robeson was marveling over the broad democratic vistas opened by the Russian Constitution and touting the virtues of the purges in neutralizing the danger posed by these “counter-revolutionary assassins.” When the Stalin-Hitler pact was signed, blacks were rediscovered and radical remediation demanded. This, of course, lasted until the Nazi invasion of Russia. But this zig-zag foreshadowed what was to become a common pattern in this as in all other political and social questions. The CP recognized the evils of American racism — of American capitalism — when Stalinism was on the opposite side of the military and political equation. But when Stalinism had need of the services of American capitalism all those same evils would be soft-pedalled. And Robeson demurred not once from this gyrating orientation.

What did this mean concretely for the CP and its hangers-on during World War II? The Stalinists and their supporters in the National Negro Congress endorsed the Secretary of the Navy’s Jim Crow policies, but opposed the March on Washington Movement and the Double V Campaign (victory against Hitler abroad and Jim Crow at home) of black self-

mobilization against American apartheid. Benjamin Davis, a leading black CP leader and close comrade of Robeson's, stated in the *Daily Worker* that "Communists were disturbed by the increasing struggle of Negroes for jobs in defense plants...Many of the Negro groups and newspapers are not clear on the international situation." Those who pressed for fair employment practices, with real teeth, were calumniated as "disruptive," "endangering the unity of the American people." The CP demonstrated its fearless devotion to Southern equality by dismantling its branches in the South for the duration of the war. Lynchings were no longer condemned as an integral means by which the system of Southern plantation capitalism was maintained, but as acts of "conscious" "sabotage and interference with a domestic phase of the military program." It was not the appeasement behavior of the Roosevelt Administration which, in its dependency on the Southern Dixiecrat machine, gave the lie to this being a war for democracy. No, it was blacks such as A. Philip Randolph, who as "saboteurs" of the war effort were openly equated with the Ku Klux Klan and Hitler. Blacks were asked, in effect, to relax their opposition to racism, to poll taxes, to employment discrimination and to segregation merely because their continued oppression and humiliation were required to maintain the Roosevelt coalition and thereby sustain Stalin's war effort.

Wilson Record, in *Race and Radicalism*, reviewing the historical evidence rightfully concluded that "(f)or most of the war [the Communist Party's] main activity was to stifle Negro protest and to urge black workers to get into line on the white man's terms, just as it urged unions to get on with the production job, on the bosses terms if necessary." He continued, "by late 1943 the party's Uncle Tomism had become so transparent that its leaders felt that at least a few gestures should be made toward advancing Negro rights. To that end the Communists used such organizations as the NNC (National Negro Congress) and the SNYC (Southern Negro Youth Congress) to launch occasional protests against racial discrimination in the military and in industry. Such objections, however, were feeble, and when some party project threatened to develop into strenuous opposition which might even remotely endanger production or military effectiveness, the Stalinists were willing to protest for the record and hastily call the whole thing off." When, for instance, wounded Black soldiers were left unattended at Fort Devens in 1945, four Black WACs stationed at the fort protested. For their efforts they were court-martialed. Protests from civil rights organizations, unions and churches eventually forced the Army to reverse itself. No thanks, however, was due to the CP. For *The Daily Worker* (April 8, 1945) admonished that "(t)he U.S. general staff has on many occasions . . . proved that they deserve the full confidence of the Negro people. We cannot temporarily stop the war until all questions of discriminations are ironed out."

When A. Philip Randolph declared in 1944 that he did not know "a

single Negro anywhere who believes that this war is being fought for democracy,” he evidently did not have Robeson in mind. At “Defend America” bond rallies, in programs for the Office of War Information and the War Production Board he called, in the singularly recondite CP-like manner previously described, for the full mobilization of the black community. “(T)his is one of the great ends of this war,” averred Robeson — “that the very concept of lower classes, colonial or backwards peoples, disappear(s) from our minds and actions. For fascism means degradation and inferior status. A people’s war is fought for dignity and equality.” Of course, the “peoples’ war” was evidently a rather elastic concept. For it also encompassed Stalin’s war, when still aligned with Hitlerite fascism, against Poland and Finland which Robeson hailed as “defensive,” “freeing the Western Ukrainians and White Russians.” It might also be noted that other black radicals, such as Claude McKay, who had previously rebuked Robeson for his somewhat, say — blinkered view of Stalinism, found “Stalin’s attack upon Finland (to be)...as vicious as Crackers lynching Negroes...”

But — and this was the lost upshot of Hill’s heavily edited and manipulated intervention — Robeson was a great “internationalist” and “freedom fighter” only in the service of lending Stalinist imperialism a free hand. It was not McCarthyite persecution alone that ultimately led to his tragic downfall, but his inability at length to free himself from being totalitarianism’s intellectual prisoner. This and this alone sullies his reputation for posterity. And it is the obligation not only of the revolutionary left, but that of any honest historical accounting, to distance itself from Stalinism’s disgraceful parody of socialism by insisting on an accurate portrayal of the CP’s record. The real import of this cannot be captured merely by means of documentary footage. Robeson shaking hands with Russian officials or vacationing with CP hacks cannot substitute for an historical inventory of the breathtaking betrayals of the Communist Party. Worse still, it lends the imprimatur of dispassionate objectivity for what is, by this time, a hackneyed apologia — the enobilized victim of McCarthyism. The passivity and resignation with which the persecution of the CP was met during the 1940s and 50s stands in bold contrast to the solid wall of resistance erected by socialists, liberals and the organized labor movement during the Wilson and Harding administrations. The conventional explanation attributes this difference to a loss of nerve. This is not entirely without foundation. But such explanations are sorely insufficient. For they elude the central theme of this tragedy.

The victims of this repression succumbed to persecution because they were, by the outset of the Cold War, neither respectable nor respected. No longer a reliable bulwark of American capitalism — on loan from Stalin — nor able to enjoy the support of the oppressed and exploited, whose cause they had only yesterday so fervidly abandoned, the CP and Robeson were easy prey for those who, for their own demagogic pur-

poses, wished to smear socialism with the stain of Stalinism and to forever fix in identity the two in the public eye.

RECOUNTING THE POLITICAL DEBACLE OF ROBESON'S CAREER, were it to have been done accurately, would have required an ongoing counternarrative and an historical contextualization which Hill's presentation, if honestly employed, should have provided. Instead, Hill's presentation was deliberately employed as an indictment against the anti-Stalinist left through the dishonest technique of amalgamating his condemnation of Robeson with that of HUAC, McCarthy and J. Edgar Hoover. This slander against the anti-Stalinist left denies in principle the right to defend dissent and civil liberties on a consistent basis, without the ritualistic rehearsal of the mythic "virtues" of the Popular Front which has become the method of choice among apologists. When built-in sensors fail to detect echoes of assent to this purpose, its self-defense mechanisms spin into overdrive to ward off by vilification other historical interpretations.

F. SCOTT FITZGERALD REPORTEDLY INSISTED THAT THERE WERE NO SECOND acts in American life. He clearly did not foresee the afterlife of American Stalinism. For to do so directs one to the lamentable but inescapable conclusion that fellow-travelling seems fated to be a permanent component of modern radical thought. Contemporary fellow-traveling, however, is a unique phenomenon. The practitioners of this form of necromancy are distinguished from previous generations of enthusiasts in that they, in all likelihood, have never had any formal experience with the Communist Party or any front organization and therefore have never extended nor desired to extend any assistance to the "cause" in any direct or self-conscious capacity. And if it were a cardinal rule of faith for the veteran fellow traveler that the Soviet Union, whatever its limitations, was fundamentally a socialist society and, as such, a beacon of social progress, this belief has been discarded and supplanted in the worldview of the modern revisionist/apologist by the axiomatic contention that the historic American Communist Party, whatever its flaws, was at bottom the party of social justice and peace.

Stated differently, the reflected glow of the American CP for previous partisans was derived from the prestige of the Russian revolution combined with the breathless worship of Stalinist ruthlessness and the spectacle of a once immense world-wide movement grimly advancing under its steely direction. These are blandishments which hold little appeal to the modern partisan, who has excised from his/her worldview the connection between the American CP and the cause it so slavishly served. The new partisan, like his less evolved ancestor, having in the main no abiding commitment to revolutionary politics and thereby no burning need to struggle with the nature of the Soviet Union under Stalin, nevertheless rightfully recognizes the right-wing (but usually only the right-

wing) of the American Establishment as a bulwark of oppression, racism and militarism. By way of distinction however, the death of the Stalinist social system has widely failed to elicit any hidden nostalgia for the ugly realities of the gulag at least on the part of the modern apologist. We are thankfully spared the exculpatory dismissals of the “excesses” of Communism which characterized yesterday’s fellow-travelling sophist. The two versions are related rather as a variation on a theme, than as the same chorus sung in different keys.

Sympathies for the historic CP, as victim of Establishment repression, have become an all-important barometer measuring the intensity of progressive revulsion with American reaction. In this drama the CP, perceived as having borne the brunt of capitalist repression, has been transformed into, and misrepresented as the unwaveringly defiant opponent of all that is rotten in American life. And conversely, this mindset remains stubbornly resistant to historic analysis for fear that a less fanciful portrait of American Stalinism could only signal a concession to the world-view of the American Establishment. What we are left with then is the distorted picture of the Stalinist as the direct successor to the 1920s’ Palmer raid radical, persecuted by J. Edgar Hoover and McCarthy for an unswerving devotion to the cause of human liberation only incidentally corrupted by any overriding allegiances to totalitarian imperialism. It is part and parcel of an ongoing retro-rehabilitation project, which, if left unanswered and unchallenged, threatens the future well-being of the next revival of socialism.

“Neither Washington Nor Moscow”: The Third Camp as History And a Living Legacy

Alan Johnson

SOCIALISM FROM BELOW IS DISTINGUISHED FROM SOCIALISM FROM ABOVE by its understanding that the agency of social change is the self-controlling emancipatory struggle of the mass of the people.¹ In Marx's famous dictum, socialism is “the self-emancipation of the working class.” What has this meant for socialists at the level of international politics? Three key “moments” can be identified in the development of a revolutionary democratic internationalism. The key figure in the first moment is Marx. Alan Gilbert has shown how Marx drew upon Aristotle's insight that Athenian imperialism abroad was a threat to Athenian democracy at home and that citizens should oppose policies of conquest for they would produce only greed and tyranny at home. Marx argued that in the epoch of capitalism the ideals of democratic liberalism had been cast down for the radicals to pick up. Basic internationalist ideas from “the recognition of the universal human capacity for moral personality and the justice of democratic movements” for self-determination, were ignored in practice by the liberals *and so fell to the radicals to defend*.² In 1847 Marx changed the slogan of the League of Communists to “Proletarians of All Countries Unite!” and insisted the ideal of human brotherhood, proclaimed by the French Revolution, must now be given a *class* basis. The ideal of self-determination had also been passed to the radicals. For Marx, “there is absolutely no contradiction in the international workers party striving for the establishment of the Polish nation.”³ The only kind of brotherhood the bourgeoisie could know was “the brotherhood of the oppressors against the oppressed, of the exploiters against the exploited.”⁴

The Second International, amid the growth of labor aristocracies and social democratic bureaucracies, regressed from these positions. Eduard Bernstein, at the Stuttgart Congress of 1907, defended colonialism in terms of the necessity “of civilized peoples to act somewhat like guardians of the uncivilized.” Alex Callinicos has argued convincingly that a demo-

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cratic internationalism “could only be properly pursued after the collapse of the Second International and the formation of its revolutionary rival, the Third or Communist International,” for only then was it possible to adopt the policy of forging an *alliance* between “incipient socialist revolution by the working class of the imperialist countries and the developing nationalist revolts in the colonies.” This marked a return to the principle of self-emancipation because the oppressed nation was now understood as “*not only the object but also the subject of politics*,” as Trotsky put it. The difference between the two internationals was the difference between the two souls of socialism.⁵

Soon enough Stalinism forced another much deeper regression in democratic internationalism. Generations of socialists, in their support for the Stalinist ruling class in Russia and its imperialist expansion, reprised the odyssey of the bourgeois liberals before them, who also supported a brutal imperialism while speaking a language of freedom. The baton of democratic internationalism was dropped again. The third moment in the development of a revolutionary democratic internationalism involved the rescue, by small numbers of “Third Camp” socialists, mainly in America, organized in the Workers Party – later renamed the Independent Socialist League — of the principles of democratic internationalism in the years during and after World War II.⁶ The “Third Camp” they defined as:

nothing more than a synonym for the tens of millions who resist or refuse the leadership of both American capitalism and of Stalinism and seek a democratic anti-capitalist, anti-imperialist, anti-totalitarian road to peace, freedom and prosperity.⁷

THE PURPOSES OF THIS ESSAY ARE TWO-FOLD. First, to reconstruct the birth of Third Camp socialism in the split with Trotsky over the question of Russia’s wars in Finland and Poland in 1939-40, and its development in the epoch of expanding Stalinism after World War II. I set out why the concept was indispensable to a politics of self-emancipation and revolutionary democratic internationalism in the period of the Cold War. The concept was not simply a rejection of the two imperialist war camps — although that *was* the beginning of all wisdom. The partisans of the Third Camp, in the most unpropitious of circumstances, also developed a positive alternative to both war-camps, and to war itself, through the concepts of a “democratic foreign policy” and “political warfare.” I explore the Third Camp’s rejection of the neutralism of the “one-and-a-half-camp,” and its transcendence of the kind of crippling antinomies, the “either-or” frameworks, which left Sidney Hook, Irving Howe and ultimately Max Shachtman as critical supporters of the capitalist camp, and the likes of Isaac Deutscher and the orthodox Trotskyists as critical supporters of the Stalinist camp. Second, the essay will explore the meaning of the

Third Camp in today's post-Communist world, when the second camp has joined the first but the world is no nearer "peace, freedom and prosperity."

The Birth of the Third Camp

IN 1939, WHEN THE SOVIET UNION INVADED POLAND AND FINLAND, Trotsky made the catastrophic argument that Russia remained a "workers state" because nationalized property was, in and of itself, "proletarian economy." Consequently, Russia's wars in Poland and Finland were the wars of a workers state, to be defended. Trotsky insisted the Stalinist invasion of Poland "gave an impulse to the socialist revolution through bureaucratic methods" and, in Finland, the "Red" Army was giving "a tremendous impulse to the class struggle in its sharpest form," the Kremlin being "forced to provoke a social revolutionary movement."⁸ Caught in the theoretical logic of the "workers state" position, Trotsky gave birth to the idea of the bureaucratic proletarian revolution, led by Stalinists, to be supported, for now, as a distorted expression of, a locum for, "The Revolution." The truth is Trotsky played a bad role in the 1939-40 dispute. He educated the movement in a "realism" which eased the way to an accommodation to Stalinism. Replying, for instance, to the view of James Burnham and Max Shachtman that as "the politics of which the invasion were a continuation" were reactionary then the Russian invasion of Poland should not be supported, Trotsky used his immense authority to mock this minority, asking if a "simultaneous insurrection against Hitler and Stalin in a country occupied by troops might perhaps be arranged very conveniently from the Bronx." Trotsky was the first to raise the objection that the Third Camp was not of the "real world." It was an argument that would, in time, carry away most of the Third Camp partisans. Max Shachtman replied that it was not a question of arranging a revolution from the Bronx, or, for that matter, from Coyoacan, but of "a political line of revolutionary socialist opposition to both reactionary war camps, one of training and preparing the workers in such a spirit, and of arming them with such a policy that they would not fall victim to Hitler's army or Stalin's but moving closer to the day when they could settle accounts with both."⁹ In December 1939, James Burnham, Martin Abern and Max Shachtman pointed out that Trotsky's argument that the Stalinist invasion must be supported as a lesser evil in the absence of an independent revolutionary movement was "essentially reactionary," as "the independent revolutionary movement cannot be brought into existence and advance if we support the Stalinist invasion." The task was to bring together and provide program and perspective to the forces of the Third Camp currently "scattered, demoralised, without program or perspective."¹⁰ But the prestige of Trotsky ensured that, in April 1940, the American Socialist Workers Party split in two. Albert Goldman, Trotsky's

attorney during the 1937 Dewey Commission into the Moscow Trials, was the spokesman for the majority faction. "Private property" he said, "has been nationalized in 1/8th of the world. It is the only thing concrete left in the camp of the proletariat. We are not giving up nationalized property for some abstraction of the world revolution." Another majority supporter, Richardson, from Oakland, said, "Just imagine if Stalin did set up a bureaucracy in India, what a tremendous advance it would be over the present democracy." Goldman defended Richardson's speech with the argument, "Between the slavery of a degenerated workers state and the slavery of capitalism, we prefer the slavery of a degenerated workers state." Convention minutes taken by the minority indicate that at this point there broke out "applause from the majority side, *hissing from the minority side.*"¹¹

Hal Draper wrote that it was in this resistance to Trotsky and the SWP majority in the 1940 split that "[the] Third Camp was born and raised."¹² Max Shachtman in his reply to Trotsky, set out why the Third Camp was the only position consistent with a belief that socialism was the self-emancipation of the working class:

I repeat, I do not believe in the bureaucratic proletarian (socialist) revolution (. . .) I reject the concept not out of "sentimental" reasons or a Tolstoyan "faith in the people" but because I believe it to be scientifically correct to repeat with Marx that the emancipation of the working class is the task of the working class itself. The bourgeois revolution . . . could be made and was made by other classes and social strata; the bourgeoisie could be liberated from feudal rule and establish its social dictatorship under the aegis of other social groups. But the proletarian revolution cannot be made by others than the proletariat acting . . . No one else can free it — not even for a day.¹³

The Triangle of Forces and the Third Camp

THE EXPANSION OF BUREAUCRATIC COLLECTIVISM INTO EASTERN EUROPE after World War II, and its victory independent of Russia state power in Yugoslavia and China, marked a new stage in world politics: a global "struggle for the world" between Capitalism and Stalinism. This was no normal inter-imperialist rivalry but a "struggle of rival systems over which, if either, shall exploit the earth." This new stage presented the socialist movement, Marxism especially, with the job of fundamental renovation and reorientation if the politics of socialism-as-self-emancipation were to be preserved. It was necessary to plant a "firm fixed point" from which the Third Camp might oppose *both* rival imperialisms and their war preparations. Before Stalinism, Marxists had imagined the world as a zero-sum game: capitalism versus socialism. Actually it never was, but until an equally exploitative reactionary alternative proved to be capable of issuing from anti-capitalism it was not, in practice, too harmful. After

Stalinism it was a disastrous framework, theoretically and practically, for the three-cornered struggle for the world was not the duel of Marx's *Communist Manifesto*. To declare for the Third Camp meant that "politically we recognize the emergence of the bureaucratic-collectivist empire as a bidder for the historic role of successor to a doomed capitalism" and a new stage in the epoch of wars and revolutions in which the working class faced two enemies, "a capitalism which is anti-Stalinist and a Stalinism which is anti-capitalist."¹⁴ Grasping that fact *and renovating Marxism in light of it* was one of the great contributions of the Workers Party-Independent Socialist League. Democracy was now the *condition* for socialism, to be consciously fought for as the *differentia specifica* of socialism from an *alternative* anti-capitalist force: totalitarian Stalinism. Stalinism was not the first rung on the ladder of socialism but its opposite. So understood, "In no other era than this does the fight for democracy rise to such a pinnacle of importance for the forces of progress. No other movement in the history of the world is so driven to place the democratic goal so close to everything it strives for."¹⁵ The 1939-40 split set both parties on diverging political paths:

The political character of the ISL quickly broadened . . . to a wide reinterpretation of the meaning of revolutionary socialism for our day. Reacting sharply against the bureaucratic concepts of both official Stalinism and official Trotskyism, it swung to a deepgoing emphasis on the integration of socialism and democracy in all aspects of politics. What was distinctive, however, was that this was accompanied by equally sharp opposition to the American establishment, to American imperialism, to capitalism and its political representatives here. What resulted was a unique combination of revolutionary opposition to both capitalism and Communism.¹⁶

The task, wrote Max Shachtman in 1948, was to "build a workers movement that is fully independent of Washington and Moscow" under "the banner of democracy and socialism."¹⁷ In the Cold War of the 1940s and 1950s the WP-ISL sought to translate this rallying cry into a political program through the policies of a *democratic foreign policy* and *political warfare*.

Democratic Foreign Policy and Political Warfare

WHY, ASKED HAL DRAPER IN 1955, was "the most brutal and repressive dictatorship in history" winning the Cold War?¹⁸ And how could Stalinism be fought, from the left, without war? The Third Camp socialists developed the ideas of a "democratic foreign policy" and "political warfare" to attack Stalinism without giving any comfort to capitalism. A *democratic foreign policy* or, as Draper happily called it in the Sixties, an anti-imperialist foreign policy, meant working for popular democratic revolution in the Stalinist countries, "blowing up the Russian empire from within,"

as the practical and realistic alternative to reliance on NATO militarism. The democratic foreign policy was what Trotsky termed a “transitional demand,” a bridge to present neutralist consciousness, a means to organize and take forward the opposition to capitalism and Stalinism. Derided as a pipe-dream, the realism of the policy was proved in the anti-Kremlin revolts of 1956-7 which broke “the myth that Stalinism had produced the dehumanized Orwellian “prole” as its mass man, or the totalitarianised zombie heralded by Hannah Arendt.”¹⁹ Yet NATO and the capitalist states proved a *reactionary barrier* to the anti-Stalinist revolt. In Poland, it was NATO and NATO rearmament of Germany which allowed Gomulka to argue for Russian troops to stay. The greatest ally of the Russian Imperialists in Hungary was the British, French and Israeli imperialist crimes in Egypt. Mao’s greatest asset was the U.S. support for Chiang Kai-Shek. The vaunted “realism” of the liberal support for NATO turned out to be a prop of the Stalinist control over the satellites and useless to those popular forces in revolt against Stalinism. As Draper put it, “The West’s stock of H-Bombs is no friend of the revolution against Stalinism. It is its enemy.” Popular revolt, not the military threat of NATO, was the best peace strategy, limiting Russian aggression in Europe and decreasing the war threat. A “democratic foreign policy” was defined by its support for this popular revolt as the weapon to defeat Stalinism and by its refusal to rely upon western capitalist governments. The West must “give up its military-base and H-bomb encirclement of Russia in order to permit the revolution to encircle Russia.” But a capitalist, imperialist West was incapable of a democratic foreign policy because its *primary* fear was the contagion of revolutionary struggle.²⁰

This fear was demonstrated during the East Berlin workers revolt of 1953. While the Stalinist apologist Isaac Deutscher rationalized the brutal suppression of the workers by the bureaucracy,²¹ the western governments suppressed the fact of its existence, fearing revolution in West Germany. Hal Draper attempted a thought-experiment: what could a government of the working class, pursuing a democratic foreign policy and engaged in political warfare against Stalinism, have said and done during the East German workers uprising? First, it would have immediately removed all U.S. troops from West Germany. Second, it would have declared in favor of German reunification. Third, it would have appealed for the East Germans to fight for reunification. Fourth, political warfare would have meant military support for the insurgents; “we urge no adventurous putsches upon you, but what you need you will get, with no strings attached.”²² Breaking the grip of the Kremlin on the East German police and army, who feared a U.S. controlled West, would open the way to a class politics throughout eastern Europe and “that is how the Russian empire will crumble, from within,”²³ for *political* warfare, and the weapon of democracy was “stronger than planes and tanks, yes stronger than the A-Bomb.”²⁴

As the systemic social antagonism between the totalitarian states and the capitalist classes became clearer after World War II, the ability of Russia to exploit divisions between capitalist states diminished. The Stalinists, in response, engaged increasingly in *political warfare*. This "reactionary exploitation" of popular anti-capitalist movements became their "main weapon." Communists could use the weapon of anti-capitalism "in a world swept by winds of anti-capitalism and anti-imperialist revolution" because they had no stake in capitalism being the representative of a rival exploitative system. In contrast, the United States was incapable of anything more than a battery of techniques of skulduggery and "psyops."²⁵ Genuine "political warfare" was beyond not only the lunk-head right but the sophisticates of East coast liberalism, too. Backing the corrupt landowners and not the peasants seeking land redistribution, the U.S. could not use the secret weapon in the Cold War: anti-capitalism. In fact the reverse was the case. In a world in which U.S. capitalism was the only one with "a bit of fat around its belt," then the middle-ground shrank and reaction faced rebellion the world over. U.S. support for reaction was rooted in the "decay of world capitalism itself,"²⁶ hence the construction of a permanent war economy.²⁷

For the Third Camp anti-capitalism was the "starting point of a meaningful foreign policy for peace,"²⁸ and an alternative to the establishment and the appeasing peace movements. If winning a *Cold War* meant winning in *political warfare*, then successful political warfare in the epoch of decaying capitalism meant the promotion of social revolution.²⁹ The conclusion was no comfort to the liberal opinion in the United States:

[The U.S.] will have to be socially and politically transformed before victory in the political war is a possibility. (. . .) Victory in the Cold War means, politically speaking, implementing a radical-democratic and anti-imperialist foreign policy which can win the support of the peoples of the world and strike blows against the Communist camp.³⁰

UNDER THE PRESS OF THE COLD WAR, organized liberal opinion adopted the world-view of U.S. imperialism as its own, indeed worked up that world-view into the terms of sophisticated liberal theory, until democratic internationalism was left, as in Marx's day, to the revolutionaries. Even organized liberal politics, which in the 1950s meant Americans for Democratic Action (A.D.A.), saw much of American foreign policy as a series of "mistakes," unconnected to the nature of the American social system. The Third Camp socialists argued that in "riding along with the [U.S.] Administration" the A.D.A. were "doing precisely that which the Stalinists need, if they are to capture the rest of the uncommitted world." For example, to drift along with Washington's support for Chiang Kai-Shek in Formosa was to help "alienate every democratic sentiment in the world and push . . . all uncommitted peoples into the arms of the Stalinists."³¹ This was expressed in the liberal lexicon. "Internationalism" had come

to mean the pursuit by American capitalism of its global interests, while proposals to reduce military expenditure and subsidies to Europe were “isolationism.” Language was turned around until “liberal neo-internationalism turns out to mean essentially nothing but the imperialist outlook.”³² This collapse of liberal opposition to U.S. imperialism was demonstrated during the U.S. intervention in Guatemala in 1954. *Labor Action* was almost unique in its coverage of Guatemala in 1954, when not just the government but also liberal opinion and even some members of the Socialist Party, refused to believe the CIA was engaged in a conspiracy to crush democracy. *Labor Action* set out the basic facts and drew out the lessons. There are no easy or direct parallels to U.S. interventions today but the *methodology* surely speaks to us. First, the episode proved the U.S. government could not fight the Stalinists politically because it followed an imperialist policy economically:

The rug can be pulled from beneath Guatemalan Stalinism . . . only by removing the legitimate social issues on which it nourishes. As long as the U.S. dollar is the enemy of the people, the Stalinists can flourish — or else they can be cut down by . . . brutal intervention . . .³³

Second, liberal anti-Communism was in practice neither liberal nor did it help to defeat Stalinism. The *New York Post*, which supported the U.S. action on the grounds that Guatemala was “communist dominated,” made the “basic error” of the liberal, failing to understand that:

while Stalinism grows on the brutality of imperialism — and this is the lesson of our era which overshadows every other one without exception — our liberals propose to support that imperialist brutality in the name of defeating Stalinism.³⁴

Liberal support for U.S. anti-Communism only succeeded in “greasing the road for Stalinism” by educating the world that only communists support land-reform and anti-colonialism and by driving the democratic Guatemalan opposition into the arms of the Stalinists.³⁵ The *New York Times*, said Draper, might well be right in pointing out the crimes of Stalinism but it does so only in order to reconcile people to the crimes of capitalist-imperialism. When the liberal press supported the U.S. action and then urged that the U.S. should now go on to pursue land reform, Hal Draper was moved to ask, “how naive is the liberal allowed to be?” Max Lerner’s pieces about Guatemala were discussed as an illustration of the politics of “putting a liberal face on national chauvinism.” Again, Lerner was right to criticize the Arbenz government’s relationship with the CP, to highlight the danger of a Stalinist coup and to call on democrats in Guatemala to fight against that outcome. But Lerner, *absorbing* the view of the U.S. as “overlord of the planet,” accepted the U.S. right to intervene, casting himself as “the enlightened democratic thinker . . . gently teaching a backwoods politician about freedom.” The imperialist

liberal lacks the spine to propose intervention but “finds his reasons to go along” once it starts, finding himself “marched along in the rear of the CIA muttering ‘Dulles has blundered again.’”³⁶ Draper traced how in the aftermath of such interventions, with the liberal cover no longer required, not one of the progressive measures the liberal spoke so eloquently for during the conflict is ever implemented. Guatemala, for instance, saw the suspension of land reforms, the proliferation of concentration camps, the declaration of enlistment to the U.S. war camp, the disenfranchisement of three-quarters of the people as illiterate, and the suspension of the constitution. At this point the good liberal is left to talk, still eloquently, of “mistakes,” even “blunders,” and certainly of individual “bad men.” Draper confronts the liberal once again on the terrain of realism, asking, “Which then is in and of the real world: your whitewash of imperialism or our Third Camp approach to the defeat of Stalinism?”³⁷

The wider political consequences of the failure to preserve ideological independence were explored in a prescient article by Draper in *New Politics* in 1962 called “The Ultra Right and the Liberals.” The liberal reaction to the rise of the new right was to try and “giggle them out of existence,” to deal with the threat from the right “*without taking up political ideas.*” In fact the liberal embrace of the world-view of successive Administrations had reinforced the shift in the center of gravity of the whole political structure to the right. The political vacuum on the left had “pull[ed] the new right out of the walls” as a reaction to the “Demo-Republican” bipartisanship. Not the least powerful of the arguments against “political realism” was the fact that “the middle of the road in any given political situation is determined only by the active extremes.” The B52 liberals failed to grasp that the middle of the road was “a mirage [which] must shift away from you as you move toward it.” When the left moves to the center the center moves to the right. The left can best stiffen the resolve of the liberal center by fighting for a radical political program and give the liberals “something they can happily water down.”³⁸

THE THIRD CAMP WAS NO NEUTRALIST “ONE-AND-A-HALF-CAMP” searching for “peaceful co-existence.” While the capitalist states might reach a *modus vivendi* with a geographically confined Stalinism, the Third Camp believed in “‘coexisting’ with Stalinism in order to destroy it, not to appease it.”³⁹ But neutralism was often the first step toward a Third Camp position. The two war-camps sought to recruit all countries, groups and movements and to the extent that they failed all-out war was less likely. So even while “passive, uncoordinated and not fully clarified,” *all* resistance to the war-camps produced a “relaxation of the war danger.”⁴⁰ Moreover, the hostility among both popular movements and some ruling classes to the prospect of being brought under the hegemony of the U.S. or Russia was often expressed in the form of neutralism in the 1950s.

There were two politically distinct forms of neutralism. As the incho-

ate instinct of the popular masses, it represented a “sound, healthy, progressive reaction” against both war camps and as such was a “long, strong step toward the conceptions and policies of Independent Socialism” with tremendous potential for further development.⁴¹ But as an organized political movement neutralism was “confused, futile, reactionary.” It sought to reconcile the war camps rather than fight them. It fostered illusions in the mirage of peaceful co-existence and appeased Stalinism. The ISL’s propaganda for a democratic foreign policy was explicitly directed “against the illusions and ambiguities of ‘neutralism.’”⁴² To oppose organized neutralism and to “work up” popular neutralism into a consistent Third Camp position was “the main task of the Third Camp today,” said the ISL in 1954. Organized neutralism urged the program of peaceful co-existence on the U.S. government as all it could realistically be expected to carry out. Much of the post-war peace movement sought the stabilization of world politics via “Pax Russo-Americana,” a negotiated division of the world between two reactionary imperialisms. Erich Fromm’s Council of Correspondence was a case of neutralism leading to the appeasement of the totalitarian Russian state. Fromm was *for* the recognition of East Germany for the same reason he was *against* German reunification, because “the existing power structure is a fact and Khrushchey, like any other leader of a powerful nation, could not keep his political position if he surrendered any of Stalin’s post-war gains.”⁴³ The Third Camp alternative to the war threat, acknowledged Hal Draper, “seems to scant the deep feeling that something has to be done now . . . and that there is simply no time to wait for transformations.” His rejoinder, carried in *New Politics* 25 years ago, is worth quoting in full, for it speaks to a left being urged once again to “be realistic” and back NATO military power:

What the Establishment needs to keep it restrained from military adventures even in the short run is in the first place, a militant and threatening left opposition in the country not clever advisors who can teach how to put a “peace” veneer on power politics. There has never been a peace movement in any country that has been worth a damn as long as it is “respectable,” that is, as long as it has seen its role as collaborating with the status quo, rather than building an opposition from below against the powers that be. That is the fundamental line of demarcation between the forces of revolutionary transformation and the theoreticians of stabilization.”⁴⁴

In Europe, building the Third Camp meant counterpoising a socialist internationalism to NATO and projecting the goal of an Independent Western Union of the European States capable of waging warfare against Stalinism by “non-military political means.” And, in 1951, the ISL looked to “the socialist and people’s movements of Asia” as “one of the largest reservoirs and organising grounds for the elements of the Third Camp of the people against the looming third world war.”⁴⁵ Independence in In-

dia, Burma and Indonesia, the tumult throughout the region, was of "world-historic importance." But these states and movements faced the threat of absorption into one or other Cold War camp despite the mass sentiment for neutralism among the masses in Asia. The proposal for an Independent Federation for Asia aimed to avoid this. For while the native bourgeoisie forces had indeed been able to win independence, apparently refuting Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, this victory was due to the incapacity of the imperialist powers to maintain their control rather than any newly developed capacities on the part of native bourgeoisies which Trotsky had failed to detect. Consequently, winning independence *from both war camps* would require the very agrarian and social revolution the native bourgeoisie could not deliver, and this was now the "concrete and contemporary meaning" of Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution.⁴⁶ It is, said the Third Camp, "the socialists of Asia who can do what Nehru cannot do." The one-and-a-half-camp stood between the two war-camps to *reconcile* them. The Third Camp waged war on both to *defeat* them. Neutralist governments such as India, Yugoslavia and Egypt often acted as apologists for both camps, "sowing illusions impartially about the intentions and nature" of both camps. Nehru, for example, defended Russia's invasion of Hungary and voted against the UN resolution calling on Russian troops to be withdrawn from Hungary.⁴⁷ The Third Camp differed from the Neutralists on the very meaning of "peace." The organized neutralists defined peace as *co-existence between* two rival imperialisms. The Third Camp said the road to peace lay through *social struggle against* both rival imperialisms. Looking to forces such as the Algerian liberation fighters or the Polish rebels, the Third Camp socialists, "do not build any bridges between these combatants and their enemies."⁴⁸

Neutralism also took the form of a demand for "World-Government." Third Camp socialists pointed out that for one hundred years the goal of world government has been at the heart of the socialist program for peace. Yet, ripped away from the rest of the socialist program, the demand for world government was utopian and reactionary. Utopian because it traded on the illusion that wars were unfortunate misunderstandings which world government would end. In fact, as Draper put it in 1952, "at the heart of world politics lies the contradiction between the essential interdependence of the world economy and the compartmentalization of the planet among competing national states."⁴⁹ It is the efforts of each rival ruling class to integrate the world politically, as an economic necessity, which leads to war. Reactionary because it sustained the illusion in the social nature of the two superpowers, neither of whom would embrace world government unless it was a cover for their own hegemony.

To take one's stand on the slogan "Neither Washington Nor Moscow But the Third Camp of Independent Socialism!," to retain a revolution-

ary hostility to both war camps, to support a democratic foreign policy and political warfare, and to refuse all illusions in neutralism or world government was a lonely political perspective in the years of Cold War, and the WP-ISL found it impossible to maintain a Third Camp organization. The vast majority of the left never tried, preferring to look up to The Powers That Be, and gave critical support to either Washington or Moscow as the lesser evil.

Washington as Lesser Evil

Did you learn to dream in the morning

Abandon dreams in the afternoon

Wait without hope in the evening?

—Ewan McColl, Ballad of Accounting

THE THIRD CAMP SUPPORTER FACED THE BARBARIC REALITY OF STALINISM in a way others did not. Out of reach to the Third Camp socialist were the knowing complicities of a Lillian Hellman or a Bertold Brecht, the pseudo-realism of the neutralist Erich Fromm, the moral illiteracy of a Jean Paul Sartre who urged silence about the Gulag lest it “demoralize the French proletariat.” Unavailable were the Trotskyist dogmas about the progressive “workers states” or Unfolding World Revolutions, or the Historic Rationalizations for Stalinism as a Proletarian Bonapartism, issued regularly from Isaac Deutscher’s watchtower. No, the view from the Third Camp was sobering indeed. It really *was* an evil empire. Stalinism *was* expansionist, and *did* put liberty and working class organization to the sword wherever it triumphed. Peaceful co-existence was a utopia and the self-reform of the bureaucracy was impossible. Possessed of this truth — and who can deny that History has shown all of this to be so as against all those fantasies — yet politically isolated, with minuscule forces, and reduced for so long to making propaganda for a Third Camp rather than merging their ideas with real social forces of the Third Camp, is it really so suprising that so many drifted politically toward Washington?

Most telling were the twin pressures of “Stalinophobia” and disillusion with the prospects for revolutionary socialism. Stalinophobia did not mean being “too anti-Stalinist” but being “led by your laudable hatred of Stalinism to sacrifice other political considerations on its altar.”⁵⁰ Once Stalinophobia was combined with a loss of hope in the socialist movement then the monster of Stalinism could only be met, “realistically,” by the power of the other war camp, the lesser-evil. At this point other ideas long held, such that capitalism was “the very ground on which Stalinism feeds,” lost all force and were quietly shelved. Julius Jacobson pointed out that the theory of bureaucratic collectivism — that Russian type societies were neither capitalist nor socialist but a new form of exploitative class society — precisely because it faced up to the realities of

Stalinism, could indeed “become a rationalisation for support of utterly reactionary societies” *once it is uncoupled from a belief in the political viability of the Third Camp*.⁵¹ For such reasons did Max Shachtman, who founded the Third Camp, and who once boasted he would support American imperialism only when hairs grew on the palms of his hand, end up, as Dave McReynolds recalled, “telling the kids to shut up about Vietnam.”⁵² Herman Benson, a leader of the WP-ISL in the auto industry, interviewed in 1989, stands for a whole swathe of Third Campists who turned to American military power as the viable counterweight to Stalinism:

When you lose that core [the revolutionary working class — AJ] you begin to look around for substitutes, the closest thing to it, some physical power that will protect your democracy . . . and that power is the United States. And in the real world as we exist the power of the United States is generally on the side of freedom and the power of Russia is generally on the side of dictatorship. What’s the problem? That’s Shachtman’s position and I’m not unsympathetic with that view.⁵³

The “loss of that core” was the leitmotif of the ex-Third Camp socialist. Sidney Hook concluded the Third Camp, “was a pose that could not be sustained in the face of the obvious realities of working-class indifference to the old and tired Marxist dogma.”⁵⁴ Manny Geltman recalls that when he left the ISL he thought that “the Third Camp idea . . . just didn’t seem to make sense any more.”⁵⁵ Geltman followed the lead of Irving Howe and Stanley Plastrick who left the ISL in 1952. Their resignation letter accused those who continued to adhere to a Third Camp position, such as Hal Draper and Julius Jacobson, of indulging in “the psychology of the saving remnant” on “some isle of rectitude more or less equidistant from both sides.” Embracing the same “realism” Trotsky stood for in 1939, though reversing Trotsky’s choice of lesser evil, they now wrote:

The “Third camp” concept now seems to us meaningless, a fetish. There are not available, at the present juncture, those historical energies which alone could activate a Third Camp — and as the slogan drags along in ISL propaganda it has no particular relation to the shift of events. It takes on a life of its own detached from the realities of European or American politics.⁵⁶

What does the partisan of the Third Camp do when there is no Third Camp? Hook self-consciously adopted the politics of lesser-evilmism. He endorsed the paper, “Two Methods of Action,” presented by Arthur Koestler to the Congress of Cultural Freedom in Berlin in June 1950. Hook recounts its basic thesis: “at certain times and in respect to certain crucial issues, instead of saying ‘neither-nor’ and looking for viable alternatives, we must recognize an ‘either-or’ and take one stand or the other.” Hook called these “dilemmatic situations” and saw the threat of Stalinist totalitarianism as one such. Superseding the conflict between capitalism and socialism, was “the overriding problem of our age and

culture — the nature of political freedom and of the threats to its existence.”⁵⁷ In 1948 the novelist, revolutionary socialist and contributor to *New International*, James T. Farrell wrote to Albert Goldman that “The simple and blunt fact of the matter is that nothing stands in the way of the Stalinization of Europe but American power.” The Third Camp, concluded Farrell, simply lacked a “sufficient fighting force with which to meet Stalinism.”⁵⁸ Irving Howe became convinced that “as democratic socialists our place is in the Western world, the democratic world.” The struggle of the West against Stalinism was not just for spoils, but was a struggle “between two ways of living: between democracy, however marred, and the most bestial totalitarianism ever known.” In this battle, “the whole heritage of civilization is at stake.” In his political memoir, *A Margin of Hope*, Howe recalled that in the late 1940s and early 1950s the fear of World War Three was real and warranted and that, unlike the fantasists and apologists, the Third Camp partisan knew that “wherever Stalinism conquered, freedom vanished.” Once you gave up on the working class it was necessary to lay down “real barriers — power, money, politics — not just articles in intellectual journals.”⁵⁹ Looking back many years later Howe summed up the entire problem accurately: “‘Third camp’ has meaning, I think, only if you believe in a revolutionary perspective.”⁶⁰

THE SADDEST OF THE INTERNAL BATTLES OF THE THIRD CAMP took place in 1956 when a political and ultimately a legal controversy broke out between the U.S. Third Camp and the Italian novelist and socialist Ignazio Silone. Silone had been one of Europe’s best known partisans of the Third Camp but his statement, “My Political Faith,” in 1956, announced his critical support for the western war camp. The exchanges which followed between Hal Draper, for *Labor Action*, and Silone, rehearsed the agonizing choices socialists made in these years.⁶¹ Silone argued the job of socialists was to struggle for peace from a position within the western military alliance, acting as a pressure for that alliance to be “democratic” and “purely defensive.” Draper’s response was to point out that imperialism can never be like that, that imperialism cannot politically fight totalitarianism, and that critical support for western imperialism is an abandonment of socialism as self-emancipation. Draper reminded Silone of his own 1939 interview with Clement Greenberg when he had spoken of the necessity of absolute political independence for socialists, even in the face of conflicts between bourgeois democracy and totalitarianism. Then, Silone had said:

When the socialists, with the best possible anti-fascist intentions, renounce their own program, put their own theories in moth balls, and accept the negative positions of conservative democracy, they think they are doing their bit in the struggle to crush fascism. Actually they leave to fascism the distinction of alone daring to bring forward in public certain problems thus driving into the fascists arms thousands of workers who will not accept the

status quo.⁶²

Draper points out that this is exactly the basis of the mass sentiment for the other totalitarian force, the Communist Parties of France and Italy, today. It is not a question of denying the superiority of capitalist democracy over totalitarianism. The Third Camp has nothing to do with that kind of moral and political insensibility. It is, rather, a question of refusing to draw the conclusion that political or military support is due to capitalist states. First, because socialism, a progressive anti-capitalist alternative, is possible now. Second, because, “[a]s long as and in proportion that the enemies of Stalinism base themselves on support of the capitalist alternative, Stalinism is bound to grow stronger and stronger.”⁶³ Silone wanted to defend human values and saw no alternative but to embrace, critically, the capitalist-imperialist west. But Draper asks, “what experience of recent life or history has persuaded you that this is where the bastions of human values are to be best defended?” The “escape to freedom” has no short cuts. There is no *realistic* alternative to the long haul of “seeking, finding and pursuing the revolutionary and democratic socialist way out of the shambles that has been made of this world by rival exploiters.”⁶⁴ Silone replied to Draper in abusive terms, mocking “little exasperated epigones of Lenin and Trotsky” and accused Draper of slandering Sidney Hook and the Italian Congress of Cultural Freedom.⁶⁵ More seriously, Silone drew an analogy between the threat of Stalinism and the threat of Hitler. Both, if victorious, would have buried all political activity. To obstruct the fight against either, therefore, amounted to “collective suicide” and justified critical support for the enemy of both. In his rejoinder Draper accepted that bourgeois democracy and fascism could not be equated, and agreed the question was how best to fight totalitarian Stalinism. But just for that reason the independent Third Camp position should not be submerged for Stalinism “is able to win victories only insofar as it can convince its victims that the only realistic alternative to its own rule is the continued rule of the old discredited system of capitalism.” But Silone was beyond reach. He had arrived at the same place as Koestler, Hook and Howe where “either-or” replaces “neither-nor.”

Max Shachtman himself, in many ways the founding figure of the Third Camp, ended up at “either-or” during the Bay of Pigs invasion of 1961 when he made the case for the victory of the counter-revolutionary invasion.⁶⁶ Shachtman was, said Draper, like the “sidewalk barker [who] pulls out the snake-oil while your head is still bobbing.” A denunciation of Stalinism, in other words, was presented as if it were a justification of support for the invasion. The method, Draper pointed out, would have meant support for the U.S. in Korea, and was a “small working model” for support for the West in *the* war. Shachtman’s method was to ignore the brute fact of the imperialist control over the invading force and to present them as a liberation movement because some trade unionists

were involved, and to argue that liberation movements had every right to take arms from where they could. Draper points out it was not the “jeune issue of take-arms-or-not” which mattered but the question of self-determination and “independence from imperialism,” and this “Shachtman has abandoned.”⁶⁷ Draper reminded Shachtman that, whether in Spain or in Hungary, “We do not call upon our own imperialist government to send arms because we have no confidence in the progressiveness of its motives, its execution, its consequences, its politics.”⁶⁸ Second, with some prescience, he reminded Shachtman that in supporting the invasion he was repeating the same old self-destructing foreign policy of the Cold War and would push Castro to Stalinism. A democratic foreign policy for Cuba, Draper wrote during the missile crisis, would involve a commitment not to invade, the cessation of all arm-twisting and coercion, economic aid not sanctions, measures aimed to “drive a wedge between the Cuban people . . . and Moscow.” But it was “pipedreaming” to expect JFK to pursue such political warfare for “The American Party Line mind is incapable of a democratic political offensive against the Communist power.” A democratic foreign policy, as ever, would require a “different America.”⁶⁹

BUT, IF STALINISM WAS WINNING THE COLD WAR, according to the WP-ISL, how are we to explain its collapse in 1989? First, one can find in the writings of the Third Camp a clear analysis of the wracking contradictions of Stalinist society which were to lead to its stagnation and implosion. The Third Camp never viewed Stalinism as a progressive social system but as a “neo-barbaric relapse which feeds on the decay of capitalism as long as the working class has not unleashed its own forces to abolish it in favor of a real workers democracy.”⁷⁰ The fundamental contradiction peculiar to Stalinist society, Draper argued, derived from the absence of democracy in a statified society. This ensured a contradiction between the *necessity of planning* (the only other possible economic regulator, the capitalist market, having been abolished), and the *impossibility of planning* (the only possible basis of planning, democracy, having been abolished). I think that for Draper this was the “law of motion,” the “dynamic” of the bureaucratic collectivist society: the repeated and doomed efforts of the ruling class to resolve the contradiction between planning and totalitarianism. The attempt to regulate a modern industrial economy by ukase produced only the “galloping disease” of chaos, of the “fantastic botches, gnarls, snags, wastes and snafus” as Draper put it.⁷¹ Only able to fight the disease of bureaucratism with more bureaucratic controls, production was kept up, for a time, by a combination of “fantastic expenditures of human labor, enslaved or virtually enslaved” and the looting and robbing of dependent satellites. Eventually these contradictions were too great and pressure of competition from the capitalist states was too pressing. Draper wrote, in 1967:

To denominate Stalinism as a social system does not confer on it any determinate lease of life, nor any historical era of existence. History does not give social systems any uniform term (. . .) Unlike any previous system, bureaucratic collectivism had hardly appeared on the scene before it was shaken by economic and political convulsions. The revolution against Stalinism did not have to remain a vision for a couple of hundred years, as was true of the revolution against capitalism. It appeared in life a little more than a couple of decades — in Budapest, in East Germany, in Poland at least. (Draper, 144)

Analogies are always dangerous but one suggests itself here. The autonomized state of the 18th and 19th century eventually underwent what Draper calls a “social fusion” with the rising bourgeois economic power.⁷² And Georg Lukacs observed, about pre-capitalist societies, that despite the juridical fusion of economics and politics in such societies it was the “subterranean ‘unconscious’ economic development” which eventually “destroys the unity of the juridical form.”⁷³ Can the 1989 revolutions be understood in these terms as a form of “social fusion” of the Stalinist ruling classes with world capitalism under the intense pressure of “unconscious” global economic development which eventually destroyed the “juridical form” of bureaucratic collectivism? And if 1989 is to be viewed in that way, does it not place a question mark over the Third Camp view — inherited from Trotsky, I think — that capitalism as a mode of production was definitively *finished*, that collectivism was, as Shachtman said, “the *only* means whereby the means of production can be expanded” and so on? Was it not the dynamism of capitalism, its unanticipated recuperative powers, that saw off Stalinism and forced the messy “social fusion” of the Nomenklatura with world capitalism, which has necessarily destroyed the juridical form of the Stalinist societies?

Moscow as Lesser Evil

THE RESULT OF TROTSKY’S “WORKERS STATE” THEORY and his notion of “proletarian economy” was that orthodox Trotskyists thereafter were left trying to reason within the terms of Trotsky’s prior revolt against reason. They would project locums within locums endowing these with the qualities of the revolutionary proletariat. During and after World War II the Socialist Workers Party used Trotsky’s theory of “proletarian economy” as a political compass with disastrous results. On September 12, 1942, readers of the *Militant* were told that in the Soviet Union, “factories, mines, mills, railroads, workshops belong to those who work them. The soil belongs to those who till it.” On February 6, 1943, that “the self-sacrificing Russian workers were producing under socialist methods.” On February 27, 1943, Felix Morrow argued that “The Red Army is fighting for a socialist Europe as well as a socialist Russia.”⁷⁴ Throughout 1944 the SWP theoretician John G. Wright, in the pages of the *Militant*,

mapped a *two camps* view of the world in which the role of socialists was to be loyal critics of the progressive, objectively revolutionary camp of Stalinism. Stalinism was redefined as the blunt instrument of an Unfolding Historical Process. The post-Trotsky Trotskyists rediscovered the role vacated by the German dissident Communist Heinrich Brandler in the 1930s, the loyal critic of the bureaucracy. Max Shachtman was moved to comment that “the very fountainhead of Stalinist fiction is the official position of the SWP” in which “the appointment of slave-drivers over industry by the GPU equals . . . the proletarian revolution.”⁷⁵ The accuracy of Shachtman’s apparently harsh judgment can be seen by an examination of Michael Löwy’s account of the “proletarian socialist revolutions” of Tito, Mao and Ho. Löwy saw not Stalinist formations, embryos of the new exploitative ruling class, but, fantastically, parties which “acted as ‘representatives’ of the proletariat,” nothing less than “the political and programmatic expression of the proletariat by virtue of their adherence to the historical interests of the working class (abolition of capitalism etc.),” parties whose “ideologies were proletarian.”⁷⁶ Hal Draper wrote in April 1948, in *New Internationalist*, that the orthodox Trotskyist, “who continues to claim that the Communist Party is a working-class party in spite of all for the reason that it directs its *appeal* to the working class or that it uses the working class as a base of operations” might be reminded of the lines from *The Communist Manifesto* in which Marx pours scorn on “feudal socialism” in which the Aristocracy “in order to rally the people to save them waves a proletarian alms bag in front of a banner.”

Marx fully expected the proletariat to look past the alms bag, and seeing “on their hindquarters the old feudal coat of alms” desert “with loud and irreverent laughter.”⁷⁷ The tragedy of texts like Löwy’s is that the bureaucracy’s “proletarian alms bag” is *theorized* as “the political and programmatic expression of the proletariat” and not from ignorance but from a position of full knowledge of the barbarities written across its “hindquarters.” Ernest Mandel for *twenty years* defined Mao’s China as a “workers state” with no qualifications, argued that “the Chinese Communist Party . . . was striving to destroy capitalism and therefore represented a fundamentally proletarian social force.”⁷⁸ That it was also responsible for some of the worst barbarities of the 20th century such as the famine of 1958-1962 in which 30 million perished and a Gulag in some ways worse than Russia’s was, for Mandel, not decisive. That it nationalized property was. *Even Pol Pot’s Kampuchea* Mandel designated a workers state. Perry Anderson *theorized* the workers-state-as-barbarism, arguing, “The iron dictatorship exercised by the Stalinist police administrative apparatus over the Soviet proletariat was *not incompatible with the preservation of the proletarian nature of the state* itself — any more than . . . the fascist dictatorship exercised over the bourgeois class were with the preservation of the nature of the capitalist state” (emphasis added).⁷⁹ Alan Woods, theoretician of the Militant Tendency, defend-

ing the Russian invasion of Afghanistan, could bracket out the national rights of the Afghans and the necessarily totalitarian dictatorship brought by the invaders, because, decisively, "the Russian bureaucracy is defending new, fundamentally progressive, social relations," i.e. nationalized property.⁸⁰

From this perspective the idea of a Third Camp is dismissed as, once more, "illusory . . . in the face of the real world of political struggle by the late 1950s." ⁸¹ Alan Wald argues that as independent nationalist movements were intertwined with Stalinism in the post-war world, the ISL demand that they "refuse assistance from their only available ally" was "unrealistic." But the Third Camp position was not that practical assistance be refused from any source, but rather that *political independence* should be maintained. This political independence was lost by the Fourth International definitively from 1948 when it engaged in what Natalia Trotsky called an "inexcusable idealization of the Titoist bureaucracy." ⁸² The dispute between anti-Stalinist Marxists about the Third Camp turns upon a prior assessment of the class nature of the Soviet Union. Wald designates the Soviet Union as an "ally" of revolutionary movements, and maintains that the Soviet Union played an "important role" in the war because of the "economic and social advances that had occurred in the Soviet Union since Stalin's triumph." ⁸³ He feels the Stalinists proved in Eastern Europe and China and Cuba and Vietnam that they could create post-capitalist societies, progressive as against capitalism, to be supported against capitalism, albeit with "bureaucratic deformations." This recalls Trotsky's pre-1933 reform perspective. ⁸⁴ Looking at the same events the Third Camp saw a brutal imperialism engaged in exploiting revolutionary movements through political warfare and militarized Stalinist formations crystallizing into exploitative bureaucratic collectivist ruling classes.

THE PERSISTENT ILLUSION OF THE DEUTSCHERITE TRADITION was that the road to socialism lay through the self-reform of the Stalinist Bureaucracy. This illusion often led its believers to side with that Bureaucracy against unpredictable popular revolt from below, as with Deutscher's opposition to the East Berlin workers in 1953. The illusion burnt bright till the bitter end among many orthodox Trotskyists influenced by Deutscher. The post-war orthodox Trotskyists were actually Deutscherites, hankering after Trotsky's *pre-1933* perspective that a Workers Russia could be reformed. Tariq Ali, who proudly claims to have been formed politically by "Isaac Deutscher, Leon Trotsky and Ernest Mandel (in that order)" dedicated his 1988 book, *Revolution From Above* to Boris Yeltsin, and claimed to have heard in Gorbachev no less than "the authentic voice of the cantankerous man in the British museum . . . echoing in the chambers of the Kremlin."⁸⁵ The Third Camp, by contrast, understood that as the economic power of the Stalinist ruling class

resided in its *political* monopoly, then “even such measures of popular political control as are possible under capitalism” were impossible as these would disintegrate the economic power of the ruling class. Capitalism, because of its disjunction between economic base and political superstructure, could exist with different political state forms, but Bureaucratic Collectivist society could not since, as Shachtman pointed out, “the introduction of political democracy of any meaningful sort automatically means the dissolution of economic exploitation.” The political form of bureaucratic collectivism, said Draper, “is necessarily not only that of a dictatorship but also totalitarian (i.e. intolerant of any and all independent centers of power in the country) and not only oppressive but terroristic.”⁸⁶ Through the prism of its juridical illusion the orthodox Trotskyists saw anti-capitalism as progressive *in and of itself*, and as *congealed in* nationalized property. It was natural, therefore, to look to reform currents in the bureaucracy to bring into line a socialist base with an inappropriate political superstructure.

Such politically corrosive illusions were impossible for the adherent of bureaucratic collectivism as she rejected the idea at the heart of Trotsky’s theory, that the bureaucracy was in wracking contradiction with the “proletarian economy,” i.e. the nationalized property. This notion was, fantastically, retained by the orthodox even after the *creation* by Stalinist forces over a large part of the globe of replica “proletarian economy.” In fact, as Draper made clear, “The police state is the superstructure that is not only appropriate to but required by an economy based on nationalized property owned by a bureaucratic class.”⁸⁷ The specific contradictions of bureaucratic collectivist society were shown to produce these illusory hopes in the “reforming bureaucracy.” Draper pointed out that the bureaucracy was repeatedly forced to try and resolve the economic contradictions of totalitarianism through a “cycle of repression and relaxation.” The bureaucracy tries to “escape the discipline of centralised authority” by liberalization, producing both the wave of illusion in its self-reforming capacity and the very popular energies which erode its own political and hence economic monopoly. The cycle is completed when the bureaucracy “finds it needs the whip for its own good.”⁸⁸

The Third Camp After Stalinism

IN 1958 A VARIETY OF THIRD CAMP GROUPS, INCLUDING THE WP-ISL signed a statement titled “Stalinism is not Socialism!” But Hal Draper discovered that whether he looked at the educational dictatorships proposed by Babeuf, Buonarroti, Blanqui or Bakunin, the elitism of Saint-Simon, Lasalle or Bellamy, the philanthropy of Owen, Fourier or Cabet, the plannism of the Webbs, or the statism of Bernstein, it turned out that Stalinism had a strong claim to represent the dominant “soul” of social-

ism: collectivism without democracy. Socialism from below, he argued, was limited to a handful of figures such as the founders Karl Marx, the “democratic extremist,” and Friedrich Engels, William Morris, Rosa Luxemburg, Eugene Debs, and, until the counter-revolution, the Bolshevik tradition. Such marginality has a social cause. Before the rise of the working class *only* the Octroyal principle — the handing down of changes from above — was imaginable, though there was a tradition of magnificent *anticipators* of the principle of self-emancipation such as Thomas Munzer, the leader of the revolutionary wing of the German Reformation and Gerrard Winstanley, the 17th century English revolutionary. Even in the epoch of the working class, non-revolutionary periods predominate when hopes for social change are dominated by Looking Up to The Powers That Be. The post-war world was dominated by two truly gargantuan Powers That Be, headquartered in Washington and Moscow, bestriding the globe like two colossi. The marginalized and dissident tradition of Independent Socialism in the U.S.A. steered a course between each by the creative development, in the conditions of its own time, of the historic alternative to the octroyal principle: self-emancipation and democratic internationalism. It would be false to claim that they were able to do more than make propaganda for the Third Camp, to renovate key theoretical ideas and provide a “fixed firm point” for a contemporary democratic internationalism. It was impossible to win popular social forces in this period. But we have much to learn from this history. In particular we can learn from the *method* of the Third Camp in our efforts to develop a democratic internationalism in the post-Cold War world.

The collapse of the Stalinist bloc has produced a “fluid world” in which “regional powers are more likely to take risks,” the U.S. and its allies are relatively unconstrained in the brutality of their interventions to contain and defeat any attempt at regional expansion by sub-imperialist powers,⁸⁹ and the implosion of multi-ethnic Stalinist states has unleashed a wave of nationalist struggles, often led by elites seeking to protect their privileges and derail worker solidarity amid economic turmoil. The sub-imperialisms are fully independent capitalist states. Many aspire to, or already exercise, a sub-imperialist role in their own region. But their political independence cannot, of course, win them economic independence in a global capitalist economy. Hierarchical relationships between competing capitalist states are *inevitable* and these have *never* been a reason for socialists to call on the working class to support the weaker capitalist state against the stronger in the wars which result. Such conflicts were largely “frozen” in the Cold War as each side submitted to the hegemony of the bloc leader, the U.S. or Russia. In the post-Communist world, sub-imperialisms are indeed taking risks and engaging in wars of competitive expansion as each tries to dominate neighbors, or even its region, as in Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait, while ethnic nationalisms frozen during the Cold War are being rediscovered, often cynically by elites seek-

ing to carve out, by ethnic cleansing and war, new nation states, as in the former Yugoslavia. In these wars the U.S. will intervene to contain the conflict, and to preserve and extend its own overarching hegemony within the capitalist state system. U.S. policy may be to stop any one sub-imperialism gaining a decisive advantage in a region, witness U.S. policy throughout the Iran-Iraq war, or to stop any sub-imperialism getting out of control and asserting its own independent interests without regard to Washington, as in the Gulf War of 1991. Such interventions are also used to pursue U.S. hegemony in Europe by establishing European reliance upon NATO and NATO hegemony globally.

In these post-Communist conflicts the Third Camp is established by a reasoned refusal of critical support for either anti-working class camp. Socialists oppose the camp of U.S. imperialism and the camp of semi-imperialist thugs such as Saddam Hussein or ethnic cleansers like Slobodan Milosevic pursuing his Greater Serbia over the bodies of the Kosovar people. But, just as in the Cold War-period this is not a politics of neutrality. The purpose of this double rejection is to clear the political space in which a positive alternative to both can be mapped: the Third Camp of Independent Socialism.

FIRST, THE THIRD CAMP WILL TODAY REFUSE CRITICAL SUPPORT to the likes of Saddam on the grounds that he is an "objective anti-imperialist" when his sub-imperial ambitions collide with the U.S. This truly tragic mistake involves treating economic inequalities between weaker and stronger capitals as a kind of proxy for the question of national self-determination. To do so is to invert the error made by Rosa Luxemburg. Lenin criticized Luxemburg for concluding from the impossibility of small nations being *economically* independent that the question of their *political* self-determination was irrelevant. The contemporary inversion of that error is to see in the economic dependence of politically independent sub-imperialist nations a ground for ascribing progressive and anti-imperialist qualities to their conflicts with the U.S.

There is absolutely no analogy to be drawn between the revolutionary nationalist struggles and wars of national liberation which Lenin urged socialists to support and wars between the U.S. and the sub-imperialist powers such as Iraq. Self-determination, said Lenin, "*cannot*, from a historico-economic point of view, have any other meaning than political self-determination, state independence, and the formation of a national state."⁹⁰ There is no analogy between struggles for these ends and the efforts of sub-imperialist predators to expand their military might, territory and economic power. Lenin urged the working class to preserve its political independence but to support wars of national liberation because the workers had an interest in the positive political content of such wars: national self-determination, the clearing of the decks for the free development of the class struggle.

Once socialists eliminate the question of national self-determination then the road is clear to call upon the working class to forget its independent stance and *take the side* of every sub-imperialist dictator who ends up in a war with the U.S., or with a competitor sub-imperialism backed, for its own selfish strategic reasons, for now, by the U.S. Such conflicts do not involve questions of national liberation and political independence. The working class has no positive interest in these wars. The politics of which such wars are a continuation are reactionary on *both* sides. For socialists to side with the weaker power, and to call on the working class to fight and die in these wars, amounts to a loss of working class political independence, a submerging of the “firm fixed point” of the Third Camp.

To call such wars “anti-imperialist” is meaningless. “Anti-imperialism” today can only rationally mean national liberation. And the only rational meaning “anti-imperialism” can have in politically independent sub-imperialisms like Iran, Iraq, and Argentina is working class struggle against the native ruling class and the international capitalist system it stands in and for. The post Communist world cannot be reduced to a manichean struggle between “Imperialism” and “Anti-Imperialism.” There is no “anti-imperialist camp” in which the working class merges its forces with General Galtieri, the Mullahs of Iran, the Serb chauvinism of Slobodan Milosevic or Islamic fundamentalist forces. The latter, especially, can indeed become a magnet for the poor and oppressed, as a reaction to Great Power imperialism, *but so, in its day, could Stalinism*. Socialists cancel themselves out if they support such forces in wars with the major powers *when no question of national self-determination is involved*. Revolutionary politics involves more than just putting a plus sign where the U.S. State Department puts a negative, to paraphrase Trotsky.

The idea that when a brutal sub-imperialist power such as Saddam Hussein's Iraq “takes risks” to advance its own power and revenues by invading a weaker bordering country, then socialists are obliged to call upon the working class to side with and support militarily that sub-imperialism, to be for its war, to die in its war, to kill in its war, is a long way from Lenin's approach. To confuse the national liberation struggles of yesterday with the sub-imperialist expansionary wars of today is fatal for the ability of socialists to fight for the political independence of the working class. The dangers were illustrated in the Iran-Iraq war. When the U.S. began to side with Iraq in the later stages of the war, helping to defeat Iran, some socialists argued that Iran's war was an “anti-imperialist” war and should be continued to victory. But this was a war which had been fought with human waves which matched the barbarism of the Somme. 100,000 were slaughtered in two futile attempts to take Basra. Chemical gas turned Kurdish villages into ghost towns. \$35 billion of missiles and bombs rained down on Iraqi and Iranian workers. One million were killed. State militarization was entrenched and internal repression heightened on both sides. The politics of which this barbaric

war was a continuation were clear: the war was being fought, on both sides, for the interests of the sub-imperialist Iranian and Iraqi ruling classes. Workers on both sides had no interest in its bloody continuation. In fact, as the socialist writer Mayam Poya pointed out, “The counter-revolution was pushed forward under the guise of Khomeni’s phony anti-imperialism and consolidated with the development of the Gulf War . . . The war . . . provided the perfect cover for the regimes wiping out of any remnants of left-wing opposition.”⁹¹

If “anti-imperialism” is defined as whatever, at any given moment, is in conflict with the U.S., then one’s politics are defined negatively, but decisively, by the actions of the U.S. An *independent* working class judgement on events is impossible. Moreover, a socialist policy toward a war between two sub-imperialisms will be blown about with every tilt in U.S. containment strategy, and socialists end up rather like those leaves imagined by Wittgenstein which say, “Now I’ll go this way . . . now I’ll go that way” as the wind blows them. In fact the American raid deployment force had been in the Gulf from the start. The U.S. had armed *Iran* to the tune of \$2.5 billion as well as arming Iraq. Indeed, in 1987 the U.S. increased Iran’s military advantage over Iraq by funnelling arms through Israel. So, when the U.S. sent warships to the Gulf to prevent an Iranian victory this was a *continuation* of its policy of containment: avoiding a clear winner and a dominant regional power.

A PARALLEL REACTION AMONG MANY ON THE LEFT — the so-called B52 Liberals or Stealth Socialists — has been to look to the military power of the United States and NATO to police the globe in defense of human rights. This reaction is a reprise of the A.D.A. of the 1950s which, after condemning the latest “mistake” in U.S. foreign policy, would then call on the U.S. government to lead a social revolution in Asia. Hal Draper’s reaction at the time — “How naive is a liberal allowed to be?” — must be ours today. The Third Camp will continue to be defined by the refusal, when resisting one reactionary social force, to place reliance upon another reactionary social force as a lesser evil. At the ISL 1957 convention, when Max Shachtman called for the U.S. to arm the Hungarian revolutionists, Draper led the successful opposition and wrote of the political meaning of the debate:

In brief, the point is not our attitude toward the revolution, but our attitude toward our own imperialist government. We cannot take political responsibility for any military intervention by this government, and therefore cannot raise as a demand that which we cannot support.⁹²

The Third Camp during the Cold War indicted the A-Bomb as the enemy of the anti-Stalinist revolt and posed a democratic foreign policy and political warfare as the alternative. Today that approach means opposition to NATO bombing so that the Serbian people can oust Milosevic.

NATO military power has damaged the political opposition to Milosevic. The veteran BBC correspondent, John Simpson, has been bullied by Tony Blair's spin doctor, Alistair Campbell, for telling some old Third Camp truths such as, "Every bomb that lands here strengthens Mr Milosevic." Simpson reported that the angriest Serbs are "the young twenty-somethings who speak English, admire Britain and the U.S., and have demonstrated against Milosevic in the past. They now feel utterly betrayed." Supporting NATO strengthens the efforts of the United States to extend its global hegemony often in the most barbaric forms. In its bombing campaign in Serbia NATO is using bombs tipped with depleted uranium (DU). The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) says if 50 tons of DU dust were released in Iraq it would kill half a million people of cancer. Perhaps as much as 700-900 tons of DU were used by NATO in the Gulf War. Leukemia has increased seven-fold in Iraq. Iraqi children have been born without eyes, limbs, genitalia. Felicity Arbuthnot, a journalist who has documented the effects of the DU in Iraq has written of "an epidemic of birth defects and cancers." The Third Camp critique of calls for "World Government," ripped out of the wider socialist program, remain valid today as a critique of widespread illusions about the United Nations. The task of socialists is not to indulge the fantasy that the UN is some kind of world-government in the making but to expose the hegemony of the Great Powers over it. Indeed the warning issued by the Third Camp in an earlier period, that the U.S. would only support that "world government" over which it exercised hegemony is, in the post-Communist world, of immediate and practical importance.

The Third Camp Today

DESPITE THE MANY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE TWO POSITIONS we have examined, those who support expansionary sub-imperialisms as "objectively anti-imperialist," and those who support U.S. imperialism and NATO as a bulwark of human rights employ a similar *method*. Both grant an objectively progressive role to reactionary forces, develop a defensism on that basis, and, consequently, lose the "firm fixed point" of the Third Camp: the political independence of the working class. The method was summed up by Hal Draper in the following terms: "our position on a given war is based on our analysis of the social and political character of the contestants, not on what they may do or how they may act, but on what they are." Draper characterized this as "the methodology of pro-war socialism," leading socialists to support any and every country in conflict with Stalinist totalitarianism because the latter was viewed as "such an overriding danger to all things good that *any* power that counters it must be supported."⁹³ Is this not exactly the method which today leads some socialists to support the wars of sub-imperialist tyrants on the grounds that U.S. Imperialism is the "overriding danger"? The Third

Camp was born resisting this pro-war method in 1939-40. Though Russia's invasions of Poland and Finland were a continuation of a reactionary political policy the Trotskyists supported Russia because it was supposedly socially preferable to its enemies. The alleged social nature of the regime was decisive for them. Draper regularly employed the following bald summary of the Third Camp methodology on the war question: "War is the continuation of politics by other, forceful, means. Our position on a concrete war is based on our position toward the politics of which it is the continuation."⁹⁴ A concrete analysis of those politics will certainly take into account the social nature of the regime as one of the data and as establishing the boundaries of possibilities. The concrete analysis will determine which of these possibilities are present in *this* war and will be shaped by two overriding considerations, consistent political democracy and self-emancipation.

THE RIGHT OF NATIONS TO SELF-DETERMINATION IS PART AND PARCEL of the right of peoples to decide their own destiny. It is the external counterpart for the internal demand for democratic government and self-control. It is, as Dabat and Lorenzano put it, "a political claim of a democratic character which has nothing to do with economic or cultural nationalism"⁹⁵ and it is *as such* that it remains an essential component of any Third Camp program. But the right to self-determination is meaningless without the right to secession and the right to armed self-defense. Lenin was clear that "when national oppression and national freedom make joint life absolutely intolerable [then] . . . the interests of . . . the class struggle will be best served by secession."⁹⁶ Lenin, of course, favored a free union between states in a socialist federation but reminded all socialists that, "a free union is a lying phrase without the right to secession."⁹⁷ Moreover, the fact that Third Camp socialists refuse all *reliance* upon U.S. or British governments does not effect at all the right of an oppressed and resisting people, fighting for their liberation, to get arms where they can.

If socialists follow Trotsky's dictum that the oppressed are "not only the object but also the subject of politics," then they cannot oppose the arming of, for instance, the Kosovan resistance to Milosevic. For if the Kosovars are not to rely on NATO then the practical alternative is to rely upon themselves and to call upon their fellow workers in Serbia to defend the Kosovan right to self-defence and secession. And, to paraphrase Marx about English workers and the question of Irish independence, if the Serbian workers remain "tied to the leading strings" of Milosevic on the question of Kosovo then they will "never be able to do anything." While NATO bombing pushes all Serbs into the national front headed by Milosevic, a democratic foreign policy would aid the breaking of these strings by working with and strengthening the wide range of Serb opposition, trade union and civil society groups who issued an Ap-

peal on April 6, 1999, emphasizing that “we have always raised our voices against the repression of the Kosovo Albanians” but that “NATO military intervention has undermined the results we have achieved.” To take their emancipation into their own hands is the Kosovars’s only alternative to NATO’s subordination of the Kosovan resistance to NATO maneuvering for NATO hegemony in the region. The current bombing campaign was not intended to destroy but to *preserve* Milosevic as a junior partner to the U.S. in the region, by “bringing him to his senses.” The U.S. is uninterested in the Kosovar refugees, as the military strategy makes clear each day, opposes an independent Kosovo, and will leave a displaced people in Gaza-like camps. If socialists oppose Kosovan reliance upon NATO then they cannot *also* oppose the Kosovan efforts to free themselves from reliance upon NATO, especially at a time when the Kosovars are being destroyed as a people, driven out and massacred. In this situation we might recall Lenin’s comments that “whoever does not recognize and champion the equality of nations and does not fight against all national oppression and inequality is not a Marxist; he is not even a democrat” and that socialists only welcome that assimilation of nations “which is not founded on force or privilege.”⁹⁸ Socialists should champion an independent Kosovo.

JULIUS JACOBSON, IN 1986, IN THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE NEW SERIES OF *New Politics*, defended the Third Camp against the charge that it was built on nothing but delusion and piety by pointing to a *living* tradition of class consciousness, embodied in such movements as COSATU and Solidarnosc, to the *vitality* of the Peace Movements which escaped the control of either war camp, to the *continuing* instabilities and barbarities of capitalism and, presciently, to the fragility of totalitarian collectivism. The contemporary meaning of the Third Camp is the ever resurgent effort to bring into being a democratic socialist alternative to NATO and Milosevic.⁹⁹ Sixty years ago Max Shachtman said the task of socialists was to “train and prepare” a third force that could “settle accounts with both” war camps. It still is.

NOTES

1. Hal Draper, “The Two Souls of Socialism,” in *Socialism from Below*, edited by Ernest E. Haberkern, New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992. In this article I draw mainly upon the writings of Hal Draper (1914-1990), not because he was the sole theoretician of the Workers Party-Independent Socialist League (1940-1958) but because I am writing his political biography.

2. Alan Gilbert, “Political Philosophy: Marx and radical democracy,” in Terrell Carver ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Marx*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p.181.

3. Quoted in Monty Johnstone, “Internationalism,” in Tom Bottomore et. al. eds. *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, Oxford:Blackwell, p.232.

4. Marx, “Speeches on Poland,” 29 November 1847, in David Fernbach ed. *The*

- Revolutions of 1848: Political Writings, Volume 1*, Harmondsworth: London, 1973, p.99.
5. Quoted in Alex Callinicos, *Theories and Narratives. Reflections on the Philosophy of History*, Cambridge: Polity, 1995, p. 187.
 6. In Britain, Tony Cliff founded the Socialist Review Group, now the Socialist Workers Party, as a Third Camp organization, albeit distinguished from the Workers Party by its analysis of Russia as state-capitalist.
 7. ISL Resolution, "Alternatives to the Two War Camps," *New International*, July-August 1954, p.184.
 8. See Max Shachtman, "The Crisis in the American Party: An Open Letter in reply to Comrade Trotsky," *New International*, March, 1940, reprinted in Sean Matgamna ed. *The Fate of the Russian Revolution. Lost Texts in Critical Marxism Volume 1*, London: Phoenix Press, 1998, p.574.
 9. Matgamna, *Fate*, p.434. Trotsky also mis-educated the movement in the abuse of "dialectics" as a substitute for substantive analysis, as obscurantism.
 10. Martin Abern, Bern (Paul Bernick), James Burnham and Max Shachtman: "What is at issue in the dispute on the Russian question?," December 26, 1939, reprinted in abridged form in Matgamna ed. 1998, p.556-7.
 11. Minutes taken at SWP National Convention, 5 April, 1940 typed by R. Saunders, [Minority] Secy.
 12. Hal Draper, "Some Notes on the Discussion of Indian Defensism," *Young Socialist Review*, December 1963, p.8.
 13. Shachtman, "Crisis in the American Party," in Matgamna, ed. 1998. p.575-6.
 14. Hal Draper, "The Triangle of Forces," *New International*, April 1948, p.115.
 15. Hal Draper, "Socialism and Democracy: What to learn from Stalinism," in Hal Draper ed. *Introduction to Independent Socialism*, Independent Socialist Press; Berkeley, 1963, p.65.
 16. Ibid. p.7-8.
 17. Max Shachtman, "U.S.A: The Two Trotskyist Traditions," in Matgamna ed. 1998, p.459.
 18. Hal Draper, "To an A.D.A. Convention: What's Wrong?," *Labor Action*, 1955, in Draper ed. 1966.
 19. Hal Draper, *The Independent Socialist World Outlook*, *Forum*, No.2, 1967, p.14.
 20. Hal Draper, "Blow For Peace: The Impact of the Anti-Kremlin Revolt," 1957, in Draper, ed. 1963, p.159, 161.
 21. For a detailed analysis of Deutscher from a Third Camp perspective see Julius Jacobson, "Isaac Deutscher: The Anatomy of an Apologist" in Julius Jacobson, ed. *Soviet Communism and the Socialist Vision*, New Jersey: Transaction Books, 1972.
 22. ISL, "Alternatives," p.192.
 23. Hal Draper, "How to Fight Stalinism without war," *Labor Action*, July 13, 1953. 1989 showed the essential validity of this perspective. Popular revolts from below did end Stalinism. And these revolts took place when the war fear was greatly lessened.
 24. Hal Draper, "The Socialist View: Democracy is a Weapon," 1950, *Labor Action*, in Draper ed. 1963, p.59.
 25. Hal Draper, "The Secret Weapon: Political Warfare and Foreign Policy," *New Politics*, Vol.2.No.3, 1963, p.18, 20.
 26. Hal Draper, "War and Capitalism: Roots of the Crisis in the West," *Labor Action*, 1951, in Draper, ed. 1966, p.142.
 27. For a collection of articles by T.N.Vance, who originated the theory of the permanent war economy, see Hal Draper ed. *The Permanent War Economy*, Berkeley: Independent Socialist Publications, 1969.
 28. Draper, "Secret Weapon," p.24.
 29. Hal Draper, "Two Lines in Foreign Policy," in Julius Jacobson and Hal Draper, *Third Camp. The Independent Socialist View of War and Peace Policy*, Berkely: Inde-

pendent Socialist Committee, 1964, p.28.

30. Hal Draper, "Two Lines," p.26.

31. Hal Draper, "To an A.D.A. Convention: What's Wrong?," *Labor Action*, March 21, 1955, in Draper ed. 1966.

32. Hal Draper, "Internationalism" in the Liberal Lexicon, *Labor Action*, August 4, 1952, in Draper ed, 1966.

33. Hal Draper, "The Case of Guatemala, in *America as Overlord: From Yalta to Vietnam*, Berkeley: Independent Socialist Press, 1989, p.77.

34. Ibid. p.83.

35. Ibid. p.84.

36. Ibid, p. 94

37. Hal Draper, Imperialist Liberalism and the Guatemala Coup," June 28, 1954, *Labor Action*, reprinted in Draper ed.1966 (cut from the version reprinted in *America as Overlord*)

38. Hal Draper, "The Ultra Right and the Liberals," *New Politics*, 1962.

39. Hal Draper, To an A.D.A. Convention, in Draper 1966 ed, p121

40. ISL, "Alternatives," p.184.

41. Ibid p.190

42. Ibid p.193

43. Erich Fromm, July 21, 1961, in Draper, Two Lines, p.35.

44. Hal Draper, "Two Lines," p.37. From Michael Ignatieff, who often writes as if NATO were the armed wing of Amnesty International, to the British MP Ken Livingstone, who wants a kinder gentler ground war, without Depleted Uranium tipped bombs and Cluster bombs, there are today no lack of "clever advisors who can teach how to put a 'peace' veneer on power politics."

45. ISL, "Independent Federation for Asia: A Proposal for the Third World," 1951, in Draper ed, 1966

46. Ibid, p. 179.

47. See Draper's analysis of Nehru in *Labor Action*, November 19, 1956.

48. Philip Coben (Hal Draper), "The One and a Half Camp," *Labor Action*, July 23, 1956, p.146.

49. Hal Draper, "The World-Federalists and World Government," *Labor Action*, June 6 1949, in Draper ed. 1966, p. 133.

50. Hal Draper, "Indian Defensism," p.2.

51. Julius Jacobson, tape recording of Standing Fast/Workers Party Conference Speech, Tamiment Institute, May 6-7, 1982.

52. Dave McReynolds interview tape, 9 July 1984, Tamiment Institute, New York.

53. Herman Benson interview tape, 6 April 1989, Tamiment Institute, New York.

54. Sidney Hook, *Out of Step. An Unquiet Life in the 20th Century*, New York: Carroll and Graf, p.567.

55. Emmanuel Geltman interview tape 19 March 1985, Tamiment Institute, New York. Geltman continued, "The only people I know who've never changed an idea are Hal Draper and Julie Jacobson."

56. Resignation Letter, October 1952, Irving Howe and Stanley Plastrick, p.2.

57. Hook, *Out of Step*, p.436-7.

58. Quoted in Alan Wald, *The New York Intellectuals. The Rise and Decline of the Anti-Stalinist Left from the 1930s to the 1980s*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1987, p.257.

59. Irving Howe, *A Margin of Hope. An Intellectual Biography*, New York: Harcourt Brace, p. 208.

60. Irving Howe interview tape, 24 January 1982, Tamiment Institute, New York. In his memoirs Howe caricatured the Third Camp he abandoned as "spectators in a fight that was not ours" and reserved as his own post-ISL position as "a fight to stop Stalinist expansion without resort to nuclear war." This is to simultaneously slander

the Third Camp as passive neutralists and claim for his later self a policy consistently held by the Third Camp he deserted. In fact, during the Vietnam war, Howe ended up defending civilization with the politics of Jeanne Kirkpatrick, siding with what he called "the authoritarian government of Saigon" against the "totalitarian government of Hanoi." That said, and other disagreements aside, as a piece of literature Howe's memoir is a masterpiece. For an imagined dialogue with a Howe-like figure see Julius Jacobson, "Socialism and the Third Camp," *New Politics*, (New Series), Vol.1.No.1.1986.

61. The exchanges and other related articles, are collected in *The Politics of Ignazio Silone*, Edited by Hal Draper, Berkeley: Independent Socialist Press, 1974.

62. Silone, in *Ibid* p.23.

63. Draper in Draper ed. 1963, p.106.

64. Draper, "Silone," p.21.

65. For details of the court case which Silone eventually dropped see Draper ed, 1974.

66. For the opposing views of Shachtman and Draper see *Two Views on the Cuban Invasion*, edited by Hal Draper, California, 1961.

67. *Ibid* p12

68. *Ibid* p13

69. "Kennedy's Disastrous Cuban Policy" in Draper, *Overlord*, p.171.

70. Hal Draper, "Stalinist Imperialism and the Cold War Crisis," in Draper ed. 1963, p.105.

71. Hal Draper, "Socialism and Democracy: What to Learn from Stalinism," in Draper ed. p.67.

72. Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Volume 1. State and Bureaucracy*, 1975, p.416.

73. Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, London:Merlin, 1971,p.57.

74. In Matgama ed. *Fate*, p. 415.

75. *Ibid*, p.441.

76. Michael Lowy, *The Politics of Combined and Uneven Development. The Theory of Permanent Revolution*, London:Verso, 1981,p.214.

77. Hal Draper, The Neo-Stalinist Type, *The New International*, January 1948, p.26.

78. Ernest Mandel, *Revolutionary Marxism Today*, London:Verso, 1979,p.158.

79. Perry Anderson, "Trotsky's Interpretation of Stalinism," *New Left Review* 139, 1983:p.52.

80. Quoted in John O'Mahoney, *Afghanistan:Troops Out Now!* London: Socialist Organizer, 1985,p.27.

81. Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, p.191.

82. Natalia Trotsky May 9 1951, in *Natalia Trotsky and the Fourth International*, London:Pluto, 1972, p.10.

83. Wald, *New York Intellectuals*, p.208.

84. *Ibid*, p. 297-8.

85. Tariq Ali, *Revolution from Above. Where is the Soviet Union Going?*, London:Hutchinson, 1988, p.xiv.

86. Hal Draper, The Independent Socialist World Outlook, *Forum*, No.2 1967, p.8.

87. Hal Draper, *Socialists and Solidarity* (unpublished paper, no date), p.6.

88. Hal Draper, The Independent Socialist World Outlook, *Forum*, No.2 1967, p.9-10.

89. Alex Callinicos, "Marxism and Imperialism Today," *International Socialism*, 50, 1991.

90. Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, Moscow:Progress Publishers, 1967 revised edition, p.12.

91. Maryam Poya, "Iran 1979:Long Live Revolution! . . . Long live Islam?", in Colin Barker, *Revolutionary Rehearsals*, London:Bookmarks, 1987, pp,162-7.

92. See Hal Draper, "Indian Defensism," p.19.
93. Ibid,p.5-6, emphasis added.
94. Ibid, p.8.
95. Alejandro Dabat and Luis Lorenzano, *Argentina:The Malvinas and the End of Military Rule*, London:Verso,1982, p. 7.
96. Lenin, *Right*, p.34.
97. Lenin, *Lenin on the National and Colonial Questions*, Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1975, p.2.
98. Lenin, "Critical Remarks on the National Question," in *Critical Remarks on the National Question and the Right of nations to Self-Determination*, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971, p.16, p. 22-3.
99. Julius Jacobson, "Socialism and the Third Camp," *New Politics*, Vol.1.No.1.(New Series), 1986.

Book Reviews

Journeys into Death, Belonging, and Hope

HEADING SOUTH, LOOKING NORTH: A BILINGUAL JOURNEY by Ariel Dorfman.
New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998. pp. 282.

Reviewed by Michael Forman

“¿Y por qué no lo escribió en español?” were my sister's less than enthusiastic first words when I shared with her one of the best books of 1998, a book I thought spoke to our own bicultural experience. Why, indeed, didn't Ariel Dorfman write *Heading South, Looking North* in Spanish? Was it because he was already looking South, to Latin America? These are only two of the questions that emerge from this autobiographical meditation on death and life, dying and surviving, exile and belonging, silence and language, North and South America, conquest and resistance, forgetting and remembering, identity and duality, and, always, hope. *Heading South, Looking North* weaves together these themes in a narrative about a life forever marked by the experience of biculturalism and the events along the Chilean road to socialism and the military coup that buried it.

Heading South, Looking North is contrapuntal in structure: chapters telling about the author's experience of the events of September 1973 are followed by chapters describing his growing up. Thus, two lines of narration emerge and eventually come together. The book opens with Dorfman explaining how (he still cannot tell why) he should not even be around to tell the story: but for a series of choices, not all of them his, he might have been at the Chilean presidential palace on September 11, 1973, the day the military stormed it. The second narrative strand tells his own story from his birth to Jewish immigrant parents in Argentina, to his early childhood and Americanization in New York, to his youth in Chile, his adoption of and by that unhappy country, his exile in Argentina and, eventually, again in the United States (the North).

In many ways, the more intensely personal aspects of the book are also the most interesting and successful. Yet, they are less personal than they seem at first. Dorfman discloses with charming honesty the secrets of those (un)fortunate enough to get to choose an answer to the question “where are you from?”—often just another way of asking “whose side are you on?” The answer has as much to

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do with loyalties and commitments as it does with language. Language is, of course, mere words. Yet, it is also the medium through which we experience the world—everything from “joy” to “the social relations of production” is grasped only through words. And words differ. While there is not a single concept that cannot be translated, many words have no simple equivalent—and the fact of using one set rather than another puts us in context with different people. It is not only a question of who understands us or of who associates with whom. Language, especially idiomatic language, conveys basic attitudes about the relationship of person to world in ways not immediately apparent. Thus, Dorfman remarks how in Spanish “*se [le] fué la micro*” (the bus went away from him) while, in English, *he* “missed the bus” (221). What does it mean to experience a world governed, among other things, by a myth of helplessness? What does it mean to live a world governed, among other things, by a myth of personal responsibility? Can one person share and identify with the stories of two peoples? Can that person be accepted by either, or both, as their own? Can the particularity of one experience transcend the particularities of two cultures?

Dorfman, at different points in his life, comes up with different solutions to a dilemma which is in many ways also the dilemma of Latin America. “Born into Spanish” in Argentina, he grows up in New York when his parents flee the fascism of Perón. In a New York hospital, Dorfman the child *decides* to learn English and forget his Spanish; soon he abandons his given name, Vladimiro (yes, after V.I. himself), for Eddie. He will insist on using this name when his parents flee a McCarthyite North for the safe haven of Chile. Later, as he recovers his Spanish, he will continue to write in English until he decides to give up on English during a 1968 sojourn in Berkeley. This was also when Eddie became Ariel. To this day, Dorfman does not seem to have entirely reconciled the contradictions: he is still Ariel but, as Jesse Helms reminded the U.S. Senate in a mid-1980s diatribe, his legal name is still Vladimiro.

Dorfman's questions and dilemmas bear upon our understanding of language and ask that we consider its relation to culture and to political and social structure. They are also questions that confront two specific cultures and their relationship. One of them, the North, has for much of this century spread its values to the four winds with a success unmatched by anything else since Christianity or Islam. The other, the South, is born into Spanish but must always look North. Latin America is a place where a syncretic culture made of Mediterranean, indigenous, and African elements clashes with North American commercialism and power to produce the very uniqueness of Latin America. Perhaps this is why these dilemmas have, in one way or another, long informed the work of its intellectuals.

ARIEL DORFMAN FITS WELL THE MODEL OF THE LATIN AMERICAN INTELLECTUAL—a figure patterned after a certain reading of the “renaissance man.” Dorfman is a scholar of literature and a literary critic; he is a playwright who has written television and radio ads; having served as cultural and media advisor to Salvador Allende's chief of staff, he has a claim to having participated in the governance of his (one of his?) country; today mostly he is a prominent novelist and essayist. In the North, he is probably best known for his *Death and the Maiden* in which he explores the fine lines between retributive justice and vengeance and between beauty, and horror through a victim unexpectedly confronted with her

torturer. (The novel was the basis for the Roman Polanski film of the same title.) More recently, *Konfidenz* demonstrates the complex connections between his own work and existentialism and magic realism as it takes on questions of history and memory through a multilayered tale of espionage, exile, confrontation with international fascism, and a long telephone conversation that may, or may not, have taken place.

While the memory may be receding, in the South, Dorfman's name is still associated with a 1972 work, *Para leer al pato Donald* (*How to Read Donald Duck*), where he and Armand Mattelart present the cultural imperialism thesis through an innovative critique of the culture industry and its products. There, they take on a much beloved and apparently innocent artifact and demonstrate through a close reading its role in the spread of the ideology and cultural hegemony of North American capitalism. Less sure today of his criticism, Dorfman wonders in *Heading South, Looking North* whether he may "have exaggerated the villainy of the United States and the nobleness of Chile" (252). Despite these doubts, he remains just as committed to the ideals that attracted him to socialism in the first place: democracy, food, and dignity for the downtrodden, justice for victims and torturers, and, above all, hope.

Hope is difficult to sustain now that Disney "has ended up by gobbling up the globe" and Dorfman and those of us still committed to those ideals are left "remembering [our] dead" (254). It was different when Allende came to power at the head of the Popular Unity (UP) coalition in 1970. Then, it seemed possible to transform the world. This, of course, had been conceivable in Cuba in 1959, in central Europe in 1919, in Russia in 1917, perhaps in Paris in 1871. But Chile was different: there the road to socialism began at the ballot box. Despite the doubts (well founded, as it turned out) of the revolutionary left throughout Latin America, progressives everywhere at the end of the 1960s could believe that a new era was dawning. Chile would be different: it would bring about revolutionary transformation without the bloodshed, the purges, or the red and white terrors which had befallen every previous socialist victory. In fact, the Popular Unity government was overthrown by one of the bloodiest military regimes ever to victimize Latin America, and Dorfman's own musings about the reasons for the collapse of this tragic experiment are not especially useful or insightful. Mostly, he suggests that the left in power became arrogant and insensitive to the concerns not so much of the working class as of the liberal intellectuals and the petty bourgeois stratum of independent truckers, public employees and the like who should have been its allies. This insensitivity became an arrogance that "reduc[ed] everything to politics and ideology," that concluded by "squeezing the mystery out of life and explaining away too easily what at times has no explanation" (259).

It is certainly the case that the Allende government and its supporters often acted with disdain toward major sectors of the population. It is also true that there were many on the Leninist and Trotskyist lefts who did not take seriously the need to protect democratic institutions. And, surely, just about every major progressive group in Chile was indifferent, if not hostile, to the aspirations of women and indigenous peoples. Yet, it is not at all clear that a more moderate course or a more feminist course or a more multiculturalist course would have prevented the authoritarian outcome. Should the Allende government have compromised its program to death as the Mitterrand coalition would some ten years

later? Would this have prevented the murders, the tortures, the disappearances? As Dorfman himself points out (32-35), important elements of the middle layers, such as the independent truck drivers, were early on organized against the Allende government with United States-provided resources. Middle class and wealthy women were certain to experience the shortages that inspired the “March of the Pots and Pans” as a challenge to their gender role interests: it was they who marched, not working class and peasant women who had always had to cope with such challenges. At any rate, once again, the March was itself engineered by the long term opponents of the UP. Furthermore, Chilean democracy was hardly the only one to collapse before a military regime in the authoritarian 1970s. In fact, it may even be useful to think of the Chilean events in a broader context, the context of “the sixties.”

THE UPHEAVALS IN CHILE WERE VERY MUCH A PART OF THE RADICAL WAVE that swept the world between 1959 and 1973, from Havana and Berkeley to Paris and Prague to Tokyo, Hanoi, and Mexico City. Established ruling groups everywhere were shocked and filled with anger and despair—*con cólera*—when ground was broken for the Chilean road to socialism. This path was to be built from hopes the Chilean working classes and much of the Chilean left shared with so many others at that time. By 1970, however, a countermovement was well on its way. This was also a time, let’s not forget, when conservative political scientists such as Samuel P. Huntington, Michel Crozier, and Samuel Brittain were decrying a “crisis of democracy” and the “ungovernability of democracy.” In Chile and the United States ruling groups were committed *in principle* to the *golpe* because their long term interests and their ideological proclivities prescribed the obliteration not only of the fact but even more of the memory of a government and a movement that made it possible for people to “dar[e] to believe that [they] could build a just society without shedding blood” (54). This is not the place to engage in a long disquisition on how the Allende government might have survived. It is, however, worth noting that the Chilean was very much a part of a broader historical movement. It is also worth remembering that the challenge UP Chile represented was simply too fundamental to go unanswered. Mostly, it is important to remember the challenge and the hope.

In this, *Heading South, Looking North* is of great help. By telling his story, which in so many ways is also our story, Dorfman manages to inspire thoughtful hope by keeping alive the memory of the dead. Theirs was a different language. It was not Spanish or English as such. It was the language of people who saw possibilities no longer apparent. Sadly, those men and women are no longer with us. Yet by taking stock of their struggles and relating them to today’s concerns Dorfman allows us to keep alive the hope for democracy, food, and dignity for the downtrodden, for justice for victims and torturers, and for a meaningful freedom for all. Even if he did not write it in Spanish—*aunque no lo escribió en español*. . . .

Anthropology and Political Economy

EXOTICS AT HOME by Micaela di Leonardo Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. 437 pp.

Reviewed by Lesley Gill

ANTHROPOLOGISTS OVER THE COURSE OF THE 20TH CENTURY have become America's Guardians of the Offbeat—domestic traffickers in exotica who wittingly or unwittingly shape popular understandings of modernity and politics through their representations of Others. So argues Micaela di Leonardo in her highly original new book, *Exotics at Home*, which explores the connections between American anthropology, anthropologists and the shifting public sphere. di Leonardo's central assertion is that anthropological depictions of Others are too often disconnected from the historical, political and economic contexts in which they are embedded. The result is a welter of images that depict noble and nasty savages, but convey nothing about the power-laden, highly unequal contexts that structure the lives of anthropologists and anthropological subjects, shape the meanings of representations, and influence the consumption of ethnographies at particular historical moments. Yet decontextualized portrayals, whether advocated by anthropologists or simply accredited to them, facilitate a variety of political agendas that have ranged from crude imperialist racism to the ethnological anti-modernism currently marketed by ethnic boutiques.

Exotics At Home charts the shifting 20th-century political and economic terrain on which anthropological representations of exotic Others have been produced and consumed. We see, for example, the racialized hierarchies of peoples and cultures displayed at the 1893 Chicago World's Colombian Exposition, where African women of "the savage races" occupy the last rung of an evolutionary ladder that demonstrates the intrinsic worth of the peoples located on it. Such "nasty savage" representations operate as tropes for the legitimization of domestic and international racism in a period of intensifying capitalist exploitation. The nasty savage reappears in contemporary popular and scholarly accounts of the "underclass" that tend to blame poverty on the victims. In both settings, these decontextualized representations say a lot about unequal race, class and gender relationships, but their significance, according to di Leonardo, remains hidden in plain sight because of the ways in which they obfuscate serious, critical engagement with concrete social and historical processes.

Di Leonardo argues that popular, nasty savage imagery is always tied to its opposite twin: the noble savage. She demonstrates how, in the 1970s, constructions of "white ethnicity" and "women's culture" portrayed certain white ethnics and women as more natural and noble than mainstream WASP America, as well as temporally distance from it. White ethnics were envisioned, and envi-

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sioned themselves, as the gatekeepers of stable urban neighborhoods that contained an anti-modern charm and warmth distinct from both the alleged coldness and opacity of WASP modernity and the professed chaos and disarray of black neighborhoods. This construction of white ethnicity emerged at a particular historical moment in which black families were increasingly defined as pathological, black and latino demands for jobs, education and social services were exacerbating tensions with whites, and middle-class blacks were attempting to purchase homes in white neighborhoods. It served to delineate "good" and "bad" racial/ethnic families and behaviors, and it was also a key ideological element in urban gentrification, a process that, paradoxically, undermined the ability of all working class people to live in newly transformed, upscale neighborhoods.

In a similar fashion, "women's culture" ideology, whether feminist or anti-feminist, espoused the superior moral qualities of women and promoted the existence of a timeless feminine nature. It focused on relationships between women at a time when grassroots feminist activism was declining, emphasized "difference" from men rather than class- and raced-based forms of domination, and defined women as natural care givers. Whether used by feminists to counter right-wing assertions that they were selfish, embraced by the Right to celebrate the devotion of white ethnic women to family and home, or embodied in popular Great Goddess writing, the "women's culture" construct, like "white ethnic community" was false. It denied, and continues to deny, important race and class differences among women, and its ideological role must be understood within the recent political shifts of American society, particularly America's rightward lurch. Radical feminism, dedicated to eliminating the material basis of women's oppression, has been superseded by cultural feminism and its preoccupation with revaluing women and their allegedly superior qualities.

NOBLE AND NASTY SAVAGE REPRESENTATIONS ILLUSTRATE THE STUBBORN REFUSAL of journalists and scholars to explore the changing contours of global capitalism and the shifting relationships of power that tie rich and poor, black and white, male and female, western and non-western together in highly unequal ways. Part of the problem, argues di Leonardo, is that anthropologists have under-theorized America and frequently have a superficial knowledge of "home." She is critical of anthropologists who view Americanist research as a form of rest and recreation from the rigors of fieldwork in distant third world locations. She correctly assails the arrogance of those scholars who, usually in late career, turn to Americanist research but never read American history, and who presume to grasp complex social processes simply by virtue of their residence in this country. These practices, according to di Leonardo, contribute to the erection of artificial boundaries between the United States and elsewhere and between "us" and "them." In addition, she argues that the profession's long-term failure to take research in the United States seriously, and its willingness to ignore the actual engagement of some anthropologists with serious U.S.-based research, aggravates the widespread popular perception of anthropologists as the experts on foreign "exotics."

While di Leonardo goes to considerable lengths discussing the political implications of anthropological research, or work that is attributed to anthropologists, she also attends to the political roles played by anthropologists and the varying ways in which the public and the profession have received them and

their work at particular points in time. For example, she details sociobiologist Derek Freeman's Reagan-era attack on Margaret Mead and Glynn Custred's recent assault on California affirmative action programs. She offers interesting discussions of Majorie Shostak's *Nisa*, Laura Bohannan's *Return to Laughter*, Robert and Yolanda Murphy's *Women of the Forest*, Janet Siskind's *To Hunt in the Morning*, and the debates that greeted their publications. Di Leonardo, however, best displays her considerable scholarly and analytical talents in a fascinating exploration of the long career of Margaret Mead. She details how Mead adeptly reinvented herself and the significance of her work, shifting from Boasian liberal to culture and personality advocate, then to cold warrior, and ultimately to the espousal of identity politics; indeed, Mead's career is a thread that di Leonardo weaves through the entire analysis of twentieth century anthropology's engagement with the public sphere.

Despite her changing political orientations, Mead, according to di Leonardo, was always a social engineer who believed that "progress" and "Western values" should reign supreme. She viewed non-western peoples as the source of useful insights to improve "ourselves," i.e. the Anglo Saxon bourgeoisie and petite-bourgeoisie, and she skillfully marketed herself as the authoritative interpreter of foreign exotics. In addition, Mead was never the feminist foremother claimed by many contemporary anthropologists, whose historical amnesia di Leonardo exposes. For example, in *Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies*, published in 1935, Mead took a stance against equal rights for women and then repeatedly objected to interpretations that portrayed her work as feminist. She continued to disavow feminism until after it had been publically legitimated in the 1970s by second-wave feminists.

Exotics at Home IS AN IMPRESSIVE WORK OF SCHOLARSHIP that is mordantly witty, passionately argued, and takes no prisoners. The book is above all an argument for the importance of political economy, particularly a political economy approach that attends to historical processes and explores the interconnections between culture, power and representations. Di Leonardo is impatient with currently fashionable postmodernism and the obsessiveness with which its anthropological practitioners focus on the ethnographic encounter between researchers and their subjects. She argues that it is impossible to say much of importance about any society simply through ethnographic observation. Reference must always be made to existing scholarship, statistical resources, and historical materials that enable researchers to draw out the connections that unite people in larger historical and cultural contexts. Di Leonardo also makes a strong case for the continued salience of states and their policies for understanding social life in the context of late twentieth century capitalism. The analysis implicitly counters much of the current scholarly and popular discussion about "globalization," a concept rendered toothless by an overemphasis on cultural flows, technology transfers, and "hybridity" and an underemphasis on the changing nature of class politics at the end of the millennium. Di Leonardo thus sets out an important argument at a time when anthropology, and the social sciences in general, seem unable to move forward in a progressive direction. Her book should be taken very seriously.

Remembering an Expansive Decade

GATES OF EDEN: AMERICAN CULTURE IN THE SIXTIES by Morris Dickstein.
Harvard Press, Cambridge, 1998. 301 pp.

Reviewed by Gregory Sumner

The naïveté of some of the millennial hopes of the sixties is breathtaking, yet somehow this remains one of the most attractive features of the decade. Though it sometimes led young people to drugs and violence, to moral smugness and sexual anomie, it also forged a generous dream of community and equality that will always be ahead of its time.

INTEREST IN “THE SIXTIES” — REALITY, MYTH, AND BRAND NAME — shows no sign of abating as we approach the turn of the millenium. The decade engages our attention today, John Judis recently observed, almost as much as the Civil War preoccupied late-19th century America. Yet even with the blizzard of retrospectives that have come out in recent years, from scholarly investigations and vivid participant memoirs to hack jeremiads and the cheesiest TV miniseries, the events, personalities, and legacy of that tumultuous time seen increasingly opaque, obscured by the haze of Boomer nostalgia, the nostrums of tired Culture Warriors, and, above all, the shallow, cynical caricatures of commercial exploitation. What, exactly, happened in the 1960s? What, really, was the nature of the political and cultural changes it spawned, and how can they be made intelligible to subsequent generations? Did the unruly, creatively destructive energies unleashed then ultimately do more harm than good?

The 20th anniversary reissue of Morris Dickstein's pioneering, erudite classic *Gates of Eden* is a welcome event, allowing us the chance to think anew about these questions. Dickstein, a child of the “frozen,” “petrified,” “tranquilized” 50s who experienced, full force, the liberating excitement of the 60s, reflects from the desultory, “grey” 70s about how the utopian impulses he observed and, to a large degree, shared (quintessentially American impulses, at bottom “religious” and spiritual, and underwritten by unprecedented economic prosperity) made themselves felt in experiments in literature and music. He is best at tracing the roots of the 1960s' insurgencies in an adversarial “new sensibility” visible by the late 50s, symbolized by both the “Whitmanesque expansiveness” of the Beats and the criticism of Cold War dissidents Mailer, Goodman, Brown, Marcuse and C. Wright Mills (who railed against McCarthyite thought police and fretted, as we do today, about the tyranny of a technocratic-corporate elite vis-à-vis a public

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“unable to face politics except as entertainment.”) In postwar literature, especially the works of Bellow and other re-ethnicized Jews, writers sought to mask and contain deep-seated anxieties with a pinched, inwardly-turned style of “limited risks, smooth surfaces, and small poetic intensities” — an approach shaken by the arrival of Allen Ginsberg (“America when will you be angelic?”) and other grizzled prophets who, Dickstein recalls, awakened in their young audiences an imaginative appetite far “larger than we had allowed.”

By the Kennedy years the retreat of Old Regime claustrophobia began to accelerate decisively, seemingly on all fronts. Beatles scholar Ian Macdonald has written, aptly, that in the early 60s a spirit of hopeful possibility “disseminated itself across generations, suffusing the Western world with a sense of rejuvenating freedom comparable to the joy of being let out of school early on a sunny afternoon.” The fresh breezes would eventually sweep Eastward; Václav Havel recalled the euphoric ambience of the all-too-brief Prague Spring this way:

I think everybody must have been intoxicated and delighted by what was happening. Just think of it. Suddenly you could breathe freely, people could associate freely, fear vanished, taboos were swept away, social conflicts could be openly named and described, a wide variety of interests could be expressed, the mass media once again began to do their proper job, civic self-confidence grew: in short, the ice began to melt and the windows began to open.

Dickstein skillfully tracks the moment of challenge and breakthrough in its disparate directions, beginning with the anti-establishment “black comedies” of war-chastened humanists Joseph Heller and Kurt Vonnegut. In Vonnegut’s “zany cartoon-like plot(s), his distaste for violence and heroic posturing, and his affinity for a few simple...verities,” one finds “the moral equivalent of the New Politics” of that exhilarating early period, an outlook that “substituted communitarian good will, anarchic individualism, and ethical fervor for the old staples of ideology,” whether of the left or the right. Also on the literary vanguard were the autobiographical testimonies of Mailer, Wolfe, Thompson and other “New Journalists,” and the engaged, often angry work of African-American voices, most notably James Baldwin, who, inspired by civil rights and nationalist currents, moved from the exotic margins to the center of (inter)national influence. Finally, and with great acuity, Dickstein explores innovations in popular music — rock being the “organized religion of the sixties,” the era’s youthful, boundary-defying, “kinetic” art *par excellence*, advancing under the tutelage of the Beatles, the Stones and Bob Dylan.

Then the period of sunny, unexpectedly fragile, in some ways undeniably naïve optimism in the arts was over, the buoyant mood of Sgt. Pepper psychedelia and “working within the system” unsustainable in the face of repeated betrayals and brutal centrifugal dislocations (assassinations, Vietnam, urban riots — and “Nixon was another serious downer”). By 1968 these blows sent avant garde culture, as surely as avant garde politics, into a self-destroying “Weatherman” phase from which it (and we) have yet to recover. During the political and economic retrenchment of the 1970s, Dickstein already worried that an embryonic “postmodern” literature, modeled on Barthian exercises, risked becoming hopelessly disconnected and trivial, descending into the airless claustrophobia of “inaccessibility, abstraction, or mere cleverness, substituting the *dreck* of liter-

ary self-consciousness for that popular realism.” While certain kinds of abstraction may “work” in the visual arts, music and other “sensuous” media, Dickstein quotes Mary McCarthy’s wise dictum that “(l)anguage, unlike paint and sound, cannot slough off its primary function of saying something. When it does, we simply stop listening.”

IN A POIGNANTLY PERSONAL CONCLUDING CHAPTER, Dickstein laments the atmosphere of strident impatience he witnessed as an instructor at Columbia, the impact of slogans by “blockheaded” radicals (“It was paradise now or never”) that eclipsed and, finally, helped to foreclose more humble and measured efforts. “The sixties were a lesson in the inspiriting power and irrationality of utopian visions,” he writes, and, in the face of repression and defeat, the vision that inspired “modernism in the streets” (Trilling’s phrase) too often became hollow, bitterly apocalyptic militancy.

The question for us today — old, middle-aged, and young — concerns how we can recapture some of what was *good* about the 1960s, and still speaks powerfully to us through its artistic and cultural artifacts — the sense of freedom and willingness to challenge received ideas; the abiding hope in human agency in our struggles against illegitimate power; the outrage at injustice, based upon genuine aspirations for solidarity — without what was *bad* — the excesses, the categorical name-calling, the narcissism. With our late-90s economic “prosperity,” built upon the foundations of a temporarily favorable turn in the global business cycle, we live in a culture that is too often “pinched” in its moral imagination, and “expansive” only in its unbound material hedonism, its desire for technologically-speeded-up sensation and self-gratification, for the indiscriminate getting and spending that some would have us believe is the true and only legacy of “The Sixties.” The changes in consciousness that occurred during that “watershed” time long ago, in all their messy, hard-fought contradiction and complexity, amount to more than that, and Dickstein’s survey of the decade’s “hidden history” will continue to be invaluable in understanding some of their contours. “The sixties survives in our minds most vividly as spectacle,” the author tells us, “as an experiment in political theater — one which, because of its failures and frustrations, is not likely to be repeated on a similar scale in the near future.” Still, its example “should remain permanently available as an avenue of protest and dissent,” its most prophetic legacy, as Dickstein insists, is a “generous,” even courageous dream that will “always be ahead of its time.”

Everyone agrees that we should work for a renewal — it is time to open up the windows again — and who knows? Perhaps the hunger persists for something more challenging and fulfilling than highways choked with S.U.V.s and digital screens relaying the latest, endless tabloid gossip. Perhaps, as before, and particularly among the young, we can awaken a slumbering spiritual and imaginative appetite — one, again, boldly experimental and “larger than we had allowed, as large as Whitman (once) boasted.” Voices from the 1960s could help insure a more fortunate trajectory as, once more, we storm the Gates of Eden.

An Old Time Liberal

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER: MIDCENTURY LIBERALISM AND THE HISTORY OF THE PRESENT by Neil Jumanveil, Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Reviewed by Michael Wreszin

AT THE HEIGHT OF THE MCCARTHY ERA DWIGHT MACDONALD WROTE A NOTE to William Shawn, his editor at *The New Yorker*, concerning a potential profile of the Columbia historian, Henry Steele Commager, a consistently outspoken critic of Senator Joseph McCarthy. Commager, Macdonald charged, was a “particularly naive and obtuse (simple-minded, clumsy) type of the routine liberal.” This was the verdict of an ex-Trotskyist who saw Commager as a dupe of Stalinist propaganda. Macdonald’s dismissal followed hard on the heels of an infamous article by Irving Kristol claiming that the American people knew one thing about Senator McCarthy, “he, like them, is unequivocally anti-Communist. About the spokesmen for American liberalism, they feel they know no such thing. And with some justification.” A prime exemplar of this wayward liberalism was Henry Steele Commager, who, Kristol charged, had in a *Harpers* article defended the right of a mindless Soviet apologist who had spread a “tissue of lies” to address a high school class, “mendaciously pleading in support of communism.” These were old internecine battles in which Commager frequently managed to draw fire from both the right and the left. Sometimes it appears that the so-called dupe, Stalinoid, fellow traveler or anti-anti-communist was held in more contempt and considered a greater threat to American life and culture than the genuine article.

As I prepared to write this review another spokesman for American liberalism, the dean of hagiographers, Arthur Schlesinger Jr., on the op-ed page of *The New York Times*, denounced the fellow travelers, CP members and apologists who “in an orgy of self-righteous frenzy,” were protesting an award to be given to Elia Kazan who had named names before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. Once again the archaic language of the '50s came to the fore and aging leftists of various hues were held responsible for the horrors of the gulag and equated with Nazis and Ku Klux Klansmen, not to mention “Mafia thugs.” Even as late as 1987 I was personally denounced in the same archaic language of nearly 50 years ago by Schlesinger after a request for an interview to talk about Dwight Macdonald. He replied:

You must be kidding. I cannot think of a man less qualified than you to write about Dwight Macdonald. How Dwight, stalwart anti-Stalinist that he was, would have raged at the notion that a stalwart anti-anti-Stalinist like you should try to write his biography.

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I had previously written biographies of those notorious revolutionaries, Albert Jay Nock of *The Freeman* and Oswald Garrison Villard of *The Nation*. But even in the late '80s there apparently existed a cold war liberal credential's committee.

Fortunately, Neil Jumonvil has not chosen to wallow in these fetid waters. He is an articulate and sophisticated intellectual historian whose first book, *Critical Crossings: New York Intellectuals in Post War America* (1991) displayed a keen ability to put characters and ideas into their historical context in a precise and felicitous prose. After dealing with what Murray Kempton called "the family" and some of its nefarious offspring, he has now turned to an extended essay on the professional life of a principled mid-century liberal historian and public intellectual. Commager is the thread by which a careful intellectual history is fashioned which deals with the progressive and then consensus historians, followed by New Left revisionists and post modernist skeptics. Jumonvil deftly reviews some of the old debates over objectivity, activism versus detached scholarship, national unity and a shared culture versus diversity and multiculturalism. He has taken a somewhat neglected public intellectual (it is astonishing in how few indexes Commager's name appears) and made a fine historiographical essay out of Commager's life. It is not a modern biography, in that the personal life of the subject receives little attention. It is a first rate "intellectual biography," a history of ideas.

HENRY STEELE COMMAGER, BORN IN PITTSBURGH IN 1902, went to the University of Chicago for both his undergraduate and graduate work, gaining a Ph.D. in European history. His first position was at NYU but he was soon recruited by Alan Nevins at Columbia University where he taught for nearly 20 years. Commager is most remembered for his co-authorship with Samuel Eliot Morrison of the influential college text, *The Growth of the American Republic*, his now unfashionable but still immensely provocative and revealing intellectual history, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880's* and several books, collections of essays and anthologies on constitutional history and civil liberties. He was also a prolific journalist with thousands of articles and book reviews to his credit. It is clear from Jumonvil's study that Commager's fame was really as an activist, public intellectual, passionately committed to contemporary debate. That is where the man lived. He was a professional historian (his dissertation won the Herbert Baxter Adams prize) but he was more interested in applied history, using the discipline to make a case for New Deal reformism and the welfare state, than in research scholarship.

This may seem a well worn track, however, Jumonvil has a way of putting issues and ideas into a controversial framework and then undertaking a careful analysis of the developing ideas. He is particularly interested in the activist scholar. In the '50s many academics considered the term an oxymoron and still do. Commager came out of the tradition of progressive historians. His greatest influence was Vernon L. Parrington, whose classic work, *Main Currents in American Thought* (1927) formed the intellectual bedrock of the New Deal reform vision. Jumonvil quotes Parrington in an epigraph: "Officially I am a teacher of English literature, but in reality my business in life is to wage war on the crude and selfish materialism that is biting so deeply into our national life and character." Change "English teacher" to a teacher of American history and the state-

ment perfectly fits the life motive of Henry Steele Commager. He insisted that he was “not primarily a writer but a teacher . . . that’s what I like best and it’s what I do most.” But he was more focused on his public activities than he was in the class room. He meant teaching the citizenry in public audiences. For this reason he was seldom regarded as a great historian in the profession and he sometimes expressed disappointment in his own work as a scholar: “I scatter my energies,” he complained. He thought that when he retired from Columbia and moved to rural Amherst in 1956 he would settle into some serious, reflective scholarship but his circuit riding lecture habit continued because he missed the action and he needed the money.

Despite the fact that Commager was never on the cutting edge of intellectual history, and seldom ventured into the thickets of methodological theory or historical epistemology, Jumonveil skillfully poses Commager’s role as a professional historian and public intellectual in contrast to the more scholarly and often more theoretical practitioners in the academy. Commager believed in using the historical discipline as a means of waging an “essential civic dialogue.”(253) The proper work of the historian was to engage in a “civic mission.” As he wrote of Parrington, his work was not merely the record of conflict, between the forces of freedom and of privilege, but “a summons to battle.” Scholars on the other hand must spend their time in the archives and research libraries, they specialize in arcane subjects and write primarily to their colleagues in the field. They often see themselves, despite the evidence, as non-partisan clinicians maintaining an Olympian objectivity. Commager respected and sometimes envied their calling but it was simply not his. There is something that appears quaintly old fashioned about this dedication, even naive and innocent, to the jaded reader at the end of this century. But Commager’s record as an activist scholar stands up very well. Especially when pitted against the academic squabbles of the ’90s confined as they so often are to esoteric struggles over the canon and the claims of various ethnic and cultural studies.

Commager’s initial summons to battle, after his active support of New Deal policies, was his resistance to the red scare and the demands of cold war conformity. Richard Pells, an historian of the McCarthy era, wrote : “One reason there were so many victims is because they had so few defenders.” Many liberals who openly opposed McCarthy did so because he was inept and gave the “noble cause” of anti-communism a bad name. From the very beginning, Commager, always a stalwart defender of civil liberties and free speech, fought the Senator with remarkable consistency. He was not deterred when his close friends and mentors, Alan Nevins and Samuel Eliot Morrison, criticized his frequent public statements. He even ignored his publisher who claimed that his stance was damaging to the sales of his most recent book. If he was attacked by the establishment he was also looked down upon by the New York intellectuals who were presumably on the liberal left but moving to the right. Many of them saw Commager as simplistic. Some of them, like James T. Farrell, Irving Kristol, and Lionel Trilling flirted with Trotskyism and harbored strong, even personal anti-Stalinist feelings. Jumonveil correctly sees the New York Intellectuals by the ’50s to the right of Commager on the anti-communist issue but Dwight Macdonald and Irving Howe, prominent members of the group, were not to his right and while they both considered him a dupe concerning the evils of Stalinism, they made no accommodations to McCarthyism.

JUMONVEIL ODDLY INCLUDES SCHLESINGER AS PART OF "THE FAMILY," perhaps because Schlesinger along with several of the New York intellectuals, was a member of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, a vociferous anti-Communist cold war organization. But Schlesinger was never "one of the boys." On the contrary he looked upon them with contempt. He charged that "the popular front mind" rather than the New Deal mind was a "psychosis of the New York intellectuals." Alfred Kazin recalled that "upper west-siders irritated him powerfully." He found the intellectuals' suspicion of state power irrational. Schlesinger was ready and willing to collaborate with the State (at least when it was run by the Democrats) as when he declared in 1949: "The espionage dangers of course are obvious and acute. . . . All Americans must bear in mind J. Edgar Hoover's warning that counter espionage is no field for amateurs." Jumonveil is too lenient with Schlesinger but he acknowledges that on civil libertarian issues Commager defended the same beleaguered professors dismissed from the University of Washington that Schlesinger pilloried as "wretched non-entities," who had "lived a political lie." Schlesinger called Carey McWilliams, a *Nation* editor, Thomas I. Emerson, a Yale Professor, and the writer, Stringfellow Barr, "typhoid Marys of the left bearing the germs of [communist] infection. . . ." When Schlesinger attacked the Emergency Civil Liberties Union as a Communist front, Commager praised it for its courage in defending Communist Party members in the courts. Jumonveil, while having respect for Commager's stance is far too easy on the failure of many well-known figures in the liberal movement to join vigorously in the fight against McCarthyism. But he does quote from a letter of Alfred Kazin who wrote that Commager was "an example of old fashioned American freedom and integrity at a time when Hook and Kristol and that whole gang of sour-ex Stalinists and ex-Trotskyites were lending moral support and more to McCarthy."

If mid-century American liberalism proved to be a frail reed against the onslaught of political repression and demands for cold war conformity, and I believe it was, what was the cause? Jumonveil touches on this matter in his account of the "consensus historians." Although he doesn't say so, consensus history was a part of the deradicalization of the liberal/left which followed the series of calamitous events in the '30s and '40s: the Depression, the Spanish Civil War, the Nazi -Stalin Pact, Nazi genocide and the atomic bombing of Japan. The confidence of western liberalism was severely shaken and that *weltanschauung*, if you will, rested on some basic philosophical assumptions. There was an easy confidence about the nature of humankind and the inevitable march of progress. The liberals were "men of good hope," the "Children of Light" as Niebuhr put it. Now, on the other side of the abyss, the vision had changed. Morton White, the Harvard philosopher wrote of the decade after the war: "These are days when Dewey's views are being replaced by Kierkegaard's in places where once Dewey was king." What were the days of Dewey? The days of a confident belief that human beings could shape their own destiny and that justice, equality, freedom would ultimately prevail over bigotry and ignorance. Education and applied intelligence could solve social problems. Commager was steeped in a tradition of Jeffersonian optimism, in the pragmatism of Dewey which put philosophy to the service of society. Pragmatism was a tool with which to create a new world. When you read his paean to progress and enlightenment in *The American Mind* (1950) one can see how old-fashioned Commager had become. Christopher Lash, Commager's son-in-law wondered how any sane person could believe

in progress by the middle of the twentieth century.

Daniel Bell perfectly expressed the new sensibility when he wrote that to read the work of Dewey, Beard, Holmes, Veblen and Brandeis, "is to be struck by their essential optimism which was based on an ultimate faith in the rationality or common sense of men." His generation, he wrote, found "its wisdom in pessimism, evil, tragedy and despair." It is not without significance that Arthur Schlesinger Jr. dedicated the first volume of his New Deal trilogy to Reinhold Niebuhr and in the Vital Center (1949) he announced: "We discovered a new dimension of experience — the dimension of anxiety, guilt and corruption. (Or it may well be, as Reinhold Niebuhr has brilliantly suggested, that we were simply rediscovering ancient truths which we should never have forgotten)." Seldom has the concept of Original Sin been embraced with such enthusiasm! In the post war years when Niebuhr is summoned you can be sure it is by a liberal in retreat!

Jumonveil notes that the consensus school of historians, named by John Higham, was a "reaction against the previous generation of progressive historians," the very men who most influenced the work of Commager—Parrington, Beard, Becker and Turner. Their work had a common dualism, man against the dollar. This conflict between human rights and property rights was seen as too simplistic to a generation that had "witnessed a world shaped by the confusion of wars, mass society and technological sophistication." Young academicians and intellectuals turned instead to the values of "irony, complexity, ambiguity, nuance, capriciousness, chance, tragedy, multiple causation." In their view the notion of conflict was not the central theme of American history. On the contrary, middle class continuity and consensus concerning fundamental core values characterized American life, even made the United States exceptional when contrasted with the old world. Jumonviel's take on all this is that it is also simplistic to see the consensus school as conservative and of course by choosing such examples as the early Richard Hofstadter in his *The American Political Tradition and the Men Who Made It*, (1949) or Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* he has a point. But for the sake of necessary historical generalization Higham's critique of the "Cult of Consensus" is more persuasive, as is the evidence in Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream* or Jesse Lemisch's marvelous polemic, *On Active Service in War and Peace*. My own reading of American history in the post-war years supports Higham's charge that the consensus historians undertook a "massive grading operation to smooth over [the] social convulsions" of our past, to deny class struggle, to see violent upheavals as exceptions and a circumspect moderation as the sine qua non of not only a new-found maturity but of our past history, from the Massachusetts Bay Colony to the cautious pragmatism of the New Deal. The weakness of Jumonveil's point here is that he never comes to grips with why the consensus historians were seen as conservative. After all Higham was hardly a New Leftist. Jumonveil doesn't deal adequately with the works in question, with Boorstin's first volume of *The Americans* or for that matter with Edmund Morgan's little biography of John Winthrop, a consensus Cold War tract by a very distinguished historian. Nor does he discuss what has become known as the "Celebration of American life" when so many intellectuals abandoned their "adversarial" stance, as Trilling put it, and embraced the State and its foreign and domestic policy. No longer critics, they acclaimed the United States as the best of all possible worlds. Trilling, from the

Olympian heights of Columbia University, wrote with enthusiasm that “the intellect has associated itself with power as perhaps never before in history and is now conceded to be in itself a kind of power.” Soon Trilling and Jacques Barzun were to be featured in a *Time* cover story. The gleeful message was “The Man of Protest has to some extent given way to the Man of Affirmation.” Nor is their any mention of the “End of Ideology” movement headed by Daniel Bell and Seymour Martin Lipset which was also very much a part of the consensus thesis and surely considered conservative by a radical like C. Wright Mills.

THE LAST INTERESTING SECTION OF THIS STUDY is Jumonveil's comparative treatment of the mid-century liberal/left perspective with that of the late century liberal/left view. He boils it down to the matter of culture. To the younger generation, Commager was an old fogey white male. He was an elitist, a believer in high culture as opposed to the trashy popular culture and had little interest in race, ethnicity, gender, or the sexual revolution. In effect the so-called radical battles of the academy in the '80s and '90s were hardly the preoccupations of an old time liberal progressive like Commager. He and his kind had been interested in the redistribution of economic power, the problems of exploitation rather than the cultural revolution of “black liberation, dashikis, draft card burnings, bra burnings, Woodstock and style as a countercultural statement. . . .” As for issues of diversity and multiculturalism Commager was skeptical about the use of black or women's studies courses. He insisted that minorities and women's history should be worked into the general history. He did not think that giving them different titles and teaching them as separate courses “really enlarges the subject.” But at least Commager did not resort to the polemical derision of Schlesinger, who railed against curricula catering to ethnic and racial identities as designed to serve as “emotional therapies.” But, of course, Commager was of a generation whose members were convinced that they were products of a “meritocracy.” One has to wonder if the very concept of meritocracy was not “an emotional therapy” for white males.

Despite Commager's weaknesses from a contemporary point of view, and judgmental presentism is an occupational disease of most historians, one has to agree with Jumonveil's overall appreciation of this principled liberal, who did not knuckle under like so many of his contemporaries. Jumonveil thinks that one reason it looks as though Commager moved to the left as he grew older is because his fellow liberals had moved so far to the right. During the Reagan years when he was in his mid 80s he felt that *The Nation* was the best weekly, *The Progressive*, the best monthly, and that *The New Republic* had “declined into conservative rubbish.” On finishing Jumonveil's book and reading Commager's *The American Mind* I have to keep reminding myself of a stricture I constantly told my students: “Things never were as good as they used to be.” But there is something grand about Commager's faith and his dedication. At a time when the academy, as Martha Nussbaum has recently observed, “is so absorbed in cultivating the self rather than thinking in a way that helps the material conditions of others,” when it is focused on culture wars, and either defending or attacking the canon, fighting the battles of language and nomenclature, a historian like Commager and his intellectual biographer seemed concerned with larger matters — how to make history count, the importance of asking the right questions and challenging the utter banality of contemporary establishment thought.

Of course Commager is a classic example of the dead white male, and he repeatedly referred to the American mind as “he.” He was surely an elitist in that he believed in a high, educated culture threatened by a trashy, lowest common denominator popular one. But Commager’s brand of liberal history was deeply concerned with broadening political and economic equality and encouraging a greater participation in decision-making. His notion of cultural pluralism anticipated a citizenry connected “by a shared culture, while not losing subcultural identities.” His was not an agenda that can be dismissed lightly as elitist or irrelevant.

Moving Backwards with Clinton

SURRENDER: HOW THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION COMPLETED THE REAGAN REVOLUTION by Michael Meeropol, Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, \$29.95, 377pp.

Reviewed by Joanne Landy

MICHAEL MEEROPOL HAS MADE AN IMPORTANT CONTRIBUTION to contemporary political debate by documenting how the Clinton Administration consolidated the retrogressive revolution started by Ronald Reagan and before him, Jimmy Carter. This counter-revolution has been dedicated to shrinking government economic activity in proportion to the overall economy, with the inevitable result of exacerbating the inequalities in American life.

Meeropol chronicles Clinton’s economic record. After a limited effort to reject Reaganism in his first two years in office, Clinton responded to the Republican Congressional victory of 1994 by embracing the basic elements of the Reagan program. Accepting the conservative premise that the deficit must be eliminated no matter the social costs, he presided over ending welfare as an entitlement, thus expanding the attack on the poor initiated by the Reagan Administration.

In 1996 Clinton joined with Congress to abolish the federal Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program, leaving support for the poor to the states, which often had inadequate funding to carry it out and in many cases lacked the commitment to do so. Despite Clinton’s protestations to the contrary, in the period before actually signing the “welfare reform” bill he had signaled his willingness to go along with such a cruel measure by issuing waivers to the states allowing them to “experiment” with draconian cutbacks. With the signing of the budget and tax bills in 1997, Clinton’s surrender was complete.

Meeropol argues convincingly that the 1994 Republican victory that prompted Clinton’s final surrender was not some mysterious calamity for which he bore no responsibility. Popular disappointment with the fruits of Clinton’s New Demo-

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cratic policies laid the foundation for the electorate's turn to the right. The first two Clinton years, when Democrats controlled the Congress as well as the White House, were marked by job insecurity, lack of improvement in the lives of ordinary people, and a continuing decline in high-paying jobs. There was no reversal of earlier wage inequalities, and the Administration vigorously supported NAFTA, widely and correctly seen as a mechanism for lowering American wages and working conditions to compete with Third World countries. Perhaps most disillusioning was the failure of health care reform. After raising popular hopes for universal health care, Clinton was unwilling to propose a single-payer program that would have eliminated the parasitic role of the insurance companies. The result was a losing campaign for a bureaucratic nightmare of a program that satisfied no one, while in the end an increasing number of Americans had inadequate health care coverage, or none at all. In the absence of an organized left alternative to Clinton, the Republicans were able to capitalize on popular dissatisfaction and sweep the 1994 elections—even though opinion polls showed that most people who voted for the Republicans didn't support the substantive content of the party's "Contract with America" agenda.

ON A MORE GENERAL PLANE, some of the best sections of *Surrender* are filled with a compelling indictment of capitalism itself. Meeropol describes how business operates systemically to subordinate economic decision-making to its own interests: "Business has the power to hold the rest of the economy hostage. In the face of a bad business climate, they can engage in a 'capital strike.'" He says that radicals see this as reason to consider "alternative kinds of economic organization where the power of capitalists to hold the economy hostage would be gone." (pp. 102-3)

To demonstrate the need to transcend the logic of capitalism, Meeropol gives a fascinating critical analysis of the conditions leading up to the collapse of New Deal liberalism in the late 1970's. The strong economy of 1945-73 had rested on a number of key factors. First was a labor-capital truce, which allowed business to operate with relatively few constraints in exchange for providing generally rising wages and a social safety net which, while meager in comparison to most Western European countries, nonetheless protected organized and many unorganized workers against the worst ravages of economic insecurity. Moreover, the government during this period was committed to taking the steps necessary to avoid economic recessions of any serious depth or duration.

According to Meeropol, the ability of America to provide these benefits over nearly three post-war decades was rooted in its military and economic hegemony over the world economy, and its access to cheap raw materials. However, he argues, the very structure of the success of the 1945-73 period contained the seeds of its own destruction (p. 66) The capital-labor truce, he suggests, created inflation, which the unions did not fight because their deal with the corporations precluded mounting a challenge to business pricing policy. Moreover, as a consequence of the social awareness created by the civil rights movement and the rise of social protest in the 1960's, resentment against continuing inequality grew among women and minorities, who had been largely left out of the labor-capital truce. In addition, there was growing resentment by workers against corporate speed-up, and resistance to sustaining hard, intensive work simply in order to prop up an unjust system. To stem the explosion in social resentment, the gov-

ernment expanded the social safety net. However, Meeropol argues, the effect of these concessions was to cut into productivity and the rate of profit, thereby creating new and profound economic problems.

Meeropol points out that radical analysts agreed with conservatives that yielding to an aroused constituency of minorities, women, and rank and file workers created difficulties for the system of prosperity that had been in place since the end of World War II, though of course they disagreed on the solution. Mainstream liberalism's response to the crisis was to accept the essence of the conservatives' argument that the solution lay in balancing the budget and shrinking government—even though they said that the conservatives wanted to go “too far” in this direction. (pp. 68-69)

Despite its often trenchant analysis, *Surrender* is oddly non-political. Meeropol minutely details the ways the Clinton Administration has pursued policies favoring the wealthy at the expense of the poor and ordinary working people. Going further, he shows how Clinton's pro-business orientation is nothing new for the Democrats, detailing how the Carter Administration opened the door for what was to come. And still further, he shows the deep systemic roots of the current economic dilemma. But nowhere in the book does Meeropol conclude that America needs a new, progressive political party, free of ties to corporate interests, that could resist the logic of capitalism and implement decent economic policies.

In his conclusion, Meeropol makes no reference to the arguments he used earlier about the need to transcend the capitalist system. Why this reluctance? One can only speculate, but it appears to be rooted in Meeropol's equation of a socialist alternative with Soviet-style Communism—an equation that would understandably make one draw back. Meeropol shows how he sees socialism (at least some of the time) when he writes approvingly about critics of contemporary American capitalism who propose reforms that remain within the limits of the system:

Of course neither the Catholic bishops nor any of the various public-interest and special interest groups developing proposals for a high-wage, full-employment economy want to recreate the planned economy of even Brezhnev's Soviet Union, let alone Stalin's. What these groups are arguing is that a market economy can be constrained politically to guarantee certain economic rights to its citizens (such as food, education, medical care), to reduce unemployment, to the bare minimum, and to speed up the rate of economic growth beyond that deemed sustainable by the current spokespeople for the financial sector. Furthermore, they argue that such political interference will not necessarily harm the ability of the economy to function well. (p. 267)

When Meeropol agrees with the idea that a capitalist economy is not threatened by measures designed to protect the economic needs of ordinary citizens he contradicts the arguments he makes earlier in *Surrender*: that post-war American capitalism was eventually undermined by concessions to popular demands for economic equity, and, more broadly, that the capitalist system empowers corporations to hold society hostage to their needs. Meeropol's assumption that one can rely on popular ability to “constrain politically” a market economy ignores the inevitably distorting impact of capital on the political process. In the end, attempts to control investment democratically while leaving the bulk of production in private hands have never succeeded—the regulators inexorably fall under

the sway of the power of the regulated.

This is not to say that one should not fight for domestic and international reforms and social regulation, but it does mean that the fight for reforms should be conducted in such a way as to build understanding of the need for and possibility of building a new economic order based on popular ownership of key economic resources and democratic control of the economy as a whole. The greatest crime of Stalinism is that it discredited the democratic socialist idea for millions. But difficult though it is to dissociate socialism from Stalinism in the popular mind, this is what needs to be done, especially today when the globalization of capitalism is bringing back Dickensian horrors of a kind one would have found unimaginable 20 or 30 years ago. In order to permanently reverse this horrific trend, control over investment and ownership of key resources must be democratized on both the domestic and international levels—otherwise there will be no way to stop the “race to the bottom” that forces relatively well-organized labor in wealthy countries to lower its own wages and compromise working conditions to compete with Third World and unorganized workers. Moreover, without popular international control over the economy there is no way to assure people who live in the Third World that labor and environmental regulation is not merely an excuse for denying them economic opportunity and the benefits of investment.

Despite the limitations of *Surrender*, Michael Meeropol has performed an invaluable service. He has provided a documentary record of the Clinton Administration's completion of the Reagan counterrevolution, which serves as an antidote to the tired lesser evilism of those liberals and leftists who have glossed over Clinton's record. Recognizing the conservatism of the Democratic Party today is an indispensable first step in building a progressive alternative to the two mainstream political parties.

Howe Little They Understand

IRVING HOWE: SOCIALIST, CRITIC, JEW by Edward Alexander, Bloomington & Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, 1998.

Reviewed by Jason Schulman

FEW FIGURES IN AMERICAN SOCIALISM WERE AS WELL KNOWN as the late Irving Howe, yet only now has a book-length biography — or, more accurately, book-length literary and intellectual study, of him been published. This first extended work on the avatar of “secular Jewishness” and founder of the long-running social-democratic magazine *Dissent* comes from Edward Alexander, Professor of English at the University of Washington and a partisan of the Israeli Right. Those

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expecting a neoconservative hatchet job, however, might be surprised by this sympathetic work by Howe's self-professed "favorite reactionary."

Alexander's affection for his chosen subject is obvious from the first page where he dubs Howe possibly "not only the last estimable public intellectual, but the greatest one." In particular, Alexander praises Howe's refusal to let his socialist commitments force him to embrace a "sociological approach" to art and literature, insisting that "the critic's obligation is not to do polemical battle with an author's ideas but to evaluate his book as a work of art." Such was the mentality which forced him to acknowledge the literary achievements of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, even as their anti-Semitism (and in Pound's case open fascism) made it morally and politically heart-wrenching to do so. In doing so, Howe was supposedly bucking what Alexander sees as the class-reductionist heart of Marxism toward literature. Of course, Howe was at the time (the late 1940s) a Trotskyist, and Alexander is forced to admit that since Leon Trotsky himself spoke in defense of the relative autonomy of art, there was nothing truly non-Marxist about Howe's point of view. Alexander also praises Howe's "Yiddishist" commitments, in particular the six anthologies on which he collaborated with the American Yiddish journalist Eliezer Greenberg, despite reservations about the exclusion of a discussion of the details of religious life of Lower East Side immigrants in *World of Our Fathers*. He further praises Howe's "democratic and egalitarian conservatism" on educational matters, in particular his opposition to post-structuralist literary theory and his defense of the value of the European literary canon.

It is the young Howe who receives most of Alexander's wrath, the Trotskyist with a "religious" attachment to Marxism and its "avalanche of dogmatic language." Even as he applauds Howe for having had no illusions about Stalinism — unlike many liberals and intellectuals of the 1930s — Alexander derides him for his supposed faith that the working class was incapable of anti-Semitism. Not surprisingly, Alexander's complete lack of understanding of Marxist and socialist thought mars the entire book. He cannot understand Howe's outlook during his years in the Workers Party — later the Independent Socialist League — that the Second World War was one between rival imperialist camps, and that the Allies could not be supported. Alexander sees this as betraying the Jews trapped in Nazi death camps. In fact, it simply represented an unwillingness to subordinate working-class economic and political demands at home to ensure an Allied victory. As Howe's WP-ISL comrade Julius Jacobson has stated, to have made a commitment to "winning" WWII would have meant obscuring the truth about the "democratic" capitalist camp as inherently incapable of fighting fascism, not simply fascists. After all, Nazi war criminals were later recruited by the U.S. government — chiefly the CIA — as allies. Indeed, far from paying insufficient attention to the plight of European Jews, Trotsky himself appealed to American Jews in December of 1938: "It is possible to imagine without difficulty what awaits the Jews at the mere outbreak of the future world war. But even without war the next development of world reaction signifies with certainty the physical extermination of the Jews." Howe, like Trotsky, sensibly believed at that time that the best way to ensure the survival of the Jews was to bring about the end of capitalism — a system forever prone to wars and economic crisis. (Of course, for Alexander, Howe's Marxism was tainted at birth by Marx's "unrelenting anti-Semitism" — never mind that the language of *On the Jewish*

Question is comparable to that of Moses Hess, Zionist forefather.

As he castigates Howe for being more interested in the progress of socialism than in the Jewish predicament of the 1930s and 40s — and for his insufficient attention to the specifically Jewish victimization of the Holocaust — Alexander dismisses the “chimera of socialist universalism,” the idea that perhaps Jewish workers had more common interests with Gentile workers than with Jewish capitalists. For him, such an idea founders upon German workers having been — to quote Daniel Goldhagen — “Hitler’s willing executioners.” Alexander fails to note that after Hitler seized power, the first thing he did was destroy the workers’ organizations — correctly understanding that once these were destroyed, atomized workers would be incapable of resisting the totalitarian capitalist state. It was no accident that Hitler identified “Bolshevism” with Judaism. It was the Socialist and Communist parties that had the greatest commitment to democratic rights. The German Communist Party, even during the worst moments of Stalin’s “Third Period” madness, never launched physical attacks on Jewish business or wrote anti-Semitic propaganda.

Indeed, the overwhelming evidence is that the most class-conscious elements of the German working class were not anti-Semitic. It was Marxist Jews, such as Rosa Luxemburg and Paul Levi, whom the most class-conscious German workers regarded as leaders — non-observant Jews, but Jews nonetheless. The German CP did make some concessions to German nationalism in the confused early 1920s before Nazism had been fully understood, but the prevailing evidence was of a party that opposed all forms of chauvinism, as the Social Democratic Party had largely been. Alexander cannot acknowledge that German workers — who created the First and Second Internationals, who tried again and again to rid Germany of capitalism — were the most heroic and self-sacrificing section of the class we can study in history. This heroism does much to explain the fury of German fascism. Had independent workers’ organizations existed under Nazism, they could have pointed out the ludicrousness of charges of Jewish “greed.” But those days were over.

Though he does not belittle Howe for his secularism, Alexander does take him to task for what he sees as his insufficient support of Israel. This may seem odd to those who think of Howe as having been a voice of Labor Zionism (in fact, he never called himself a Zionist), or who remember his 1971 essay “The Campus Left and Israel,” where he argued that all New Left criticism of Israel stemmed from anti-Semitism and authoritarian proclivities. But Howe was a supporter of Peace Now, and he became increasingly critical of Israel once he no longer saw it as a “democratic socialist” state. In Alexander’s view, for a Jew to fail to see only the PLO as having been terrorist in the Arab-Israeli conflict means she/he is engaging in “Anti-Israel Jewish politics.”

Some of Alexander’s criticisms of Howe are, in fact, on the mark. The “socialist” politics espoused by *Dissent* on its founding were vague and amorphous, and Howe’s former comrade, Hal Draper, correctly took him to task for it. Howe abandoned his earlier Marxism for an ill-defined ethical vision. The problem, as Alan Wald put it in *The New York Intellectuals*, is that moral judgments cannot substitute for a historico-causal basis for radical social change, since they can often be subjective and relativistic. Over time, Howe’s socialism expressed itself as little more than a greater enthusiasm for welfare-state measures than liberals usually evince but he hardly advocated a radical transformation of society

and the state.

Predictably, Alexander praises Howe's disparagement of the New Left. Where Howe saw 1960s radicals as believing in "the decline of the West," Alexander sees a comrade in the fight against multicultural "barbarism." Howe is applauded for not making the distinction between that part of the New Left which did in fact have illusions about Third World Stalinism and was dismissive of "bourgeois" civil liberties and the New Left as a whole. Nor does Alexander have any reason to protest Howe's not-particularly-militant opposition to the Vietnam War, or his denunciation of Kate Millet's *Sexual Politics* and "middle-class" New Left feminism. Howe's explicit distancing from his original politics in Leon Trotsky (1978), admittedly a rather fair-minded book, also meets Alexander's approval. The "Kronstadt question" predictably pops up, though one should hardly expect sympathy for the revolution from the likes of a Likud supporter.

Howe's son and literary executor, Nicholas, had no interest in assisting Alexander's project. Hence, we learn little about Howe's four marriages and the turmoil they obviously caused, much less about the personal costs of a lifetime devoted to battling Stalinists, New Leftists, and, ultimately, the Jewish neoconservatives who currently convene around *Commentary* magazine. Whatever the book's insights, it is fatally flawed by its author's utter incomprehension of socialism as anything other than state-ownership of industry. A complex figure such as Irving Howe demands a more knowledgeable intellectual biography — from a socialist point of view.

Negotiating Feminism

RECONCILABLE DIFFERENCES: CONFRONTING BEAUTY, PORNOGRAPHY, AND THE FUTURE OF FEMINISM by Lynn S. Chancer, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

Reviewed by Jessie Klein

IN HER STIMULATING BOOK, LYNN CHANCER TACKLES beauty, pornography, prostitution, sadomasochism, and rape. Negotiating the warring factions in feminism, Chancer elegantly develops resolutions that simultaneously celebrate the "pleasures of sexuality and work against the pain inflicted by sexism." This is no small feat, since feminism has divided along these lines in intellectually bloody wars.

The face of feminism was less complicated when I was in elementary school in the 70s. It was clear to me that women's rights were about being able to wear pants to school and to play baseball with the boys. In high school, it meant not having to wear make-up or shave my legs. Being against pornography was part of the package.

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I started to experience the complexities Chancer addresses when I was in college. Now, rather than contributing to my liberation, these practices felt oppressive. What if I wanted to wear make-up and skirts? Would I betray the feminist revolution?

I believe my adolescent *angst* characterizes what many people experienced as a split in feminist consciousness. Was having to look beautiful an oppressive social structure or a personal delight? Did pornography degrade women with sexist images or free us to express our sexuality adamantly and unselfconsciously?

That's how some women of my generation became known as "pro-sex" feminists, battling the "anti-sexist" norms our mothers had "won" and perceived as new-found freedom from a historically demeaning society.

These debates raged uncontrollably over the last few decades, becoming increasingly hostile and sometimes nasty. Lynn Chancer demonstrates most effectively that different feminisms can co-exist and even enrich each other.

She explores the subtleties of each of these positions and rather than choosing sides, looks at the central ideas in these theories characterized by structure and agency. She argues that while individuals should be free to express themselves in myriad ways, the society that perpetuates female oppression and sometimes destructively engineers female identity must also be challenged.

Chancer illustrates how binary thinking exacerbates factionalism within feminism. The "pro-sex" and "anti-sexist" polarities are increasingly estranged from one another. She argues for a new paradigm which she calls "relative emphases," a more synthesized position which recognizes common ground as it acknowledges different foci. Feminisms which differ on sexuality issues might fight together for "universal childcare, guaranteed income (the face of poverty is increasingly female), sexual and reproductive freedom, gay and lesbian rights and an expanding media that includes more women in cultural production."

To achieve solidarity, feminists need to take responsibility for needlessly exaggerating their differences. Catharine MacKinnon, known for her legal efforts to censor pornography, refers to women who disagree with her as "Uncle Toms," a pejorative she also extends to the sex workers depicted in such films. These women are accused of colluding with the enemy, patriarchy. Similar abuse is heard from the other side. Nadine Strossen, President of the ACLU, and author of *Defending Pornography*, refers to "MacDworkinites" in her book, and it is not uncommon to hear her compatriots add "fascist."

Analyzing other internally destructive influences, Chancer says, "an erroneous association between feminism and 'hating men' may have made many women uncomfortable calling themselves feminists at all." Women began to think that being a feminist meant abandoning heterosexual relationships. Chancer's position does not call for giving up personal desires to support feminism. In her mediated world women are no longer judged on whether or not they like pornography, are heterosexual or gay, have cosmetic surgery, or follow the rules of a "good feminist." And Chancer says collective movements are always more powerful when they are united than when they are divided. Tacitly referring to the rebellious "pro-sex" voices, she reminds us that feminisms need to leave room for individual differences or fall prey to "reactionary backlashes even from within."

AS WOMEN, WE HAVE LEARNED TO GAIN SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE, LOVE, AND RECOGNITION BY

preening ourselves and perfecting our physical images. Beauty expectations, Chancer says, conform to Emile Durkheim's definition of a "social fact." They exist a priori, unalterably. Western cultures idealize thinner models, pressure women of color to look "white," and encourage women to utilize increasingly accessible plastic surgery.

The artillery is loaded when women rebelling against the 70s "anti-sexist" feminism insist that cosmetic surgery can be "empowering." Instead of "Can the woman who undertakes cosmetic surgery be a feminist?" Chancer wants to ask "can women still be perceived as attractive as they get older without such surgery?" She challenges the biological theorists who insist that beauty is necessarily symmetrical, young, and thin. If hegemonic looks are challenged, she argues, we will perceive beauty in more shapes, sizes, colors, and styles.

Chancer bravely confronts what is often called "instinct." Men say they are attracted to the typical model of beauty, and insist that they can't help it. She seems to find it almost amusing that otherwise intelligent people suddenly become irrational on this topic. She reminds us that various body types and images are idealized at different times in history. Given this, how could attraction to contemporary ideals of beauty be inborn?

Furthermore, it is well known that women reach their sexual peak in their 30s and 40s. Men are said to peak in their teens. If biology were the final arbiter, "it would make more sense for older women and younger males to pair up, rather than the double standard that approves of only the opposite pairing." Biology is not so deterministic.

Rather than a biological drive, societal visions of beauty may be economically motivated. Chancer argues that these beliefs are constructed by a society that depends on a paradigm of beauty that is always just out of reach. If the ideal model of looks were dismantled, the beauty industry would collapse. Women would no longer feel the insecure need to participate in expensive regimes of hair, diet, and make-up.

Motivations related to cultural status are also at work. For instance, walking beside a woman who looks like a model may be seen as a signal to other men that one has acquired something that represents influence and prestige. Looks then are a form of capital. This "body capital" is a measure of cultural power. When women acquire the appropriate looks they receive social rewards. The men who are with these women are often envied. The social value attached to this experience makes it more likely that beauty serves and develops from society rather than from naturally acquired traits, Chancer explains.

CHANCER DISCUSSES PROSTITUTION FROM A DIFFERENT VANTAGE POINT. There is a lack of serious research on this subject, she argues, because of the social stigma a female sociology student might encounter if she immersed herself in this field.

While some feminists perceive prostitution as reprehensible, others recognize the need for sex workers to be afforded the basic civil rights now denied them. Prostitutes suffer the worst sexual harassment and assault, and are offered the least legal protection. They are effectively the most disenfranchised and stigmatized women in male-dominated society.

Again, Chancer argues for a change in structure, as well as respect for individual prostitutes. She proposes more equitable sex work. If women were economically secure, they would not enter this profession because of economic ne-

cessity. With greater equality people would enter this field as a matter of choice.

On feminism and sadomasochism, Chancer summarizes and adds new insights to another of her books, *Sadomasochism in Everyday Life*. She shows that consensual sadomasochistic sexuality bears little resemblance to the more insidious power dynamics that may occur on a daily basis. She asks, "How on the one hand, to endorse the freedom to explore S/M consensually and erotically without on the other, leaving untouched the coercive societal or patriarchal institutions within which gendered sexual desires have incubated?" There are five conditions Chancer uses to define an S/M relationship. 1. It is hierarchical 2. The subordinate member expects to be punished if s/he attempts to break away. 3. There is a symbiotic dependence. 4. The dynamic is always shifting. The masochist must resist to encounter further restraint. 5. The relationship is always unstable and crisis-ridden. These patterns may be present when a boss threatens to fire a worker for organizing a union, a professor punishes a student for asking a difficult question, or a parent emotionally or physically abuses a child when s/he tries to break away or separate.

Chancer's analysis calls attention to oppressive social structures that condone and encourage everyday destructive relationships while celebrating the freedom to engage in the consensual sexuality of one's choice.

PORNOGRAPHY MAY BE THE MOST DIVISIVE FEMINIST ISSUE. Catharine MacKinnon tries to protect women from sexual harassment by banning images of sexual domination, what she calls institutionalized sexism. Carol Vance in *Power of Desires* calls these limits new forms of sexual repression. Chancer reminds us that many women who are against pornography do not consider themselves "anti-sex" as they are often labeled by "pro-sex" feminists. Similarly, women who do not think pornography should be censored may still be concerned about depictions they consider sexist. Chancer believes women should be free to engage in the pornography industry as workers and/or viewers, but challenges the society to expand the members who control the film production.

She calls for more body types represented and wants depictions of female fantasy to expand the more common presentation of male desires. Chancer also believes there should be more women in production roles. Here, she may be talking about degrees of involvement.

As a burgeoning "pro-sex" feminist, I have championed pornography as a liberating sphere for women. In pornography, more than mainstream film, different bodies and races are exhibited. Porn is one of the few media where women are allowed to be sexual without being punished. The "too sexual" woman is always the "bad guy" in mainstream films a la *Fatal Attraction*, *Basic Instinct*, *Disclosure*. In porn, women are allowed to actually enjoy sex. Studies show that more women are using pornography, and the video industry is working hard to capitalize on this new demand. I believe many women have fantasies similar to men and actually enjoy some of the same images. In addition, the role of women in producing porn is steadily increasing. Yet, Chancer argues convincingly that while pornography may have undiscovered liberated meaning, it is not free of hostility toward women. Her nuanced discussion of pornography in *Reconcilable Differences* is typical of how Chancer tackles hard issues and evokes new perspectives in a style that is even-handed and respectful which makes her arguments that much more relevant and compelling.

Camping Out: Roberto Benigni's "Life Is Beautiful"

Kurt Jacobsen

IN THE LATE 80S, FOR A CHICAGO WEEKLY, I reviewed Eim Klimov's *Come and See*, a superb Soviet war film depicting the partisan struggle in the blood bath of the Eastern Front. A cavalcade of Goyaesque horrors climaxes with a sequence of gloating SS troops "ethnically cleansing" a Byelorussian village — with extreme prejudice. When a survivor of that onslaught contacted me later, I asked her if the screened brutality was at all exaggerated or if the Nazis were caricatured, as another Chicago movie critic, to my amazement, had suggested. No, she answered, scenes of villagers being tortured, butchered, and finally burnt alive inside a church, if anything, had understated the unspeakable acts she had witnessed (and narrowly escaped) as a little girl. Nazis were not just "mean guys who yell a lot" by any stretch, or lack, of even a child's imagination.

Mass market films about the holocaust are curious but canny creatures in which essential elements of the excruciating experience must always be sacrificed for the sake of sustaining entertainment. Scripts undergo "commercial cleansings" to appease their fretful producers' fallible sense of what audiences are willing to pay to see — and tragedy of any kind just isn't boffo box office. Film makers, if they want to go on working, observe tacit but extremely rigid narrative rules: celebrate a hero who strikes back at tormentors even if only by spitting in their onion soup or by manufacturing dud munitions, stir in a tempestuous love story, draw a neat line between good and bad guys, and concoct a poignant or upbeat ending.

Audiences must see themselves as part of the solution, not the problem. So one is quite content with the unreflective applause of realtors who move "riff-raff" out of gentrifying neighborhoods, bankers who red line, and business men who downsize to the detriment of everyone and everything but the bulging size of their wallets. To his credit Steven Spielberg, after consecrating Schindler as a proto-yuppie hero and assuring us that only Germans ever behave like Nazis, gave us gut-wrenching glimpses of cold-blooded atrocities managed by something akin to real Nazis: venal, corrupt, banal and only zealously inhuman toward those dregs officially deemed 'life unworthy of life.' Appallingly ordinary people. Indeed, ordinary law-abiding people (or enough of them), as the holocaust amply demonstrated, are capable of anything that the law compels or allows. The SS just happened to speak German. This is a striking caveat that

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artists like Benigni can help us to bear soberly in mind. Of course, he doesn't. What does he want us to bear in mind?

Six dead is a crying shame, goes the sardonic lament; six or eleven million dead is arithmetic. Do atrocities of the latter magnitude permit a comedic treatment if it allows a harrowing message (*pace*, Western Union) to strike home? In principle, why not? *Catch-22* arguably told us as much of value about warfare as did *All Quiet on the Western Front*. Sugaring the pill is excusable if the pill serves its bitterer purpose. In Roberto Benigni's *Life is Beautiful* critics and audiences beheld Samuel Johnson's dog not only dancing but doing a bit of ballet, and with such good intentions. The supreme soviet of sentimentality, formally known as the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, responded with a gush by awarding Benigni, this ebullient bully of bonhomie, Oscars for a best foreign picture and best actor. Has Benigni prat-falled his way past our callous defenses to insinuate a valuable searing lesson we otherwise would not get? Does his premeditated brand of audacity excuse the otherwise insane intrusion of comedy into the environs of the camps? Night and fog and chuckles too.

Unprecedented, Benigni is not — even in Italy. Comedy and concentration camps blended there on another notable occasion. In the 1970s Bruno Bettelheim, unjustly disparaged after his death, took Lina Wertmüller's *Seven Beauties* severely to task for its flip and, he feared, dangerously misleading view of camp survivors, and what it took to be one. What perturbed Bettelheim was not the director's intent — which he could not presume to pinpoint anyway — but how enraptured and deluded audiences were by this raucous and dazzling work. (Wertmüller recently told me that, although she felt he misunderstood her intent, she agreed with many of his trenchant comments.) Indeed, Bettelheim at the time got it mostly right as to how movie audiences perceived the demented moral: "survival is all — it does not matter how, why, what for" — a lesson Bettelheim condemned for distorting camp realities and for pandering to a cheap cynicism. The most urbane cynicism, unfortunately, posed no barrier to any societal stirrings or inklings of a replay of Nazi-like conduct and crimes. Good intentions, even for a gifted artist, are not enough.

Enough about Wertmüller. What's not to like about Benigni? Apart from a grotesque misrepresentation of the camps? Apart from a smug underlying message that a little guile and a lot of pluck enabled survival. (Bettelheim, Rousset, and Levi have news for you: it didn't.) Apart from the unnoticed presence of a child in the men's barracks? Apart from the absence of kapos? Apart from every inmate speaking Italian? One can go on and on. But are these opportunistic violations — not just suspensions — of reality justified by the film's impact not only as "pure" cinema but as a humanistic work? After all, Benigni could have picked less well-documented plights, or else a patently imaginary one. Benigni is so impressively, or oppressively, charming that one feels kind of churlish pointing out that the prince-inmate is wearing a freshly laundered striped tunic.

IN AN OPENING SCENE AT A PICTURE POSTCARD FARM the skinny, raggedy, cunning clown Guido first literally catches a classy signorina, and then her eye — gallantly sucking a wasp stinger from her trembling thigh. Our self-declared prince of the province spins a medley of often serendipitous tricks to woo this cool and rather uppercrust young lady. Next stop is Guido's uncle who dwells in a vast ramshackle beauty of a house ("Nothing is more necessary than the unneces-

sary”) strewn with enchanting antiques, a nag named Robin Hood and, by the looks of it, a few million bucks worth of paintings. Guido moves in and, while courting the lady and awaiting official permission to start a bookstore, takes a lowly waiter’s job in a plush hotel where we find he can crack any riddle quicker than a lobster’s claw. A German doctor enjoys, if that is quite the verb for his deadly earnest delight, spinning riddles with the waiter — an amiable duel of wits which sets up an ugly realization much later in the camps of how profoundly banal evil men can be.

A plethora of implausibilities pile up, setting the half-lyrical, half-daffy tone. A heady mix of alternating inanities and dramatic shocks unfolds. Benigni invents a Marx Brothers Mediterranean universe where, without any serious reprisal, he drops flower pots on bumptious bureaucrats, steals hats (and an automobile), impersonates a pompous school inspector who instructs a classroom in the joys of possessing a racially superior belly button, and gallops aboard a green horse around a posh hotel ballroom filled with swaggering admirers of Mussolini, grabs a girl and gets away unmolested. You gotta like this guy even if you can’t believe him. His successful antics evidently are all jokingly owed to will power and Schopenhauer.

“Ingenuity uber alles” is Benigni’s keynote. Into this occasionally tedious frivolity he drops somber notes and disquieting scenes: none more so than a blithe dinner table conversation among enthused fascisti about a children’s math book problem posed in terms of how much money the liquidation of 300,000 cripples will save the state — for 300,000 patients were killed by the Reich in a warm-up for the final solution. The diners chatter brightly about arithmetic, not the gruesome reality. The German doctor will be anally absorbed in abstractions, not the plight of human beings. The film is nearly redemptive despite the unlikelihood of a rich girl marrying Guido, once a poor waiter and now a poor book seller (How did he get permission from her former boy friend, a local official, to start the shop anyway?)

CUT TO SEPTEMBER 1943 OR THEREABOUTS when Germany occupied Italy and tried to pry loose its Jews — murdering about one in ten. Nazi troops strut nearby. Anti-semitic epithets are smeared on the book shop and Guido dutifully misinforms his son that the scrawling refers to something silly, like “spiders and Visigoths.” It seems far from clear, though, that being deceived is any better for five-year-old boys than it is for 25-year-old men and women. Is this really something to admire? Father and son are carted off to the camps anyway; momma insistently joins them with help from an obliging SS officer. They are, I swear, actually helped aboard the train by the Nazi guards — or get, at worst, an impatient shove.

In camp barracks, where the son wouldn’t have lasted five seconds, Guido’s hilarious mistranslation of the Nazi’s instructions would have gotten his skull bashed in not by the Nazis, but by fellow prisoners whose own lives would have been that much more endangered. There is a double deceit or delusion going on: Guido of the child and then of the filmmaker regarding the audience. For poignancy to arrive, reality has to go. The loudspeaker and use of the station would have gotten him and child instantly killed, but he gets away. Guido can grandstand for his son and the actor grandstand for his audience who will not be much pushed by the distance between the “mean guys who yell a lot” and the stagger-

ing routine callousness and brutality of a precisely gauged and totally monitored hell.

Not that this camp isn't grim. The prisoners are disgruntled, they are scruffy, they are pretty depressed about it all. Everybody speaks Italian instead of the babel of tongues that aided the "divide and conquer" system. They tote heavy anvils all day long. But reality intrudes most rudely in the women's barracks, where with the blithest and blithering inconsistency, momma learns that "children and old women" are selected for death. Why hasn't the men's barracks gotten word? Guido's Uncle meanwhile is led with a shrug off to death. The mother happens on the gray gruesome mound of entangled corpses. There is a child's kitten crawling over discarded clothing, which is Benigni's answer to Spielberg's scarlet-coated girl in the ghetto clearance sequence in *Schindler's List*. But Benigni's most brilliant moment is when Guido dissuades his son regarding wild rumors of extermination: "Who would turn people into buttons and soap? That'll be the day. Preposterous!"

The prisoners are remarkably complicit in fooling the child that this is all a game to win a thousand points and win a real tank. As American troops near the camp, and liberation beckons, Guido ultimately is killed in the frantic course of saving his family. He clearly would have survived had he not had a wife to save; his fate, unlike that of any actual inmate, was in his hands. The denouement bring the son a tank, liberty and mother again. Guido bluffed the kid and us, the audience. It's a pity that for the film to work that the camp must become an outrageous lie.

AGONY IS KEPT MOSTLY OFF-SCREEN on the belated and, I thought, offensive ploy that this really all was a child's eye view ("This is my story"). No wonder the Academy loved it: a Walt Disnified concentration camp, love melting the class divide, a Chaplin-ish figure tweaking authority — as if tweaking made any difference. To boot, it masquerades as a true story (like *Europa, Europa*), a story full of weird miracles where the naive and innocent triumph. (One thinks instead of the Yad Vashem memorial of glittering mirrors and candles commemorating the children killed.) The filmmaker simply counted on substituting this sentimentality for deeper and more disturbing lessons about camps. It is tempting to walk away knowing love conquers all, and that moxie alone will see you through. If it worked for Benigni's hero, why didn't more survive? Did we really get a profound insight, or any insight at all, into these systemic murder machines, into camps infernally designed to reduce you to what your captors think of you? Nope.

The real tribute to holocaust victims is depicting and facing their experiences honestly with an eye to preventing it ever happening again through developing, as it were, informed hearts. Shock value, audacity and nerviness carefully wrapped in certified good intentions is what the latter half of *Life is Beautiful* has to offer as a successful counterfeit. Benigni means well, but since when does meaning well obliterate other criteria — since when does the intent excuse the content? What audiences need to know is how ordinary men, not psychos and fanatics, carried out these deeds. But that appears to be one abiding riddle that Benigni is uninterested in posing, let alone solving.