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EDITORIAL NOTE

IT'S HARD TO PUT A POSITIVE SPIN ON THIS REPORT" was what Lehman Brothers' chief economist Ethan S. Harris told the *New York Times* in response to the Labor Department's mid-year economic report. As of July 1, the country's official unemployment rate had climbed to 6.4 percent, the highest in almost a decade, and the economy continued to shed jobs. Thirty thousand jobs went missing in a single month, May, while one quarter of a million vanished in the first six months of the year. Over 2.5 million jobs have disappeared in the past 2 1/2 years. A sizable number of the newly unemployed are African-Americans, many of them laid off by manufacturing companies that paid higher-than-average wages, and the black unemployment rate is currently rising twice as fast as that of whites.* "One thing I wonder about," said Mr. Harris, "is whether all the happy talk about the economy encouraged people to start job hunting again, only to find that the labor market wasn't nearly as strong as what they were hoping for."

Positive spin and happy talk: it is hard to think of a single Bush administration initiative that hasn't been accompanied by great gusts of pre-tested twaddle. Clean air and clean water through deregulation, wilderness

protection via tree-clearing and road-building, job creation from tax cuts for the top 1 percent and a stronger Social Security program by giving Wall Street a fat slice of the action. This spring President Bush told one audience that al-Qaeda is "on the run" and another that weapons of mass destruction have "already been found" in postwar Iraq. The pressures of the 2004 election will no doubt generate a tsunami of sophistry; the Republicans decision to hold their convention in New York City, under the figurative shadow of the Twin Towers, practically guarantees it.

In the case of U.S. policy toward Iraq, the gap between rhetoric and reality is vertigo-inducing. In mid-May Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld conceded that "a few areas have challenges, to be sure," but insisted

*"Unemployment among blacks is rising at a faster pace than in any similar period since the mid-1970s, and the jobs lost have been mostly in manufacturing . . . At the same time, jobless black Americans have been unusually persistent about staying in the labor force. Having landed millions of jobs in the booming 1990s, they have continued to look for new ones in the soft economy, and so are counted now as unemployed; if they gave up trying to find work, they would not be counted. These two phenomena help to explain why the black unemployment rate, though still not high by historic standards, is rising twice as fast as that of whites." "Blacks Lose Better Jobs Faster as Middle-Class Work Drops," Louis Uchitelle, *New York Times*, July 12, 2003.

that “most areas are progressing, and a growing number actually have conditions that are today estimated to be better than prior to the recent war.” He famously dismissed concerns about looting, organized crime and revenge killings as “growing pains.” His optimism was echoed by L. Paul Bremer III, head of the interim authority, who confidently asserted that “Across most of Iraq, life is already getting better.” (This will come as good news to the families of the children whom Unicef reports have been killed or injured by bombs, ammunition and abandoned weapons in recent weeks.) As the numbers of U.S. soldiers killed in “postwar” Iraq continued to mount, the Pentagon announced that the military is spending just under *four billion dollars a month* in Iraq, doubling its earlier estimates. Not surprisingly, Pentagon officials are unwilling to speculate about spending levels in the coming months. How could they, when faced with the distance between policy, and the facts on the ground?

Or take President Bush’s recent “Africa tour” — six hours in Senegal, six hours in Botswana, three hours in Uganda, and most of the rest of the time relaxing at a luxury hotel in Pretoria, South Africa. “We’re not here for style, we’re here for substance,” explained Secretary of State Colin Powell. The assembled press corps duly recorded his words, and quoted them in their front page stories, and the major networks ran footage of a somber-looking president touring the slave house on Gorée Island, Senegal, where he lingered for almost fifteen minutes. Rather less attention was paid to the actual agenda for Africa’s nation-states that Colin Powell was referring to, which includes such gems as privatization, arms sales, oil deals and biotech. The fact that most leading Democrats — the party’s major funders, staffers and elected officials — embrace this multifaceted pro-corporate agenda may be one reason why the “substance” of the president’s excursion generated what can only be described as to-

ken interest on the part of the mainstream media.

U.S. politics has long generated massive quantities of spin. Sinclair Lewis’s *Babbitt* (1922) memorably satirized the “babbitry” of Main Street USA — the ways sales pitches and showmanship had seeped into the texture of civic life. Nearly a century later the numbers of people affixed to the political system who hype, lobby, advertise, promote and publicize is staggering. Even now there are consultants, pollsters, policy analysts and professional pols laboring overtime to coin some piece of rhetoric to help explain away the economy, Afghanistan or the Middle East, or to show how this or that Democrat will transmute lead into gold. The fact that millions of Americans more or less see through the hype — and, for this reason, rely on the BBC, Jon Stewart or the Internet for their news — does not really matter so long as their disaffection can be spun away, as so much anti-Americanism, especially as long as that growing disenchantment goes unrepresented by a credible and organized political force.

JULIUS JACOBSON, to whom this issue is dedicated, was many things — editor and essayist, gourmet and machinist, husband and father — but he was an indifferent publicist and a complete failure as a huckster. “That’s a good issue” was about as far as he would go in talking up back copies at the *New Politics* table at a Socialist Scholars Conference. “It’s a nice piece,” he would remark appreciatively, referring to something on the order of Marshall Berman’s masterful essay on Meyer Schapiro (*NP*, no. 20), or Stephen Steinberg’s widely reprinted dissection of the liberal retreat from race (*NP*, no. 17). “Try and write something for us,” he would tell a prospective author, “we’d be happy to take a look at it.” Happy, good, nice: in an era of rhetorical overkill Julie kept it simple.

New Politics was first launched in 1961, at a time when the civil rights movement was

gaining momentum and when the first stirrings of a younger, newer left could be discerned. While the early issues look quite different from the journal in its current incarnation — they were smaller, for one thing, with pen-and-ink drawings on the margins — the underlying formula has changed relatively little. Then as now the magazine offers a forum for debate, discussion and analysis. Instead of laying down a political line for others to follow, the magazine provides space for dialogue, critical reflection and reexamination. New voices, including younger writers as well as authors from other countries, have always been an important part of the mix. And rather than confining itself to a narrow range of political and economic issues, *NP* has from the outset tried to engage with broader cultural and intellectual trends. In these respects as well as others, the magazine is part of the tradition of New York-based “little magazines” — personified by the early *Partisan Review* or Dwight Macdonald’s *Politics* — that encompass the world of books, ideas and culture as well as politics, policy and political economy.

While over the years *New Politics* has published articles on a dizzying array of topics, it has always returned to certain core themes. Any reader who has glanced at more than one issue is likely to be aware, for example, that the magazine’s editors and contributors take a strong interest in the past, present and future of Soviet-type societies, as well as the workers and students who have periodically rebelled against them. Trade unions, labor relations, working-class militancy and labor history in the United States and abroad — not to mention the variegated

experience of work itself — are also topics that the journal has taken up time and again. Virtually every issue of the magazine has featured at least one substantive essay on the politics of race and racial oppression, as well as race in relation to the labor movement and the left. In the 1980s and 1990s the magazine began to pay sustained attention to the full range of modern social movements — from feminism to environmentalism — as well as innovative parties such as Brazil’s Workers Party and the German Greens that grew out of social movement activity. Another theme that has received an extensive airing is that of the malignancy, and contradictions, of U.S. foreign policy. These preoccupations are enough to indicate, in broad strokes, the magazine’s political center of gravity — both what it is *against* (totalitarianism, imperialism, racism, militarism), and what it is *for* (democracy, civil liberties, working class empowerment, vibrant social movements).

While we have taken steps to enhance the look of the magazine, and are searching for ways to better promote it, we see no reason to tamper with the template. We happily predict that the new-look *New Politics* will continue to publish articles on Cuba, China, affirmative action, labor organizing and the administration’s plans for regime change in the Middle East. But *New Politics* will also leave plenty of room for features on the arts, literature and intellectual life. The table of contents for this issue is broadly indicative of both where *NP* has been, and where it is going. In their low-key, no-spin way, Phyllis and Julius Jacobson have given us an extraordinarily robust model for socialist intellectualism. We proudly affirm their vision.

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Nathan Glazer and the Assassination of Affirmative Action

STEPHEN STEINBERG

NATHAN GLAZER STARTED OUT AS A youthful radical who wanted to change the world. He will be remembered for his perfidy in leading the assault against affirmative action policy. Though the Supreme Court's rulings in the University of Michigan cases stopped short of a total repudiation of affirmative action programs, they do further restrict both the scope and logic of affirmative action, thus driving yet another nail into the affirmative action coffin. But it was Nathan Glazer who drove in the fateful first nail with a series of articles that began as early as 1964, culminating with the 1975 publication of *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy*. This was the first book-length polemic against affirmative action, and it came at the time that Glazer enjoyed a reputation as a leading public intellectual with impeccable liberal credentials — “one of Harvard's adornments,” as Martin Marty wrote in his review in the *Christian Century*. Another reviewer commented prophetically: “Because of his influence, [the book] may well stimulate policy revision at the highest levels of our government and courts.”

In 1998 Glazer announced that he had changed his mind on affirmative action, and recently he joined hands with Glenn Loury, another political repentant, to file an amicus brief in support of the University of Michigan. Both these men were prominent for decades in the assault against affirmative action, and their eleventh-hour conversion can hardly compensate for the damage inflicted by their past actions. In a previous article in *New Politics* (Summer 2002), I argued that Loury's disavowal of his conservative positions does not withstand critical scrutiny. The same is true of Glazer. As I argue below, his reversal on affirmative action is half-hearted and replete with reactionary innuendo.

Glazer's ascent from immigrant poverty to the heights of academe hinged on the access he enjoyed to City College when it was tuition-free.

Glazer does not concede that affirmative action is a just remedy for institutionalized racism. Rather, consistent with his past writings, his support for affirmative action is based on a victim-blaming paradigm

of fragmented families and disorganized communities that render individuals unable to compete “by the tests and measures that have become the coin of American meritocracy.” Glazer may have changed his mind about affirmative action policy, but he has not forsaken the assumptions and worldview on which his erstwhile opposition was based.

Why, one might ask, make Nathan Glazer the focal point of analysis? It goes without saying that affirmative action was not defeated by the whims or acts of a single person. However influential, Glazer's book did not trigger the backlash against affirmative action, but rather succeeded precisely because it resonated with a backlash that was gaining momentum at the time his book was

STEPHEN STEINBERG's latest book, *Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy*, received the Oliver Cromwell Cox award for Distinguished Anti-Racist Scholarship. An expanded second edition was published by Beacon Press in 2001.

published. Even if Glazer had remained faithful to the radical politics of his youth, it was inevitable that the forces of reaction would launch a campaign against affirmative action. And given the racist and reactionary underbelly of American society, it was almost inevitable that this campaign would eventually triumph.

All the same, Glazer did play a key role in this historical drama. Indeed, he was perfectly cast for this role precisely because he enjoyed a reputation as both a liberal intellectual and a leading scholar on race and ethnicity. Through his persona, we can observe the confluence of historical events and forces that led to the gradual evisceration of affirmative action and its ultimate defeat. Focusing on Glazer also brings an unpleasant fact to light: that liberals — and Jewish liberals in particular — were among the earliest and most vocal opponents of affirmative action. I hasten to add that Jewish individuals and organizations figure prominently among the most ardent and steadfast supporters of affirmative action. Nevertheless, this should not detract from the fact that Jewish liberals not only played a significant role in forging anti-affirmative action discourse, but also had explicitly Jewish reasons for doing so. Eventually, of course, the political right appropriated the anti-affirmative action cause, marshalling opposition into a veritable crusade that has come dangerously close to achieving its nefarious objective. But it was Nathan Glazer who let the genie out of the bottle, so to speak, by helping to put into motion forces that ultimately led to an outcome that he now disavows.

Before we get to the genie, it is crucial that we place the issue in historical context. Let us briefly examine the historical conditions that gave rise to affirmative action policy, and the emergence of the anti-affirmative action backlash that began even before the term “affirmative action” entered popular discourse. Then I shift the focus to Nathan Glazer’s personal trajectory. How is it that this man, the upwardly mobile son of poor Jewish immigrants with socialist proclivities, emerged on the vanguard of the movement to gut affirmative action?

Occupational Apartheid

LIBERAL RACE THEORY IS PREDICATED on a concept of “employment discrimination” that is seri-

ously flawed and misleading. At first blush this term seems unassailable since it implicitly identifies discrimination as a problem and incriminates the employer (read: the greedy capitalist) for wrongdoing. On closer examination, however, the term is riddled with difficulty. Conceptually, it reduces the problem of racism to one of employers intentionally engaging in acts of discrimination based on racial animus. Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act proscribes such discrimination. Thus, for Glazer and other critics of affirmative action, “employment discrimination” is already unlawful, and all that is required is more vigorous enforcement of anti-discriminatory statutes. Instead of affirmative action, these critics proffer crocodile tears over the travesty of “employment discrimination,” followed by hollow demands to prosecute employers who engage in discriminatory practices.

The problem is that it is almost impossible to prove willful discrimination. Employers can always claim that they are hiring the “best” people, and that their black applicants come up short: whether in terms of educational credentials, job experience, references, “hard skills,” “soft skills,” or a host of other factors, many of which are patently subjective, that enter into decisions regarding hiring and promotion. Indeed, it was the failure of Title VII to enact broad changes in job integration that gave rise to affirmative action policy in the first place. In effect, employers were told that it was not enough to desist from practicing discrimination, but that they must go out of their way to ensure that their work force was inclusive of minorities. It is amazing how a term with such positive connotation — *affirmative* action — came to acquire such moral and political stigma.

There is a second, far more vexing problem with restricting “racism” to acts of intentional discrimination. Such acts are only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. Lurking beneath the surface is a cluster of interconnected historical and institutional factors that prevent blacks from acquiring the necessary education, skills, work experience, and access to hiring networks. In effect, so many roadblocks are placed in the way of black workers that it is unusual for them to reach the figurative hiring hall in the first place. Thus employers rarely have to dirty their hands by engaging directly in acts of discrimination. Such blatant discrimina-

tion is reserved for the rare individual who manages to circumvent these roadblocks and to arrive on the threshold of opportunity. In a racist system the discriminatory employer or admissions officer is the agent of last resort.

Thus, "employment discrimination" scarcely reflects the magnitude or depth of the problem.

Affirmative action evolved as a remedy for occupational apartheid.

We are speaking not of discrete individuals who encounter racial barriers erected by discrete employers. Rather, we are talking about the categorical exclusion of an entire people from whole industries and entire job sectors for all of American history. A term that does capture the magnitude and depth of the problem is "occupational apartheid." We can put the matter simply: Title VII was designed as a remedy, though an ineffectual one, for employment discrimination. Affirmative action evolved as a remedy for occupational apartheid.

Occupational apartheid has its roots in slavery. Above all else, slavery was a system of labor, one that benefited the national economy as well as the regional economy of the South. Consider the historical irony. In the 17th and 18th centuries Southern planters went all the way to Africa to import workers for their plantations. Two centuries later government contractors are merely asked to go out of their way to recruit blacks into their work force, and we are told, in so many words, that this asking too much.

Occupational apartheid did not end with slavery. For a whole century later, a rigid "color line" relegated blacks to "Negro jobs," thus excluding them categorically from coveted jobs reserved for whites. The color line existed with nearly as much consistency in the North as in the South, effectively barring blacks from the entire manufacturing sector, with the exception of a few menial, low-paying, often dangerous and backbreaking jobs that whites spurned. In effect, a system of "racial

preference" was instituted that benefited white workers for generations. Again, we confront the irony that any mention of racial preference that would benefit minorities is seen as violating a sacred principle of color blindness.

A few examples will suffice to illustrate the depth and persistence of occupational apartheid:

- Following a "riot" in Harlem in 1935, triggered by an incident of police brutality, a commission established by Mayor LaGuardia and led by sociologist E. Franklin Frazier, issued a report on "Social and Economic Conditions Responsible for the Outbreak," compiled the following statistics. In a combined work force of 20,000, the Consolidated Gas Company and New York Edison had only 278 blacks, all of them in menial positions. The Rapid Transit Company, which had 10,000 employees, employed only 580 blacks as messengers, porters, and cleaners.
- A 1960 study of the Tennessee state government found that blacks had access to only 115 of the 1216 classified jobs. For example, of the 6000 employees in the Highway Department, only 55 were black. Schooling corresponded to this racial division of labor. White children studied electronics, business machines, refrigeration, air conditioning, drafting, radio, and television. Black children studied tailoring, bricklaying, cabinetmaking, cooking, and maid and maintenance services.
- In 1973 the Nixon Administration held up a rate increase for American Telephone and Telegraph Company until it signed a consent decree agreeing to change its employment practices for women and minorities. Women were employed almost exclusively as operators and clerical workers, and even the supervisors of "women's departments" were male. Black women were readily employed as operators, which white women were fleeing as more attractive job opportunities opened up. Black men, however, were categorically excluded from coveted craft jobs. At that time AT&T was the nation's largest employer and a classic example of caste in the workplace, in terms of both race and gender.

To repeat, we are speaking not of random acts of discrimination, but rather the categorical exclusion of an entire people from whole occupational sectors for all of American history. This is precisely the condition that affirmative action was designed to remedy, though it was never developed as coherent policy, but evolved through a series of executive orders, court decisions, and

administrative policies, all buttressed by “pressures from below.” The Civil Rights Movement, though generally regarded as a struggle for “rights,” was equally a struggle against “the color line.” Remember, A. Philip Randolph’s March on Washington Movement was centered on a demand that President Roosevelt issue an executive order lowering racial barriers in defense industries. Remember too, that the slogan for the 1963 March on Washington was “For Jobs and Freedom,” rhetorically placing “jobs” even before “freedom.” After the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1965, Whitney Young and other black leaders pressed for “compensatory hiring” to drive a wedge into the system of occupational apartheid that they recognized was the greatest stumbling block to racial equality.

Finally, in 1967 and 1968 there were a number of highly publicized, grassroots protests at construction sites in Philadelphia, Chicago, and New York against the exclusion of blacks from the construction trades. This provided the lever for faceless bureaucrats within President Johnson’s Department of Labor to draft the Philadelphia Plan, which sought to impose “goals and timetables” upon unions and employers in the construction trades to hire blacks. After Hubert Humphrey’s defeat in the 1968 election, the Plan was shelved, only to be resurrected a year later by the black Assistant Secretary of Labor, Arthur Fletcher, with indispensable backing by Secretary of Labor George Shultz and Nixon himself.

The Philadelphia Plan was the embryo of affirmative action policy. After it survived a number of legislative and court challenges, affirmative action mandates were extended to all government contractors, including those lofty institutions of higher learning that were not accustomed to thinking of themselves as “contractors” subject to labor law and policy. This was the birth of affirmative action as we know it. By 1975 affirmative action was evolving into a major policy initiative that had the promise of altering the racial division of labor that has existed since slavery. This was the moment that Nathan Glazer chose to thrust himself on the stage of history with his screed against affirmative action.

Enter Nathan Glazer

NATHAN GLAZER’S LIFE TRAJECTORY put him on

a course that would eventually collide with affirmative action policy. First, however, he had to make a transition “From Socialism to Sociology,” the dubious title that he chose for an autobiographical essay (why are these two endeavors mutually exclusive?).¹ In this essay Glazer provides details about his political education, acknowledging that he was a socialist “not by con-

Here in the spring of 1964 was an early sign of a crisis in liberalism that would ultimately spawn the neoconservative movement.

version but by descent.” His father voted faithfully for Norman Thomas, and as a member of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, fought against Communist control of the union. Glazer describes his upbringing as one of sage compromises: “socialist, but not too socialist; Orthodox, but not too Orthodox; friendly to Palestine, but not a Zionist; Yiddish-speaking, but not a Yiddishist.” The question invites itself: was this a mindset that led him to repudiate racism, but oppose affirmative action as going “too far”?

Although Glazer emerged as the chief exponent of the theory that Jewish success in America derived from a uniquely Jewish reverence for learning, he discloses that he and his five siblings “were not expected to go to college.” As the youngest, however, he was under less pressure to contribute to family earnings, and he enrolled in City College in 1940. There he gravitated to Avukah, a student Zionist organization, which Glazer describes as a group of “intellectual socialist Zionists” — just the right mix of religion, politics, and intellectuality. And as we know from Joseph Dorman’s documentary *Arguing the World*, Glazer became a denizen of famed Alcove 1, the political hotbed that produced the four acolytes featured in Dorman’s film: Daniel Bell, Irving Howe, Irving Kristol, and Nathan Glazer. Other denizens included Seymour Martin Lipset and Philip Selznick, who lured Glazer into sociology.

These biographical details bear closer scrutiny. Glazer's ascent from immigrant poverty to the heights of academe hinged on the access he enjoyed to City College when it was tuition-free. Moreover, at CCNY Glazer forged friendships that were crucial to his later success. According to Glazer's own account, it was Daniel Bell who helped him get his first job as a research assistant at the American Jewish Committee in 1944, which in turn led to a job at the *Contemporary Jewish Record*, which later morphed into *Commentary* magazine. This was the "break" that put our unemployed neophyte on the road to success. Furthermore, whatever his own ethnic and religious proclivities, Glazer's professional career was tied to Jewish organizations and the Jewish community, and he oscillated for years between his job at *Commentary* and his doctoral studies at Columbia. His first book, *American Judaism*, was based on lectures he gave at the University of Chicago in 1955 at the invitation of Daniel Boorstin, though Glazer decided, in what he describes as "a fit of bravado," not to use this for his dissertation. In 1957 another old school tie came into play. Seymour Martin Lipset, Glazer's companion on the subway to CCNY, resigned from the staff of a research project on Communism in American Life, and tapped Glazer for the job. This provided Glazer with a topic for his dissertation, which was published as a book in 1961 under the title *The Social Basis of American Communism*.

Glazer received his Ph.D. in 1962, at the ripe age of 39. After an unproductive year in Japan, he took a position, with the help of Daniel Patrick Moynihan — whom he met through Irving Kristol — at the Housing and Home Finance Agency in Washington. By all appearances his career had no clear direction. Though Glazer had collaborated with David Reisman on *The Lonely Crowd*, and had done some stints as a visiting professor at Berkeley, Bennington, and Smith, at the age of 40 he still had no regular academic position. In Glazer's own words: "From an academic journeyman spending a year teaching at one institution after another I had become a wandering semiacademic grantsman, collecting small grants to write one book after another." Another crony from Alcove 1 came to the rescue. Through Irving Kristol, Glazer met Lewis Feuer who helped him secure a position at Berkeley, where two oth-

ers of his CCNY cronies, Lipset and Selznick, were on the sociology faculty. This was 1963, the same year that *Beyond the Melting Pot* was published. Decades later Glazer succeeded Kristol as co-editor, with Daniel Bell, of *The Public Interest*. Needless to say, none of this calls into question Glazer's "merit" as a scholar. It is only to say that the old boys network proved indispensable as Glazer negotiated his way from an unemployed college graduate through a series of career steps culminating in his designation as "one of Harvard's adornments."

Why make this point? Because access to college and the networks that ensue is what affirmative action in higher education is *about*. Where would Glazer be today if he, like his older siblings, had to forgo college to contribute to family earnings? Or if CCNY had not been tuition-free? Or if he came up 100 points short on his SATs, reflecting family poverty, inferior schooling, or an inability to acquire the coaching that today jacks up the scores of the children of affluent families? How many young men and women with Glazer's talents have languished on the margins or never fulfilled their promise?

Thus the question: how is it that Glazer emerged as a leading opponent of affirmative action? Why did this man place himself in the door of opportunity — a George Wallace in liberal garb — piously invoking high-minded principle to deny access to the victims of America's racial oppression? Was he a reluctant conservative all along, espousing positions that conformed to *Commentary's* "line"? Did he have pangs of liberal conscience that led him ultimately to "change his mind" on affirmative action?

Commentary: Ethnicity and Reaction

In an article entitled "Breaking Faith," published in *Dissent* (Spring 1981), Bernard Avishai offers a trenchant analysis of *Commentary's* "turn" away from liberalism to an increasingly strident and retrograde neoconservatism. Avishai errs, however, in assuming that this rightward turn occurred from 1969 on. Granted, this was the period that *Commentary* stopped publishing the "radicals" whom Podhoretz renounced in *Breaking Ranks*, and it was not until the 1970s that *Commentary* shifted ground on Vietnam and a host of domestic issues. The latter was heralded by Glazer's 1971 article

on “The Limits of Social Policy” in which Glazer maintained that liberal social policies could not compensate for deficiencies among the reprobate poor. However, to claim as Avishai does, that *Commentary* “succeeded brilliantly as a force for American Jewish life, especially from 1963 to 1968,” requires turning a blind eye to issues of race. In point of fact, *Commentary*’s “turn” began in 1964 when Podhoretz and his minion detected a “radical” change in the direction of the black protest movement, as calls were issued for “compensatory treatment” in education and jobs. The alarm bell sounded in the editorial offices at *Commentary*, and this marked the beginning of *Commentary*’s fateful shift away from liberalism.

In February 1964 — a critical moment in the black liberation struggle before the legislative victories were assured — *Commentary* sponsored a symposium at Town Hall in New York City, on “Liberalism and the Negro.” Norman Podhoretz introduced the discussion as follows:

I think it may be fair to say that American liberals are by now divided into two schools of thought on what is often called the Negro Problem . . . On the one side, we have those liberals whose ultimate perspective on race relations . . . envisages the gradual absorption of deserving Negroes one by one into white society . . . Over the past two or three years, however, a new school of liberal (or perhaps it should be called radical) thought has been developing which is based on the premise . . . that ‘the rights and privileges of an individual rest upon the status attained by the group to which he belongs.’ From this premise certain points follow that are apparently proving repugnant to the traditional liberal mentality.

Here was a battle cry and warning that the black protest movement was shifting in a “radical” direction that would no longer enjoy the support of the *Commentary* liberals. At the Town Hall symposium Sidney Hook, Gunnar Myrdal, and guess who? — Nathan Glazer — all argued forcefully against the idea of compensatory treatment. Podhoretz had drawn a clear line in the political sands. Traditional liberals envisaged the gradual absorption of “deserving Negroes one by one,” whereas “radicals” opted for strategies that would achieve more rapid results by introducing — reader: be prepared for the “p” word — prefer-

ences for blacks to compensate for the cumulative disadvantages associated with past and present racism. The fourth panelist — James Baldwin — stood alone, parrying the arguments thrust at him with his usual eloquence and resolve. To the optimistic view that the nation was making progress, Baldwin had this to say: “I’m delighted to know that there’ve been many fewer lynchings in the year 1963 than there were in the year 1933, but I also have to bear in mind — I have to bear it in mind because my life depends on it — that there are a great many ways to lynch a man.”

Here in the spring of 1964 was an early sign of a crisis in liberalism that would ultimately spawn the neoconservative movement. Given the prominence of Jews in liberal circles, it becomes difficult to sort out how much of this breach was a matter of ideology and how much boiled down to raw ethnic interests. Jews recoiled at any suggestion of “proportionate representation,” which conjured up memories of the *numerus clausus* in Russia that restricted Jewish access to universities, not to speak of discriminatory quotas imposed in the 1920s at such elite colleges as Harvard, Columbia, Yale, and Princeton. However, there was barely a hint of raw ethnic interests in the rarefied discourse at Town Hall, though by 1972 Podhoretz was willing to dispense with intellectual façade in an article entitled “Is It Good for the Jews?” Without mincing words, Podhoretz asserted that Jews had a right to aggressively defend their group interest. Specifically, he was exercised about affirmative action in university admissions and hiring practices, which he construed as “hurting the Jews.” Since they constituted a mere three percent of the population, Podhoretz reasoned, “the Jews must inevitably be harmed by any move in the direction of a system of proportional representation according to group.”

Commentary featured the text of the Town Hall symposium in its March 1964 issue under the title “Liberalism and the Negro: A Round-Table Discussion.” However, the wheels of change in the magazine’s disposition toward the black protest movement were already in motion. The January issue had included an article by David Danzig, an associate director of the American Jewish Committee, on “The Meaning of Negro Strategy.” According to Danzig, the recent “outcropping of violence and intransigence” was obscur-

ing “the less dramatic but more significant development of a new stage in Negro-white relations.” A few paragraphs later he laid his cards on the table: “The solitary Negro seeking admission into the white world through unusual achievement has been replaced by the organized Negro insisting upon a legitimate share for his group of the goods of American society.” Then in language that was echoed by Podhoretz in his remarks at Town Hall: “The white liberal who . . . has generally conceived of progress in race relations as the one-by-one assimilation of deserving Negroes into the larger society, finds himself confused and threatened by suddenly having to come to terms with an aggressive Negro community that wishes to enter it *en masse*.” The subtext was unmistakable: CLOSE THE FLOODGATES: THE NEGROES ARE COMING. EN MASSE!

As with the lofty discussion at Town Hall, there was nothing in Danzig’s article to suggest that his concerns about the “new strategy” were motivated by ethnic self-interest. Indeed, his article had only a single passing reference to Jews, crediting them with “raising virtually an entire immigrant population into the middle class within the span of two generations,” with the hopeful implication that blacks might do so as well. Without “quotas” or “reverse discrimination” alluded to elsewhere in his article. The delicate job of linking the specter of “quotas” to Jewish interests was left for Nathan Glazer who published an article in the December 1964 issue of *Commentary* under the equivocal title “Negroes and Jews: The New Challenge to Pluralism.”

What was this putative “challenge to pluralism”? According to Glazer:

. . . there is another and more subtle side to the shift of Negro demands from abstract equality to group consideration, from color-blind to color-conscious. The Negroes press these new demands because they see that color-blind policies do not lead rapidly enough to the entry of large numbers of Negroes into good jobs, good neighborhoods, good schools. It is, in other

words, a group interest they wish to further. Paradoxically, however, the ultimate basis of the resistance to their demands, I am convinced — certainly among Jews, but not Jews alone — is that they pose a serious threat to the ability of other groups to maintain *their* communities.

Let me get this straight. Blacks are faulted for pursuing “a group interest,” thus violating a cherished principle of liberalism, but it is permissible for Jews to defend “their” jobs, neighborhoods, and schools from the “challenge” posed by blacks. In other words, this is a case of pluralism for me but not for thee. Paragraphs later, Glazer alludes to “the true seats of Jewish exclusiveness — the Jewish business, for example, the Jewish union, or the Jewish (or largely Jewish) neighborhood and school.” But there is a world of difference between asserting that a business, union, neighborhood, or school is largely populated by people who “happen to be Jewish,” and making a proprietary claim that these are Jewish institutions.² Glazer is invoking “pluralism” as a justification

These men deserve grudging credit for their political acumen: they anticipated the next stage in the black protest movement, and they were determined to nip the flower in the bud.

for racism, much as ideological defenders of apartheid (which literally means “separate development”) did in South Africa. Such was Nathan Glazer’s contribution to American race relations in December 1964, a time when blacks were still struggling to end second-class citizenship. In this context it is breathtaking for Glazer to attack blacks as violating the hallowed principle of color-blindness, an allegation that would emerge as central to anti-affirmative action discourse.

Thus, in 1964 Glazer was in league with other Jewish liberals who were among the first to go on record as opposing compensatory programs for blacks. What is remarkable about this is that affirmative action was years away from evolving as a concept or a policy. These men deserve grudging credit for their political acumen: they anticipated the next stage in the black protest movement, and they were determined to nip the flower in the bud.

Nevertheless, the worst fears of the *Commen-*

tary liberals slowly materialized. Much to their consternation, the Nixon Administration championed the Philadelphia Plan over the active opposition of labor unions and Jewish leaders and without notable support of civil rights leaders. Though the Plan was initially targeted for trade unions — not elite colleges or the professions — once it survived court challenges, “goals and timetables” were extended all large government contractors. White liberals also took up the cause for compensatory hiring. In August 1971, John Kenneth Galbraith, together with MIT economists Edwin Kuh and Lester Thurow, published an article in the *New York Times Magazine* entitled “The Galbraith Plan to Promote The Minorities” (which Podhoretz rails against in “Is It Good for the Jews?”). The article began as follows: “One of the plain lessons of the last 20 years is that where equality for blacks . . . is concerned, good intentions are not enough.” Citing statistics showing that white males had 96 percent of high-paying jobs, the Galbraith Plan envisioned the establishment of a Minorities Advancement Commission that would require employers with more than 5000 people “to submit a plan for bringing the distribution of women, blacks, and Spanish-speaking workers in its salary hierarchy into conformity with the representation of these groups in the working force of the community or communities in which it operates.” The authors sidestepped the issue of racism in unions with the demurrer that “no reform can accomplish everything.” With this noteworthy exception, the Galbraith Plan envisioned a broad attack against occupational apartheid (“the present monopoly of good jobs by white males indefensible”).

This was the political context in which Nathan Glazer devoted his talents to writing the first book-length polemic against affirmative action. Published in 1975, *Affirmative Discrimination* was a compilation of articles that Glazer had written in the early 1970s for *Commentary* and *The Public Interest*, together with lectures that he had presented in 1974 at the University of Michigan entitled “The American Ethnic Pattern: A New Phase?” Glazer’s core argument was that ethnic groups in America were free to maintain themselves on a voluntary basis without any constraints imposed by the state. This policy of “salutary neglect,” however, was contradicted by the emergence

of “a new ethnic pattern,” where the state became implicated in recording the ethnic affiliation of its citizens, and ensuring that each group is fairly represented in jobs, housing, schools, and other institutional settings. For Glazer, this constituted an ominous breach of the social contract. “We have

A staple of anti-affirmative-action discourse is that blacks were making rapid strides *before* the implementation of affirmative action.

not yet reached the degraded condition of the Nuremberg laws,” he wrote, “but undoubtedly we will have to create a new law of personal ethnic and racial status to define just who is eligible for these benefits, to replace the laws we have banned to determine who should be subject to discrimination.”

Now, the mere mention of the Nuremberg Laws by this *Commentary* intellectual is enough to raise a red flag warning Jews that affirmative action was fraught with danger. Glazer forgets that the Nuremberg Laws were themselves modeled after laws and practices in the Jim Crow South. Still worse, he betrays the memory of the victims of Nazi persecution by using their unfathomable tragedy to defeat proposals designed, not to impose a regime of racist persecution, but on the contrary, to counter the effects of America’s version of Nuremberg.

Of course, Glazer is not totally oblivious to racism. Indeed, he writes that, unlike the case of other ethnic groups where class differences could be attributed to individual deprivations, “there was one great group whose degree of deprivation was so severe that it was clearly to be ascribed to the group’s, not the individual’s status. This was the Negro group.” By acknowledging the unique situation of blacks, Glazer is a logical step away from conceding the need for “special efforts” (to use Whitney Young’s term) to deal with the problem. But he does not like where this thread leads, and

so he veers off in the next sentence, lamenting that “what began as an effort to redress the inequality of the Negro turned into an effort to redress the inequality of all deprived groups.”

Glazer has backed himself into a corner. Logically, he could have argued that affirmative action is justifiable for blacks alone (which he now argues). Instead, he avoided these nettlesome realities by taking refuge behind abstractions: color-consciousness is proscribed by the Constitution, and the whole purpose of the civil rights movement was to institute the ideal of a color-blind society. How then deal with the fact that blacks have suffered “a group deprivation” in patent violation of hallowed Constitutional norms, and as a consequence, still languish at the bottom of the class system? For Glazer, the way out of this conundrum is to shift the blame away from racist structures (the target of affirmative action policy) to blacks themselves. Here Glazer reiterates a position that he first enunciated in *Beyond the Melting Pot*: that because of the terrible ravages of the past, blacks are incapacitated to follow in the footsteps of other ethnic groups who were able to overcome barriers of prejudice and discrimination in a successful pursuit of the American Dream. In other words, it is the damaged and defective culture of blacks that needs to be repaired, and this, regrettably, is “beyond the limits of social policy.” Instead of social action, we get moral exhortation about what blacks need to do to raise themselves from the depths.

Glazer’s position is barely distinguishable from the one enunciated, though without liberal gloss, by Dinesh D’Souza in *The End of Racism*: that the crux of the problem of race is the cultural pathology that riddles the black community, and the responsibility for repairing the problem rests with blacks themselves. According to Glazer’s rendering of history, during the 1960s discrimination was declining and blacks were making progress in terms of jobs and incomes. Mysteriously, “there was simultaneously a great increase in female-headed families among blacks, of youth unemployment, and of crime among blacks. No one has given a very convincing explanation of this tangle of pathology in the ghetto, but it is hard to believe it is anything as simple as lack of jobs or discrimination in available jobs.” Like D’Souza, Glazer blames “family breakup and so-

cial disorder among blacks” for white resistance to integration in jobs, schools, and housing. The remedy: blacks need to do what white ethnic groups did — namely, establish a social order consisting of “stable neighborhoods, with children succeeding parents in the same area, strong organizations centered around the church, formal ethnic associations or patterns of informal ethnic association, the local political organization, the trade union, the local small businesses of members of the group, which serve as much for socialization as for ordinary business.” In effect, blacks need to morph themselves into Jews — or Italians, or Poles, or whatever other group represents “the old ethnic pattern.” This is rather like trying to pound a rectangle into a slot shaped like a circle. To accomplish this, Glazer has to mutilate race history and twist concepts to make blacks fit into a paradigm that does not represent their experience.

Glazer knows better: he concedes that “blacks were brought in chains as slaves and the whites came as free men,” and “blacks have continually dealt with the most severe and unbending prejudice, whereas that met by immigrants was mild and scarcely to be found after the second generation.” But he flicks away these caveats on the grounds that “compensation for the past is a dangerous principle.” In the final sentences of his book, Glazer invokes the principle of color-blindness to conceal his contradictions and bad faith:

It is now our task to work with the intellectual, judicial, and political institutions of the country to reestablish the simple and clear understanding that rights attach to the individual, not the group, and that public policy must be exercised without distinction of race, color, or national origin.

Tragically, history was on Glazer’s side. Although affirmative action persisted as national policy in such diverse areas as employment, higher education, government contracting, and the military, it also has been subject to unrelenting attack from intellectual, judicial, and political elites, along the very lines that were prefigured in Glazer’s writing. Though the earliest attacks on affirmative action came from the ranks of liberals — labor unions as well as liberal intellectuals and academicians who bridled at being subject to affirmative action mandates — in time the anti-affirma-

tive action movement was appropriated by the political right, organized and funded by conservative foundations (as Richard Delgado and Jean Stefancic document in *No Mercy: How Conservative Think Tanks and Foundations Changed America's Social Agenda*). Ironically, even as the crusade against affirmative action gathered steam, the benefits of affirmative action policy were becoming plainly visible. For the first time in American history, there was a large black middle class that was not anchored in the ghetto economy, but in occupational spheres that had been subject to affirmative action mandates: the professions, white-collar corporations, major blue-collar industries, and in government (where over a quarter of all blacks are employed). The crowning irony is that critics of affirmative action cite the progress of this black middle class as proof that affirmative action is unnecessary.

Glazer's Second Thoughts

DURING THE 1980S AND 1990S there was an outpouring of books by scholars attacking affirmative action. The intellectual groundwork was laid for a series of Supreme Court decisions that have eviscerated affirmative action policy. Although defenders of affirmative action breathed a sigh of relief at the Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action at the University of Michigan Law School, there is little to cheer about. Gone forever are affirmative action mandates directed at all large government contractors, and subject to governmental oversight. Not only are affirmative action programs entirely a voluntary affair, but the nebulous concept of "diversity" is also a poor substitute for the imperative of remedying past racism. At least for the time being, colleges that wish to increase minority enrollment will find ways of doing so without running afoul of Court rulings. However, one thing is certain: the curtain is slowly descending on affirmative action policy as we know it. The inevitable result will be a gradual erosion of many of the hard-won gains of the past several decades.

This prospect has led Nathan Glazer to have second thoughts. As mentioned earlier, he even co-sponsored (with Glenn Loury) an amicus brief in support of the University of Michigan. One might think that Glazer's belated flip-flop would be greeted with bitterness and cynicism among supporters of affirmative action. No such thing.

Instead Glazer receives encomiums for being "open minded" and rallying to the cause. Certainly, his support is welcome, even at this late date. However, before we toss laurels at the man who did more than any other single person to torpedo affirmative action, it behooves us to scrutinize his current position. It is well and good that Glazer now has declared his support for affirmative action. But what about the bevy of suppositions and premises that undergirded Glazer's initial opposition? Has Glazer had an intellectual lobotomy, or is he merely having pangs of conscience?

Glazer has had no intellectual lobotomy. He has not engaged in an honest reexamination of the premises on which his initial opposition to affirmative action was based. His belated endorsement of affirmative action policy is at best tentative and qualified, and it is based on false assumptions. I have encountered numerous colleagues who say with approval that Glazer has "changed his mind." But I have yet to meet one who has actually examined the substance of Glazer's supposed conversion.

In 1987 Glazer published a second edition of *Affirmative Discrimination*. In the opening paragraph he writes, "Remarkably little has changed to affect the contours of the issue as it was laid out here in 1975." Yet he concedes "one fear and one hope failed to be realized in the dozen years" intervening. The fear was that "affirmative action would spread beyond the initial groups targeted for government concern to include others." In other words, that affirmative action would evolve into a system of "proportionate representation." An honest reckoning with this supposition, vitiated by subsequent events, would have forced Glazer to confront the fact that he, along with the other progenitors of anti-affirmative action discourse at *Commentary*, were driven by an unrealistic and unrealized fear that "goals and timetables" for blacks would usher in a system of proportionate representation that would inflict great harm on Jews. We can thank Podhoretz for at least laying his cards on the table and asserting that Jews have a right to aggressively defend their group interests, and even to use the elbow when necessary. Jewish anxieties about "quotas" are not hard to understand given the bitter experience with discriminatory quotas alluded to earlier. Unfortunately, the *kluge mentchn* at *Commentary* chose not

to acknowledge the difference between quotas designed to keep Jews out, and those whose purpose was to increase the representation of the victims of racial oppression. Perhaps they grasped this (how could they not?), but feared that it would be Jews — certainly not the patricians who were already recipients of preference — who would pay the price for increased black enrollment at the elite colleges. But this was a knee-jerk reaction that had more to do with fighting demons from the past than dealing with the urgent realities of the moment. Now that Glazer concedes that this “fear” was unwarranted — which is to say, that affirmative action is not bad for Jews — he is free to give it his grudging endorsement.

Ironically, Jewish defense groups had long employed a similar logic, citing statistics indicating a pattern of underrepresentation of Jews in the boardrooms of major corporations and partnerships of prestigious law firms. No one accused Jews of proposing a system of “proportionate representation.” Rather, it was understood that these statistics were indicative of a pattern of discrimination that was fundamentally unfair and undemocratic. To compare affirmative action to the Nuremberg laws, fudging the fact that a classification system was being used for the purposes of inclusion and not exclusion, was a cynical misuse of history for self-serving ends.³

The “hope” that failed to materialize, according to Glazer, was that “the progress of blacks would continue and would make evident the lack of necessity of such measures.” Glazer’s sin, according to Glazer, was that he was too optimistic. But again, an honest reckoning would require that Glazer examine the intellectual and political girders on which this optimism was based. Why did he fail to see what was evident to black leaders in 1964 — that passing a law proscribing discrimination in employment was not enough — both because blacks suffered handicaps associated with past racism and because discrimination was embedded in occupational structures in ways that were beyond the reach of Title VII? If this truth was not transparent to Glazer in 1964, certainly it had to be clear when he published *Affirmative Discrimination* in 1975, eleven years after the passage of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, when whole industries and job sectors were practically devoid of black presence. Or by 1986, the year that Glazer

published the second edition of *Affirmative Discrimination*, it had to be obvious that affirmative action had been immensely successful as policy, integrating blacks into occupational structures from which they had been excluded since slavery. So, for Glazer to claim that his error was that he had optimistically expected that blacks would continue their progress without affirmative action is patent nonsense. The truth is that this optimism was a sunny cover for opposing a policy that was anathema for other reasons.

There is a substantive point to be made about racial optimism as well. A staple of anti-affirmative-action discourse, from Glazer to Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom, is that blacks were making rapid strides *before* the implementation of affirmative action. This claim is based on a gross misuse of statistics. As these scholars must know, the figures indicating improving incomes in the 1950s and 1960s reflected the migration of millions of blacks from the South, largely prompted by the mechanization of Southern agriculture. These migrants gravitated to ghettos in the North where they encountered massive discrimination in jobs, but even the worst jobs were better than the “slave wages” they received in the South. This is the “progress” that Glazer and others choose to crow about. They have had to don blinders to deny the fact that affirmative action opened up massive opportunities to blacks in job sectors where they were previously excluded, including major blue-collar industries.

Finally, in 1998 a proclamation went out to all the people in the land: “Nathan Glazer Changes His Mind, Again.” The venue was the *New York Times Magazine*. The author, James Traub, was responding to an article that Glazer published two months earlier in *The New Republic* under the title “In Defense of Preference.” Glazer began by piously portraying the conflict as one between hallowed principle (“merit”) and “reality” (“strict adherence to merit would result in few African Americans getting jobs, admissions, and contracts”). Both elements in this equation warrant close scrutiny. Glazer chooses to disregard the tomes that have been written debunking the idea of “merit,” especially as it pertains to college admissions, and the manifold ways in which “merit” perpetuates racial and class advantage. He only bemoans “how far behind African Americans are

when judged by the tests and measures that have become the common coin of American meritocracy.” He is saying, in so many words, that blacks cannot make it any other way, and therefore we must lower the bar.

Furthermore, Glazer’s assumptions about the “reality” that requires us to compromise with principle is replete with racist innuendo. What are the “painful facts” that make affirmative action necessary? Not that blacks still encounter massive discrimination in job markets. Not that subtle forms of racism are so embedded in employment structures that “good faith” efforts alone are ineffectual. Not that the virtual absence of blacks in entire job sectors or in higher education amounts to *prima facie* racism, no matter what reasons are cited for black exclusion. Not that the government is implicated in the perpetuation of racial exclusion and disadvantage by awarding contracts to employers where there is a clear pattern of discrimination. Not that it is unfair to disqualify black students who have been able to overcome numerous racist obstacles to even reach the gates of elite colleges solely on the basis of a numerical deficit on the SATs. Not that the legitimacy and value of affirmative action policy have been validated by the beneficial results, not only for the recipients of affirmative action, but for the businesses and universities that have become more inclusive, and for the nation as a whole.

None of these suppositions enters into Glazer’s “defense of preference.” Instead Glazer resorts to the blaming-of-the-victim paradigm that he did so much to pioneer in *Beyond the Melting Pot*. As he writes:

What was unforeseen and unexpected was that the gap between the educational performance of blacks and whites would persist and, in some respects, deepen despite the civil rights revolution and hugely expanded social and educational programs, that inner-city schools would continue to decline, and that *the black family* would unravel to a remarkable degree, contributing to

social conditions for large numbers of black children to do far worse than those in the 1960s [*italics are mine*].

Thus, with echoes of the Moynihan Report, Glazer cites the unraveling black family as a major factor explaining the widening racial gap in educational performance. This, from a professor who hangs his hat at Harvard’s School of Education!

Glazer is strangely riveted on affirmative action as it pertains to “positions of influence, wealth, and power.” He says nothing at all about affirmative action in the workplace.

“In the presence of those conditions,” Glazer argues, “an insistence on color-blindness means the effective exclusion today of African Americans from positions of influence, wealth, and power.” But it is not blacks from

“unraveled” black families and inner-city schools who are applying to Harvard! First of all, there is no “black family,” only black families from disparate class circumstances (the reason that Glazer’s older siblings never went to college). Moreover, Glazer is strangely riveted on affirmative action as it pertains to “positions of influence, wealth, and power.” He says nothing at all about affirmative action in the workplace, which can and does provide channels of escape for inner-city families still mired in poverty.

Let me be clear: I do not ask for a mea culpa from Nathan Glazer, which would only be a gratuitous and hollow gesture. If anything, I am asking that he acknowledge where he went wrong as a scholar. In his unwillingness to do more than pay lip service to the wrongs visited upon blacks throughout American history. In his failure to arrive at a conceptualization of racism that encompasses the systemic nature of racism and requires a corresponding remedy. In his adoption of the language of pathology in order to shift attention away from racist institutions onto the very individuals who are the victims of institutionalized racism. And finally, in putting personal ethnic allegiances ahead of a search for either truth or justice.

Through his influential writings, Glazer succeeded in his mission: to foment opposition to affirmative action, both in terms of discourse and

political action. Precisely because of his stature as a liberal intellectual, Glazer's dissent on affirmative action had two important consequences: first, it eroded support from the two groups — liberals and Jews — who represented a crucial constituency for affirmative action policy; and second, it paved the way for a frontal assault against affirmative action by conservatives who could deny that their opposition was motivated by ideology or racism.

It bears repeating, however, that Glazer did not act alone. One would have to go back to the discourse on slavery to find such an outpouring of misguided erudition: philosophical treatises by learned scholars that elide elemental truths, or that obscure these truths behind a smokescreen of sophistry and obfuscation. The triumphant anti-affirmative action crusaders who sanctimoniously waged battle against an abstraction will have to bear moral responsibility for the real-life consequences. America will not be the more democratic nation that they imagine, but rather a nation ever more riven by racial divisions that are a persistent blot on American democracy. Perhaps this is what tugs at Nathan Glazer's liberal conscience.

NOTES

1. Nathan Glazer, "From Socialism to Sociology," in Bennett M. Berger, ed., *Authors of Their Own Lives* (University of California Press, 1990), pp. 190-209.

2. Herbert Hill makes this point forcefully in his critique of Glazer's 1964 article. As Hill also points out: "Ironically, the goals and methods of the black struggle to which Glazer pointed with disapproval characterized the history of many Jewish organizations in their earlier efforts to realize Jewish

aspirations." "Black Labor and Affirmative Action: A Historical Perspective," in Steven Shulman and William Darity, eds., *The Question of Discrimination* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), p. 230.

3. In the interest of full disclosure, I should report a personal encounter with *Commentary* and its battle against "quotas." Between 1962 and 1971 I was enrolled as a student at UC, Berkeley. I should add parenthetically that my path never crossed with Glazer's, either inside or outside the classroom. I did my dissertation on "The Religious Factor in American Higher Education," based on large surveys of faculty and students sponsored by the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education. In my reading I encountered fleeting references to the imposition of quotas to limit Jewish enrollment at Harvard and other elite colleges in the 1920s. This aroused deep curiosity, borne out of naiveté: how did these venerable institutions of higher learning, I asked myself, possibly justify such blatant discrimination? I proceeded to write a chapter on "The Jewish Problem in American Higher Education," which I submitted for publication to *Commentary*. This was another act of naiveté since, as an editor told me, virtually all of the magazine's articles were commissioned. In any event, my article was accepted for publication. However, when it appeared in the September 1971 issue, I was appalled by the title that the editors inserted: "How Jewish Quotas Began." The clear subtext was: Today, as we again confront the specter of quotas in elite colleges, let us examine "how Jewish quotas began." I jumped at the opportunity to set the record straight when *Commentary* asked me to respond to a letter written by Harold Wechsler, a doctoral student in history at Columbia, accusing me of propagating "a generalized fear of a quota system." As I wrote: "Mr. Wechsler seems to think that one has to be either for or against quotas, and therefore is uncomfortable about accepting the facts concerning Jewish quotas. But this stems from a failure to recognize the difference between a quota predicated on bigotry and one whose purpose is to counteract bigotry." Thus, despite my unwitting complicity in *Commentary's* war against affirmative action, at least I was able to inject a subversive note, albeit in the Letter's column.

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Betty Friedan and the Radical Past of Liberal Feminism

JOANNE BOUCHER

BETTY FRIEDAN IS UNIVERSALLY REGARDED as one of the founding mothers of feminism's Second Wave. In *The Feminine Mystique*, published in 1963, Friedan aimed to expose the sexist underpinnings of America's post-World War II complacent prosperity. Friedan argued that millions of American housewives found the destiny of mother and housewife which society mapped out for them stifling, repressive and even dehumanizing.

Anna Quindlen, in her introduction to the most recent paperback edition of *The Feminine Mystique*, proclaims that this book changed her life and that of millions of other women who became engaged in the women's movement and "jettisoned empty hours of endless housework and found work, and meaning, outside of raising their children and feeding their husbands. Out of Friedan's argument that women had been coaxed into selling out their intellect and their ambitions for the paltry price of a new washing machine...came a great wave of change in which women demanded equality and parity under the law and in the workplace."¹

Friedan's self-presentation in *The Feminine Mystique* is that of a rather naive and apolitical albeit bright and university-educated suburban housewife who stumbles onto a startling discovery — that America's housewives are, in fact, miserable.² Friedan depicts herself as sharing in all the experiences of her fellow housewives. She is one of them and has experienced their plight.³ However, Friedan also uses another voice in the text, that of the expert, the university-trained re-

Friedan's self-presentation in *The Feminine Mystique* is that of a rather naive and apolitical albeit bright and university-educated suburban housewife.

searcher and psychologist. This perspective lends her work scientific authority. The combination of the two voices — the personal and scientific — gives *The Feminine Mystique* much of its dramatic force.

However, for all its acclaim and its status as

the book that ignited the women's movement, praise for Friedan's *Feminine Mystique* has never been unqualified. Indeed many feminists have criticized its myopic representation of women. There is hardly a word in *The Feminine Mystique* that would indicate that American women in the 1950s were dealing with problems other than the trap of suburban domesticity which, after all, was a consequence of economic prosperity. The problems facing, for example, millions of poor, working women or non-white women — oppressive working conditions and low pay, racism, and the burdens of a double day — barely register on the radar screen of *The Feminine Mystique*. As Rosemarie Tong remarks, "Friedan seemed oblivious to any other perspectives than those of white, middle-class, heterosexual, educated women who found the traditional roles of wife and mother unsatisfying."⁴

bell hooks draws out further the deleterious political implications of Friedan's narrow picture of American women, particularly given her role as a founding figure of the women's movement. hooks notes that Friedan "did not discuss who

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would be called in to take care of the children and maintain the home if more women like herself were freed from their house labor and given equal access with white men to the professions. She did not speak of the needs of women without men, without children, without homes. She ignored the existence of all non-white women and poor white women. She did not tell readers whether it was more fulfilling to be a maid, a babysitter, a factory worker, a clerk, or a prostitute than to be a leisure-class housewife.”⁵ hooks does credit Friedan with providing “a useful discussion of the impact of sexist discrimination on a select group of women.” But she also offers this damning assessment of *The Feminine Mystique*, “it can also be seen as a case study of narcissism, insensitivity, sentimentality, and self-indulgence, which reaches its peak when Friedan, in a chapter title “Progressive Dehumanization,” makes the comparison between the psychological effects of isolation on white housewives and the impact of confinement on the self-concept of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps.”⁶

hooks’ critique is shared by many feminists for whom Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* represents the severe limitations of liberal or bourgeois feminism as a theory and as the basis for political action. The faults of liberal feminism center on its seemingly bland acceptance of American capitalism as a system structured on economic freedom which merely needs some tinkering (such as the elimination of “unfair practices” such as racism and sexism) to make it entirely workable and just. Friedan’s single-minded focus on white, middle class suburban housewives and the presentation of their dilemmas as emblematic of those of all women demonstrates the underlying presuppositions of *The Feminine Mystique* about the character of sexism and capitalism. Friedan’s liberal or bourgeois theoretical perspective has also been seen to inform the liberal politics which she espoused as the first head of the National Organization for Women (NOW) with its focus on attaining economic and civic equality and its avoidance of the more contentious territory of sexual politics.

Indeed, Friedan is notorious for her initial vociferous opposition to the introduction of lesbianism in particular and sexuality in general as legitimate topics of political discussion in NOW (a

position she later renounced). She pushed a brand of respectability which was anathema to many of the radicals in the early days of the women’s movement. Friedan was adamant that the women’s movement present itself as reasonable, moderate, heterosexual, family-loving not family-destroying, man-loving not man-hating in its approach. Friedan’s image as the paradigmatic liberal feminist was only reinforced with the publication of *The Second Stage* (1981) in which she systematically pointed out the dangers of what she deemed the excesses of the women’s movement. Thus, Friedan’s persona and the political positions she championed seemed to be entirely of a piece with her liberal feminism.

Moreover, there’s an important way in which Friedan and her classic text are pivotal to the narrative of the evolution of the women’s movement itself. Friedan and *The Feminine Mystique* epitomize an earlier, less sophisticated and less inclusive version of feminism. It is the feminism of a white, privileged middle class woman who was unaware of the lives of women outside the confines of safe and prosperous suburbs. In this sense, *The Feminine Mystique* represents the unworldly past of feminism which has been surpassed by years of political debate and experience. Friedan’s work stands for the unsophisticated, naive past of the women’s movement. It is a past which has been superseded as women have become more enlightened as a result of decades of struggle, debate and experience.

Before *The Feminine Mystique*

WITHIN THIS THEORETICAL AND POLITICAL context, the revelations in Daniel Horowitz’s book *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique* are intensely dramatic and disorienting. For Horowitz meticulously details the voluminous evidence of Betty Friedan’s entirely un-bourgeois and un-liberal political commitments prior to the publication of *The Feminine Mystique*. Much of the new historical data Horowitz offers is significant precisely because it throws into question the tidy narrative of the progressive enlightenment of the women’s movement — from limited and exclusionary to sophisticated and aspiring to be fully inclusionary. Horowitz’s book disrupts this sort of Darwinian tale of the evolution of feminist politics, with its liberal, radical, socialist, global and

post-modern phases representing steps up the evolutionary ladder of politics.

Here are some of the highlights of Friedan's hidden radical and feminist political past that Horowitz has brought to light:⁷

- While at Smith College (1938-1942) Friedan's leftist politics were developed by the radical outlook of her professors. She put her beliefs into practice. Friedan (then using her maiden name, Betty Goldstein) was editor of a college campus weekly paper where she argued for her positions e.g. non-intervention in WWII (up until Pearl Harbor), unionization of the maids on the college campus. She attended a summer course at the famous activist training camp, Highlander Folk School.⁸
- Friedan spent one year doing graduate work in psychology at Berkeley (1942-1943). She was offered a scholarship but declined it. While at Berkeley her social milieu consisted of active members of the Communist Party United States of America (CPUSA). Notably, one of her boy-friends, David Bohm, a party member, was a physicist at work on the Manhattan Project, developing the atomic bomb. He was later called up by HUAC, (as were several of her Berkeley professors). Bohm was acquitted and left the country.⁹
- After leaving Berkeley, Friedan's first job in New York City was as a journalist at *Federated Press*, the U.S.'s premier leftist news service. While at *FP* (1943-46) Friedan wrote stories, for example, promoting unions, exposing and opposing corporate exploitation, denouncing racism and sexism.¹⁰
- After being fired from *FP* (to make room for a man or because of her excessively pro-Soviet positions, the evidence is not entirely clear) her next job was as a staff reporter for *UE News* (1946-1952), the newsletter of the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America. This union was among the most radical in the country and was in the orbit of the CP. It should be stressed that Friedan wrote extensively on the specific and unique problems of inequality and hardship faced by working class and African American women. Friedan wrote an important pamphlet, *UE Fights for Women Workers* in 1952.¹¹ In this pamphlet she outlined how corporate America exploited women workers and engaged in discriminatory practices. As Horowitz explains: "To support the call for equal pay for equal work and to fight discrimination against women, she countered stereotypes jus-

tifying lower pay for women: that they were physically weaker, entered the work force only temporarily, had no families to support, and worked only for pin money." And "she highlighted the 'even more shocking' situation of African American women faced, having to deal with the 'double bars' of being female and African American."¹²

- While working as a freelance journalist (after leaving *UE News* in 1952) she wrote another pamphlet for UE in 1953, *Women Fight For a Better Life! UE Picture Story of Women's Role in American History* in which "she used photographs and texts to provide the social, economic, and political dimensions of the story of how over the centuries American women had fought against discrimination and for peace, justice, and equality." Again, she emphasized the "double discrimination" faced by African American women historically in the U.S.¹³
- Friedan was fired from *UE News* with her second pregnancy. Her life from 1952 - 1963 most approximates that of a suburban housewife —

Friedan pushed a brand of respectability which was anathema to many radicals in the early days of the women's movement.

pivotal to her persona in *The Feminine Mystique*. However, even on this count, Horowitz provides a full account of how unorthodox a suburban housewife she was. Friedan continued to write freelance articles, many based on her experiences, and taught writing courses at New York University and the New School for Social Research. That is to say, she continued to be extremely active in community-based politics, writing, for example, of experiments in co-operative living and of a nationally-recognized educational project she set up in her community.¹⁴

This information was virtually unknown for almost four decades though one broad and very public hint had been dropped by Friedan herself. In a 1974 essay in *New York* magazine, "The Way We Were — 1949" (which was later reprinted in the collection of her essays, *It Changed My Life*), Friedan argued that 1949 was the year that the

feminine mystique “really hit.” She offers an analysis of her mind-set in that fateful year. Friedan declares, “After the war, I had been very political, very involved, consciously radical. Not about women, for heaven’s sake! If you were radical in 1949, you were concerned about the Negroes, and the working class, and World War III, and the Un-American Activities Committee and McCarthy and loyalty oaths, and Communist splits and schisms, Russia, China and the UN, but you certainly didn’t think about being a woman, politically. It was only recently that we had begun to think of ourselves as women at all. But that wasn’t political — it was the opposite of politics.”¹⁵ As Horowitz notes, neither Friedan nor any journalist or scholar followed the thread of this startling declaration. It was only when Horowitz first published results of his research in a 1996 article

Horowitz’s research raises serious questions about the usual chronology of the women’s movement itself and, intriguingly, the connections between liberal and socialist feminism.

in *American Quarterly*, (his book was published in 1998), that the proverbial cat was let out of the bag. As Horowitz puts it, “In public, with a few exceptions, Friedan has avoided, denied, minimized or obscured her progressive political convictions of the 1940s and 1950s, especially on women’s issues.”¹⁶

Subsequent to this, Friedan did grant extensive co-operation to Judith Hennessee for her 1999 biography, *Betty Friedan: Her Life*. Hennessee does focus some attention on Friedan’s political activism in the 1940s-1950s. Hennessee openly depicts Friedan as a Marxist in her college days and notes her dismissal of her pivotal activist years 1943-1952 as unimportant. However, unlike Horowitz, she concentrates on the more personal aspects of Friedan’s life, her family relationships, marriage, affairs, children, personality traits and so on. In

this sense, Hennessee’s portrayal of Friedan is more consistent with the mode of self-presentation constructed by Friedan in *The Feminine Mystique*.¹⁷ It is only very recently that Friedan herself has provided extensive detail about her radical past with the publication of her recent autobiography, *Life So Far*.¹⁸

Beyond *The Feminine Mystique*

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE of all this new information about Friedan’s hidden years of political activism? What are its implications for an assessment of Friedan herself as an author, feminist leader, liberal feminist, socialist feminist? What are the implications for an understanding of *The Feminine Mystique* as a founding text of Second Wave feminism? More generally, what can we learn about the contribution of women in the Communist Party and its political circles to the women’s movement?¹⁹

Certainly it is evident that portrayals (and dismissals) of Friedan as a clued-out liberal feminist must be reconsidered. Clearly she was a canny, seasoned political activist when she wrote *The Feminine Mystique*. Arguably, it may have been her political and professional experience that enabled her to tap so brilliantly into the mood, of and appeal to, middle-class housewives. She left out references to Marx, Engels, and de Beauvoir which, according to Horowitz, were included in early drafts and instead emphasized her persona as a smart college graduate and trapped housewife. In short, the Betty Friedan depicted by Tong and hooks may be said to no longer exist. Further, as mentioned above, Horowitz’s research raises serious questions about the usual chronology of the women’s movement itself and intriguingly, the connections between liberal and socialist feminism. Finally, Horowitz’s work is a forceful reminder, as he puts it, that “social movements and their leaders do not...come out of nowhere. They have histories that powerfully shape their destinies . . .”²⁰

But, apart from all such questions, which will have to be sorted out over the years to come one question must first be approached: Why did Betty Friedan avoid public discussion about her political past? And how does Horowitz address the specific question of her obfuscations about the past? He argues the following: “Friedan had reason to worry that her involvement in radical politics for at least a

dozen years beginning in 1940 meant that a full rendering of her life after 1960 was dangerous, given McCarthyism's power in memory and reality . . . Had Friedan revealed all in the mid-1960s, she would have undercut her book's impact, subjected herself to palpable dangers, and jeopardized the women's movement."²¹ Thus, obscuring her past was merely a sensible, utilitarian choice. Given this motivation for concealment, Horowitz asserts that it was "morally reasonable" since "in the early 1960s, protecting oneself from McCarthyism is an understandable and defensible act."²²

Indeed, Horowitz's entire re-telling of Friedan's political past is structured around the notion of the "tragedy of McCarthyism," that the wave of anti-communism which swept the U.S. in the 1950s destroyed an indigenous left tradition, broke connections between generations of radicals and terrified dissidents like Friedan into inactivity and silence. As he states, "I wish to highlight the damage McCarthyism did to progressive social movements in the 1940s and early 1950s, and especially to feminism, which it forced underground but could not destroy."²³

But why tell all now? The political climate is clearly more conducive to such news. It would appear that any immediate danger posed by rabid anti-communism has disappeared. And, Horowitz's motives are precisely to reveal the political losses America has suffered due to McCarthyism, that is, the lessons and experiences of an entire generation of radicals obscured. He wishes to restore a sense of the continuity of feminist politics from the 1940s to the 1960s and bemoans the lack of dialogue between what he terms the Old Left and New Left feminism and seeks to encourage such dialogue through the example of Friedan's life.²⁴ Thus, he writes, "I felt that what I was going to reveal about her life made her a more significant, heroic and interesting figure in American history than her own story allowed. After all, I was arguing that Friedan's life, in connecting the 1960s and the Old Left, gave second-wave feminism a richer heritage, one of which both

Friedan and American feminists should be proud."²⁵

Friedan, for her part, seems singularly unimpressed by Professor Horowitz's efforts. She refused to co-operate with Horowitz in any way. He was denied interviews and the right to print anything from her unpublished papers. Her hostile attitude is on display in her recent autobiography:

A deconstructing male historian would try to dismiss my credibility in writing *The Feminine Mystique* by claiming that it was all a communist plot, starting with my Smith student days

and my labor immersion, and insisting that I never was a real suburban housewife. But that isn't true. My experience with Communist dogma had given me a healthy distrust of all dogma that belied real experience, while Smith had given me the conceptual ability to take on the feminist

mystique, training as a hands-on reporter gave me a third ear to hear pieces of new truth behind denials and defenses and rigidity. That ability to follow leads, clues from many different fields, was invaluable once I truly committed myself to solve this mystery.²⁶

How can we explain Friedan's hostility? After all, the threat of McCarthyism is long gone and she herself has indicated her involvement with left-wing causes. If anything, a radical past could only improve her image in the women's movement. The key seems to me to be in Horowitz's confident declaration that "Friedan's life . . . gave second-wave feminism a richer heritage, one of which both Friedan and American feminists should be proud." In fact, Horowitz presents voluminous evidence, that "At least from 1940 until 1953 [Friedan] inhabited a world where Communists and their sympathizers held influential positions, where she witnessed redbaiting, and where she encountered the ideology of American Communists, especially in their Popular Front appeals."²⁷

Given this, one would expect more caution about assertions of a proud heritage. After all, at this time, Stalin was at the height of his powers in Russia engaging in political crimes of world-historic proportion which the world's Communist

This is certainly not to dismiss the dismal legacy of McCarthyism with jobs lost, lives destroyed and radicalism gone underground.

Parties blithely ignored or explained away lest it destroy their faith in the existence of a worldly utopia. Moreover, there is no question that the CPUSA adhered to the idealization of Stalin's regime and took direction from Moscow on international and domestic issues. It is at this point that Betty Friedan's anxiety and hostility may become entirely understandable. To say this is a "problematic" political heritage with which Old and New Leftists and feminists have to contend is to understate the case beyond measure.

Political Anxieties

HOROWITZ'S NARRATIVE of Friedan's political life is, I would argue, one-sided, with its focus on the "tragedy of McCarthyism," and scant attention to the "tragedy of Stalinism," to the point of possible misrepresentation. This is certainly not to dismiss the dismal legacy of McCarthyism with jobs lost, lives destroyed and radicalism gone underground. But, it is crucial to insist on the atrocious legacy of Stalinism and its domestic effects in the U.S. — blind adherence to party-lines, excusing inexcusable crimes against humanity in the name of a greater good — which also played a central role in discrediting the aspirations of more than one generation of socialists.

This narrative strategy indicates Horowitz's anxiety about being associated with any form of red-baiting by criticizing overtly the CPUSA and its fellow-travelers. Horowitz thereby positions himself within current debates within American historiography as part of a stream of historians who wish to restore the image of the CPUSA as an organization comprised of "home-grown radicals," motivated by a passion for social justice. This stream of historiography is counterposed to that which views the CPUSA as a mere vehicle for Soviet aims. Horowitz and like-minded historians wish to explore "issues without concentrating on the obedience of some party members to a Soviet-directed party line." He objects to this approach because it presents "a one-dimensional core-periphery model which exaggerate[s] the degree of control of the Kremlin and the Communist Party over people who they thought were passive and naive recipients of a party line. Such a perspective over-emphasizes the importance of actual party membership, as well as the influence of the party and Moscow."²⁸

Horowitz proposes instead to "stress the varied sources of American radicalism, whose origins, power, and sophistication a focus on the party underestimates."²⁹ And he writes, "I can well appreciate how progressives would join with party members in supporting the Soviet-American alliance in World War II, or in fighting for social justice for women or African-Americans."³⁰

This is the prism through which Horowitz analyses Friedan's political life. He specifically describes Friedan as a "Popular Front" feminist or radical. By this he means to include her among those "who battled anti-communism and were inspired by issues articulated by radicals — party members and non-party members alike."³¹ He doesn't specifically address whether or not Friedan was, in fact, a CPUSA member.³² But, as noted above, he does position her squarely in CP circles.

However, he also insists that she was not a dogmatic adherent of Stalinism. He contends the following: "I knew that in the immense amount that Friedan published in the 1940s and early 1950s, some of which appeared in party-sponsored publications, she never mentioned the party or displayed a preference for the Soviet social or economic system. I have found no evidence that she sanctioned the killings of millions of people carried out by Stalinists in the USSR, approved of

Joseph Stalin himself would not fit this absurd definition of a Stalinist.

pro-Soviet Americans conveying national security secrets to a foreign nation, or looked favorably on the party's penchant for making dramatic and opportunistic shifts."³³

This, of course, proves absolutely nothing. Joseph Stalin himself would not fit this absurd definition of a Stalinist — he never advertised his mass murders and, of course, spies were operating clandestinely in the United States. Thus, Horowitz produces an exaggerated definition of Stalinism to prove that Betty Friedan was not a dogmatic Stalinist. Moreover, he consistently downplays the extent to which it does indeed appear, the politi-

cal views espoused by Friedan were entirely consonant with those of official CPUSA party line. He recounts the positions taken by Friedan in articles for *FP* and *UE News* as simply as those of an independent radical espousing her own personal views. The significance of the fact that in virtually all cases that Horowitz recounts, her work pushed the concerns and views of the CPUSA is not acknowledged let alone accounted for.

I will note one example that Horowitz raises from Friedan's *FP* days:

Because Goldstein [her maiden name] also worried that tensions between America and the Soviet Union were early signs of the Cold War, she hoped for a post-war world order built on the continuation of Soviet-American friendship. In March, less than two weeks after Winston Churchill had delivered his speech in which he coined the phrase 'iron curtain,' Goldstein and Kolkín [a colleague at *FP*] wrote a story that reported favorably on a protest against Churchill's fostering of hostilities between the United States and the USSR. Two days later, she hailed Wallace's efforts to rally Americans around a decreased commitment to Anglo-American coalition and to develop in its stead a greater understanding of Soviet actions. This, she wrote, would diminish American enthusiasm for a war against the USSR. A few days later, she discussed how interest in oil led the British to support an anti-democratic government in Iran at the same time that she cast a skeptical eye on news of Russian military presence there. In the spring of 1946, she expressed concern that America's support of fascist governments abroad would lead to the deterioration of Soviet-American relations.³⁴

This passage is indicative of the general method Horowitz uses in his approach to Friedan's politics. He presents her as an independent journalist or a Popular Front feminist and ignores the glaring indications that in her journalism she is promoting positions which are entirely in tune with those of the CPUSA (not to mention in the interests of the USSR).

This is certainly not to say that the specific political positions Friedan took were wrong or problematic simply because they were consistent with those of the CP but it is to note that time and again Horowitz obscures or downplays the extent to which she is surrounded by CP mem-

bers, espousing CP positions and promoting CP-related institutions and organizations in her writing. For instance, Horowitz refers four times to Friedan's dealings with Ruth Young. He refers to an interview with Young as being the most important article Friedan wrote on women at *FP* during the war. He refers to Young as a "UE official . . . a forceful advocate for women's rights in the union movement."³⁵ Next, it's "Ruth Young, the UE leader whom Friedan had interviewed in 1943 . . ."³⁶ The third reference notes that Friedan "knew Ruth Young, the key feminist in the UE leadership."³⁷ There's little preparation, then, for the final reference to Young which is, as follows: "The transformation of Ruth Young's life under McCarthyism was especially fraught with meaning for Friedan since she had written about Young early in her career as a labor journalist. Young, a Communist since 1937 and the daughter of a Communist, was the first woman member of UE's executive committee and was active in the Congress of American Women [a CP popular front organization]."³⁸ Horowitz then tells a tale of Young and her husband's de-radicalisation and responses to McCarthyism. So, on the one hand, CP connections are not mentioned. When they are mentioned, they only serve to highlight the "tragedy of McCarthyism."

A similar strategy is evident with Horowitz's account of Friedan's relationship to the newspaper, *Jewish Life*. He writes,

Nothing better illustrates the stakes surrounding McCarthyism than the treatment of articles Friedan wrote for *Jewish Life: A Progressive Monthly*. This publication noted a scholar, was 'in the orbit of the Communist Party' until 1956. Although it apologized for Soviet anti-Semitism, in many ways the periodical fought for admirable causes. In its pages, writers explored the relationship between Jewish life and progressive politics. They celebrated the resistance of the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto uprising. They emphasized the connections between discrimination aimed at African Americans and Jews. Moreover, *Jewish Life* published some of the period's strongest attacks on anti-Semitism.³⁹

The following is from the entry in the *Encyclopedia of the American Left* that Horowitz uses as his source:

JL, for the first nine and a half years of its existence [1946-1956 — jb], adhered to current CPUSA positions on Jewish and other issues. From 1948 to the middle 1950s, it followed the Soviet view concerning assimilation when, under Stalin, after 1948 all Jewish social and cultural institutions suddenly shut down. *JL*'s explanation for these events was that they merely reflected a natural process of assimilation of Jews into the general Soviet population and thereby should be seen as being a progressive development and a direct result of the building of a new socialist society in the USSR. When the anti-Semitic campaign in the USSR and Eastern Europe reached its zenith during the years 1948-1953, *JL* referred to it as a myth fed by Cold War lies. The publication defended the Prague trials of 1952 and wrote an effusive eulogy on the death of Stalin called 'Stalin and the Jewish People.' These positions served to isolate *JL* from organized Jewry.⁴⁰

The central difficulty here is that when one consults the source used by Horowitz for information on the periodical, *Jewish Life*, what one encounters is a more clear picture that this was a CPUSA publication which followed its international politics to the point of condoning the extreme oppression of Jews in the Soviet Union.

Horowitz recounts that Friedan wrote a series of four articles for *Jewish Life* attacking the policies of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU), which was the UE's major union rival. The fourth article never appeared because the editors devoted the issue to the execution of the Rosenbergs. His argument is that this must have struck terror into Friedan's heart, given that she was a radical Jewish woman with extensive Party connections (though he doesn't say this explicitly), that she had dated a party member working on the atom bomb, and so on.

However, Horowitz's dramatic juxtaposition of Friedan's association with *Jewish Life* (fighting for "admirable causes") against the drama of the execution of the Rosenbergs emphasizes the aggression of the American state and entirely downplays aspects of Friedan's political engagements which may be extremely "problematic." In particular, why did Friedan write for a journal which idealized the Soviet Union to the point of condoning its anti-Semitism?

THIS RHETORICAL STRATEGY of emphasizing the "tragedy of McCarthyism" vs. the "tragedy of Stalinism" runs through Horowitz's book. This strategy continues the obfuscation begun (for whatever reasons) by Friedan. It prevents a full accounting of the character of the politics of women activists of the period. And, without this, an open, informed and informative dialogue between Old Left and New Left feminists cannot productively move forward. The difficulty, of course, in assessing the work of women activists such as Friedan is the extent to which their understanding of "male chauvinism," "women's equality," "ending sex discrimination," as ideals were separable from the long-term goal of establishing a society akin to the Soviet Union in the United States. This strikes me as one of the most problematic areas of accounting in which socialist feminists must engage. I would argue that it is far too simplistic to look back at the work of activists/intellectuals/reporters such as Friedan and one-sidedly praise their work any more than it is useful to dismiss it because of its connections to the Stalinist CPUSA.

NOTES

1. Anna Quindlen, "Introduction," to Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), p. x.
2. For an excellent discussion of the narrative structure of Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* as a mystery story see Rachel Bowlby, "The Problem with No Name: Rereading Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*," *Feminist Review*, 27, Sept. 1987, pp. 61-75. It should also be noted that recent studies have questioned the picture of 1950s domestic conformity which Friedan so effectively popularized. See, for example, Eva Moskowitz, "It's good to blow your top': Women's magazines and a discourse of discontent, 1945-1965," *Journal of Women's History*, Fall 1996, pp. 66-98; and Joanne Meyerowitz, "Beyond the Feminine Mystique: A Reassessment of Postwar Mass Culture, 1946-1958," in *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960*, ed. Joanne Meyerowitz (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), pp. 229-262.
3. Friedan says in her introduction to the tenth anniversary edition of *The Feminine Mystique*, "until I started writing the book, I wasn't even conscious of the woman problem . . ." Friedan, *Mystique*, p. 3.
4. Rosemarie Tong, *Feminist Thought*, (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1998), p. 26.
5. bell hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2000), pp. 1-2.
6. hooks, p. 3.

7. I use the term “feminist” here advisedly. There is considerable and important evidence that activists in the CPUSA, radical unions and Popular Front organizations were quite conscious of the need to fight “male chauvinism” (and “white chauvinism”). Of course, this need not (within the context of an orthodox Marxism) constitute “feminism” as it is now understood. Nonetheless, I would use the term to emphasize that Horowitz’s research indicates that Friedan was clearly conscious of and wrote extensively about the unequal position of women in American society well before she began research for *The Feminine Mystique*.

8. Her biographer, Judith Hennessee, comments, “The most profound thing that happened to Betty at Smith was her radicalization. She became committed to Marxist philosophy . . .” and she quotes from one of Friedan’s editorials, powerfully defending the right to organize unions as a democratic and American right: “As the Nazis rose to power in Germany they attacked and destroyed labor unions . . . For fascism to survive all free and democratic institutions must be prohibited . . . Union . . . members are . . . as American as the funny papers they read, the movies they see, the beer they drink, the streets they live on; their aims are basic to the protection and expansion of democracy in America.” Judith Hennessee, *Betty Friedan: Her Life* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1999), p. 26.

9. Daniel Horowitz, *Betty Friedan and the Making of The Feminine Mystique: The American Left, the Cold War, and Modern Feminism* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1998), pp. 147–148.

10. Horowitz, Ch. 6.

11. Horowitz, Ch. 7.

12. Horowitz, p. 139.

13. Ibid.

14. Horowitz, Ch. 8.

15. See Betty Friedan, “The Way We Were — 1949,” in *It Changed My Life: Writings on the Women’s Movement* (New York: Dell, 1976), p. 27.

16. He continues and neatly summarizes all significant details missing from the popular narrative of her life: “She has rarely, if ever, publicly named *Federated Press* or the *UE News* as publications she worked for, or revealed her authorship of the 1952 pamphlet on sex discrimination against working women. Nor has she talked about the distinctive nature of the suburbs in which she lived beginning in 1950s, or how she saw this innovative program as an answer to McCarthyism. She has not noted that she had to excise references to class and race in what she wrote for popular magazines in the 1950s, or the way she questioned Cold War consensus in the published versions. When discussing *The Feminine Mystique*, Friedan has not mentioned how, from first draft to final product, she changed its tone and narrowed its focus. Finally, she has offered only the vaguest hints at the connection between her book and her earlier experiences with Marxism or progressive feminism. These omissions from her story have enabled Friedan to insist that until 1957 she had little or no knowledge of women’s issues. As late as November 1995, she reiterated key elements of her story, especially her denial that she had any interest in women’s issues

before 1957.” Horowitz, p. 237.

17. See Hennessee, *Friedan*.

18. Arguably, despite significant candor in her autobiography, Friedan continues to present her political commitments somewhat ambiguously. For instance, in the following passage, she appears to be a decidedly passive student of radical politics. Of her early days in New York City, Friedan comments, “In our classes at the Jefferson School, we learned that communism was a system that put the interests of the people first and in which private profit from the exploitation of workers was abolished . . . With Spain as an example, I also learned that communism, to protect the revolution from its enemies, at home and in the world, had to suspend the freedoms of speech and the press and other democratic rights we hold dear. We were told that under capitalism, democratic freedoms, like religion, are ‘opiates’ for the masses, serving the interests of profiteers by keeping the people diverted and quiet. We were told that both political parties in America were controlled by big business and their networks, newspapers, the arts, etc.” Betty Friedan, *Life So Far* (New York: Touchstone, 2001), p. 72.

19. For an excellent book which elaborates on the activism of American Communist Party women and their contribution to 1960s feminism see Kate Weigand, *Red Feminism: American Communism and the Making of Women’s Liberation* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

20. Horowitz, p. 245.

21. Horowitz, pp. 242–43.

22. Horowitz, p. 322, in n. 26.

23. Horowitz, p. 12.

24. Horowitz comments that unlike the voluminous accounts of “troubled conversations” among men of the Old and New Left there is an almost complete absence of such discussions among women, “Remarkable for their absence are frank discussions among Old and New Left women, one consequence of which is that most 1960s feminists had little or no inkling of what their progenitors, even those among them, had learned and experienced.” Horowitz, p. 249

25. Horowitz, p. 13.

26. Friedan, *Life*, p. 111.

27. Horowitz, p. 134.

28. Horowitz, pp. 10–11. For an excellent discussion of the general trends and divisions in approaches to the history of the CPUSA and related issues see Maurice Isserman, *Which Side Were You On?: The American Communist Party During the Second World War* (Middletown, Conn., Wesleyan University Press, 1982), pp. vii–xii.

29. Horowitz, p. 11.

30. Horowitz, pp. 12–13.

31. Horowitz, p. 11. As I argue below, I find this definition singularly evasive. It fails to indicate the extent to which the relationship between the domestic and international fronts of political battles in this era for CP members, allies, fellow-travelers were inseparable. Consider, for instance, the CPUSA’s massive shift in approach during the notorious period of the Hitler–Stalin Pact (August 21, 1939 – June 22,

1941) from a militant non-interventionist stance in World War II to an equally militant pro-interventionist stance based solely on the dictates of Stalin's regime's needs. For a discussion of this see Isserman, Chs. 3-6.

32. Friedan, in a wonderfully evocative passage in *Life So Far* which combines candor with concealment, evades the question of party membership. She tells a colorful story about applying for party membership — but never actually offers the punch line. She writes, "One day before I left for Berkeley, I looked up the address of the Communist party headquarters in New York and, on my day off from the hospital, went into their dark and dingy building on 13th Street and announced I wanted to become a member. The woman at the desk looked a little surprised. Maybe it was unusual for a well-dressed college girl, in Braemar twin sweater set, pumps and pearls, to come in out of the cold and announce she wants to be a communist, or maybe it was not. There was nothing illegal then in America, or even incriminating or subversive, about being a socialist or communist or Trotskyite. Of course, when I went home and told my parents, my father had a fit. 'Is that what I sent my daughter to Smith for, to be a communist?' But I talked with such pseudo-sophistication then about everything. Using all those sexual words I'd now learned in psychology class, while still fighting the good backseat battle to keep my virginity intact." Friedan, *Life*, pp. 57-58.

33. Horowitz, pp. 11-12. Despite Horowitz's exaggerated

definition the evidence is ambiguous here. Certainly, as mentioned later, Friedan appears to have been very preoccupied with a Soviet-American alliance for the post-war years. In addition, she wrote about the atom bomb and spying, calling for civilian control of the atom bomb. Moreover, she denied the existence of Soviet spying. She referred to "the smokescreen of the Canadian spy scare" (that is, the Gouzenko case) from which she spun the notion of a conspiracy being hatched to prevent the use of atomic energy for peaceful purposes. Horowitz, 116.

34. Horowitz, p. 115.

35. Horowitz, p. 109.

36. This is in the context of a discussion of Friedan's writing about the Congress of American Women "whose 1946 formation Friedan had helped announce in *Federated Press*. Horowitz refers to this as "the most important Popular Front organization of progressive women. It was the American branch of the Women's International Democratic Federation (WIDF)." Horowitz, p. 126.

37. Horowitz, p. 144.

38. Horowitz, p. 150.

39. Horowitz, pp. 150-151.

40. David A. Hacker, "Jewish Life/Jewish Currents," in *Encyclopedia of the American Left*, Mari Jo Buhle, Paul Buhle and Dan Georgakas, eds. (New York & London: Garland, 1990).

Iraq and the Third Camp

ALAN JOHNSON

THERE IS TAKING PLACE A TRIANGULAR STRUGGLE FOR THE WORLD. Three responses to the ending of “the short twentieth century” and its political and economic architecture. Three attempts to control the full throttle celerity of late capitalism and make something solid from the melting air of the 21st century.

The first, emergent for over a century but unleashed since the end of the Cold War, is the United States of America. The U.S. is now the world’s hyperpower with a grand strategy to reshape global political and economic relations in its favor and in the interests of global capital. The second — which cannot be reduced to mere “blowback” — is an entirely reactionary and frequently terroristic Jihad fundamentalism seeking the defeat of the “infidel” world of women’s rights, democracy, secularism, sexual self-determination and individual liberty. These two forces crashed into each other, with the al-Qaeda terrorist atrocities of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent U.S.-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The turbulence has capsized parts of the left. To right itself the left needs to turn toward the perspective of a “third camp”: the burgeoning global working class leading the progressive social movements of global civil society. During the Cold War the third camp opposed both Russia and the U.S. in the name of all the democratic forces struggling for peace and democracy. The contemporary meaning of third camp socialism is the refusal to be enlisted into some new “Great Contest” as cheerleader or critical supporter of either reactionary camp, and the elaboration of a positive and practical political alternative to both.

Third camp socialism will not survive as a

The left needs to turn toward the perspective of a third camp: the burgeoning global working class leading the progressive social movements of global civil society.

merely negative critique but only as a rounded political program developed alongside progressive social and political movements. Its partisans seek to inform, organize and “revolutionize” — i.e., help free from the muck of ages and make fit for power — the third camp of the organized working

class and global civil society. To do that we need political clarity about the character and strength of the two reactionary forces we face.

The Hyperpower

THE U.S. IS NOT A MERE GLOBOCOP policing the natural growth of global “free trade imperialism,” ironing out the smooth space of a new form of sovereignty. That is indeed part of the picture but so too is the deliberate and unilateral assertion of U.S. power and interest. To use the terms coined by James Fallows in *Atlantic Monthly*, and fleshed out recently by Alex Callinicos in *International Socialism*, we are witnessing the implementation of the Grand Strategy of U.S. imperialism: a self-conscious and global political project marked by a combination of pessimism, optimism, and impatience.

Their pessimism: the architects of the U.S. Grand Strategy fear the longer-term emergence of competitors, particularly populous China but also Europe and Russia. Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy Defense Secretary, has laughed at the idea of an “End of History,” warning that China today can be compared to Germany at the end of the nineteenth century, “a country that felt it had been denied its ‘place in the sun,’ that believed itself mistreated by the other powers, and that deter-

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mined to achieve its rightful place by nationalistic assertiveness.” The Project for the New American Century (with which Rumsfeld, Cheney, Wolfowitz, and Bolton were associated during the Clinton era) warned in 2000 of “potential powerful states dissatisfied with the current situation” and called for the elaboration of a “grand strategy [to] preserve America’s advantageous position as far into the future as possible.” Their ideas about what that “grand strategy” should be are now the common currency of the Bush White House.

Their optimism: After the defeat of the “evil empire,” the swift dispatch of the Milosevic, Taliban, and Saddam Hussein regimes, and armed with Rumsfeld’s “Revolution in Military Affairs,” the unprecedented superiority of U.S. military force — U.S. military expenditure exceeds that of the combined total of the *nine* next-biggest powers — means America feels itself to be, for now, invincible.

Their impatience: it would be ridiculous to dismiss the impact on U.S. foreign policy of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, or to dismiss the very real threat posed by al-Qaeda. I see no reason to think Paul Wolfowitz is just making it up when he says to Sam Tannenhaus of *Vanity Fair* that he concluded by 9/13 that 9/11 was

just the beginning of what these bastards can do if they start getting access to so-called modern weapons, and that it’s not something you can live with any longer. So there needs to be a campaign, a strategy, a long-term effort, to root out these networks and to get governments out of the business of supporting them.

Part of the picture is indeed a real attempt to destroy al-Qaeda, its bases, and its supporters. But it would be naïve to imagine that that is all Wolfowitz or Bush concluded by 9/13. It was not just the events of 9/11 but the combination of long term geo-strategic pessimism and short-term politico-military optimism that led George W. Bush to step up to the podium and announce “an entirely fresh doctrine of pre-emptive action” to the cheers of his West Point audience on June 1, 2002. His strategists perceive a window of opportunity in which the climate of fear created by 9/11 can be used as cover to assert the unilateral power of the United States to reshape the world so that no rival can climb into the U.S. weight class.

Paul Rogers, writing on the *openDemocracy*

website (www.opendemocracy.net), has observed that this strategy requires a more genuinely global disposition of U.S. military force:

The aim . . . is to have the ability, when required, to operate in any of the zones of potential threat, taking vigorous pre-emptive action, mostly by using air power, the marines and special forces. This would enable the U.S. to destroy any threats, whether from unacceptable regimes or paramilitary groups.

The Bush administration’s reaction to 9/11 certainly included this element of Machiavellian calculation, Rumsfeld playing the part of the

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Florentine secretary. On September 4, 2002, CBS aired an Evening News story (ignored of course) in which CBS journalist David Martin said “Barely five hours after American Airlines Flight 77 plowed into the Pentagon, the Secretary of Defense was telling his aides to start thinking about striking Iraq, even though there was no evidence linking Saddam Hussein to the attacks.” CBS alleged that an aide noted that Rumsfeld demanded the “best info fast” so he could “judge whether good enough to hit S[addam] H[ussein] at the same time, not only U [Osama] B[in] L[aden].” The aide’s notes quote Rumsfeld as insisting the White House “go massive . . . sweep it all up, things related and not.” Former general Wesley Clark, speaking on *Meet the Press* on June 15, confirmed there was a drive to exploit 9/11 for the purposes of a wider imperial game.

CLARK: There was a concerted effort during the fall of 2001, starting immediately after 9/11, to pin 9/11 and the terrorism problem on Saddam Hussein.

TIM RUSSERT: By who? Who did that?

CLARK: Well, it came from the White House, it came from people around the White House. It came from all over. I got a call on 9/11. I was on CNN, and I got a call from my home, saying "You've got to say this is connected. This is state-sponsored terrorism. This has got to be connected to Saddam Hussein. I said, "But — I'm willing to say it, but what's your evidence?" And I never got any evidence.

The short time-frame of the Grand Strategy drives the impatience of the U.S.—Gulliver with the Lilliputian strings of the international legal order, revealed dramatically in the sidelining of the UN before the Iraq war. The preservation of U.S. geopolitical pre-eminence into the long range future, the creation of a global "smooth space" for free trade, requires the unilateral assertion, in the short-term, of U.S. military power. Hence the contempt for the United Nations shown by John Bolton, Under-Secretary of State for Arms Control and International Affairs. "There is no such thing as the United Nations. There is an international community that can be led by the only real power left in the world, and that is the United States, when it suits our interests and when we can get others to go along." Going one better, Condoleezza Rice dismissed the very idea of an international community as "illusory."

The war on terror leads a double-life: now a response to the Jihadi fundamentalists, now a cover for the wider Grand Strategy. The hinge concepts of "humanitarian intervention," "nation-building," and "weapons of mass destruction" connect the two.

America! America! (again)

CONSERVATIZED BY 9/11, paralysed by the rise of the Islamists, fearful for the very survival of liberty and reason, and no longer convinced of the viability of a third camp alternative, elements of the left have decided, just like an earlier generation, to "Choose The West!" Christopher Hitchens, one-time literary jewel of the leftist intelligentsia, certainly one of the most gifted essayists of the twentieth century, is now a critical supporter of the Bush administration on the question of the war in Iraq.

A new collection of his pro-war journalism, *Regime Change*, demonstrates that his talent for skewering an opponent for hypocrisy or mendacity and slowly turning the spit is undiminished. To the French sophisticate (or sniffy Clintonite),

quick to condemn Bush's response to 9/11 as that of a "cowboy," Hitchens has this to say:

To have had three planeloads of kidnapped civilians crashed into urban centers might have brought out a touch of the cowboy even in Adlai Stevenson. But Bush waited almost five weeks before launching any sort of retaliatory strike. And we have impressive agreement among all sources to the effect that he spent much of that time in consultation. A cowboy surely would have wanted to do something dramatic and impulsive (such as to blow up at least an aspirin factory in Sudan) in order to beat the chest and show he wasn't to be messed with. But it turns out that refined Parisians are keener on such "unilateral" gestures — putting a bomb on board the *Rainbow Warrior*, invading Rwanda on the side of the killers, dispatching French troops to the Ivory Coast without a by-your-leave, building a reactor for Saddam Hussein, and all the rest of it.

Hitchens exposes Chirac's hypocrisy to good effect but as a subordinate moment in his attorney's defense of Bush, Cheney and Rumsfeld. He lampoons the idea that they are cowboys in order to hide the fact that they are warriors.

Why has Hitchens lost his political bearings? One senses a real anguish underneath the insouciant surface of *Regime Change*. Do not forget, Hitchens has been a man of the left for *forty years*. His political odyssey of recent times no doubt has many roots and his was increasingly an idiosyncratic contrarianism rather than a coherent left-wing politics. But part of the picture is surely a question of his own personal "blowback": a [gross over-] reaction to the recent decay of parts of the left. One gains the impression that faced with the amoral don't-bother-me-about-the-Iraqis-or-Kurds chauvinism, summed up in the popular anti-war slogan, "Leave Iraq Alone!" (how can a left worth the name utter such a thought about a totalitarian state?), he just had enough. Confronted by an anti-war movement that hoisted onto its leading platforms a man like the British MP George Galloway, Hitchens just threw up.

An ex-old style Stalinist, and long-time political ally and personal friend of leading figures in the Saddam regime, in January 1994 Galloway appeared on Iraqi Television before the butcher of the Iraqis and the Kurds, the invader of Iran

and Kuwait, the Baghdad Hitler, *and he genuflected*: “Sir . . . we salute your courage, your strength, your

“There is no such thing as the United Nations. There is an international community that can be led by the only real power left in the world, and that is the United States, when it suits our interests and when we can get others to go along.”

indefatigability . . . We are with you. Until victory! Until Jerusalem!” Galloway spent Christmas as the houseguest of Saddam’s No. 2, Tariq Aziz. Did any of this create a storm within the anti-war movement? Barely a ripple.

Hitchens has been made mad by this decayed left as much as by the decay of his own hopes. And, like another madman, he can find no resting place as he “leaves his village to seek his spirit’s home in exile,” as Harold Bloom said of Cervantes’s Don Quixote. Hitchens may yet make that long trudge of despair all the way over to the neo-conservative right in part because, like Quixote, he spurns the reality principle in favor of a heroic quest.

Embracing the U.S. Grand Strategy as his own Hitchens regales his readers, each of us cast as Sancho Panza, with the idea that the war on terror is not just humanitarian and progressive but even revolutionary. Apparently the Pentagon is leading (or could be persuaded, by people like Quixote-Hitchens, to lead) a “revolution from above.” He explains this is “what the colonial idealists used to call ‘the civilizing mission’: everything from the education system to the roads. Nobody should underestimate for a second what the magnitude of the task is.”

Ah, the old “revolution from above.” Now we have been around this track before. Hitchens may not know it but he has (to move from a literary to a political fantasist) donned the clothes of the late

historian and writer Isaac Deutscher (more about those clothes in a moment). After the Second World War, Deutscher would have preferred a revolution from below in Eastern Europe but he educated a generation to settle for being critical supporters of Stalin’s totalitarian substitute. He wrote, “The revolution which Stalin now carried into Eastern and Central Europe was primarily a revolution from above. It was decreed, inspired, and managed by the great power predominant in that area.” Today Hitchens would prefer a revolution from below across the Middle East but he is educating his reader to view the unilateral assertion of U.S. military power as an acceptable substitute, ignoring the fact that this power works to extinguish any hope of revolution from below.

Hitchens is fond of classical and literary allusions. In clothing himself in the raiments of “revolution from above,” has he not put upon his back a Shirt of Nessus? In the Greek legend the shirt soaked by Deianeira with the poisonous blood of the centaur Nessus was placed on the back of her husband Heracles. So excruciating was the pain, Heracles had himself burnt on a funeral pyre. Having opted for the poison of “revolution from above” Hitchens’ *political* self-immolation has already begun. Of the 20th century crimes of U.S. imperialism (and he so recently their chronicler!) all he can now muster is the pathetic line that the U.S. “wasn’t exactly free of blemish or shame.”

Nation-Building to the Sound of Wagner

HITCHENS MAY OBJECT that he could yet be proved right. Could the U.S.-UK establish a free, democratic, and prosperous Iraq and then spread that model throughout the Middle East? If it could it would have been progressive in a way Deutscher’s Russia never was. There are two responses one can give to this question. First, even if one thought Hitchens’ judgement sound (which I do not) there would still be no good reason to preach trust in Bush and Blair. The work of the left is to help prepare the third camp to go beyond any limited bits of progress (tied to dependence) L. Paul Bremer, the U.S. administrator of Iraq, can bring. That means combining a fierce political independence from the occupation forces with urgent practical solidarity with the beginnings of a third camp in Iraq (see the statements which follow this article).

Second, anyone who has been soberly tracking the occupation will be aware of how fantastic Hitchens' portrait of a "civilizing mission" is. Power outages occur several times a day (though southern Shia farmers who could irrigate their fields for only one hour a day under the Sunni-dominated regime of Saddam now get twelve hours of supply per day, according to Jason Burke of the London *Observer* July 6, 2003). Sewage systems are backed up into streets that fill with waste. There has been a surge in violent crime throughout Iraq (though the 40,000 criminals released by Saddam as war began are a key factor). As of June 30, 22 American soldiers had been killed in combat in Iraq since President Bush declared on May 1 that major combat operations were over. Six British soldiers died on June 24 alone. Potential investors are being told the chances of the country sliding into open revolt are about even (though this seems unlikely as the violent resistance is largely confined to the Sunni triangle to the north and northwest of Baghdad, Saddam's tribal and political base).

The organized sabotage and arson by Baathists of Iraq's infrastructure — oil pipelines, electricity systems, a liquid natural gas plant, even, it seems likely, the weather station at Baghdad international airport — is certainly taking its toll. This report in the *New York Times* of July 1 is typical:

In a junkyard in the Sheik Omar neighborhood in eastern Baghdad, a warehouse full of second-hand spare parts for the city's electrical system was on fire. On Saturday, men who work in and around the junkyard said today, another warehouse had burned. The workers said that on both occasions four or five men, heavily armed, had arrived in a Land Cruiser and set the warehouses on fire.

Rumors of the formation of a loose network of Saddam supporters, named "Return," and threats to cut out the tongues of collaborators are also a factor. There is reason to take these rumors seriously. The manager of power distribution for half of Baghdad, Haifa Aziz Daoud, a mother of five, was killed in her home on June 25.

But nation-building from above and outside cannot unleash the one force able to resist the Baathist sabotage and death squads. *The occupiers have capped the democratic hopes of the Iraqi people*

along with the burning oil wells.

There is a widespread celebration of Saddam's overthrow and a near-universal desire for elections and a rapid transition to self-rule. But an election for the Mayor of Najaf — prepared in an atmosphere of local jubilation — was summarily cancelled by Bremer on the grounds that the people would not have voted the right way (prompting an unnamed American military officer to comment "We should've had this election. What are we telling them?"). The broadsheet newspaper, *As-Saah*, ran the headline "Bremer is a Baathist" (June 18) in reaction to his censorship of the media. Bremer's edict bans the media from "inciting violence" not only against any "individuals or group including racial, ethnic, religious groups and women" but also "against coalition forces." NGOs are being pressured to become "an arm of the U.S. government" by threats from Andrew Natsios, the head of the U.S. Agency for International Development, and by fatuous attacks from the corporate-funded witch-hunting Yahoos over at the American Enterprise Institute (the intention clearly being to separate the NGOs from the global anti-war movement). Iraq's leading Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani has opposed the

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U.S. plan to impose a constitutional convention, calling for general elections, a constitutional assembly, and a referendum on a draft constitution. All of which is Democracy 101 of course (and shows that the left should not imagine all Shias are Khomeini-ite fundamentalists).

Meanwhile, Bremer is plowing ahead with a neo-liberal economic blueprint for Iraq centered on the privatization of state-owned assets and

companies and economic deregulation. Unemployment will sharply increase. But there is to be no welfare state. Only a bare “social safety net,” says Bremer (*New York Times*, June 23, 2003). No assembly of the Iraqi people has decided on this economic and social program. It is being imposed without Iraqi agreement by the U.S. occupation forces and largely to the benefit of U.S. companies: the vassalization of Iraq. Without democracy the forces of liberation, ipso facto, become forces of colonization.

Hitchens may dream of a “civilizing mission” but it is the long shadow of Da Nang and McNamara which is cast by two recent press reports. First, *USA Today* (June 18, 2003) notes that “Two top U.S. defense officials (Deputy Defense Secretary Paul Wolfowitz and Marine General Peter Pace) signaled Congress on Wednesday that U.S. forces might remain in Iraq for as long as a decade and that permanent facilities need to be built to house them there.” Second, Reuters (June 21, 2003) reports that “U.S. Troops psyched up on a bizarre musical reprise from Vietnam war film *Apocalypse Now* before crashing into Iraqi homes to hunt gunmen on Saturday.” They were playing Wagner’s Ride of the Valkyries.

Nation-Building Kipling-Style

THE TRAGEDY unfolding in Iraq is not due to a lack of resources nor to the absence of advance planning by the Pentagon (though the latter does beggar belief: such a big agency, such a lack of intelligence). Rather, we are witnessing only the latest and most visible expression of *the inherent limits of nation-building from above and from outside*. Paul Rogers points out that the neo-conservatives’ basic assumption, “that a ‘threat’ can be dealt with in a rapid military operation, to be replaced by the early imposition of a benign peace [is] deeply flawed.”

To understand why this is the case we can turn to Michael Ignatieff’s useful little book *Empire Lite: Nation Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan*. Ignatieff is a supporter of “humanitarian interventionism” and so his portrait of the shocking record of nation-building is all the more telling.

Ignatieff spends a lot of time out in the world and is clear-sighted about U.S. objectives, which makes him a more useful source than Hitchens.

He bluntly points out that the U.S. uses military force “for imperial reasons: to consolidate its global hegemony, to assert and maintain its leadership, and to ensure stability.” The result is a “new

The tragedy unfolding in Iraq is not due to a lack of resources nor to the absence of advance planning by the Pentagon (though the latter does beggar belief: such a big agency, such a lack of intelligence).

imperialism” that is “creating a form of sub-sovereignty, in which states exercise sovereignty in name without real independence in fact as formal or informal protectorates of the great powers.”

Writing before the invasion of Iraq, Ignatieff saw the approaching war in these terms: “its goals are imperial . . . to wipe out the leader of Arab rejectionism and to go on to reorder the political map of the Middle East on American terms.” In fact, after apologizing to his U.S. readers, he points out that “America’s entire war on terror is an exercise in Imperialism . . . what else can you call America’s legions of soldiers, spooks, and Special Forces straddling the globe?” Scoffing at the naïve hope of “liberal international lawyers” that the U.S. Gulliver might be tied down by the thousand Lilliputian strings of a transnational legal and economic order, Ignatieff points out that the U.S. is as unsentimental in reality as it is sentimental in its public rhetoric. America “signs on to those pieces of the transnational legal order that suit its purposes (the WTO, for example) while ignoring or even sabotaging those parts (the International Criminal Court, the Kyoto Protocol) that do not.”

As we follow Ignatieff’s tour through the protectorates of the new imperium we watch him get more and more dispirited. There are achievements to celebrate and he does so: the return of a whole people, the Kosovars, to their homes for one, the opening of the schools in Kabul, and the rise in attendance from 5 to 35 per cent, for another. But the basic pattern is clear: the nation-building

project has stalled. Yes, the murderous Serbian assault upon Bosnia was ended. But in Bosnia today “international disillusionment is palpable,” “rule of law is next to non-existent,” and community leaders “meet only for photo opportunities,” just often enough to keep the aid flowing. Yes, the ethnic cleansing of the Kosovars by Milosevic was stopped. But today there are “daily shootings,” “petty feuding among the Kosovar princelings,” and “the stubbornly unchanging reality of Kosovar backwardness.” Yes, the al-Qaeda training camps have gone and the Taliban driven out of Kabul. But “in the vacuum where an Afghan state ought to be, there are warlords like Distum and Atta” and “children with legs ripped apart by mines push themselves along in the dust on home-made carts.”

Ignatieff sets as his highest hope for Afghanistan the creation of a “sort of ordered anarchy among loosely controlled regional fiefs” (92). As the saying goes, he should be careful what he wishes for. According to Syed Sallem Shahzad of *Asia Times* (June 13, 2003) “such is the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan, compounded by the return to the country of a large number of former Afghan communist refugees, that United States and Pakistani intelligence officials have met with Taliban leaders in an effort to devise a political solution to prevent the country from being further ripped apart.” But this will only make matters worse. Sarah Chayes, field director of Afghans for Civil Society, an organization that sponsors democracy initiatives, writing in the *New York Times* (July 1, 2003), points out in some desperation that

The American alliance with warlords also discourages ordinary Afghans from helping rebuild their country. And *without the people, the process is doomed*. Afghans I have met and worked with share a fierce desire to live in a normal country. They have demonstrated that desire. In the face of tremendous adversity, they have managed to open schools, clean irrigation ditches, plant trees and dig sewers. But seeing warlords regain power is making people waver. I have found in my work that more and more Afghans are withdrawing to the sidelines, subtracting their life force from the battle to reconstruct Afghanistan [emphasis added].

And so it goes.

Ignatieff is even aware of the basic reason for

these failures: *you can't do it from above and outside*. “The problem” he says, “is that those who believe in the use of imperial means do not practice what they preach. We say we believe in self-determination, and we confiscate all power into our own hands; we say we respect local cultures and traditions, and yet we are often as contemptuous behind the locals’ backs as the imperialists of old. Finally, we say we are going to stay the course, when we are always looking for the exit.”

Nation-building from above is now a multibillion-dollar business and “wherever the traveling caravan of nation-builders settles it creates an instant boomtown, living on foreign money and hope. But boomtowns inevitably go bust. In Sarajevo, for example, the internationals arrived in 1996 after Dayton with \$6 billion to spend. Now, six years later, the money is all but gone, and the caravan is moving on to Kabul.”

Most important, the nation-builders suck up all the political oxygen. In Pristina “the ‘internationals’ run everything . . . streets are clogged with the tell-tale white Land Cruisers of the international administrators, and all the fashionable, hillside villas have been snapped up by the Western aid agencies.” In Kabul, “the reality, as in all nation-building cities, is ferocious com-

Ignatieff sets as his highest hope for Afghanistan the creation of a “sort of ordered anarchy among loosely controlled regional fiefs.”

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petition among donors, United Nations agencies, and non-governmental organizations for a market share in money and misery.” In these places the “illusion of self-government [is] joined to the reality of imperial tutelage.” The effusive rhetoric of capacity-building is matched only by the “reality of capacity confiscation.” In Afghanistan “the relationship between the locals and the internationals is inherently colonial. The locals do

the translating, cleaning, and driving while the internationals do the grand imperial planning.”

The internationals are not knights on white chargers: “[their] first priority is building their own capacity — increasing their budgets and giving themselves good jobs. The last priority is financing the Afghan government.” The new Afghan Minister of Finance tells Ignatieff that of the 350 projects of the international organizations and NGOs *not one* promised to consult with the Afghan interim administration. Though there are exceptions — the work of building grass-roots capacity in community forums by the UN urban regeneration program run by Samantha Reynolds is of interest — it seems many NGOs have happily taken up what the British poet of imperialism, Rudyard Kipling, called the “white man’s burden,” now rebranded as “humanitarian intervention.”

Empire Lite

OF COURSE IGNATIEFF HAS TO conclude in true rabbit-from-hat style that imperial power and self-determination can be reconciled. As nothing in his own book supports this hope, he reaches back to the British Empire as proof that “self-determination and imperial rule are not incompatible.” But they plainly are. The Indian National Congress had to drive out British imperial rule in order to *win* self-determination.

Ignatieff thinks the problem might be “Empire Lite” (trying to do nation-building on the cheap and too quickly). He really wants what we might call Empire Full Strength. More troops. More engineers. More money. Empire Full Strength has the task of mopping up where “two botched decolonizations” — of the Soviets from Eastern Europe and the Europeans from Africa and Asia — have created “an ongoing crisis of order in a globalized world.” Empire Full Strength is to simultaneously reorganize and democratize

the country it controls *and* hand over power to the locals *and* get out.

I do not find Ignatieff’s intentions ignoble. I

I do not share the idea (never stated but often implied) that it would be better to have things the way they were, under Milosevic’s Serb murderers, the anti-woman acid-throwers of the Taliban, or Saddam’s gassers and torturers, pushing ordinary Iraqis into the plastic shredders at Abu Ghraib prison.

do not share the relish some seem to feel when presented with the failures of nation-building in the new imperium. I do not share the idea (never stated but often implied) that it would be better to have things the way they were, under Milosevic’s Serb murderers, the anti-woman acid-throwers of the Taliban, or Saddam’s gassers and torturers, greedily pushing ordinary Iraqis into the plastic shredders at Abu Ghraib prison right up to the arrival of the U.S.-UK

forces. Ignatieff is plainly not looking to exploit or oppress but to relieve enormous human suffering.

But to follow Ignatieff and cede our political independence to the new imperium would be a tragic error for the left for two reasons: it will not work, and we can do better.

It will not work: Ignatieff should take much more seriously his own observation that “Achieving democratic goals through imperial means is, of course, an exercise in contradiction.” This is the crux of the matter. The self-determination of Iraq is not the goal of Bush and never will be. A controlled, pliant, semi-sovereign, and semi-democratic Iraq as part of a reordered Middle East friendly to U.S. elite interests is the goal. We are not witnessing a repeat of the democratization of occupied Japan after World War Two. In fact, as John Dower, the pre-eminent historian of twentieth-century Japan and author of the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Embracing Defeat* has argued, the more instructive comparison is with the short-lived Japanese Empire in Asia of the 1930s and 1940s: “In each instance we confront empire-building embedded in a larger agenda of right-wing radicalism. And in each we find aggressive and essentially unilateral international policies wedded to a sweeping transformation of domestic priorities and practices” (*The Na-*

tion, July 7, 2003).

Already this neo-conservative Grand Strategy is unravelling. As Paul Rogers has observed,

the real significance of what is happening in Iraq, and indeed Afghanistan, may relate to the very viability of the pre-emptive strategy of U.S. neo-conservatives. The United States has formulated a military strategy designed to “keep the violent peace” by the use of short sharp bursts of vigorous military force; but its likely result is to embroil U.S. forces in dangerous, complicated, costly regional occupations — the very opposite of what was intended.

At this moment over half the U.S. Army’s deployable troops are engaged in peacekeeping and stabilization operations. Little wonder then that Donald Rumsfeld is floating the idea of a new global peacekeeping force, operating outside the purview of the UN or NATO, led and trained by the U.S., with a core of U.S. dedicated peacekeeping troops, but composed mainly of international soldiers (*Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 2003). The point, of course, is that he could assemble an army of Jedi Knights but, without democracy and self-determination, they could not guarantee peace.

We can do better. Ignatieff could also use a little of what Gramsci called optimism of the will. He is paralyzed by the fear that if “democratic imperialism” is not the route to democracy and self-determination then there is no hope and, immediately, no bulwark against the Jihadi fundamentalists, the ethnic cleansers and the totalitarians. But this is too pessimistic by half. It overestimates the strength and coherence of the Jihadi fundamentalist threat and it fails to see the scale and potential power of the gathering forces of the third camp. The rest of this article will consider these two contenders in turn.

Jihad Fundamentalism

A FORMER LEFTIST LIKE Christopher Hitchens has lost his political bearings because the rise of a fascistic Jihad fundamentalism has filled his political vision, leaving room for nothing else. He is Jihadphobic, if you like. That does not mean he opposes the fundamentalists too much, which would be an impossibility. It means he has allowed the force of his opposition, married to a loss of hope in a third camp alternative, to capsize his judgement about the U.S. (this was a common

phenomenon in the Cold War and it devastated the ranks of the third camp).

Hitchens claims that “The Government and peoples of these United States are at war with the forces of reaction.” Of course it is true that anything less than mortal hostility to the political Islamists *is* to disarm politically. Islamic fundamentalism is not identical with but is analogous to fascism. As the British socialist Clive Bradley has written, political Islamism is a collection of “organized political forces, the violent enemies of workers, trade unionists, socialists, feminists, women generally, non-Muslim minorities, oppressed nationalities and so on. It is also a fact, increasingly, that they express their violent hostility through the mobilization of a mass movement.” In consequence it is “a fantasy” for genuine democrats as well as socialists to think that they are

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tactically on the same side as the Islamists against a common enemy.

However, to imagine ourselves in a short-term war to the death with the Islamists, and so to conclude we must side with the Pentagon, is equally fantastic. This is the perspective of writers such as Stephen Schwartz and Paul Berman as well as Christopher Hitchens. Each offers variations on the idea that we are in a duel to the death with an old enemy now on the march again in new religious garb: totalitarianism. Each calls, in effect, for a new Schlesingerian “vital center.” Each has valuable insights, but fails to locate the cause of the rise of the Islamists, fails to take a realistic

measure of their capabilities, and fails to map a viable strategy for their defeat, other than cheering on the Pentagon.

Stephen Schwartz (a convert to Sufi Islam) indicts Wahhabism (the branch of Islamic theology favored by the Saudi royal family and bin Laden) as Islamofascism and indicts the House of Saud, awash with petro-dollars, as its paymaster and promoter: "The Wahhabi-Saudi regime...embodies a program for the ruthless conquest of power and a war of extermination."

Paul Berman argues that political Islam is just the latest ripple produced by the stone of "European irrationalism" which splashed rudely into the quiet pond of Western liberal culture around the late nineteenth century. These dreams of transcendence come and go, don't you know. We suffered Lenin, Mussolini, Hitler, Stalin and now we have Osama bin Laden. We faced them down. We will have to face bin Laden down. A new "vital center" must once again take up arms (or, at least, once again cheer on the arms of the Pentagon) against totalitarianism. The book really is — some interesting passages about the Islamic theorist Sayyid Qutb aside — as crass as that. It meets a widespread late-modern yearning for complex problems to be wrapped up in simplistic explanations, tied with bows of pseudo-profundity (in this case borrowed from Albert Camus) and moral certitude. The book is a measure of the disorder of our intellectual culture.

More optimistic alternatives to these writers are ex-CIA analyst Graham E. Fuller's *The Future of Political Islam* and Noel Feldman's *After Jihad*. But theirs is an ungrounded and dangerous optimism. The CIA has been looking for the new Ataturk, the strong man who will create a stable authoritarian Islamic semi-democracy friendly to U.S. interests, for a very long time. Feldman is in this tradition: he hopes Pakistan could be an Islamic democracy if "its latest military leader proves better than those who came before." Even the oil monarchies may "surprise the world" and create democracies. Well, I will not be holding my breath. While Wolfowitz and the neocons have rejected this kind of thinking (which gave us Saddam in the first place) it survives over at State and in the op-eds written by Brent Scowcroft. The idea that Colin Powell is better than Wolfowitz is a mystery to me. He is a throwback to the worst kind of

cynical "he may be a bastard but he is our bastard" school of U.S. imperialism.

If . . . If . . . Then

WE NEED A MORE SERIOUS, historically grounded approach to the rise of Jihadi fundamentalism and a more compelling political program to combat it. When he was a socialist Max Shachtman argued that if capitalist society continued to decay and if the organized working class failed to lead an alliance of forces to a progressive democratic collectivism then a totalitarian doppelganger, Stalinism, could emerge as a reactionary alternative to impose a "bureaucratic collectivism." While history never repeats itself, we can use the logical structure of Shachtman's analysis — "if . . . if . . . then" — to fathom the rise of Jihadi Islamic fundamentalism.

If the national, secular, often state-capitalist, modernizing projects of the bourgeoisie and state elites fail to develop the society and culture, and become stalled in corruption, tyranny and cultural stagnation, leaving the rulers unable to secure the support of large sections of the middle class; *if* global capitalist competition, penetration, and dislocation presses on that middle class, sending it into panic and rage, disintegrating welfare systems established by the state-capitalist regimes in the post-war period, ravaging old social relationships but not creating new ones, threatening the old exploiting classes — the bazaar merchants, the religious establishment, sometimes landlords; and *if* the political leaderships and organizations of the left are widely discredited for having tailed the nationalist projects of the bourgeoisie (the Egypt's Communists dissolved into Nasser's front in the 1960s, for instance); and *if* the working class is weak and not organized independently, *then* not only the middle classes (small manufacturers, shopkeepers, artisans, peasants, market merchants, frustrated university graduates) but also those classes created by primitive capital accumulation and pauperization, a cast-off sub-proletariat, a mass of marginalized semi-proletarian poor and distressed petit-bourgeois (who were, in truth, never really won over to secularism during the post-war years) are "opened up" for recruitment by the traditional intellectuals of political Islam, the *ulemas*.

These forces can be swept up into a mass

movement aimed inchoately at “the West” or “imperialism” or “the infidels,” chasing the entirely reactionary “solution” (actually incapable of implementation) of using modern military technology and, they hope, state power, to turn back the clock to the pure Islamic state of the seventh century based on sharia law.

Each of these pre-conditions for the rise of political Islam can be found, with national peculiarities of course, in the countries that have suffered its spectacular rise.

The Islamic fundamentalists appeal to a deep sense of humiliation. Bernard Lewis, in his book *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, is right (whatever his political failings) to focus attention upon that anguished question which torments the Islamic world: how did the very fulcrum of civilization become dependent, defeated, backward, corrupt and poverty-stricken? The fundamentalists say “they did it!” pointing to a cast of villains such as “infidels,” “westernizers,” corrupt oil sheiks, Jews and uppity women.

Fundamentalist Islamic intellectuals such as Sayyid Qutb, Mawlana Mawdudi, and Ruhollah Khomeini laid the foundations for the rise of political Islam. When modern secular nationalism stalled amid defeat and failure in the 1970s and 1980s, and the Stalinist-led workers’ movements lost the allegiance of major social layers, then the Islamists became the repository of the hopes and dreams of millions. In turn, the Islamists worked tirelessly to redefine those dreams as nihilist fantasies (even now they are out daubing the walls of the hitherto secular Iraqi universities with slogans about the veil making women beautiful). The result has been a wave of Islamist political militancy and violence from Iran to Algeria, Sudan to Afghanistan, Kashmir to Chechnya, and, in the form of al-Qaeda, a global Jihadic terrorist network.

How does this mayhem connect up to Shachtman’s idea that “capitalism is decaying?” It depends how “decay” is defined. If Shachtman meant the “decline of the productive forces” then he would have been just wrong. The global explosion in the productive forces of the post-1945 world, and the surge in life expectancy and living standards associated with it, speaks for itself. World GDP increased six-fold from 1950–1998, with an average growth rate of nearly 4 percent a

year, according to the OECD. Real GDP per capita rose by 2.1 percent a year between 1950 and 1998. That compares with less than 1 percent a year between 1820 and 1950.

In fact Shachtman defined decay rather differently: “To say that capitalism is decaying is to say that it is increasingly incapable of coping with

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the basic problems of society, of maintaining economic and political order.” That is an accurate indictment of the “runaway world” of the 21st century: a voracious, amoral capitalism eats up the resources of the planet, churns up communities, mocks social institutions from the family to representative democracy, and turns everything it touches — and it touches *everything* — into a commodity to be bought and sold. This pathology generates a counter-pathology: an irredentist throwback to a simpler time of order, tradition, tribe, and blood. Benjamin Barber has called this the dialectic of McWorld and Jihad.

We have tamed the irrational forces of nature but we remain at the mercy of irrational social and political forces we have created, from the religion of the market to the market place of religions. Humanity is kept in a state of suicidal macro-irrationality “increasingly incapable of coping with the basic problems.”

The Jihadis offer no answer to any of this. They are a desperate, anti-modern reaction to the impasse. In power the Mullahs may ramble on about sex and the Jews but they run the economy like good capitalists. The youth of Iran take all this in and can’t wait to throw the religious shackles from their bodies and minds. And half the region are aged 25 or under. The Jihadis are not the power Hitchens imagines them to be. Gilles Kepel, in his book *Jihad*, argues that in reality Islamic fun-

damentalism has been on the decline since the early 1990s: September 11 itself was an expression of the desperation and isolation of the most militant Jihadis, not their strength. Of course this decline may be temporary. In any case, if the progressive forces of the third camp are to push them aside, and reconnect with Muslim workers and diverse progressive elements in society who experience the fundamentalists as their mortal foe, then we must first define them correctly as a deadly enemy not a potential ally. And here elements of the left are sometimes confused.

The Left and Fundamentalism

WHEN ISLAMIC FUNDAMENTALISM first emerged, sections of the left defined it as analogous to fascism. The Arab Trotskyist Salah Jaber wrote in 1981 that “Islamic fundamentalism is one of the most dangerous enemies of the revolutionary proletariat.” He pointed out that “the fundamentalist movement shares many of the characteristics of fascism outlined by Trotsky: its social base, the nature of its political ideology, its fierce anti-communism and its totalitarianism.”

But there were also differences between classical fascism and fundamentalism. In some respects “the fundamentalist movement is, in fact, more backward than was fascism.” It drives the historical clock backward to a reactionary utopia

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with more faith and zeal than the classical fascists. But the fundamentalists, *as part of this “more reactionary” drive backwards*, can also challenge big private capital. This contrasts to the role of classical fascism as the brutish guarantor of big capital in the face of a mass workers movement. All this means socialists will find themselves on the same demonstration, protesting the same social ill, from

time to time. However, “any compromises proposed by the fundamentalists as a result of this type of situation pose enormous dangers for all sections of the left, both moral and physical.”

Tactical flexibility must be balanced against the overriding political conclusion that it was “absolutely and under all circumstances necessary to combat its ‘reactionary and medieval influence.’” Even the so-called “anti-imperialism” of the fundamentalists, Jaber pointed out, does not amount to what socialists mean by that term. It represents only an inchoate reactionary hostility to “the hated ‘west’ . . . all the political and social gains of the bourgeois revolution.”

However, once fundamentalism gained a mass base and, all-importantly, came into conflict with the U.S., then some parts of the left (forgetting that the possession of a mass base was also typical of classical fascism, forgetting that totalitarian Russia was also in conflict with the U.S.) allowed their rhetoric about the U.S. being “the heart of the beast” to merge with the political Islamists’ talk of “the Great Satan.” Reactionary Islamic fundamentalism was now redefined as “radical Islam” and the anti-Semitic zealots of Hamas, for instance, were redefined as bona fide “anti-imperialist” forces.

This redefinition was part of a wider collapse of independent working class socialist politics. There is very little positive support for regimes such as Saddam Hussein’s Iraq, of course. We are not repeating the Stalinist experience in that sense. But to register only that is to miss a certain collapse of the sensibility of parts of the left. Too often leftists halt at a merely negative and inchoate oppositionism to whatever the U.S. is doing. A complex world is reduced to a face-off between two camps, “imperialism” versus “the resistance.” These leftists define the political Islamists as part of “the resistance,” and, of course, *in that act redefining themselves* as the critical supporters of the political Islamists. Clifford Geertz is a little over the top when he says “Marxist thinkers of every stripe began to credit Islamic activists with socialist virtues,” but only a little.

The price paid in the West has been the loss of independent political judgement and much idiocy about, for instance, the “anti-imperialism” of groups like Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Elsewhere the price has been much higher. In 1977 in Pakistan

the left sided with Jamat al-Islami against Bhutto, imagining a tactical alliance against a common enemy. They were used and then jailed. During the Iranian Revolution negative oppositionism and inchoate “anti-imperialism” pushed the left into the arms of Khomeini, the so-called “objective anti-imperialist.” They were led to his gallows.

Our job is to push on past a stalled modernity and a demented reaction. How? By a consistent and principled fight for democracy.

The Third Camp and The Fight for Democracy

Interviews with dozens of Iraqis suggest that there is one force that unites them: an almost messianic belief in ‘demokratiya.’ (David Rhode, *New York Times*, June 22, 2003).

WHO WILL LEAD THE FIGHT for consistent democracy? A vibrant global social movement of movements took the “End of History” discourse and buried it at Chiapas, Seattle, Prague, Genoa and Porto Alegre. As Daniel Bensaid puts it, we have given History back its color. And when on February 15 many millions around the globe took part in a day of protest against the war, even the *New York Times* had to acknowledge “the rise of a new global superpower.” But how can this movement of movements move history onto new tracks? How can we advance from symbolic forms of protest to a rounded politics of self-emancipation? The writer and activist Kim Moody surely hits on the essential point:

By itself, and despite its ability to breach police lines, this ‘movement of movements’ lacks the social weight to carry out the very task it has set itself — the dismantling of the mechanisms of capitalist globalization . . . As scores of activists and analysts alike have stated, the great need is to pull two forces together: the mobility and audacity of the movement in the streets with the social weight and numbers of the organized working class.

But this program — the organized working class leading a coalition of civil society movements in a consistent fight for democracy — a new “historic bloc” to use Gramsci’s phrase — is not the common sense of the left. In part this is because there is no question about which the left is as weighed down by poor theory than the question of the working class. We have lost our nerve in

the face of real working class defeats and surreal academic advice to bid the working class “farewell” (Andre Gorz) or to view it as having “all but disappeared from view” (Michael Hardt and Toni Negri). And yet there are 165 million trade unionists in the world. There are more trade unionists in South Korea today than in the entire world when Marx wrote the *Communist Manifesto*. In truth the global working class has been growing explosively.

Perhaps there are good reasons to look again at the notion of *working class politics*. That notion was not always just a quasi-religious talisman to ward off awkward political realities (though it frequently was). It was also, and can be again, the basis of a rational politics of hope. For it remains the case that the unique combination of interest, capacity, and social weight possessed by the global working class can still provide a foundation on which a rational and radical democratic politics and a viable strategy and tactics could be elaborated.

If we study just fifteen countries (China, India, Brazil, Mexico, South Korea, Indonesia, Argentina, South Africa, Thailand, Iran, Philippines, Pakistan, Egypt, Bangladesh, and Nigeria) we find a seven-fold increase in the number of industrial workers *alone* over the past half century: 45 million in 1950, 358 million by 2000. Each has entered into class struggle and forged its own organizations. Cultural hybridization, for instance in the form of world music, continues apace. International links, though weak, exist.

The brute fact is that the best hope for democracy and progress in the world — for *winning*, not just bearing witness to our dissent or living out a personal ethic of refusal — is the global working class leading a broad alliance of progressive forces.

It is recent history not old texts that prompt that conclusion. In Brazil and South Korea the working class was the central force in the overturn of military rule. In South Africa, it was when the weight of the working class was added to the heroism of the students, youth, and women’s organizations that apartheid was overthrown. In Thailand workers rallied to thwart the military coup in 1992. In Indonesia the strike wave of the 1990s prefigured and inspired the movement against Suharto. In Pakistan the working class has been the only force to oppose both the military

and the fundamentalists. In China the struggles waged for independent unions and the repeated and heroic strikes against super-exploitation, including revolts against the Chinese Gulag, remains the greatest hope for the democracy movement.

Labor movements in all these countries have

Gilles Kepel argues that in reality Islamic fundamentalism has been on the decline since the early 1990s: September 11 itself was an expression of the desperation and isolation of the most militant Jihadis, not their strength.

contested the neo-liberal economic model and have fought for welfare states and democratic rights. Rapid industrialization has been met by militant unionism. Developments have not been linear. Explosions have been followed by periods of stagnation. Political participation and representation has been uneven. The Workers Party in Brazil has not yet been matched by workers' political representation elsewhere. Nonetheless the underlying trend is clear: the growth in social weight and political assertiveness of the working class is the greatest global force for democratization and for a "third camp" politics able to oppose the other two reactionary contenders.

Yet old texts also have their place. They can help us to see past the immediate conjuncture and gain a longer-term perspective, for one thing. Max Shachtman set out the reasons why the working class is the most likely spearhead of democratization and I will now quote him at length. I risk the reader's irritation perhaps but please bear with me. Allow the possibility that the serious, democratic, eds. and working-class based sensibility for which Shachtman once stood might be the very sensibility we need today. Perhaps measured against the waves of theoretical absurdity that have crashed over the left in the last thirty years his ideas can be a useful starting point for our own thinking:

The working class is least able to conform be-

cause the accumulating burdens rest primarily upon its shoulders. To protect its economic interests it is compelled to oppose the prevailing trends. To resist effectively it must have and exercise those democratic rights that, valuable to all classes, are absolutely indispensable to the working class. The more it exercises these rights out of the simple necessity of defending its economic position — the stronger is the tendency of the bourgeois state, out of simple necessity of defending its position, to curtail these rights and even nullify them entirely. Self-preservation generates in the working class a craving for democracy and dictates the fight for it against the bourgeoisie. The socialist movement which is (or should be) nothing but the conscious expression of the fight of the working class, can be restored to a decisive political force if it realizes that, today far more than ever, the all-around and aggressive championing of the struggle for democracy is the only safeguard against the encroaching social decay, and the only road to socialism. We are or must become the most consistent champions of democracy.

But Shachtman's ideas retain validity today only if we grasp two new overarching facts about the condition of the contemporary working class and develop creative political responses to those facts.

The Working Class Today

THE FIRST FACT IS THAT the international working class is being simultaneously universalized and differentiated under the impact of globalization. In other words, while the experience of wage-labor is pushed into every nook and cranny of the world system (the commodification of the planet) the experience of wage-laboring is highly uneven, and interwoven in complex ways with axes of oppression rooted in the systemic oppressions of "race," gender, and nation.

In short, the lived experience of workers is highly varied. Production processes spread across the globe and organize labor into gendered, racialized, and spatial hierarchies. Saskia Sassen, in her study of *The Global City*, notes the rise of a new labor aristocracy in the "highly concentrated command points in the organization of the world economy," in global cities such as London, New York, Los Angeles, and Tokyo. Simultaneously, in favelas, shantytowns and sweatshops around the globe other "wage-laborers," often part of the same

circuits of capitalist production, distribution and exchange as the “aristocrats,” face capitalism red in tooth and claw recreating the horrors of 19th century Manchester. As Martin Thomas has put it, “Capital today creates a workforce simultaneously more universalized (wage labor spreads ever wider); more mobile, versatile, educated, and able to communicate [yet] more differentiated and variegated.”

This is not to write off the radical potential of the working class in the West by any means. The explosive militancy of the French working class in recent years, and the astonishing votes for candidates of the far left, is enough to scotch the idea that the Western working class has been incorporated or silenced, and enough to remind us that to have climbed out of the worst poverty through collective struggle and organisation is not necessarily a deradicalizing experience. The point, rather, is that questions of political mediation across difference — different experiences not only of “race,” gender, and nation, but also of basic economic situation — lie at the heart of any viable global working class politics today.

The second overarching fact about the contemporary working class is that this global economic restructuring is taking place amidst the implosion of the two hegemonic 19th and 20th century traditions of working class politics — social democracy and Stalinism. Nothing has yet replaced them. For now the crash of the old political forms has produced — like the dust clouds thrown up when a decayed block of flats is dynamited — a return to pre-1848 utopian socialisms.

To state this bluntly is not to dismiss these new political forms. They express the stubborn refusal to accept that the end of history has been reached with the Dow Jones and the WTO. As a scream of revolt these new movements are, of course, priceless. Disobedience must be ranked a virtue above almost all others at this time. But the hallmark of all these new utopian socialisms (John Holloway’s “scream of resistance,” Tony Negri’s politics of “Refusal,” even the various appeals to ethics made by Rawlsian egalitarian liberals, first wave analytical Marxists, the writers at *Dissent*, or figures like Richard Rorty) is that they see themselves as *post-proletarian* forms of politics. As such they are also post-strategic politics and politics without a viable social agency.

Of course no one can say they have the answers to the problems and opportunities thrown up by these two new facts. And no one can ask for guarantees. But so much of recent history suggests that it is premature to conclude that we are living through an irreversible secular decline of the working class as a political force rather than a conjunctural crisis. There are many reasons to be more optimistic. Things can change. Defeats can be reversed. But the painful processes of economic restructuring and political atomization do dictate the range of plausible answers that can be given.

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If the working class is to be reconstituted as a practical force today, it will not be as a simple reflection of raw experience, as Shachtman perhaps thought, but as the long-term result of complex acts of political mediation, aggregation, and organization across difference and through popular struggles many of which will not chime with an orthodox view of what “working class politics” should look like.

No one can spell out what these acts will be with exactitude. When it comes to reviving a global working class politics then, as the Zapatistas say, we will have to talk while walking. But this will not be a stroll down memory lane but a walk into the future. For what lies prostrate and in a critical condition today is not the working class *per se* but a certain form of reformist working class politics which was based on projecting the common sense of mass labor movements, based on mass fordist manufacturing processes, into nation-state parliaments (as far as capitalism could accommodate that common sense).

The slow process of economic restructuring

and de-social democratization has pulled the rug from under that entire political world. Labor parties have become barely distinguishable from their conservative and corporate rivals. But this exhaustion of national reformism, while it certainly produced the torments and defeats of the eighties and nineties, has also opened up exciting new oppor-

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tunities. First and foremost, the road to a new labor internationalism from below. Second, together with the impact of three decades of social movement agitation, and the transformation of the gender and racial composition of the global working class referred to earlier, the demise of fordist laborism has opened up a new political space in which labor movements can be reformed as anti-oppressive movements.

Perhaps labor movements can only prosper in the twenty-first century as the “all around and aggressive champion” of every oppressed group. We can be feminist, green as well as red, gay as well as straight. Pressure from the independent organizations of the oppressed (provided these are not merely professionalized middle class lobby groups integrated with the status quo) has been and will remain indispensable to the re forging of the labor movement. A *two-way movement* between the labor movement and the struggles of the oppressed, each submerging itself in the other, each fructifying the other, can create something more than the sum of its parts, a movement for human emancipation.

And, this not the least in importance, we have an opportunity to cast off the puritanical inheritance of those dark satanic mills and embrace a socialism with the sensuality and exuberance of the carnival or the rave as well as the quiet integrity and solace of the chapel and friendly society.

Whither Iraq?

WHAT CAN THIS PERSPECTIVE mean for Iraq? Where is the third camp in Iraq? It is to render words meaningless to say “self-determination” and “anti-imperialism” are represented by the remnants of the totalitarian Baath Regime-Party and the thugs of the Fedayeen, currently regrouping after their exertions torturing dissidents and murdering prisoners before the war began, now shooting at American and British soldiers and setting buildings ablaze, even as the mass graves of the ordinary Iraqis they murdered are being uncovered.

A stand alone “anti-imperialism” is not even close to being an adequate basis for contemporary left-wing responses to the occupation of Iraq. Without a positive, democratic, and anti-capitalist program mere “anti-imperialism” can be a demagogic, even reactionary discourse. For instance while democracy in Iraq depends on local politicians, freely elected, taking over the running of Iraq from the occupation forces, and this means that the troops must leave, this does not mean that the main job of the left is to unthinkingly rally behind every political force shouting “Troops Out Now!”

For us to recognize that the return of Saddam would not be a progressive alternative nor represent the “self-determination” of the Iraqi people, but merely the return of a minority totalitarian tyranny over the Iraqi people, is not to support the occupation. But it is to escape the politically disastrous framework of “imperialism” versus “the resistance.” It is to see that the job of third camp socialists is not passive propaganda but urgent political action and positive opposition to both the occupation forces and the Baathists by building up the progressive forces of the third camp, the emergent labor movement and civil society, the bearers of a progressive alternative to the Baath and to Bremer. It is to understand that what distinguishes the third camp socialist on Iraq is the progressive democratic movement we are trying to build, and the objective of international socialism, not that we are the most militant “anti-Americans.”

Their Anti-Imperialism and Ours

MOREOVER, THIS IS THE genuinely “anti-imperialist” perspective. It is important to grasp that the American ruling class is attempting to create a certain kind of “civil society” over the ruins of the old regime. That is to say, it is striving to engen-

der a native capitalist ruling class and install it over Iraqi society. How? By means of dismantling rather than democratizing the statist Baath economy, and contracting out the restructuring and rebuilding of Iraq to American capitalism — Halliburton, MCI, Brown and Root, etc. Iraqi capitalism will be fostered as fully integrated subcontractors of American imperialism from the outset. In short, America is in the process of vassalizing Iraq.

Consequently Iraqi labor struggles, strikes, and demonstrations will, from the outset, carry an implicitly dual character: challenging both western capitalism and national oppression. Such labor action is therefore immediately political. As in most societies struggling for independence, we will see two emerging patterns of struggle: the more nationalistically-oriented one, subordinating all social struggles to the struggle for national liberation, and the more revolutionary trend that realizes that national problems cannot be solved without social revolution.

In the specific circumstances of Iraq, it will be increasingly impossible to impose a purely nationalist solution to the problem because Iraqi capitalism will be unable to disentangle itself from the U.S. economic structure. Nationalism per se will increasingly become the provenance of reactionary Islamist forces that will make their appeal to the Arab world on that basis, folding Iraqi nationalism into a sectarian religious mold. The only counterbalance to this is an Iraqi working class in motion. Their resistance can be expected to begin the erosion of all existing authority in the Arab world, which has neither momentum nor popular support, thereby placing themselves in direct confrontation with the only other dynamic force in the region — Islam — in the struggle against U.S. hegemony.

The struggle for a consistently independent and democratic Iraq is therefore crucially dependent on the revival and mobilization of the Iraqi working class, which in turn is critically dependent on the political and material support of democratic Iraqi forces here in the West. That, and not mere piety to a Marxist orthodoxy, is the reason why we must turn our face to the Iraqi working class.

These forces are just beginning to breathe. Today, in Baghdad, socialists have opened offices

and can distribute literature, independent trade unions are being discussed, and the forces of democratic civil society are beginning to stir. Disobedient theatre productions are being staged. Against the Baathists, the Islamists, and the occupation forces the first line of defence is to build up this network of grassroots power in unions, and in civil rights, students', and women's organizations. These offer a social base and an alternative moral system, a different conception and practice of solidarity, and an image of democracy in action. Around this trelliswork our weak forces can thread their growing tentacles. Socialists should put aside insurrectionary fantasies and dig in for the slow organic work of building this base.

Our forces can be found at the Basra refinery, the second largest in Iraq, striking against the Baathist management foisted on them by the UK occupying force. Though the action was limited, one could glimpse a political actor and a new poli-

Allow the possibility that the serious, democratic and working-class based sensibility for which Shachtman once stood might be the very sensibility we need today.

tics emerging from the Baathist darkness and blinking into the light. Workers at the state-owned Iraqi Airways are battling the U.S. occupiers over both wage rates and the removal of the airline's general manager, a cousin of Saddam Hussein and a Baath party official.

Our forces can also be found among the women who are organizing for equality and for life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. And among those forces calling for a secular Iraq, a constituent assembly, and a rapid transition to democracy.

Our forces can be found among the unemployed workers who took over a building that used to belong to the Baathist run unions and set up a Union of the Unemployed in Iraq (UII). (When the Baathists returned to demand the return of

the building they were arrested by U.S. troops.) It is impossible to know how accurate these figures are, but as of late June the UII was claiming 15,000 members with centers in Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Nasiriya and had appealed to “all labor unions and organizations throughout the world” for support as it demanded “Jobs or Unemployment Insurance” of the occupying forces (see the UII statement below).

And there is a history of working class struggle throughout the Muslim world. There were mass workers’ strikes in Egypt before the coup of 1952 (repressed by the coup leaders), and again in 1977 forcing Sadat to change economic policy. There was intense working class militancy in Iraq after the 1958 revolution (repressed by the Baathists after 1968). The militant trade unionism in the Sudan (to which the military coup of 1989 was a reaction) and the still powerful workers’ movements of Algeria and Tunisia are capable of self-assertion. The Iranian working class, which built the shoras or workers’ councils in 1979, waits in the wings as the students battle the regime on the streets. And in Indonesia the workers were a vital factor in the fall of Suharto.

Solidarity Forever

IT IS THE URGENT TASK OF THE left to solidarize with the Iraqi working class and democratic civil society. Raise money for its fledgling organizations. Send delegations. Twin union branches and feminist organizations. Seize every opening.

On May Day, Denis MacShane, the British Foreign Office Minister, issued a press release requesting that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the umbrella body for most global unions, become involved in the creation of democratic trade unions in Iraq. The MacShane May Day Statement looked to the free trade unions to aid the establishment of secular and representative trade unions

in Iraq. While no trust should be placed in the ICFTU (which has said it wants the World Bank, the IMF, and the OECDs Trade Union Advisory Committee to be involved) and while there remains a danger of business-friendly unions being

established with few democratic structures, there are real possibilities to create genuine international union-to-union links “from below.”

Two British Labour MPs — Harry Barnes and Peter Lloyd, and trade union leader Kevin Curran — issued an appeal for a workers’ campaign in solidarity with the fledgling trade unions

in Iraq. The MPs pointed out that:

Iraq’s labor movement was once a vibrant part of society. In 1959, one million people joined the May Day march in Baghdad. The population of Iraq was then 14 million and this illustrates the tremendous social weight of its working class. But Saddam demonized independent trade unions and hundreds of union leaders were imprisoned, tortured and executed.

In Iraq today, the independent trade union movement is seeking to re-establish itself. It supports a unified, federal and democratic Iraq that transcends religious, ethnic, and nationalist divisions and also guarantees political and trade union rights. It backs the transfer of power from the occupying forces to an interim and broadly based coalition government that could remove the remnants of Saddam’s dictatorship and prepare a permanent constitution. This would provide the basis for free and fair elections under UN supervision. The International Labour Organisation and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions [should] become involved in the creation of democratic trade unions in Iraq.

By late June a labor-based international solidarity movement, organized in the United States by U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW) had emerged. USLAW has produced a report, *The Corporate Invasion of Iraq: Profiles of U.S. Corporations Awarded Contracts in U.S./British Occupied Iraq* which provides much needed information to

Iraqi workers about the U.S. companies that are their new employers. (Copies can be downloaded free at www.uslaboragainstawar.org or ordered for \$5 from USLAW, P.O. Box 153, 1718 M St NW, Washington, DC 20036.)

The report was discussed by the labor representatives of the Workers' Group of the ILO in Geneva, June 14-15. That meeting established the Campaign for Labor Rights in Iraq (see statements below). The Appeal Statement can certainly be faulted. It pledges its signatories to oppose "the destruction of labor and democratic rights in Iraq" but of course none existed under Saddam! So called trade unions were state-run fronts for Saddam's propaganda.

There is also a worrying one-sidedness about the idea that the post-war chaos in Iraq has been "promoted deliberately by the occupation forces." The Appeal fails to mention the role of the Baathist death squads and arsonists who seek a return of Saddam. And, unlike the British Labour MPs who are clear that trade unions were viciously repressed in Saddam's totalitarian Iraq the Appeal makes the false claim that "Iraq has a long tradition of trade unionism and workers rights codified in legislation." There are a variety of forces involved in the Campaign and the Appeal may represent a compromise. Practical solidarity is the overriding priority. Nonetheless, the failure to clearly define the old regime is not at all a good sign.

More positively, USLAW argues for a new labor internationalism. Amy Newell, USLAW national organizer, says their report "aims to establish an international labor network of unions interested in organizing these companies on a global scale." Gene Bruskin, the co-convenor of USLAW, sees the privatization of Iraq as an opportunity to further the new labor internationalism: "U.S. and Iraqi workers now have a direct link because our companies are over there . . . there is a potential to connect and build real solidarity in a way that people haven't done before." Newell sees a clear link between this union solidarity work and progressive resistance to the occupation of Iraq. In a splendid, though of course not deliberate, reprise of Shachtman's argument about consistent democracy she argues,

Clearly you cannot have trade union rights without basic democratic rights. The appeal issued by the trade unionists in Geneva for this labor

rights campaign explicitly condemns the illegal occupation of Iraq. A Statement issued by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) makes the point that democracy has to have roots in the people, and the best way to do that is to have a strong and independent trade unions; they are the anchor of democracy.

USLAW argues:

There is a critical role that we as trade unionists can play in bringing true democracy to Iraq. Unable to produce the weapons of mass destruction that the Bush administration used to justify its invasion of Iraq, 'democracy for the people of Iraq' has now become the administration's strongest rationale for the war. As trade unionists, we know that central to any democracy must be fundamental trade union rights — the freedom to assemble, to organize, to bargain collectively and to strike if necessary, to protect and improve workers' standard of living.

Shachtman's call for the labor movement to become the "all-around and aggressive champion of democracy" is also echoed in Newell's view that "U.S. labor must be part of the broader international labor movement against war — for peace and social justice."

ADVOCATES OF THE THIRD CAMP will urgently but patiently build this kind of long-term practical solidarity with the organized Iraqi working class and with pro-democratic Iraqi civil society as the rational basis of peace, democracy, and progress. Out of that soil a new socialism could emerge. The third camp will not mistake the remnants of the old regime as "objectively anti-imperialist" as they seek to re-impose the old Baath dictatorship, nor imagine its role is to cheer on clerical reactionaries as a "national liberation movement."

In the triangular struggle it is our task to plant a firm fixed point between the military Visigoths and the fascistic theocrats. We seek to make that third camp conscious of itself, of its relation to the reactionary contenders, and of its potential to turn the whole world upside down. And then truly we who have been nought shall be all and the world shall rise on new foundations. Let others take care of their own. Let us stand up and say what *we* believe in and fight for *our* forces. We have a world to gain.

Editorial Note

We have reproduced four statements from the emerging labor solidarity movement. The first, written by Alan Benjamin of the San Francisco Labor Council, traces how the Appeal for a Campaign for Labor Rights in Iraq emerged, and the crucial role played by U.S. Labor Against the War (USLAW). The second is the Appeal itself, issued in Geneva on June 15, 2003, together with a list of its initial signatories. The third is a statement from the Labor Group of the ILO. The fourth is an appeal from the newly formed Union of Iraqi Unemployed (UII) about which little information is available at this point.

1. Presentation: Campaign for Labor Rights in Iraq Launched in Geneva on June 14-15, 2003

Dear Sisters and Brothers:

I had the privilege of travelling with Amy Newell, national organizer of U.S. Labor Against War, to the International Conference in Defense of ILO Conventions and Trade Union Independence held in Geneva, Switzerland, over the weekend of June 14-15, 2003. I represented the San Francisco Labor Council (AFL-CIO) at this gathering, which was attended by 130 labor officials from 30 countries.

This International Conference was held for the 10th consecutive year at the initiative of the International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples (ILC). As every other year, it was scheduled to coincide with the annual yearly session of the UN-affiliated International Labor Organization (ILO). A large number of the participants at the ILC's conference were official delegates to the ILO's 91st Yearly Session.

Sister Newell and I travelled to Geneva with the purpose of joining forces with broad sectors of the international labor movement to launch a Campaign for Labor Rights in Iraq. The proposal to organize such a campaign originated with Iraqi and Arab trade unionists and was relayed to USLAW and to the international labor movement by International Liaison Committee Coordinator Daniel Gluckstein. Last May 15, in fact, Brother Gluckstein travelled to Washington, D.C. to meet and discuss this initiative with the two national conveners of USLAW, Bob Muehlenkamp and Gene Bruskin.

The USLAW conveners and coordinators endorsed this campaign and agreed to send their national organizer, Amy Newell, to the ILC's June 15th conference in Geneva. They also agreed to produce a document, or White Paper, profiling 18 U.S. multinational corporations that have been awarded contracts to "re-build" — i.e., privatize — Iraq. This 34-page document, produced with the collaboration of the Washington, DC Labor Committee for Peace and Justice, was ready just in time for the ILC Conference and the ILO's 91st Yearly Session. Thanks to the help of the ILC, more than 600 copies of the USLAW "Profiles" document were printed and distributed in Geneva, both to the ILC conference participants and to the 410 labor delegates comprising the Workers' Group of the ILO.

In order that a more complete discussion among the key players in this Campaign for Labor Rights

could take place prior to the ILC Conference on June 15th, ILC coordinator Daniel Gluckstein, Algerian Member of Parliament Louisa Hanoune, and renowned Iranian antiwar activist Subhi Toma invited Amy Newell of USLAW, the representative of the San Francisco Labor Council, leaders of the major Arab trade union federations, and representatives of the ILC to participate in a planning meeting the evening of Saturday, June 14th. The meeting, hosted by Geneva Socialist Party leader Alexandre Anor, was held at the office of the Geneva Socialist Party.

One of the main goals of the meeting was to adopt a written Appeal for the Campaign and to designate speakers to introduce this campaign to the following day's ILC Conference.

The planning meeting was opened with four major reports. The first report, by Daniel Gluckstein, explained the origins and importance of this campaign. The second report, by Iraqi activist Subhi Toma, focused on the current situation in Iraq and the urgent need for the Iraqi workers to have genuinely independent trade unions and full labor rights to defend their most basic interests. [Brother Toma presented a written report to the meeting on his recent trip to Iraq, which we will send out in a separate posting, together with excerpts from his oral presentation to the June 14th planning meeting.]

The third report was presented by Amy Newell, who described the origins, goals and achievements of USLAW and then summarized the White Paper profiling the 18 U.S. multinational corporations awarded contracts in Iraq. Sister Newell explained that this report was not simply aimed at helping the workers of Iraq; it was also a tool to promote union organizing drives of these corporations in the United States and around the world.

The final report was presented by Hacene Djeman, General Secretary of the 35-million-member International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (CISA). Brother Hacene expressed his federation's full support for this campaign and informed the gathering that a few days earlier, he and other official representatives to the ILO's 91st yearly session presented a statement to the 410 members of the ILO's Workers' Group urging the ILO to launch a campaign for labor rights in Iraq and to send a fact-finding mission to Iraq — a mission that would be open to the participation of all national and regional trade union organizations.

This Statement On Iraq was adopted by the ILO

Workers' Group and was then submitted to the ILO yearly session [see statement below]. Not surprisingly, Brother Hacene explained, the representatives of the ILO's Governmental and Employer Groups did not endorse this resolution. Brother Hacene expressed his view that despite the ILO's refusal to embrace this delegation, the ILO Workers' Group would collaborate with the ILC, USLAW and others in promoting this campaign and this fact-finding trip to Iraq later this fall.

Following the reports, the other participants in the meeting presented statements in support of the campaign and recounting the effects of the war on Iraq in their own countries. Speakers included the central leaders of the United Trade Union Federation of the Arab Maghreb (USTMA), General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA), Committee of Working Women of Lebanon, Lebanon Workers General Confederation (CGTL), Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation (SWTUF), General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT), and Tunisian Committee in Switzerland. A central point made by all was the historic importance of USLAW for the international labor movement.

In the course of the discussion, Brother Ibrahim A. Gandour, General Secretary of the Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation (SWTUF), said that his federation would translate into Arabic — no later than June 28th — the USLAW "Profiles" document. [The following day, trade unionists from Japan, Brazil, Spain and France said their unions or federations would translate this document into their respective languages.]

After the discussion on the reports, the participants in the June 14th planning meeting read a Draft Appeal for the campaign prepared by Subhi Toma, Louisa Hanoune and Daniel Gluckstein. A lengthy discussion followed, with numerous amendments proposed to the Draft. By the end of the evening, the participants had agreed to the text of the Appeal for the Campaign for Labor Rights in Iraq [see appeal below]. They also agreed to constitute themselves as an Organizing Committee of an International Labor Delegation to Iraq — a delegation scheduled to take place before the middle of October 2003.

The meeting ended with the designation of Amy Newell, Subhi Toma and Hacene Djeman as the three reporters on this campaign to the June 15th ILC Conference in Defense of ILO Conventions and Trade Union Independence.

On June 15th, following the presentations and the discussion, trade unionists from around the world added their endorsements to the Appeal for the Campaign for Labor Rights in Iraq. [See first list of endorsers below.]

As a representative of the OWC Continuations Committee and San Francisco Labor Council, I was honored to have been able to participate in this June 14th planning meeting and in the June 15th Conference.

Sister Newell's participation in these gatherings was made possible by a fund drive launched by the OWC Continuations Committee and S.F. Labor Council Secretary-Treasurer Walter Johnson. To date, our campaign has gathered \$482 — which is way short of the \$1,200 needed to cover Sister Newell's travel and lodging expenses. In addition, we in the OWC Continuations Committee want to contribute at least \$3,000 to the overall campaign.

This is why we continue to appeal to you for your financial support. To those of you who have already sent donations, we want to express our deepest appreciation. To those of you who still have not sent in a donation, please don't delay — we need your support urgently. Contact us at ilcinfo@earthlink.net.

Thanks, as always, for your interest in this important effort to promote labor rights, peace and social justice.

In solidarity,
Alan Benjamin,
OWC Co-coordinator,
S.F. Labor Council representative
to the June 15th Geneva Conference

2. Appeal For International Campaign for Labor Rights in Iraq

Barely two months have passed since the end of the war, and already the facts are there for all to see: The war waged against the people and nation of Iraq had nothing to do with democracy, the liberation of the Iraqi people, or so-called weapons of mass destruction. All these were just a pretext.

It is now clear that it was a war for oil, a war of domination of the region and the world, a war that threatens all countries and peoples. That is why we the undersigned who opposed the war say: "No to the Occupation of Iraq!" There can be no democracy if the Iraqi people do not have the right to freely determine their fate and establish their sovereignty over the resources and future of their country.

We issue this appeal to the international labor movement to organize in every country an *International Campaign For Labor Rights in Iraq*. As trade unionists and union officials of various origins and countries, we mobilized — together with millions of working people and their organizations the world over — to say: "No to the War in Iraq!"

Together, we pledged that whatever the circumstances we would pursue the fight against the war, occupation, and destruction of labor and democratic rights in Iraq, and against the dislocation of the Iraqi nation — and beyond that, of all nations.

On June 15, 2003, in Geneva, we came together at the initiative of the International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples (ILC). We heard a report on the situation of the workers and people of Iraq now under occupation: Baghdad and the entire country are facing a situation of total disarray. Unemployment is

rampant as widespread vandalism, chaos and terror — promoted deliberately by the occupation authorities — have prevented the resumption of all activities. Wages have not been paid. The privatization of public enterprises is under way.

The armies of the United States and Great Britain, armies of occupation, protect the interests of the U.S. multinational corporations, which are poised to super-exploit the Iraqi people without hindrance and to plunder the resources and wealth of the Iraqi nation.

We also heard a report from a representative of U.S. Labor Against War, a coalition that regroups trade unions representing several million trade unionists in the United States. USLAW organized this past February 19th an international press conference to present an International Declaration of Global Labor Against the War in Iraq. This declaration was supported by trade unions and federations representing 130 million unionists in 53 countries, all of whom came together on a world scale to speak out with one voice against the war.

USLAW has prepared a White Paper on the U.S. multinational corporations that have been awarded contracts in Iraq. This document presents in great detail the systematic denial and violation of labor rights, as well as the corruption and financial scandals that characterize the large bulk of these corporations. This report is being translated into Arabic, and will be brought to the attention of the Iraqi workers, who need to know the record of these corporations.

We also heard reports from the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (CISA), the United Trade Union Federation of the Arab Maghreb (USTMA), the General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT), the General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA), the Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation (SWTUF), and the Committee of Working Women of Lebanon. They explained the dire consequences of the war and U.S. occupation in their own countries. The privatization drive implemented in the Arab countries these past years, for example, has already led to an increase in unemployment from 12 million to 19 million workers.

Once again, in this most difficult situation confronting workers and peoples everywhere, it is more than ever the task of the labor movement to unite and take action on a world scale to fight for labor rights, peace, and democracy.

Those who launched the war against the Iraqi people speak about democracy, but democracy requires that the workers be able to organize themselves freely. Democracy presupposes the existence of independent trade union organizations.

The workers of Iraq urgently need trade unions to fight for their interests. They must be able to organize themselves freely to build unions of their own choice. These basic labor rights, these anchors of democracy, have been codified in International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions 87 and 98.

ILO Convention 87 concerning Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize stipulates:

Each Member of the International Labor Organization for which this Convention is in force undertakes to give effect to the following provisions.” (Article 1) *“Workers and employers, without distinction whatsoever, shall have the right to establish and, subject only to the rules of the organization concerned, to join organizations of their own choosing without previous authorization.* (Article 2) *Workers’ and employers’ organizations shall have the right to draw up their constitutions and rules, to elect their representatives in full freedom, to organize their administration and activities and to formulate their programs. The public authorities shall refrain from any interference which would restrict this right or impede the lawful exercise thereof.”*(Article 10)

ILO Convention 98 concerning the Application of the Principles of the Right to Organize and to Bargain Collectively stipulates:

Workers shall enjoy adequate protection against acts of anti-union discrimination in respect of their employment. (Article 1) *Workers’ and employers’ organizations shall enjoy adequate protection against any acts of interference by each other or each other’s agents or members in their establishment, functioning or administration.*(Article 2)

This last Convention was ratified by the Iraqi government on November 27, 1962.

ILO Conventions 87 and 98 — just as the other ILO Conventions — must be ratified, translated into law and implemented for all Iraqi workers over the entire territory of Iraq. We affirm that no one can speak about democracy so long as these rights are not the law of the land.

Iraq has a long tradition of trade unionism and workers’ rights codified in legislation. From 1919 to the beginning of the 1980s, Iraq ratified 66 ILO Conventions*. Will these be respected and implemented today?

Together, we have mobilized against the war. We are convinced that the international organization and mobilization against the war, particularly within the international trade union movement, points the way forward for the labor movement as a whole.

Together, on June 15, in Geneva, we hereby commit ourselves to organize this international mobilization and we state:

- The undermining and destruction through war of trade union and labor rights in Iraq, just like the planned destruction and plunder by the multinational corporations, are part and parcel of the generalized

offensive which, under different forms, targets working people in every country.

- The right of workers to organize themselves freely knows no borders.
- The existence of independent unions is a cornerstone of democracy.
- The unity of working people the world over will forge the road to peace.

We believe it is necessary to unite our efforts with the goal of constituting an International Labor Delegation that will travel to Iraq on a fact-finding trip to evaluate the situation of the working class, labor rights and status of the trade union organizations. We have already learned that the first labor strikes and walk-outs have taken place. At the same time, the repression against trade union leaders has been unleashed, with a number of unionists now facing death threats.

Through this campaign, we seek to mobilize the support of the international labor movement for the workers of Iraq so that they can build the trade unions of their choice.

This initiative is not in competition with any other. We have learned that similar concerns to ours have already been expressed by various international organizations such as the International Labor Bureau of the ILO, the Workers' Group of the ILO, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), and Education International (EI), among others. Our initiative simply seeks to bring together the broadest forces in the framework of an international campaign for the defense of the ILO Conventions and for social justice, peace and democracy.

We issue this appeal to labor organizations throughout the world and call upon them to support this campaign so that together we can organize this fact-finding delegation to Iraq later this fall.

We, the undersigned, constitute ourselves as an Organizing Committee of this International Delegation. Our campaign is independent from all international institutions. It will seek support among workers and their trade union organizations the world over.

AMY NEWELL, National Organizer, U.S. Labor Against War (USLAW); ALAN BENJAMIN, Representative, San Francisco Labor Council, AFL-CIO (United States)

HACENE DJEMAN, General Secretary, International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (CISA); FAROUK SOURIG, International Director, International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (Syria); ABDELMAJID SAHRAOUI, United Trade Union Federation of the Arab Maghreb (USTMA); AMAR TAKDJOUT, General Union of Algerian Workers (UGTA); LOUISA HANOUNE, Spokesperson, Workers Party of Algeria; SUBHI TOMA, Iraqi antiwar activist; KHADYE EL HUSAINI, Committee of Working Women of Lebanon; ABDEL AMIR NADJA, Lebanon Workers General Confederation (CGTL); IBRAHIM A. GANDOUR, Sudan Workers Trade Unions Federation (SWTUF);

MOHAMED TRABELSI, General Union of Tunisian Workers (UGTT); MOHAMED BEN HENDA, Tunisian Committee in Switzerland

DANIEL GLUCKSTEIN, Coordinator, International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples; OLIVIER DORIANE, Workers Party (France); MARIE-CLAUDE SCHIDLOWER, ILC Working Women Commission; JEAN-PIERRE BARROIS, Antiwar activist (France); LUC DELEY, Hosting Committee, International Conference in Defense of ILO Conventions (Switzerland); ALEXANDRE ANOR, Socialist Party member (Switzerland).

(Appeal Issued in Geneva, Switzerland on June 15, 2003)

FIRST ENDORSERS:

BELGIUM: Roberto Giarocco, General Federation of Belgian Workers (FGTB).

BENIN: Marie-Antoinette Toudonou, President, Women's Committee of the Confederation of Workers of Benin (CSTB).

BRAZIL: Julio Turra, National Executive Board member, Unified Workers Federation of Brazil (CUT).

CHAD: Djibrine Assale Hamdallah, General Secretary, Confederation of Trade Unions of Chad (UST); Gami N'Garnadjal, General Secretary, National Union of Education Workers of Chad (SET).

COTE-D'IVOIRE/IVORY COAST: François Yao, General Secretary, National Union of Energy Workers (SYNASEG); Céline Yassine, Deputy International Relations Secretary, National Union of Energy Workers (SYNASEG).

FRANCE: Jacques Paris, national education sector trade unionists; Pascal Grasso, trade unionist; Xavier Boiston, oil & chemical sector trade unionists; Eliane Juquel, trade unionist; François Le Pivert, trade unionist; Véronique Pépers, chemical sector trade unionist; Clarisse Delalondre, EDF energy sector trade unionist; Denis Langlet, metalworkers' sector trade unionist; Christian Savidan, community sector trade unionist; Jean Markun, trade unionist; Michèle Couillet, national education sector trade unionist; Jean-Charles Marquiset, trade unionist; Patrice Sifflet, trade unionist, Manifesto for Trade Union Independence; Jacques Girod, trade unionist; Marie Bordes, national education sector trade unionist; Daniel Chalié, healthcare sector trade unionist; Pascal Samouth, trade unionist; Christiane Buf, trade unionist; Michèle Simonnin, public sector trade unionist.

GABON: Maixent-Hubert Ndong Odzame, President, Confederation of Trade Unions of Gabon (CO.SY.GA); Camille Mombo-Moulet, General Secretary, Federation of Mines and Energy Workers (FLEEMA).

GERMANY: Frey Henning, Ver.di; Karlheinz Gerhold, SPD, Ver.di; Klaus Schüller, SPD, DGB Thuringe.

GREAT BRITAIN: Colette Bradford Calderdale Trades Council, Warren Ellison Calderdale Trades Council

GUADELOUPE: Jocelyn Lapitre, MPTPG.

INDIA: H. Mahadevan, General Secretary, All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC); Sharad Rao, General Secretary, MAZDOOR trade union federation.

JAPAN: Osamu Yomono, Vice President, National Rail Workers Union of Japan (JRU); Mari Takenouchi, JRU.

MEXICO: Raul Dominguez Alcala, General Secretary, Transportation Workers Union of Oaxaca (SUTCAO).

SPAIN: José Miguel Villa, General Secretary, FES, General Union of Workers of Madrid (UGT); Conrado Soria Garcia, UGT of Barcelona.

SWITZERLAND: Alain Charbonnier, Member of Parliament, Socialist Party; Françoise Schenk-Gottret, Member of Parliament, Socialist Party; Claude and Pierrette Iseli, Union of Circles for Workers' Policies (UCPO); Michel Gindrat, UCPO; Adriano Crameri, General Secretary, SIB; Myriam Lonfat, Former Member of Parliament, SSP-VPOD; Max Robert, Public sector trade unionist (SSP); Simone Girodo, Public sector trade unionist (SSP); Rania Madi.

TOGO: Tétévi Norbert Gbikpi-Bénissan, General Secretary, Federation of Independent Unions of Togo (UNSTIT); Claude Ameganvi, Organizational Secretary, Workers Party of Togo.

TUNISIA: Halim Chaabane, Spokesperson, Iraq-Palestine Trade Union Solidarity Committee.

UNITED STATES: Paul Germanotta, European Support Committee, Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC, AFL-CIO); Claude Piller, Education sector trade unionist; Dan Kaplan, Delegate to June 15th Conference, California Federation of Teachers (CFT).

3. ILO Workers' Group Statement on Iraq

In a statement in March 2003, the Workers' Group of the Governing Body of the ILO deplored the onset of the War on Iraq. It then called for a speedy end to the hostilities and urged that an urgent rehabilitation program should follow in which the ILO should play a major role.

The Workers' Group of this 91st International Labor Conference endorses that earlier statement. The group now calls for a speedy end to the occupation of Iraq and for every assistance to be given to ensure the establishment of a transitory national government under the auspices of the United Nations, free from military or any other autocratic control.

The Workers' Group requests the ILO urgently to send a needs assessment mission to Iraq to determine what forms of technical support and assistance the ILO can properly provide in the rehabilitation and

reconstruction program. This Mission should allow for the inclusion of cooperating International and regional trade union organizations.

The Workers' Group believes that in the rehabilitation exercise support must be provided for all the people of Iraq, especially the poor, the disabled and vulnerable groups. The Group calls for the immediate resumption of work for all Iraqi workers, with due protection for their wages. It also demands that the oil resources of Iraq be used solely by the people of Iraq and exclusively for their benefit.

In the new Iraq there must be, consistent with ILO standards, full freedom of Association guaranteeing the Iraqi workers the right to organize and to bargain collectively; there must be true democracy with full civil liberties, permitting trade unions to choose their own leadership independently and without interference; there must be the right to self-determination by the Iraqi people.

4. Official Letter from the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq — UUI

Tuesday, June 17, 2003

To: All labor unions and organizations around the world

In the aftermath of the U.S devastating war on Iraq and on the following May Day, we, a group of activists in the labor movement, have founded the Union of the Unemployed in Iraq-UUI. Our decision to form this union was an essential response to the extraordinary circumstances in which Iraq has gone through.

Thirteen years of economic sanctions as well as the dominance of the Ba'ath regime have had its greatest impact on imposing the minimum standards of living, the most inhuman working conditions, and a large-scale unemployment on the masses of workers.

The Anglo-American war, which ended with the occupation of Iraq, has pushed further up the unemployment rates to dreadful levels. Most of the industrial and service facilities and institutions were rendered out of service and thousands of factories and smaller workshops have closed their doors either due to lack of water and electricity, or due to lack of security. Rumors are widely being spread around that the U.S is thinking of privatizing the public sector. This clearly means an increase in unemployment among workers. Millions of workers are out of work with absolutely no means of earning a living, threatened with hunger while the food ration, distributed by the previous regime is rapidly running out.

We have formed our union to bring all unemployed workers together and to push forward their basic demands. The Union of the Unemployed in Iraq has currently around 15,000 members across the country, with centers in 3 major cities in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Nasiriya. Since founding our union we have organized

weekly demonstrations to draw the attentions of the occupying forces to our status and conditions, but there has been no response to our demands so far. Our demands could be summarized: either Jobs or Unemployment Insurance. We also demand: emergency allowances to all unemployed and full payments to all those who lost their jobs because of war.

Since May 24th, 2003, we have been in continuous negotiations with the U.S Civil Administration, in vain. They are clearly postponing and maneuvering.

Dear Friends,

Our union has decided to organize a big demonstration across Iraq on Thursday, July 3rd, 2003. We, therefore, entreat you to support us in our demands. You could express your solidarity with us either through organizing protesting rallies or demonstrations or holding big protesting gatherings on the day of our dem-

onstration, in front of those authorities that are responsible for our current situation i.e. the British and the American authorities. You could also send us letters of solidarity to our union and letters of protest to the U.S. and British consulates and embassies in your countries. We call on the workers of the U.S. and Britain in particular to raise their voices against their governments which deny us our simplest demands.

Your solidarity with us will certainly reinforce the impact of our protests to compel the occupation forces in Iraq to submit to our demands.

In Solidarity,
Issam Shukri,
International Relations Coordinator
Union of the Unemployed in Iraq — UII
Bab Al-Sharki, Al Rasheed St., Old Labor
Union Bldg. Baghdad, Iraq
Email: union_u_iraq@yahoo.com

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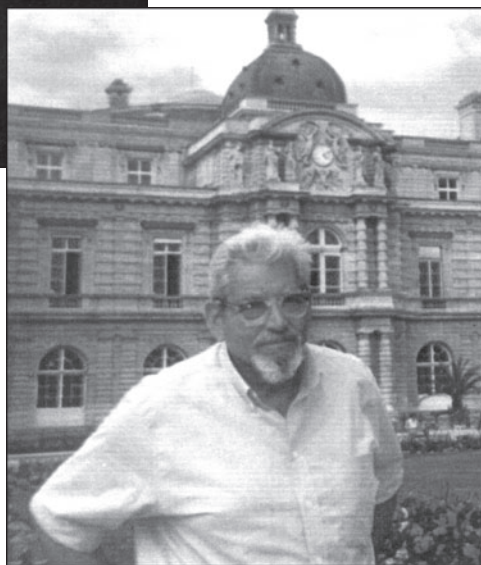
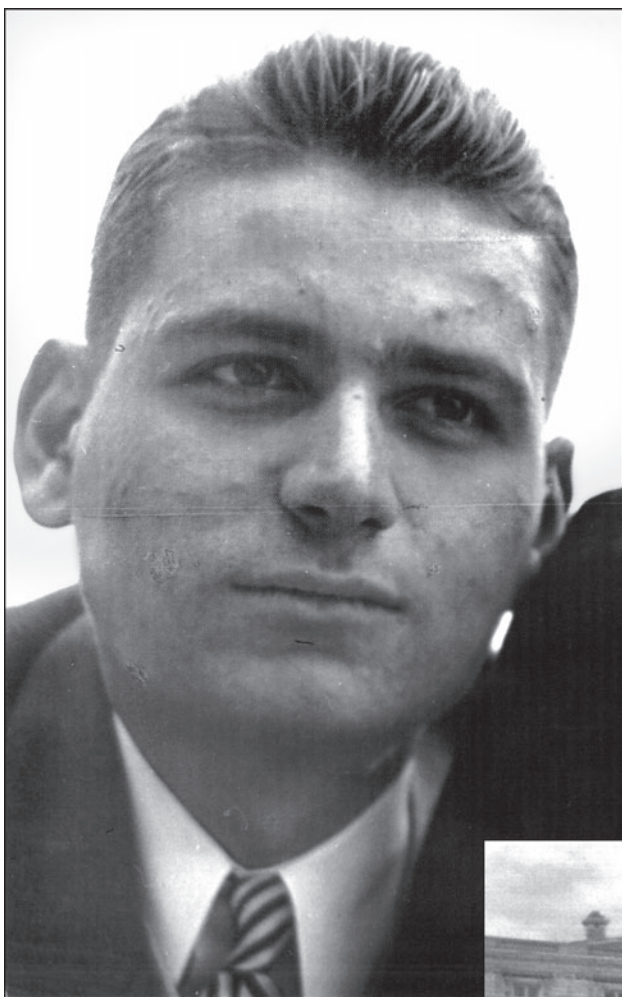
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Latest issue vol. 3 no 3

In Memoriam: Julius Jacobson



Standing Fast Julius Jacobson (1922-2003)

BARRY FINGER

JULIUS JACOBSON — JULIE TO HIS MANY FRIENDS and comrades — founder and editor for more than forty years of *New Politics* died on March 8th of cancer. He is survived by his wife and *New Politics* co-editor Phyllis, his son Michael, daughter-in-law Lynn Chancer, grandson Alexander . . . and by generations of socialists and radicals who were first acquainted with and then educated to the ideals and values of democratic, third camp revolutionary socialism by a lifetime of his essays, letters and polemical exchanges. It has been said that twenty-five years in the life of a small magazine is the equivalent of an individual attaining the age of one hundred. By that standard this journal, for which Julie travailed to his last breath — tirelessly writing, cajoling recalcitrant contributors, searching for scarce funds, grooming new voices, and endlessly, relentlessly editing — has truly earned its place as one of the venerable mainstays of American radicalism.

As a socialist committed to keeping radical politics vibrant and relevant, Julie would have repudiated any tribute as an unforgivable lapse into sentimentality. Julie was remarkable for revealing so little of himself in his writings — his political passions and moral steadfastness, his rollicking wit and historical sweep, the vigor and brilliance of mind, of course, permeate his pieces, but of Julie the man, the historical personality, there is precious little. He was, in this manner, a scion of the movement that fashioned him — wary of the cult-breeding virus that arises from the association of socialist analysis with the projection of any individual personality. There is, therefore, only one way to write about him in accordance with how he led his life: to appraise his writing as if he were still alive and could read that assessment with his own uniquely critical, skeptical and combative sensibility in anticipation of the almost certain sharp rejoinder to follow. This, certainly, will come. Still, in tow to the enormity and immediacy of this loss, one must be forgiven from straying, at least in part from his wishes.

One of a vanishing breed of working class intellectuals, the product of the heroic socialist struggles of an earlier age, Julie began life as the

son of Eastern European immigrants, his father a (largely unemployed) stevedore. The family was immersed in the left-leaning, secular culture of immigrant Jewry. His parents read the social democratic *Forward* for the “news” but, the Yiddish language Communist daily *Freiheit* for what they believed was the *emes*, the truth behind the news. As a child, perhaps as early as the tender age of 9, Julie was recruited by his older brother, Leon, to the Young Pioneers, the pre-teen youth group of the Communist Party. Julie always insisted that political radicalization at such an early age was not the aberration then that it seems today. But as a teenager, in defiance of Leon, Julie jumped ship from the Communist Youth League for the Young People’s Socialist League (4th International). Julie’s new affiliations caused a political breach in the family that was never wholly repaired, though interestingly Leon later contributed drawings which peppered the first several issues of *New Politics*.

These were the waning days of the unified American Trotskyist movement — days of street corner agitators, of battles between the anti-Semitic followers of William Pelley, and the largely Jewish Bronx chapter of the YPSL, days in which Trotskyist meetings were violently disrupted by Stalinists; a few short years that formed an epoch in which capitalism seemed so rotted out that

Barry Finger is a member of the New Politics editorial board.

world revolution, “permanent revolution,” by the oppressed masses seemed the only realistic hope for humanity. It was a time in which the thoroughly Stalinized Communist Party was aligning itself with big city machines and “progressive” capitalists, where social democracy could no longer find its bearings. It was a time, the last time, in which an entire historical movement, revolutionary Marxism, could still be seen as concentrated both politically and morally in the remarkable personality of one intellectually incorruptible individual. And it was this Trotskyism that produced a youth movement far better skilled in matters of theory, history and tactics than the youth of any other group of its day. This youth movement was almost half of the Trotskyist movement of the late 30s, with a robust and vibrant internal public life, most of whose members gravitated around Max Shachtman.

Intellectual Armor and Historical Change

BUT IT WAS ALSO A PERIOD in which history began to deviate from the classical Marxist trajectory on which Trotskyism was based. New forms of property and of class rule were beginning to take shape, forms which were not anticipated by the old formulas. Trotsky’s attempts at reconciling the emerging historical data with his revolutionary theory were becoming increasingly tenuous, forced and unconvincing. He began to betray a doctrinaire, mechanical bent to basic theory that stood in stark contradiction to the unblinkered fearlessness with which he interpreted unfolding events. Unable to follow his insights to their unorthodox conclusions, Trotsky who, better than any other leader, understood the dangers of Stalin’s abandonment of international revolution in favor of building “socialism in one country,” intellectually disarmed his followers, in the end, by his failure to re-conceive Stalinism as a new form of class society. To that remnant of the movement that did not flinch from the full implications of what was transpiring in Russia — the Shachtmanites, who were exiled into a separate organizational existence as the Workers Party — was where Julie was to find his political home and where he would remain until its dissolution in the 1950s. This is where Julie’s political and literary skills were shaped and his flinty and unyielding polemical

edge honed. This is where his lifelong fixation with the broader intellectual, political and cultural corruptions of Stalinism, of bureaucratic collectivism as it became known, was incubated and nourished. This is where the inseparability of socialism and democracy, which lent the struggle against both Stalinism and capitalism a theoretically unassailable basis and political program, became the touchstone of Julie’s politics.

It was also where Julie first met Phyllis, both teenagers in the Yipsel. Julie’s territorial domain at the time was the Bronx and the Manhattan party headquarters. But Phyllis came from Brownsville in the hinterlands of Brooklyn. Ordinarily such romances were doomed to heartbreak. Rare indeed was the relationship that could withstand the demands of a three-hour roundtrip subway journey from one end of New York City to the other. Legion are the tales of movement’s loves lost, crushed by the limitations of mass transit. This was a singular exception, a veritable legend of its time, whose details are still enviously recounted by aged veterans of the Trotskyist and socialist movements. In time this teenage romance was to blossom into a full political and intellectual partnership, a rounded friendship of shared passions — not only of politics, but of art and music, of travel and antiques, of fine literature and epicurean delights; of passions pursued inconspicuously on the shoestring budget of the skilled machinist Julie was to become. To be sure, there were plenty of lean years. But as a life together that of the Jacobsons remains a standing rebuke to those who would extol the supposed socialist virtues of humorless gray existence consumed by Jimmy Higgins drudgery and wanton self-deprivation much the way a contemporary sensibility is repulsed by the pretence that monkish austerity brings the members of a religious order closer to god. Julie never worshipped at any shrine, and certainly not that of working class squalor. He had nothing to prove.

When the country entered the war, the Workers Party industrialized, unionizing its cadres to position the movement for an anticipated upsurge in militancy following the war. Julie, although a skilled industrial worker at General Electric, was nevertheless drafted. He served at the tail end of the Battle of the Bulge, where he narrowly escaped death after a mortar shell pierced the boxcar he

was traveling to the front in, killing half of the G-Is inside. But even more riveting than this brush with death was another incident whose effects he would never shake off. While traveling to the front,

Rare indeed was the relationship that could withstand the demands of a three-hour roundtrip subway journey from one end of New York City to the other.

Julie witnessed a large contingent of white soldiers firing as if in sport on an encampment of black American soldiers. The officers in charge displayed no interest, more accurately found it amusing, that their racist troops were engaged in target practice against their own countrymen. This episode of military lynching flagrantly contradicted the Popular Front nonsense that the Second World War was a conscious fight against fascism. That WWII was the “good war” was a proposition that Julie would never theoretically or practically entertain. It transformed Julie’s anti-racist commitments from the political realm to the visceral.

Julie also took part in the liberation of Paris in 1944. He made contact with French and expatriate Greek Trotskyists, most memorably one who went by the party name of Pablo, and managed to smuggle supplies of clothing, blankets, food and socialist literature to these beleaguered comrades. Shachtman sent word to Julie to be wary of Pablo, whom Shachtman believed to be seriously unmoored as evidenced not least by Pablo’s fanciful if not fantastical perspective at the time that the American troops were at the precipice of revolt. Years later — after subsequent rifts in the Fourth International, which had become, not least under the pernicious influence of Pablo, little more than a leftwing of Stalinism as far as the Workers Party was concerned — Pablo proved incapable of maintaining even the pretense of civility with Julie, despite their once warm wartime friendship.

Upon discharge, the Party maintained its industrial perspective. But Julie disagreed with this,

objecting that the meager and thinning resources of the Party were inadequate to offer young workers a meaningful industrial alternative. Where Julie did see organizational prospects was not in the high schools or among “proletarian youth” but on campus, where returning G-Is benefited from unprecedented educational opportunities. Julie abandoned his job as a machinist for General Electric and plunged himself into college organizing for the Socialist Youth League, which later stripped the SP’s youth group from its parent organization to form the Young Socialist League, and made a major contribution to the burgeoning of a campus Third Camp. The SYL had good-sized units in New York, Chicago and Berkeley and had groups in dozens of other cities and universities including Oberlin, Detroit, Los Angeles and Denver. It was in those years that Julie wrote the “Youth Corner” column for *Labor Action* and founded and edited the campus magazine *Anvil* that later merged with *Student Partisan* in 1950. Formally formed by the New York Student Federation Against War, its political tendency was generally that of the Independent Socialist League, which the Workers Party had now become, diversified somewhat by association with pacifist clubs and unaffiliated students sympathetic to the ISL’s anti-war and militant viewpoint. This remarkable journal, with a circulation of over 4000, whose pieces were never unfortunately collected for reprint, contained essays by the likes of Richard Wright, Lewis Coser, Irving Howe, Hal Draper, Michael Harrington, Paul Goodman, Harold Rosenberg, George Rawick, C. Wright Mills, Isaac Rosenfeld, Harvey Swados and Dan Wakefield. It helped introduce an American audience to the writings of Simone de Beauvoir.

Julie contributed two pieces in particular that were symptomatic of later enduring themes. “Do Communists have the Right to Teach?” was an editorial in the inaugural issue. It was an attack on Sidney Hook, who, by that time, had become a sophisticated apologist for McCarthyism. Julie’s rebuttal remains a ringing and spirited endorsement of free speech and civil liberties noteworthy not only for the archivists — contrasting the consistent stand of independent socialists with that of the wavering liberal anti-Communist left — but for its eerie contemporary relevance. Julie’s implacable defense of civil liberties was extended and

developed in forthcoming articles, written under his pen name Julius Falk (Falk being his mother's maiden name), in the ISL's journal, *The New Internationalist*. These concerns, that "the democratic principles of the Bill of Rights are often ground to dust in the social mechanism of bourgeois democracy," were continuously revisited in the course of his political and literary career. In the penultimate article that Julie penned for the Summer 2002 issue of *New Politics*, Julie warned that unlike the 1950s witch hunts, that were made short shrift of by the Army and Eisenhower, the current "War on Democracy is recognizably a war by the ruling class and its State."

War, Lesser Evilism, and the Russia Question

ANOTHER THREAD OF ENDURING relevance was laid out in "War, Realism and the Lesser Evil." It remains to this day one of the most concise and concentrated statements of Third Camp foreign policy analysis, whose relevance outlives the particular context in which it arose. However, it too was set against a raw political backdrop that made liberalism suspect and radicalism subversive. In it Julie tackled openly and imaginatively the knotty maze-like logic of "lesser evilism" that seduced an army of retreating leftists into believing that they could lend critical support to the American Establishment while remaining in the ultimate service of socialism. This is a theme that continued and could not but continue to find resonance in his numerous subsequent anti-war polemics. But it is in Julie's elegant parting thoughts that can be seen the animating impulse of a lifetime of socialist activism. It is a piercingly simple and yet more profound statement than can be found in the most pretentious of treatises on dialectical methodology, over-determination and universal schemata often associated with Marxism and a telling rebuke to the "end of (socialist) ideology" theories of then and now. "Nevertheless," Julie concluded, "guarantees can not be given to those who ask 'How do I know the Third Camp will succeed?' We do know that neither capitalism nor Stalinism can succeed in solving a single basic social problem. We do know that the potential for socialism exists. More than that we do not need to know for making a political, realistic and moral choice."

During the 1950s Julie turned over the stewardship of *Anvil* and *Student Partisan* to others to become editor of *The New Internationalist*. By the middle 50s, Shachtman was shifting rapidly to the right purportedly in pursuit of new opportunities for movement building. The Communist Party was in disarray, traumatized by Khrushchev's revelations at the XXth party congress and the Hungarian revolt, and rent by an ensuing faction fight that could not be resolved within the framework of a unified organization. It was caught, as the ISL stated, between the Russian ruling class and the American working class. This raised anew the question of a broader socialist movement predicated on finding common ground for regroupment and unity with that wing of the CP that was beginning to find its own path towards recognizing the centrality of democracy for socialism. The search on the part of Shachtman and the majority for a minimum platform, understandable in the abstract as being inconsistent with the full position of the ISL, signified in practice an opening to the right. That is, the Shachtmanites became ever more unwilling to advocate — in a nondisruptive manner — for revolutionary poli-

The promise of radical renewal was to be found elsewhere, in the emancipation struggles of Southern blacks, in the emergence of a militant civil rights and civil libertarian consciousness in the North and in the small, spontaneous outbursts of peace and anti-war sentiment on campus.

tics and Third Camp socialism as they folded up shop inside the near moribund Socialist Party.

Julie, who had always maintained close personal relations with Shachtman, identified and exposed the regressive trends and interpretations in the latter's writings that represented a rupture with the ISL's historic past and which invited in-

tellectual disorientation to envelope the movement's remnants. "Leninism, The Comintern and Putschism" was Julie's answer to Shachtman's final article in the fall 1957 issue of the *New Internationalist* entitled "American Communism, or a Reexamination of the Past." It unfortunately had to be privately printed and circulated, having been submitted for a scheduled issue that was never to appear. Painful as this was to Julie, it became increasingly apparent that Shachtman was beginning to manipulate the lesser evil comparison of democratic capitalism with Stalinism as a rationalization for abandoning socialist politics. That is, Julie would concede that democratic capitalism was a "lesser evil," but insisted, in the WP-ISL tradition, that supporting Western capitalism against Stalinism could only perpetuate a Cold War symbiosis that undermined democracy globally. For a brief moment following the absorption of the ISL into the Socialist Party, it seemed that the latter might enjoy a revival, anticipating new support from the fallout from the CP and the merger of the AFL and CIO. But the old movement leadership, once inside the SP, began to move to the right and with few exceptions to the extreme right. They were shortly to plunge the organization into a series of disastrous and debilitating factional fights in their newfound zeal to abandon independent political action for a political realignment of the Democratic Party.

Developing a Third Camp Framework

STILL THIS INTERREGNUM was an intellectually fecund period for Julie. He produced a groundbreaking trilogy of articles, actually the material for a small volume, on "The Origins of the Communist Movement in the U.S." that appeared in successive issues of *The New Internationalist* during 1955 and 1956. And he extended his researches contributing as an associate author to the Howe and Coser volume on *The American Communist Party* in 1957, one of a handful of truly seminal treatments of this subject and the only one to refract the topic through the critical lens of Third Camp socialism.

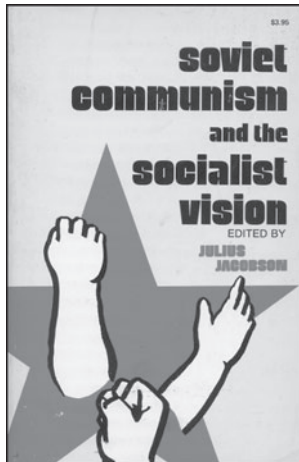
Julie never entered the SP after the dissolution of the ISL, although Phyllis for a period was its Manhattan organizer. Yet it was quite clear to the Jacobsons that the newly regrouped SP would not be the antidote to the frailty of organized so-

cialism in the U.S. The promise of radical renewal was to be found elsewhere, in the emancipation struggles of Southern blacks, in the emergence of a militant civil rights and civil libertarian consciousness in the North and in the small, spontaneous outbursts of peace and anti-war sentiment on campus all of which portended the birth of a new left. The immediate problem as they saw it was "not how to solve all the problems of socialist politics, theory and organization but rather . . . how to establish a sphere in which these problems could be seriously discussed." They proposed a new magazine which would grapple with the issues pioneered within the independent, Third Camp framework — the impact of totalitarianism on the concept of socialism, the post-Stalin changes in Russia, the meaning of socialist democracy and the dangers of bureaucratization, the relevance of socialist anti-militarism in a world living in the shadow of the bomb, the role of the modern working class, and the ubiquitous impact of racism on American society. But it would also be a journal in which the "sole criterion of editorial selection [would] be neither conformity nor heterogeneity, but rather the ability of articles to stimulate thought and debate, or to contribute in some way to thinking out acute questions of politics and theory. It can be taken as a principle that an article which stirs one to refute it is an article eminently worth printing — whether an editorial board or any editor agrees with it or not — far more than an article of impeccable sentiments which stirs no thought at all." *New Politics* would be a journal to engage the left, not to hector or lecture to it from on high; a journal that would assist the left in resurrecting itself.

It was an idea met with the enthusiastic reception of leading American socialists, writers, university professors and trade unionists. Included among its original editors and sponsors were Hal Draper and Herbert Hill — who more than any aside from the Jacobsons themselves were to shape the journal — as well as such notables as Harvey Swados, James Baldwin, Dan Wakefield, Sid Lens, A. J. Muste, Norman Thomas, Herbert Gold, Bert Cochran, Patrick Gorman, Bayard Rustin and Michael Harrington. It was an illustrious list to be sure, but a list also all too typical for its time with its notable and jarring lack of women sponsors and editorial members. Not even Phyllis was

recognized as editor until the Summer 1968 issue. Although its endorers and contributors ranged from the reformist to the revolutionary, the journal clearly intended to stake out for itself an independent democratic Marxist presence in the intellectual life of the left. In this it distinguished itself from the other significant journals of the left at the time: *Studies on the Left*, with, what Julie felt, was a “clear enough pro-Eastern bias,” the social democratic *Dissent* and the anarchist-pacifist monthly *Liberation*.

The imprimatur of the Third Camp was immediately impressed on the journal by Julie himself in such remarkable essays as “American Socialism and Thermo-nuclear War;” “The Limits of Russian Reform” and “Isaac Deutscher: The Anatomy of an Apologist.” Some of these were later gathered, along with pieces of a similar Third Camp orientation by other *New Politics* contributors, in a volume edited by Julie, *Soviet Communism and the Socialist Vision* (1972). These remain signal contributions that can be reread profitably today as luminescent roadmaps of an independent socialist politics; one which eschews any accommodation with authoritarianism or “democratic capitalism” of that sort that all too often litters and neutralizes socialist politics. He insisted that the relevance of socialism is crucially and inseparably linked to a policy of peace and freedom. “Peaceful solutions can be offered short of freedom but they can not be socialist solutions (nor do I believe that they can assure peace) because socialism is freedom and a policy that



denies freedom, denies socialism.” Put otherwise, these non-socialist “solutions” cannot really bring peace because they leave in place class systems with an inherent drive toward war.

With his extended discussion of Deutscher, Julie grappled with a strain of radicalism that was

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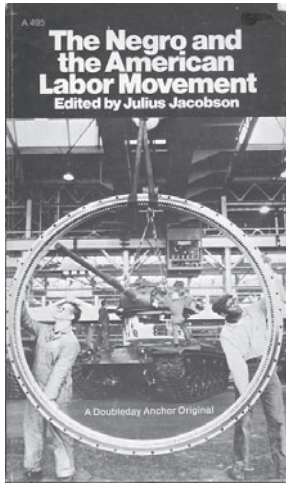
to make deep inroads into the more sophisticated interstices of the New Left and beyond. “Given his [Deutscher’s] views of socialism, which eliminate democracy as an integral part of socialism and given his conviction that only the inevitably (‘predetermined’) evolved system of Stalinism could bring this method about, there is no ground for repudiating Stalin’s methods

other than an irrelevant squeamishness. Perhaps it was not necessary to slander the old Bolsheviks with the charge of being agents of foreign imperialism and on Hitler’s payroll, but whatever reasons might be advanced, from Deutscher’s point of view and analysis, if logic prevails, the old Bolsheviks had to be removed one way or another, since it can easily be established that their very existence was a serious menace to the consolidation of Stalinism politically and therefore an impediment to its historic ‘socialist’ mission of raising Russia from the wooden plow to the tractor.” Deutscher created the “theoretical justification for terror whose practical significance” is extended, in echoes that reverberate even today, to justify the “use of terror and the liquidation of democracy and democrats” not least of all in Cuba, as it has in China and Vietnam.

Imbued by the animating impulse of socialism from below, Julie became an extraordinarily keen observer and consistently sympathetic ally both of the militant wing of the civil rights movement and of the rising tide of campus radicalism in the ‘60s. His “Defense of the Young,” “Coalitionism: From Protest to Politicking” and the introduction to *The Negro and the American Labor Movement* (1968), which Julie edited, brought into sharpest relief the contrasting poli-

tics of the third camp with that of his old comrades. These he now condemned as having debased the ideals of socialism by shilling for the Democrats and becoming “paid political agents of the reactionary Meany leadership of the AFL-CIO” or who, in their more radical “democratic left” wing, having “grown tired, disillusioned and frustrated over the failure of independent socialist politics . . . moved in an increasingly rightward direction, discovering en route all sorts of wondrous things in liberal (and not so liberal) institutions and values.” He indicted them for setting upon themselves the task of “impeding and reversing the radicalization of the young” and of “reducing the Negro-labor alliance to a fetishism.”

With respect to the latter, Julie was particularly merciless and impatient. “What,” he asked in the 1960s, “is either extreme or unfair in the demand that Negro workers who have so long been oppressed be partially compensated for the crimes against them (including crimes by racist unions which deprived them of a livelihood) by giving them preferential consideration in hiring practices?” The point can easily be extended to the demand for reparations today. The larger issue is that the blight of racism and inequality are not merely historic outrages, but ongoing offenses that demand pervasive institutional and social redress and compensation. Affirmative action was, in Julie’s estimation, a “small democratic step in the direction of social justice.” Those among the “Democratic Left” who so relentlessly insisted on a black-labor alliance never once outlined what the labor component of that alliance should look like. Could a militant civil rights movement be expected to accommodate itself to a conservative and bureaucratic trade union bureaucracy? And if so, at what cost? Julie warned that those who perpetually counsel the need for such an alliance, and who placed no preconditions on that the trade



union movement acknowledge and cleanse itself of racism, could no longer claim to be primarily concerned with advancing the cause of social reform. They had, in word and in deed, become brokers for the establishment within the civil rights movement, attempting to effect a non-disruptive framework, a pact of institutional quiescence, as a pre-condition for Democratic Party advancement. As for what cost, Julie was specific — “the abandonment of political independence and socialist opposition.”

Certainly, one of the most agonizing essays Julie was called upon to write was “The Two Deaths of Max Shachtman” in the winter 1973 issue. Shachtman had earned the admiration of a generation of radicals of previous decades by his political courage in engaging and opposing and, in Julie’s estimation — besting Trotsky, whom he “loved, respected and feared” and for his intellectual and political contributions to the understanding of Stalinism. In the 40s and early 50s, Max had had unusually warm — unusual for the difficult and ungenerous Shachtman, that is — relations with Julie and Phyllis. Among the most stunning and dramatic photographs of the Jacobsons in their young adulthood were some taken by Shachtman, who was not an infrequent diner at the Jacobson household. Yet with admitted trepidation, Julie passed the pronouncement that Max, the unheralded author and *eminence grise* of coalition politics and of the “realignment strategy” died in the most factual sense a renegade, “a man

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who reneged on his earlier, most fundamental commitment to social justice . . .” “Had he [Shachtman] been able to make contact with the young, who were fresh and receptive to new ideas, might he not have been able to guide some into the camp of revolutionary socialism?” “But why,” Julie characteristically asked, “should any of these young people have cocked an attentive ear to

Shachtman's revelations about Stalinism when they were accompanied by apologies for the American bombing of Vietnam and plaudits for some of the most reactionary elements in the trade unions and the Democratic Party?" In this essay, Julie put to rest for a decade any lingering need to further engage the self-entitled "Democratic Left," including most of the comrades of his youth who had by then orbited themselves politically and morally miles away from anything that could reasonably be said to be socialist.

A few years later, Julie had occasion to analyze the neo-Stalinist mist that was fast envelop-

Putting out a quarterly journal on a shoestring and editing the journal as a two person operation had occupied nearly every nonworking minute of their lives.

ing the antiwar movement. In it he found the ultimate tragedy of the Shachtmanite legacy, reduced by his epigones to simple anti-communism, to be clear. "If the ideological force of Stalinism, in the left wing world is to be exposed and eliminated it can only be done by those who continue in a truly radical, socialist tradition; never by those who compromise with imperialism." This theme foreshadowed Julie's final project that began twenty years later, "The Soviet Union is Dead: The 'Russian Question' Remains."

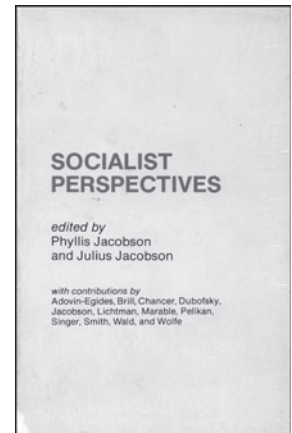
By the end of the 1970s, the Jacobsons had quite literally exhausted themselves. Putting out a quarterly journal on a shoestring and editing the journal as a two-person operation had occupied nearly every nonworking minute of their lives. Julie's business, he had operated a small machine shop — General Machines (one of whose workers invariably answered the phone by announcing, "General Machines, private parts here") — was taken over by Bell and Howell. The shop, which had barely paid its bills, in part by having functioned as subsidized employment for numerous movement personalities over the years, was — at Julie's insistence — fully unionized. Its re-

maining workers were absorbed as a pre-condition by their new employer with full seniority rights and appropriate union wage scales and benefits, a somewhat unusual procedure in such take-overs. With this transition, the first run of *New Politics* also came to a close, brought to that by a combination of editorial fatigue with the social isolation and subsequent disappearance of the New Left at the conclusion of the Vietnam War.

Restating Political Principles

IN THE INTERIM, the Jacobsons edited a volume entitled *Socialist Perspectives* (1983), which frankly hoped to contribute to a renewal of interest in socialist theory and ideology buoyed by the growing anti-nuclear, feminist and ecological movements during the Reagan years. It prefigured by some three years the forces that again led to the revival of the journal in 1986. When the journal was resuscitated, Julie made it explicitly clear from the outset that this was to be a journal of Third Camp socialism. Julie's masterful and detailed analysis of the manifold meaning and implications of such politics was fleshed out in greater detail than ever before and "Socialism and the Third Camp" remains, along with Hal Draper's "The Two Souls of Socialism," a classic exposition on the subject. He took on the specters that haunted such politics, the apparitions of past Third Campers, who had — so to speak — given up the ghost by their acquisition of a superior political "realism." Where is the Third Camp to be found? In what social forces does it adhere? Does it have a concrete history? What of the Third Camp and bourgeois democracy? And what of it and lesser evilism? One by one he painstakingly attempted to dissolve the political gunk that had accumulated in opposition to these animating political ideals assembled over a lifetime of revolutionary experience. His conclusion bears restating.

For Third Camp socialists, political and so-



cial democracy and a belief in the ability and necessity of working people to govern their own lives are at the core of our socialism; we cannot recognize socialism in any other guise. This is not to suggest that Third Camp socialism is a sectarian

Julie spent his last months as he had his entire adult life — with enormous reserves of dignity, not a hint of self-pity and with his sense of humor and irony fully intact.

and rigid dogma which provides a 'correct line' on all political questions. The concept is broad enough to embrace a rich variety of views, strategies and programs. But what is imperative is the acceptance of democracy as a common denominator of socialism if we are to overcome the 'crisis of socialism' over which we have agonized for so many decades. For the crisis is also *in* socialism, a crisis of self-definition of who we are and what we want. And since we are convinced that it is the responsibility of socialists to wave the banner of peace, freedom and democracy with one hand, then it follows that the other must be raised in a clenched fist as both affirmation of socialism and in defiance of all the little people in high places who control our lives; against those societies which oppress humanity and threaten its existence.

Some of Julie's finest writings during the ensuing years dealt, necessarily and at length, with American imperialism. The winter 1991 issue, in which Julie analyzed the first Gulf War crisis, actually sold its complete press run. What he observed a decade ago about American foreign policy still rings, if anything, with added truth and a resilient poignancy after the recent carnage. "... (T)o be effective, and deserving of popular support, anti-war activists must make it unambiguously clear that resistance to an unjust war does not mean any support for the Iraqi dictatorship . . ." "All of us active in the movement against war in the Gulf should make our own linkage between the struggle for peace and the struggle for democracy in the Middle East. We should urge the adoption of a

foreign policy which encourages the development of democratic movements and democratic societies in a region now dominated by feudal monarchs, religious fundamentalists and dictators in the Arab world, and by racists and hardline hawks in Israel."

Julie's final project, which he considered the culmination of a lifetime of theoretical reflection rooted in political engagement, was to cast a cleansing light over the Stalinist shadow which had so infected and discredited socialism; to complete, as it were, the work of the Workers Party-Independent Socialist League. Of this project, three-fourths were brought to print: the introductory essay on the enduring relevance of the Russian question, a discussion of the USSR and the nature of the Second World War, and one on Stalinism and the demise of American Socialism. It was to culminate in a larger theoretical section on the Bolsheviks, Communist totalitarianism and Marxism that, sadly, was never completed. Still he left a tantalizing prospect of what was to have come. "What is involved is nothing less than the question of self-definition, of fundamental concepts of right and wrong, of what kind of movement for emancipation must be built and, last but by no means least, what vision we have of an emancipated society."

Ideals and Commitments

IN THE LAST THREE YEARS, Phyllis was stricken with a series of debilitating strokes that left her severely compromised and in need of round-the-clock attention. Julie, unable to care for her himself, shifted his office to Phyllis's nursing home room. There he carried out the day-to-day business of *New Politics*. That is where he did his note taking, his writing, his editing. That is where he contacted essayists to discuss their submissions. That is where he took his lunch and, many days, where he dined in the evening. He was Phyllis' untiring nursing home advocate, overseeing her treatment and summoning specialists when he felt the home to be negligent. He shared his articles with her and took delight in showing her each ensuing issue of the journal. Except for his stint in the army, Julie never parted a day from Phyllis, and the last years were no exception. Julie refused trips to museums and could not bear to indulge himself even to take in a movie, for fear that his absence

would frighten, alarm or disorient Phyllis. He abandoned his weekend cottage and his beloved fishing trips. On their anniversaries and on their birthdays, friends gathered with Julie in Phyllis's room. When in his last few months he underwent chemotherapy, he would end his day, wan and ill, with a visit to Phyllis, fearing only that his ravaged appearance might shock her.

Julie spent his last months as he had his entire adult life — with enormous reserves of dignity, not a hint of self-pity and with his sense of humor and irony fully intact. He completed the

final draft of his article just days before he died. For those who knew Julie, it was striking that only in the last few months were we aware of his having aged. Striking because it reminded us how indestructible Julie appeared, one of our generation out of time. If for us, the editorial board of *New Politics*, Julie seemed never to really grow old, there is an explanation, even if the truth sometimes lurks in clichés. Perhaps it is impossible to truly grow old, as Ignazio Silone suggested, when one remains as fully and truly faithful to the ideals and commitments of one's youth as did our comrade.

CHRISTOPHER PHELPS

“PART INVENTIVE GENIUS . . . ; part dictator, semi-literate Babbitt, underground maneuverer and exploiter, combined with a ruthless persistency. . . .” I suspect this has made you somewhat discomfited, so let me explain that I am not referring to Julie. Rather, I am reading from an obituary he wrote for Henry Ford in *Labor Action* in 1947, entitled “Apostle of the Assembly Line and Speed-Up.”

One day, the history of the Workers Party and Independent Socialist League will be told by somebody who can see the story fully, beyond the usual antinomies of hopeless sect and faultless moral cause. In the yellowing pages of *Labor Action*, that future historian will run across Julie's articles published under the name Falk, his mother's maiden name, including the regular column “Youth Corner,” which he wrote as national secretary of the Socialist Youth League. Julie was very proud of that role when I interviewed him five years ago. His eyes twinkled while recounting how he built a dynamic youth affiliate for the small third camp socialist movement on campuses from Brooklyn to Chicago. Julie's writing for *Labor Action*, *Student Partisan* and *Anvil*, and *New International* in the 1940s and 1950s schooled Julie in a polemical style he relished to the end.

For years, my contact with the Jacobsons was by long distance. I was a rare radical in a generation of bond traders. An incongruous left-wing Iowan transplanted to Oregon, I started writing

for *New Politics* at the age of twenty-five. A call from Phyllis was to me not just a call from New York but from the 1940s. Her voice, redolent of Brooklyn, with a jaunty diction reminiscent of Katharine Hepburn, was to me a lifeline to a political past that would otherwise have existed only in imagination. Over time I got to know both Phyllis and Julie personally, visiting them at their brownstone when in New York. By slow acquisition, I amassed a complete set of both series of *New Politics*.

To my mind the magazine, always my favorite on the American left, was the great achievement of Julie and Phyllis. The name *New Politics* rings with the spirit of a fresh start, and it was remarkably open to new ideas and newcomers like me. But the quieter function of *New Politics* was to preserve a long-held set of values and oppositional stance on race, war, market, bureaucracy, state, and conventional politics. The magazine's success in mixing principles with discovery, memory with hope, is a tribute to the personal qualities of Phyllis and Julie, as is its virtually unique facilitation of intellectual camaraderie between the left wing of social democracy and the rational wing of revolutionary socialism.

Julie was to me an endless resource, able to break the code of old left pseudonyms and provide perspective on people and controversies long past. I am going to miss that enormously. I was looking forward to presenting him with a copy of a Max Shachtman text I persuaded Verso to publish this spring, sure only of one thing: that his reaction, when he read my introduction, would be honest.

CHRISTOPHER PHELPS is the author of *Young Sidney Hook: Marxism and Pragmatism* (1997) and editor, most recently, of *Max Shachtman's Race and Revolution* (2003).

Julie was grumpy with me once. Was he with you? In my case, it was a special fiftieth anniversary issue of *Monthly Review* that I produced during my time as editorial director at Monthly Review Press. Julie sent me a blistering e-mail. Never once did I include a critical word about Maoism. Well, actually, I replied, in my interview with Harry Magdoff, I referred to the “tremendous cult of personality” and “arbitrary authority” under Mao. What more did he expect in a commemorative issue? Julie never replied, but soon our relations regained their customary warmth.

I’ve turned that exchange over in my head. For a time Julie’s rebuke struck me as a sign not so much of anti-Stalinist principle as of ritualistic reaction. Julie was technically incorrect. I *had* criticized Mao’s authoritarianism. Why fixate on it? Yet from time to time I have thought Julie right, in some larger way. I did not know enough about the Cultural Revolution at the time I produced

that issue of *Monthly Review*, and though I remain mostly content with the issue and continue to see *MR* as a venerable periodical, I would not handle certain passages identically now — especially since, following my departure from *MR*, the process of transformation I sought to accentuate there was cut short by what can only be described as the purge of my friend Ellen Meiksins Wood.

A clever Maoist line, Confucian in its pith, once branded anti-Stalinist radicalism “left in form, right in essence.” If I may be permitted to recast the meaning of that phrase, Julie to me *was* left in form, right in essence — “right” not in the sense of politically conservative, for anti-Stalinism never served as protective cover for a rightward turn in Julie’s life, as it did for so many others, but *essentially correct* in his refusal ever to compromise socialist values or democratic radicalism, even among friends.

ERNEST ERBER

WE ARE GATHERED HERE TODAY to honor the memory of Julie Jacobson, and to send our highest regards and love to Phyllis, Julie’s lifelong mate, co-thinker and co-worker, who survives him.

When the history of the so-called “American Left” during the last half of the 20th century is written, the names of the Jacobsons, Julie and Phyllis, will stand out among those few who responded to the challenge that confronted those who continued to think and work within the tradition of the socialist movement, with a continuing devotion to its perspective.

They saw the challenge as a task of salvaging from the past and rebuilding for the future. Given Julie’s intensive exposure to the theoretical foundations of the Trotskyist movement, he soon recognized that at the root of the programmatic challenge to the post-World War II generations, lay the mixed legacy of the Russian Revolution, generally referred to as the “Russian Question”.

This concept of the challenge to their generation, to which Julie and Phyllis responded, was to identify and to extract from the debris of the Russian Revolution that which might prove necessary, or at least useful, in building anew a socialist movement; specifically, a movement on our native American soil. Recognizing that the building of such a movement had to begin with sorting out ideas — accepting some and rejecting others — Julie opted to begin with the founding of an ideological magazine — *New Politics*.

What of the mixed legacy of the Russian Revolution to reject? What to accept? And how to redesign it to make it compatible with new American surroundings? This is somewhat akin to the task of the scientists and engineers called upon to gather and examine the half-buried debris of the space ship Columbia in order to give answers to such primary questions as — what happened? What went wrong? And then to identify and describe and label those parts that proved sound and workable and usable in designing a superior space ship.

For Julie’s generation and those that followed, a most challenging and formidable task: no less than designing and building the bridge for the generations of the 21st century to carry on in the

ERNEST ERBER *has been active in the radical movement for over sixty years. He joined the Young Peoples Socialist League in the 1930s and was a leading member of the Workers Party in the 1940s. He has written on nationalism, fascism and Stalinism for New Politics.*

struggle for a socialist future for humanity. The volumes of *New Politics*, which Julie and Phyllis leave to new generations as building blocks for that bridge, seem hardly adequate to the task. But they are a beginning; a work in progress. This is the real monument to the memory of what Julie accomplished, with the help and encouragement of Phyllis and that of the-all-too-few others who assumed and carried out tasks in its creation.

To carry on where Julie left off — that is the challenge to the rest of us. Integral to doing this is the realization that there is no such thing as “an end to history” — not as long as the human race survives and its social and economic orders and formations undergo constant challenge and constant change. I sought to glimpse this vision of constant challenge and constant change in verses I composed some fourteen years ago, but never published. In allegorical and metaphorical form I sought to draw upon and set forth the never-ceasing struggle and unending-change within nature as imagery for the social struggles that challenge us today — and will throughout our time here on earth, and for other generations that follow.

I now dedicate these verses to the memory of Julie Jacobson:

TO CHANGE THE LAND

I.

Suddenly, the predictable, seemingly interminable, thrust-and-parry of sea and land gives way to the fierce, ponderous, thunderous onslaught of sea upon land. In ranks of massively towering waves the advancing sea casts itself landward, causing the earth to tremble deep down to its rocky substructure. And even as the advancing tide breaks upon the stubbornly resisting shore, distantly new waves rise and form, swelling as they move shoreward to join the assault. The highest and mightiest roll far inland, seemingly seeking to hold the land in their grip.

And succeeding them, an even more massive incursion that rolls over the vegetation-topped dunes and breaks through age-old protective barriers. But even these, the mightiest of waves, disintegrate upon the land, dissipating as they retreat. In time, the tide ebbs. The sea calms, The age-old thrust-and parry resumes.

II.

I am the land.
I have prevailed.
I am impenetrable, unshakeable, unchangeable, immutable.

III

I am the sea.
You delude yourself, for I have left my mark upon you. I have changed your contours.
I have drained sand from your beaches.
I have created new depths and shallows, new pools and eddies.
I have cut through your barriers and opened new channels.
I have uncovered the soil and new kinds of vegetation will replace the old.
Though you have survived my fiercest onslaughts, you will never be the same again.

IV.

I am the sea, the unchanging sea.
Though I am now again content to play the seemingly interminable game of thrust-and-parry, it will not always remain so. As your contours become decrepit and your ways stodgy, they will become offensive to my presence.
Then shall I again rise in stormy onslaught and impose renewing change upon you.
For I am of the universal dynamic; you of the static. And effecting change is the very rationale of my existence.

SAM FRIEDMAN

I WAS NOT ABLE TO BE at the memorial for Julius Jacobson, but he meant a lot in terms of my intellectual development. To memorialize this, I have written the following poem.

Words that Glowed

I barely knew you,
Julie J,
though I met your magazine
40 years long-gone
your magazine that showed
Marxists could have minds,
not merely whizzing lips spitting pabulum rhetoric
in unhearing faces passing by.

I barely knew you,
Julie J,
though your anthologies illuminated
labor life, labor strife
and the contours of a racist land
to me and my students
in the years when campuses blazed words of fire.

SAM FRIEDMAN contributed to the discussion of the left and Bush's "war on terrorism" in *New Politics*, no. 34.

PETER DRUCKER

I WAS NOT ABLE TO ATTEND THE Julie Jacobson memorial, but I can offer the following recollection. I met Julie in 1992, when I asked for his comments on the manuscript of my biography of Max Shachtman. His comments were, as you might expect, critical. Particularly of my suggestion that the Independent Socialist League had exaggerated the Stalinist threat to the U.S. and Western European labor movements at the end of the 1940s and into the 1950s struck him as mistaken and wrongheaded. He didn't pull any punches either, used no diplomatic formulas, left no weak point in my reasoning unprobed.

But nothing in my encounter with Julie lent any credibility to the accusations made by some people who had left the WP/ISL over the years, or

PETER DRUCKER, author of *Max Shachtman and His Left* (1994), codirects the *International Institute for Research and Education (IIRE)* in Amsterdam.

I barely knew you,
Julie J,
though your shoulders bore a world of truth,
an umbrella against the backsliding and lies
of two decades of despairing
reversion.

I barely knew you,
Julie J,
might not recognize your face
were you to rise from your well-earned sleep,
awakened no doubt by a troubling need
to refute one more wanderer
into the lands of accommodation.

I barely knew you,
Julie J,
and if you were to walk into this room,
I might not know your face, your voice,
until you began to write
your glowing words,
your words on yonder Babylonian wall
again bringing revelation,
bringing wisdom
one last time.

later by some historians who relied on their testimony, that the discussion climate among third camp socialists was intolerant of dissent. Of course Julie was fierce in his discussions with me: I was questioning some of his lifelong positions on issues that were supremely important to him. And yet he and Phyllis treated me from beginning to end as a comrade. They welcomed me into their home, fed me, went out of their way to publish a positive review of *Max Shachtman and His Left*, and began encouraging me to write for *New Politics*.

That combination of tenacious defense of political positions, openness to debate, and human generosity is part of the record of third camp socialism, a record that as far as I can tell none of its critics on the left have improved on. I'm sure that Julie would have wanted *New Politics* to live on after him; but I think that combination of tenacity, openness and generosity is an equally precious legacy, one I hope will be kept alive by Julie's political cothinkers.

CENTER FOR SOCIALIST HISTORY BOARD

THE MEMBERS OF THE Center for Socialist History board of directors will miss Julie Jacobson, who was a long time personal and political friend to several of us.

At a time when most of the generation of 1930s radicals were evolving into Cold War liberals on the way to the dead end of neoconservatism, Julie, Phyllis, and other members of the *New Politics* editorial board did their best to preserve the tradition of Third Camp so-

cialism.

While most of the New Left radical generation reacted to the collapse of the older generation of radicals by rejecting as “Old Left” the political traditions of the labor and socialist movements, Julie, Phyllis and their friends insisted on the importance of examining and learning from those previous experiments.

It is up to us to carry on the job.

IN THE FOLLOWING SECTION, *New Politics* is pleased to present a set of pieces on the recent trials and executions in Cuba and the response of the anti-imperialist left to that wave of repression. The section begins with an interview by three NP editorial board members with Samuel Farber, a Cuban-born writer whose articles on Cuba have appeared in *New Politics* over the years. The interview is followed by two responses to James Petras, whose article denouncing left critics of the Cuban crackdown was released in early May 2003. The first response is by Canadian socialist Zane Boyd, the second is by Joanne Landy, co-director of the Campaign for Peace and Democracy (CPD) and a member of the NP editorial board. The section ends with two CPD statements: "Anti-War, Social Justice and Human Rights Advocates Oppose Repression in Cuba," which was circulated for signatures starting in March 2003, and "Campaign for Peace and Democracy Protests U.S. Actions Against Cuba" issued in June 2003. Taken together, we believe this group of pieces will prove an invaluable resource for the left in the United States and abroad.

Cuba Today: An Interview with Samuel Farber

CONDUCTED BY JOANNE LANDY, THOMAS HARRISON AND STEPHEN R. SHALOM

New Politics: *Let's get some background on conditions inside Cuba. What kinds of political freedoms do the Cuban people have as far as freedom of expression, elections and political parties, independent trade unions and political organizations are concerned?*

Samuel Farber: There are elections in Cuba, but without politics. The regime encourages the appearance of democracy without the substance of it, mainly in the form of the *Poder Popular*, which means "popular power" in English. The *Poder Popular* is a multi-level pseudo-parliament that

brings together representatives from different localities.

One reason I call it a pseudo-parliament is that there is only one legal political party, the Cuban Communist Party, which is also an integral part of the state. It is a one-party state. But the party encourages a small number of people who are not members of the CCP to serve at the lower and sometimes even higher levels of the *Poder Popular*, for example, some Protestant church leaders. The Cuban leadership makes strategic choices of people who are important for them to have in the parliament even though they may not be CCP members. But these people are not allowed to form political parties.

NP: *So there are elections for the Poder Popular?*

SF: Yes, there are elections. Candidates run on officially sanctioned slates. At the lower level there is more contest. But even at the lower level there are no meaningful political choices, because the candidates have to be acceptable to the authorities and because they are not allowed to campaign

SAMUEL FARBER was born and raised in Cuba. He is the author of *Revolution and Reaction in Cuba 1933-1960* (Wesleyan University Press, 1976), *Before Stalinism: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy* (Polity/Verso, 1990) and *Social Decay and Transformation: A View from the Left* (Lexington Books, 2000). He is also a member of the editorial board of the socialist journal *Against the Current*.

JOANNE LANDY, THOMAS HARRISON and STEVE SHALOM are members of the NP editorial board. Transcription by Liz Walsack.

except to present their political biographies to the public. In any case, people are not permitted to organize independent groups or parties.

NP: *If I were nominated for this body as an independent or even as a party member for that matter, and I were to say "I want to use this election as an occasion to say the country needs a totally different attitude towards sugar cane production . . ."*

SF: You wouldn't get on the slate. That's what Oswaldo Payá, a dissident who can be described as a Christian democrat, tried to do. Payá went around collecting signatures, and tried to campaign just like the constitution says he can, but he wasn't allowed to do it. By the way, there is a very good article on Cuba's pseudo-democracy by Francisco Sobrino: "Socialism, Democracy and Cuba Today," *Against the Current*, #94, Sept.-Nov. 2001.

NP: *So what you're saying is that at the lower levels there are contested elections, not just the slate candidates. There can be two candidates, or three or four. But if you try to use that candidacy to express a coherent, alternative opinion and especially to build an organization in favor of that coherent, alternative opinion, you'll be cut out of the political system.*

SF: Right. In the case of Payá the state ignored his signatures, so he was kept off the ballot.

NP: *Are there unofficial political parties in Cuba?*

SF: There is a multiplicity of illegal parties, of course. Literally dozens of them, and they are all illegal.

NP: *What happens to people who form either an illegal political party or a political organization that stands for ideas that are outside the pale?*

SF: Well, Payá himself is deeply involved in the so-called Varela project, which calls for a gradual democratization of Cuba. Until recently the regime by and large tolerated these kinds of reformers, although individual activists would routinely face harassment. Sometimes people were fired from their jobs, that kind of thing.

NP: *But non-violent political dissidents weren't put in jail?*

SF: Some individuals the government regarded as more provocative were given short prison terms, but the kinds of sentences that the government has recently imposed on dozens of dissidents are a throwback to a more heavy-handed policy that

prevailed in the 1960s and 1970s. Generally speaking, since the mid-to-late 1970s there have been far fewer political prisoners, and those prisoners

Even at the lower level there are no meaningful political choices, because the candidates have to be acceptable to the authorities and because they are not allowed to campaign except to present their political biographies to the public.

In any case, people are not permitted to organize independent groups or parties.

have tended to receive lighter sentences.

NP: *And why was that?*

SF: I suppose the government felt more secure. As was also the case in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe over time, the Cuban leadership became increasingly less reliant on executions and long prison sentences to maintain its hold on society.

NP: *In the 1970s and 1980s, the Soviets used psychiatric hospitals as a means of clamping down on dissent.*

SF: There was that in Cuba, too, particularly in the 1960s and 1970s.

NP: *In the final years of the system in Eastern Europe it was exactly as you have described, a liberalization, although not a democratization: a loosening up, with less severe penalties, but without changing the rules of the game, without the party-state losing any of its monopoly on political power. Many people risked jail if they were politically active, but generally not ten or twenty years, but two years, or three years.*

SF: Well, take the issue of traveling. There has been virtually no change in Cuba so far as the right to travel is concerned, at least from the legal point

of view. But the application process has been liberalized in practice over the last 20 to 25 years. It's not that you have any more right to travel than you did before that point, but they are not as strict about excluding people. There was a time when if you were not over 65 years of age it was very difficult to leave Cuba to go anywhere at all. They still have that power, but do not exercise it to the same harsh degree as before.

NP: *Are there any independent unions in Cuba, underground or above ground?*

SF: The regime does not permit independent trade union activity of any kind. There are unofficial groups, such as a small affiliate of the Latin American Christian unions, but I am not aware of any concrete activities they are engaging in. Many years ago, in the Port of Havana, people had been elected to union positions and some of these people were opposition-minded, but they were repressed.

But we also have to keep in mind that the context for labor union activities in Cuba is very peculiar, because what many Cuban workers want more than anything else is to get a job in a joint venture: whether in tourism, or the telephone company, or what have you; something that is a joint venture, with a foreign investor, where there is a more solid situation, in addition to the fact that people who work for foreign investors, even though they are officially paid in pesos, often get supplementary payments in dollars under the table. Sometimes there are blackouts so you can't work because there is no energy or the inputs are missing. This is more likely to happen in the state sector. Therefore, a lot of the work in the state sector is make-work because otherwise there wouldn't be enough jobs. In this kind of environment, access to dollars and hard currency is the main issue, not working conditions. By the way, foreign investors pay the Cuban state in dollars, and then the state pays the workers in pesos. However, sometimes the state pays part of the salary in dollars, and of course there is tipping in hotels and other tourist places.

NP: *Are there official, government-controlled unions?*

SF: Yes, of course.

NP: *Are there strikes?*

SF: Not to my knowledge. The purpose of the official unions is to work with the state in negoti-

ating wage agreements as well as running certain welfare and leisure activities. Fundamentally, these unions are no different from company unions in the capitalist countries.

NP: *What about grievances on the job? Does the union ever protect or stick up for workers who were suspended?*

SF: The emphasis is not on the job issue, the emphasis is on wages and benefits. The union's job is as the "negotiator," but, of course, not as an independent negotiator. From that point of view, I think that at the lower level, *Poder Popular* has a little more credibility than the unions do, because at the lower level *Poder Popular* deals with administrative and local service issues with some flexibility. So if people are looking to official institutions, they are looking more to *Poder Popular* than to the unions.

Let me tell you a story to illustrate the kinds of grievances people have. One of my professional friends in Cuba has a house, even though it is very decayed. In the past few years there have been some improvements in the phone system due to an influx of Italian investment. Before that, new phones were difficult to come by. But this upgrade meant that new cables and poles had to be put up. The phone company came and put a telephone pole right in the middle of my friend's garage entrance, screwing up his garage. There was nothing he could do about it; he got stuck with it. That's the kind of thing that makes people angry — arbitrary, sheer administrative recklessness and carelessness. The authorities did not give a fig so they put a telephone pole right in the middle of his garage entrance, and now he doesn't have a place to put his very ancient and barely functioning car anymore.

Freedom of the Press

NP: *What are the opportunities to publish leaflets, newsletters, magazines, newspapers, and so on?*

SF: The Catholic Church is a significant but not a major publisher. For example, in western Cuba it publishes a magazine called *Vitral*. And the archbishopric of Havana issues a regular newsletter. So there are Catholic publications in Cuba. However, the Catholic Church hierarchy in Cuba has been very cautious in testing the limits of official tolerance. In general, in the Spanish-speak-

ing Caribbean, Catholicism has been weakly implanted and the Catholic Church in Cuba was historically heavily white, urban, and middle class. In 1957, a study was done by the Catholic Association of the University of Havana and they found that when they asked rural people “Who do you look for to help you with your problems as a peasant?” overwhelmingly the answer was “the government,” while 3 percent said the Catholic Church and 4.3 percent said the Masons. More Cuban rural people looked to the Masons than to the Catholic Church! So partly for this reason the Catholic Church is very cautious, but nevertheless it is the only significant independent publisher in Cuba.

By the way, one of the reasons that the Catholic Church has become a little more open in its activities is because in 1991 the Fourth Congress of the Communist Party eliminated its prohibition on religious people joining the Party. This ended up having a significant impact on the practicing of religion — every kind of religion — Catholicism, Afro-Cuban religions, Protestantism, even Judaism. All of a sudden Jews came out of the woodwork and started going to the synagogues in Havana because before they didn’t want to get into trouble, not because they were Jews, but because of religion. All religions benefited from this process of liberalization.

NP: *What if I were an individual citizen and I wanted to mimeograph a newsletter that was critical of a particular government policy?*

SF: Number one, it would be very difficult to get the facilities to do that. And number two, you would get into trouble for independent, non-sanctioned publishing activities. I gather that people who are not particularly Catholic but have some connection to the Catholic Church try to publish critical stuff in *Vitral* or one of those publications of the Church that are distributed typically at masses and other religious ceremonies.

NP: *Are individuals in Cuba allowed to own a mimeograph machine, for example?*

SF: There is state control of printing and reproduction facilities of that type. However, I know that computers, for example, can be acquired at stores that accept dollars. But right off the bat that places computers as well as paper and other supplies in the hard-to-obtain category. Some people

typically use email through their workplaces, however. I email to people in Cuba, and, because my correspondents assume that there is monitoring, I am very careful about what I send to people since I don’t want to get them into trouble. In reality, if you are an oppositionist and you want to get published, you would probably try to use the facilities of the Catholic Church. If you are not so much in the political opposition, but you want to issue some cultural and non-political social criticism, you would try to get involved with *La Gaceta de Cuba*, the official organ of the UNEAC — the official artists and writers union or *Temas*, which is put out by a research center. It is possible to get some of your material in there, provided it is not a political challenge to the regime. However, both of these are elite journals read almost exclusively by social scientists, and some artists and intellectuals.

NP: *But what if a bunch a people get together and pool their money and get the dollars so they can buy a computer?*

SF: People can do that; I have sent money to friends in Cuba to help them buy a second-hand monitor. The question is, what do you do with a computer once you have one? The fact of the matter is that the independent journalists in Cuba who have been getting arrested were not primarily publishing stuff locally; they were sending their writings to the *Miami Herald*. And that’s what got them into trouble.

NP: *They sent it to the Herald because they wouldn’t even try to publish something in Cuba? Is that what you’re saying?*

SF: Right, so they got into the *Herald* with the hopes that people in Cuba, or their relatives, would hear about it. The *Herald* also pays for contributions and that is a factor that cannot be ignored. It goes without saying that the *Herald* attracts for the most part those independent journalists whose politics are compatible with the right wing line of that newspaper. Other journalists and writers who are more liberal or social democratic will send their material to *El Pais*, the Spanish newspaper close to the Spanish Socialist Party, or to other publications in Spain and Latin America. But I think it’s important to keep in mind the fact that at this point *all* the dissident groups, regardless of their

political perspective, are quite small and marginal in Cuba today.

NP: *My assumption is that the government justifies these restrictions by saying "Well, we have free expression. You can just publish in one of the official publications."*

SF: Right.

The purpose of the official unions is to work with the state in negotiating wage agreements as well as running certain welfare and leisure activities. Fundamentally, these unions are no different from company unions in the capitalist countries.

NP: *One of the questions that came up in the context of the current wave of arrests was the role of the U.S. special envoy, James Cason, who doled out money for people to buy computers and fax machines and so on. We'd like to understand the specific barriers that people are up against when they try to acquire these items themselves. Are the obstacles primarily financial, legal, harassment, or what?*

SF: There is harassment, and there are also financial obstacles. People who are identified with the opposition get searched and in the process of the searches things get confiscated. It is a messy reality.

NP: *But it's not 100 percent impossible for people who are oppositionists to get certain kinds of equipment themselves, so it would be possible for people to get it without taking it from Cason?*

SF: Yes, but it would be difficult.

NP: *Are you saying that it would be a big hassle, so it's easier to take U.S. government funds, especially if you don't have any principled objections to it?*

SF: Exactly, and that's the key. The reality is that the center of gravity of the opposition, or dissi-

dents, or whatever you want to call them, in Cuba is center-right, politically speaking. That's the reality; I don't think we should fool around about that. At best you have people who are moderately left, and that's as far as it goes. For example, Elizardo Sanchez is a moderate social democrat, and Oswaldo Payá is a Christian democrat. These are among the more moderate elements of the opposition. Across the board, they all assume that the market is a force of nature. It's not even discussed, it's taken for granted.

NP: *Do any of them have principled objections to taking help from the U.S.?*

SF: Well, Payá was recently quoted in the *New York Times* to the effect that he was not in favor of taking the U.S. government's money. But it was not clear whether he was raising a tactical or a principled objection. In the past, Elizardo Sanchez has made statements similar to those recently made by Payá.

NP: *But some people from Payá's Varela Project were arrested and accused of having taken things from the U.S.*

SF: And I suspect some of them did. But that does not make them spies or the equivalent of foreign registered agents any more than Communists in Western countries were spies or the same as registered agents of the Soviet Union when they accepted help from the USSR. The efforts of the Varela Project, for example, are directed toward peacefully demanding that *Poder Popular* provides the forum for popular grievances that it is supposed to. Payá's position is "OK, they have a set of laws in the constitution, I'm going to demand my rights within that constitution, and within the laws." This has gotten him in trouble with some right-wingers in Miami who say, "How can you acknowledge the Cuban constitution!" But that's his strategy. But make no mistake. Payá is also pro-market and the wording of the Varela Project's proposed amendments to the Cuban constitution leaves the door wide open for any kind of business investment in that country, and not just small business.

NP: *Are there any socialists in Cuba?*

SF: There are socialists like Haroldo Dilla, who is in the Dominican Republic now, in exile. There are a handful of politically active Cuban exiles in

North America who call themselves social democrats. There are even people affiliated with the government who are in the process of searching for a solution, who may end up with genuinely socialist politics. Communism, both within the countries where it holds sway and outside of them, appeals for support on the basis of its claim to represent socialist aspirations, the ideals of the Enlightenment, and, more broadly, democratic values. Though we know that's not what Communist society is actually like, there

are people both in and out of the CP structures who take these claims seriously. This is an important difference between Communism and other authoritarian or totalitarian societies. In Cuba, this explains why some people connected to the government, particularly at middle and lower levels, may come to adopt genuinely socialist politics as the regime begins to face greater and greater problems — but unfortunately I suspect it'll be older people, since at least right now the young seem more entranced by the capitalist illusion.

NP: *There are no socialist groupings?*

SF: No, not to my knowledge. But there are individuals here and there, individual Trotskyists, for example.

NP: *Again this is reminiscent of the process in Eastern Europe. When opposition movements first emerged, with the East German workers' uprising in 1953, and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, socialist ideas and values were a critically important part of the mix. By the end of the century the center of gravity had shifted strongly both in favor of markets and in favor of the U.S. Part of the reason for this shift was that the international left was unfortunately not generally supportive of opposition movements under Soviet-style Communism. Yes, there are the various pressures coming from the world economy and from Western governments, but the left's failure to support political dissidents in places like Eastern Europe and Cuba was also an important element in delivering those East-bloc dissidents into the arms of the United States.*

The reality is that the center of gravity of the opposition in Cuba is center-right, politically speaking. That's the reality; I don't think we should fool around about that.

SF: I think that in 2003 by far the single most important element is the overwhelming predominance of U.S. power and the market. However, there is no question that the majority of the inter-

national left's identification with the Cuban government makes it unfortunately less likely that younger opponents of the Cuban government will identify with the left. And not only that, but a great majority of leftists of one kind or another identified the collapse of the Soviet Union with the collapse

of socialism, period. This echoed itself in a peculiar sort of way in the Cuban government itself, because ever since the Special Period which is the period since the fall of the Soviet Union . . .

NP: *Special Period?*

SF: That's what they call it, the Special Period. The full name is the Special Period in Time of Peace. The Special Period began in 1990, after the collapse of the Soviet bloc, and the government's ideological emphasis became much more heavily nationalist than "socialist," no question about it. There's some talk about socialism, there's talk about Marxism, but the ideological center of gravity has moved very dramatically toward left-wing nationalism.

NP: *There was a Cuban slogan "within the revolution everything, outside the revolution nothing," saying that you can have free speech as long as you stay within the basic parameters . . .*

SF: But that was in 1961, and that was an excuse to justify the suppression of *Lunes de Revolucion*, the weekly literary supplement of *Revolucion*, the main revolutionary newspaper. This supplement was an excellent, free wheeling leftist journal publishing just about everybody on the international left.

NP: *OK, but today, what if someone said "I support the revolution, I support socialism, here's why we need to democratize it." Would that person have any more leeway than these right-of-center dissidents?*

SF: Well, let's look at the case of Haroldo Dilla,

who is now in the Dominican Republic. Dilla was part of the Center for the Study of Americas, a Communist Party think tank. The Center was not part of a university, and so he was not a professor, he was a researcher. As it happens, he was one of the more important researchers there. Some other people in that think-tank, like the economist Julio Carranza, one of the most important Cuban economists, began to play around with notions of market socialism, while not challenging Castro in any way whatsoever. Eventually he got into trouble, and there was concern that he and other members of the Center might even go to prison, but they didn't. The Center was dissolved and the researchers were spread out to other institutions. The hard-line party faction took over the Center's facilities, and it was revived but with a totally different staff. The people who were independent thinkers were dispersed. Haroldo stuck to his guns and what particularly got him into big trouble was that he advocated a multi-party system. I quoted him in an article for *New Politics* ("Cuba Today and Prospects For Change," Summer 2000). After that they expelled him from the Cuban Communist Party, and ruled that he could not leave Cuba for a period of no fewer than five years. But he was able to hustle out of that and leave Cuba. I don't know how he managed to leave. By the way, under Cuban practice the Party can restrict the movement of at least present or expelled party members. They don't even have to take the trouble to go through the judicial process.

NP: *What is the nature of the Cuban regime? If it's not socialist, what is it?*

SF: It's certainly not a socialist society because the working class and the rest of the population do not have democratic control over decision-making. It's one variety of what and I and others call "bureaucratic collectivism." Bureaucratic collectivist societies, where a ruling class controls property politically through its control of an undemocratic state rather than individually or privately, differ from each other, but share a basic character — just as capitalist countries vary among themselves: Sweden is not Japan is not the United States.

NP: *Is there rough economic equality in Cuba?*

SF: In comparison to what? In comparison to the

extremes of wealth and poverty in a number of Latin American countries, yes, there is comparative economic equality. But that doesn't mean that there are not significant and important inequalities in Cuba, within the context of the distribution of the available resources in the country. Up until recently privilege has been largely monopolized by the party bureaucracy. Today, with the growing role of semi-public, semi-private functionaries in the joint venture sector, and possibly even some private entrepreneurs, we see the addition of new privileged groups.

NP: *What is the relationship of today's Castro government to the original revolution?*

SF: The original revolution was a popular democratic revolution, which later evolved into a bureaucratic and undemocratic form. I personally would have wanted Cuba to go beyond the reform program of the original revolution, but in the direction of deepening democracy to extend popular control over the economy as well as the political sphere, not in the direction of dictatorship, as unfortunately happened.

Current U.S. Policy

NP: *Could you say something about current trends in U.S. policy toward Cuba?*

SF: First of all, it should be clear that the U.S. government continues to see Cuba as an obstacle to its imperialist control of the western hemisphere, Washington's "backyard." However, it is also true that since the collapse of the USSR, Cuba has lost a great deal of its importance in the eyes of the U.S. empire. In order to describe these new conditions, some time ago I used the analogy of the "rotten fruit falling," meaning that the U.S. intention was to maintain the blockade and let the regime fall under those pressures. Now and then they also like to shake up the tree to hasten the fruit falling. Today we might be witnessing one of those situations. An earlier example of this tree shaking was the Helms-Burton bill, approved into law in 1996, which greatly strengthened the blockade. The current administration has given a lot of thought to ways of tightening the blockade, but the measures they are contemplating are double-edged. One of the most powerful measures would be to severely restrict the remittances that Cubans in the U.S. can send to the island. It is

estimated that approximately \$800 million a year is sent by Cubans abroad to their relatives in Cuba. A huge bulk of that comes from the United States. Cubans in other countries also send money — Spain, Venezuela, Mexico, and so on — but the overwhelming majority of that money comes from the United States.

NP: *How significant is \$800 million?*

SF: It is very significant. It is probably the second largest source of revenue for Cuba after tourism

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and probably as important as sugar, maybe even more so, because the sugar industry has been in crisis over the last several years. About a year or two ago the government shut down around a third of the sugar mills because the price of sugar, which had been oscillating between six and eight cents a pound, was not enough even to pay for the cost of production. Remittances from abroad and tourism are critical to the national economy. Now the Bush administration may impose other restrictions. For example, they can make it very difficult for non-Cubans to travel to Cuba. For the time being, any professional association — doctors, professors, nurses, librarians, architects, and so on — can organize a trip to Cuba if it relates to the conduct of professional business. Bush is likely to stop all of that and restrict traveling only to Cubans going to Cuba under the heading of humanitarian reasons.

Stopping non-Cuban visits to Cuba poses minimal political cost to the Bush administration. The more difficult and also more significant thing that they can do is restrict the flow of remittances. But this is tricky because the Cubans in the U.S. who holler and scream loudest about overthrowing the Cuban government right now are some of the same people who actually send money to relatives in Cuba. Bush may still decide to cut remittances and pay the political cost; I'm not saying

he won't, but we don't know that.

NP: *Would you say that there is a battle going on within the administration over Cuba that is analogous to the debates that have taken place about Iraq and Iran? That within a generally reactionary framework there is a more bellicose faction and a more moderate faction?*

SF: Absolutely. These tensions are also found within the Cuban-American community. Not too far back a right-wing faction split from the already right-wing Cuban-American National Foundation (CANF). The group that left was upset about what they considered a softening up on the part of CANF. So, I suspect there is a tug of war between the various and sundry right-wing groups. They are all reactionary and pro-imperialist, I might add, but nonetheless, they have tactical differences of significance when it comes to this issue. A major difference between the Middle East and Cuba is that Cuba, notwithstanding all the recent flak, has been a decidedly lower priority for U.S. foreign policy since the early 1990s.

NP: *Are the members of the administration who are most hawkish on Iraq, Iran, Syria, and North Korea the same ones who favor a more aggressive posture towards Cuba?*

SF: Yes, but with two provisos: one of them is that I don't think that Wolfowitz and company are as invested in the issue of Cuba as they are in the Middle East, in part because of Israel and in part for a variety of other reasons. Another complication is the increasing interest on the part of very often right-wing Midwestern farm state Republicans in trading with Cuba. It is interesting that when Ashcroft was a senator from Missouri, before he lost his seat and was nominated Attorney General, he was careful about not going overboard on the issue of the Cuban blockade because he had a business constituency in Missouri that was very eager to sell its products there. He was still right-wing, obviously, but within that context, he tried to tone things down because of the pressures he was getting from big agriculture — we're talking Archer Daniels Midland, and other major players in agribusiness. Many of these big companies have already done business with Cuba, under the new legislation which allows so-called humanitarian trade. When the Cubans pay in cash,

as they have been doing in the last couple of years, they are able to purchase grains and other foods grown and processed in the U.S. There is no limit to that, provided it is paid in cash. Incidentally, this has created a certain amount of resentment among the Europeans because they've been trading with Cuba all along.

NP: *Is there pressure from the Republican business constituency to lift the embargo altogether and allow free trade?*

SF: The House recently approved a bill that would have eliminated the travel ban to Cuba. It would not have undermined the entire blockade, but it would have made a huge dent in it by facilitating tourism. The bill did not reach the Senate, but it passed the House by a substantial majority, including an important number of Midwestern Republicans. Tourism is of course Cuba's number one industry, so this would have opened a big hole.

NP: *Let me put the question about the Bush administration in a more general way. Do you think we should rule out the possibility that this administration might decide to impose regime change on Cuba?*

SF: Well, as we saw from Iraq nothing is impossible, and everything is possible. I think what is on the agenda right now, though, is a tightening of the blockade, which is bad enough. The canceling of remittances to Cuba, if they get to that point, would be a major blow to the Cuban economy and to ordinary Cubans. Maybe the Bush administration is ready and willing to pay the political price. By the way, that doesn't mean an automatic end of remittances; but remittances would become much more expensive because then you'd have to go through third countries. That is, it would be a bonanza for the banks in the Bahamas and Cancun and other nearby places, but it would reduce the flow of money into Cuba. That is what is on the actual agenda for at least the near future. Beyond that anything is possible.

There is, however, another form of pressure, which is to make it more difficult for Cubans to get visas to come to the U.S. In 1994, an agreement was made at the time of the last *balseros*, the people who come from Cuba to the U.S. on little rubber tubes. After the last *balsero* crisis in 1994, an immigration agreement was signed by the United States and Cuba by which the United

States agreed to issue 20,000 visas a year. They are currently issuing far fewer visas than the agreement stipulates, possibly as a way of putting pressure on the Cuban government, but also because the U.S. has gotten very reactionary on the general issue of visas since September 11. So that is another element in the picture.

I find it very doubtful that the Bush administration would like to provoke another Mariel crisis — the exodus to Florida of approximately 125,000 Cubans in the spring of 1980. It is very possible and in fact quite likely, however, that they want to increase tensions inside Cuba in order to accelerate the collapse of the government from within — through a military coup, particularly if Castro were to die of natural causes, to give an example.

NP: *Do most visas go to those with relatives in the U.S.?*

SF: Most. But some of them come through something called the visa lottery. That is, people who are unrelated to Cubans living in the U.S. can apply to be put into this lottery. The visa lottery has helped many people get to the U.S. Far more applicants of course enter the lottery than the number of visas given this way, which altogether between relatives and non-relatives is supposed to be 20,000. It's not a hell of a lot of people, but many fewer than that are being allowed in right now.

NP: *Why aren't the Cuban-American groups in Miami making a fuss about this?*

SF: The really hardcore right-wingers are happy to see various kinds of restrictions imposed, even at the cost of hurting ordinary Cubans. Some of them believe that limiting the number of visas, for example, or cutting off the flow of remittances, are useful tools to put pressure and eventually get rid of the Cuban government.

NP: *But the U.S. is currently in violation of an agreement that it previously reached?*

SF: Yes, in 1994. This is also when the so-called Wet/Dry policy was put into effect. Under the 1966 Cuban Adjustment Act, if a Cuban makes it to American territory he or she is eligible to apply for asylum. Under the 1994 Migration Agreement, if they are stopped at sea they are returned to Cuba, though if they make it to U.S.

soil they are still let in. Under both Clinton and Bush Junior hundreds and hundreds of Cuban refugees have been sent back to Cuba because they didn't make it to the U.S. mainland.

The Wet/Dry Policy

NP: *The term Wet/Dry refers to whether you hit land or whether you hit water. Turning back those in the water is official U.S. policy?*

SF: Yes, it has been so since 1994. Once the Cuban-Americans in Miami organized a huge demonstration because the Coast Guard was literally hitting people within sight of the beach.

NP: *Hitting?*

SF: Actually beating people to keep them from making it to dry land. There is a contradiction at the heart of U.S. policy toward Cuban refugees. On the one hand, the U.S. government wants to use people who seek asylum as a political tool; on the other hand, they don't want mass migration. I doubt very much that even the most right-wing folks in the U.S. government want a repeat of what took place in 1980, when 125,000 Cubans came to the U.S. within a period of a few months.

NP: *But the Cuban government would probably like to get rid of some people as a safety valve, and so by not letting them do that it helps destabilize the regime.*

SF: It certainly builds more pressure inside the country against the government, no question about it.

NP: *On the other hand, Cubans in Florida have relatives they'd like to get out of Cuba.*

SF: Exactly. This is where there are contradictory pressures on both sides, if you will. And that's why the issue for Bush of stopping remittances is a tricky one and why there are divided opinions within the administration, though none of them are motivated by any love for the Cuban government, obviously. Here is also a contradiction between the individual level and the collective level. Individuals are thinking about their relatives; at the collective level, they are thinking about getting rid of Castro. They don't want to do that at the expense of having their relatives suffer. Somebody else's relatives, that's OK, but not theirs.

NP: *I understand that this Wet/Dry policy had some bearing on the case of some accused or actual hijack-*

ers who made it to Florida and have not been imprisoned; the Cuban government has pointed to this as proof that U.S. policy promotes hijacking. Could you comment on this?

SF: Shortly after the recent crackdown in Cuba with the executions and arrests and so on, James Cason went on Cuban television to say that people should not try to go on their own to the U.S. and that they would be arrested and so on. The Cuban government gave him time on Cuban TV to make this announcement. The big contrast here, of course, is between the treatment of Haitians who come to Miami, who are treated like dirt, and the treatment of Cubans.

Also, on the Cuban side there is another contradiction, in that the government is happy to let 20,000 people leave each year as a safety valve but on the other hand there is no right to travel in Cuba. That is, it doesn't just take a U.S. visa to get out of Cuba. Your exit has to be approved by the Cuban government. At least during the last decade, the government has eventually granted permission in most cases, but not always.

NP: *So you're saying that under the Wet/Dry policy, as long as you make it to dry land — even if you are a hijacker and have broken all kinds of international laws — you are granted asylum. And that this kind of deal is not offered to people coming from other places, of course, such as Haiti.*

SF: Right. Obviously there is a favoritism here.

NP: *Do you think the U.S. is encouraging, or at least condoning, hijacking?*

SF: Not officially. But there are other elements to the story. For example, state and federal courts in Florida tend to be lenient toward hijackers from Cuba as well as opponents of the Cuban regime who use violence. There is a definite bias in the Florida courts, and a tendency to go very easy on people who make it to the U.S. On the other hand, the U.S. government does not want to encourage tens of thousands of Cubans to suddenly enter the United States. They don't mind playing up individual attempts to escape but they don't want another mass exodus into the country.

NP: *There are some people on the left who say there is a more or less imminent threat of a U.S. invasion of Cuba. Would you dismiss that?*

SF: I don't think that's on the immediate agenda.

As a longer range possibility, as I said before, anything is possible. In terms of the current plans, I have seen nothing to indicate that is the case, except for pronouncements of a clear electoral, demagogic, character, such as from Jeb Bush in Florida.

NP: *They can only invade so many countries at the same time.*

SF: The principal issue in this context is not how many wars they can fight at the same time, the issue is their general perspective and the significance of any particular country for their world imperial plans. Proximity plays a role here in that they do not want to promote a massive refugee crisis in Florida.

NP: *But to push the argument, this administration seems extraordinarily interested in achieving a "demonstration effect" through the projection of military power in different areas of the world. In the case of Latin America, we have seen new left-leaning governments emerge, in countries like Venezuela and Brazil, and the U.S. government could conceivably go to war with the Cubans to demonstrate their reach and power. Or is it that the administration believes it can control these left-wing governments successfully using other, largely economic means? That is, why should they resort to military invasion of Cuba when the IMF seems to be all they need to keep Latin American governments in line?*

SF: Look, we have to examine the evidence. There is a large amount of evidence that indicates that the groundwork for an invasion of Iraq was laid over the past few years and especially since September 11. I am thinking in particular of the strategic thinking pushed by the likes of Wolfowitz, Perle, and company. It's not like people were predicting the invasion of Iraq out of thin air; there was a solid documentary record indicating that was exactly what they were going to do. This was not a deductive exercise. I haven't seen evidence of the same kind indicating that Cuba is next in line.

But, I think we cannot minimize the fact that the measures the Bush people *are* contemplating are very harmful. Consider that there is a serious tourism crisis throughout the world. The combination of SARS in Asia, a world recession, war in Iraq, and 9-11: all of this has led to a serious crisis

in tourism. In the case of Cuba, the events of September 11 resulted in something like a 5 percent drop in tourism, and these recent U.S. actions are potentially more threatening to the Cuban economy. If the U.S. government took the step of severely cutting remittances, combined with the decline in the tourist trade, coming, in the case of Cuba, primarily from countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain, and Canada, that would be a very se-

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rious blow to the Cuban economy.

There is a tendency for the pro-Cuba North American left to dismiss the measures the Bush administration is now likely to take as somehow unimportant, especially in contrast to an actual invasion. I think that there is a misunderstanding of just what hitting remittances to Cuba would mean. It's not just a minor item on the agenda; it is very serious stuff. Somehow these things tend to be dismissed as if the only real thing that counts is an invasion.

I also think the whole thing about an imminent invasion was manufactured by the Cuban government as a response to the larger than usual international left-wing protests against the executions and long imprisonment terms that were recently imposed against dozens of dissidents. The scale of these protests surprised me and I think it surprised the Cuban government as well. In reaction to this controversy the writer Gabriel García Márquez declared that people who criticized the Cuban government were helping to justify a U.S. invasion. In this he was echoing the position of the Cuban government. Clearly the government would like the international left to either give it unqualified support or shut up.

Again, the measures that are being contemplated are potentially devastating to the Cuban economy. For people such as myself in the U.S.

and elsewhere who are against imperialism and against violating the rights of national self-determination in Cuba and elsewhere this is the central actionable issue at hand.

NP: *Could you say a little more about how the Europeans were upset about the U.S. policy of hard currency for humanitarian aid?*

SF: In its broader meaning the issue is whether Cuba is using its scarce hard currency reserves to buy food from the United States and not from the Europeans, who have been trading with the Cuban government for many years. Behind that there lies another concern, which is what will happen after the blockade, when there is likely to be a surge of U.S. investment into the country.

NP: *If the U.S. announced tomorrow it was totally lifting the blockade, that would mean fewer sales for European companies and that's just a matter of their market being cut into.*

SF: Right.

NP: *Is that all this is about?*

SF: There is the question of the limited hard currency the government currently has available — dollars, British pounds, Euros, and so on — which is now being used to buy U.S.-made farm and food products. There has been some concern in Europe along the lines of “Hey, we’ve been your loyal customers for all this time. Are you forgetting about us?” I’m not going to exaggerate, it’s not a huge crisis — it’s an undercurrent. Now, the fact is that the Europeans have heavily invested in Cuba. There are a number of joint ventures, often with Spanish capital. The Italians are very heavily involved in the telephone system in Cuba. The Canadians are very heavily invested in nickel; Cuba is one of the main producers of nickel in the world so the Canadians have the market on that. Israel has significant investment in Cuban citrus production. They have the biggest citrus plantation in the world in central Cuba — the citrus plantation is a joint venture between Israeli capital and the Cuban government. In the long

run there is potential tension between European capital and U.S. capital.

NP: *Could you say a little about the “Cuban Five”?*

SF: Yes. The Helms-Burton Act of the mid-1990s severely strengthened the embargo of Cuba, which had been somewhat liberalized in the late 1970s. It passed because President Clinton, who had originally said he would veto the bill, decided that because of Cuba’s shooting down the Brothers to the

Rescue plane over the strait of Florida in 1996 he would sign the bill.

The Brothers to the Rescue is a right-wing group that has given up armed combat in favor of the propaganda war. By 1996 they had already flown at least one or two unarmed missions over Cuban airspace, dropping leaflets over Havana. In this particular instance they were shot down as they were going towards Cuba, but whether they were over Cuban waters or international waters is in dispute. Following this incident, five Cuban security agents in Miami were accused of providing information to the Cuban government that led to the shooting down of the plane. The Cuban government had apparently infiltrated Brothers to the Rescue, as they had also done inside Cuba with certain opposition groups. The security agents were tried in federal court in Miami and were given heavy sentences. The case is currently under appeal in Atlanta and the appeal court hasn’t yet determined whether due process was violated or not. The charge was not spying as such, but spying leading to the shooting down of this plane and the killing of the two people who were on the plane.

There was another spying case involving a Puerto Rican woman named Ana Belen Montes. She was a functionary at one of the U.S. government security agencies in Washington and she had been providing information to the Cuban government. After some plea bargaining, she was also given a heavy sentence, but the Cuban government has not said a word about it. People in Cuba

don't know anything about this case and the government has not yet released any information about her.

NP: *She was a spy in the traditional sense?*

SF: Well, the five security agents were spies too, but against the Cuban right wing in Miami rather than the U.S. government as such. Cuba has maintained a spy network for many years, as you would expect. As a matter of fact there is a whole literary genre in Cuban literature about this kind of story, some of them based on true experience, some of them fiction, based on the actions of Cuban agents in Miami. On the one hand, the five were carrying out activities that could be considered legitimate from the point of view of Cuban self determination against aggression directly or indirectly inspired by the U.S. government. On the other hand, they are also agents of Cuban state repression. You can be sure that they would also have informed on other Cuban dissidents in Florida even if these had not been right-wing and pro-imperialist. There are also other issues that are relevant here such as whether the five agents of Cuban state security could have gotten anything like a fair trial in Miami.

Liberalization Without Democratization

NP: *What has brought about the partial liberalization of the Cuban system in recent years?*

SF: The economic crisis of the nineties forced the government to ease up, both politically and economically. Obviously there were economic problems since the early 1980s. In the mid 1980s Cuba suspended payments on its foreign debt. This was before the Soviet Union told the Cuban government that they were not willing to pour scarce resources into the Cuban economy by means of the so-called subsidies.

NP: *Why do you say "so-called"?*

SF: So-called because who establishes the "true" value of a particular commodity in the capitalist world market? How is this possible? All these things can be put in quotes. In a world dominated by the capitalist marketplace, what is the true value of anything? The world market is not a natural phenomenon, but rather it is a social arrangement based on objective realities — the law of value and all its implications. It is a very powerful and crush-

ing arrangement, but still a social arrangement for which there is a potential alternative social arrangement — i.e., a democratic and international socialism. In any event, there were problems even before Gorbachev and during the early 1990s, in the Special Period, there was a major crisis in the Cuban economy which severely hit the mass of the population, particularly in the years 1992 to 1994.

When I was in Cuba in January of 2000, I was surprised by the degree to which that particular two-year period had impacted the collective consciousness of the Cuban population, regardless of point of view. I spoke to people of diverse political viewpoints, ranging from strong supporters of the regime to strong opponents of it. Everyone referred back to what they had gone through from 1992 to 1994, in terms of drastic shortages, health problems, hunger, and so on.

It was during this period that the Cuban government encouraged or at least permitted certain forms of market activity. Holding dollars, for example, was made legal in Cuba in 1993. In order to wipe out the black market the Cuban government simply began to pay whatever the market said pesos were worth and the last figure I heard was something like 20 or 22 pesos to the dollar. That has fluctuated a little bit, but usually it has been in that range. The government allowed some kinds of small private enterprises, including little family restaurants and private farms. Once a private farmer has fulfilled his quota to the state he can sell the remainder under market conditions with certain government restrictions. On the one hand, this helped to improve the consumer goods situation, particularly for people who had access to dollars, because a lot of this was sold in dollars. Anywhere from 40 to 60 percent of the Cuban population has some access to dollars — meaning that a sizable number of people don't, which has fostered greater levels of economic and social inequality.

NP: *Presumably the people who have access to dollars are mostly people who receive remittances, as well as people who work in the tourism industry.*

SF: Remittances, as I've indicated, are very important. And if you work with tourists then you have a certain access to dollars in that even if your salary is in pesos your tips are likely to be in dol-

lars or pounds or whatever. And of course taxi drivers often expect to be paid in foreign currency. I found tremendous disaffection, which is at least partially based on material factors, among many academics and professionals, because these people are less likely to have contact with the tourist industry and are therefore less likely to see dollars. This is a source of continuing discontent.

There are millions of Black people in Cuba, although nobody knows for sure how you define Black in Cuba. But the rule of thumb is that about half the population is in some sense or another Black. Black people in Cuba are much less likely to have access to dollars than other people do. There is racial discrimination in who gets hired in the tourism industry. There is a tendency to hire people with a “good appearance” who, because of the abiding impact of racism are much more likely to be white. This has created a lot of stresses in Cuban society. So the 1990s was a period when new social tensions and lines of demarcation developed inside Cuban society.

It is also possible to argue that a certain degree of liberalization was introduced in the 1990s in part because the government no longer had command of the resources to maintain its strict surveillance mechanisms. By the mid 1990s, for example, there were many districts in Havana where the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution, the CDRs, had effectively stopped functioning.

NP: *Those are the neighborhood . . .*

SF: The neighborhood watch groups. But these didn't exist anymore because people were too busy trying to earn dollars, working two or three jobs, and so on. I don't know the full story, but clearly the government's system of surveillance has deteriorated.

NP: *Isn't this largely an issue of morale? If people had more enthusiasm for the regime then they would be more likely to participate in these sorts of officially sponsored monitoring groups.*

SF: Absolutely. At the same time there has been a certain liberalization — not democratization — in the intellectual, artistic, and academic worlds. A number of specialized intellectual journals in Cuba are relatively more free-ranging. Provided they don't talk about Fidel Castro or criticize or

oppose the government, they can get away with a lot more than they used to get away with.

NP: *Like what?*

SF: For example, *Temas*, which is one of the more important magazines, recently had an issue that included a wide-ranging panel discussion on the question of the marginalized people in Havana. Now they don't address systemic issues in that discussion, of course, but just discussing the subject matter at all is a new thing.

NP: *This is reminiscent of what went on in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s where sociologists were allowed to examine the seamier sides of society for the first time since the inception of Communism in the country.*

SF: I've been subscribing to *Granma*, the Communist Party daily newspaper. Ever since 1990, I've been getting it two to three weeks later in New York. A couple of months ago it stopped coming, after thirteen years of normal delivery. I called the people at the Center for Cuban Studies, where I ordered the subscription, and I said now that I have you on the phone, I was wondering if you could change my subscription to get *Temas* and *La Gaceta de Cuba*, which is, as I stated earlier, the magazine of UNEAC, the artist and writers' union in Cuba. *Granma* is a very dull paper, the Communist Party's official organ. It occurred to me that maybe this is the time to change to publications that at least I can get something out of. I haven't found out yet whether they will let me switch my prepaid subscription, but both *Temas* and *La Gaceta* publish things that are of interest.

NP: *These signs of vitality were not always there, were they?*

SF: Absolutely not. One of the things that will be interesting to see is the extent to which the recent crackdown will reverse this greater tolerance, how much it will affect the limits of speech in cultural and intellectual journals.

The crackdown itself was concentrated on whatever political opposition exists in the context of a worsening economic crisis that is perhaps linked to possible future problems in tourism. The government might be concerned that popular discontent might eventually find expression in one or more of the various and sundry opposition groups. They are also worried about more imme-

diate forms of political disorder. In 1994, for example, there were significant riots in Havana at the high point of the economic crisis I have just described. At that time there was no connection

The whole thing about an imminent invasion was manufactured by the Cuban government as a response to the larger than usual international left-wing protests against the executions and long imprisonment terms recently imposed against dozens of dissidents.

between that and any type of political opposition. My question, and I have no evidence to prove this, is whether this recent crackdown was connected to the fear that another serious economic crisis is going to have effects that it didn't have in 1994, and that's why they are using the war on Iraq as a moment to do it. This is just a hypothesis — I believe a reasonable one, but of course, I cannot prove this.

NP: *So would it be correct to say that while in the last few years, at least up until now, magazines like Temas could publish something about a social problem that has been otherwise neglected, they cannot openly criticize the government?*

SF: There is one fellow, Pedro Juan Gutierrez, a member of the National Union of Writers, who is more or less tolerated by the regime. He wrote a “dirty trilogy” about the lives of the poorest and most marginal people in Havana. He was published abroad, not in Cuba, but he is living and writing in Cuba. There is that kind of latitude for expression. To give you another example: *Gaceta de Cuba*, which is the organ of the National Union of Writers and Artists in Cuba, has published well-regarded exiled poets, including a right-wing Black poet named Gaston Baquero, who had been exiled in Spain ever since the revolution. He is considered by people in the know to be a very fine poet. Things of that sort would have been unthinkable

in the old days. And they no longer feel the need to refer to such writers in footnotes as “Traitors to the Revolution,” as used to be the case.

The Politics of the Crackdown

NP: *I'd like to return to the question of James Cason and the recent crackdown. Some have said that if the Cuban government felt that what Cason was doing was so terrible then they could have simply thrown him out of the country, rather than arrest people for taking part in what some might call building civil society.*

SF: The fact is that there is no freedom of the press, or freedom of speech or any of those freedoms in Cuba. That sets the context. If the government in Cuba provided facilities for democratic speech, so that individuals could engage in peaceful, political activity I would have a totally different outlook on the question of legal punishment for people who receive aid from the outside. But the fact of the matter is that those rights do not exist. The ruling Communist Party decides who should be able to publish, who can have access to a printing press and so on.

NP: *You're not saying they have to provide facilities, you're saying they have to not place obstacles, right?*

SF: At a bare minimum. By the way, Lenin wrote some interesting things about freedom of the press, before he was in power, which I quote in my book *Before Stalinism: The Rise and Fall of Soviet Democracy* (Verso 1990). He thought this thing out and he advocated that citizens' groups should be entitled to free press facilities. This could become a very real issue in Cuba, because I am not in favor of a post-Castro environment where the U.S. government and businesses, as they did in Central America, come in with millions and millions of dollars and drown out any possibility of democratic debate among the Cuban people themselves. I would support the outlawing of foreign funding if existing publishing facilities were distributed in a democratic fashion and were not monopolized by one party (or class of rich people).

Allowing for some possible exceptions here or there, these people are not spies. They are not strangers who were parachuted into Cuba from the United States. They are people who respond to Cuban conditions in ways that express one point of view. A considerable number of them are people

who grew up within the system. This is not to say that I don't disagree with these people about a large number of fundamental issues; I most certainly do. In fact, many of these are people I consider to be my political opponents. But this is a question for political debate, not a police matter. The people that the Cuban government has singled out for punishment have a democratic right to peaceful, free expression.

The fact is that the Cuban government prefers to see police action replacing political debate. This is not to suggest that the content of this debate is necessarily progressive or leftist in any way. And that is a serious problem. As I have already said, the center of gravity of dissent and opposition inside Cuba is pro-capitalist and pro-U.S. There are variations of course. But there is very little disagreement about the supposed magic of the marketplace. However, that's a political issue to be debated, not a subject for police action.

NP: *Does this support for the market extend into such areas as healthcare?*

SF: Here's where there is a big difference between the organized opposition and the much broader range of discontented people in Cuba. Many of those who are unhappy with the system in Cuba want the famous mixed economy model, combining the market with a generous welfare state — whereas the right-wing opposition tends to favor the American model. There is a very important magazine called *Encuentro* published in Madrid which recently published a long article by Carmelo Mesa-Lago, who is probably the most important Cuban economist in exile. He is by no means a right-winger, but either a social democrat or a U.S.-style liberal. His article for *Encuentro* concerns the situation in Cuba and among the issues he discusses is what medical system should replace the one that exists in Cuba today. Essentially what he proposes is something similar to the U.S. system — one system for those who cannot afford it, like Medicaid, and one system for

those who can afford private care. This tells you something about the shift to the right.

I was taken aback because Mesa-Lago is not a traditional right-winger by any means. But that shows what we're up against. Now, in Cuba, many

independent-minded people say "we want capitalism with a well-funded medical care system as we used to have in Cuba until the 1990s." That would be their basic perspective. Obviously ever since the early 1990s the healthcare system in Cuba has deteriorated dramatically, but the mixed economy formulation still resonates for

broad layers of discontented people. I am referring to people who are disillusioned with the regime and have not conceived of the possibility that socialism can mean something very different from what is upheld by the Cuban government.

NP: *An ordinary Cuban, who may be very pro-U.S., pro-market, who would consider themselves right-wing or whatever, would still not want to be trapped without health care insurance, as is the reality for more than forty million people in the U.S. today. It's actually unimaginable to most people in Cuba what a free market health care system is really like.*

SF: Unfortunately, they may find out.

NP: *Some say that the people who have been arrested were taking money and doing Cason's bidding. What does it mean to be doing his bidding and what is the evidence that they were doing so?*

SF: What Cason wanted, obviously, was to create trouble. He was making friends, building networks, and trying to put pressure on the regime. But I don't think he was giving out detailed tactical instructions to the majority of those arrested or anything like that.

NP: *Do your thing, knowing that when you do your thing, it'll make trouble for the government?*

SF: Yes.

NP: *Well, there are claims that Cason has helped set up a political party.*

SF: That's possibly quite true. But either way . . .

NP: *But he wouldn't expect to run it directly himself?*

SF: Again, let me emphasize the term "center of gravity." There is an entire spectrum of people who are independent and/or opposition-minded. There are people who are in the opposition who are directly tied into the U.S. Embassy and there is a much broader milieu. Cason was most likely trying to reach out to this wider community, and not just to his much smaller group of political agents. We should also have a sense of proportion and keep in mind that even this broader milieu is still small and marginal. One can guess that there might have been a couple of spies or agents among the people that the Cuban authorities arrested, but I do not know that. Nevertheless, the overall political character of those who were arrested is fairly clear: the bulk of them were arrested not for digging up information to transmit to the U.S. authorities but for their political activities.

NP: *Some people say that the only alternative to the present one-party and undemocratic rule in Cuba*

would be brutal inequality, mass poverty, a return to conditions like those under Batista. Do you agree?

SF: As long as Cuba is not integrated into an authentically socialist global or at least regional economy, nothing that anyone does can eliminate poverty in Cuba in the foreseeable future — regardless of what system exists. The question is whether there is a system in which people can defend themselves from exploitation and oppression by either bureaucrats or plutocrats and thus diminish poverty in the country. Only people's ability to organize democratically can give them the tools to do so.

The best thing that the people in the U.S. can do is to see that the blockade and all other forms of hostility against the Republic of Cuba cease and desist, and that normal diplomatic and economic relations are reestablished, thereby allowing maximum room for the Cuban people to make their own choices. Beyond that, we all need to work for a world in which the sharp inequality of wealth between "first world" and "third world" countries is ended, once and for all.

The Debate Over the Recent Arrests and Sentences in Cuba

ZANE BOYD

A REMARKABLE DEBATE HAS opened up in the international left around the arrests and harsh sentences meted out to more than 70 opponents of the Cuban government and its execution of three hijackers earlier this year. The debate is an important one, because what's at stake is not only how best to respond to the U.S.'s criminal policy toward Cuba but, more importantly, how best to defend the Cuban revolution itself.

While there have been numerous statements and counter-statements on this issue, I wish to focus on the contribution by veteran Marxist and Latin America scholar James Petras, "The Responsibility of the Intellectuals: Cuba, the U.S. and Human Rights," which he issued May 1, 2003.

While Petras acknowledges various right-wing intellectuals who have predictably condemned the Cuban government's actions, he makes it clear his primary target is "a small army of otherwise progressive intellectuals — Chomsky, Sontag, Zinn and Wallerstein." It is this "progressive" group that he says "causes the greatest harm to the burgeoning anti-imperialist movement."

Intellectual Integrity

I WANT TO ANSWER WHAT I can only describe as slanders by Petras against these intellectuals. This is necessary since, after all, the very subject of

ZANE BOYD has been a lifelong Canadian socialist. He was raised in a Communist Party family, but subsequently, after spending a year in Moscow, became a dedicated anti-Stalinist. From age 15, he participated in the movement against the war in Vietnam. In the 1970s and early 1980s, he was actively involved in defending Soviet and East European political prisoners. He has supported and identified with the Cuban revolution since his early youth.

But if constructing the future and settling everything for all times is not our affair, it is all the more clear what we have to accomplish at present: I am referring to ruthless criticism of all that exists, ruthless in the sense of not being afraid of the results it arrives at and in the sense of being just a little afraid of conflict with the powers that be.

—KARL MARX

Freedom for only the supporters of the government, however many there may be, is not freedom. Real freedom is freedom for those who think differently . . . Without general elections, without freedom of the press and unlimited freedom of assembly, without a contest of free opinions, life stagnates and withers in all public institutions, and the bureaucracy becomes the only active element.

—ROSA LUXEMBURG

The emancipation of the working class must be the work of the working class itself.

—KARL MARX and FRIEDRICH ENGELS

Petras's piece is the responsibility of intellectuals.

Well, the first responsibility is to integrity, honesty and truth. What is particularly galling (as well as unhelpful for a healthy debate and exchange) is that, while waxing indignant over dishonesty, moral blackmail and "mendacious moralizing," Petras himself engages in a defamation of his intellectual targets.

For instance: ". . . prestigious intellectuals brandish their past credentials as 'critics' of U.S. foreign policy to give credibility to their unin-

formed denunciation of alleged Cuban moral transgressions, equating Cuba's arrest of paid functionaries of the U.S. State Department and the execution of three terrorist kidnappers with the genocidal war crimes of U.S. imperialism. The practitioners of moral equivalents apply a microscope to Cuba and a telescope to U.S. crimes — which gives them a certain acceptability among the liberal sectors of the empire."

What is this about "past" credentials? The international statement against the Cuban regime's crackdown signed by Chomsky, Wallerstein, Zinn and a host of other "otherwise

progressive" intellectual authors contains fully four out of six paragraphs focused clearly on the past *and* the present crimes of the U.S. government. It is a demagogic smear to claim that these intellectuals make a moral equation between the recent actions of the Cuban government with the manifold crimes of U.S. imperialism.

The slander gets worse. Again: "But our moralists are not bothered by context, by U.S. threats to Cuba immediate or proximate, they are eager to ignore it all to demonstrate to the State Department that they not only oppose U.S. foreign policy but also condemn every independent country, system and leader who opposes the U.S. In other words, Mr. Ashcroft, when you crack down on the 'apologists' for Cuban 'terror', remember that we are different, we too condemned Cuba, we too called for a change of regime."

Incredible! The real reason these so-called progressive intellectuals have condemned the Cuban regime's crackdown is . . . to curry the favor of the U.S. State Department! Since when has Noam Chomsky ever curried the U.S. State Department's favor, or any other of these other individuals for that matter? It is to laugh! Or perhaps cry.

In the spirit of free debate and openness of ideas — that which, incidentally, should also prevail in any country calling itself socialist — Petras is of course fully entitled to criticize the response of various intellectuals to the recent Cuban events. However, he has no justification for maligning or impugning the motives of those he takes issue with

based on fabrication, innuendo and hyperbole. This makes it difficult to take any argument he may have seriously and effectively discourages further debate.

A Shameful Lack of Context

ON A MORE CRITICAL MATTER, for someone who lectures about the importance of context, Petras himself displays a shameful lack of it in yet another noteworthy paragraph. "Let us remember," he writes, "the same intellectuals supported 'dissidents' in Eastern Europe and Russia who were bankrolled by Soros and the U.S. State Department. The 'dissidents' turned the country over to the Russian mafia, life expectancy declined five years (over 10 million Russians died prematurely with the sacking of the national health system), while in Eastern Europe 'dissidents' closed the shipyards of Gdansk, enrolled in NATO and provided mercenaries for the U.S. conquest of Iraq. And never among these current supporters of Cuban 'dissidents' is there any critical reflection on the catastrophic outcomes resulting from their anti-communist diatribes and their manifestos in favor of the 'dissidents' who have become the soldiers of the U.S. Middle Eastern and Central European empire."

Context, indeed! So, it was Adam Michnik, Jacek Kuron and their colleagues who single-handedly restored free market capitalism in Poland. The kindly declaration of martial law by that great friend of socialism, Wojciech Jaruzelski, and his Stalinist henchmen of course had nothing to do with Poland's subsequent fate. And it was the likes of Leonid Pliushch and Ivan Dziuba who brought Ukraine to its knees and not the years of Stalinist rot brought on by those Ukrainian socialist paragons, Leonid Brezhnev and Konstantin Chernenko, and their cronies.

The "critical reflection" that Petras so rightly demands on the recent history of the former "socialist" states of the USSR and Eastern Europe is not a matter of mere idle theoretical and historical interest to socialist Cuba. It is vital, given the urgency of the Cuba's own current crisis.

Unfortunately, Petras himself turns reality on

The first responsibility is to
integrity, honesty and truth.

its head on this subject. It wasn't dissidents who sold off the Soviet economy and took over along with the Russian mafia. Rather, it was those with the power to do so — former state apparatchiks themselves, especially those within the managerial bureaucracy.

This was also largely the case on the political level. Boris Yeltsin and now Vladimir Putin were former Communist Party stalwarts, as was Byelorussia's Alexander Lukachenko. In Eastern Europe, meanwhile, ex-Communist bosses morphed into "social democrats" or adopted some other new guise, and have moved in and out of political power over the past decade. It's hard to believe that Petras doesn't know all this already. Or, has the vehemence of his vitriol against his intellectual nemeses simply clouded his memory?

In any event, does Petras actually believe that none of this would have happened — that there would have been no collapse of the Soviet and East European systems, no restoration of capitalism — had the "dissidents" simply kept their mouths shut or perhaps been eliminated? Petras should instead be asking himself how it is that these former "socialist" governments collapsed with such overwhelming popular approval with nary a peep of protest or ounce of resistance from any of the working classes of these countries.

What we have here is conspiracy theory substituting for serious social analysis. There is nothing regarding the corruption, decadence and oppression of Stalinist rule. There is nothing on the role (or passive lack thereof) played by the Soviet and East European working class. There is nothing about the absence of socialist democracy. There is nothing even regarding the U.S. and NATO's bankrupting the Soviet economy through the four-decades-long arms and space race.

No, the entire socio-economic evolution of these countries over the past fifteen years is chalked up to the scheming of a ragtag bunch of dissidents fostered and funded by Western capi-

talists and the U.S. State Department — and, of course, the perfidious support of our "otherwise progressive" Western intellectuals.

To put it bluntly, this is precisely the kind of hysterical response that infected millions of Communist Party members and their intellectual fellow travelers in the West when confronted with any opposition to or criticism of Soviet Stalinism in the 1930s.

Back then as well, any problems within the Soviet Union were blamed entirely on the threats and machinations of Western imperialism, fascism and various plotters — including Trotskyists, anarchists and social democrats. Then as well, it was "you're with us or against us." Back then, too, anyone who criticized or denounced the Soviet regime was branded either a willing or pliant accomplice in the pay of (read: "apologist" or "paid functionary") the CIA and Hitler.

On a more contemporary note, Petras here (like so many "otherwise progressive" intellectuals on the left before him) again trots out the same old slander and misrepresentation of the historic Solidarnosc movement in Poland. In the early 1980s, "Solidarity" conducted perhaps the most militant and massive workers' uprising in modern times. These "dissidents" didn't "close" the Gdansk shipyards, they occupied them! And they also struck and occupied factories, mines, schools and

offices throughout the entire country.

These "dissidents" in fact comprised virtually Poland's entire working class organized in regionally coordinated local workers' self-management bodies that had sprung up spontaneously during the strike wave in 1980. The 1981 draft program of Solidarnosc called for a national system of workers' self-management within the

framework of a "socialized" (vs. merely "nationalized") economy. Meanwhile, Jaruzelski's bureaucrats and their Moscow mentors fought frantically to retain rigid, central command of a decaying and bureaucratically manipulated structure

It wasn't dissidents who sold off the Soviet economy and took over along with the Russian mafia. Rather, it was those with the power to do so — former state apparatchiks, especially those within the managerial bureaucracy.

with an implacable hostility to any element of genuine workers' democracy. In fact, Jaruzelski declared martial law in December 1981 on the very eve of a planned national gathering of workers, self-management delegates — what would in effect have amounted to a full-fledged dual power situation.

It appears that Petras finds more kinship with the Stalinist "defenders" of "actually existing socialism" than with the Polish working class and its intellectual defenders.

Just imagine for a moment if Solidarnosc had succeeded in establishing workers' power in Poland through a self-managed economy and democratic political system. What might Poland and possibly all of Europe for that matter have looked like today? Would the world have seen in Poland the real possibilities of socialism as opposed to the dead hand of bureaucracy? And would not the liberating promise of socialism have retained some cachet among the new generation of anti-globalization and anti-capitalist activists who instead have largely turned their backs on socialism?

Broadening the Context

THROUGHOUT HIS ARTICLE, Petras repeatedly sounds the alarm on the indirect and overt threats of a U.S. military intervention in Cuba, U.S. covert operations in funding and fomenting oppositional activity within the country, international U.S. imperialist aggression, Miami-based terrorism, and the like. In fact, Petras frames the dangers facing the Cuban revolution exclusively within this singular context.

Cuba and its problems are viewed entirely within the perspective of a hostile American regime bent on world domination. And it is this narrow alarmist framework that, in fact, defines his attitudes to all dissenters and critics of Cuban government policies, above all our "progressive" intellectuals.

Everything with Petras is U.S. vs. Cuba, state vs. state. There is nothing regarding Cuba's inter-

nal situation. Petras scarcely mentions the U.S. embargo and its effects. More significantly, he fails to address the question of how the base of Cuban society — workers, students, intellectuals — are

expected to fulfill their essential function in defense of the revolution. Instead, they are relegated to a passive role, while the entire burden of the revolution seems to be shouldered by the Fidelista leadership.

Of course, the threat of U.S. intervention is real. It always has been. And admittedly there is a greater urgency under the current U.S. administration. And yes, the U.S. engages in covert and overt destabilizing operations in Cuba as well as many other countries. And yes, the Bush administration is bent on world domination. However, is this exactly news? Especially after 9/11, Afghanistan and Iraq? And how does any of this justify the Cuban regime taking undemocratic actions against its critics and opponents, however serious the charges it may have against them?

It is ludicrous in any case for Petras to think that the intellectuals he denounces would not strongly oppose any imminent or actual U.S. invasion of Cuba, as they have on Iraq?

More importantly — and this is something Petras never addresses — the revolution is not just in danger from U.S. intervention, subversion and terrorism. There is also the dire internal crisis facing the country with its profound social consequences. The economic reforms introduced by the Cuban government over the past decade (many of them pro-market and even pro-capital, by the way) have spawned dangerous divisions among the Cuban population, virtual two-tiered health care, and serious unemployment. While some of these reforms may be necessary simply to keep the economy afloat, there is a very real danger that the revolution could eventually implode from within.

This is the actual context — external threat and internal crisis — in which the various problems facing the Cuban revolution must be con-

Petras should ask himself how it is that these former "socialist" governments collapsed with such overwhelming popular approval with nary a peep of protest or ounce of resistance from any of the working classes of these countries.

sidered, including that of organized opposition. In this context, internal dissatisfaction and criticism are inevitable. The challenge is, how best to harness the creative *and* critical energies of the Cuban people? How best to preserve, extend and in some cases restore the gains of the revolution?

Socialist Democracy is Key

TO BEGIN WITH, the larger strategic context must always be kept in mind: if it was impossible to achieve socialism in a single isolated country as it was in the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 30s (what was realized was, in fact, a grotesque caricature of socialism), it is that much more impossible in tiny, even more impoverished and isolated Cuba. But, for this very reason, the revolution requires the institution of genuine, full-fledged socialist democracy. The National Assembly, the People's Councils, the official unions, and other popular bodies are not in themselves sufficient. They do allow for some participation by much of the population. But the Cuban Communist Party maintains a monopoly of power — with dominant influence and control within these and other popular bodies.

In defense of the revolution itself, it is urgent that the Cuban government establish a system of real popular political and economic power (not mere participation), especially local and national structures of workers' self-management and control. At the same time, it is imperative that a plurality of workers' and other popularly based political parties be introduced, along with free elections within all bodies, the right to free assembly for all citizens, and freedom of the press. Let the Communist Party demonstrate the superiority of its vision, program and leadership within the full light and debate of public opinion — public opinion that is fully engaged and active in actually running the country.

Think of the beacon and example such a system of democratic socialism would be to all of Latin America and the rest of the world, including the United States itself, with its pathetic, transparently sham bourgeois democracy. On the other hand, if the Cuban leadership continues to balk

at such a prospect (perhaps on the grounds it would “destabilize” the country), then it will be responding all-too-typically like the bureaucrats Rosa Luxemburg warned us about.

All socialists, as well as others, should be reminded that the Bolshevik Party's monopoly of power during the nascent years of the Soviet Union was to be a temporary measure. It was imposed during the then-raging Civil War, initiated by the armed opposition to Soviet power of the Russian White armies and the invasion by 15 imperialist armies including those of the U.S. and Canada. In fact, before the Civil War began, the Bolsheviks reserved seats in the Congress of Soviets for the absent Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries, who had opposed the establishment of Soviet power and were at the time boycotting the Congress.

HINDSIGHT IS ALWAYS BEST SIGHT. However, the continued Soviet Communist Party monopoly on power through the 1920s and beyond, it must be said, was a disastrous policy and egregious error. Had the Soviet workers and peasants been able to enjoy real Soviet (viz., Council) democracy during that time and had there been a plurality of parties, freedom of assembly and of the press, they might have been able to prevent the consolidation of the heinous Stalinist regime,

the resultant deaths and misery of millions, and the corruption and emasculation of communist parties throughout the world which under the Kremlin's direction, it should again be pointed out, thwarted several po-

tential socialist revolutions.

Our challenge is to learn from history. The Cuban revolution has survived now for over forty years. It is high time to invigorate Cuba's political system. Socialism is incompatible with continued exclusive centralist rule by the Cuban Communist Party. The defense of the Cuban revolution requires the ongoing, active engagement of the entire Cuban population enjoying complete socialist democracy. Otherwise, the revolution itself ultimately cannot survive.

It is high time to invigorate Cuba's political system.

James Petras Goes Over the Top on Cuba and the Left

JOANNE LANDY

IN MARCH 2003 THE Campaign for Peace and Democracy issued a statement entitled *Anti-War, Social Justice and Human Rights Advocates Oppose Repression in Cuba* protesting “the arrests of scores of opponents of the Cuban government for their nonviolent political activities, and the shockingly long prison sentences — some as high as 28 years — imposed after unfair trials.” It also opposed “the trial and execution of three alleged hijackers in a week’s time, both for the lack of due process and because we oppose capital punishment on principle.” Over one thousand people signed the statement, including a great many prominent U.S. progressives such as Michael Albert, Noam Chomsky, Barbara Ehrenreich, Naomi Klein, Katha Pollitt, Edward Said, Immanuel Wallerstein, Cornel West and Howard Zinn. The Campaign’s statement with a longer list of the signers is reprinted in this issue of *New Politics* (see page 99), and is on the CPD website with the complete list of signers (www.cpdweb.org).

The statement was crystal clear in its opposition to U.S. policy against Cuba. It said, “As the Bush administration, further emboldened by its military victory in Iraq, threatens to wage ‘pre-emptive’ wars around the globe we reaffirm our support for the right of self-determination in Cuba and our strong opposition to the U.S. policy of economic sanctions that has brought such suffering to the Cuban people.” In addition, the statement denounced “the long, criminal record of U.S. interventions in Latin America. This record has included six decades of exploitation and imperial control of Cuba, followed by an attempted invasion and a campaign of international terrorism and economic warfare, that is by now well-documented.”

The Campaign’s statement was well received

because it provided people in the progressive community with the opportunity to stand up for democracy and civil liberties in Cuba while at the same time sharply opposing U.S. attempts to dominate Cuba and the rest of the world. But it was precisely this independent, principled stance that enraged some other people, including James Petras.

On May 1, 2003 Petras released an article “The Responsibility of the Intellectuals: Cuba, the U.S. and Human Rights,” which contained a furious attack on the individuals signing the CPD statement, singling out Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn and Immanuel Wallerstein. The article is filled with misstatements and apologetics for repression in Communist countries, many of which are addressed in this issue of *New Politics* by Zane Boyd (see page 90).

I wish to respond mainly to the part of Petras’s attack that was directed at me and the Campaign for Peace and Democracy. He writes:

The principal author and promoter of the anti-Cuban declaration in the United States (signed by Chomsky, Zinn and Wallerstein) was Joanne Landy, a self-declared “democratic socialist,” and lifelong advocate of the violent overthrow of the Cuban government — for the past 40 years. She is now a member of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), one of the major institutions advising the U.S. government on imperial policies for over a half century.

Landy supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, Yugoslavia and the Albanian terrorist group, the KLA — calling publicly for overt military support — responsible for the murder of 2000 Serbs and the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands of Serbs and others in Kosova. It is no surprise that the statement authored by this chameleon right-wing extremist contained no mention of Cuba’s social accomplishments and opposition to imperialism. For the record, it should be noted, that Landy was a visceral opponent of the Chinese, Viet-

JOANNE LANDY is a member of the editorial board of *New Politics* and co-director of the Campaign for Peace and Democracy.

namease and other social revolutions in her climb to positions of influence in the CFR.

For all their vaunted critical intellect, the ‘progressive’ intellectuals overlooked the unsavory politics of the author who promoted the anti-Cuba diatribe.

WHERE TO BEGIN? First of all, how does Petras know that I am the “principal author” of the statement? It was signed by three people — Thomas Harrison, Jennifer Scarlott and myself — and in fact it was a collective product. I point this out not to disclaim responsibility but to show that Petras’s attack, beginning almost with the first word, is based on totally unfounded assertions and — as I will indicate — outright lies. Secondly, it’s true that I call myself a democratic socialist, and I’m proud to do so — though I would add that I am a left-wing, revolutionary democratic socialist.

Have I called for the violent overthrow of the Castro government? No, I haven’t. In fact, I would hope for nonviolent change in Cuba brought about by a democratic movement. As in any country, however, if the government there violently resisted a majority movement for democratic change, that majority would have the right to defend itself, with force if necessary, and to take power through mass, democratic participatory institutions — though the strategic and tactical questions of whether and how to exercise that right would have to be decided in light of the specific political circumstances. Of course, what Petras really objects to is not my alleged advocacy of violence but my opposition to the undemocratic Communist regime in Cuba.

Petras goes on to charge that I “supported the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan.” In fact, I totally opposed it, from start to finish — believing that the Taliban and U.S. imperialism were in a reactionary, symbiotic and mutually reinforcing relationship — and that a United States attack on Afghanistan would be just a way for the U.S. to pro-

mote its imperial goals. Of course, that’s exactly what it was, opening the way for the later horrific U.S. war on Iraq.

Petras’s next claim is that I supported the U.S. war on Yugoslavia. Totally untrue. Though I was against Milosevic’s attempt to hold together Yugoslavia by force against the will of Croats, Bosnians, Kosovars, etc., I also vigorously opposed U.S. military intervention. (See my article on Kosova “Self-Determination, Not Intervention” in *New Politics*, Winter 2000.) I am proud of my role and that of the Campaign in defending Bosnia against truly genocidal Serbian aggression and protesting the cynical U.S.-supported arms embargo. As far as the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) is concerned, Petras conveniently omits any

mention of Milosevic’s ferocious repression of Kosova’s right to self-determination, even to retain the autonomy it had won under Tito. Albanians in Kosova were subjected to systematic discrimination, mass firings from their jobs, vigilante violence, and a reign of police terror at the hands of Milosevic and his supporters.

In fact, the hysterical vendetta against the Kosovars was key to

Milosevic’s rise to power. The non-violent Albanian resistance led by Ibrahim Rugova was ruthlessly suppressed, which resulted in growing popular support for the KLA among Albanians. I supported the KLA (but not the U.S., which incidentally was for the most part quite apprehensive about them as a “destabilizing” force) in the belief that the thrust of their resistance was directed against Milosevic and the armed forces of the Yugoslavian state. I criticized the KLA to the extent that they carried out attacks against Serb civilians. It’s possible that my judgment as to the dominant character of the KLA was incorrect, though I don’t think so. But the moral right to criticize or oppose the KLA belongs only to those who denounced the original Serb suppression of Albanians in Kosova, and I would bet the family

The Campaign’s statement was well received because it provided progressives with the opportunity to stand up for democracy and civil liberties in Cuba while at the same time sharply opposing U.S. attempts to dominate Cuba and the rest of the world.

farm that this doesn't include James Petras.

Yes, I opposed the coming to power of Communists in Vietnam and China, in the conviction that old oppressors were being replaced with new ones. The Communist states of China and Vietnam were and are brutal one-party dictatorships, with no civil liberties or democratic rights for their people. They came into being in response to vicious, right-wing regimes supported by the U.S. and other Western powers, which is why I and my co-thinkers had a "Third Camp" position that saw hope in the development of democratic forces independent of both sides in the conflict between the Communist parties, on the one hand, and Western-supported dictators on the other. During the Vietnam war, for example, my colleagues and I called for immediate, unilateral U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam despite our hostility to the National Liberation Front (NLF) — a fact not mentioned by Jim Petras, of course, even though he and I were both active in the movement in Berkeley in the 60s, and he is very familiar with what my position was.

And incidentally, to speak in this day and age of supporting the Communists in China as though that were some sort of touchstone of progressive politics is simply obscene. People with my politics knew all along that the Maoist regime was a totalitarian nightmare based on mass murder of historically unprecedented dimensions, and by now the whole world (with the possible exception of Petras) knows the truth about the Great Leap Forward, the Cultural Revolution, and other horrors that the Chinese people had to endure for half a century.

Finally, Petras explains my position on China and Vietnam as integral to my "climb to positions of influence in the Council on Foreign Relations." This would be simply a hilarious invention if it were not such an outrageous lie — and Petras must know that it's not true.

Here are the facts. In the early 1990s I was invited to join the Council on Foreign Relations

on the initiative of Katrina vanden Heuvel (now editor of *The Nation*), herself a CFR member. At the time Cora Weiss, a major leader in the American peace movement, and Aryeh Neier, head of Human Rights Watch and anathema to the Reagan administration for his relentless work in exposing U.S. complicity in Latin American human rights violations, were also members of the Council. So I thought I would join, go down and make some trouble as a left wing voice. But in fact I felt so alienated at the three or four forums I went to that I didn't participate at all in the organization.

Far from "climbing to" or in any way attaining "a position of influence" in the Council, I haven't been a member for several years, and it would have been impossible to be a CFR member with less influence that I had while I was a member. I attended a handful of forums, was not a speaker at any of them, never communicated with CFR officials, and never wrote anything for them. Campaign for

Today the United States looms over the world as an imperialist power armed with unprecedented force and resources. Yet, as the already shaky U.S. occupation of Iraq reveals, military strength and naked force aren't everything.

Peace and Democracy Co-Director Tom Harrison said at the time that I shouldn't join, and in retrospect I think he was right — but one shouldn't make a mountain out of a molehill.

Apparently, Petras will go to any lengths to discredit a position with which he disagrees. Not only does he try to smear me and the Campaign, but he engages in character assassination against all leftist critics of repression in Cuba. In his article, Petras says that it is the "progressive' group [among all the critics of the Cuban government's actions] which has caused the greatest harm among the burgeoning anti-imperialist movement." Accusing Chomsky, Zinn *et al* of having the most base and selfish motives for signing the statement, he actually suggests that these progressives are trying to gain favor with the Administration: "... In other words, Mr. Ashcroft, when you crack down on the 'apologists' for Cuban 'terror', remember that we are different, we too condemned Cuba, we too called for a change

of regime.”

JAMES PETRAS IS SO UNSCRUPULOUS, and such an admirer of repressive Communist regimes, that one can only shudder to think what he would do to Chomsky, Zinn, Wallerstein or the three Campaign for Peace and Democracy co-directors if he and others like him held state power. Nor is Petras’s fondness for repression limited to the Communist world: in defense of the Cuban crack-down, he even, broadmindedly, goes so far as to cite, without condemnation, one of the most anti-democratic laws in the United States. He writes, “No country in the world tolerates or labels domestic citizens paid by and working for a foreign power to act for its imperial interests as ‘dissidents.’ This is especially true of the U.S. where under Title 18, Section 951 of the U.S. Code, ‘anyone who agrees to operate within the United States subject to the direction or control of a foreign govern-

ment or official would be subjected to criminal prosecution and a 10-year prison sentence.’ Unless, of course, they register as a paid foreign agent or are working for the Israeli government.”

Today, the United States looms over the world as an imperialist power armed with unprecedented force and resources. Yet, as the already shaky U.S. occupation of Iraq reveals, military strength and naked force aren’t everything. As we work in this country and forge alliances with movements abroad to oppose U.S. domination of the world and the brutal capitalism it seeks to impose everywhere, we need to stand opposed to repression wherever it takes place, rather than engage in shameful apologetics in the mode of Petras and others of his sort. The Campaign for Peace and Democracy statement on Cuba and its outstanding list of progressive signers is an important expression of that independent, liberatory stand.

Statement Protesting Repression in Cuba

CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

PLEASE JOIN Michael Albert, Stanley Aronowitz, Mel Bienenfeld, Eileen Boris, Robert Brenner, Stephen Bronner, Noam Chomsky, Joshua Cohen, Mike Davis, Richard Deats, Haroldo Dilla, Manuela Dobos, Ariel Dorfman, Melinda Downey, Mark Dow, Barry Finger, Barbara Ehrenreich, Gertrude Ezorsky, Samuel Farber, Janeane Garofalo, Barbara Garson, Susan Griffin, Thomas Harrison, Michael Hirsch, Adam Hochschild, Doug Ireland, Alan Johnson, Joanne Landy, Jesse Lemisch, John Leonard, Sue Leonard, Rabbi Michael Lerner, Nelson Lichtenstein, Arthur Lipow, Gretchen Lipow, Michael Lowy, Betty Reid Mandell, Marvin Mandell, Grace Paley, Christopher Phelps, Katha Pollitt, Matthew Rothschild, Edward Said, Jennifer Scarlott, Carl Schorske, Juliet Schor, Ellen Schrecker, Stephen Shalom, Adam Shatz, Alan Sokal, Chris

Toensing, Immanuel Wallerstein, Liz Walsack, James Weinstein, Naomi Weisstein, Cora Weiss, Peter Weiss, Cornel West, Reginald Wilson, Kent Worcester, and Howard Zinn and others in signing this statement against repression in Cuba from the Campaign for Peace and Democracy.

CPD's statement "We Oppose both Saddam Hussein and the U.S. War on Iraq: A call for a new, democratic U.S. foreign policy" appeared in The New York Times, The Nation, and The Progressive, as well as on the ZNet, Progressive, Nation, and Boston Review websites and on numerous listserves in this country and abroad. With your help we will also aim to publicize this statement as broadly as possible.

Thank you,

Joanne Landy, Thomas Harrison,

Jennifer Scarlott, Co-Directors, CPD

Anti-War, Social Justice and Human Rights Advocates Oppose Repression in Cuba

WE, THE UNDERSIGNED, strongly protest the current wave of repression in Cuba. We condemn the arrests of scores of opponents of the Cuban government for their nonviolent political activities, and the shockingly long prison sentences — some as high as 28 years — imposed after unfair trials. According to Amnesty International, the arrestees include journalists, owners of private libraries and members of illegal opposition parties. We condemn as well the trial and execution of three alleged hijackers in a week's time, both for the lack of due process and because we oppose capital punishment on principle.

As anti-war, social justice and human rights advocates, we condemned the brutal Saddam Hussein regime, and we oppose the United States occupation of Iraq. We support civil liberties and democratic rights everywhere, regardless of the country's economic, political or social system. We believe it is imperative to be consistent in oppos-

ing repression wherever it takes place, whether in Iraq or Saudi Arabia, Israel or Cuba, Turkey or the United States. Democratic change in Cuba needs to be achieved by the Cuban people themselves. The Cuban government's violations of democratic rights do not justify sanctions or any other form of intervention by the United States in Cuba. The government of the United States — which employs the rhetoric of human rights when doing so promotes its imperial goals, but maintains a discreet silence or makes only token protests when U.S. allies are involved, and which fully supports the barbaric practice of capital punishment, routinely inflicted in the U.S. — is hardly in a position to preach democracy and human rights.

And we recall too the long, criminal record of U.S. interventions in Latin America. This record has included six decades of exploitation and imperial control of Cuba, followed by an at-

tempted invasion and a campaign of international terrorism and economic warfare, that is by now well-documented. Only a government that repudiated this record, renounced any intention of restoring its economic or political domination over Cuba, either directly or through rightwing Cuban-American proxies, and promised to respect the democratic will of the Cuban people themselves would have the moral legitimacy to call for democratic change in Cuba.

As the Bush administration, further emboldened by its military victory in Iraq, threatens to wage "preemptive" wars around the globe we reaffirm our support for the right of self-determination in Cuba and our strong opposition to the U.S. policy of economic sanctions that has brought such suffering to the Cuban people.

At the same time, we support democracy in Cuba. The imprisonment of people for attempting to exercise their rights of free expression is outrageous and unacceptable. We call on the Castro government to release all political prison-

ers and let the Cuban people speak, write and organize freely.

MARCH 2003

To: Joanne Landy, Thomas Harrison, Jennifer Scarlott,
Co-Directors, CPD

- ☐ Add my name to the list of signers to the CPD *Anti-War, Social Justice and Human Rights Advocates Oppose Repression in Cuba*. You may use my name when the statement is published.
- ☐ I am sending a donation of \$_____ to help disseminate and publish the statement.
- ☐ I am sending my gift ___ by mail ___ on line (see below.)

Your name

Organizational/institutional affiliation or city (for identification only)

.....

E-Mail

Phone

Address

Only name and affiliation or city will be made public.

For further information, to sign on-line, and to see evolving full list of signers go to www.cpdweb.org

Make checks payable to "Campaign for Peace and Democracy" or donate on line by going to our website www.cpdweb.org
Mail to Campaign for Peace and Democracy, 2790 Broadway,
#12, NY, NY 10025

Comment from the Campaign for Peace and Democracy

The text below is not part of the statement to be signed, but a comment from the Campaign for Peace and Democracy on some issues that often arise in discussion about democracy in Cuba. People who agree with the statement itself need not agree with this comment in order to sign the statement.

All the information available to us indicates that, apart from the individuals accused of hijacking, none of the prisoners were charged with violent actions; rather, they have been accused of collaborating with U.S. diplomats to undermine the state, and/or receiving American government funds. Many of them, as well as other Cuban dissidents, have met with James Cason, head of the U.S. Interests Section in Cuba, and some have received duplicating materials, funding or other resources directly from the U.S. government or from NGOs funded by Washington.

One reason dissidents turn to the U.S. for help is that Cubans are not consistently allowed access to the tools necessary to disseminate their views to the public: computers, copying machines, printers, etc. Obviously they would not be as likely to accept U.S. aid, and the political influence that generally

accompanies it, if Cuban citizens, whatever their views, were free to acquire these items themselves, without obstacles.

Many dissidents (and non-dissidents) in Cuba look to the United States, some because they actually favor an unbridled U.S.-style capitalist system, others because they sincerely believe that the U.S. is interested in promoting genuine political and social democracy in Cuba. The latter are terribly mistaken, because Washington's interest is in reconstructing a society of private wealth and privilege and in promoting a conservative, and probably repressive, pro-U.S. government in Havana.

But this is a political problem that in no way justifies repression. Rightwing politics and support for the U.S. in Cuba cannot be countered by censorship and imprisonment. Neither the Cuban government nor any other government has the right to stifle or obstruct the free expression of opinions, no matter how repellent or misguided we think they might be. Instead, progressives should try to influence Cubans by simultaneously protesting the Castro government's repression and U.S. interventionism, and exposing Washington's reactionary agenda for their country.

A Protest Against U.S. Threats to Cuba

CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

FLUSH WITH ITS MILITARY VICTORY in Iraq, the Bush administration seems more determined than ever to assert U.S. hegemony over the entire globe. A future military invasion of Cuba cannot be ruled out. In the meantime, there has been a clear and ominous escalation of U.S. threats to the island.

The Bush administration has threatened to impose further restrictions on travel to Cuba and to curtail the remittances that Cubans in the United States can send to their relatives on the island. Increased travel restrictions will serve only to further isolate the Cuban people, and they constitute another outrageous limitation on the right of people living in the U.S. to travel freely. Curtailing remittances will undermine the economic well-being of tens of thousands of Cubans, who depend on these payments to alleviate the poverty that is to a significant extent the result of U.S. sanctions.

Cuba has been the target of travel restrictions and embargo — not to mention U.S.-sponsored terrorism and other forms of subversion — for more than four decades now; it is clear that such actions punish ordinary Cubans and do nothing to advance the cause of Cuban democracy. In fact, their effect has been precisely the opposite: to strengthen undemocratic tendencies. The recent expulsion of 14 Cuban diplomats from the United States is yet another ratcheting up of the level of U.S. threats against Cuba, and is no more likely than the rest to promote democracy on the island.

As supporters of democracy in Cuba, we condemn the recent arrests of scores of Cubans for their nonviolent political activities, and the shockingly long prison sentences — some as high as 28 years — imposed after unfair trials. We also pro-

test the trial and execution of three alleged hijackers in a week's time, both for the lack of due process and because we oppose capital punishment on principle. But we condemn just as strongly all attempts by the Bush administration to intimidate Cuba. Washington's recent actions — like those of all previous administrations — have nothing to do with promoting democracy in Cuba and everything to do with expanding the U.S. empire.

We call on the Castro government to release all political prisoners and to let the Cuban people write, speak and organize freely.

We would note that the Bush administration is especially unqualified to demand democratic rights and due process in Cuba. The Administration's hypocrisy is shown by its own behavior in Guantanamo, where prisoners are held with neither the rights guaranteed to prisoners of war by the Geneva Convention nor with the protections of U.S. law; recent reports (as yet unconfirmed) suggest that some of those incarcerated on Guantanamo may even face execution there. At home, the Patriot Act and the proposed Patriot Act II drastically undermine civil liberties for both citizens and non-citizens of the United States.

As advocates of democratic rights and liberties everywhere, including Cuba, we strongly believe that democratic change in Cuba must be achieved by the Cuban people themselves, not by threats, embargoes or intervention by a U.S. government bent on reasserting its domination over that country. We call on the Bush administration to respect the right of Cuba, and all other countries, to self-determination.

June 9, 2003

Venezuela in Two Winds

JUSTIN PODUR

REPORTS ARE CIRCULATING ABOUT COLOMBIAN paramilitaries being trained in New Mexico for the purpose of infiltrating and destabilizing Venezuela.* Stories of the Venezuelan government uncovering yet another conspiracy against it are frequent. It is difficult to check these reports, but that some such events have occurred is certain. On March 31, 2003, the Colombian army (it is unclear whether these were army regulars, “irregulars,” or paramilitaries) crossed the Venezuelan border and attacked a military post. The Venezuelan army responded with a brief bombing raid at the Colombian army camp. President Hugo Chavez announced that “Neither paramilitaries nor rebels nor the armed forces of Colombia have authorization, nor will they have it, to be on Venezuelan territory.”¹

Colombia’s attack on Venezuela can only be understood in context. There are two parts to this context: first, the strategic importance of Venezuela in the designs of the United States, and second, the social and political changes that are taking place within Venezuela. Both aspects have made that country a target for attack, but also a site with important lessons for social movements. There are thus good reasons for us to pay close attention to Venezuela.

The Wind From Above

HECTOR MONDRAGON, a Colombian economist, reminded readers in April 2002 that two years before U.S. senator Coverdell argued for military intervention in Colombia in the *Washington Post*. Making the analogy to the first U.S. war on Iraq, Coverdell said: “A decade ago the United States went to war with a powerful enemy partly to stabilize a major oil-producing region. We worried that Iraq would attack Saudi Arabia, an ally and one of the United States’ largest oil suppliers. Where is that same concern with Colombia today? The destabilization of Colombia directly affects bordering Venezuela, now generally regarded as our largest oil supplier.”² Mondragon viewed this as a threat:

“If the war against drugs was a pretext for a war against the insurgency, now the armed conflict in Colombia has become a pretext for an attack on Venezuela and against the Chavez government.” He went on:

The attack on Venezuela would be justified in terms of “Colombia’s security,” and the ramifications for the region of this “Coverdell logic” are horrifying. The method could be applied against the indigenous uprisings in Ecuador and of course, against a future government of the Workers’ Party in Brazil. The U.S. government would turn Colombia into a wedge to drive into Latin America.³

What Mondragon calls the “Coverdell logic” unfolded as he described it in a “regional security summit” in Bogota, Colombia, in mid-March 2003. The Colombian government, two weeks before its own raid into Venezuela, accused its neighbors of aiding the Colombian insurgents and participating in “cross-border terrorism.” Panama, Ecuador, Brazil, and especially Venezuela, were made to answer accusations of terrorism by the Colombian government, the hemisphere’s leader in human rights violations.⁴

Just as the U.S. attack on Afghanistan left permanent U.S. military bases very close to the oil and gas reserves of Central Asia⁵ and the U.S. occupation of Iraq completes the encirclement of

JUSTIN PODUR maintains many of ZNet’s Latin America subsites. He has traveled in and reported from the region and has been involved in various solidarity initiatives. He is based in Toronto.

* The title of this article acknowledges the 1993 essay by Subcomandante Marcos, “The Southeast in Two Winds.”

West and Central Asian oil and gas reserves by U.S. military outposts, the U.S. military has been building up its presence in the Andean region. A map of the Andean region shows that since 2000 the U.S. military presence has been increasing steadily. The U.S. has bases and “forward operating positions” in Ecuador and Colombia. Colombia in particular has received hundreds of millions of dollars in military aid for equipment (helicopters in particular) and training from the United States.⁶ Analysts in Colombia have referred to Colombia as the “South American Israel,” playing the same role as a regional outpost.⁷

The ‘dirty war’ to destabilize the country continues.

Venezuela is the main target of this aggressive Latin America maneuvering because of its oil reserves and its experiments with independence and democracy. These experiments have threatened to take Venezuela off of the neoliberal track to dependency that had been set for it before the “Bolivarian Movement” brought Hugo Chavez to power in 1998.

Oil and Neoliberalism

VENEZUELA’S OIL INDUSTRY BEFORE 1998 was described by oil expert Bernard Mommer as being “on a path towards re-privatization.”⁸ Mommer suggests that both the Bolivarian movement of Chavez and the elites of the state oil company, PDVSA (Petróleos de Venezuela-Sociedad Autónoma) were working at the time to try to subvert the status quo:

Both PDVSA executives and Chavez and his followers believed that the current political regime was beyond repair . . . The military dreamed about saving the country; PDVSA executives dreamed about saving the oil industry from the country.

Chavez and his followers, trained at a college with a progressive-nationalist tradition, believed that the political system was stacked against the people and fundamentally corrupt. The oil company executives of PDVSA, meanwhile, saw them-

selves as part of an international elite. Their loyalties were to their class, and their opportunities for advancement and wealth were through alliances with the multinational corporations they worked with in PDVSA. For them, privatization was a natural evolution that would bring them more opportunities, and the public nature of the oil company was an obstacle to be overcome.

The Venezuelan oil industry had been nationalized in 1976, part of a strategy by the government of maximizing fiscal revenues, or oil rents. The revenue so raised was squandered by the government, which did not succeed in its ambitiously declared plans to use the oil revenue to develop the country. PDVSA, along with the international oil companies and consuming countries, chiefly the United States, worked to undermine nationalization by trying to maximize volume and disregard revenue. With a rapid decrease in oil prices in the 1980s, PDVSA’s policy culminated in the 1989 “Apertura” or neoliberal “opening,” where the oil company was “opened” to allow private investors back into the oil industry. This “opening” was part of a larger IMF/World Bank structural adjustment, which included massive price hikes in gasoline and foodstuffs. When Caracas awoke to find bus fares several times more expensive than they had been the night before, major rioting ensued.⁹

In Mommer’s view, the conflict between PDVSA’s elite and the Bolivarian movement boils down to this question:

Is Venezuelan oil a free gift of nature to international producing companies and foreign consumers? PDVSA’s liberal agenda answers this question with an unqualified “Yes.” This view is antithetical to everything Venezuelan oil nationalism ever achieved . . . it is imperialism in its most ancient of definitions: the conquest of foreign land and its mineral resources . . .

In February 1998 . . . Venezuela was on the brink of becoming Latin America’s model pupil of natural resource-liberalism and globalization . . . Then, to spoil it all, Chavez turned up as a popular candidate.¹⁰

For arresting this development, Chavez and the Bolivarian movement have been under continuous attack from many quarters.

Coups and Strikes

THE MOST DRAMATIC ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW

the Chavez government came in the form of a military coup and a 24-hour dictatorship on April 11, 2002.¹¹ The U.S. government immediately endorsed the coup. A large part of the armed forces remained loyal to the Chavez government, however, and, combined with a popular mobilization of hundreds of thousands, reversed the coup the next day. At that point, the U.S. government reversed its position on the coup as well.

Movements are taking advantage of the space opened up by a government with a progressive agenda.

Next, in December of 2002, a massive “strike” (more aptly, a lock-out) took place, led by PDVSA. Other than the oil industry, the “strike” affected primarily the retail sectors of multinational corporations (like McDonald’s and Burger King) and the beer and cigarette industries. Rank-and-file workers wanted to go to work, and in some cases even took over factories and kept them running in spite of their owners. The “strike” cost Venezuela billions of dollars in revenue, and combined with ongoing capital flight, plunged Venezuela into severe economic trouble. But the “strike” failed in its objective of overthrowing the government, which responded by sacking some 8,500 PDVSA employees — mostly executives and managers who had supported the lockout.

The latest move in the domestic part of the conflict is a recall referendum. The opposition will try to use the constitutional provision allowing for recall of elected officials halfway through their term. The recall referendum could be held in August, but a larger number of voters than elected Chavez in the first place will have to vote to oust him for the referendum to succeed.¹²

Dirty War

MEANWHILE, THE DIRTY WAR to destabilize the country continues, and not only through Colombia’s (likely U.S.-sponsored) attempts to export its civil war to Venezuela. The opposition may already be adopting some of the tactics that

observers of the Colombian conflict know well. Numerous threats and outright assassinations of peasant leaders have occurred in the countryside. The targets of the assassinations are organizers who are working to implement the land reform law passed by the government, while the assassins are linked to powerful *latifundistas* who oppose the law.¹³

The situation of total polarization, where the media is a key protagonist in the conflict and in which different parts of the government itself are divided, makes it very difficult to objectively assess the human rights situation.

Human Rights Watch reports that opposition supporters have, like Chavez supporters, been killed under very suspicious circumstances, and has asked for full investigations into the murders.¹⁴ But as with the murders of Chavez supporters in April 2002 and since, impartial investigations are impossible under existing conditions. In HRW’s 2002 report, they discussed this problem:

By early November, only four people had been detained in connection with the April shootings. Video footage taken during the protest march suggested that two members of the Metropolitan Police (under the command of an anti-Chavez mayor), one member of the National Guard, and at least eleven civilians fired their weapons. Most of the civilians were said to work for, or to have worked for, the Chavez government. Efforts by the legislature to establish a truth commission to determine responsibility for the April deaths stalled when government and opposition legislators were unable to agree on its composition and authority.¹⁵

It is worth looking at two of the more unlikely fronts of this dirty war in more detail. The first is the union bureaucracy. Venezuela’s union central (the *Confederacion de Trabajadores Venezolanos* or CTV) was supportive of both the coup attempt and the later “strike.” Its leader at the time of the coup, Carlos Ortega, is now a fugitive in Costa Rica. Rising to CTV leadership in a stolen election, Ortega was quick to back the coup and “strike.” The AFL-CIO, through its support of the CTV through the coup, was in effect supporting the coup as well.¹⁶ The Bolivarians have responded by organizing their own labor federation (the *Union Nacional de Trabajadores* or UNT).¹⁷

The second, and incredibly important front in the dirty war has been the media, specifically the television media. An example from Naomi Klein explains just how blatant and virulent the mainstream media attacks on Chavez are:

Poor Endy Chavez, outfielder for the Navegantes del Magallanes, one of Venezuela's big baseball teams. Every time he comes up to bat, the local TV sportscasters start in with the jokes. 'Here comes Chavez. No, not the pro-Cuban dictator Chavez, the other Chavez.' Or 'This Chavez hits baseballs, not the Venezuelan people.'¹⁸

The mainstream television networks played an active, organizing role in the coup of April 2002 and the "strike" of December of that year. They continue to systematically campaign against Chavez's government. The government strikes back on the state-controlled television and radio stations, but there are perhaps more important developments in other areas. One has been the opening up of community-controlled media. These are still on a very small scale, but offer the citizenry a real chance of communicating with one another outside of the coup-plotting networks but with a certain independence from the state. Another important development is the growth of a popular oppositional stance towards the mainstream media. During the movement to reverse the coup, the television stations became targets of demonstrations of hundreds of thousands of people.

The media's position, and the reaction by the Bolivarian movement, have been corrosive for the idea of a "free press" that is impartial, neutral, and protected from the political arena. Reporters without Borders, for example, describes reporters as being "caught between an authoritarian president and an intolerant media."¹⁹ While their report criticizes the Venezuelan media for "openly siding against the government," and "excesses," it reserves its harshest criticism for the President: "The fact is that the President acts like a clan chief." This report, and criticism, understates the role of the media in bringing about the coup of April 2002 and its continuing campaign against the gov-

Social movements and the government are in a close alliance, facing traditional elites and their U.S. backers.

ernment and the social movements. The film "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised"²⁰ shows just how important the television stations were in the coup and its reversal.

Human Rights Watch has also called upon the Venezuelan government to take greater measures to protect journalists. While reporting that

There are few obvious limits on free expression in Venezuela. The

country's print and audiovisual media operate without restrictions. Most are strongly opposed to President Chavez and express their criticism in unequivocal and often strident terms. No journalists are in prison for exercising their profession, and there have been few criminal prosecutions or successful civil suits against journalists in recent years.²¹

Human Rights Watch also stated that

journalists in Venezuela today face constant physical risks . . . there were at least 130 assaults and threats of physical harm to journalists and press property between the beginning of 2002 and February 2003, and the assaults continue. It is not the government, the police or the armed forces that commit these acts of aggression, however, but civilians who strongly identify with the president and his proclaimed revolutionary program.

Human Rights Watch recommends that the government prosecute these offenses, be clear in its public statements against the media that it is against violence, set up a special commission on press freedom, and, importantly, not pass a proposed media law imposing stricter regulations on press freedom.

Even in the current conditions, the position of Human Rights Watch is appropriate. In April 2002, after the coup, Chavez successfully appealed to his followers to refrain from reprisals against the coup-plotters. The Chavez government has exhorted both its own followers and the opposition to keep their struggle within the parameters of the constitution. The government should also urge its followers to eschew violent reprisals against journalists or opposition members.

The Wind From Below

VENEZUELA'S SOCIAL MOVEMENT REFERS to itself as "Bolivarian," after Simon Bolívar, "the Liberator," who fought against Spanish colonialism. The movement — and the Chavez government — invoke Bolívar and contemporaries of Bolívar, affirming its independence and its Latin American roots. One of the main tenets of the Bolivarian movement is this pan-Latin American focus, since Bolívar believed that only a united Latin America could resist imperial depredations.

Chavez's own politics come from this tradi-

If the government takes a
bureaucratic route, will the
movement have sufficient
independence to criticize the
government?

tion. The cohort of military officers to which he belongs were educated in Venezuela (unlike many Latin American officers who studied at the U.S. Army School of the Americas — now renamed WHISC but still an instrument of domination) and favor national independence. These officers became set on rebellion after they were ordered to suppress the Caracas riots of 1989, killing hundreds, perhaps thousands, of civilians (estimates vary). The first dramatic attempt at rebellion came in 1992, when Chavez attempted a military coup, which failed. Another coup attempt was attempted in 1994, when Chavez was in prison. It was after Chavez's prison term that the Bolivarians attempted the electoral route, and succeeded.

Perhaps because of his military background and his attempted coup, his government has been scrupulously democratic since 1998, bringing in a new constitution, ratifying it by referendum, and encouraging citizens to study and use it to hold the government accountable.²²

Venezuela's movement has shown tremendous resilience in the face of opposition. In addition to attempts at building more democratic media and unions, the Bolivarian movement came to

power by defeating a two-party system that offered no real electoral choices to the public. Prior to 1998, the government alternated between two parties, *Accion Democratica* (AD), and the Christian Democratic Party, (COPEI). The parties had a power-sharing arrangement similar to that of the Liberals and Conservatives in neighboring Colombia. U.S. readers won't be surprised to hear about a system ruled by two parties that have more similarities than differences.

Chavez's candidacy changed the political landscape. The new party created by Chavez had a success that was so rapid that it surprised even its own members.²³ If this offers a lesson for North American movements it is that a political party with a genuinely progressive platform and sincerity can have unexpected success, especially in a system where the poor abstain en masse from voting for either one of the two mostly identical parties. By changing the constitution and ratifying major changes through referenda, the Bolivarians have strengthened their political hand considerably.²⁴

The question of whether Chavez is out for "revolution" or is a mere populist pandering to the masses is a false one. The gains that have been made in Venezuela have come not as gifts from Chavez, but through popular mobilization and, increasingly, education and organizing. The program of the government seems to be one that is very sensitive to the international situation (including the power and ruthlessness of the U.S.-backed opposition). In such a context, an insurrectionary "revolution" would likely lead rapidly to intervention and disaster, so the government has opted instead for progressive reforms, consolidated by popular mobilization, which will empower its constituencies against the inevitable backlash and counter-assaults.

There is increasing education and activism around the oil company, PDVSA, especially since the "strike" of December 2002. This is part of a larger context in which movements are taking advantage of the space opened up by a government with a progressive agenda in order to organize themselves. Solidarity activist Diana Valentine, on a delegation to Venezuela in January 2003, before the "strike" finally ended, described this activism:

It isn't just about tens of thousands of people in the street, or even the constitutional changes that empower people. In everyday encounters there's this spirit of change — after greeting each other on the street people will immediately start talking about the projects they're organizing, all the organizing that they're doing, studying the constitution, establishing co-operatives.

This started with Chavez's own attempted coup in 1992. To the public, Chavez has represented an opportunity to actually utilize the government to change their own lives. The 80 percent that live in poverty knew frustration, disempowerment. The Chavez government gave them an opportunity to meld their anger with an opportunity to act. An organizer with the Women's Popular Circles ("*Círculos Femeninos Populares*") told me "Before, politics was a dirty word. We had no faith in any of it."²⁵

One of the key aspects of the government's reform is land redistribution. Gregory Wilpert describes this as "Bolivarian privatization":

Paradoxically, the rural and urban land reforms of the Chavez government are in effect privatization programs, since so much of the property to be redistributed by them is publicly owned. But, of course, this is privatization whose social meaning is the very opposite of the neoliberal prescriptions of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, which promote or impose the sale of large state-owned resources and utilities — water, telephone, electricity etcetera — to transnational corporations. Here it is the poor who benefit from the dismantling of nominal, unutilized appurtenances of the state — those who actually live or work on the land.²⁶

In Wilpert's opinion, "successful implementation of these programs would in the long term be the most important legacy the Chavez government could leave, and the surest way of consolidating support for it in the short term."²⁷

In Valentine's opinion, "The opposition might be able to slow the reforms and make people suffer — but stopping the revolutionary aspects of the *proceso*, the people's self-organization and empowerment, they will find more difficult."²⁸

Venezuela's union central was supportive of both the coup attempt and the later 'strike.'

The Venezuelan political landscape described by Valentine is one where social movements and the government are in a close alliance, facing traditional elites and their U.S. backers. Because the movement and the state are, for the time being, on the same side, assessing the genuine independence of the social movement from the state is very difficult. It is also difficult to know whether the people are controlling the government or vice versa, creating a difficulty for movements. If the government changes direction,

or undergoes an increase in corruption, or takes a bureaucratic route, will the movement have sufficient independence and political space to criticize the government? Given the violence of the attacks by the elite opposition, will the movement silence itself to keep a united front? These are serious questions whose answers are not obvious. Attempts to build international networks and movements in solidarity with Venezuelans independently of the state could, in this context, only be a good thing. The Indymedia network is one such example, and a Venezuela Indymedia Center (IMC), made up of Venezuelans with connections to the grassroots, international indymedia network, would be welcome.

Even though this state-movement alliance gives Venezuela a unique character, its movement also provides lessons that could be worth studying. When faced with bureaucratic political party machines, the movement sought to create an independent party. When faced with a corrupt union bureaucracy, the movement sought to organize an independent union federation. Faced with a virulently hostile mainstream media, the movement took actions to discredit it and also worked to build alternative, community media. It is now attempting to bring the oil company back under public control. It has been strong enough to reverse a coup and stop a phony "strike" that did severe damage to the economy.

How will the Bolivarians respond to the extension of the Colombian model of dirty war, sponsored by Washington? The U.S. tried the "Chile Model" of a military coup, and failed. It seems that the "Nicaragua Model" of destabiliza-

tion, economic sabotage, and “contra” warfare, is next. If there is a role for North American support and solidarity in Venezuela, it is here, in trying to prevent this from happening and giving Venezuelans the space they need to continue with their *proceso*.

NOTES

1. See Podur, “What is the Colombian Army doing attacking Venezuela?” ZNet, April 3, 2003, www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=45&ItemID=3389.
2. Paul D. Coverdell, “Starting with Colombia,” *Washington Post*, April 10, 2000.
3. See Mondragon, “What are these other ‘threats’ to Colombia’s security,” ZNet, April 27, 2002, www.zmag.org/content/Colombia/mondragon-col-ven.cfm.
4. The source for the “regional security summit” was Colombia’s main daily newspaper, *El Tiempo*, March 11–12, 2003.
5. See Rahul Mahajan, *The New Crusade: America’s War on Terrorism* (New York: Monthly Review, 2002).
6. “Plan Colombia,” begun in 2000, involved \$1.3 billion in U.S. aid, primarily military plus several billion dollars more from Colombian tax revenues. At the time, the government was in peace talks with the Colombian guerrilla group, FARC. By early 2002, the funds had been disbursed—the helicopters were purchased and the battalions were trained – and in February 2002 the government broke off the peace talks with FARC.
7. See Patricia Dahl, “Senator Castano?” ZNet, May 8, 2003, quoting Gustavo Petro, www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=9&ItemID=3591.
8. Bernard Mommer, “Subversive Oil,” Chapter 7 in Steve Ellner and Daniel Hellinger, eds., *Venezuelan Politics in the Chavez Era: Polarization and Social Conflict* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 2002).
9. The structural adjustment program called for increased gas prices, which were reflected in a sudden increase in bus fares, which in turn triggered a massive and deadly uprising in Caracas the week of Feb. 27, 1989, called the “Caracazo.” The army was called in to quell the riot, and an uncounted number of people (likely in the hundreds) were killed. Many of the soldiers who were involved in suppressing the Caracazo became disenchanted with the government and joined the Bolivarian movement.
10. Mommer, “Subversive Oil.”
11. The history of the coup is intricate, and important, but too much to go into here. See ZNet’s Venezuela Watch for many good sources, especially the reporting of Gregory Wilpert.
12. See Gregory Wilpert, “Collision in Venezuela,” in *New Left Review* 21, May–June 2003. www.newleftreview.net/NLR25505.shtml.
13. See Wilpert, “Collision in Venezuela.”
14. Human Rights Watch, “Investigate Killings of Opposition Supporters in Venezuela.” Feb. 19, 2003. <http://hrw.org/press/2003/02/venezuela021903.htm>.
15. Human Rights Watch, *World Report 2003*, “Venezuela.” <http://hrw.org/wr2k3/americas10.html>.
16. See Tim Shorrock, “Labor’s Cold War,” *The Nation*, May 19, 2003.
17. A note by Mike Lebowitz from April 2, 2003 discusses some of the developments in Venezuela’s labor movement in detail. www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=45&ItemID=3374
18. See Naomi Klein, “Venezuela’s Media Coup,” *The Nation*, Feb. 13, 2003. www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20030303&s=klein.
19. Reporters without Borders, “Caught between an authoritarian president and an intolerant media,” www.rsrf.org/article.php3?id_article=6036.
20. See www.chavezthefilm.com.
21. Human Rights Watch, “Caught in the Crossfire: Freedom of Expression in Venezuela,” May 2003, www.hrw.org/reports/2003/venezuela/.
22. A good account of Venezuela’s electoral system and the electoral success of the Bolivarian movement is Richard Gott, *In the Shadow of the Liberator* (London: Verso, 2000).
23. Gott, *In the Shadow of the Liberator*.
24. The constitution itself can be read in Spanish at <http://ftp01.mipunto.com/documentos/constitucion.pdf>.
25. Diana Valentine, “Slow, low-intensity, (so far largely bloodless) class warfare,” ZNet, Jan. 12, 2003, www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=45&ItemID=2855 and also “The Process and the ‘Strike,’” by the same author, ZNet, Jan. 19, 2003 www.zmag.org/content/showarticle.cfm?SectionID=45&ItemID=2886.
26. Wilpert, “Collision in Venezuela.”
27. Ibid.
28. Valentine, ZNet, Jan. 12, 2003.

Lula: New-Style Revolutionary or False Prophet?

SUE BRANFORD

SHORTLY AFTER LUIS INÁCIO LULA DA SILVA, from the Workers' Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores*, PT), had taken office in Brasília on January 1, 2003, Luís Soares Dulci, Lula's closest aide and a leading ideologue within the party, cautioned the Brazilian left against undue optimism. "The PT is a left-wing party, but the government represents an alliance," he said. "The program on which Lula was elected to office is center-left and that is the programme which will set the government's agenda."¹ But Lula-mania was sweeping through the country and few wanted to listen to Dulci. Hundreds of thousands of poor Brazilians swarmed to the federal capital, Brasília, on inauguration day to gain a glimpse of the man in whom they had deposited their hopes for resolving the country's profound social crisis. Security guards were overwhelmed, as thousands broke through the rails, desperate to touch Lula or to throw him flowers. Trade unionists and left-wing political activists, who had dreamed of this moment ever since the party had been founded in 1980, hugged each other in the streets. Brazil had been through two difficult decades of economic stagnation, high unemployment and mounting crime. It was impossible not to be infected by the climate of excitement and hope that took hold of the country. Despite Lula's own attempts to defuse expectations, it was almost as if the revolution had finally happened.

Over the following few months, as the country got used to having for the first time in its history a working class Brazilian as its president, the importance of Dulci's warning became increasingly apparent. Lula, whose greatest political talent has always been his skill in forging consensus, first within a divided labor movement and then within the notoriously factionalized Workers' Party, sought from his first day in office to apply this same skill to forming a national government that would represent the main reformist forces within the country. In his cabinet he brought together a remarkable collection of strange bedfellows. He selected some PT veterans, such as Marina da Silva, a passionate ecologist, to head the environment ministry, Miguel Rossetto, a known left winger, to be minister of agrarian reform, and

Cristovam Buarque, an innovative thinker and the former PT mayor of Brasília. But, alongside them, he appointed figures from the world of banking and business, who had never been associated with the PT. Luiz Fernando Furlan, a dynamic entrepreneur, who heads Sadia, Brazil's largest poultry, pork and beef exporting firm and is on the board of Amro Bank Brazil, a subsidiary of the big Dutch multinational bank, became minister of development, industry and external trade. Roberto Rodrigues, who has close links with Brazil's modern, export-oriented commercial farmers, became agriculture minister. And, perhaps most remarkably of all, Lula chose as president of the Central Bank Henrique Meirelles, the first Latin American to have headed an international bank (the Bank of Boston). Many veteran *petistas* were shocked at the choice of Meirelles: for them, he was the enemy, representing the world financial system that they were seeking to change.

There are enormous political differences be-

SUE BRANFORD is co-author, with Bernardo Kucinski, of *Lula and the Workers' Party in Brazil*, *The New Press*, New York (January 2004).

tween the ministers. Marina da Silva, who worked with the murdered political activist, Chico Mendes, to win land for the rubber-tappers in Acre in the west of the Amazon basin, has never hidden her profound dislike of the intensive farming methods used by Furlan's poultry company. Sadia routinely sends out batches of 2-day-old chicks to impoverished contract farmers, who are instructed to inject the birds with growth hormones and to keep them awake 24 hours a day so that they eat more and grow more quickly. Marina da Silva, who believes that genetically modified crops should remain banned in Brazil until long-term environmental impact studies have been carried out, also finds herself at odds with Rodrigues, who argues that Brazil will get left behind in the technological race unless it works with the biotechnology multinationals. Rossetto, who is a close ally of the *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* (MST), Brazil's powerful landless movement, which believes that the only way to end the poverty in the cities is to carry out a program of radical agrarian reform and to take millions of people back to the land to set up new "communities of peasant production" to practise *agro-ecologia*, a form of environmentally-friendly peasant agriculture², has little in common with Rodrigues, who only has time for big, modern capitalist farms and believes any attempt at peasant farming to be an exercise in futility.

Along with the U.S. president Lyndon B. Johnson, Lula may believe that it is better to "have the bastards inside the tent, pissing out," but it is clearly more than this. It is a recognition that he heads, not a revolutionary government intent on abolishing capitalism, but a democratic government that is attempting to reform the country. "We are in government but not in power," commented the Dominican Friar, Frei Betto, one of Lula's closest aides. "Power today is global power, the power of big companies, the power of financial capital." Lula has got to learn to work with this power.

Perhaps because he has had very little formal education, Lula does not think in conventional ideological terms of "left" and "right." Having travelled extensively over this vast country (almost as big as the U.S.), he has had first-hand contact with the country's profound problems: the shocking levels of rural and urban poverty, with 25 million people officially classified as *indigente*, that is,

without enough resources to cover their basic needs; the social inequalities, with the richest 20 percent of the population taking 60 percent of

Trade unionists and left-wing political activists, who had dreamed of this moment ever since the party had been founded in 1980, hugged each other in the streets.

national income, while the poorest 20 percent have to make do with 4 percent; the high level of land concentration, with 262 huge estates covering 40 million hectares, almost 10 percent of total farm land, while 32 percent of the farmers have just 4.4 million hectares, 1.3 percent of the total; and the existence of slave labor, with thousands of rural workers held against their will in remote estates. Lula believes that, because the iniquities are so glaring, the only way forward is to unite well-intentioned Brazilians of very different political inclinations around a project of national construction. Indeed, this is the way that Lula has always worked: when in 1978 he was establishing himself as the country's most important labor leader and, through industrial action, was mounting the first serious challenge to the military government, he was bitterly criticized by some fellow workers for inviting two representatives of the establishment — the Governor of São Paulo state and the Commander of the 2nd Army — to his inauguration as president of the São Bernardo metalworkers' union. Lula argued then — as he would today — that he has to dialogue with his adversaries.

Lula believes that the way forward for Brazil is a social democratic project, with a strong nationalist component. The goals are: strong economic growth, high employment, social inclusion, social equality, industrial development, a productive agricultural sector composed of both efficient, export-oriented, commercial farmers and a large, relatively prosperous peasantry, and an active state

sector responsible for both economic planning and the monitoring of public services (whether they are delivered by a state bureaucracy or a private company). It is a project, Lula says, that needs the support of all Brazilians and, if successful, will provide something for everyone.

Strategies of Conciliation

FOR MANY ON THE LEFT Lula's program seems disappointingly middle-of-the-road, yet it contains an under-reported revolutionary kernel: the democratization of power. Since Brazil was colonized by the Portuguese in the early 16th century, power has been monopolized by a small clique. For centuries, this group was composed exclusively of *latifundiários* (big landowners) and top government officials. Eventually, with the development of the modern Brazilian economy, this exclusive club had to allow in a few more members — industrialists, bosses of state companies, export-oriented farmers, and even the upper middle classes — but huge sectors of the Brazilian population — industrial workers, the rural poor, shantytown dwellers, and the lower middle classes — were completely excluded. When Brazil eventually adhered to formal parliamentary democracy, different political parties gained power, yet very little was done to challenge the control exercised by the privileged group over the country's structure of power, including the state bureaucracy.

Education minister Cristovam Buarque recently gave an indication of the level of exclusion of the poor: "Brazil has been a republic for 115 years, but today the state invests 80 times more in the education of someone from the middle or upper classes than in the education of a youngster from a poor family."³ According to another study, carried out by the *Instituto de Estudos do Trabalho e Sociedade* (IETS), only 1 percent of the inhabitants of Rio's 500 *favelas* (shanty-towns) manages to get a university education.⁴ It is evident that, if Lula's government were able to incorporate the

excluded sectors within the political system so that they were able to redress these structural inequalities, it would change Brazil forever.

It was his confidence that Lula would be able to do this that led the leading Marxist sociologist, Francisco de Oliveira, to exclaim triumphantly just after the election: "I think Lula's triumph is a turning point in Brazil's history, like the abolition of slavery or the proclamation of the Republic. It may be the point at which we move on from a passive history, in which the country is led by the dominant blocs, to an active history in which the dominated classes have a big impact on state policies." Yet this enthusiasm was premature. (Oliveira, himself, expressed great disappointment in the limited nature of Lula's achievements after six months in government). Lula is attempting to reform Brazil while respecting, not only the constitution, the constraints of parliamentary democracy and the wide-ranging concerns of the members of his broad coalition, but also the contractual agree-

ments, particularly with creditors, that the previous administration entered into.

Lula's original intention was to repeat the strategy successfully applied by some PT state and municipal governments: namely, a year of austerity in order to sort out the financial problems bequeathed by the previous administrations, followed by heavy investment in the kind of development favoured by the party. Lula was clearly optimistic that, within a relatively short period, he would be able to get the economy growing vigorously once again, which would, in its turn, make it easier to redistribute power and resources.

However, after just a few weeks in office, it became clear to Lula and his cabinet that the national economy had been devastated to a far greater extent than they had anticipated, by over a decade of unfettered neo-liberal reforms that had left Brazil heavily dependent on borrowed capital, both foreign and national. As we shall see, these problems may jeopardize Lula's whole

By the time Cardoso ended his eight years in government, international capital had taken over huge areas of the Brazilian economy and the country was caught in a foreign debt trap of unprecedented proportions.

conciliatory strategy.

The Cardoso Years

WHEN FERNANDO HENRIQUE CARDOSO took office on January 1, 1995, he stood for the best of the old elitist civilian governments that had ruled Brazil for much of the twentieth century (outside the period of the 1964–85 military dictatorship): he was a respected intellectual, he spoke four or five languages, he was a democrat who opposed the military dictatorship, and he was personally honest. Moreover, before entering politics, Cardoso had established an international reputation as a left-leaning sociologist who had studied “dependent development” in Latin America, and had concluded that, far from bringing autonomous development, the close relationship that the region had developed with the rich, industrialized countries, particularly the United States, had exacerbated its social and economic inequalities and increased its vulnerability to external shocks. He had argued that Latin America’s spineless and cowed “national bourgeoisie” was incapable of using an alliance with “external monopoly capital” to defend its own interests⁵ and concluded that the region must forge its own identity and independent path to development.

Even though Cardoso’s views altered after he returned from exile in 1978 and entered politics, few people expected Cardoso to become a convert to the latest — and particularly vicious — variant of “dependent development.” However, by the time Cardoso ended his eight years in government, international capital had taken over huge areas of the Brazilian economy and the country was caught in a foreign debt trap of unprecedented proportions. Unemployment — and crime — had reached record levels. One analyst concluded: “The Brazilian case constitutes a laboratory experiment demonstrating how and why the injection of the neo-liberal virus, especially that strain which includes a pegged exchange rate, tends to polarize society and ruin an economy.”⁶ How had this happened?

Cardoso’s first important job in government was as finance minister in the administration set up by Collor de Melo’s successor, Itamar Franco. In early 1994 Cardoso announced a radically different kind of anti-inflationary plan, called the *Plano Real*, which was implemented piecemeal and

culminated on July 1, 1994, amid much fanfare, with the introduction of a solid new currency, the *real*, anchored to the U.S. dollar. The plan succeeded in very rapidly bringing down inflation to manageable levels. For several years, runaway inflation had been the scourge of the country, reaching 1,158 percent in 1992 and 2,709 percent in 1993. While the massive price increases had wreaked havoc on all Brazilian lives, they had particularly affected the poor, who were paid in cash and, unlike the middle classes, did not have the protection of index-linked bank accounts. Before converting the price of retail goods to the new currency in the last stage of the plan, the government increased the minimum wage, which is the yardstick for all payments, including pensions, made to the poorer classes. So, as well as benefiting from the end of inflation, the poor received a real income boost.

With inflation down to manageable levels, it became possible once again to pay for goods in instalments in the department stores, and the poor went on a spending spree, buying basic household products, such as televisions and washing machines, which they had not been able to afford during the years of high inflation. The economy, which after several years of stagnation had already grown by 4.9 percent in 1993, as foreign capital began to enter the economy as a result of the early round of free market reforms, expanded by a further 5.9 percent in 1994, as poorer Brazilians joined in the party. The whole country breathed a collective sigh of relief, as the nightmare years receded and the population recovered its faith in the future. The PT was caught off balance by the success of the plan, which they did not know whether to praise or condemn. The main beneficiary was Cardoso, widely regarded as the “savior of the nation,” and with the backing of the right-wing Liberal Front Party he became the presidential candidate of the ruling party for the elections in October 1994. He won with a comfortable majority in the first round, while Lula (who had come very close to defeating Collor de Melo in 1989) suffered his second defeat, not even obtaining enough votes to force a second round.

While it is true that inflation had become so ingrained in Brazilian society that it took some kind of shock treatment to break its hold, it is also clear that the technocrats who backed the *Plano*

Real, particularly the team that came into power with finance minister Pedro Malan on January 1, 1995 at the beginning of the Cardoso government, used the prestige they had gained from the plan as a means of implementing a fully-fledged neo-liberal program, which they believed would finally launch Brazil on the road to full economic development. According to Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, a leading Brazilian economist who was Minister of Federal Administration and State Reform during the first Cardoso administration (1995-8), the team had accepted uncritically the U.S.-sponsored economic doctrine known as the

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Washington Consensus. Bresser-Pereira sums up the new orthodoxy in the following way: “The recipe is simple: if a country completes its fiscal adjustment, if it carries out other neo-liberal reforms, and if it opens up the financial sector to the world market, then it will be rewarded by a big influx of foreign capital. Instead of the “development-with-debt” that characterized the 1970s, it will have “development-with-foreign savings.”⁷⁷

The most fervent advocate of the Washington Consensus in the Cardoso government was Gustavo Franco, whose familiarity with U.S. economic theory included a doctorate at Harvard University; he became first Director of International Affairs and then president at the Central Bank. One commentator said that: “Cardoso considered Franco’s ideas as a kind of Copernican Revolution,”⁷⁸ that is, he believed that they made possible an entirely new — and self-evidently superior — way of viewing the world of international finance. In a newspaper interview in October 1996, Cardoso commented: “We have achieved something that neither Marx nor Weber nor anyone else imagined — they couldn’t have

done at the time they lived. Capital has internationalized rapidly and is available in abundance. Some countries can take advantage of this excess of capital, and Brazil is one of them.”⁷⁹ Totally won over to the new ideology, Cardoso did not spare his critics, calling them “catastrophists” and “doom-mongers”; he even invented a new term — *neobobo* (neofool) — for those Luddites who criticized the neo-liberals and refused to recognize the wonderful opportunities opened up by the globalized world.

In line with neo-liberal thinking, the Cardoso government took measures to change the role of the state, cutting back on public spending and privatizing many large state companies, including some that were perfectly sound. As controlling inflation was seen as an essential part of the program, it also kept the local currency at a high value with respect to the dollar, so that imports would remain cheap, and was delighted when in 1998 inflation was brought down to 1.7 percent, a lower rate than in many industrialized countries. The high value of the *real* meant that Brazilian goods became expensive abroad, so Brazil began to run a trade deficit (see Table 1) but, as there was plenty of foreign capital coming into the country, this was not seen as a problem but as a means of acquiring foreign goods cheaply.

Not surprisingly, since they had been masterminded in the U.S., Brazil’s new policies were warmly welcomed abroad. The world economy was suffering from a huge glut of capital, with financial institutions in the rich countries desperately searching for new sources of short-term profit. The decision by many developing countries, under guidance from Washington, to open up new opportunities for speculative investment, particularly the hugely lucrative foreign exchange market, came as a godsend. According to the economist Harry Shutt, “The global volume of business [in the foreign exchange market] rose over tenfold in constant value terms between the early 1980s and the mid-1990s — to a level estimated at no less than U.S.\$1,500 billion *a day* by 1995. Its attraction for investing institutions — particularly commercial banks — are obvious, since it involves dealing in the most liquid of all assets (cash), of which they are bound in any case to hold large quantities and which can be placed in interest-bearing deposits for very

short periods.”¹⁰

Foreign direct investment poured into Brazil, with the annual net total going from U.S.\$3.9 billion in 1995 to U.S.\$9.6 billion in 1996, U.S.\$17.8 billion in 1997, U.S.\$26.3 billion in 1998, U.S.\$29.9 billion in 1999 and U.S.\$30.5 billion in 2000.¹¹ According to the United Nations Commission on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), Brazil’s stock (that is, the total amount) of foreign direct investment rose from U.S.\$42.5 billion (6 percent of GDP) in 1995 to U.S.\$197.7 billion (21.6 percent of GDP) in 1999.¹² Not surprisingly, Brazil was fêted around the globe as the latest “wonder” of the developing world.

Inflows of Foreign Capital

WHILE MANY ANALYSTS, particularly on the left, believe that it is harmful for key sectors of the productive economy to be under foreign control, because multinationals do not consider national interests when taking investment decisions, orthodox economists have long argued that foreign direct investment is beneficial for a developing country, because it allows a country to have a higher rate of investment and thus to grow more

rapidly. This argument makes the common-sense assumption that foreign capital does not replace national savings, but complements them. So did this happen? Did the big influx of foreign investment that Cardoso so strongly promoted lead to a higher rate of investment?

Rather surprisingly, Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira discovered that foreign investment had little impact on Brazil’s overall rate of investment: “During the Fernando Henrique Cardoso government foreign direct investments increased extraordinarily: until 1994 the country received at most U.S.\$2 billion *a year* in foreign investments; after the *Plano Real* the country received on average U.S.\$2 billion *a month* in direct investments. But, contradicting conventional wisdom, the rate of capital formation did not increase and the growth in per capita income remained at around 1 percent per capita.”¹³

These figures strongly suggest that most of the inflows of foreign capital did not constitute investment in completely new fixed assets, which is what UNCTAD used to mean by foreign direct investment and which is generally seen as beneficial to the receiving economy. Other uses, it seems, were made of most of the money. Some

Table 1. **Brazil’s Balance of Payments** (U.S.\$ billions)

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
a) Trade (a)											
Exports	38.5	43.5	46.5	47.7	52.9	51.1	48.8	55.0	56.2	51.3*	54.7*
Imports	-25.2	-33.1	-49.8	-53.3	-61.3	-57.7	-49.2	-55.7	-55.5	-42.7*	-41.7*
Balance	13.3	10.4	-3.4	-5.5	-8.3	-6.5	-1.2	-0.6	2.6	8.6*	13.0*
b) Services (b)											
Interest	-8.4	-6.3	-8.1	-9.8	-10.6	-11.9	-15.2	-15.0	-14.8	13.7*	12.7*
Profits and Dividends	-1.9	-2.4	-2.5	-2.4	-5.5	-7.1	-4.0	-3.5	-4.9	n.a.	n.a.
Other	-3.5	-3.4	-3.9	-5.4	-6.3	-7.8	-5.0	-5.5	-6.1	n.a.	n.a.
Balance	-13.8	-12.1	-14.5	-17.6	-22.4	-26.9	-24.2	-24.0	-25.8	n.a.	n.a.
c) Current Account	-0.5	-1.7	-17.9	-23.1	-30.7	-33.4	-25.4	-24.6	-23.2	-14.9*	-8.6*
Amortization	-9.2	-11.0	-11.0	-14.4	-28.7	-33.5	-49.5	-34.6	-35.2	n.a.	n.a.
Gross External Debt	145.7	148.2	159.2	179.9	199.9	241.6	241.4	237.9	233.7	223.3	222.6*

*Economist Intelligence Unit predictions

SOURCES: Banco Central do Brasil, Geisa Maria Rocha, Economist Intelligence Unit and my calculations.

of it went to the takeover of existing assets. Indeed, the Brazilian government was at this time encouraging such a trend through its huge privatization program in which state companies were sold to multinationals, often at knock-down prices. The government expected the multinationals to invest heavily in the companies they purchased, but in most cases this did not happen. So the Brazilian people got a raw deal: they handed over control of key sectors of the economy without getting the increase in productive investment (and the influx of sophisticated technology) that was supposed to be their recompense in the *quid pro quo*. Another part of the money appears to have gone to the lucrative local money market where, as will be discussed in more detail later, the government was paying exorbitantly high interest rates in its desperate need to raise the money to roll over the huge domestic and foreign debts.

Bresser-Pereira points to another complementary “perverse mechanism” at the very heart of the Washington Consensus that added to the harm done by the big influx of foreign capital. It is a simple mechanism that stems not from decisions taken by individual companies, but from the nature of the macroeconomic policy itself in a situation of almost complete trade liberalization. It works as follows: a big influx of foreign capital means that foreign currency becomes more widely available, so the dollar depreciates against the local currency; this means that the purchasing power of wages, paid in local currency, increases *vis-à-vis* the dollar; this, in turn, leads both to an increase in consumption, particularly of imported goods, and to a concomitant decline in domestic savings by individuals; this shortfall in domestic savings is covered by foreign capital. The net result is an unchanged rate of capital formation but a worsening trade account, because of the surge in imports.

In Brazil’s case, the impact on the trade account was dramatic: the country went from routine trade surpluses of around U.S.\$10 billion in the early 1990s to heavy deficits — U.S.\$3.4 billion in 1995, U.S.\$5.5 billion in 1996, U.S.\$8.3 billion in 1997 and U.S.\$6.5 billion in 1998. The deficit on the current account (that is, the balance left after trade in goods and services, income flows and current transfers have been taken

into account, excluding capital movements) went up from U.S.\$1.7 billion in 1994, when Brazil still had a healthy trade balance, to U.S.\$17.9 billion in 1995, U.S.\$23.1 billion in 1996, U.S.\$30.7 billion in 1996 and U.S.\$33.4 billion in 1998 (see Table 1). Throughout Brazil’s history high current account deficits have usually been a sign that a crisis was approaching and this was to prove no exception.

New Forms of Economic Vulnerability

THE DEFICITS LED TO A startling increase in the country’s foreign vulnerability. Once again, it is easy to see what happened. Brazil needed a big influx of foreign capital (apart from foreign investment) to cover the current account deficits and to build up its foreign reserves to protect its overvalued currency from attacks by speculators. In order to attract this foreign capital, the government (which borrows in the local currency, the *real*, on the local money market) had to raise interest rates to one of the highest levels in the world and lay on other attractive enticements for foreigners (such as indexing treasury bonds against the U.S. dollar and authorizing investors to set up bank accounts with free access to floating exchange rates, so that they could move funds in and out of the country at will).¹⁴ In its turn, the high rate of interest led to a ballooning internal debt, which by the end of the Cardoso government had reached over 50 percent of GDP. The foreign debt, too, grew very quickly (just as it had, in very different circumstances, in the late 1970s), increasing from U.S.\$145.7 billion in 1993 to U.S.\$241.4 billion in 1999. Even discounting foreign reserves of around U.S.\$35 billion, this left a net debt of U.S.\$206 billion in 1999, which was more than four times that year’s exports of U.S.\$44.8 billion. The IMF and the World Bank believe that in most cases a ratio of net foreign debt to exports of more than 2.5 leaves an economy extremely vulnerable to external shocks.

As Geisa Maria Rocha has shown, Brazil’s susceptibility soon became evident during the Cardoso government. The country no sooner recovered from one shock than it was shaken by another: first, the collapse of the Mexican peso in 1995 and the subsequent aftershocks throughout Latin America; next, the East Asian crisis in early 1997; and then the Russian default in August

1998, followed by the plunge in Wall Street in the autumn. Each time the crisis took the same relentless course — speculators withdrew their “hot money,” the government increased interest rates to super-high levels in a desperate attempt to attract the capital back, the Brazilian economy stalled as companies reeled from the high cost of borrowing, recession, and finally a modest recovery.

This chain of events, which has been repeated in so many vulnerable countries in the world over the last decade, does incalculable damage to the developing nation. Because the debtor country is so dependent on capital inflows, it is vulnerable to deliberate attacks, engineered by speculators to increase their takings. At these moments Brazil’s “country risk” — the sanctimonious and self-righteous term with which speculators justify their exorbitant takings by claiming that they must be rewarded for the high risk they are taking in lending to an untrustworthy country — rose to over 1,500 points (even going to the ludicrous level of 2,500 points at one stage in 2002). This meant that Brazil had to pay an additional rate of interest, above the U.S. base rate, of 15 percent (or even 25 percent) a year. In practice, the banks have rarely paid the price of the additional risk they claim to be running, for whenever an important debtor has finally exhausted its reserves and faced default, the IMF has stepped in with extra cash, always demanding additional sacrifices from the recipient nation, even though almost all the new money has gone straightaway to the foreign banks. This scheme has meant that for two decades the governments of debtor countries have been paying ludicrously high rates of interest and making big contributions to the exorbitant profits made by many foreign banks. This export of capital from the poorest to the richest nations — which dwarfs all assistance received by developing countries in aid — is one of the worst scandals of the present age.

For Brazil, the crisis was most serious in the first half of 1998, when U.S.\$31.2 billion in speculative capital hemorrhaged out of the coun-

try in a few weeks amid rumors that Brazil would follow Russia into default. Rather than let the *real* drop to its market level (which was bound to happen in the end, given the deregulated state of the Brazilian economy), the government spent half the country’s foreign reserves in just two months in what was to prove a fruitless attempt to maintain the currency at its high level. Politics intervened when the U.S. organized an IMF bail-out worth U.S.\$41.5 billion to postpone the collapse of the currency until after Cardoso had been re-elected President in October (defeating

Lula knows that huge expectations have been aroused by his election.

Lula in his third attempt) but, after the election, market pressure on the *real* continued. According to Bresser-Pereira, Finance Minister Pedro Malan refused to accept even then that his policy had failed: “In January 1999, after a long internal struggle

within the government, the President of the Republic, going against the advice of his Finance Minister, decided to let the exchange rate float.” If the government had insisted on keeping an overvalued currency until the last possible moment, as happened in neighboring Argentina, Brazil’s economic situation would undoubtedly be worse today. Surprisingly, Malan was not sacked, nor did he resign, after this major policy defeat (although the young Turk, Gustavo Franco, lost his job).

Because of the devaluation and the U.S. government’s decision to lower interest rates to prop up the U.S. stock market, Brazil enjoyed a breather and the economy grew by 4.4 percent in 2000. Yet before that year was out, the crisis returned in an even more virulent form. The flow of international capital, vital for covering the current account deficit, was halted by the looming default in Argentina and the downturn in the global economy, particularly in the United States. In August 2001 Brazil signed a new U.S.\$15 billion deal with the IMF, for which it was required to commit itself to a budget surplus of at least 3 percent over the following three years. This time the respite was even shorter. In 2002 rumors were rife that Brazil would soon

be forced into a default. In the middle of the year, with opinion polls suggesting that Lula would win the presidential election in October, speculators began to pull money out of the country, saying that they feared that Lula would repudiate the foreign debt and freeze the domestic debt. One bank — Goldman Sachs — even created a so-called “Lula meter” in which it calculated the knock-on effect that the fluctuating predictions of a Lula victory had on the *real* in the currency market and on Brazil’s foreign-debt rating in the financial market.

In June, George Soros, the speculator-cum-philanthropist, told a Brazilian journalist in New York that Brazil faced economic meltdown if it elected Lula. He added: “Brazil is condemned by the market to elect Serra [the government’s candidate], for in global capitalism only Americans vote, not Brazilians.” The comment was seen in Brazil as outrageous interference in the country’s internal democratic system and it probably helped to strengthen Lula’s ratings in the opinion polls. In August 2002 the international financial community decided that a Brazilian default would be too disruptive for the already nervous world financial markets. The Bush administration, in particular, was keen to bail out First Boston and other U.S. banks, large donors to the Republican Party, just before the mid-term elections. So the IMF agreed to another bail-out, of U.S.\$30 billion. In what was clearly intended as a manoeuvre to gain maximum political leverage for its loan, the IMF arranged for most of the money to be disbursed in February 2003, so that it could first get a commitment from the new President to agree to the IMF’s conditions.

The Social Legacy

CARDOSO REPEATEDLY CLAIMED that, by making the economy more efficient, the neo-liberal reforms would boost growth, which would benefit the whole population. Yet the poor, after having their hopes raised by the *Plano Real* that had brought them real benefits by ending runaway inflation and increasing the minimum wage, gained little during the Cardoso years. The economy grew by an average rate of just 2.6 percent in the 1990s, which works out at an annual per capita rate of growth of just 1.1 percent (*see* Table 2). It was only a small improve-

ment on the rates achieved during the “lost decade” of the 1980s, and it meant that the last period of sustained growth for Brazil was in the 1970s.

Table 2. Growth of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Across Three Decades

Period	GDP	Per Capita GDP
1971-1980	8.63 percent	5.72 percent
1981-1990	1.57 percent	- 0.37 percent
1991-2000	2.65 percent	1.11 percent

SOURCE: Ipeadata — www.ipeadata.org.br

Sluggish economic growth meant that it became more and more difficult for a worker to find a proper registered job: according to official figures, which are known to underestimate the scale of the problem, unemployment increased from 4.5 million (6.1 percent of the labor force) in December 1994 to 11.5 million (15 percent of the labor force) in December 2000.¹⁵ Unemployment was most prevalent among the young, with half of the unemployed being 25 years old or younger. Many of the unemployed tried to eke out a living in the informal market. By 2002 only one third (24 million) of Brazil’s economically active population of 76.5 million people had a registered job, with some kind of labor rights. According to Sérgio Mendonça, director of DIEESE, the main trade union statistics department, “the figures show that the informal market is more than saturated.”¹⁶ Research shows that by 2002 workers in the informal sector in the city of São Paulo worked, on average, 76 hours a week and, even so, had an income of less than R\$240 (about U.S.\$80) a month. Not surprisingly, the combination of high unemployment and deteriorating labor conditions led to a fall in earnings: once inflation is taken into account, the average wage fell by 10.8 percent from the end of 1997 to the end of 2001, even though Brazilian productivity was increasing during this period.¹⁷

Lula’s Dilemma

LULA — AND, INDEED, all the ministers in his government — were clearly shocked by the scale of the economic crisis that faced them on taking office. In early 2003 the public debt stood at about

55 percent of GDP, which meant that the country, through fiscal restraint and additional borrowing, was paying the equivalent of 9 percent of its GDP in debt servicing, which, according to the respected Brazil analyst, David Fleischer from the University of Brasília, “no country can continue to pay for very long.”¹⁸ In a fairly grim analysis of the financial situation after 100 days in office, finance minister Antônio Palocci (a PT veteran, with no academic training in economics, who had first come to Lula’s attention for the competence with which, as elected mayor, he had run the administration of a medium-sized town, Ribeirão Preto) said that, if all else remained equal, Brazil would have to run a budget surplus of 4.25 percent of GDP for at least nine years before it could “stabilize” the public debt, that is, stop it growing.

Even though rumors abound as to a secret Plan B, it is evident that, for the moment at least, Lula is trying to find a way forward through orthodox economic policies. By showing sustained economic prudence, the government hopes to be able to reduce interest rates, still in June running at 26.5 percent, the highest rates in the world. This would obviously reduce the cost of debt servicing, as well as encourage productive investment. At the same time, the government is doing everything it can to boost the trade surplus, which would also help to reduce dependence on foreign resources. Minister Luiz Fernando Furlan said that his ministry had high hopes of achieving very rapid growth in exports, possibly by as much as 13 or 14 percent a year. “We have to seek non-traditional markets. For instance, our exports to China will increase by 40 percent this year. I think it is possible for our exports to reach U.S.\$100 billion by the end of Lula’s four-year term of government.” At the same time the Lula government is pushing ahead with two controversial reforms to reduce the chronic deficit in the social welfare system and to restructure the tax system. Not surprisingly, the government’s policies have been warmly welcomed by the international financial system, which has been falling over itself to pile praise on Lula. Because of this, there seems little doubt that Brazil should be able to attract the foreign finance — estimated by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) at U.S.\$23.9 billion in 2003 and U.S.\$29.6 billion in 2004¹⁹ — that is needed to balance the books.

These tough policies mean that economic growth is expected to remain at a sluggish 1.6 percent in 2003, scarcely above population growth. Lula is clearly unhappy with this performance. In a passionate speech on television in April, he said: “I know that the poor are suffering with the economic policies that we have to adopt, but that is all that is possible at the moment. The country’s economic situation was extremely difficult when we took office. As soon as it’s possible, we shall change course.” So far, Lula has been prepared to face down criticism from people in the labor movement and in his own party, who feel betrayed by the government’s willingness to demand yet more sacrifices from the Brazilian people so that foreign debts can be honored.

Lula seems confident that his orthodox approach will work. He is already talking about a recovery in economic growth to 3.5 percent in 2004 and has said that, despite the rise in unemployment during his first six months in office, the government will honor its electoral commitment to create 10 million jobs during its four-year term. This is extremely optimistic, for it implies among other things that the government will be able to negotiate better terms from its foreign creditors. This is far from certain. Short-term capital is pouring into Brazil at the moment, because of Lula’s new prestige (and the very high rates of profit earned by the speculators). Yet, as was demonstrated brutally during the Cardoso years, conditions on the international financial market can change very rapidly and this “swallow capital,” as it is called in Latin America, can fly out of a country, even more rapidly than it arrives. If this happens, Lula’s plans will come crashing to the ground.

It is then — and only then — that the mettle of the government will be tested. Lula knows that huge expectations have been aroused by his election. Shantytown dwellers are hoping for jobs. Landless peasants want agrarian reform. The homeless want cheap houses. Most Brazilians, even many on the left, believe in Lula and are prepared to give him time to deliver. But, unless Lula is remarkably fortunate, he will sooner or later have to opt between keeping his promises to millions of poor Brazilians to improve their lives and honoring his commitments to foreign creditors. Many of the left outside Brazil already seem to be dis-

missing Lula as yet another false prophet, who lacks the courage for confrontation, yet millions of poor Brazilians, for whom the election of Lula was a dream come true, still steadfastly believe that their president will deliver.

NOTES

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3. *Jornal MEC*, 01/04/2003.
4. Quoted in *O Estado de S. Paulo*, 03/05/2003.
5. See Fernando Henrique Cardoso, *Mudanças Sociais na América Latina*, Difusão Européia do Livro, São Paulo, 1969; and F.H. Cardoso and Enzo Faletto, *Dependency and Development in Latin America*, Berkeley, 1979.
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7. Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, "Financiamento para o Subdesenvolvimento: Brasil e o Segundo Consenso de Washington," paper presented during the conference commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Banco Nacional de Desenvolvimento Econômico e Social (BNDES), 14 October 2002, p. 15.
8. Quoted in Rocha, "Neo-Dependency in Brazil," p.8.
9. Ibid.
10. Harry Shutt, *The Trouble with Capitalism: an Enquiry into the Causes of Global Economic Failure*, Zed Books, London and New York, 1998, p. 82.
11. Rocha, 'Neo-Dependency in Brazil', p.9.
12. UNCTAD, *World Investment Report, 2001*, Country Fact Sheet: Brazil, UNCTAD, Geneva.
13. Bresser-Pereira, "Financiamento para o Subdesenvolvimento," p.24.
14. Rocha, "Neo-Dependency in Brazil," p.9.
15. Figures from the Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE).
16. Quoted in Altamrio Borges, "A Regressão do Trabalho na 'Era FHC,'" *Revista Mensal*, year 2, no.16, September 2002.
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19. Economist Intelligence Report, *Country Report — Brazil*, March 2003

The Politics of the Cairo Declaration

STAN CROOKE

THE CAIRO DECLARATION — a product of the “International Conference Against U.S. Aggression on Iraq” which was held in Cairo in December 2002 — was essentially a mouthpiece for the politics of the now defunct Iraqi Baath regime. This did not prevent sections of the left in Europe and America — notably the Socialist Workers Party (SWP), the largest far left group in Britain, and the Workers World Party (WWP), a bizarre but extremely energetic neo-Stalinist sect in the U.S. — from enthusiastically rallying round the Conference and the Declaration to which it gave rise. These two groups are of some importance because they have both managed to assume leading roles in the anti-war movements of their respective countries.

While the majority of the anti-war movement in the U.S. and Europe had no illusions about Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship and stood instinctively for peace and democracy — even if unsure about how to advance that position — there was also a small section of the movement — sadly often in leadership positions — which tried to resurrect the old Communist Party tradition of the “popular front” and the “peace conference,” complete with evasions, one-sided “anti-imperialism” and back-handed support for tyranny. The Cairo Conference and Declaration was a throw-back to that sorry tradition not the “great leap forward” claimed by its organizers.

By their Friends Ye Shall Know Them

ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBERS attending the Cairo Conference, held in the Conrad Hotel in Cairo on December 18 and 19, 2002, varied. An article on the conference by a journalist from the French Communist Party paper *L’Humanité* referred to

The majority of the anti-war movement in the U.S. and Europe had no illusions about Saddam Hussein’s dictatorship and stood for peace and democracy.

“... nearly 200 intellectuals, artists, journalists, businessmen, trade unionists, and other representatives of the civil society of several Arab countries. They were joined by some American and European personalities.” An article by Tufts University associate professor

Gary Leupp in the American magazine *Counterpunch*, on the other hand, enthused about the sight of “over a thousand participants. Prominent anti-war activists from the West ... activists from Russia and Cuba, and delegates from Egypt, Palestine, Iraq, Algeria, Lebanon, Jordan and other Arab and Third World countries.”

In their journalistic coverage of the conference John Rees of the SWP and Sara Flounders of the WWP both settled for the figure of “400 delegates,” variously described as “activists from the anti-war and ‘anti-globalization’ movement ... and delegates from across the Arab world” (Rees), and as “representatives of popular organizations from 20 countries” (Flounders). But many of those attending the conference were no more “activists” or “representatives of popular organizations” than those who used to attend the Communist Party congresses in the old Stalinist states were rank-

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and-file workers who had left their lathes for a day in order to attend to the good governance of the country.

The Iraqi delegation to the Cairo Conference was headed by Nabil Negm (an under-secretary in the Iraqi Foreign Ministry who rose to become chief political adviser to Saddam Hussein) and Saad Qassem Hammoudy (a leading member of the Baath Party, Secretary-General of the Iraqi Conference of Arab Popular Forces, and Iraqi Ambassador to the Arab League). This was a delegation of the rulers, not the ruled.

A Cuban delegation attending the conference was led by Juan Carretero Ibanez. Until May of 2000, when he took over as secretary-general of the Cuban-government-run "Organization in Solidarity with the People of Africa, Asia and Latin America," Ibanez had worked in the International Relations Department of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party.

A Russian delegation at the conference was fronted by Vasily Safronchuk. In the early years of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan Safronchuk had worked at the Russian Embassy in Kabul. He later became the USSR's deputy permanent representative at the United Nations. After the collapse of Stalinism he set up his own "Defense Information Centre" in Moscow and became a regular contributor to the Russian nationalist newspaper *Sovetskaya Rossiya*.

The Palestinian "People of the Homeland Movement," led by Mohammed Asad Kanaana, was represented at the conference. In 2001 Kanaana had explained in an interview with the "Free Arab Voice" how Marxism was to be applied to the Middle East conflict: "The Jews don't have the prerequisites of a national identity. They are a religious denomination . . . I am a Palestinian Arab before being progressive . . . How can anyone who tolerates the right to exist of 'Israel' be truly for Arab unity?"

Also present at the conference was a delegation from the Iraqi "opposition," led by Abdul Ameer Al-Rikabi. Only the subsequent demise of the Baath regime deprived this "oppositionist" of the chance to be a pseudo-democratic fig-leaf for the regime. At the time of the Cairo Conference he was due to be appointed, with the blessing of Saddam Hussein and Tariq Aziz, to the position of prime minister in an Iraqi "national

coalition government." Al-Rikabi may have been an "oppositionist." But he was certainly loyal enough in his "opposition" to merit a place in government alongside of Saddam Hussein and Tariq Aziz. And he was an "oppositionist" whose presence at the Cairo Conference was welcomed by Hammoudy on behalf of the official Iraqi delegation: "Iraq welcomes any opponent who does not deal with American, British or Israeli intelligence."

A sampling of some of the individual activists attending the Cairo Conference reveals them to be no less politically dubious.

- Moustafa Bakri, editor of the Egyptian magazine *Al Oshoa*, attended the conference. *Al Oshoa* is a publication renowned for its denunciations of homosexuality and human rights activists. In 1999 the International Human Rights Federation published a report accusing Bakri of ties to the Egyptian security services.
- Willem Oltmans, a veteran Dutch journalist, was also at the conference. His recent publications explicitly equate the Bush government with fascism: "The White House even prepares for a global version of the Waffen SS elite commandos to assassinate all those who disagree with U.S. Nazi policies."
- The Egyptian-Syrian film star Raghda Mahmoud — a regular visitor to, and known supporter of, Saddam Hussein — turned up for the conference. So too did George Galloway, the Labour MP who has sung the praises of Saddam Hussein and enjoyed spending Christmas, in 1999, with mass-murderer Tariq Aziz.
- Another friend of Saddam Hussein present at the conference was Ahmad Ben Bella — once the leader of a secularist struggle against French imperialism, but now an Islamist who hails Ghaddafi's Libya as a model for future society.

A number of the Egyptian businessmen who financed the Cairo Conference also turned up for the event. (That they financed the conference is beyond dispute — the conference closed with a reading of the names of the businessmen who had paid for it.) According to the Lebanese *Daily Star*, all of them were recognized trade representatives of the Iraqi government.

In terms of its composition and financial backing, and though there were some independent activists and sincere democrats in attendance, on the whole the Cairo Conference had nothing in common with what the left understands — or at least used to understand — as a conference of

“activists,” “delegates,” and “representatives of popular organizations.” The Iraqi Communist Party described it in its press as “a conference of solidarity with Saddam Hussein’s regime.” But this did not bother the “revolutionary socialists” of the British SWP.

The Declaration

THE CAIRO DECLARATION TO WHICH the conference gave rise — although there is no reason to assume that it had not been drafted in Baghdad well before the conference gathered in the Egypt-

Many of those attending the conference were no more “activists” than those who used to attend the Communist Party congresses in the old Stalinist states were rank-and-file workers.

tian capital — was a worthy outcome to a conference attended and financed by Saddam Hussein’s henchmen, cheerleaders and trade representatives.

Two days after the close of the conference a “Call for Support for the Cairo Declaration” was issued by John Rees and George Galloway MP. Rees signed the appeal as “Vice-President, International Campaign Against U.S. Aggression on Iraq.” Under the headline “Cairo Motion is Great Opportunity,” his newspaper published the following month carried a carefully edited selection of extracts from the Cairo Declaration. The extracts referred to “solidarity with the people of Iraq and Palestine,” “solidarity in the international struggle against neo-liberalization,” opposition to “capitalist globalization and U.S. hegemony,” and “our resolve to continue the struggle against U.S. policies of global domination.” Also quoted was that section of the Cairo Declaration which defined the Cairo Conference as “an extension of a protracted international struggle against imperialism, from Seattle and Genoa, to Lisbon and Florence, to Cordoba and Cairo.” This was a particularly crass piece of idiocy designed to coat the thugs and anti-Semites among those who gathered at

Cairo with the glitter of the global anti-capitalist movement. The demonstrations in Seattle, after all, were not financed by Iraqi trade representatives nor attended by a delegation from the Baath regime.

The three themes of the Cairo Declaration were contained in its title: “Cairo Declaration Against U.S. Hegemony and War on Iraq and in Solidarity with Palestine.”

Their “Anti-Imperialism” and Ours

THE CAIRO DECLARATION CONTAINED ringing and entirely accurate denunciations of U.S. imperialism. It condemned war and aggression against the peoples of Iraq and Palestine as “part of the U.S. project of global domination and subjugation.” The U.S. was guilty of “monopolizing political, economic and military power within the framework of capitalist globalization.” The U.S. was likewise guilty of “imposing control through naked aggression and militarized globalization in pursuit of its rulers’ interests, all the while reinstating the characteristic direct occupation of classic colonialism.”

“We should not succumb to this colonization force that is reproducing itself in the worst form and is led by a fascist right-wing administration,” declared one of the Egyptian businessmen who had helped finance the conference. The Italian economist Gabrielle Muzio had similarly explained to the conference: “We have no option but to demonize the United States because it poses the greatest danger to humanity.” Oltmans, in his contribution to the conference, had warned that “Bush is very closely approaching the behavior of the Nazis,” while Bakri had issued the warning: “If Iraq falls, I believe that Syria and Saudi Arabia and Egypt will fall next. This is the real face of globalization.”

Invoking fascism and the Nazis was a staple of Soviet Cold War propaganda. The Soviet Union — as well as its apologists and fellow travelers — was also capable of making sober and eloquent denunciations of the crimes of U.S. imperialism — real crimes let us not forget — but only to provide cover for its own equally rapacious imperialism. Just as the Soviets’ attacks on Western imperialism were entirely self serving and reactionary in their effect, because they were in the service of a rival imperialism, so there was nothing authen-

tically progressive about the attacks on “imperialism” and globalization made at Cairo. They were an expression of the “anti-imperialism” which had long been a stock-in-trade of the Baath regime (and similar “Third World” dictatorships): bogus, demagogic, selective in its targets, and divorced from any socio-economic analysis of international relations. The Baath regime was “anti-imperialist” only in the self-fulfilling sense that it labeled its opponents as agents of imperialism. Dissident Baathists, Kurds, Communists, Iranians, the Kuwaiti government, Zionists, Jews, the Gulf monarchies or, periodically, the Syrian government — there was no end to the list of Iraq’s “imperialist” foes.

The role of the Baath regime’s “anti-imperialism” was to allow Iraq, and its rulers, to masquerade simultaneously as the victims of imperialism and as the champions of anti-imperialist struggle. The Cairo Declaration’s references to U.S. hegemony and globalization served the same purpose: a plea to the opponents of U.S. imperialism and globalization to rally round the Baath regime in its hour of need. The “anti-imperialism” of the Cairo Declaration and its socialist cheerleaders was also distinctly one-sided. There was no mention of Iraq’s own imperialist record of attempts at regional hegemony — its war against Iran in the 1980s, its invasion of Kuwait in 1990, and its repression of Kurds in Kurdish and non-Kurdish Iraq. And the comparisons with fascism which were so in vogue at the Cairo Conference would have been more apposite in relation to the Baath regime than the U.S. government. There are trade unions in the United States, whatever restrictions they might be subject to. There were no trade unions in Iraq under the Baath regime.

As an alternative to the U.S. hegemonic project of “maintaining the existing uni-polar world order” the Cairo Declaration advocated a “shift (in) the balance of power towards multipolarity.” This was merely a complaint on behalf of sub-imperialists like Saddam Hussein against the hegemony of U.S. arms and capital.

Using the Palestinians

SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE was the second theme of the Cairo Declaration. Here again, there were many indisputably valid charges made, against both the U.S. and Israel. The United States

was guilty of providing “unlimited support and even justification to the Zionist perpetrators of genocidal crimes against the Palestinian people.” The Palestinian people were “suffering as a result of the loss of their land and continued Zionist aggression, which the U.S. supports militarily, economically, and politically.” The declaration condemned the United States for providing “unwavering support to the system of apartheid imposed on the Palestinian people.” War and aggression against the peoples of Iraq and Palestine were “part of a U.S. project of global domination and subjugation.”

Indeed Israel’s brutal occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, and the appalling oppression of the Palestinians should rouse everyone who cares about democracy and human rights to anger and solidarity. And it is true that the U.S. has been the

The Cairo Declaration was a worthy outcome to a conference attended and financed by Saddam Hussein’s henchmen, cheerleaders and trade representatives.

political guarantor and quarter-master of successive Israeli assaults, and has vetoed criticism of Israel at the UN. But with the Cairo Declaration, as well as similar pronouncements inspired or authored by repressive Middle Eastern regimes, we must consider the source. It is vital that the left separate its voice clearly from the kind of attacks on “Zionism” made by the old Baath regime. In truth the Baathists never acted out of solidarity with the Palestinians. In Baath ideology “Zionism” played the same role as “imperialism.” It was not a term with a defined content. It was a label which “justified” the physical liquidation of those to whom it was attached. Law 35 of 1977 had decreed: “Whoever propagandizes for Zionist ideas, including Freemasonry, or encourages Zionism, or materially or morally supports it, is to be executed.”

After its seizure of power in 1968 the Baath regime claimed that it had saved the nation from “a clique of ignoramuses, illiterates, and Zionists.”

The following year a series of show trials imposed death sentences on Iraqi Jews accused of being “Israeli spies.” A few months later members of the former regime were likewise executed as “Zionist agents.” The Baath regime denounced Israel as a “cancer” and “AIDS virus” in the body of the Arab nation. Just as the “Zionists” in Iraq had been liquidated, so too Israel had to be eliminated. When Iraq fired Scud missiles at Tel Aviv in 1991, Saddam Hussein pledged that the Israeli capital would be reduced to rubble by Iraqi bombers and that Arab soil would be cleansed of the “Zionist entity.” The Baath regime’s anti-Zionism was one which dehumanized Jews. In the mid-1990s Tariq Aziz, the man with whom George Galloway enjoyed tucking into his Christmas turkey in 1999, told UNSCOM chief Richard Butler that Iraq had developed biological weapons for use against “Persians, Jews, and other insects.”

Through an amalgam of “Zionism” and “imperialism” — the Baath regime even coined the

The attacks on “imperialism” and globalization made at Cairo were an expression of the “anti-imperialism” which had long been a stock-in-trade of the Baath regime.

term “Zio-imperialism” — Saddam Hussein sought to present himself as the natural ally and leader of the forces of anti-imperialism and anti-Zionism. A month before the Cairo Conference Saddam Hussein had given an interview with Bakri’s *Al Osboa* magazine: “The Arab oil will be under U.S. control and the region, especially where the oil flows, will be under full American hegemony. All this serves Israel’s interests, with the aim of turning it into a vast empire in the region . . . The United States wants to destroy the centers of power in all the Arab homeland, whether these are in Cairo, Damascus or Baghdad. Iraq’s problem is that it challenges these schemes, while others do not realize we are doing this for them.”

The call for solidarity with Palestine, at least

on the part of the Baathists and their apologists, had nothing to do with solidarity or the Palestinians. Its purpose was to sidetrack solidarity with Palestine into solidarity with Saddam Hussein by presenting the Baath regime as the champions of “anti-Zionism” and Palestinian rights, and to thereby rally support for the regime in the coming conflict with the U.S. and Britain.

In giving support to the Cairo Declaration those sections of the left who backed it were not challenging Israeli oppression and solidarizing with the oppressed Palestinians. They were falling in behind a project to present the Baath regime as being in the front line of the fight for Palestinian rights.

How to Oppose the War

THE THIRD THEME OF THE Cairo Declaration was opposition to war on Iraq. But the Iraq portrayed in the declaration, and in the conference as well, was not the totalitarian state consciously modeled on the Soviet Union and underpinned by an ideology which, at the time of its emergence, had drawn on Nazi philosophizing.

In the conference hall Hammoudy had praised the Baath regime’s human rights record: “The U.S. can teach nothing about democracy to a country that had its first parliament 3,000 years ago and continues to have deep democratic traditions.”

Harald Schumann, co-author of the left critique of globalization, *The Global Trap*, had walked out of the conference in protest at this defense of the Baath regime’s human rights record. It is unclear whether or not other activists who attended without knowing the true character of the conference did likewise. The SWP, along with George Galloway, apparently did not feel sufficiently motivated to follow Schumann’s footsteps.

The Cairo Declaration distorted the Baath regime’s human rights record beyond recognition: “Admission to restrictions on democratic development in Iraq in no way constitutes acceptance of U.S. justifications for continuation of sanctions, and now preparations for war. Without disregarding long-standing restrictions on democratic development in Iraqi society — as is the case in all Arab societies — it is evident that the U.S.-imposed sanctions have had a devastating effect on Iraq’s development.” There can be no argument

that the sanctions regime was a terrible blight on the Iraqi people and indefensible. The case against sanctions, and against the depraved defense offered by Madeleine Albright, was made eloquently in *New Politics* no. 32 by Jeff Lindemyer. But the left needs to be sophisticated enough to separate a genuine opposition to sanctions in the name of the Iraqi people from a demagogic opposition in the name of the regime.

The Cairo conference condemned sanctions as part and parcel of a cover-up for Saddam Hussein's crimes against his own people. The expression "restrictions on democratic development" did not do justice to the level of totalitarian repression under the Baath regime. The equation drawn in the declaration between "Iraq and all Arab societies" was factually inaccurate: Iraq under the Baath regime was qualitatively more repressive than the surrounding Arab states.

Placing the blame for the "restrictions on democratic development" in Iraq on the "U.S.-imposed sanctions" was equally factually inaccurate: Iraq under Saddam Hussein had been a totalitarian state because of the nature of the Baath regime, not because of sanctions. The Iraqi regime had been just as repressive prior to the imposition of sanctions as it was after their imposition. In one sense, however, there had been a linkage between sanctions and the stifling of democracy in Iraq. The rationing system established by the Baath regime in response to the imposition of sanctions — while the members of the ruling clan continued building their palaces and making vast fortunes from illegal trading in embargoed goods — had been used by the regime as another mechanism to guarantee its absolute control of Iraqi society. But this was not caused by the sanctions themselves. It was caused by the nature of the Baath regime.

The Cairo Declaration's scapegoating of sanctions for the lack of democracy in Iraq followed the political line of the Baath regime. When members of the Iraqi National Coalition ("oppositionists" of the ilk of Al-Rikabi) had met with members of the Iraqi Supreme Revolutionary Council shortly before the Cairo Conference, for example, their press release about the meeting explained: "Mr. Izat Ibrahim, vice-president of the Supreme Revolutionary Council, (gave) an extended talk about the unfair sanctions and the continuous ag-

gression against our country and people, two things which played fundamental roles in paralyzing and postponing the heading towards democracy and political diversity."

In other words, inherent in the Baath regime was a drive towards democracy — doubtlessly frustrated only by the aggression of imperialists and

In the mid-1990s Tariq Aziz told UNSCOM chief Richard Butler that Iraq had developed biological weapons for use against "Persians, Jews and other insects."

Zionists. The Cairo Declaration advocated rather more than just opposition to war on Iraq. The declaration portrayed the Iraqi regime as wishing to establish human rights and democracy. It largely blamed sanctions for the "restrictions" on democracy in Iraq. And it did so because the declaration was about support for the then ruling Baath regime as much as it was about opposition to war on Iraq.

Making Sense of Cairo

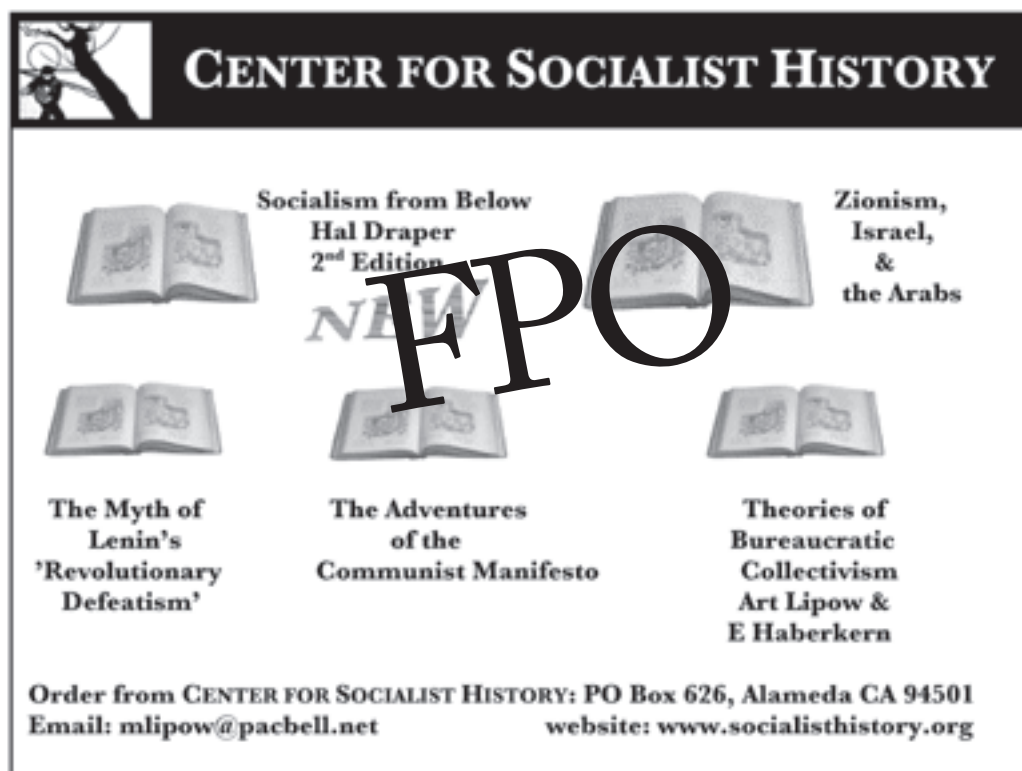
SUPPOSE, ON THE EVE OF THE Second World War, an international peace conference had been convened, behind the scenes, by Nazi Germany. The conference, and a declaration which it votes through on the nod, denounce British imperialism, but not German imperialism. The conference and declaration praise Germany's human rights record, and blame any shortcomings in German democracy on Britain. The conference and declaration conclude by calling for human shields to go to Germany, to help defend the country against the plots of Britain and international Jewry to achieve world domination. No self-respecting socialist would have attended such a conference.

The long and sorry "left-wing" tradition of accommodation to despotism is alive today as a bogus "anti-imperialism" and "anti-Zionism." But we should not frighten ourselves. That tradition might be alive but it isn't exactly well. The

anti-war movement in its great majority stood instinctively for a “No to Saddam, No to War” position. By rallying against U.S. imperialism without at the same time defending or excusing Washington’s enemy-of-the-moment, millions of people around the world moved towards constituting a “third camp” independent of the war-makers and enemies of democracy on both sides — even if they might not understand their position in these terms.

THIS NASCENT THIRD CAMP needs to become more self-conscious, however. The case for

positively linking peace and democracy still has to be made, and sharply. But we can be reasonably optimistic. The tremendous response from all sectors of the anti-war movement to the third camp statement issued by the Campaign for Peace and Democracy (CPD) (see *New Politics*, no. 34) “No to Saddam, No to War” surely reflected the vast appeal of an anti-war politics that is also robustly in favor of democracy and human rights everywhere. Cairo, we may be permitted to hope, represented the past. We have every confidence that the CPD Statement represents the future.



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The Life and Death of Socialist Zionism

JASON SCHULMAN

IN PREVIOUS DECADES IT WAS not uncommon for democratic leftists, Jewish ones in particular, to believe that the state of Israel was on the road to exemplifying — as Irving Howe once put it — “the democratic socialist hope of combining radical social change with political freedom.”¹ But times have obviously changed. Today, no one would argue with the assertion that Israeli socialism “is going the way of the kibbutz farmer,” even if the government continues to be the major shareholder in many Israeli banks, retains majority control in state-owned enterprises, owns a sizable percent of the country’s land, and exerts considerable influence in most sectors of the economy.² The kibbutzim themselves, held up as “the essence of the socialist-Zionist ideal of collectivism and egalitarianism,” are fast falling victim “to the pursuit of individual fulfillment.”³ The Labor Party is ever more estranged from Israel’s trade union movement, and when it governs it does so less and less like a social-democratic party, and its economic program has become ever more classically liberal. To many Israelis, who remember the years of Labor bureaucratic power, “socialism” means little more than “state elitism.”

In examining “what happened,” it is worthwhile to ask what precisely the content of Israeli socialism was from its inception. There are essentially two narratives of “actually-existing” Labor (Socialist) Zionism. One argues that the most important of the Zionist colonists were utopian socialists who had no intent to be either exploiter or exploited. These socialists set up communistic agrarian communities, *kibbutzim*. But over time Labor Zionists compromised their ideals in order to win the leadership of the *yishuv*, the Jewish community in Palestine. To achieve this they shifted “to a policy of ‘revolutionary constructivism’ that separated the concepts of class and nation, stressing the development of the *yishuv* as a whole rather than classical socialist goals. This strategy isolated and overwhelmed the Revisionist

If Ben-Gurion and his co-thinkers were socialists, theirs was a socialism purely of the state, not the working class.

opposition of the time, but at the cost . . . of subverting Labour Zionism’s own future.”⁴ In time, the governing Labor-Zionist MAPAI party “subsume[d] the will to revolution [with] the will to normalcy,” as Mitchell

Cohen puts it, as the state replaced the working class as the agent of universal interests. However, non-Zionist or “post-Zionist” socialists argue that to claim that Labor Zionism (or more specifically MAPAI, later the Labor Party) “degenerated” fails to acknowledge the content of the “socialism” of the dominant strain of Israel’s founding Labor Zionists. Zeev Sternhall claims that for most Labor Zionist leaders “socialism” was a rhetorical means of legitimating the national project of creating a Jewish state and little else. Universalistic, internationalist socialist principles stood in the way of national and cultural goals and were therefore subverted. MAPAI’s leaders, says Sternhall, never really believed in the idea of the socialist, classless society, or even in the individual rights held dear by liberal-

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ism. By the 1920s, the foundations of David Ben-Gurion's principle of *mamlachtiut*, "the primacy of the nation and supremacy of the state over civil society, of political power over social action and voluntary bodies," had already been laid.⁵ MAPAI's ideology did not move from socialism to mere nationalist statism — its "Socialist" Zionism *was* nationalist statism, or more concretely, a nationalism that *used* the working class for statist ends under a socialist guise. The Zionism of Ben-Gurion and his colleagues was, Sternhall argues, a "nationalist socialism" which appeared in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century and

preached the organic unity of the nation and the mobilization of all classes of society for the achievement of national objectives...[and held that] the fate of each social group was organically linked to that of all other classes, and all members of the nation were responsible for each other...it refused to accept society as a theater of war . . . it never objected to private capital as such . . . If capitalists did not sink their money in production, contribute to the enrichment of society, or employ workers, they were incorrigible parasites, but the fault lay with unproductive capitalists, not private capital itself.⁶

This article will examine and assess these conflicting viewpoints. It will become obvious that the mainstream of Socialist Zionist leaders never really conceived of the working class as "the identical subject-object of Jewish history."⁷ If Ben-Gurion and his co-thinkers were socialists, theirs was a socialism purely of the state, not the working class.

The Beginnings of Socialist Zionism

IN THE 1890S, ZIONIST GROUPS in Palestine emerged that put forth a combination of Jewish nationalism and socialism. What became known as *Po'alei-Tzion* (Workers of Zion), itself part of a world federation of similar parties, began to take shape and developed two wings, one moderately social democratic and the other explicitly Marxist. The main theoretician of Marxist Zionism was Ber Borochov. Borochov posited that the Jews were an "abnormal" people, with a class structure resembling an "inverted pyramid": "rather than workers and peasants constituting the broad base of their society, and lesser numbers of petty bourgeois and capitalists at the top of the social 'pyramid,' among the Jews the masses were in large part urban petty bourgeois, engaged in increasingly marginal occupations far from the point of production."⁸ As Mitchell

Cohen explains,

Borochov's argument is that anti-Semitism, national competition (in which the Jews, lacking a territorial base, are at a disadvantage), and the continuing development of capitalism force a continual pattern of Jewish migration, and make the abnormal Jewish conditions of production more and more insecure. Jewish labor, not employed by non-Jews, follows the migration of Jewish capital, and because of the competition the Jewish petty bourgeoisie becomes more and more proletarianized. Yet if 'the Jewish problem migrates with the Jews,' then a radical solution that does not simply lead to another inhospitable roadside inn is needed. The solution was proletarian Zionism; the 'conscious Jewish proletariat' had the task of directing the migration. In the final analysis the abolition of capitalism *and* national liberation were the salvation for the Jewish working class.⁹

The nationalism of the oppressed Jewish proletariat, Borochov argued, "is emancipatory. If we were the proletariat of a free nation which neither oppresses nor is oppressed, we would not be interested in any problems of national life."¹⁰ What was needed to "normalize" the Jews — and avoid their destruction — was the founding of a Jewish state where Jewish capitalists and workers would wage class struggle. Migration to Palestine specifically "was ideal because it would be, in Borochov's view, the only land available to the Jews. It lacked advanced political and cultural development, and would be a land in which big capital would find no possibility while Jewish petty and middle capital would."¹¹ Palestine would then develop along capitalist lines and the Jewish proletariat — in solidarity with the world proletariat — would fight for socialism. However, while Borochov's theories may have been critical to the mobilization of the Zionist labor movement, the actual development and rise to power of MAPAI — the hegemonic Socialist Zionist party — was ultimately "a result of its rejection of Borochov's programmatic conclusions."¹²

Between 1904 and 1914, the mainly Eastern European immigrants of the "Second Aliyah" joined two Zionist labor parties: *Po'alei-Tzion*, which, though internally divided, called itself socialist and called for class struggle, and *Hapo'el Hatza'ir* (the Young Worker), which rejected class struggle as harmful to the national cause. It was on the initiative of *Po'alei-Tzion* that the non-party trade union of guards in the Jewish colonies, *Hashomer*, was

founded, which took upon itself the protection and defense of the colonies from attack by their Arab neighbors. Attempts were also made to organize the Jewish agricultural workers and to create cooperatives of workers in city and country.¹³ The founding program of Po'alei-Tzion defined the party as the Zionist wing of worldwide revolutionary Marxism;

The socialist content of such a strategy seems obvious, as its goal appears to be the bypassing of capitalism in favor of building directly socialist institutions, something that even Marx and Engels had hoped to be possible in Russia on the basis of peasant village communes.

the "Ramle Platform" declared, "the chronicles of humanity consist of national and class wars." Sternhall explains this revision of the famous line from *The Communist Manifesto*:

At the beginning of the century, every person . . . knew that a view of history in terms of class struggle formed part of a complete and comprehensive system of thought. One might criticize this system, but to combine it with a conception of history as consisting of national struggles was absurd. The drafters of the Ramle Platform knew this very well . . . they were aware that struggles between nations were a recent phenomenon in the history of humankind . . . If they knowingly decided to commit such a gross error, it was because they had no other means of reconciling the two schools of thought, which at the end of 1906 divided the socialist community in Palestine.¹⁴

Future prime minister of Israel David Ben-Gurion, then a member of Po'alei-Tzion, argued for the Jewish right to the land of Palestine through a version of the labor theory of value: "The source of true rights to a land . . . is not in political or legal authority, but in the rights of labor. The true, actual owners of the land are its workers."¹⁵ Though the echo of the Marxian labor theory of value is obvi-

ous, Ben-Gurion would later abandon all traces of what he labeled "proletarian Zionism" after 1919, with the founding of the *Abdut Ha'avoda* (Unity of Labor) party; indeed, despite his familiarity with Marxist terminology, he never shared Borochoch's conception of Zionism. His was a voluntaristic Zionism that echoed European "organic" nationalism, one that shunned the economic determinism of Borochoch.

The views of Hapo'el Hatza'ir more closely echoed Ben-Gurion's. It shunned strikes, class struggle, and the word "socialism," and espoused the theories of Aaron David Gordon, who believed that only by physical labor and by "returning to the land" could the Jewish people achieve national salvation. Hapo'el Hatza'ir oriented to the workers solely "because of their national value, not because of working-class issues in and of themselves."¹⁶ Supposedly the Marxist stress on class struggle was irrelevant to a primarily agricultural country such as Palestine. The party's leading ideologue, Yosef Aharonovitch, claimed there were no "struggling classes within the Jewish people as a whole and among the Jews in the Land of Israel, in particular."¹⁷ By the eve of World War One much of the Po'alei Tzion party was espousing much the same view; Borochovism was eclipsed by what was called a "specifically Jewish socialism" which was ever more radically nationalistic and more and more removed from the universal principles of classical social democracy. Furthermore, as Sternhall notes, the dismissal of Marxist categories by both Zionist parties contradicted the fact that "Marxism at the beginning of the century remained . . . first and foremost a critique of capitalism. It is hard to understand how Marxism could have been relevant to Russia, Poland, and Romania but not to Palestine . . . [social democracy's] adherence to [Marxist] principles made the socialists the spearhead of the struggle against tribal nationalism and the cornerstone of ideological modernity."¹⁸ It was no accident that Ben-Gurion would later help found a party built on other principles.

The End of Po'alei Tzion

THE WORLD UNION OF Po'alei Tzion met in Europe in 1909. It was then that Borochoch's Marxist paradigm was decisively rejected. Among the opponents of Borochoch were the Austrian Po'ale: Zionists led by Shlomo Kaplansky. They advocated not only inter-class cooperation within the Zionist movement, but also what was later termed the "constructivist" strategy of Labor Zionism.

Kapalansky argued that the working class ought to lead the Zionist movement and “pursue a general strategy of building economic institutions and cooperative settlements in Palestine that would be the harbingers of the future society. This was, in fact, to become Po’ale Tzion policy.”¹⁹ The idea of building cooperative workers’ settlements and the building of a “labor economy” owed much to Nachman Syrkin, leader of the American Po’alei Zion until his death and an avowed anti-Marxist and voluntarist. The “constructivist” strategy of building Jewish Palestine involved collecting funds “to finance socioeconomic institutions capable of organizing and settling significant numbers of immigrant workers. The initiative of private capital . . . was thereby relegated to a secondary status . . . workers’ settlements, such as the kibbutz, became strategically central in this effort.”²⁰

The socialist content of such a strategy seems obvious, as its goal appears to be the bypassing of capitalism in favor of building directly socialist institutions, something that even Marx and Engels had hoped to be possible in Russia on the basis of peasant village communes. Cohen argues that “constructivism meant the possibility of identifying the interests of the emerging workers’ movement and its institutions with the interests and needs of the Jewish people as a whole . . . this allowed a Zionist reworking of the classic Marxist theme of a universal class.”²¹ But if constructivism owed much to Syrkin,²² then it is worth noting the problematical aspects of Syrkin’s thought:

[Syrkin’s] anti-Marxism went hand in hand with a belief in the determinant role of heroic characters in history . . . [he believed that] human progress occurred as the result of an ideological revolution that took place from time to time among minorities. He sought explanations in places that social democracy avoided like the plague: the collective national soul, the Volksgeist, and the various peoples’ mysterious cultural and historical symbolisms . . . The true test of a political strategy, wrote Syrkin, is not the degree to which it corresponds to the situation or to reality but its power to penetrate the souls of the masses and to activate the will of the people . . . Unlike the democratic socialists, Syrkin believed that a nation is a fact of nature. Thus in his system of thought, the nation is given greater importance with class interests . . . his view that ‘Zionism, being the Jewish enterprise of national construction, does not con-

flict with class warfare but simply transcends it,’ is a classic nationalist socialist formulation.

Syrkin’s cooperative program — along with that of Franz Oppenheimer and Shlomo Kaplanski — played a major part in moving Po’alei Tzion away from Borochovism. This program was, in fact, explicitly non-socialist. Syrkin argued that “We wish only to build cooperatives . . . A socialist society is .

It may have been a means to achieve political and economic supremacy for labor, but it did so not through class struggle but through attempting to realize objectives that were primarily national, i.e., cross-class.

. . . impractical, because people have been talking about it for a hundred years, and we still do not know what it is. Cooperative experiments, however, have already been made in present society, and we are able to build on them.”²³ Neither the labor movement nor the Socialist International could provide the funds; that would have to be “the affair of the whole Jewish people,” with the Jewish workers as the main agent of cooperative construction.²⁴

Though he was less concerned with cooperatives, Ben-Gurion’s thinking largely echoed Syrkin’s. He believed that the creation of a specifically Jewish working class in Palestine was necessary for Jewish “redemption.” Should the “petit-bourgeois” socioeconomic practices of Jews in the diaspora be repeated in Palestine, it would mean the end of the Zionist enterprise. “A distinction between the needs of the individual and the needs of the nation,” Ben-Gurion argued, “has no basis in the lives of the workers of Eretz Israel . . . Our movement makes no distinction between the national question and the socialist question . . . we have fused the working population into a single unit.”²⁵ Socialist and nationalist aspirations were harmonious, but the latter took priority; Ben-Gurion said little in his programmatic speech at the Po’alei Tzion convention in 1919 on socialism, save that cooperatives would reduce — not abolish — dependence on private capital. This

runs contrary to the assertion made by latter-day Socialist Zionists that Ben-Gurion, at least initially, set out to create the institutional framework for a Jewish workers' state in Palestine.

That year the World Union of Po'alei Tzion began to split between right and left over whether or not to apply to the Communist International or participate in the bourgeois-led international Zionist organizations. In the final split the right wing majority of the Palestinian Po'alei Tzion party merged with independent left Zionists to form *Ahdut Ha'avoda* (Unity of Labor), with Ben-Gurion and other significant labor movement figures among its leaders. This organization was less a party than a federation (*histadrut*) intended "to mobilize all wage earners by providing for their needs and all the services they required in order to facilitate the construction of the nation."²⁶ Though for some years it used the rhetoric of the class struggle and was officially "socialist," it is notable that at its founding convention the principal speech given by Berl Katznelson stressed that the labor movement in Eretz Israel aimed "not just to lead a class but to lead the nation . . . to be the whole nation, to create a working Hebrew nation"; "socialism" was described purely as a matter of shared "existence" by Jews and not an alternative to capitalism, or even as an ideology which critiqued capitalism.²⁷

"From a Working Class to a Working Nation"

IN 1920 THE *HISTADRUT*, or General Federation of Jewish Labor in Palestine, was founded as a united project of Ahdut Ha'avoda, Hapo'el Hatza'ir, and other Left Zionist parties. Membership was open to all Jewish workers regardless of political beliefs. Ben-Gurion became the Federation's first Secretary-General. In Cohen's interpretation — often repeated elsewhere²⁸ — Ben-Gurion "acted forcefully to centralize the Histadrut's resources and power structure as a nascent workers' state within the state of Mandate Palestine. For a short period he championed the idea of turning the entire country into a single commune."²⁹ Through its building of a vast array of institutions such as a sickness and disablement fund (*Kupat Cholim*), labor exchanges, building firms (*Solel Boneh*), a company for the sale of agricultural products (*Tnuva*), a wholesale sales cooperative (*Hamashbir Hamerkazi*), a labor schools network, housing cooperatives, and kibbutzim, Ben-Gurion argued that the Histadrut was "an organization of the working class *in the making* as distinct

from the Trade Union which is the classic form of organization of a working class *in being*."³⁰ But what this truly meant, as Michael Shalev notes, was that the Histadrut "did not emerge out of the class struggles contingent upon capitalist industrialization and political democratization; it was primarily concerned with the realization of national interests in the rural sector rather than with the class interests of urban wage-earners; and it was founded from the top down rather than crystallizing and aggregating spontaneous processes of working-class formation."³¹ It may have been a means to achieve political and economic supremacy for labor, but it did so not through class struggle but through attempting to realize objectives that were primarily national, i.e. cross-class. Though the Histadrut may have been meeting the needs of the "Jewish nation," it excluded Arab workers and encouraged the various campaigns to replace Arab with Jewish labor; it was argued that "the unorganized and poorly-paid Arab workers were a threat to the organized Jewish workers, and a trade union must protect its members."³² Ben-Gurion may have said that he was "for Bolshevism," but in practice what this meant is that he was for a strongly centralist orientation for both the Histadrut and Ahdut Ha'avoda.³³ He was opposed to the traditional Marxist belief that the solution to the problem of competition from rural, unorganized labor working for miniscule wages was to organize the backward workers together with the unionized workers.³⁴ Though they did not make it explicit, the Histadrut labor elite feared that "the logic of collective action in the market arena might lead Jewish workers to join with their Arab counterparts in struggles against Jewish employers. This would have contradicted the core commitment of the labor movement . . . to place the Jewish working class at the head of the nation-building struggle," even though it would have been consistent with the socialist principles to which Ben-Gurion and his colleagues supposedly adhered.³⁵

In the 1920s there were left wing Socialist Zionists led by Menahem Elkind whose "Bolshevism" differed greatly from that of Ben-Gurion. They criticized the top-down character of the Histadrut and became involved with the *Gdud Ha'avoda* (Labor Battalion), an attempt to promote the development of the Jewish state through "establishing a General Commune of Jewish Workers in Palestine."³⁶ Sternhall argues that "the Gdud represented a new departure and had real revolutionary potential. Its idea of a single countrywide commune was the only

chance of building a true socialist society.”³⁷ Ben-Gurion may have once advocated the idea of the Histadrut as a general commune³⁸ — albeit as a way to concentrate economic power and the reserves of manpower into the hands of the Agricultural Center and the Bureau of Public Workers³⁹ — but he vigorously opposed Elkind and his “impractical” supporters:

[Ben-Gurion] wanted to concentrate power in the hands of the executive, whereas the latter defended the autonomy of the settlers . . . values such as individual freedom and the hope for a better society were subordinated [by Ben-Gurion] to national interests. The Gdud wanted to apply the principles of equality to the urban sector . . . whereas the leadership of the movement wished to restrict public ownership of the means of the production to agricultural settlements . . . freeing the urban sector from the yoke of communal ownership put an end to all hope of large-scale social change.⁴⁰

Gdud leftists acted as a left opposition within the Histadrut for a few years, arguing for its democratization, for a complete equalization of salaries and “the delegation of work to organized kibbutzim on their full responsibility.”⁴¹ But the Gdud did not exist for long. By 1927, after campaigns by Ben-Gurion which included economic pressure and expulsions,⁴² and a deep recession which undermined the left,⁴³ this alternative society which took the socialist pretensions of Socialist Zionism seriously was no more.

MAPAI and the “Class Warfare” Debate

AHDUT HA’AVODA’S MAIN RIVAL was Hapo’el Hatza’ir, whose main theoretician was Haim Arlosoroff. Before moving to Palestine he had written a pamphlet explaining what he called Jewish *Volkssozialismus* (People’s Socialism), an outlook that opposed class-struggle theories of socialism (such as Marxism) and echoed the ideas of Aaron David Gordon and Russian populism. In a 1926 speech, “Class War in the Reality of the Land of Israel,” he argued that

[t]he two facts that Palestine was a British colony and a bi-national society...subverted the application of class struggle . . . The ‘state’ in Palestine was the Mandatory authority, and rather than being a reflection of indigenous class forces and relations, its political character was due to the ‘class forces of English society’ . . .

the horizontal cleavages of class in Palestine were cross-cut and undercut by a vertical national cleavage [Arabs and Jews] . . . ‘The organized workers’ movement’ in Palestine could not even be classified as ‘proletarian’ . . . because the Histadrut represented the ‘aristocracy of the settlement’ and the worker was ‘the leader of the Yishuv’ . . . Furthermore, the Yishuv was still in the process of self-creation; the Palestinian Jewish workers were constantly renewing their ranks by means of immigrants, most of whom came from non-proletarian backgrounds and were in the process of being transformed into workers; the Jewish economy . . . had no normal cycle of production or division of national income within a cycle. These were characteristics of a society-in-the-making — a society entirely unsuited to Marxist theories of class warfare.⁴⁴

Arlosoroff claimed that the inapplicability of class struggle to Eretz Israel did not make the socialist idea inapplicable. Yet urbanization was continuing apace in Palestine, and the emergence of a wage-earning proletariat — as well as a Jewish bourgeoisie — was bound to lead to class struggle. Despite the “socialist” label, mainstream Socialist Zionism “did not deny the legitimacy of private property or seek to change society but wanted only to control it, and at the same time was unwilling to acknowledge the ability of the private sector to implement Zionism,” i.e. build the infrastructure of a Jewish state.⁴⁵ And despite the moral claims made for the kibbutzim, as late as 1936 no more than 8.4 percent of Histadrut members were living in one.⁴⁶ As Nathan Weinstock explains, “although the sacrifices and the socialist convictions of its militants are not open to doubt, the kibbutz movement has never . . . represented a threat of any sort to the Zionist bourgeoisie; quite the contrary. Thus the Jewish Agency subsidised these ‘socialist oases in the capitalist desert’ to the best of its ability . . . the Jewish working-class movement was led to substitute itself for a Jewish bourgeoisie which was almost non-existent as a class in Palestine in the Twenties in order to lay the foundations of Zionist capitalism through the economic organisations of the Histadrut.”⁴⁷ The selfless idealism of the kibbutzim “relieved the Zionist bourgeoisie of the need to make unprofitable investments”⁴⁸ and thus contributed to Zionist national goals without affecting the class character of the economy as a whole.

On one hand, Labor Zionists such as Ben-

Gurion declared, "If all the capitalists in Palestine were Jews . . . the country would be no more Jewish than it is now . . . If the workers in country were Jews . . . it would be a Jewish country."⁴⁹ On the other hand, Ben-Gurion wrote that class conflict in Palestine was "only about the *use of capital* . . . It is not capital itself that is the subject of dispute, but only its destination" — the private sector or collective settlement administered by the Histadrut.⁵⁰ "Class warfare" was a code word for this struggle over resources; it was not about the struggle between labor and capital at the point of production, let alone socialization of privately-owned industry. "Class warfare" was a means towards "national unity"; while socialist parties of other nations were, by definition, concerned only with the interests of the working class and believed (at least in theory) that those interests were in conflict with those of the capitalist class, the dominant strain of "Socialist" Zionism — Ben-Gurion's strain — was of a wholly different character: "Our movement has always had the socialistic idea that the party of the working class, unlike the parties of other classes, is not only a class party solely concerned with matters affecting the class but a national party responsible for the future of the entire people. It regards itself not as a mere part of the people but as the nucleus of the future nation."⁵¹ This was a peculiar "movement of the universal class," as it effectively denied that the interests of the workers alone were truly universal.

The mutual commitment to "constructivism" by Ahdut Ha'avoda and Hapo'el Hatza'ir made possible their merger in 1930 into a single party, MAPAI (a Hebrew acronym for *Miflegeth Poalim Eretz-Israel*, Palestine Workers' Party). It controlled the Histadrut and became the largest party in both Palestine and the Zionist Organization. To achieve this position in the ZO, Ben-Gurion worked towards an alliance with the moderate Zionist bourgeoisie (though not their uppermost ranks, which were few in number). Cohen explains the strategy undertaken by MAPAI:

Labour's strategic shift . . . was occasioned by a bitter battle with the far right; consequently, in order to vanquish the latter, Labour sought to head as broad a coalition as possible. This, in turn, implied a new relation with groups it had previously fought, together with acceptance of a 'compromise equilibrium' and an 'economic corporate' sacrifice, in particular accepting the Histadrut as one pillar among others . . . even though Labour frequently continued to employ

its class rhetoric of the past, its operative assumptions, implicitly, had been very much transformed.⁵²

This shift by MAPAI "signified the abandonment of the concept on which Labour power had been built in the first place: the identity of the interests of the working class and the nation. This was an important departure from the past and from a fundamental element of socialist politics."⁵³ A departure from socialism it indeed was, but the "break with the past" was not as great as might be imagined; neither Ahdut Ha'avoda nor Hapo'el Hatza'ir had had a commitment to the socialization of capital. Cohen deplores MAPAI's acceptance of the principle that "class, nation and state were separate, if not opposed, categories, things unto themselves above and beyond the project of Labour Israel — which henceforth became a particular, not a universalizing, endeavour . . . the working class los[t] its role as the subject-object of Zionist history." But it seems more correct to say that for Ben-Gurion and his co-thinkers the working class was never more than the object of Zionist history; it was the Histadrut elite that was the real subject. The Jewish working class might build the Jewish nation-state, but it was not going to own and control that state's means of production, distribution and exchange. Both before and after MAPAI's "historic compromise," "socialism" was a myth used for mobilization.

Socialist Zionist parties whose socialism was more than rhetorical also found their nationalism eating away at their commitment to universal, democratic principles. *Hashomer-Hatzair* (The Young Guard) sought the "integration of pioneering Zionism with revolutionary socialism, colonization with class struggle,"⁵⁴ though in its view the realization of socialism could only occur after the realization of Zionism. Though it put forth the idea of a bi-national state in Palestine — one neither exclusively Jewish nor exclusively Arab — it participated energetically in the effort to exclude Arab workers from Jewish firms. It oriented almost exclusively towards the kibbutz, and while it stressed the practical tasks of building up the material basis of the Jewish home (constructivism), some of its kibbutzim were on land taken from Arab peasants. One of the party's leaders even argued that Zionists, like the British, had been entrusted the "historical and humanitarian mission" of settling among "backward and hostile natives."⁵⁵

The Labor Bureaucracy in Power

ISRAELI GOVERNMENTS WERE FORMED by coalitions led by MAPAI from 1949 to 1977. Ben-Gurion served as prime minister until 1963. From the start of its reign there was unease within MAPAI that its socialism “was being forsaken in the din of state-making”; Ben-Gurion had already labeled the kibbutzim as a “socialist aristocracy detached from the needs of the state.”⁵⁶ He went on to declare that the Israeli state was neither socialist nor capitalist (i.e., it was above classes), that the term “socialism” was of no relevance, and that

the working class’s interests and its institutions could no longer be seen as general. For many Histadrut members . . . their interests in the Labour organization were private, i.e. what it could give them in terms of services. The working class’s vision, unity and pioneering spirit had faded, and a particularism had asserted itself instead. Consequently, ‘In the state there exists a more efficient and comprehensive tool than the Histadrut. It is up to us to draw the proper conclusions from these two facts’. The conclusions were that the state’s institutions, not the working class’s, were universal, and that ‘The Histadrut is neither the state’s rival or competitor, but rather its faithful aid and loyal supporter’.⁵⁷

To argue that any Israeli institution should be purely for workers was denounced by Ben-Gurion as “partisan.” Shalev explains the difference between the Israeli version of social democracy and that of the European social democrats:

[European] social-democratic parties made the particularistic interest of the working-class in higher wages synonymous with the general interest of all classes in stimulating production. In contrast, the material basis for the status of Jewish labor in Palestine as a *universal class* did not rest solely on the positive implications of working-class prosperity for other classes. It also relied on the shared interest of workers, the middle strata, and much of bourgeoisie in the economic separation of Arabs and Jews; and on the crucial role of the labor movement in guaranteeing the present security and future of the entire Zionist community in Palestine.⁵⁸

Though Minister of Labor Golda Meir might have spoken of “socialism in our time” in 1950, MAPAI’s economic policy increasingly allowed for income inequality. Ben-Gurion insisted that full em-

ployment and housing depended on attracting foreign capital, and MAPAI’s socialist rhetoric masked the development of a “restricted capitalism . . . propelled by a large influx of desperately needed foreign investment capital, particularly in the form of loans from foreign governments and banks, private funds through the sale of Israeli Bonds, Jewish contributions from abroad and German reparations . . . there was no attempt at nationalizations of the private sector and wage policy shifted from . . . principles of need . . . to one based on professionalism and less socialist or egalitarian criteria.”⁵⁹ Where rival parties came to be supported by elements of the working class, MAPAI earned the support of the “state made middle class” — a generously treated (by MAPAI) group of “entrepreneurs and middlemen who made their fortunes through government concessions and subsidies, as well as the considerable salariat of managerial and professional workers in public employ.”⁶⁰ Over the first twenty years of MAPAI’s rule, a technocratic group of army officers who entered the economy as administrators and specialists emerged in the party and came into conflict with its “old guard”; statist technocracy would come to define MAPAI and its successor, the Labor Party. Indeed, aside from the fact that there were still opposition parties and some degree of freedom for non-Arab minority opinion, Israel under MAPAI had aspects that were eerily reminiscent of Stalinism. One small group of leaders (MAPAI) controlled the political party of the workers, the trade union of the workers, the state-owned industry (“of the workers”), and through a series of coalitions, the government (also “of the workers”). This “workers” state could break strikes (how could workers sensibly strike against “themselves,” after all) and then deny strikers further employment in the “socialist” sector by a labor court presided over by appointees of MAPAI.*

Israel’s welfare state also varies greatly from social-democratic norms. In terms of social security spending it has been dubbed a “welfare-state laggard.”⁶¹ Its social policy has favored benefits to children over pensions for the retired. Most notable in its defiance of universalistic social-democratic principles is the difference in policy provisions for Arabs and Jews; the latter get all the benefits and the former only some, while Arabs in occupied Palestine “are entitled to virtually no income maintenance support and are offered a limited range of public social services which bear no comparison with those of Israel proper.”⁶² Even among Israeli Jews there is

a two-tier system of welfare:

Essentially, the upper tier was reserved for the veterans of the period before sovereignty, most of whom were Ashkenazim . . . Here social protection depended primarily on the employment relationship. The veterans had access to the best job and enjoyed a high degree of job security . . . [and] entitlements to a variety of insurance-based income maintenance schemes . . . In contrast, recent arrivals naturally lacked job seniority and a great many were unemployed, in temporary jobs, or administratively barred from entering the labor market . . . they were dealt with harshly by means of a 'residual' system of niggardly means-tested benefits and manipulative forms of so-called treatment and rehabilitation. The ones who suffered the most were...mostly the 'Eastern' Jews who immigrated to Israel from North Africa and the Middle East.⁶³

MAPAI attempted to simultaneously retain the loyalty of its traditional supporters while winning over other constituencies, such as the new middle strata. Had it governed in a more universal, traditionally social democratic fashion, this would have undermined the clientelism on which the party so heavily relied. Hence MAPAI's welfare state policy — more properly defined as *dualist* than socialist.⁶⁴

A result of such policies were that many Israeli workers came to see "socialists" as the society's elite, with many second-class Sephardic and Eastern Jews opting to support the right-wing Likud Party. The control of the Labor bureaucracy over the flow of foreign capital allowed it "to exercise a far-reaching control over the broad masses of the population, not only in political and economic matters, but even in aspects of everyday life. The majority of the Israeli population depend[ed] directly, and daily, on the goodwill of this bureaucracy for their jobs, housing and health insurance. Some of the workers who . . . rebelled against the bureaucracy, like the seaman in the great strike of December 1951, were denied employment, and some who refused to surrender were forced in the end to emigrate."⁶⁵ In the Histadrut, blue-collar workers came to constitute "only a mi-

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nority of the Histadrut's constituency, which includes all grades of white collar and professional workers, and even many of the self-employed."⁶⁶ Left opposition to MAPAI was weakened when the party took into the state functions of the Histadrut that were important leftist power bases (the Palmach military force and the labor school system). The

Histadrut's social services and its affiliated economic enterprises "were permitted to remain [non-state] and came to enjoy substantial informal privileges, on the understanding that they would continue to serve the needs of the party."⁶⁷ Those enterprises had always functioned according to market logic and were managed in traditional capitalist fashion. Histadrut leader and

Minister of Agriculture Haim Gvati admitted in 1964 that

We have not succeeded in transforming this immense richness into socialist economic cells. We have not succeeded in maintaining the working-class nature of our economic sector. Actually there are *no* characteristics to differentiate it from the rest of the public sector, and sometimes even from the private sector. The atmosphere, work-relations and human relations of our economic sector are in no way different from any other industrial enterprise.⁶⁸

Pinhas Lavon, General Secretary of the Histadrut, argued that the federation had no specific class character: "Our Histadrut is a general organization to its core. It is not a workers' trade union, although it copes perfectly well with the real needs of the worker."⁶⁹ Employment in the public or Histadrut sectors "often meant having the right connections in MAPAI. As major employers, the Histadrut and the state had an interest in restraining working-class militancy, and since they were controlled by the same party, they generally cooperated to do so."⁷⁰ While restraint of militancy is hardly

*As Barry Finger has informed me, this is more or less what happened to Akiva Orr, later a founder of the independent Marxist group Matzpen, who thought that the state-owned merchant marine should be run along socialistic lines and participated in a strike action that rendered him unemployed by means of the above process.

unknown among social democratic parties and trade unions, the alienation that Israeli workers felt towards the Histadrut was notable; by the mid 1960s, few of its members said that they had joined be-

Unless one identifies “socialism” with statism, socialism was never a goal of Ben-Gurion and his co-thinkers.

cause of ideological reasons or because the Histadrut defended workers’ interests, many felt that the Histadrut made no difference in their work situations, that the local trade-union branches in their workplaces should be independent of the Histadrut, and that the trade-union conference had no influence on the functioning of the central body — i.e., that the ordinary trade unionist had little influence.⁷¹ Beginning in 1952, it became official Histadrut policy to put “the good of the state” and “the needs of the economy” above the needs of workers — it traded off wage concessions “not only, or even mainly, in return for compensatory material benefits for the working class,” but in return for state subsidies for the Histadrut-owned sector of the economy and its health clinics and pension funds.⁷²

Conclusion

THE LABOR PARTY IN GOVERNMENT implemented policies that ultimately weakened the institutions that supported it, most notably the Histadrut. Today, it is no longer guaranteed an authoritative role in government or of hegemony over the Histadrut, and as mentioned before, its political program has ever less resemblance to traditional social democracy.

Years of supposed socialism in Israel have not left any positive legacy where Israel’s labor laws are concerned. The law allows only a very limited, very specific strike, against a particular employer who fails to respect the promise of good working conditions. This kind of strike must be approved beforehand, as it is already considered a violation of contract. In collective bargaining agreements, the worker agrees to industrial peace and is obligated to not strike. Solidarity strikes with other workers are illegal, as are strikes against government policy or Knesset de-

cisions. If the government is about to discuss raising taxes, or privatization, or cutting subsidies, the workers are not allowed to strike — it would be considered a “political strike,” forbidden by law. The courts do permit a “semi-political” strike of no more than three hours if the workers believe that a particular policy may hurt them directly, but the possibility that a three-hour strike might have any kind of effect is quite small.⁷³

A 1997 general strike in the public sector gave hints of a possible long-term realignment of Israeli politics that might ultimately displace the current hawk/dove division by a new politics based on social class. That year saw the first serious talk in decades of the formation of a new workers’ party in Israel, as many Labor Party leaders are estranged from the trade union movement; some of them even supported the Netanyahu government against the strike. Today there exists the *Am Ehad* (One Nation) Party, headed by Histadrut Chairman Amir Peretz, which presents itself as Israel’s only “real” social-democratic party and “aspires to economic and social equality among all citizens of the State of Israel.”⁷⁴

NOTES

1. Quoted by Norman Finkelstein in “Palestine: The Truth About 1948,” <http://www.nimn.org/history/finkelstein.html>.
2. Lori Epstein, “Socialism doomed, business interns say here,” *Jewish Bulletin of Northern California*, May 29, 1998, <http://www.jewishsf.com/bk980529/sfadoom.htm>.
3. Geoffrey Wheatcroft, “Death of the Kibbutz,” *The Guardian*, Monday, May 14, 2001, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/Print/0,3858,4186081,00.html>.
4. Alan Dowty, *The Jewish State: A Century Later* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 56. “Revisionism” refers to the movement led by Vladimir Ze’ev Jabotinsky in the 1920s, which asserted the exclusive right of Jews to all of Eretz (Greater) Israel, and explicitly upheld order, discipline, and authority over democracy and individual rights.
5. Zeev Sternhell, *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998), p. 35.
6. Ibid., pp. 7-9.
7. Mitchell Cohen, *Zion and State: Nation, Class and the Shaping of Modern Israel* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992).
8. Zachary Lockman, “The Left in Israel: Zionism vs. Socialism,” *MERIP Reports*, 49 (July 1976), p. 4.
9. Mitchell Cohen, “Ber Borochov and Socialist Zionism,” in Mitchell Cohen, ed., *Class Struggle and the Jewish Nation: Selected Essays in Marxist Zionism* (New Brunswick: Transaction Books, 1984), p. iv.
10. Quoted in Cohen, *Zion and State*, p. 91.

11. Cohen, "Ber Borochov and Socialist Zionism," p. iv.
12. Cohen, *Zion and State*, p. 92.
13. Lockman, op. cit.
14. Sternhall, p. 84.
15. Quoted in Cohen, op. cit., p. 94.
16. Ibid., p. 97.
17. Ibid., p. 96.
18. Sternhall, op. cit., pp. 91-92.
19. Cohen, op. cit., p. 99.
20. Ibid., p. 101.
21. Ibid., p. 102.
22. "In 1919, Syrkin . . . was the key figure in the World Po'alei Tzion Conference in Stockholm, which assigned him the task of heading a study commission to visit Palestine to draw up a plan for mass cooperative settlement" (<http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/biography/nsyrkin.html>).
23. Quoted in Sternhall, op. cit., p. 104. Syrkin was either unaware or uninterested in the outlines of socialist society provided by Karl Kautsky in *The Social Revolution* (1902) or the writings of British Guild Socialists such as G. D. H. Cole.
24. Ibid.
25. Quoted in Ibid., pp. 93-4.
26. Ibid., p. 108.
27. Ibid., p. 112-13; Lockman, op. cit., p. 5.
28. An example, from <http://jewishpeople.net/labourzionism.html>: "Beginning in the 1920s, [Ben-Gurion] set out to create the immense institutional framework for a Jewish workers' state in Palestine." Excerpted from Helen Chapin Metz, ed., *Israel: A Country Study* (Washington, D. C.: Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress, 1988).
29. Cohen, op. cit., p. 109.
30. Quoted in Cohen, *ibid.*, p. 110.
31. Michael Shalev, *Labour and the Political Economy in Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 27.
32. Lockman, op. cit.
33. Cohen, op. cit., p. 111.
34. "This organization of the proletarians into a class . . . is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves. But it ever rises up again, stronger, firmer, mightier." Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto," in David McLellan, ed., *Karl Marx: Selected Writings* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 228.
35. Shalev, op. cit., p. 40.
36. Cohen, op. cit., p. 112.
37. Sternhall, op. cit., p. 199.
38. Cohen, op. cit., p. 113.
39. Sternhall, op. cit., p. 202.
40. Ibid., p. 198.
41. Ibid., p. 205.
42. Ibid., p. 212.
43. Cohen, op. cit.
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54. Lockman, op. cit., p. 6.
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63. Ibid., p. 244.
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65. Haim Hanegbi, Moshe Machover, and Akiva Orr, *The Class Nature of Israel* (Cambridge, Mass.: Middle East Research and Information Project, 1971), pp. 16-17.
66. Shalev, op. cit., p. 85.
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68. Quoted in Hanegbi, Machover, and Orr, op. cit., pp. 13-14.
69. Ibid., p. 15.
70. Joel Beinin, *Was The Red Flag Flying There? Marxist Politics and the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Egypt and Israel, 1948-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 72.
71. Hanegbi, Machover, and Orr, op. cit., p. 17. The Histadrut was not controlled by workers at the shop level, but governed by "parliamentarily" elected party lists.
72. Shalev, op. cit., p. 194.
73. Information received through Eric Lee of Labourstart (www.labourstart.org), who has lived in Israel.
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Rank and file Metalworker Militancy in France and Britain, 1890-1918

MARK HUDSON

LABOR HISTORIANS HAVE OFTEN NOTED and tried to explain the increasing militancy shown by workers in the metal-processing industries in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.¹ In France, Britain, Germany, Russia and the United States, indeed all over the industrialized world, metalworkers showed an increasing willingness during this period to confront their employers in struggles over wages, working hours, the introduction of skill-reducing technologies and the concomitant reorganization of the workplace and work processes.

In France the number of strikes in the metalworking industries increased steadily from 1890 to 1914, with 224 strikes occurring in 1890-1894, 368 in 1895-1899, 415 in 1900-1904, 586 in 1905-1909 and 685 in 1910-1914.² In Britain, although the increase was less steady, the number of metalworker strikes during this period was greater than in France and the increase more spectacular after 1910, with 776 strikes occurring in 1890-1894, 947 in 1895-1899, 447 in 1900-1904, 453 in 1905-1909 and 1,203 in 1910-1914.³ In France metalworker strikes comprised 12 percent of all strikes in 1890-1914; only textile and construction workers showed a greater propensity to strike during this period.⁴ In Britain metalworkers accounted for 22 percent of all strikes in 1890-1914, more than any other industrial sector including miners.⁵

The world war of 1914-1918 brought new challenges for metalworkers because their labor was crucial to the requirements of the warring governments. Metalworkers in both France and Britain were subject to "industrial compulsion," i.e., government control over workplace organization and the disposal of their labor power, which in France took the form of an outright military mobilization of labor. In response, French and British metalworkers defied wartime strike prohibitions and their union executives and organized militant movements that threatened to disrupt the production of war materials and

thus posed a potential threat to the stability of the state itself. Wartime metalworker struggles played an important part in widening the division between leftists and moderates in the French and British labor movements — a division that after the war would lead to the affiliation of the left with the new Third International.

This essay compares metalworker activity in France and Britain during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. I analyze some of the explanations that have been offered by historians for metalworker militancy in these two countries, and I argue that although French and British metalworkers showed similar levels and types of militant activity during this period, the militancy of each requires a rather different explanation. Different work cultures, rates of technological change, forms of labor organization and working-class ideologies make each case unique and necessitate historical analyses sensitive to the roles these factors play in different national settings. In Britain, skilled metalworkers became militant in response to threats to their craft bargaining power, i.e., their ability to control the supply of labor and the organization of work processes in the metalworking industries. Classic labor aristocrats, they seldom showed solidarity with less skilled workers, whom they regarded as the primary threat to their status — until the war, when the ultimate futility of the craft bargaining strategy became readily apparent and a more class-conscious militancy emerged.

In France, by contrast, technological change was more gradual, craft unionism was weak, and militancy among less skilled metalworkers was catalyzed

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by skilled workers who still maintained old artisanal traditions of autonomy and egalitarianism. When threatened by mechanization and the reorganization of work processes, these artisanal workers responded, not in a craft-defensive way, but by forging alliances with their less skilled brethren and eventually organizing them into industrial unions. Of course these differences are generalizations; not all French artisans were so solidaristic, and there were a few British skilled metalworkers who saw the futility of craft unionism before the war. Nevertheless, when militancy emerged, it developed one way in France, another in Britain.

Structural Transformations

THE METAL-PROCESSING SECTORS of all the industrialized nations were given a tremendous boost in the latter part of the nineteenth century by structural transformations of production that greatly augmented the demand for factory machinery, transport equipment, construction materials and other capital goods. There were about 927,000 metalworkers in Britain in 1881; by 1914 this number had nearly doubled to about 1,804,000.⁶ The French metalworking sector was small by comparison, with only about 600,000 workers employed in 1906, but was also expanding rapidly.⁷ The metalworking industries in both countries encompassed a myriad of occupational groups involved in primary and secondary metal manufacture, e.g., foundry and forge workers, moulders, fileworkers, boltworkers, metal polishers, metalsmiths, gunsmiths, coppersmiths, tinsmiths, ironworkers and engineers (in France, “machine-builders”) — the skilled turners and fitters involved in the cutting and assembling of metal.

British metalworkers organized stronger craft unions than their French counterparts primarily because labor organizations remained illegal in France until 1884. The most powerful of the British metalworker unions was the Amalgamated Society of Engineers (ASE), founded in 1851. In 1914 almost 80 percent of the 219,000 organized workers in the engineering trades belonged to the ASE.⁸ While in Britain most semi- and unskilled metalworkers remained unorganized until the war because craft unions like the ASE failed to recruit them, in France craft unionism in the metal industries was gradually — but only gradually — overtaken by industrial unionism. The *Fédération des Ouvriers Métallurgistes* was founded in 1883 (the year before the law permitting freedom of association) with the aim of organizing all metalworkers regardless

of specialization or level of skill. But its efforts over the next two decades to fuse with various craft unions in the metal industries met with considerable resistance.⁹ Kathryn Amdur argues that even after a unified nationwide *Fédération des Ouvriers des Métaux* (FOM) was founded in 1909, metalworkers in Saint-Etienne remained averse to industrial unionism and maintained small separate craft unions alongside the industrial federation. On the eve of the war the FOM had only 25,000 members nationwide, although this number increased dramatically during the last two years of the war.¹⁰

While Amdur characterizes Saint-Etienne metalworkers as craft-exclusivist, she also produces police reports showing that a significant minority of them had anarchist or anarchosyndicalist leanings. She argues that metalworker anarchism in the Loire appealed mostly to “an intermediate rank of metalworkers employed in a variety of skilled factory trades”; of 164 suspected anarchists in the department in 1914, 43 were factory metalworkers, although the police statistics do not distinguish between the skilled and less skilled.¹¹ Anarchist metalworkers were also disproportionately represented

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in the local FOM, which endorsed the class struggle and tried to organize metalworkers from different industries regardless of skill level. This seems to contradict Amdur’s suggestion that Saint-Etienne metalworkers’ tendency toward anarchosyndicalism was a sign of their “spirit of craft exclusiveness.”¹² By her own account, anarchist metalworkers tended to be less averse to industrial unionism than their more moderate brethren.

Michael Hanagan provides us with a compelling explanation for prewar metalworker militancy in the Loire, arguing that militant artisanal workers threatened by technological change forged alliances

with industrial metalworkers and thus acted as catalysts of metalworker unionization and strike activity. The gradualness of French industrial development made possible the survival of a large artisanal workforce until late in the nineteenth century, and

Although French and British metalworkers showed similar levels and types of militant activity during this period, the militancy of each requires a rather different explanation.

when mechanization and new forms of work organization did begin to undermine their position, artisans responded not only by organizing unions to defend their own corporate interests but also by actively encouraging and defending the unions of industrial workers. French artisans believed, not without justification, that “any employer attack on the union organizations of industrial workers might be only a prelude to an attack on *their* unions.”¹³

To illustrate his thesis Hanagan examines three industrial towns in the Loire: Rive-de-Gier, Saint-Chamond, and Le Chambon-Feugerolles. In Rive-de-Gier, the transition from artisanal to industrial forms of work organization in metalworking began in the 1860s and was practically complete by the early 1890s, as the introduction of the press and the steam hammer transformed the process of forging steel. By 1893 most metalworkers in Rive-de-Gier were either semiskilled “forgers” or other poorly-paid semi- and unskilled workers, although there were still a few skilled workers — puddlers, foundrymen, fitters and turners — who received relatively high wages. Effective union organization among Rive-de-Gier metalworkers was hindered by several factors. One was their low wages, which made it hard to sustain an organization and even harder to sustain strikes. Another was the physical separation of skilled workers from the less skilled in metalworking factories, so that skilled and less skilled metalworkers seldom met each other on the job. A third factor was the residential scattering of metalworkers in the town; unlike the glassworkers of Rive-de-

Gier, metalworkers were not concentrated in their own distinct residential sections.

The artisanal glassworkers, with their high wages, cohesive informal work group, and tightly-knit community life, organized a strong local trade union in the early 1890s to defend themselves against the effects of mechanized glassmaking. When all 1,700 of the town’s metalworkers struck in 1893 in defense of their own nascent union organization, glassworker leadership and financial support were crucial in enabling the metalworker union to sustain the strike for two months. The 1893 strike eventually failed because of metalworker disunity, as a substantial minority of metalworkers chose to accept wage increases offered by the employers instead of defending the existence of the union, and metalworkers did not strike again in Rive-de-Gier for over a decade.¹⁴ But it demonstrates, not only the obstacles to metalworker organization and militancy in France in the 1890s, but also the “logic of solidarity” that sometimes made it possible for metalworkers to overcome these obstacles, at least for a time. By contrast, in nearby Saint-Chamond, where the artisanal working class was small and unthreatened by technological change, industrial metalworkers faced the same obstacles as in Rive-de-Gier but were unable to overcome them because they could not find allies possessing the financial resources and group cohesion they lacked.¹⁵

The clearest illustration of Hanagan’s thesis is Le Chambon-Feugerolles, where it was artisanal fileworkers threatened by the mechanization of filecutting who stimulated the development of industrial metalworker militancy. The Chambonnaire fileworkers organized a local trade union in 1888, and when a mechanized file factory opened in the town in 1899, the union launched a protest movement against it, calling on fileworkers to boycott the new factory and appealing to boltworkers and other industrial metalworkers for support. Although the factory remained open, by the beginning of 1901 this struggle led to the formation of an industry-wide metal union in Le Chambon, with fileworkers providing the core constituency. As in Rive-de-Gier, it was the higher wages and tighter group cohesion of the artisanal workers that made it possible for them to mobilize industrial metalworkers. The Chambonnaire metal union, Hanagan tells us, “possessed considerable resources, including the ability to raise large sums of money; through the metal union, fileworkers in large part financed industrial worker strikes.”¹⁶ The union financed strike ben-

efits for a 137-day strike of boltworkers in 1901, an 88-day strike of toolworkers in 1904, and a 22-day boltworkers' strike in 1905. Its strike kitchens (*soupes communistes*) also provided crucial support, especially during the 1910 general strike of 900 boltworkers, 1,900 fileworkers and several hundred other metalworkers. Although the general strike exhausted the union's funds, the strike kitchens allowed it to use its resources more efficiently and thus enabled the strike to succeed.¹⁷

Unlike Amdur, Hanagan argues that anarchosyndicalism "further reinforced the tendency toward cooperation between artisanal and industrial workers," although he recognizes that syndicalists occasionally "pandered to artisanal prejudices." In Le Chambon, revolutionary syndicalist ideas spread to metal-union leaders — mostly artisanal fileworkers — in the years after 1906, "when feelings of artisanal-industrial worker solidarity were already very strong."¹⁸ Although St. Etienne metalworkers may have been as craft-exclusivist as Amdur suggests, it seems unlikely that this was because of the influence of revolutionary syndicalism. More probably craft-exclusivist metalworkers in the Loire were either indifferent to revolutionary syndicalist philosophy or else influenced by the reformist brand of syndicalism that found growing sway in the French labor movement in the decade before the war.¹⁹

Hanagan also stresses the survival of an artisanal work culture among French skilled metalworkers even after their inclusion in the factory, arguing that "[a]lthough shut behind factory walls, metalworking artisans continued to behave as if they were in their own small shops: they took their own workbreaks, and they expected their supervisors to treat them as equals." He quotes a British skilled metalworker in 1904 who had worked in both countries and who commented on the importance attached by French workers, "altogether unrecognized in England," to matters such as "personal freedom and treatment, courtesy of foremen and masters and so on."²⁰

Indeed, the faster pace of technological change in British metalworking had probably undermined most vestiges of artisanal autonomy for British skilled metalworkers several decades earlier. Keith Burgess marks the beginning of a capital-intensive engineering industry in Britain during the period 1830-1850. Prior to 1830 the engineering industry was highly labor-intensive, adapting the skills of preindustrial millwrights to its needs and expend-

ing most of its capital on wages rather than machinery or buildings. But from 1830 to 1850, the diffusion of machine-tool technology on an unprecedented scale increased the ratio of capital to labor and made possible the emergence of the specialized workers — turners and fitters — known in Britain as engineers. This phase of development culminated with the founding of the ASE in 1850-1851 and the engineering lockout of 1852, as skilled engineering workers tried to maintain their autonomy and bargaining position in the face of increased supervision, longer work days, piecework, cyclical unemployment, competition from less skilled labor and other consequences of technological change.²¹

From the 1850s to the 1880s, Burgess argues, the capital-labor ratio in the British engineering industry remained comparatively stable, as this period "saw the spread of existing techniques rather than the development and diffusion of new ones." Piecework and overtime work became less common, although fluctuations in employment persisted, and fitters and turners consolidated their position as the

The gradualness of French industrial development made possible the survival of a large artisanal workforce until late in the nineteenth century.

most important workers in the industry. Wage rates for engineers who belonged to the ASE rose 30-40 percent during this period. But in the 1880s and 1890s a new round of labor-saving investment began to once again undermine the position of British skilled engineering workers.²² James Hinton describes a "technical revolution" starting in the 1880s which "increasingly threatened the engineers' ability to control the supply of skilled labour." The turners and fitters who comprised about 90 percent of the new members of the ASE during this time saw their "versatility and manual dexterity" rendered increasingly superfluous by new machines capable of being operated by lower-paid semiskilled workers. The introduction of automatic turret lathes and new specialized machine tools meant that turners were needed "only to set up the tools before the machin-

ing began,” and the increased precision of machine work threatened fitters with replacement by semi-skilled assemblers, since the size and shape of the cut metal article no longer had to be adjusted manually with a file.

The Machine Question

WITH EMPLOYERS MORE ABLE TO dispense with the skills of fitters and turners, the quality of apprenticeships declined. Although apprenticeship remained the most important means at the ASE's disposal for controlling entry into the industry, bosses “often took advantage of the very low wages payable to apprentices to exploit their labour on routine jobs, while neglecting to fulfil their obligation to instruct them in the craft.” The ASE's response to these changes was to “follow the machine,” i.e., to insist “that all jobs traditionally performed by craftsmen should continue to be treated as craft work and paid at the craft rate, even when the introduction of new machinery eliminated most of the skill necessary for its performance.”²³

The showdown over the “machine question” in the British engineering industry began in 1896. Disputes over the control of machinery became more frequent in 1896-1897, as unofficial committees of shop stewards, elected by the ASE district committees but potentially autonomous of them, became lightning rods of engineers' discontent. In August 1896 ASE members in Govan struck without the ASE Executive's approval after a nonunionist was allowed to work a lathe, and the newly-formed Employers' Federation of Engineering Associations threatened an industry-wide lockout unless the Govan men returned to work. Although a lockout was averted for the time being, tensions in the industry remained high. In January 1897, after a nine-month strike, ASE members in Hull forced their employer to recognize the Society's position on the machine question. Although the number of disputes continued to increase in the early months of 1897, both the Employers' Federation and the ASE Executive preferred to avoid an industry-wide work stoppage, and the two sides agreed to a national conference to be held in April.

Burgess argues that it was the ASE's weakness which made the Executive receptive to the idea of a conference on the machine question — a weakness he contends was due to the Society's failure in the 1890s to pursue a policy of “comprehension,” i.e., to organize the growing number of semiskilled workers in the industry. It was impossible, argues Bur-

gess, “for what was essentially a trade union of fitters and turners to wage industrial warfare on behalf of the non-unionist majority, particularly since unionist and non-unionist alike were increasingly competing for similar kinds of work.” The skilled engineers' effort to maintain a monopoly over certain jobs, even after the new machinery had eliminated most of the skill necessary to perform them, alienated them from the semiskilled operatives, most of whom “were only too willing to work machinery at lower rates of pay.”²⁴

The April 1897 conference failed to resolve the machine question, and renewed rank-and-file ASE militancy in its wake led to a nationwide lockout, which by October affected 45,000 workers and 579 firms. The engineering lockout of 1897-1898 ended in defeat for the ASE and the formal recognition of the employers' right to hire “any worker deemed suitable to operate machine tools at a mutually agreed wage.”²⁵ The craft exclusivism of British skilled engineers at this time, and their resultant weakness in the face of employers determined to assert their prerogatives, contrasts strongly with the

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militant industrial unionism of the Chambonnaire artisanal fileworkers.

British engineers in the late nineteenth century were skilled industrial workers with a long history of legal and successful craft unionism, not artisans recently confined in the factory and just starting to experiment with the possibilities of legal workplace organization. Although there is not enough evidence to say how representative the Chambonnaire fileworkers were of French skilled metalworkers as a whole (or even of skilled metalworkers in the Loire),²⁶ a clear comparison can be made between British and French fileworkers in the late nineteenth century. The Sheffield file trades were actually organized on an industrial basis in the

first half of the nineteenth century, but after the mechanization of file forging, which led to a general strike in 1866, the more skilled fileworkers set up a separate union. Hanagan tells us that “[t]he formation of craft unions had a logic of its own, and there were soon separate unions for hardeners, grinders, cutters, hand forgers, and machine forgers.” On the other hand, when the fileworkers’ union was organized in Le Chambon in 1888, “no heritage of organizational factionalism existed,” and machine forgers “were admitted into the union with all the other workers at the factory level.”

Whereas in Sheffield several decades of craft unionism in the file trades “created competing hierarchies of full-time paid officials who were not disposed to risk their union organization and their paid office for solidarity with other unions,” in Le Chambon fileworkers provided the core constituency for industry-wide metal unionism after 1900 and financed several industrial metalworker strikes. In Sheffield, unlike in Le Chambon, the mechanization of filecutting at the end of the century met little determined resistance.²⁷

Hinton calls the ASE’s craft bargaining policy “remarkably successful” despite the defeat of 1897–1898, noting that the engineers did win recognition from the employers “that ‘special consideration’ should be given to the employment of displaced craftsmen.” As a measure of the engineers’ success in “following the machine,” he cites the fact that by 1914 much of the work performed by skilled engineers and paid at the craft rate actually required little skill. But this success, Hinton argues, “rested increasingly on bluff,” because “as the real skill content of their work declined,” the engineers “lost their ability to defend the standard rate by deploying genuine craft bargaining power.”

The inconsistency of the ASE’s strategy became fully apparent after the outbreak of war in 1914, when dilution was introduced on a large scale under government direction. The war effort required a huge expansion in engineering production, which in turn necessitated the recruitment of large numbers of semi- and unskilled workers, many of them women. Dilution seldom meant the displacement or downgrading of skilled workers, especially in ammunition work where most dilutees were employed on new plant or in new factories, and there was a severe shortage of skilled labor throughout the war. Skilled engineers were needed to set up tools for dilutees, build and maintain machinery, test and inspect products, and for other complex tasks. Thus,

Hinton argues, “skilled engineers remained a privileged stratum despite dilution,” although this did not lessen their sense of insecurity about the threat dilution posed to their craft bargaining strategy, and he suggests that it was the “combination of a very powerful bargaining position with a very strong sense of insecurity” that explains the engineers’ explosive wartime militancy. Furthermore, he argues that this militancy could not be contained “within the existing structures of engineering trade unionism,” because the ASE Executive did not understand “the problems posed for the traditional craft strategy by wartime dilution.”²⁸

Craft Unionism and the Industrial Truce

AS WE HAVE SEEN, strike activity in the British metalworking industries was increasing in the years before the war, with almost three times as many strikes occurring during 1910–1914 as in 1905–1909. In the engineering industry there were 92 strikes during 1910–1914. Eighteen of these are classified as “miscellaneous,” and 40 arose from conflicts over wages, piece rates, and overtime pay, which is not surprising in an inflationary period. But there were almost as many strikes (34) over control of the workplace as there were over issues of remuneration.²⁹

When war broke out in 1914, the ASE Executive joined other trade union executives in declaring an “industrial truce” — a no-strike pledge for the war’s duration — which was formalized in the Treasury Agreement of March 1915. This was given statutory force by the Munitions Act of June 1915, which outlawed strikes and lockouts in the munitions sector and established a category of “controlled establishments,” in which all “restrictive practices” concerning the employment of less skilled labor were suspended and workplace organization was under state control. A Ministry of Munitions was created to coordinate war production, with the authority to assign workers to plants according to the needs of the state, and local Boards of Management were established, which excluded labor representatives.

In the winter of 1915–1916 and again in the winter of 1916–1917, the ASE tried unsuccessfully to counter this lack of representation, arguing for the establishment of joint committees that would give workers a hand in the administration of local industry.³⁰ Hinton argues that ASE leaders “retained considerable bargaining power despite the very limited character of their inroads into the formal decision-making process.” But their ability to deploy that power “was severely limited by their commitment

to the war effort.” Once they accepted the no-strike terms of the Munitions Act, ASE leaders “could hardly back up their claims with the direct threat of strike action.”³¹

Hinton describes the ASE Executive’s response to dilution as “[c]raft exclusiveness tempered by patriotic collaboration.” It was based on a “continuing belief in the long-term future of craft unionism” and “made no allowance at all for the technological dynamism of the industry.” But while the Executive continued to “follow the machine” and pinned its hopes on guarantees of a postwar restoration of pre-war craft practices in the industry, the shop stewards in the Clydeside munitions factories were developing a more realistic and class-conscious response to the dilution threat that accepted dilution as “a progressive and permanent development which could not be resisted and with which the craftsmen must come to terms.”³² The Clyde Workers’ Committee (CWC), formed in October 1915, was composed of 250–300 delegates from the engineering and shipbuilding trades and led by a small group of shop stewards from the munitions factories, all of them socialists of one kind or another.

The chairman of the CWC, William Gallacher, was a member of the British Socialist Party (BSP), and two other members of the leading group, James Messer and David Kirkwood, were members of the Independent Labour Party (ILP). But the most important political influence on the CWC was the Socialist Labour Party (SLP), which espoused Daniel De Leon’s philosophy of socialist industrial unionism. Besides Gallacher, Messer, and Kirkwood, all the other members of the leading group — John Muir, Arthur MacManus and Tom Clark — were SLP members. The SLP had long denounced craft unions as “the blue blood of the working class,” and the CWC’s policy was that in the long run the only adequate response to dilution was to do away with craft unionism and, as Gallacher put it, “weld these unions into one powerful organization that will place the workers in complete control of the industry.” CWC leaders also demanded, as a negotiating stance on the dilution issue, the nationalization of “all industries and national resources” and worker participation in management, and stated their determina-

tion to “force this matter to an issue.”³³

The confrontation came almost immediately, and in the early months of 1916, dilution was imposed on the government’s terms. In January the government dispatched three Dilution Commissioners to the Clyde, where they cooperated closely with

William Weir, the Director of Munitions for Scotland and part-owner of a large engineering firm, Weir’s of Cathcart. In February the Commissioners began to enforce dilution on a plant-by-plant basis. Meanwhile, the SLP’s newspaper was suppressed, and Gallacher and Muir were arrested,

charged with violating the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA) and held without bail, although bail was granted after several thousand engineering workers struck in protest.

In March the engineers at Parkhead Forge struck after management revoked Kirkwood’s power as shop steward to move freely around the plant in order to ascertain the wages and conditions of dilutees. Other plants followed, and on March 25th Messer, MacManus, Kirkwood and two other Parkhead shop stewards were deported from the Clyde. The strike continued to expand, five more shop stewards were deported, including Tom Clark, and strikers were threatened with prosecution under the Munitions Act and DORA unless they returned to work immediately. By early April the strike collapsed, amid rumors that martial law was about to be declared. A number of strikers were prosecuted and fined, and Gallacher and Muir were each sentenced to one year in jail.³⁴

Hinton argues that the CWC was “easy prey” for government repression because it “failed to transcend the objective limitations of its original base” among the 20 percent or so of the skilled engineers on the Clyde employed in the munitions sector. The CWC’s dilution policy went beyond the craft exclusiveness of the ASE’s, but it was only directly relevant to workers in the munitions factories where the dilution threat was greatest. An industrial union could not be built overnight, because the less skilled munitions workers were mostly unorganized on the Clyde, where the Workers’ Union and other general unions were weak. But the cooperation of these workers “was essential if dilution was to be posi-

When war broke out in 1914, the ASE Executive joined other trade union executives in declaring an “industrial truce.”

tively controlled, not merely resisted.” Thus, “[e]ven the revolutionaries could not escape entanglement in the protective reflexes of the craftsmen,” and they were unable “to become an effective vanguard for the local working class as a whole.” Still, despite its failures and difficulties, the CWC succeeded in developing a “new type of local independent rank-and-file organization based in the workshops and the shop steward system,” and this idea subsequently spread to other centers of munitions production.³⁵

In Sheffield, where the less skilled engineering workers were much better organized than on Clydeside and dilution was less of an issue, an Engineering Shop Stewards’ Committee was formed, which linked up ASE shop stewards in the campaign against the Munitions Act and the new policy of military conscription introduced in the spring of 1916. Under the Committee’s leadership, 12,000 engineers from the ASE and other skilled engineering unions in Sheffield struck in November 1916 after a fitter was conscripted. The government was forced to back down, and in January 1917 the Committee reconstituted itself as the Sheffield Workers’ Committee, thus extending the movement to skilled engineers outside the ASE, although the issue that precipitated the strike — the exemption of skilled men from conscription — was as much an issue of craft privilege as dilution was on Clydeside.³⁶

Rank-and-file militancy continued to spread in 1917, and in May engineering workers struck in Lancashire, Sheffield and Rotherham, Coventry,

tary conscription. In an attempt to coordinate the strike movement nationally, a Joint Engineering Shop Stewards’ Committee was formed, which sought direct negotiations with the government and refused to accept the right of the ASE Executive to negotiate a settlement without submitting it to a vote of the strikers. But the final settlement was negotiated between the Executive and the government, which agreed to drop the plan to introduce dilution on private work, but not the decision to abolish the Trade Card scheme.³⁷

The Strike Weapon and the Way Forward

HINTON SEES THE MAY 1917 STRIKES as a significant step backward for the rank-and-file movement, arguing that the struggle to defend the Trade Card scheme “did more than anything else to undo or to retard the shop steward leaders’ work of constructing an alliance with the less skilled workers and inculcating a revolutionary perspective among the craftsmen.” In Sheffield the strike aroused considerable hostility among the less skilled workers, who reportedly hung around outside the strikers’ mass meetings with wounded soldiers and sang bitterly, “Don’t send me in the army, George, I’m in the ASE/ Take all the bloody labourers, but for God’s sake don’t take me.”³⁸ But May 1917, Hinton argues, was not the “climax” of the rank-and-file movement. In subsequent months, “the movement recovered from its lapse into mere craft concerns, expanded its base, developed a national leadership and by January 1918 had moved into the forefront of militant anti-war politics.”

In August 1917 representatives of shop stewards’ organizations held a conference in Manchester, where they elected a National Administrative Council (NAC) of the Shop Stewards’ and Workers’ Committee Movement. The conference also threatened strike action in October unless “a substantial increase had been made in the skilled men’s wages.” When the government granted a 12.5 percent increase to skilled timeworkers, less skilled workers in the engineering and other metal industries demanded inclusion, thus giving the skilled engineers a chance to demonstrate their solidarity with the less skilled. In Sheffield in particular, and throughout the country, the fight to extend the 12.5 percent bonus did much to reduce the divisions between skilled and less skilled and thus expand the base of the rank-and-file movement. The summer and autumn of 1917 also saw the return of the

Even the revolutionaries could not escape entanglement in the protective reflexes of the craftsmen.

London and other areas. The strikes of May 1917 involved over 200,000 workers and the loss of one-and-a-half million working days. They were precipitated by the government’s plan to introduce dilution on private work (i.e. to transfer skilled engineers in private industries to state-controlled munitions factories), and by its decision to abolish the “Trade Card” scheme which in the early months of 1917 exempted skilled munitions workers from mili-

CWC's deported leaders to Clydeside and the reconstitution of the Committee as a militant vanguard on the Clyde.³⁹

The possibility of a revolutionary alliance with the antiwar movement, however, was missed in early 1918. On January 5th and 6th another national conference of shop stewards was held in Manchester,

In France, as in Britain, most labor leaders did not oppose the outbreak of war in 1914.

and this time the delegates recommended nationwide strike action to prevent the passage of a bill authorizing the government to cancel exemptions from military service based on occupation. It was decided that delegates should "ascertain from the workers in the districts, what form this action shall take, and at once acquaint the NAC." Significantly, the conference rejected any defense of a privileged exemption for skilled workers, and it advised the rank-and-file movement to "demand that the government shall at once accept the invitation of the Russian Government to consider peace terms."

But when the delegates returned on January 25th with their reports from the localities, the NAC declined to issue a strike call. The delegates from London and Clydeside both strongly favored strike action, but neither had held a workshop ballot on the question. In Sheffield and Manchester, workshop meetings had shown the rank and file to be "opposed to strike action against the war." At another conference in April, most of the delegates reported that the workers were not willing to support an antiwar movement. Hinton argues that although the NAC may have had no choice but "to abdicate responsibility for the mass movement" in January 1918, the decision not to strike against the war "proved a fatal blow from which the movement...did not recover after the war."⁴⁰

Burgess criticizes Hinton for ignoring the "wider political climate" and focusing too exclusively in his explanation of the rank-and-file movement's failure on "internal divisions in the movement that can be reduced simply to variations in productive relations" (i.e., the divisions between skilled and less skilled workers). He argues that the government's efforts after mid-1917 "to develop new institutional

forms for the containment of industrial conflict [e.g., the Ministry of Reconstruction] created a new ideological discourse that offered hope for the future," and were thus instrumental in preventing the movement from expanding its base of support "to the degree required for a fundamental political challenge to the power of the state."

Furthermore, "the reconstruction of the Labour party during 1917-18, with clause four of its new constitution widely interpreted as an indication of its commitment to socialism, appeared to offer working people hope in the constitutional road to an improved tomorrow" and thus made a "Bolshevik-style seizure of power" seem unnecessary.⁴¹ Burgess also criticizes Hinton's explanation of skilled engineers' wartime militancy, arguing that it was the "politicization of productive relations rather than any inherent technological dynamism" that explains the extent and character of the engineers' militancy during the war.⁴² For his part, Hinton seems to assign roughly equal explanatory weight to the politicization of production and the technical transformation of the engineering industry, arguing merely that "[t]he struggle over rationalization and dilution of labour is at least as important a part of the context of the shop stewards' movement as the struggle against industrial compulsion."⁴³ If Hinton is overly economic, Burgess is equally culpable of privileging politics and state-generated discourses at the expense of more purely material considerations.

In France, as in Britain, most labor leaders did not oppose the outbreak of war in 1914. The national leadership of the Confédération Générale du Travail (CGT), which in late July 1914 had proclaimed itself "absolutely opposed to any war," reversed itself in early August and declared its support for a war to save "democratic and revolutionary" France from "German militarism." CGT general secretary Léon Jouhaux and other CGT officials accepted positions on government boards and joint committees alongside employers' representatives.⁴⁴ The most prominent CGT leader to oppose the war from the outset was Alphonse Merrheim, secretary of the Metalworkers' Federation.

In December Merrheim published two articles in the CGT journal *La Bataille Syndicaliste* defending the antiwar position of Karl Liebknecht, the left-wing Socialist who voted against war credits in the German Reichstag. Merrheim declared that "[i]t would be an everlasting honor for the CGT to have neatly and loudly sided with Karl Liebknecht." In

April 1915 the FOM adopted a resolution sympathizing with the antiwar campaign in Germany led by Liebknecht, Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin, and calling on the CGT to launch a similar campaign. In May Merrheim, working with his friend Alfred Rosmer, published a special antiwar issue of the FOM's journal, *L'Union des Métaux*. In the lead article, Merrheim denounced the CGT's collaboration with the war effort and called for peace with no annexations. After the journal's publication, two other CGT federations and five departmental unions endorsed the FOM's antiwar position.⁴⁵

French war mobilization, like that in Britain, required state intervention on an unprecedented scale and a transformation of the war-related industries of munitions and steel. In early 1915 the government began recalling soldiers from the front lines, and by the beginning of 1917 mobilized military workers comprised over one-third of the workforce in the war industries nationally and almost one-half the number in the Loire. As in Britain, the position of skilled workers in the munitions sector was threatened by the recruitment of large numbers of less skilled female workers and the introduction of new machines. Amdur sees dilution as a factor in French metalworkers' wartime militancy,⁴⁶ but she provides little if any evidence of this; dilution was never as explosive an issue in France as it was in Britain, because French skilled metalworkers lacked the craft bargaining power of their British counterparts. As we have seen, the FOM, although an industrial union, was much smaller than the ASE in 1914, and its membership fell in the first two years of the war as members were called up to serve on the front lines. The Le Chambon metalworkers' union fell from 400 to 100 members after the mobilization, and at Saint-Etienne membership dropped from several hundred before the war to barely a dozen in May 1916.⁴⁷ Even if the FOM had been a stronger union in 1914-1916, it is still unlikely that its response to dilution would have been to defend the craft privileges of its skilled members at the expense of the less skilled metalworkers it was also committed to organizing.

To coordinate war production the French government named right-wing Socialist Albert Thomas to head a new department of Artillery and Munitions within the War Ministry, which later became a separate Ministry of Armaments. In early 1917 legislation was passed banning strikes in war production, establishing arbitration procedures, and improving the wages, hours and conditions of work-

ers in the war industries. At the suggestion of the FOM and other federations, Thomas organized a system of shop stewards to handle workplace grievances in armaments plants under the terms of the new law.⁴⁸ Thus, as Carmen Sirianni notes, in France the shop steward system was established by the government within the framework of industrial unionism, unlike in Britain where in most places the shop stewards arose spontaneously outside and often in antagonism to the official craft-union structure.

But the system implemented by the government fell far short of the federations' proposals for workshop delegates with broad functions and constituted in a collective factory body under the authority of the union. Isolated, the delegates were prone to management influence and generally functioned to conciliate rather than providing workers in the war industries with greater workplace con-

French war mobilization, like that in Britain, required state intervention on an unprecedented scale and a transformation of the war-related industries of munitions and steel.

trol. Some French shop stewards defied the restrictions and formed factory councils either loyal to or independent of the official union structure, but these councils seem to have played much less of a role in wartime strike activity than the workers' committees in Britain. Sirianni explains this difference by the "structural congruency" in France between the shop steward system and industrial unionism, which "undercut any struggle for recognition of the delegates as a means of creating an all-grades organization of workers." Similarly, in British munitions centers such as Birmingham and Coventry, where less skilled workers were well-organized and the bargaining position of the skilled engineers was thoroughly undermined by dilution before the war, "union structures capable of housing the stewards were available, thus depriving the more revolutionary elements of leadership and a mass base in the struggle for recognition itself."⁴⁹

In September 1915 Merrheim attended the

international conference of antiwar activists at Zimmerwald, Switzerland. Upon his return to France he resumed his pacifist activities, editing more antiwar issues of *L'Union des Métaux*, speaking to meetings of CGT and Socialist peace advocates in various parts of the country, and establishing local antiwar committees. In early 1916 Merrheim helped organize and lead the Commit-

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tee for the Resumption of International Relations (CRRI), which worked to spread the ideas of the Zimmerwald conference and to reestablish relations between the European Socialist parties as a way of bringing an end to the war. By the spring of 1916, however, many members of the CRRI were moving beyond the moderate pacifism endorsed by the majority at Zimmerwald. Merrheim, who had opposed Lenin's calls for revolutionary antiwar action at the conference, eventually quit the Committee, the sole leadership of which then passed to the left-wing Socialist faction led by Fernand Loriot.

The Syndicalist Current

MEANWHILE, LEFT-WING SYNDICALISTS impatient with the moderate pacifism represented by Merrheim but suspicious of Socialist leadership joined the Committee for the Defense of Syndicalism (CDS) led by Raymond Péricat of the building trades workers and Pierre Monatte. It was this left-wing syndicalist current that was to be most influential on the antiwar movement in the Loire. The Union Départementale (UD) of the Loire was one of the five departmental unions to endorse the FOM's antiwar position in May 1915, and by early 1916 a small antiwar labor committee was meeting in Saint-Etienne, led by the secretary of the Saint-Etienne metalworkers' union, Laurent Torcieux. A small anarchist antiwar group also met in 1915 and

1916; its members included Clovis Andrieu, metalworkers' union secretary in Firminy, and Saint-Etienne typesetter Charles Flagecollet, who became UD secretary in May 1917.⁵⁰

Torcieux and Andrieu also played key roles in the revival of metalworker unionism and militancy in the Loire. Torcieux, a Loire native mobilized at the Manufacture Nationale d'Armes, had been forced to leave the area in 1910 because of his part in the strikes at Le Chambon. In September 1916 he published a pseudonymous letter protesting the exploitation of mobilized workers in the war industries. The letter argued that the Ministry of Armaments' wage regulations were discriminatory because they fixed mobilized workers' wages on the basis of the average wages paid to civilians in the largest enterprises, which paid less than the smaller firms and employed a smaller percentage of the total workforce. Mobilized workers were also denied overtime supplements, because they were considered, as soldiers, to owe all their time to the government. Torcieux demanded a new wage scale (*barème*) for the mobilized workers, and it was this demand that became the rallying cry in the strikes of 1917. But Torcieux, probably fearing reprisals, resigned as Saint-Etienne metalworkers' union secretary by the end of 1916 and played little role in these or other wartime strikes.⁵¹ Andrieu, a Paris native mobilized at the Holtzer steel plant in the Loire, maintained ties with Parisian syndicalists such as Merrheim and Péricat.

As more and more recalled soldiers returned from the front to work in the war industries of the Loire, Andrieu and other activists worked to bring women and foreign workers into the Loire metalworker unions, urging them to support the mobilized workers' wage demands and to demand higher wages and shorter hours for themselves. Their efforts paid off as the unions more than recovered from their weakened state during the first two years of the war. The Saint-Chamond metalworkers' union claimed 4,000 members in May 1917, including 800 women, and the department-wide Loire Union des Métaux claimed 20,000 in mid-1917, over half of them mobilized workers. Nationwide, the FOM claimed 150,000 members in mid-1917, a six-fold increase since before the war.⁵²

As the metalworker unions grew, strikes became more frequent. Strikes had practically ceased in the French metalworking industries in the first two years of the war, but there were signs of reviving militancy in 1916. Whereas in 1915 there was only one

metalworker strike in France, with 18 participants, in 1916 there were 54, with an average of 188 participants.⁵³ By contrast, in Britain there were 189 strikes in the metalworking industries in 1915, and 105 in 1916.⁵⁴ This difference can be explained by the much greater potency of the dilution issue in Britain, as well as by the weakness of the FOM in 1914-1916. But in 1917 the *barème* became an issue for mobilized metalworkers in France to compare with the dilution issue for skilled engineers in Britain.

In January 1917 a wave of strikes spread through the war industries in Paris and several provinces. It was this strike wave that prompted the French government to pass the aforementioned legislation of early 1917 and then establish a shop steward system to handle workplace grievances in the war industries under the new law. In April the government issued a new *barème* which applied to military as well as civilian labor, but militants in the Loire and elsewhere rejected this as unsatisfactory, partly because it did little to improve the wages of skilled workers — a sign that divisions between skilled and less skilled metalworkers still existed despite the growth of industrial unionism. The *barème* was revised again in June, too late to avert another strike wave that summer. Militants also objected to the shop steward system, which they saw as a thinly-veiled attempt by the employers and government to undermine union autonomy. Merrheim lost credit with left-wing metalworkers when he backed down from his initial proposals for the system and left the delegates isolated, and in the Loire some local union leaders were ousted in 1917 for their moderation on this and other issues.⁵⁵

The alliance of militant metalworkers with the antiwar movement that was never more than a possibility in Britain was accomplished in the Loire in 1917, although as we have seen the two were never entirely separate in the Loire. The alliance was completed as the growing metalworker unions sought to coordinate strike activity throughout the department. The Saint-Etienne Bourse du Travail and the Loire UD were both led until May 1917 by Philippe Grégoire, a local musician with no base of support in the labor movement. Although Grégoire was succeeded as UD secretary by the anarchist typesetter Flageollet, his replacement at the Bourse was a

moderate Socialist who opposed any militant antiwar action. To provide more effective department-wide leadership, the Loire metalworker unions founded a Comité Intercorporatif (CI), which maintained close contact with the Parisian left-wing syndicalists in the CDS. The CI expanded to include all major unions in the department, although some, such as the coal miners, showed little enthusiasm for antiwar strike action. The metalworkers' strongest allies on the CI were the building trades workers, whose federation secretary Raymond Péricat was a leading CDS militant.⁵⁶

The CI's effectiveness was demonstrated by the end of the year. In late November Andrieu and other Loire militants demanded another revision of the *barème*; they also denounced the employers for profiting from war production and pressuring the government to prolong the war. Merrheim, who by now was playing a much more conciliatory role, urged

the militants to wait while the FOM negotiated with the Ministry of Armaments; the government, which under new Prime Minister Clemenceau was taking a hard line against "defeatism," decided to retaliate

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by returning Andrieu to the front lines. Andrieu's departure was immediately followed by a mass strike in his defense, in which between 100,000 and 200,000 workers participated. After ten days the government was forced to reach a compromise agreement with the CI, and it was announced that Andrieu was merely "on leave" and that the Ministry of Armaments would renegotiate the *barème* with the FOM.

Of course, not all the strikers shared the revolutionary and antiwar aims of the militants; as Amdur argues, most metalworkers probably acted in solidarity with Andrieu and in "defense of syndicalist liberties," and for many workers, especially the miners, wage issues were probably paramount. But Amdur sees the strike as a crucial turning point because it "revealed the new line of demarcation within the syndicalist movement, no longer between prowar and antiwar factions" but between the moderate majority and left-wing minority.⁵⁷ This split was reflected nationally at the CGT conference in late December 1917, where the confederation voted to work for peace on a platform that combined Wilsonian "peace without victory" principles and support for the Bolshevik Revolution. Only two

delegates dissented from this apparently contradictory resolution; even CDS militants such as Péricat voted for it out of concern for syndicalist unity. But Loire militants denounced their delegate, Saint-Etienne Bourse secretary Antoine Reynard, who they alleged violated a mandate from home by vot-

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ing with the majority.⁵⁸

Metalworker strike activity ebbed in early 1918, as economic conditions improved and a new German offensive made most workers and even some militants more cautious about antiwar strike action. In the first four months of 1918, there were only four strikes in the Loire metalworking industries, averaging less than 500 working days lost apiece. But the German offensive also prompted the French government to start sending large numbers of younger mobilized workers and civilians from the war industries to the front. In the Loire over a thousand workers were called up, and Andrieu and other militants organized demonstrations in which women gathered at train stations, tugged at the conscripted soldiers’ coats and cried, “Don’t leave! Down with the war!”

CGT moderates, including Merrheim, counseled caution and agreed to postpone a CGT conference planned for the spring and all antiwar action until the military situation improved. In late March CDS militants in the southeast region convened an interdepartmental conference at Saint-Etienne, where they voted to demand that the CGT hold the planned conference; when the CGT refused, the CDS announced that it would hold its own conference at Saint-Etienne in mid-May. The left-wing syndicalists also called for a one-day nationwide strike on May Day, which some hoped would spark a widespread insurrection against the

war. In fact, the strike was mostly unsuccessful outside the Loire, where it was supported by the UD and organized by the Comité Intercorporatif. In the Loire probably 30,000 workers participated at Saint-Etienne alone, and large turnouts were also reported at Firminy and Le Chambon.

The May Day strike was only planned for one day, but when several workers were dismissed from the Verdié steel plant for alleged “sabotage,” the Loire metal unions responded by calling a general strike, which spread to Firminy, Le Chambon, Unieux and even Paris, where an estimated 200,000 metalworkers struck in solidarity with the Loire strikers. When the CDS conference convened in Saint-Etienne, the delegates voted 114 to 4 (with 60 abstentions) to call for a nationwide general strike in the war industries, but this found little support outside the southeast, and most of the Paris strikers were already back at work by the time the conference started. Still, the strike continued for the rest of May in the Loire; it ended when the government arrested Péricat, Andrieu, Flageollet and about 120 other militants. Most of the arrested were mobilized workers; some were indicted on military charges, while others were returned to the army. The repression marked the end of wartime strike activity in the Loire; the militants were not freed until the following winter.⁵⁹

Technology and Patterns of Militancy

AFTER THE WAR the left-wing minority in the FOM expanded quickly from its wartime base in the Loire. Of course, after 1918 the primary issue dividing moderate from left-wing syndicalists was no longer the war but support for the Bolshevik Revolution and the new Third International. At the 1919 CGT Congress at Lyon, 42 percent of the metalworker unions affiliated with the FOM voted with the left-wing faction; at the 1921 Congress at Lille, 54 percent sided with the left.⁶⁰

By 1922 both the FOM and the CGT had split, and the left-wing metal unions joined the new Confédération Générale du Travail Unitaire (CGTU), which in 1923 affiliated with the Red International of Labor Unions (RILU), the Third International’s labor organization. In Britain, the merger of the ASE with nine other metal-craft unions in 1920 to form the Amalgamated Engineering Union (AEU) still did not signify the advent of industrial unionism in the British metal trades, although Hinton argues that “the pursuit of the wages policy developed on the Clyde in 1916 had much to

do with the capacity of the AEU in the long term to adapt itself to the technological dynamism of the industry and gradually expand into an all-grades industrial organization.”⁶¹ Although there was no formal split in the labor movement in Britain, in 1922 the NAC of the shop stewards’ movement officially merged with the British Bureau of the RILU.⁶²

As we have seen, metalworker militancy developed one way in France, another in Britain. In France, the gradualness of technological change made possible the survival of large numbers of artisanal metalworkers until late in the nineteenth century, who even after their inclusion in the factory continued to maintain an artisanal work culture that emphasized autonomy and egalitarianism. These artisans responded to the threat of mechanization by forging alliances with less skilled metalworkers, encouraging and defending their efforts to unionize and eventually organizing them into industrial unions. By contrast, in Britain the faster pace of technological change undermined the artisanal culture much earlier, and by the end of the century British engineers were skilled industrial workers long accustomed to factory hierarchy and discipline. They possessed a powerful craft union that protected their bargaining position in the industry, and they saw no need to build alliances with less skilled workers, whom they regarded as a threat to their wages and status.

In France, although tension between skilled and less skilled metalworkers still existed, dilution was much less of an issue than in Britain because French skilled metalworkers lacked the craft bargaining power of their British counterparts. The Metalworkers’ Federation was greatly weakened during the first two years of the war as many of its members were called up for military duty. But in 1915 the government began recalling soldiers from the front to work in the war industries, and by 1917 the metal unions were considerably larger than they had been before the war. Mobilized metalworkers such as Clovis Andrieu played key roles as organizers and strike leaders in the Loire; most of the arrested militants in the 1918 Loire general strike were mobilized workers in the war industries. In Britain wartime leadership was provided by the shop stewards’ and workers’ committee movement, which tried to develop a more realistic and class-conscious alternative to the ASE’s craft bargaining strategy. The Clyde Workers’ Committee went furthest in this regard, arguing that in the long run the only adequate re-

sponse to dilution was industrial unionism. But this was only a long-term goal, and in the short term the CWC and other workers’ committees did not succeed in expanding the base of the rank-and-file movement and constructing an alliance with the less

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skilled workers, although some progress was made in late 1917.

There was no shop stewards’ movement in France; although a shop steward system was created by the government in 1917 to handle workplace grievances in the war industries, the shop stewards’ functions were severely circumscribed, and most militants saw the system as a thinly-veiled attempt to undermine union autonomy. Furthermore, unlike in Britain where in most places the shop stewards’ movement arose outside the craft-union structure as a means of transcending craft divisions, in France the shop stewards existed officially within the framework of industrial unions, which made them much less effective as a base for insurgent rank-and-file activity.

FINALLY, THERE IS THE question of working-class ideologies. In France, anarchosyndicalism mostly reinforced the class-conscious tendencies of prewar artisanal metalworkers, although their initial impulse toward class solidarity and industrial unionism seems to have developed, paradoxically, from their preindustrial traditions of egalitarianism and independence from authority. Wartime Loire militants such as Andrieu also found a basis for their actions in anarchist or left-wing syndicalist philosophy. In Britain the De Leonist industrial unionism of the SLP and the class-struggle socialism of the BSP and ILP provided direction for a movement struggling to overcome craft divisions and establish

working-class control of industry. But the revival of the Labour Party in 1917-1918 probably made many British socialists less willing than they might have been to launch an insurrectionary general strike to end the war.

Could such a strike have led to a working-class seizure of power in Britain or France in 1917-1918, as occurred in Russia at that time? The odds were against it. What made working-class revolution feasible in Russia in 1917 was, above all, the obsolescence of the Russian social structure, which was shaken to its foundations by the war. Compared to Russia, Britain and France were advanced, stable capitalist societies capable of mobilizing for war (and against internal opposition) with a high degree of effectiveness, whatever the human cost. This of course does not mean that revolution was impossible in Britain and France in 1917-1918, but only that we should not assume it would have occurred had working-class leaders acted more decisively. One thing is certain: a successful working-class revolution in either country would have profoundly altered the subsequent history of Europe, the international workers movement and the world.

NOTES

1. Edward Shorter and Charles Tilly, *Strikes in France, 1830-1968* (Cambridge 1974), 211.
2. B.R. Mitchell and Phyllis Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics* (Cambridge 1962), 71.
3. Shorter and Tilly, *Strikes in France*, 195.
4. Mitchell and Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, 71.
5. James Hinton, *The First Shop Stewards' Movement* (London 1973), 24.
6. Gérard Noiriel, *Workers in French Society in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York 1990), 110-111.
7. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 48.
8. Nicholas Papayanis, *Alphonse Merrheim: The Emergence of Reformism in Revolutionary Syndicalism, 1871-1925* (Dordrecht 1985), 7-9.
9. Kathryn Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy: Trade Unions and Politics in Two French Cities in the Era of World War I* (Urbana 1986), 40-41, 76.
10. Ibid., 53-54, 301.
11. Ibid., 40-41.
12. Michael Hanagan, *The Logic of Solidarity: Artisans and Industrial Workers in Three French Towns, 1871-1914* (Urbana 1980), 13-20, 209-217.
13. Ibid., 87-120.
14. Ibid., 159.
15. Ibid., 174-176, 187-189.
16. Ibid., 168-169, 178.
17. Ibid., 192-193.
18. On the growth of reformism in the French syndicalist movement generally and the metalworker federation specifically, see Jeremy Jennings, *Syndicalism in France: A Study of Ideas* (London 1990), 114-140; Papayanis, *Alphonse Merrheim*, 33-47.
19. Hanagan, *Logic of Solidarity*, 11.
20. Keith Burgess, *The Origins of British Industrial Relations: The Nineteenth Century Experience* (London 1975), 1, 12-24.
21. Ibid., 1-2, 25-28.
22. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 58-61.
23. Burgess, *Origins of British Industrial Relations*, 60-62.
24. Ibid., 64-68. Although the lockout was ostensibly over the issue of the eight-hour day, Burgess argues that this "was more important as a symbol than as an issue in its own right," and that "the employers made it clear that they regarded the confrontation as a test case for the enforcement of their prerogatives, especially the control of machinery."
25. Nor is it possible to draw any direct comparisons between French "machine-builders" and British engineers; there are only a few scattered references in the literature to machine-builders as a distinct occupational group in France, due to the weakness of French craft unionism. (There was nothing in France to compare with the ASE.)
26. Hanagan, *Logic of Solidarity*, 174-175.
27. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 61-65.
28. Keith Burgess, "The Political Economy of British Engineering Workers during the First World War," in *Strikes, Wars, and Revolutions in an International Perspective*, ed. Leopold Haimson and Charles Tilly (Cambridge 1989), 296-297.
29. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 50-52; Burgess, "Political Economy," 299-300.
30. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 53.
31. Ibid., 68-74.
32. Ibid., 120-124, 129-133.
33. Ibid., 140-160; Burgess, "Political Economy," 308-309.
34. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 129-130, 133, 161.
35. Ibid., 162-177; Burgess, "Political Economy," 310-311.
36. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 196-206; Burgess, "Political Economy," 314-315.
37. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 209-212.
38. Ibid., 235-254.
39. Ibid., 254-269.
40. Burgess, "Political Economy," 317-318.
41. Ibid., 301.
42. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 55.
43. Papayanis, *Alphonse Merrheim*, 86-88; Val Lorwin, *The French Labor Movement* (Cambridge, MA 1954), 47-49.
44. Papayanis, *Alphonse Merrheim*, 88-90; Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy*, 63.

45. Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy*, 65-67. In France there was also considerable recruitment of less skilled foreign workers (Spaniards, Italians, Africans and Asians from the colonies). By the end of the war foreign labor comprised about 5 percent of the metalworkers in the Loire; another 10 percent were German and Alsatian prisoners of war.
46. Ibid., 59.
47. Ibid., 67; Lorwin, *French Labor Movement*, 50; Carmen Sirianni, "Workers' Control in the Era of World War I," *Theory and Society* 9 (1980), 44-45.
48. Sirianni, "Workers' Control," 44-47.
49. Papayanis, *Alphonse Merrheim*, 90-95, 104; Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy*, 61-63.
50. Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy*, 68, 73.
51. Ibid., 73, 75-76.
52. Ibid., 69.
53. Mitchell and Deane, *Abstract of British Historical Statistics*, 71.
54. Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy*, 73-75; Lorwin, *French Labor Movement*, 50; Sirianni, "Workers' Control," 45.
55. Amdur, *Syndicalist Legacy*, 76-77.
56. Ibid., 78-79.
57. Ibid., 80.
58. Ibid., 86-95.
59. Papayanis, *Alphonse Merrheim*, 141.
60. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 75; J.B. Jefferys, *The Story of the Engineers* (London 1946), 191-194.
61. Hinton, *First Shop Stewards' Movement*, 324-325.

Michael Albert on Participatory Economics

INTERVIEWED BY JUSTIN PODUR

OVER THE PAST THREE DECADES Michael Albert has written extensively on the importance of developing workable alternatives to contemporary capitalism. In his latest book, *Parecon*, Albert provides a model of participatory economics which he hopes can provide the left with a viable program for radical change.

JUSTIN PODUR: *Before we get into concerns about participatory economics in your new book, can you give a brief summary of the model's logic and features?*

Michael Albert: Participatory economics, or parecon for short, is a new economic vision proposed to replace capitalism. Its guiding values are solidarity, diversity, equity, and self-management.

Solidarity means the economy should cause people to be mutually concerned about one another's well being rather than trampling one another. Diversity means the economy should engender varied options rather than producing homogeneity. Equity means the economy should accord people income in proportion to the effort they expend and sacrifices they endure in socially useful labor rather than according to property owned, bargaining power, or output. And self-management means that workers and consumers should impact production, allocation, and consumption decisions with a degree of influence proportional to the decision's relative impact on them rather than some people having a huge say and others being entirely obedient.

Parecon's key institutions for attaining these ends are participatory workers and consumers councils, decision making methods that apportion influence in proportion to the degree one is affected, a division of labor that ensures comparably empowering circumstances to all workers, remuneration in proportion to the intensity and length of socially valued work, and allocation by cooperative nego-

tiation rather than by authoritarian central instruction or cut throat competition.

Networks of nested workers and consumers councils are familiar throughout history and are simply the vehicle/place for developing and manifesting preferences whether in a work team, division, whole workplace, or industry, or in a household, neighborhood, region, or country. The decision making methods are also generally known — one person one vote majority rule, or three quarters rule, etc., consensus, and diverse voting variants also including varied mechanisms of decision-related information sharing and dispersal, debate, delay and closure, etc, but all this chosen on a case by case basis to apportion influence proportionately to the degree people are impacted.

The division of labor of a participatory economy is a bit more original. Tasks are apportioned so that each actor has a "job complex" comparable to that of all other actors regarding quality of life implications and, even more so, empowerment implications. No one does only work that is overwhelmingly rote and boring, nor does anyone do only work that is overwhelmingly confidence-building, skill inducing, and accessing levers of power. Rather, we each have a mix of things we do, of course suited to our capacities and inclinations, some of which are empowering and some of which are not, but the total of which are comparable in their empowerment implications to everyone else's total. A parecon still has managerial tasks, conducting tasks, design tasks, and so on. But it doesn't have people who only manage, conduct, design, and so on. And similarly a parecon has assembly tasks, clean up tasks, service tasks, digging and carrying tasks, and so on, but it doesn't

MICHAEL ALBERT's book, *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*, has recently been published by Verso. He was interviewed by JUSTIN PODUR, a writer and activist based in Toronto.

have people who are only assemblers, cleaners, servers, or carriers.

Most people on the left understand why remuneration should not include returns to capital, but parecon also rejects remuneration according to output. Instead, people are paid according to their effort and sacrifice, which is different from output, given that people differ in their abilities, use different tools, etc. Since jobs are balanced, in a parecon if you work longer than I do, other things equal, you will get proportionately more pay. If you work harder or less hard, other things equal, you will get proportionately more or less pay. If you had a more debilitating or more pleasant job, again you would earn proportionately more or less pay.

And finally, as the last defining institutional feature, participatory economic allocation is no longer by competitive markets which distort behavior, establish horribly biased prices, cause unjust remuneration and income distribution, distort investment to serve the accumulation of profit (or surplus) rather than the meeting of human needs, and violate ecology, among other failings, nor by central planning which is authoritarian and

A good economy needs to decide the scale of operations case by case, not a priori.

contrary to self-management, among other failings. Instead, allocation in parecon is accomplished by *participatory planning*. Workers and consumers councils propose their involvements, and engage in a negotiated process of settling on final inputs and outputs exercising appropriate decision-making influence to meet freely developed and expressed preferences.

My new book, *Parecon: Life After Capitalism*, first argues for the values noted above. Then it critically evaluates current capitalist and also market socialist and centrally planned socialist institutions in light of those values. Then it presents in a far more complete and, I hope, compelling manner the new, participatory economic institutions and also explores their individual and col-

lective properties. And finally, it addresses diverse concerns readers may have about parecon.

Politics, Culture and Economics

JP: *At their best, today's movements do not see class oppression and capitalism as the only form or even the primary form of oppression. Instead they oppose sexism, heterosexism, racism, and all forms of hierarchy. Meanwhile, Parecon minimally discusses any of these. Why is that?*

MA: Certainly politics, kinship, culture, and other dimensions of life are critical, not just economics. But suppose you were describing desirable new political institutions (a new kind of legislature or court system, say), or desirable new socialization and living unit institutions (new ways of parenting, say), or desirable new cultural forms (ways of communities relating, say). You would focus on the intrinsic logic of your focused realm, but not on all other realms at the same time. You would talk a lot about families and up-bringing, etc., but not much about prices or exchange of resources. But your talking primarily about parenting, or religious ritual and community identity, or adjudication wouldn't mean that you thought that prices or workplaces were unimportant, of course, and in the same sense my focusing on economics when I am trying to present an economic vision doesn't imply that I think race or gender or other factors are unimportant, especially when the contrary is continually indicated in this book and in all my writing.

An economic vision should respect norms arising from liberatory gender, sex, race, and other relations. And I think parecon is capable of that, and the book addresses that. So while I agree that it is very important to battle the tendency to exaggerate the importance of economics and to pay attention to other factors including both conceptual and organizational approaches to multi-issue activism, I think that even with that multi-focus priority, sometimes it makes sense to centrally address one part of society and give less attention to other parts. Talking explicitly about economic vision seems to me to be one such time, just as talking explicitly about political, cultural, or kinship vision would also entail highlighting a part of the whole society.

JP: *But what does participatory economics say about household labor, for example, or about women doing*

gender-defined work on the job? Or what does it say about abortion?

MA: Parecon says nearly nothing about abortion. Or about child rearing, or about making love, or about a million other things. And the little that it does say about extra-economic phenomena is very general.

Thus, if there is a parecon in a society, then whatever else there is in that society beyond its economy will need to be at least compatible with what the participatory economy asks from people. This is what a good polity would also say about other dynamics in society apart from political ones, or what a good cultural sphere would say about other dynamics beyond cultural ones. That is, if one proposes a vision for some part of society — such as I do for the economy — then it says that the rest of society should be compatible. The book is explicit about this.

If we call bringing up kids or washing dishes from dinner work, and we live in a parecon, then bringing up kids or washing dishes become part of the process of balancing job complexes, and is remunerated and decided in the parecon way, like everything else in the economy. In that case, parecon would say about bringing up kids just exactly the same kind of things that it says about producing bicycles or doing surgery or digging coal. It must occur in balanced job complexes. It must get its inputs from the social planning process, as inputs to production. It must be remunerated according to effort and sacrifice. Some people, such as the wages for housework movements that have existed at various times — favor that way of looking at household activity, including child-rearing. And if a society wished to treat these activities that way, a parecon would have no trouble accommodating that choice.

But suppose we say, instead, as some people including myself would prefer, that child rearing and housekeeping isn't work in the same sense as bicycle manufacture, surgery, and coal mining are. Suppose we decide that there is something far more subtle and profound involved — first because the primary beneficiary of the activity is the practitioner of the activity rather than distant consumers, and second because there is something profoundly different about bicycles as a product than about children or even a clean or well designed living room as a product? In that case, par-

ticipatory economics wouldn't say so much about these activities — other than that the people emerging from families and from social life more generally will also work and consume in the economy, and will therefore need to be suited to doing that. Does that imply that there is nothing to be said about the activities, about the need for equity in them, etc.? Of course not. It just implies, instead, that what needs to be said about

Child rearing and housekeeping
isn't work in the same sense as
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coal mining.

raising children and caring for a home is far more the purview of a kinship vision than it is of an economic vision. For the economy to be deciding attributes of child rearing and household life based on how the economy thinks bicycles ought to be made, seems out of place, to me.

On the other hand, the statement that the family and socialization must be compatible with a parecon, is appropriate, I think, and is quite analogous to what a parecon says for the school system and other features, as well. A society that has a parecon can't sensibly have a school system that produces graduates who are unable or disinclined to participate in decision-making in balanced job complexes, nor can it sensibly produce graduates who expect to dominate others or to be dominated by others in a class hierarchy, because a parecon has no place for these relations.

Similarly, a society can't sensibly have family life that produces people who expect there to be relations of hierarchy between men and women regarding influence over economic outcomes or regarding income from economic activity in a society that has a parecon, because a parecon doesn't permit that kind of inequality and hierarchy. In a parecon neither workplaces nor consumption can reduce the influence of women vis-à-vis men, or reduce the relative income of women vis-à-vis men, or relegate women to worse conditions vis-à-vis men, because no such systematic hierarchies of power, income, or conditions can exist in a

parecon, period.

But couldn't women get a raw deal if they are equal in the economy but have to do everything, or nearly everything, in family and social life? Yes, they of course could, so presumably a kinship transformation would rule out such a backward residue.

So I think the answer is that parecon is very much in accord with eliminating sexual or gender hierarchies and also accords well with feminist innovations more generally, but it also doesn't overstep its bounds to say more than it ought to about other parts of life as if economics was the place to define and decide such relations in their positive and full character.

JP: *What about culture? What happens if there is racism in the work place? Parecon doesn't seem to talk about that. Does it deny the importance? And what does participatory economics say about religion, or about developing cultural communities around national citizenship, or ethnic factors?*

MA: If we had a parecon in a society that had racist cultural structures, the racist structures would cause one community — let's say whites in the U.S. — to expect to have dominating conditions and income, and another community or communities — let's say blacks and Latinos in the U.S. — to have subordinate conditions and income. But the parecon economy would not gratify these expectations born in the racist culture. It would violate them.

White workers in a parecon could have racist attitudes toward black workers, say. But they couldn't have systematically higher income, or better jobs, or more power. No one can have such advantages in parecon for any reason, because everyone in a parecon has a balanced job complex, everyone is justly remunerated for effort, and everyone has proportionate say in production, consumption, and allocation decisions.

In other words, by virtue of its balanced job complexes and self-management and its equitable remuneration, parecon eliminates racial and all other hierarchies of power and income in economic life. There just aren't any such hierarchies because the institutions literally preclude their being any such hierarchies. There could still be racist attitudes, yes, and there could even be some people who desired to violate parecon's built-in

features — and so of course the model should have means for repressed or minority communities to especially express and represent their interests, and parecon has that, as described in the model and the book.

What does parecon say about religion? It says almost nothing. Religion is not at its core an economic phenomenon, just as sexuality isn't.

Parecon does say, however, that in a society where there is a parecon, a religion that causes its adherents to expect to enjoy greater economic conditions relative to people of other religions is going to be at odds with the economy, and something will have to give. This is like the example above of the school system having to be in accord, or the example of home life having to be in accord. And of course the reverse holds true as well.

That is, suppose we — as I think we ought to — develop a powerful and compelling and worthy vision for cultural relations in a good society, and for gender relations, and others. Then these will have features and attributes that we celebrate and desire to enjoy, and these attributes will have wider implications. The economy in a society where these visions are in place would have to comply with various requirements the visions impose. Will a parecon be able to do that? I think so, and the book discusses such issues — though of course one can't be sure until these other visions are developed.

I believe, in other words, that when feminist movements put forth a vision for kinship relations and when anti-racist and other cultural and community related movements put forth a vision for culture, and when anarchists and others attending to matters of political activity in society put forth a political vision, it will turn out that parecon is consistent with and even supportive of each of these visions. And I think that is the right standard by which to judge an economic vision vis-à-vis other spheres of social life.

So just to be absolutely clear on this, if I said, or the parecon book said, here is participatory economics, this is a vision for society, that would be implicitly claiming that the only thing that matters is economics — so that an economic vision addresses everything important about all sides of life. But I don't say that, nor does the book. Instead I and the book claim exactly the opposite — that we need vision for other parts of life, just as

we need it for the economy, and no less importantly, and that an economic vision has to be compatible with those other visions, just as the reverse will also have to hold. That doesn't elevate economics nor denigrate anything else.

Finally, regarding culture vision, there are some efforts to try to elaborate cultural vision that would be compatible with parecon and would be comparably liberated, such as for example your own essay, *Life After Racism*, on ZNet.

Decision-Making and the State

JP: *But what about the state? What happens if there is stealing or violence or other violations? And how does society decide that some things the economy might otherwise do shouldn't be done — such as violating the rights of animals?*

MA: Parecon no more ignores the state than it ignores the family, or socialization, or schooling, or cultural celebration, or religion, among other dynamics. The participatory economic vision and the parecon book say about the state that we need new institutions that can accomplish legislation, adjudication, and implementation in ways that support the values we hold dear. It says that such a state will have to be compatible with parecon, and that parecon will have to be compatible with such a state.

There is no such thing as an economy alone. A real-world parecon will never exist without an accompanying polity, to be sure, or without an accompanying culture and kinship system, and so on. But that doesn't mean that thinking about the economy itself requires or even calls for us to overreach economic limits by indicating what the character of the polity (or kinship, or culture) must be. To do that is not the place of an economic vision.

How would external constraints be placed on the economy? Your example is a good one. A good polity might decide that there are rules that must be abided vis-à-vis a particular species, or perhaps even all animals — and then the economy would have to comply, just like the economy would have to comply if the polity says no one can own a hand gun, as another example.

Finally, interestingly, there are efforts now under way to try to conceive a way of doing political functions compatibly with parecon. See, for example, Stephen Shalom's essay on parpolity in the *Life After Capitalism* section of ZNet.

JP: *Regarding the economy itself, aren't your workers and consumers councils and remuneration for effort and sacrifice and balanced job complexes and self-management and participatory planning just "socialism from below"? What is the point of inventing a fancy name for something that every Marxist understands? Why are you taking credit for something that you didn't invent? Haven't you just taken old-style Marxism and repackaged it, and changed the name to try to fool people who are unfamiliar with it?*

MA: If by the word socialism you mean workers and consumers controlling economic life without class divisions diminishing people's options, then, yes, you could reasonably say that parecon is that kind of socialism, whereas what has gone under the name socialism in the past isn't. I used to do that, years back, but I have come to think it is like blowing into the wind, and perhaps not only futile but even counter productive, because I think it can impede developing really new vision, much less communicating it, as if saying one is a socialist conveys some positive vision already.

Millions upon millions of people have called public or state ownership taken together with markets or central planning and corporate divisions of labor and remuneration for power or output, socialism. Every Marxist text that presents a serious economic model labeled socialism has those institutions at its core. Every Marxist party that has gotten into a position to establish an economic system has incorporated those features in its aims. Every such party while in opposition has utilized structures and put forth analysis that is anti-capitalist, but that is also consistent with arriving at those structures rather than at the ones proposed in parecon.

So which communicates more accurately and clearly: To call the new economic vision participatory economics and accept that what has gone under the label socialism is socialism and reject it? Or to call this new economic vision socialism and to deny that anything that has in the past called itself socialism was, in fact, socialism, contrary to the beliefs of all its adherents?

But the real point, in order to address the rest of your question, is that parecon is not a Marxist goal. It rejects the institutions that Marxism has consistently supported and offers quite different

institutions in their place. What's more, parecon rejects class rule by people who monopolize empowering conditions in their work, and this parecon priority is completely absent from Marxism as it has overwhelmingly existed in real history.

So, parecon has different guiding values, different institutions, and different features and implications than what has gone under the label socialism and than what has been overwhelmingly propounded by Marxists. If it doesn't walk like a duck, doesn't talk like a duck, and doesn't swim like a duck, what is the point of calling it a duck?

Regarding originality, it is quite true that workers and consumers councils have been a part of every major upsurge in modern history. Parecon is consistent with that heritage, and is not original in that respect but part of a historical process. But Marxist Bolshevism actually destroyed such institutions, and at other times such institutions have internally dissolved for want of consistent and effective structures due to being stuck, instead, with Marxist options.

Similarly, public and or state ownership is part of socialist and Marxist practice and history and certainly bears considerable resemblance to parecon's elimination of private ownership of productive property. That much is correct.

On the other hand, socialist and Marxist practice has consistently been about remuneration for power or output, whereas parecon is about remuneration for effort and sacrifice. And socialist and Marxist practice has consistently embodied a corporate-style division of labor elevating about twenty percent of the workforce to decision-making dominance over the rest, whereas parecon incorporates balanced job complexes and removes this form of class domination. And socialist and Marxist practice has utilized markets and or central planning, whereas parecon rejects both these modes of allocation and incorporates in their place participatory planning.

So the council emphasis is old but renovated a bit. The remuneration scheme has certainly surfaced at various times in the past, but has never been so fully explored, and likewise for the actual meaning of self-management. The balanced job complexes and participatory planning are largely original, though very much an outgrowth of aspirations and practices that have recurred through

history. Putting it all together into a whole economic model and showing its properties is certainly new, at least as far as I am aware.

Real World Social Movements

JP: *All over the world, there are real movements trying, in very difficult conditions, to develop alternatives to capitalism. Think of the assemblies and recovered factories in Argentina; the "planes de vida" in Cauca, Colombia; the social programs erected by governments in places like Cuba, West Bengal, Kerala, and Brazil. There are the Mondragon enterprises in the Basque country in Spain. There is a whole network of "economia solidaria" enterprises all over the world. And yet, Parecon is hopelessly abstract. There is very little reference to any specific experiences. It is as though no effort was made to learn from developments in the same field. Does the theory of Parecon come from anywhere? Does it come from any experience? Does it come from the study of anything specific? Or is it just an economist's invention?*

MA: Actually there is some reference to pretty much all of what you mention in the new book, but you are correct that there is not very much. The book doesn't do case studies of all those experiences, or even of any of them. But that doesn't mean it floats in space. Parecon emerges from an examination of the history of various revolutions and struggles as well as from more recent practical experiences, and from the study of economic thought, as well. In fact, a decade of personal experience with a pareconish institution in the midst of market capitalism informed the vision, as well.

But despite the fact that I could therefore dismiss the question by agreeing with its agenda and simply saying the agenda has been followed for parecon, I want to answer somewhat differently. Suppose it was the case that someone who was shipwrecked off on an island somewhere — rather than folks with diverse activist experiences who were also well read in other people's views and in movement histories and had explored and worked on them for decades, and so on — had sat and contemplated, day after day, all alone, and had through simple imagination even though utterly divorced from any real world reports, produced an economic vision. They knew nothing about and took no lessons from working class movements, from consumer campaigns, from the entire legacy of economic theory, from the history of capital-

ism and of post capitalist economics, from the writings and studies of others, and so on (all quite unlike the authors of the parecon vision, myself and Robin Hahnel). They just thought. Now I don't think this is remotely likely, perhaps it is not even possible, but let's suppose, nonetheless, that it did happen.

What would our reaction be? Mine would be that if I heard about this I would doubt its likely

When judging a vision what matters is the institutions that are proposed and their properties, feasibility, and worthiness.

value, but I would read the vision, and if I liked it, great. I would be amazed that it was good, but so what? If it's a good vision, I like it, regardless of where it came from.

On the other hand, suppose someone has been utterly immersed in endless case studies of all kinds of projects and systems and historical experiences, and they then produced an economic vision — a set of proposed institutions. I may well anticipate that it will be very interesting and good. But if I read it, and it's a bad vision, I don't like it.

My point is that when judging a vision it doesn't matter what research, study, and activity it emerged from, who in particular authored it, and what language it is written in (though if it is meant to be shared widely it better be accessible). What matters is the institutions that are proposed and in particular their properties, feasibility, and worthiness. We may doubt the likelihood that a vision proposed without much contact with real economic systems and history and without much training in economics and without much related personal experience would be very good — but still, the proof would be in the pudding.

In fact parecon does emerge from the history of libertarian radical thought, from the history of radical political economy, from the experiences of anti-capitalist movements and revolutions, from the new left, and from various contemporary related economic experiments as well — but, in fact parecon had emerged from a couple of people

chatting and stumbling on it, or if it had emerged whole cloth in a dream — it wouldn't matter. The vision is what it is . . . and it ought to be judged on the basis of the properties of the institutions it proposes.

I make this point because while I imagine that political, cultural, and kinship/social visions for movements will most likely derive from study of past experiences and experiments, familiarity with the relevant history of thought, and experience with experiments, like this economic vision did, if they happen to arrive instead whole cloth from somewhere, I sure wouldn't want to miss out on the benefits due to ruling them out a priori.

JP: *What difference does parecon make? What does any of this have to do with all of the urgent things we have to do now? Describing some detailed futuristic paradise seems far less valuable than having plans of action for right now. What kinds of programs have a chance of succeeding now? Health care, housing, living wages, reparations — working out the economics of these campaigns, figuring out whom to pressure and how and what it would take to bring these kinds of things about, is far more important than describing a utopian society.*

MA: I think there are two main reasons why developing an economic vision (and other visions as well) has tremendous bearing on what we do in the present.

The first reason has to do with motivation, or hope. It is my impression that a major obstacle to many people becoming involved in movements is the belief that “there is no alternative” to what we now endure. This doesn't mean that such people think there is no alternative to bombing Iraq, or no alternative to passing the Patriot Act, or even no alternative to having the IMF. It is more subtle. They feel, often just intuitively but sometimes very explicitly, that there is no alternative to the underlying defining institutions of society. And they also feel, not least due to the movement's saying so for decades, that those underlying institutions produce injustice of all kinds, from poverty to war and from indignity to powerlessness. So they feel that while maybe some reforms can be won, in time the gain will be lost as the weight of underlying pressures undoes the positive steps. They feel that organizing against poverty and war, much less against inequality and alienation, is like

organizing against gravity or against old age — they are the pursuits of the naïve. Fighting poverty can at best accomplish little, and in any event what is accomplished will be rolled back. So why participate? Why allot any of what little spare time one has to movement activism? Why risk one's so-difficult-to-attain equanimity, in order to demonstrate, to protest, to organize?

So the first way that vision relates to current organizing is to help refute the idea that there is no alternative to capitalism and in doing so to help counter hopelessness.

The second way that vision relates to what we do in the present is by informing our practice. Yes, we need to fight for health care, living wages, a shorter work day and work week, more control on the job, income redistribution, budgetary changes, new investment patterns, and many other economic changes — not to mention changes in other domains of life. But how do we struggle for them? What rhetoric and analyses do we use? What organizational structures do we use? The answer, I think, depends very much not only on what our options are in the present (we certainly do have to choose from among what is possible now), and not only on what we oppose, of course — but also on where we want to wind up in the future. That is, while we have to choose among options that are possible now, and which oppose the ills we reject, we also have to choose options that accord with our ultimate aims and values and will help us reach them rather than becoming obstacles to doing so. And to know what fulfills these criteria, we need to know what our future ultimate aims and values are.

I think parecon contributes much that is relevant to today. It contributes hope. But it also contributes, for example, an innovative understanding of class relations and of the implications of organizational structures for people's consciousness and motivations inside our movements. Parecon is profoundly anti-Leninist, for example, and that bears directly on what we do in the present. The understanding that comes from having a participatory economic vision can and should instruct how we build our institutions, what kinds of job structures we incorporate in our own projects and organizations, what kinds of decision-making we utilize, as well as what demands we make and how we talk about them so as to de-

velop truly positive consciousness about making lasting change. Parecon leads toward constructing and employing balanced job complexes, toward emphasizing self-management, toward attaining just remuneration, toward relating to the differences between coordinator and working classes, both in our movements and concerning our demands on existing institutions.

But none of this is an argument for presenting what I suspect you are referring to when you say "detailed futuristic paradises" or otherwise "utopian" formulations. This is an argument, instead, for sober and comprehensible descriptions of what we broadly seek in new defining institutions, plus elaboration of the implications of having those goals for our future prospects as well as for the choices we make in the present.

Parecon and the Nation-State

JP: *Parecon offers answers to the problems created by markets, private property, and hierarchical work organization. But there are other problems with capitalism. What about the global division of power and wealth? What about the division between the rich and poor countries, in which the rich countries plunder the poor ones? The on-going colonization of indigenous lands in the Americas? The on-going exploitation of immigrant labor and control of immigrants by borders? The capitalist economic relations that Parecon rejects were founded on these divisions. And yet Parecon has no analysis or answers for these problems: no talk of nation states, no talk of borders, no talk of the global distribution of wealth, the distribution of wealth between communities or nations. These go to the heart of capitalism, and "life after capitalism." Why is there no discussion of them?*

MA: Well, actually I don't think these matters do go to the heart of capitalism per se, so much as they reflect the impact of capitalism on international relations. Capitalism is a particular set of economic institutions for handling economic functions in a society. Parecon is an alternative set of institutions for handling economic functions.

If you have one parecon in the world, and lots of capitalisms, you will of course have many problems of the sort you indicate. The book talks about what to do then, and it isn't very different conceptually than now. People of good will[?] living in the country with a participatory economy, or in any other country, will presumably work hard to

reduce and impede the horrible ills that you note. The society with a parecon of course does not partake of exploiting those ills but instead interacts according to pareconish valuations and in ways aimed at reducing disparities between rich and poor.

If instead, you have only parecons in the world, the ills you mention are overwhelmingly gone, though you still need various international agencies and organizations, no doubt...a matter that goes beyond an economic model.

Mainly, there is nothing in parecon, I believe, which drives a society to try to exploit others. And of course the minute the world economy incorporates pareconish norms, even the possibility of such disparities would disappear. What parecon thus says about the ills that you describe is what you would anticipate — the ultimate economic goal is solidarity, diversity, equity, and self-management domestically and internationally. Short of that, one fights to get closer to these goals.

The book is about economic systems for countries, however, not about relations among countries, so it addresses the latter only briefly. It is not because such matters are unimportant. It is also true that the book doesn't address eliminating nation states. I myself doubt such an end is very important, or even desirable, and I am not sure it has any realistic meaning, in any event. I think eliminating nation states would be homogenist and reduce diversity — are we going to have one language, one culture — unless all that one means by it is that just like there are counties inside a country, there should also be nations in the world, but the world should be more of a whole than it is now. That is in no way incompatible with parecon, of course, and indeed quite consistent with it.

JP: *It is clear that if an "economic vision" fails to consider that natural resources are finite, that the use of fossil fuels leads to climate change, that organizing society around automobiles is disastrous, then it is avoiding one of the most urgent problems the economy faces. Parecon deals with ecological issues in a cursory way, saying: "in parecon prices represent full social and ecological costs." Is it really so automatic? Isn't it possible that a parecon could still use many ecologically inappropriate technologies, or be saddled with an infrastructure that led to those kinds of choices?*

You dismiss "bioregionalist," "deep ecology," and "small-is-beautiful" type ideas as anti-ecological, but you seem to think that a parecon automatically takes care of nature. Is that really the case?

MA: Humans live in context of and influencing and being influenced by their natural environment. We and rivers and the atmosphere and all the rest are all entwined together, one entity at an ecological level — and the same holds for other species, who are also part of that whole, of course.

An economy is about production, consumption, and allocation undertaken in response to human desires. For capitalism this means the economy is about profits for owners and elite status for coordinators. Those two classes dominate capitalist decision-making and additionally capitalist economic institutions make those the economy's driving motives.

For a parecon this means the economy is about meeting human needs and developing human potentials in accord with advancing solidarity, diversity, equity, and self-management. All actors have proportionate say and economic institutions make those aspirations the economy's driving motives.

Any economy, capitalist, participatory economic, or otherwise, impacts the ecology by affecting the context that all species, resources, the built world, and ourselves "inhabit," including using resources up or preserving them, etc.

The job of an economy, vis-à-vis ecology, is to provide the populace with as accurate information about the implications of possible economic choices for ecological conditions as knowledge and means allow. The populace then must make decisions with proportionate say for all.

Capitalism does not arrive at or deliver the needed information, and it skews motives so that, in any event, ecological outcomes are obscured, ignored, and dismissed whenever attending to them would interfere with profit.

Parecon, in contrast, does arrive at and deliver the best possible estimates of true social (including ecological) costs and benefits — at least it does so insofar as we are talking about impact on humans, and it also facilitates determinations in light of this information. Do we want more fulfillment and development for humans enough to warrant using up some part of the remaining available nonrenewable resources or enough to

eliminate some natural growth? People must decide, with appropriate input, and with the best possible information — but the economy should not judge such matters *a priori*. Parecon follows this instruction.

But what about other animals? That is an extra-economic matter. In the polity, people may decide, for example, that a particular breed of butterfly is sacrosanct and simply can't be inconvenienced much less hurt by human choices. Then that instruction would be imposed on the economy's functions. The participatory economy could not arrive at such an instruction internally but the parecon could easily accommodate any such constraints arrived at in the political sphere due to the efforts, for example, of advocates of animal rights.

What about the insight that small is beautiful or those that fuel bioregionalism? These insights come in two forms. The first says small production methods often have important advantages and we should be aware of this fact and choose such methods when it makes sense to do so. Likewise, it says that local self-reliance often has important advantages and we should be aware of this too and choose self-reliance when it makes sense. This is not only correct, and not only congenial to parecon, but parecon provides the means to carry these instructions out — unlike market economic systems, which would make such assessments impossible and would be biased against both small and local for diverse reasons, as well.

In other words, this version of these insights says that in determining the scale of operations, or the range of provision (local or wider) we should be attuned to the full social costs and benefits including by way of impacting the ecology. Parecon does all this.

Another version of these insights says that we know, *a priori*, that small is always better and that local is always better. This version of the insights is, I think, horribly wrong. In fact we don't know that small and local are always better.

This version moves from the very sensible ad-

monition to be aware of a probability of benefits from small and local, to saying it is always a fact that small and local will be optimal. Acting on this version of the insights, a person would presumably say that instead of a relatively few workplaces producing airplanes for a whole country, we should instead have an airplane production plant in every bioregion — or let's say, since what the definition of a bioregion is is never really clear,

in every county. This would be ecologically horrendous, and would be horrible regarding the utilization of human energies as well. And — before anyone says, okay, but airplanes are an exception — the same is probably true for bicycle shops. Should we only have two or three person bicycle building

shops putting together relatively few products, or do economies of scale actually make it more advisable to have larger ones?

And the same goes for self-reliance. The advocate of the strong version of the insights would presumably say that people in a desert bioregion should only eat what they can grow locally, people in a bioregion that has no coal, oil, iron, and so on, should just do without, and people who happen to live in a bioregion that enjoys vast ranges of natural assets, should prosper greatly compared to all others. But, put this way, obviously this makes no sense. And the minute we permit what is produced over there to be consumed over here, we are saying that issues of local sufficiency are a matter of case-by-case judgment.

A good economy needs to decide the scale of operations and the range of provision and the desirability or not of receiving inputs from a distance, case by case, not *a priori*. To say that regions should be self-sufficient says that most of the world should have no oil at all, no steel, no coal, no tin, no tungsten, no oranges, etc. It says each place cannot enjoy the diversity of the whole, or any product that requires inputs from beyond their region. Why say this in cases where to enjoy additional diversity increases fulfillment more than it costs in transport?

Honestly, I don't think these are very com-

Each actor has a 'job complex'
comparable to that of all other
actors regarding quality of life
implications and empowerment
implications.

plex matters. We cannot say that large is beautiful nor that small is beautiful. We cannot say that self-sufficiency is beautiful nor that sharing everything for all is beautiful. What we can say is that choosing a scale and choosing levels of mutual availability so as to meet people's needs and develop people's potentials while propelling values people hold dear all while taking into account full and true social and ecological costs and benefits as well as abiding by socially agreed constraints is beautiful. And that's what a parecon facilitates.

Levels of Specificity

JP: *When it comes to questions like ecology or other specifics, you sometimes argue that it is pointless to get overly specific. Social change is a process of trial and error, and the true test of ideas is in their application. So it is only possible and desirable to sketch the broad outlines of the vision — councils, participatory planning, balanced job complexes, etc. But Parecon is a 300-page book, and it gets into some very specific answers to criticisms. How does one decide that this level of specificity is right — that 300 pages is just right, 10 pages is too little, 600 pages is too much. What you have described is already far too specific for many readers, but not specific enough for many others. It seems arbitrary.*

MA: I don't think it is arbitrary, though of course reasonable people can disagree about just how much description makes sense. Suppose someone were describing capitalism. Of course they could pick a country — say the U.S., or say Thailand, or whatever — and they could describe at any length...up to tens of thousands of pages. But suppose the idea isn't to convey the full characteristics of each specific instance of capitalism, but rather the broad characteristics of capitalism itself. The aim is to describe the key and defining features that all instances of capitalism have in common, not the unique characteristics or optional characteristics of any of them. The aim is to describe the part that makes them capitalist, not the specific additional details that may be unique from one case to the next. If there are 50,000 pages on the U.S. in detail, and the same on Thailand in detail, and on South Africa in detail, and on Japan in detail, and so on — the part that is relevant to the query about capitalism per se is the part that overlaps, which is much less than 50,000 pages.

We don't have lots of parecons to examine,

but we certainly know that if we did there would be a tremendous amount of detail in each, and much that would be unique in each. Similarly, even inside a parecon — just like inside a capitalist economy — there would be great variation from institution to institution, and even for institutions of a single type, such as assembly plants, much would be optional, so to speak, varying from case to case.

So the task is to describe the key defining features. It is to describe the institutions that emanate influences that determine the broad and central attributes of the economy.

Another reason for this particular limiting of what we do, beyond that it is what describing a type entails, is that when talking about a future vision, to go further most likely takes us beyond the realms where we can be reasonably confident, and does so to no useful gain. What we need in the way of an economic vision is the broad strokes, the defining features, the attributes that can give

People are paid according to their effort and sacrifice.

hope, inspire us, and provide context and direction regarding how we organize and what we demand in the present, and how we develop structures from which we learn about and which become part of the future. I think that discussing workplace organization and division of labor, remuneration, decision-making, and allocation at the broadest level, with sufficient attention to individuals and their interrelations to make a case for desirability and for viability, does what is needed. Sometimes it may make sense to go a bit further into hypothetical details to provide texture so as to facilitate understanding. But when we do that, we ought to be clear that it is possibilities we are offering, rather than specifications, so to speak.

Parecon is a particular economic vision. An economy that doesn't have workers and consumers councils using self-management methods for decision-making, balanced job complexes, remuneration for effort and sacrifice, and participatory planning, is not a parecon. If one of these defin-

ing features is flawed, we will have to reconceive. But beyond these broad features there is tremendous room for diversity and for variation. We can talk about some of what that might look like, to provide texture and descriptive clarification, but we ought not confuse it with key attributes.

So, when I try to present the key features, including some preparatory material and some clarification of objections, it comes to about 300 pages. Others might wind up longer or shorter — either due to including more or less, or having a more succinct or effusive style. But this is all talking about a candidate vision, so to speak. An economic vision becomes a real vision, not just proposed, in my view, when it is widely shared and utilized. That certainly doesn't hold for participatory economics, as yet. And if and when it does hold, then we will know what the shared vision constitutes.

JP: *Participatory economics has been around for over a decade now — if you are right in your claims that vision is critically important to activist advance and that parecon provides a viable and worthy vision, why hasn't the reception been better so far? And what do you expect to come of parecon now? Do you believe that if enough people read a book about balanced jobs, participatory planning, and worker and neighborhood councils, that something will change? Do you think that social change works that way? Has it ever worked this way?*

MA: This is a hard question, particularly for me. Why isn't parecon, or something like it, by now widely adopted by anti-capitalists throughout the world? Well, the answer for parecon itself is certainly in part that virtually no activists around the world have heard of it, much less know enough about its properties to have an opinion of it. It isn't rejected or ignored by anti-capitalists worldwide for the decade you mention; it is just unknown to them.

But that raises a prior question. Why for a decade has it been so difficult to get knowledge of this model out and about to people who might reasonably advocate it, or, if not, refine or revamp it and then advocate whatever emerges from that process?

It could be that it just plain takes time to get new ideas visible. It could be that new ideas need to have more appeal with initial audiences, however small, to reach larger audiences later, and that

parecon didn't have that needed appeal, at least so far. It could be that there are difficult obstacles to hurdle to reach wider audiences, such as the antipathy of many people who are publishers or even movement leaders to certain aspects of parecon, leading them to like it less than would a broader audience, and leading them to not make it visible to that broader audience.

As to what will come of this vision now, we will have to see. There are some very promising signs, however. The new book has been available since May. There are about a dozen foreign rights deals closed or nearly closed, and quite a few more in early stages of exploration. This is the first wide international visibility the model will have. Reviews seem to be happening at a faster rate than for past books on parecon. Interest in the form of early buying is hugely greater than for any past book on the topic, with the first and second hardback print runs selling out before they even reached stores. So I think there is evidence that there is interest in anti-capitalist economic vision. If people become aware that there is a book which tries to provide it, many will read it. What will happen then, we will have to see.

As to the latter half of your question, reading, talking, thinking, acting — all of these are part of what affects peoples viewpoints and allegiances. Does anyone think otherwise?

Do I think a book can have a very significant impact? Of course I think that can happen. Many books have had important impact, so this question seems resolved by evidence. But it is also true that any book that does have a significant political impact will do so in accompaniment to discussions, debates, and in the case of a vision, also organizing and organization. So the question is open whether participatory economics will be judged widely, and whether it will, if it is judged widely, pass the test as a worthy vision, and whether, if it passes the test as a worthy vision, movements will find it worth advocating and utilizing in their outreach and struggle.

Since I think vision is very important, I hope all the answers to these questions will be yes. If they aren't, then I hope something else will fill the void that now exists regarding shared economic vision. I am pretty sure that that void needs filling.

Electoral Agnosticism and the Greens

AS A LONG-TIME GREEN PARTY member with roots in the socialist left, I've been pleased to see *New Politics* taking a serious look at the Greens' electoral activity and the questions it raises. I was especially impressed with two articles in issue 34, Eric Kirk's smart and nuanced take on Pete Camejo's 2002 run for the California governorship on the Green ticket, and Stanley Aronowitz's realistic if occasionally bemused account of his gubernatorial campaign in New York.

I have to note, though, that Aronowitz overstates the total vote that Ralph Nader received in the 2000 presidential election. According to the Federal Election Commission Web site, Nader received almost 2.9 million votes or 2.74 percent of the popular vote — not the 3.7 million votes and 3.5 percent that Aronowitz claims.

In that same issue, I was puzzled and disappointed by Michael Hirsch's article, "Liberals Amid the Wreckage of the 2002 Elections." Hirsch does a good job of making the case that the Democrats did poorly in 2002 because they failed to stand for progressive principles or even describe how they would govern differently from the Republicans. He also argues effectively that progressives within the Democratic Party have a lot in common ideologically with leftists who choose independent political action.

But then what? He raises the question: Can the Democrats ever be a progressive, anti-corporate mobilizing force? He strongly implies that the answer to this question is "no" but Hirsch seems unwilling to follow through on his own (non)conclusion, which would of course lead to third-party politics.

Instead, in a footnote (!), Hirsch seems to argue that whether or not to participate in Democratic electoral politics should be a completely individual decision. In fact, he likens arguments on this point to arguments on whether another person should chew gum, "about which deeply held feelings are pointless."

Hirsch's argument, if taken seriously by the U.S. left, would completely demobilize the left as a force in electoral politics. It hardly needs to be said that the only way progressives can gain any influence in the electoral arena is through unified mobilization. If, for example, a left formation commanded the allegiance of, say, one million voters

nationwide, that would give the group significant clout. It would be an argument progressive Democrats could use in favor of nominating progressive candidates and taking progressive stands.

But to generate that kind of clout, one needs unity. The *laissez-faire* (or is it agnostic?) position tentatively espoused by Hirsch cannot generate clout or even influence.

I don't want to suggest that the Green Party is the only vehicle, or even necessarily the best vehicle, for rallying left/progressive groups and individuals to a unified electoral strategy. But as the only left-of-center political party seriously contending for votes in America today, it needs to be a key part of the conversation.

BOB GULDIN
Takoma Park, Md.

Response to Bob Guldin

AFTER WRITING HOW "IT HARDLY NEEDS to be said," Bob Guldin says it anyway: "The only way progressives can gain any influence in the electoral arena is through unified mobilization. If, for example, a left formation commanded the allegiance of, say, one million voters nationwide, that would give the group significant clout."

It also hardly needs saying that if grandma had wheels, she's be the cross-town bus. Incanting truisms is easy, but answering the tough question — how do you effect that mobilization — is hard.

"Liberals Amid the Wreckage of the 2002 Elections" (*New Politics* #34) was a stab, or at least a pinprick, at answering the question. Appearing along with two unambiguously supportive pieces on the Greens — one of which I solicited and edited — it looked for common ground among some of the more astute liberals who, while not full-blooded independent socialists and far from ready to bolt Holy Mother Church, share deep criticisms of the Democratic Party, too. It was an effort to establish a frame of reference for identifying joint interests without letting party pedigrees do all the talking.

As much as supporters of independent politics need to collaborate with the Greens — a party whose candidates most *New Politics* editors, including myself, have backed — they need to en-

gaged left liberal critics and their supporters, too. Because these make many of the same astute distinctions as do radicals: viz, that the national Democratic Party stands for nothing good; that it is a creature of professional operatives and big corporations; and that class struggles, not electoral contests, are the motor force of history.

But loyalty to the Democratic Party paints these critics into a corner, so that the things they want to accomplish, from national healthcare programs and unions' rights to organize, to rational social planning, social and economic justice, a democratic foreign policy and an end to the American imperium, cannot happen with the Democrats. These desirable ends won't even be facilitated by trying to move the party left, even to where it can meet the current expectations of its core voters. I argued that these liberals were comrades we had to struggle with, but struggle with them on the merits.

What Guldin objects to is a footnote arguing that the day-to-day choices activists make require — like chewing gum or scratching in public — some forbearance. I wrote that what needs addressing instead are “the tough questions: what kind of electoral politics, when, how, and if ever, to back Democrats strategically; how to build an alternative, anti-corporate political center, and what role electoral politics plays in building that alternative — (these are) the real questions of moment.”

So what is Guldin's throw-away line? That my alleged agnosticism, “if taken seriously by the U.S. left, would completely demobilize the left as a force in electoral politics.” In an otherwise measured communication, that is overreaching. It's also the sort of over-the-top hyperbole that litters the left. Because the idea that opponents are not just wrong or, at worst, obtuse, but endanger the course of history is just loopy. Others of course go much further, accusing critics of systematic bad faith or of being characterologically damaged, which expresses itself in — what else — incorrect formulations.

You don't have to treat Dostoyevsky's *The Possessed* as a blueprint — and I do not — to recognize that misplaced rage masquerades as passionate political discourse on all sides of the left. It harms our work, making a movement that deems to speak broadly and for the future seem narcissistic and dead-ended if not clownish. See the venomous response on so many listservs to the Campaign for Peace and Democracy's using a socialist standard to judge Cuban crimes. Its sig-

natories — including myself — are not just deemed “wrong,” or writing “out of context,” some of the milder criticisms; we are denounced as sectarians and blinkered “Stalinophobes” when not agents of U.S. adventurism.

And on the other side of the street, among the self-satisfied “democratic” left, look at Fabian Society pamphleteer Ben Pimlott's unctuous obituary to the late Paul Hirst (*Guardian*, 6/20/03), the academic Marxologist who went from Althusserian high priest to rigger for what Pimlott calls “the intellectual scaffolding for New Labour.” No upper-caste dilettante he, Hirst is said to have “joined battle with the *New Left Review*, whose leading writers he regarded — with more than a touch of irritation — as a clique of Trotskyite schoolboys.”

Whatever one thinks of the *New Left Review* editors or of Hirst, this description is intellectual pornography. The rest of Pimlott's is a puff-piece (it is an obituary after all, and of a close University of London colleague) but also is in the nature of a slam at the radical left. It is all dish and no meat, all intellectual laziness and no rigor. But as Pimlott is ostensibly “democratic,” and incrementally “left,” there can be no flies on he.

The point is: neither of these schools' criticisms are in any sense political, and that's the context in which I was dealing with our homegrown liberals. Yes, sharp ideological struggle is good. It's the dull kind, the kind done with a hammer and torch in the “heat-it-and-beat-it” millwright style of polemical engagement, that needs to be replaced with something surgical and precise.

Every party and every movement is built on splits and fusions, and while the American left is more familiar with the former, it stands to reason that the movement of the future will be composed of comrades from all sides of today's divide. Those activists trying to build the Kucinich and Dean campaigns are as much a part of a movement for social change as are the Greens. We need to engage those folks now.

We already have a hint of the noise that will crescendo next year, after the Democratic standard bearer is crowned, and the Greens and other independents are smeared as wreckers for not rallying behind the nominee, no matter how loathsome. People who should know better are already likening the current period and the Bush ascendancy to pre-Hitler Germany. They warn that the failure of a united left electoral effort will be on the heads of the abstainers, and not on the fact that the Democrats cannot or will not mobilize

and offer real choices

I think it is incumbent not to respond in kind, but to patiently demonstrate that, regardless of which major party wins or which side of the electoral line select militants end up next year, the struggle continues.

IN TRUTH, SOME GREEN SUPPORTERS are going beyond a “four legs good, two legs bad” catechism. Ted Glick, for one, has floated the idea of running Green campaigns in “safe states,” i.e., states

where a rigorous campaign will not bleed votes from a strong anti-Republican effort. That is not unlike the “tactical voting” strategy tried in the 1980s in Britain, which aimed to take control of parliament away from the Tories by minimalizing Labour and Liberal Democratic competition in select district elections. Other options will likely be advanced, too. They should all be explored, and with brio.

MICHAEL HIRSCH

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Appropriate Means

An Interview with China Miéville

INTERVIEWED BY MARK BOULD

AS FAR BACK AS Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) writers have used science fiction and horror conventions for their own literary and political purposes. In this interview one of the new stars of genre-based storytelling talks about Tolkein, Surrealism, Marxism and the special significance of collective action.

Mark Bould: *Let's begin by discussing your fiction. When did you start writing?*

China Miéville: Pretty much as long as I can remember I wanted to be a writer. I loved doing it at school, and since I was in my early teens I took it seriously as something I might want to try to do with my life. Becoming a writer was inextricably bound up with the question of science fiction (sf) and fantasy; I was interested in writing because I loved reading, and what I loved reading — as a kid in particular — was genre-based fiction. So my passion for writing came from that.

MB: *Which authors do you see as being most influential on your work?*

CM: When I was reading sf and fantasy as a kid, I wasn't really conscious of there being different schools. I didn't really know that there was this stream of writing and that stream of writing, so I

was reading Jack Chalker and Robert Silverberg and Mike Moorcock and M. John Harrison and some of the older stuff like H.P. Lovecraft and some of the classics of Golden Age science fiction, but once I became a bit more conscious of the fact that there were different streams within the genres, I noticed that I'd never really got on with a lot of the classic sf. I never really enjoyed Robert A. Heinlein or Arthur C. Clarke or Isaac Asimov. It's not that I never read them, but they weren't my loves. The fiction that most inspired me, that I most loved, was that which I then discovered was part of what was called the New Wave: writers like Michael Moorcock, M. John Harrison, Brian Aldiss, J.G. Ballard, Pamela Zoline — the writers who were writing around *New Worlds* magazine in Britain — and the writers doing the American version of the New Wave, like Thomas Disch, Harlan Ellison, Robert Silverberg (who predated it but was quite open-minded about it). Subsequently, other traditions became very important to me, like the *Weird Tales* tradition and some non-generic traditions — Surrealism in particular — and also individual writers in no particular category, like the Zimbabwean Dambudzo Marechera.

Assessing the Value of Fantasy

MB: *People often seem to find it odd that a materialist should be drawn to fantasy and, although probably to a slightly lesser extent, sf. What's the value of fantasy for a Marxist?*

CM: I have to preface this by saying that this is

CHINA MIÉVILLE is the author of three highly regarded fantasy novels — *King Rat* (1998), the award-winning *Perdido Street Station* (2000), *The Scar* (2002) — and the novella *The Tain* (2002). He has served on the editorial board of the journal *Historical Materialism* since 1998, and in 2001 he stood as a Socialist Alliance candidate in the British general election.

MARK BOULD is a Senior Lecturer in Film and Media Studies at Buckinghamshire Chilterns University College. He is on the editorial board of *Historical Materialism* and an editorial consultant for Science Fiction Studies. He is the author of *The Cinema of John Sayles* (Wallflower 2004) and *Film Noir: From Fritz Lang to Fight Club* (Wallflower 2005).

all theorisation after the fact, that I didn't set out to develop a Marxist defence of fantasy. It was the literature that I knew and loved, and as I grew into a political and theoretical consciousness I tried to make sense of that.

The other thing is that for me fantasy and sf and supernatural horror are very much triangulation points in the same broad field of fantastic

The point about Tolkien and his heirs is that whether or not they are racist, whether or not their characters are racist, theirs are worlds in which *racism is true*, in that people really are defined by their race.

literature. It's not all that uncommon for Marxists to be into sf; and for me, my love of certain types of fantasy and horror is part of exactly the same process as my love of sf. And you're right, there is a nervousness about that on the left, partly because there's a sort of unconscious, default, almost Stalinist notion about the functionality of literature that is part of a lot of Marxist thinking on this. I've had people react slightly nervously to the fact that I write and love ghost stories, and feeling the need to point out to me that ghosts don't actually exist, as if this is something that one has to be a bit worried about. You see this kind of thinking in its most theoretically sophisticated forms in critics like Darko Suvin, whose extremely influential *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (1979) drew a very sharp distinction between sf and fantasy on the basis that fantasy, being about never-possible things, was mystificatory. To me, that is a misunderstanding of what literature is about, what literature is for. And I think it is also inconsistent. Suvin has recently modified his position somewhat, but I don't think even back in the day he would have said it about someone like Franz Kafka or Mikhail Bulgakov. There's an inconsistency on the left between the treatment of, on the one hand, genre fantasy — fantasy which surrenders itself

to the internal logic of its own fantastic — and, on the other, the slightly oneiric fantasy of people like Kafka. To me literature should not be about a straightforward reflection on the real world; and so I have no problems with fantasy. I have gone into some detail about this in my introduction to the *Historical Materialism* symposium on Marxism and fantasy; I've tried to indicate some of the specifics of how one can approach fantasy a little more open-mindedly. But this starts from the fact that I loved the literature and didn't get my knickers in a twist. It didn't bother me. I loved it, I enjoyed loving it, and I could see no contradiction at all in loving it and in being a Marxist.

MB: *Since the 1960s fantasy has inevitably been cast in the shadow of J.R.R. Tolkien, and consequently there has been a widespread perception that fantasy is engaged in a nostalgic embrace of the idiocy of rural, hobbit life. But your novels are resolutely urban fantasies: both King Rat and The Tain offer vividly imagined versions of London; London is also visible through the sprawling city of New Crobuzon in Perdido Street Station; and despite setting The Scar almost entirely at sea most of the action takes place in a vast floating city called the Armada. What is the attraction of the city, and of London in particular?*

CM: For some reason, London is one of the cities that refracts literature with a peculiarly intense hallucinatory power: think about Thomas De Quincey and Charles Dickens, through to Peter Ackroyd, Iain Sinclair and Neil Gaiman, and other younger writers who I think have been neglected, like 'Two Fingers' and 'James T. Kirk', the authors of the drum'n'bass novel *Junglist*. London has this intensity, and I see myself writing in this London tradition. I grew up in London, and London is an influence on me, but at least as much an influence on me as the real London is the literary refraction of London. And, in broader, political terms, city life is simply more interesting to me than rural life (of which I've had a bit: didn't like it, came back). Again, after the fact, one can think of all kinds of political reasoning.

The nostalgia for rural life in Tolkien and all his innumerable grandchildren is politically very problematic. There are two things I'd want to say about that, though. First, although I'm on record at tedious length about how much I don't particularly like Tolkien and have all sorts of prob-

lems with him, we should not dis Tolkien for the crimes of his epigones, who came after and are immeasurably worse and less interesting and more straightforwardly reactionary than he. And second, the fact that a reactionary — contradictorily but, I think, broadly reactionary — impulse is evident in his writing, his aesthetic, is not of course a reason to dismiss him. There are plenty of writers whose politics do not stand in the way of their creating brilliant literature — most famously Balzac for Marx, but also Louis-Ferdinand Céline or, within genre fantasy, Gene Wolfe — and their politics is so embedded in their prose that you cannot simply get away from it either, you have to engage with it. The problem with Tolkien is that the prose itself, the form of the writing, intersects with his reactionary aesthetic so as to create what is, for me, very flat literature.

For my part, I start simply by being more interested in cities and then, as a political person, I try to politicise that fact in my own writing. Having said that, in the novel I'm writing at the moment, quite a lot of it takes place not in a city: that's because I'm trying to mediate my own interest in urban environments through more than simply the constant repetition of a hallucinatorily *there* city. That is fine but is a limited way of doing it.

But one thing you've pointed out there which I think is very important in the left's suspicion of fantasy is the rapid creation of genre fantasy. People don't seem to realise it is really a very recent phenomenon. You are talking about post-1950s; and, in its intense and self-conscious form, post-1960s. Before that, not only would you not have had a problem with leftists being interested in, say, Fritz Leiber, but Fritz Leiber himself was a leftist, albeit of a gentle liberal stamp, as were a lot of writers who were around that environment in the States. Judith Merrill was a Trotskyist, apparently.

MB: *One of the things that makes urban fantasy interesting is the extent to which it enables or encourages writers to move away from a Manichean conflict between good and evil. In *Perdido Street Station* you have the economics going on behind the events, and *The Scar* becomes very much a critique of colonialism. Is this tendency in your work a conscious attempt to revise the parameters established by*

Tolkien's popularity?

CM: Yes, it is in both cases, but I'd be anxious about making it sound professorial. I don't come at writing these books as a leftist wanting to kick against the pricks by writing a revisionist fantasy novel. I come at this as a lover of fantastic literature who wants to write the kind of fantasy novel or sf novel that I would like to read. Having said which, as a political person who is fairly interested in what is by now no longer a terribly radical thing to do — to question the structures of the genre — I do try to do that. For example, writing *Perdido Street Station*, I started with wanting to write a big fat sprawling gothic book with loads and loads of monsters in it; I then thought that one of the ways to do that that would be interesting for me would be to interrogate the structures of fantasy and write a deliberately anti-Tolkienesque fantasy. Having decided the basic thrust of the story and the aesthetic, I then made a checklist of the kind of things Tolkien does and

I've had people react slightly nervously to the fact that I write and love ghost stories, and feeling the need to point out to me that ghosts don't actually exist, as if this is something that one has to be a bit worried about.

set out to invert them: so where his is a feudal world, mine is capitalist; his is rural, mine is urban; his is very Manichean in its morality, mine is all about shades of grey — and not even shades of grey, really, but genuinely insoluble moral and political conundrums, where there is no right answer. With *The Scar* even more so. I wanted to write a really good romping adventure, a big pirate book with lots of monsters and pirates hitting each other with swords and journeys looking for hidden treasure. I wanted to write that kind of yarn I love, but I also thought that whereas in *Perdido Street Station* I'd been critiquing and subverting Tolkien, in *The Scar* I wanted to look at

the structures of quest fantasy as it has developed since Tolkien and to write an anti-quest. Quests are a very strong tradition in fantasy, and I wanted to take a lot of the structural tropes of the quest and undermine them at every step.

When you talk about revisionism, there are two different levels to that. One is political, in the sense that to write an anti-colonial novel is to be historically and politically revisionist vis-a-vis colonialism itself. The other is that in the field of fantasy there are such strong generic traditions, that you can also be a revisionist at the level of the generic tradition. So you end up writing a book that is both an anti-fantasy and an anti-colonialist anti-fantasy. Which, now I've said it, sounds rather grandiose.

MB: *And this must be one of the areas where you are most aware of the influence of M. John Harrison, who with his novel Climbers finally succeeded in writing a fantasy novel with absolutely no fantasy in it.*

CM: Absolutely. Mike Harrison is probably the biggest single influence on me, although our prose styles are radically different. He is an absolute giant figure. His career for the last twenty-five years has basically been a kind of degutting of fantasy from the inside. One difference between me and Mike is that I'm more or less at ease with my own pulp roots. I'm much pulpier than he is, I like the pulp tradition, for all its faults, and I don't think there's anything intrinsically wrong with fantasy; I just think the way it's been done creates all sorts of problems. Whereas Mike genuinely thinks there is something inescapably shallow and escapist about the form of fantasy, and although he can't leave it alone — at one level he loves it and is fascinated by it — his critique is in some ways more fundamental and punitive than mine.

The Legacy of J.R.R. Tolkien

MB: *One of the things that does seem to link Tolkien, particularly The Lord of the Rings, with your work is suffering. The amount his characters suffer is something many of his imitators just don't seem to notice and is peculiarly absent from their work; and yet your novels often seem to be full of suffering and grief.*

CM: I think you're right about this, and that there is a real danger here of creating a kind of pornography of grief. It's something I'm concerned with: endlessly putting your characters through the

emotional mill as a kind of spurious seriousness-by-numbers. And I think if I have a tendency, it's that, and I worry about it and try not to do it. But you're right about the fact that followers of Tolkien often don't seem to notice the suffering.

One of the reasons I make my characters suf-

Discovering theory at university was extraordinarily intellectually liberating. I know some people are alienated by it, but for me I constantly had the sense of it being like wandering into a whole wing of my head I didn't know existed and turning on the lights.

fer quite a lot is because I am genuinely interested in this question of insoluble conundrums, situations in which one cannot take a correct position, and they are often around the results and causes of suffering, and so it gets thrown up a lot. That is in stark contrast to the worst of the post-Tolkien fantasists. However, although Tolkien is much more interesting than they, mine is also a different approach to suffering than Tolkien's, because for Tolkien suffering is Tragic-with-a-capital-'T'. At some level it is redemptive. I wouldn't want to over-egg that, because I wouldn't want to suggest that everything happens for the best in Tolkien, but there is a sense in which the suffering of Tolkien's characters is a moment of immense transcendent moral purpose.

I'm interested in the *contingency* of suffering, and one of the things I've tried to get away from is the notion of transcendental moralism of any sort. The fact that there is no straightforwardly happy ending in Tolkien — which is one of the things that makes him more interesting than many of his followers — does not mean that his are not books structured by transcendent moralism. Tolkien famously said that fantasy should be about consolation. Now some people have argued that the end of *The Lord of the Rings* is very sad, and is therefore not consolatory. But that's a misunderstanding of consolation. A happy ending is merely

the most banal and vulgar form of consolation. Tolkien's consolation is substantially more thoughtful and critical, but it is still consolatory because it is still about *coming to terms* with something — the status quo, the vale of tears, whatever — and it is predicated on transcendent moralism. I try to structure my books around the contingency of agency, and that's not an anarchism or a nihilism, it's about people in a messy reality genuinely struggling to do their best morally and politically, and that sometimes this causes contradictions. My books are about people who try to live and love together in a system that is *not* structured according to transcendent morals, and therefore the tragedy of suffering is not a capital 'T' moral Tragedy. The tragedy is precisely that it is contingent. Sometimes it's the result of cock-ups, and sometimes because of human venality or oppression. Sometimes there's an easy way out, sometimes there isn't. The characters are trying to deal with the complexity of an order in which the only morals are the ones that we create.

MB: *Part of that transcendence in Tolkien and many of his imitators is the inherent racism which structures their fictional worlds, in which characters are defined in terms of traits that their entire species is said to possess. Your rejection of this logic is particularly noticeable in Perdido Street Station.*

CM: I think we need to be a little bit generous here. This is not to say that Tolkien was personally a racist, and in fact he was splendidly angry with his German publishers for trying to ascertain whether he was Aryan. He was appalled by their anti-semitism. However, the point about Tolkien and his heirs is that whether or not they are racist, whether or not their characters are racist, theirs are worlds in which *racism is true*, in that people really are defined by their race. If you are an Orc in Middle-Earth you are, definitionally, a shit; if you are an elf, you might be difficult to deal with but you are, definitionally, noble. What I tried to do with *Perdido Street Station* was create a world in which racism was very real but also wasn't true. So because this is a world in which racial oppression and racial tension are factors, people are defined racially, and stereotyped. But it is racism that is causal, not race, and there are therefore hundreds and thousands of people who don't fit the clichés; there's even a little section

(which probably reads as horribly didactic) in which someone is discussed as being very much not like the stereotype of their own race, and the way racists are able to rationalise that by saying, 'Yes, but that's Bob; he's my friend, he's different'.

The key is that in traditional fantasy in which race is a defining characteristic, you have worlds where racism is true; in my worlds racism is very important, but it is no more true than it is in our world. Parenthetically, that leaves you with certain interesting situations, because one of the things you are trying to do as a fantasist is to create genuinely alien characters that are precisely not human, but if you have them as sympathetic characters, empathetic characters, characters the reader can understand, then you're not really making them not human. In my books, for example, there is a sense in which although they're full of aliens and creatures and weird monsters, it's kind of a *Star Trek* alien-ness; it's basically a thin-coating of latex rubber over what are humans of different ethnological traditions. I don't say that as a self-flagellation, because I simply cannot work out a way to be able to create characters that the reader can genuinely identify with that are not therefore, definitionally, empathically human. And so what I do is try to have it both ways: have a large number of monsters with which you can empathise, and which are therefore humans in make-up, really, although they might come from very different cultural traditions and thus behave very differently, and also have a few who are genuinely alien and that think nothing like humans and are therefore only described; I would never try to get inside their heads because if you're inside their heads they're not aliens any more. So I was interested in trying to depict the truly alien, but I didn't want to do that all the way through because it would become kitsch and it would undermine that point about race and racism.

Collective Activism is Irreplaceable

MB: *Let's move on to discuss your involvement in politics and activism. Tell me about your political development.*

CM: I've been an activist in the broader sense of someone who went on demos and was involved in local organisations since I was a teenager. However, as an activist, I was a radical liberal: I was in

the anti-apartheid movement, the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, and so on. I identified myself as being on the left, but I did not have much of a theoretical understanding of Marxism beyond the then postmodernist common sense that it was dead, teleological, wrong, and so on. When I was at university, I went to a couple of Socialist Workers Party meetings, and I attended Marxism 1994,

There are writers who say my contribution is this fantastic poem I wrote, and equally there are Marxist academics who will look you straight in the eye and tell you that their activism is that they've written this brilliant deconstruction of the transformation problem, or whatever.

the SWP summer school, and was hugely impressed by the extent to which my moronic criticisms of Marxism were systematically taken apart. I had been very disenchanted with postmodernism — I was studying anthropology and the moral and ethnic relativism of postmodernism really alienated me because it was so unable to deal systematically with the fact of oppression — and so my radical liberal activism suddenly came face to face with Marxism as a theoretical system. I was hugely attracted to the fact that Marxism could quite calmly explain everything, or at least attempt to. Whether or not you thought it was *right*, is not what I'm saying; but, for example, I was very attracted to feminist theory but I remember being struck by the fact that it could offer you a plausible theory of women's oppression but it did not have very much to say about, say, exchange-rate fluctuations in the 1970s. Whereas Marxism could do both. I was stunned by that. Whether or not you thought it was right, it had something to say about *everything* because of its overall theoretical shape. So I went away and started to read up on Marxism. I spent a couple of years familiarising

myself with Marxist theory. I did a Masters in International Relations at the London School of Economics, and I was reading up on Marxist theory there, and then I went and studied in the States for a year and was still reading, and also slowly getting to grips with the profusion of far left groups and finding out who was saying what, politically and theoretically. I was still going on demos but now self-consciously as a Marxist. I was always closest to the SWP, because they had introduced me to Marxism, but as I got more to grips with the specifics of theories I did find myself persuaded by their take on most things, and I eventually joined some years ago.

The process of joining a revolutionary organisation had a very big impact on me because it introduced me to a new way of thinking. People are very sceptical of what they think of as groupthink in organisations, and they worry that you lose your independence of mind and so on. Instead, I have been very pleased and excited by this new kind of thinking, which is thinking strategically. I'd never had to think strategically before. It's a combination of political thinking, theoretical thinking, and thinking as part of a collective. I find that very exciting, both politically and intellectually. Since then, I've been active to varying degrees. I was extremely active when I was a parliamentary candidate for the Socialist Alliance.

MB: *How did the Socialist Alliance candidacy come about?*

CM: I was asked by the local Socialist Alliance. The MP in my area was Karen Buck who had been a loyal follower of the Labour leader Tony Blair. On one level it was extremely bad timing because I had a deadline for *The Scar* and I had a deadline for my PhD, but I was honoured to be asked, so I sat down and thought about it very seriously — 'What will this take? Can I do justice to it?' — and it was something I couldn't not do. So I devoted two months to it, and poured myself into it. I don't regret it at all and I would certainly do it again.

MB: *In what ways do you see an overlap between your activism and your fiction? Do you consider writing fiction itself as a form of activism?*

CM: I quite emphatically think my writing is not activism, and I quite emphatically think that that is a really important distinction to maintain. A lot

of writers have an amazingly self-important relationship with what it is they do. You saw this a lot in the aftermath of 9/11 when there were a plethora of articles on 'How do I, as a writer, respond to this?', most of which started off saying something like 'Writing seems somehow...one's almost embarrassed to write now; it doesn't seem very important'. Which was an ingenious and totally disingenuous piece of sleight-of-hand, because it's vastly self-important to suggest that what one has to do 'as a writer' is discover the correct response to this appalling occurrence, to find the correct way of writing. The one that sticks in my mind is Zadie Smith claiming that 'as a writer' she was now turning to minimalist prose as a response to 9/11. Despite the little feint at self-denigration, what it's actually about is self-importance, it's about saying that our writing is an important intervention into the world, and I don't think that's the case, certainly not in the way implied. I'm not saying that you shouldn't relate to your writing politically — I think it's wonderful to relate to your writing politically and to think politically about what you do, and to play political games with your writing — but I think you're really kidding yourself if you see it as activism or as an *alternative* to activism.

The reason I find it hard to express this is because it may sound like I'm talking about art for art's sake, or about stripping politics out of writing, which is emphatically not what I'm trying to say. I don't think you can and I don't think you should, but reading and writing, even politically, is not the same thing and cannot be a replacement or substitute for collective activism.

The relationship between writing and activism was brilliantly expressed by Benjamin Péret, the Surrealist, who struggled with exactly this question and came up with a brilliant conclusion in his essay 'The Dishonour of Poets'. He tries to express that dialectical separation and interrelation between activism and writing poetry: '[T]he poet struggles against all oppression . . . It does not follow that he wants to put poetry at the service of political, even revolutionary action. But his being a poet has made him a revolutionary who must fight on all terrains: on the terrain of poetry by appropriate means and on the terrain of social action, without ever confusing the two fields of action under penalty of reestablishing the confu-

sion that is to be dissipated and consequently ceasing to be a poet, that is to say, a revolutionary.' It's a lovely little passage because he's trying to express something very hard to express, he's wrestling with this dialectic. Although there's a romanticization of poetry in there, I love the fact that he says it is absolutely crucial to distinguish social action and poetry for the sake of the social activism *and for the sake of the poetry*. For the sake of being a writer, you have to be clear that what you are doing is writing, whether or not you want to do it polemically and politically, and as a social activist what you are doing is social activism. All of which is a long-winded way of saying that I think very hard and very politically about my writing, but that I don't think it is my contribution to the struggle. Collective activism is irreplaceable.

Scholarship and Politics

MB: *Where does your academic writing fit?*

CM: There's a great deal of suspicion on the left of academicism, and much of it is deserved. There are loads of academics and scholars who write deliberately obfuscatory stuff. There is a tradition whereby they are definitely trying to make things less rather than more accessible, and that is to be opposed. So I understand the concern, but I have to say that for me reading theory, and reading in some cases quite high falutin' theory, was central to becoming a Marxist and an activist. There's no contradiction for me. I'm on the editorial board of *Historical Materialism*, I completed my PhD that I'm currently trying to turn into a book, and I find reading theory fascinating. Discovering theory at university was extraordinarily intellectually liberating. I know some people are alienated by it, but for me I constantly had the sense of it being like wandering into a whole wing of my head I didn't know existed and turning on the lights, and so I feel that there is a danger about being too philistine about theory. I do recognise the problems, and think that as a socialist you have to constantly guard against unnecessary complexity and obfuscation in expression, but I am very interested in the projects of Marxist theory at all levels. It's analogous in some ways to the question of fiction. There are writers who say my contribution is this fantastic poem I wrote — which is bollocks — and equally there are Marxist academ-

ics who will look you straight in the eye and tell you that their activism is that they've written this brilliant deconstruction of the transformation problem, or whatever, to which my response would be, 'Well, it may be a brilliant essay, I may find it incredibly liberating and be delighted that you've written it, but it's not a substitute for collective activism'. Of course that doesn't mean that the theory's not valuable, which is why I work on the board of *Historical Materialism* and enjoy writing and publishing theoretical stuff.

MB: *The editorial work is again in a slightly different position in this relationship in that it is a collective process, and part of the purpose of being on that board is to work collectively both with each other in order to produce the journal but also with the people who submit work to the journal.*

CM: I don't think it can be meaningfully thought of as activism just because it is a collective endeavour, but it is about the development of the journal that is itself about the development of Marxist theory as an explanatory force. And as an activist I think its explanatory force is a transformative force, and so it is related to activism but at a remove. For me, if you read a Marxist essay on Bush's war drive, there is a fairly clear connection; if you read a Marxist essay on, say, the relationship between Hegel and Spinoza, the line to activism is considerably more attenuated and opaque. However, because Marxism is a total theory, anything, no matter how obscure, which contributes to the sum of Marxist theory is ultimately a progressive thing. Which obviously shouldn't be taken as *carte blanche* to write deliberately obscurist stuff, but I'm open to theoretical approaches to quite abstruse things because it fascinates me and makes me more theoretically rigorous, which ultimately affects my activism.

MB: *What can you tell me about your PhD?*

CM: The title of the PhD is *A Historical Materialist Analysis of International Law and the Legal Form*, which I'll jazz up slightly for the book, but not much, probably *Between Equal Rights: A Marxist Theory of International Law*, and it's exactly what it says. It draws on the writings of Pashukanis, the Bolshevik legal theorist, and marries it with the insights of certain radical interna-

tional legal theorists like Martti Koskenniemi, who is a very brilliant left-postmodernist, and tries to Marxify that. There is not a strong tradition of Marxist theory in international law, but there is a small but very good strain of radical postmodernist writing. The dissertation describes the emergence of the international legal system as the development of the legal form as a logic in the international sphere as being directly related to and an expression of the spread of commodity relations internationally. It talks about the spread of colonialism and mercantilism and the changing nature of international law as you get into the epoch of imperialism. It tries to be the first step toward a Pashukanisite theory of international law.

MB: *Where do you think your scholarly work might take you next?*

CM: I get really frustrated with discussions about state capitalism. There are people who think this is a dead issue, and there are a lot of people, often leftist academics, who treat the theory of state capitalism as if it is self-evidently moronic. Sometimes I think that there is a fundamental misunderstanding on the left about what state capitalist theory is. It's not just about saying 'We don't like the Soviet Union', it's not just about saying 'We don't want to ally ourselves with Stalinism'. It is a deeply thought-through, if unfinished, body of theory which attempts to explain the nature of capitalism in general and specific forms of capitalism in particular, and I do wish people would be less intellectually close-minded about it. My thinking along these lines owes a great deal to my partner Emma Bircham who is doing a PhD which directly interrogates some of these issues. I've got really excited about this whole area of theory and so I might try to do some scholarly work on that.

I've also got more and more interested in the theoretical issues surrounding genre, and science fiction, and fantasy, and would like to do some investigations there, but would have to do some frantic reading in literary theory. As ever it's a question of time. Right at the moment I've got some more monster stories to get out of my system first.

The Only True Emancipation

REVIEWED BY MICHAEL LÖWY

THIS IS A REMARKABLE ESSAY, thought-provoking and truly radical — in the original sense of the expression *going to the roots of the problem*. Whatever its problems and weaknesses, it brings to the fore, in an impressive way, the critical and subversive power of negativity. Its aim is ambitious and topical: sharpening the Marxist critique of capitalism.

One of the best sections of the book is the first one, “The Scream.” These few pages are among the most powerful and moving in revolutionary thought that I have read in the last years. His basic assumption is that “we need no promise of a happy ending to justify our rejection of a world we feel to be wrong.” Faced with the mutilation of lives by capitalism, “there arises a scream of sadness, a scream of horror, a scream of anger, a scream of refusal: NO.” Our protest against the established order does not depend for its validity on any particular outcome. However, “the scream clings to the possibility of an opening, refuses to accept the closure of the possibility of radical otherness.”

The key philosophical chapters of the book deal with fetishism and fetishization. Creatively drawing on Marx, Lukacs and Adorno, Holloway defines fetishism as the separation of doing from done and the breaking of the collective flow of doing. He insists that fetishism is not a state that permeates the whole of society, but a process, the antagonistic movement of fetishization against anti-fetishization. Critical theory should then be understood as part of the movement of anti-fetishization, part of the struggle to defend, restore and create the collective flow of doing.

This is a very insightful viewpoint, but John Holloway seems to identify all forms of objectiv-

ity with fetishism. For instance, he complains that in capitalism “the object constituted acquires a durable identity.” Well, would a good chair produced under socialism not become “an object with a durable identity”? His refusal to distinguish between alienation and objectification (cf. note 22 of ch.4) — a mistake the young Lukacs did not make,

in spite of his late self-criticism of 1967 — leads to a denial of the objective materiality of human products.

Another powerful argument is his criticism of “scientific Marxism,” i.e., theories which attempt to enlist certainty to the side of socialism and claim to explain and predict historical change according to scientific laws: “Our struggle is inherently and profoundly uncertain. This is so because certainty is conceivable only on the basis of the reification of social relations. It is possible to speak of the ‘laws of motion’ of society only to the extent that social relations take the form of relations between things . . . revolutionary change cannot possibly be conceived as following a path of certainty, because certainty is the very negation of revolutionary change. Our struggle is a struggle against reification and therefore against certainty.” This section is one of the most important of the book, and a significant contribution for a critical Marxist approach to politics.

Among the scientific Marxists Holloway includes Kautsky, Lenin’s *What is to be Done?* (1902), and Rosa Luxemburg’s *Reform or Revolution?* (1899). However, he ignores her pamphlet on *The Crisis of Social-Democracy* (1915) which represents a radical methodological break with the doctrine of scientific certainty, thanks to a decisive new formulation: the historical alternative between socialism or barbarism. This essay is a real turning point in the history of Marxism, precisely because it introduces the principle of uncertainty into socialist politics.

*Change The World
Without Taking Power:
The Meaning of Revolution Today*

JOHN HOLLOWAY

London, Pluto Press, 2002.
240 pp. \$24.95 pb.

MICHAEL LÖWY and Robert Woods Sayre’s essay on “Reification and Conspicuous Consumption in The Great Gatsby appeared in *New Politics*, no. 34 (Winter 2003).

Typologies of Power

NOW I COME TO THE MAIN BONE of contention, which gives the title of the book: “changing the world without taking power.” Holloway suggests at first that all attempts at revolutionary change have so far failed because they were based on the paradigm of change through winning state power. However, as he acknowledges on footnote 8 from page 217, historical evidence is not enough, since all attempts to change the world without seizing power have also failed, so far. He attempts therefore to ground his claim on three theoretical arguments. The first one is that the existing state is part of capitalist social relations. However, as he himself writes, revolutionary Marxism is aware of such connections: its aim is not to seize the existing state, but to smash it and create a new one (p. 15).

The second argument is that the state as such, whatever its social content, is a fetishized form. This is the classical anarchist argument, which Marx, to a certain extent, shared, particularly in his writings on the Paris Commune, where one can find the suggestion of a non-state form of political power. But here comes his third argument, the distinction, introduced in chapter three, but which pervades the whole book, between power-to, the capacity to do things, and power-over, the ability to command others to do what one wishes them to do. Revolutions, according to Holloway should promote the first, and uproot the second. I must confess that I’m not persuaded by this distinction. I think that there can be no form of collective life and action of human beings without some form of “power-over.”

Let me try to explain my objections. They have to do with the idea of democracy, a concept that hardly appears in the book, or is dismissed as a “state-defined process of electorally influenced decision making” (p. 97). I have to disagree. I believe that democracy should be a central aspect in all processes of social and political decision-making, and particularly in a revolutionary process — an argument remarkably presented by Rosa Luxemburg in her (fraternal) critique of the Bolsheviks (*The Russian Revolution*, 1918). Democracy means that the majority has power over the minority. Not an absolute power: it has limits, and it has to respect the dignity of the other. But still, it has power-over. This applies to all kinds of hu-

man communities, including the Zapatista villages.

For instance: in 1994, after a few weeks, the Zapatistas decided to stop shooting and to negotiate a truce. Who decided? The Zapatista villages discussed, and a majority — perhaps there was even a general consensus — decided that armed fighting should cease. The minority — if there was one, I don’t know — must accept this decision, or split from the Zapatista movement. The majority had power over the minority. The villages then gave the order to the commanders of the EZLN to stop fire. They had power over the commanders. And finally, the commanders themselves, according to the logic of *mandar obedeciendo* (command while obeying), obeyed the orders of the villages, and instructed the Zapatista fighters to stop shooting: they had power over them. I don’t pretend this is a precise description of what happened, but it is an example of how democracy requires some forms of “power-over.”

One of my main objections to Holloway’s discussion on the issue of power, antipower and counterpower is its extremely abstract character. He mentions the importance of memory for resistance, but there is very little memory, very little history in his arguments, very little discussion of the merits or limits of the real historical revolutionary movements, either Marxist, anarchist or Zapatista from 1917 onwards.

In one of the few passages where he mentions some positive historical examples of anti-fetishism and self-determination, Holloway refers to “the Paris Commune discussed by Marx, the workers’ councils theorised by Pannekoek, and the village councils of the Zapatistas” (p. 105). One can show that in each one of these examples you have forms of democratic power requiring some form of power-over. I have already discussed the practice of the Zapatistas’ village councils. What about their propositions for Mexico? Holloway’s book is, to a certain extent, a brilliant comment on the well known Zapatista principle of revolutionary action: “We don’t want to seize power!” But this assertion cannot be understood if it is not connected to another famous slogan of the EZLN: “Everything for all, nothing for us!” And if one relates both statements to the fight for democracy in Mexico, which stands high in all Zapatista pronouncements, one has the following

argument: “we, the Zapatista Army, don’t want to seize power in our hands; we want power to all the people, i.e. a real democracy.”

In the Paris Commune one has a new form of power which was not quite a state, in the usual sense; but still it was a power, democratically elected by the people of Paris — a combination of direct and representative democracy — and it had power over the population, by its decrees and decisions. It had power over the National Guard, and the commanders of the Guard had power over their soldiers (“let’s go and put up a barricade on Boulevard de Clichy!”). And this power, the democratic power of the Paris Commune, was literally seized, beginning with the act of seizing the material instruments of power, the cannons of the National Guard. As for the council/communist Anton Pannekoek, he wanted “all power for the workers councils,” and he saw the councils as a means for the workers “to seize power and to establish their domination over society” (I’m quoting an essay from Pannekoek from 1938).

What I feel is also lacking in John Holloway’s discussion is the concept of revolutionary praxis — first formulated by Marx in the *Theses on Feuerbach* — which for me is the real answer to

what he calls the tragedy of fetishism and all its dilemmas: how can people so deeply enmeshed in fetishism liberate themselves from the system? Marx’s answer is that through their own emancipatory praxis, people change society and change their own consciousness at the same time. It is only by their practical experience of struggle that people can liberate themselves of fetishism. This is also why the only true emancipation is self-emancipation and not liberation from above. Any self-emancipatory action, individual or collective, however modest, may be a first step towards the “expropriation of the expropriators.” But I don’t believe that just any No, however barbaric, can be a “driving force” as Holloway suggests on page 205: I don’t think that suicide, going mad, terrorism and all sorts of anti-human responses to the system can be starting points for emancipation. Just to give the obvious example: al-Qaeda is not a starting point, it is a blind alley.

I like the conclusion of the book — without an end. We all are searching, and, no one can say he has found the true and only strategy. And we all have to learn from the living experience of struggles, like those of the Zapatistas.

A Perusable Joy

REVIEWED BY KURT JACOBSEN

IF YOU WANT TO SEND A MESSAGE,” a movie mogul allegedly barked, “try Western Union.”

Fair enough, except, if you probe a bit, you find that these same no-nonsense producers propagated and pandered to make-believe American “heartland” values, and tirelessly peddled a panoply of conservative bromides to moviegoers.

That’s how they figured to make big bucks. So you don’t need a tweedy semiotician to tell you that Hollywood movies send all kinds of messages all the time: endorsing this trend and scorning that one, celebrating this event and ridiculing another, prizing her and mauling him. The trick is that a message must not sound too much like it was delivered by an acne-faced emissary.

Messages vary from in-your-face product placement to far subtler playing upon wish fulfillment fantasies. Sure, money, sex, and power loom big here, but so does love, justice and community. Mainstream movies, like old-fashioned propaganda reels, thrive by expertly striking pre-existing emotional and symbolic chords in audiences. Feature film is foremost an entertainment medium and you shrivel if you cannot hold the audience with a solid, compelling story, intriguing characters, and their feverish pursuit of something that hopefully is worthwhile. If people in their daily lives care about causes and fret about moral choices, then the screen will reflect this in some dim or illuminating way. Otherwise, cinemas would spew nothing but wiseass animated froth. Reconciling entertainment, art and politics in a single work really isn’t that daunting a feat to pull off or no more so than creating any work of art. Those filmmakers who do take cracks at it are, if unwittingly, genuine dialecticians, as allergic to the label as they may be.

KURT JACOBSEN’S review of *Matrix Reloaded* and *X-2* appears elsewhere in this issue.

*The Cineaste Interviews:
Filmmakers on the Art and Politics
of the Cinema, Volume 2*

Edited by GARY CROWDUS
and DAN GEORGAKAS

Chicago, Lake View Press, 2002
281pp. \$17.95 pb.

Cineaste, by now a venerable monthly American magazine, has long made it its mission to mine even the unlikely films for political ore, or to expose glittering veins of fool’s gold. The editors conduct regular interviews with directors, actors, producers, writers and cinematographers, which are a must-read for buffs who crave more than *Entertain-*

ment Tonight puffs spoken on cue under the beady eyes of publicity agents. My only real gripe about this second volume, containing 25 interviews, is that many pieces are disappointingly brief. One wants more conversations to go on as long as Fred Zinneman and Arthur Penn enthrallingly do. It is no surprise that cultural background, personal temperament, and political leanings inflect everything an artist does, but it’s always fascinating to read how each individual consciously and unconsciously blends it all in their work.

Oliver Stone, badly pummeled at the release of *JFK*, points out with what one might call infinite justice, that “dramatic license is what politicians use to start a war,” as in fabricating the 1964 Tonkin Gulf incidents or whipping up war fever against Iraq lately. Stone was criticized from the left by John Sayles — interviewed here about his film, *Lone Star* — and it’s a pity we don’t get a parry-and-riposte between these two marvelously talented mavericks. As for his debatable use of dramatic license, Stone with some justice complains that many critics are “incredibly naïve about the way movies are made.” Events unavoidably are compressed, characters combined, and lurid liberties taken to transmute the essence of events into cogent cinematic form. Film isn’t the only place it happens; filmmakers are merely more blatant. Even Nixon, Stone says of another of his notorious film subjects, “was a master revisionist of his own history,” as was emetically clear to anyone tuning into all the fawning at Nixon’s funeral.

One fellow who thinks kindly of Stone is

Spike Lee who, in regard to his biopic of Malcolm X, is likewise exasperated when explaining, "you can't put a man's whole life into a film." Hence, a cunning and contentious selectivity is the rule. Still, the pressure not to screw up *Malcolm X*, he says, was almost crushing. Lee, for example, recounts the multitude of versions of the script that ultimately settled on James Baldwin's treatment, not (Allah be praised) David Mamet's. Lee also deals engagingly with the tricky "crossover requirements" needed to lift a ghettoized "black film" into a lucrative mainstream run.

And it didn't start with Stone or Lee either. Director Arthur Penn fesses up that in *Bonnie and Clyde* "we were flagrantly inaccurate and said right off, this is metaphor." For *Little Big Man*, Penn hired and then selectively ignored historians, when their advice worked against the sardonic thrust of the narrative. The film's the thing. Penn ruefully recalls a young Warren Beatty worriedly whispering during a 1960s film shoot (*Mickey One*) the fatal phrase: "too fucking obscure," which was true. He relates the epic misery of beholding a producer mutilate *The Chase*, omitting Brando's "extraordinary improvisations" (more Brando was all that was worth retaining in *Apocalypse Now Redux*). Penn happily describes vital technical gimmicks such as running film a few frames faster to convey a savage beating, and, more strategically, his canny use of "comedy to disarm, to make the audience vulnerable to a turn." Penn curtly dismisses Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* as "a powderball" and yearns for a return to a solid narrative tradition.

He isn't the only one. Director Fred Zinneman, an Austrian wartime émigré, admires the enormous mainstream prowess behind the camera lens but detects "a worrying lack of what I would have to call soul." Interviewed shortly before he died, Zinneman is engagingly incisive as he chats about everything from the crane shot in *High Noon* to anticommunist crusades and how to survive them. (He was blacklisted for part of the 1950s.) Film is an all-consuming art: Zinneman hired a ballet troupe in *Nun's Story* because ordinary extras did not move with the rhythmic sway he desired. He waited for the that rare day of the year when in *A Man for All Seasons* his bejeweled Henry VIII leaps from a boat into the correct depth of tidal mud. Despite directing *Julia*, Zinneman regarded writer Lillian Hellman as the

"phony character" she evidently was.

"I believe it's possible to combine entertainment and education," affirms Robert Redford while on location directing John Nichols' *The Milagro Beanfield War*. He chats about the land as a character, the Sundance Institute, and the existential pleasures of capturing happy "accidents" on film. Constantin Costa-Gavras, director of *Z*, *Missing* and *Music Box*, likewise pounces on chance serendipities but — very un-American also chafes against storyboarding rigidity. Yet Costa-Gavras confesses he grew up with "romantic notions of Americans" as "fighting with great strength and courage for the truth." He discusses the very delicate enterprise of making provocative political points on screen, and how to array actors and technical apparatus to achieve them.

The late Jack Lemmon is as mesmerizingly sane and decent as his everyman characters on screen often were. Interviewed in Cuba in 1985 where his acceptance of a film award itself made a stinging political point, he talks about typecasting, nuclear industry subterfuge aimed at *China Syndrome*, and the acting profession. "We forget that comedy and drama are intertwined in day to day life," he says, and that "comedy does not have to be escapist."

Echoing screenwriter William Goldman, Lemmon says the producers, "the suits" want "the built-in ingredients, they just don't know what they are." Akira Kurosawa comments elsewhere, "I suspect that if I chose contemporary problems as my subjects, no film company would dare to distribute such films. Film executives are the people who understand films least."

Susan Sarandon, a notable progressive activist, supplies the best brief definition of acting I know: "Acting forces me to be aware. It's almost enforced compassion." And, no less pithily, she observes, "any film where somebody is encouraged to take action is political." Just having completed *Lorenzo's Oil* and her Oscar winning role in *Dead Man Walking* (directed by husband, Tim Robbins) she discusses the problem of converting scientific jargon into "passionate, funny and visual" terms, the portrayal of social class on screen, and sexism in Hollywood. Readers may be surprised to learn that *The Player* and *Bob Roberts* did not make money. Robbins discusses *Dead Man Walking* and the volatile task of being fair both to death row

inmates and to the distraught families of their victims.

MILOS FORMAN TALKS ABOUT the customary vexations of converting books to film, sharpening his wits on Communist censorship (in his Czech days), American audiences aversion to open-ended European films, and utters some rare glowing words about Kurt Cobain's ex who starred in *The People vs. Larry Flynt*. Polish actress Kystina Janda muses almost mournfully on the peculiar plight of East European film makers after the collapse of the Soviet system which they so ingeniously devised their art to sneak allegorically around.

The Taviani Brothers (*Padre Padrone*, *A Man for Burning*, *The Meadow*) openly proclaim: "we are communists." They warn that a sound film does not pound home any message or solution, but it will ask pungent questions. Anyway, it's not as if leftist filmmakers were dying to make politically correct versions of *Triumph of the Will*. British director Mike Leigh (*Naked*, *High Hopes*) also aims to "share questions with the audience and employs improvisatory techniques and iconoclast instincts to avoid "plugging into the expectation system" the audience hauls along. He aims to upset it, at least a little, and this is not an objective that the folks who bankroll films warmly encourage.

Telling grim funny stories, as Leigh does, is a very intriguing enterprise. But is it political "When you get involved in someone else's suffering, and you try to convey it so that other people feel it and understand it," observes Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami (*Through the Olive Trees*), "then this is political." Ken Loach's interview is much too brief about his Spanish civil war film *Land and Freedom*, a caustic yet elegiac story scouring intra-left betrayals. (I was in the London screening room when Loach and writer Jim Allen faced an angry band of British International Brigade survivors who detested what they saw as the romanticization of the irregulars of the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (POUM); but see Orwell's bitter *Homage To Catalonia*.) Loach aptly remarks: "The more this myth of cynicism and just look after number one and don't care about anyone else is perpetuated, the more people lose power.

The more you can say, "Look, people have great potential, the more volatile things will get." That's his not so humble cinematic objective, and it requires no distortion.

I apologetically omit Atom Egoyan, Lizzy Borden, Marlene Gorris, Gianni Amelio, Peter Greenaway, Sally Potter, Francesco Rosi and Tomas Gutierrez Alea, all of whom have interesting insights, wise cracks, and hard-won wisdom to offer. A perusable joy.

The Revolution Fails to Devour This Child

REVIEWED BY ANIS SHIVANI

ORIGINALLY SELLING MORE THAN 120,000 copies in France in 2000 and 2001 in two volumes as *Persepolis 1* and *Persepolis 2*, this graphic novel is surprisingly subtle in its exploration of the effects of revolution on all social classes. Presented from the point of view of Marji, nine on the eve of the Islamic revolution in 1978

and fourteen when she leaves for Vienna in 1984 at the height of the Iran-Iraq war, the novel shows the gap between idealism and reality, at both the individual and collective levels, that a child's-eye view can reveal better than other vantage points.

While not shying away from retelling the gory aspects of the revolution and its bloody aftermath, including the persecution and murder of leftist dissidents close to her family and the sacrifice of young boys as human mine-sweepers during the Iran-Iraq war, Satrapi presents a consistently self-critical but compassionate protagonist who could well show the way forward for Islamic nations caught in a trap where both modernity and reactionism imposed from above have been exposed as shams. The young Marji functions as a late twentieth-century female version of the enlightenment *philosophes*: she has that same rough-and-ready resistance to repression, the same liberal trust in humanity, that helped usher in the great age of republican government in the West.

Satrapi does not hesitate to let us see the traces of moralism in her young heroine: when she is less than courageous, or when she makes too big a deal of having guts, we are caught between admiration and fear for what happens to nonconformists during revolutionary times. Satrapi, now thirty-three, seems to have acquired enough distance from the events narrated to keep us sus-

pended between a sense of realism about the limits of individual resistance and our hopes for it.

That seems to be exactly the right attitude required to fight the new fanaticisms on the scene.

Marji is uniquely situated to comment on the effects of the Iranian revolution. Her parents are committed Marxists, and as we

know, the revolution made it a point to crush Marxism, both Islamic and secular, as soon as it consolidated power. At the end of the book, Marji's parents, while taking part in demonstrations against the regime's repressive measures, remain unscathed, but her dear uncle Anoosh is executed, and other family friends with a leftist leaning are also murdered. While the Shah's SAVAK had also imprisoned, tortured or killed such dissidents, Khomeini's regime actually killed them in larger numbers (the Shah's defenders used to claim during his last years that the actual number of political prisoners was in the range of 4,000, not the 100,000 claimed by the exiled Iranian opposition; if this smaller figure is accurate, then the number of political prisoners under the Islamic regime far exceeded anything experienced under the vilified Shah).

Satrapi is correct on the weight of evil committed by the Shah, compared to his even worse successors, as on other historical points. Her motivation in being ruthlessly honest about the delusions of her parents, as well as other well-meaning citizens, is to point out the wave after wave of disillusionment that sets in during politically turbulent times: the only sane course seems to be to expect the worst, without becoming cynical about the prospects for progress.

How does a preteen maintain this sanity (and what can adults learn from this attitude)? Humor, self-deprecation, and persistence, in the end, break down the will of any group of tyrants, including

Persepolis

MARJANE SATRAPI

Illustrated. Translated by Mattias Ripa
and Blake Ferris.
New York, Pantheon, 2003.
153 pages. \$17.95

ANIS SHIVANI is at work on a novel about South Asians in New York during the boom years.

the mullahs. What happens in the seemingly endless duration is the theme of *Persepolis*. In 1980, when Marji is only ten, it becomes mandatory to wear the veil at school. Marji has been lucky to attend a French secular school, but all bilingual schools are closed down in 1980 as part of the Iranian version of the Cultural Revolution. Marji's mother Taji demonstrates against the veil, but is afraid of the regime when a German journalist takes a photograph of her that ends up being published in European newspapers. Marji is aware of class injustice from her early years: she says that she wants to be a prophet because "our maid did not eat with us" and "because my father had a Cadillac." Marji is determined to do something about class injustice, rather than take it sitting down. The fact that by the end her parents see it in her interest to make her leave and get a decent education in Europe could be seen as admission of defeat; but along the way, Marji shows how a principled individual can survive under the worst tyranny.

SATRAPI TAKES US DOWN the road of exposing the intelligentsia's complicity in installing ideological hegemony. Of course, this is not a prisonhouse from which there is no escape: while the young Marji is frequently visited by God at moments of crisis, she soon outgrows him as God comes up short time and again. Some among her adult companions don't have this much discrimination. We know that many Iranian Marxists and leftists supported Khomeini against the Shah (although some, like Marji's parents, were wary of Khomeini from the beginning, and would have been content if the Shah's liberal reforms had become a reality, preserving a figurehead monarchy in the process). Once the true nature of Khomeini's regime became obvious, elements of the left that had been supportive of him claimed to have been blindsided by Khomeini's extremist religious fervor; or they claimed that Khomeini had hoodwinked the masses into supporting a program they weren't prepared to fully understand or endorse. Both defenses, it can be shown, were continuing acts of delusion.

The advantage in having a child protagonist is that Satrapi can imply parallels between the secret life of a child and the repressed idealism of adults. At an early, malleable age, children can slip

in and out of possible roles, discard them when necessary, matching the inner with the outer; but to the extent that this is a problem for adults, escape for them is more difficult, once idealism runs up against harsh, unyielding obstacles. It is a child who can realize that wanting to be "justice, love and the wrath of God all in one" is not a sustainable proposition: her adult interlocutors, such as the functionaries of the state, illiterate and hastily pressed into service to the utopian (easily dystopian) ideal, fail to see the absurdity of their situation.

Che, Fidel and Trotsky

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL COMIC NOVEL is a peculiarly sharp-edged means of dissecting the lies and hypocrisies of revolution: it would take volumes of verbal description to accomplish what Satrapi does in a simple drawing to reduce the vanities of professional prophets to a heap of absurdities.

In only a couple of pages of an early chapter called "The Bicycle," Satrapi's expert sketches presage utopia gone awry. Marji's young friends, once the Revolution begins, think of themselves as Che and Fidel and Trotsky; the wheels of revolution soon turn, making them land, upside-down and topsy-turvy, on the bicycle that carries them all off (to the unknown?). Repeatedly, Satrapi's illustrations reproduce the effect of dehumanization of the individual human soul, as it is canceled out by an overwhelming preponderance of the collectivity's will — mad and self-destructive as it often is. The new beginning — as a caption reads, "After a long sleep of 2,500 years, the Revolution has finally awakened the people" — contains its own disillusionment; the grander the prophecy, the more Satrapi's drawings flatten the vanity with their astute observation of the weakness of individual human will. The hope is that "2,500 years of tyranny and submission" will finally come to an end, as Marji's Marxist-leaning father naively expects, but when we see the drawings of the tyranny wrought by "first our own emperors," then "the Arab invasion from the West," then the "Mongolian invasion from the East," and "finally modern imperialism," we can easily visualize that the most harmful of all invasions will be the one from within.

The later drawings of repetitively drawn hu-

man heads or figures, reduced to ciphers in the cruel march of history, are the predictable correlates of the earlier, equally mindless, joy and expectation. When the Shah leaves, "the country had the biggest celebration of its entire history." With the benefit of hindsight, we can see how naive this attitude was: it would take twenty years at Iran's current rate of growth to match the level of output Iran had achieved in 1978, on the eve of the Revolution, and Iran's per capita income is a mere fraction of what it was then. One of the more touching drawings is that of homogenously duplicated faces of preteen girls, forced to wear the veil and beat their breasts to mourn the war dead. Cars, towns, people, houses are often drawn in masses, as the spirit of the revolution sweeps away all individuality. There is only Marji, drawn as a solitary figure lost in a dark sky among stars and planets, when, at the beginning of the war, she is told, "Marji, run to the basement! We're being bombed!" Now Marji, and the adults she had looked to for comfort, are all equally lost. When we now think of the revolution, perhaps we overlook the psychological effect of the needless war on Iranians. Satrapi is bold enough to depict the daily struggle of survival, where one had to resort to dissimulation, disguise, or at least simulated obedience in order to merely exist.

THE INTELLECTUAL GROWTH of the humanist consists in accepting her essential aloneness in the world: little Marji comes to realize that God, her elders, her teachers, none can be of help in navigating the troubled waters of revolutionary times. Marji learns from her father that when Reza Khan, later Reza Shah Pahlavi, came to power, "the emperor that was overthrown was grandpa's father" (Satrapi happens to be the great-granddaughter of the last Qajar Emperor of Iran). Her grandfather, appointed Prime Minister by Reza Shah, turns to Marxism, and is often sent to prison. When Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi celebrated 2,500 years of continuous Persian monarchy at ancient Persia's capital Persepolis in 1971, promising to make Iran one of the five largest industrial nations, he was not the last, nor the worst, link in the chain of self-deception. In retrospect, some of the Shah's accomplishments in modernizing Iran (although with a much smaller population than the Islamic revolutionaries encouraged

Iran to produce) seem remarkable. Some of the leading leftist intellectuals allied with Khomeini to oppose the Shah's early sixties liberalization program (the White Revolution), put in place under pressure from the Kennedy administration. Once the euphoria of the Shah's departure led to a flurry of historical revisionism, there would be no end to the falsification of history. Marji's family is complicit in this lack of objectivity.

The discomfiting subtext through all of *Persepolis* is Marji's status as the child of privileged parents, having access to the kind of cultural capital denied to the masses in her country. When Marji's maid Mehri attracts a handsome neighbor's son, her father has to tell him that he has to call off the affair because Mehri is his maid, not his daughter. He explains to Marji that "their love was impossible" because in Iran "you must stay within your own social class." Marji protests, "Dad, are you for or against social classes?" Satrapi's drawings, showing us the maid's, her father's, the neighbor's son's, and her own outraged expressions contain a world of social insight. There's a chance for the family to leave for America early in the revolution, but Marji's father doesn't want to do so for fear that he might become a "taxi driver" and her mother a "cleaning lady." Anticipating in September 1980 that things were about to get worse (the Iran-Iraq war started soon after), her parents abruptly decide to take a vacation for three weeks in Italy and Spain, one of their last acts of class distinction. As riled up as Marji's father is about Saddam Hussein's invasion, he dismisses Marji's question about whether he's going to fight in the war: "I'm not going to fight. Why should I fight?" But her parents are willing to risk serious consequences when they ingeniously smuggle in banned posters of Kim Wilde and Iron Maiden from Istanbul for Marji.

There is no running away from one's family's and nation's past, although Marji has to be made to flee too, to preserve the status quo of her social standing. As long as historical fact is difficult to confront, social protest ends up amounting to the symbolic, and can easily lead to the opposite of its presumed intent. Even after having suffered imprisonment under the Shah, Marji's uncle Anoosh rationalizes the new tyranny thus: "Everything will turn out fine. In a country where half the population is illiterate you cannot unite the people around

Marx. The only thing that can really unite them is nationalism or a religious ethic.” Both options suggested by him are bargains with the devil; on the other hand, without compromise, revolution exists only on paper. Meanwhile, theories of revolution come up short against any actual revolution: the frightening “transitional period” that Marji’s father describes has now lasted a quarter century.

THERE IS MORE THAN ENOUGH IN *Persepolis* to make us understand how a revolution like the Iranian one takes hold in the first place and classes which delude themselves about being able

to keep the beast in check once it comes to power. A more informative, yet appetizing, primer to the most recent of the world’s great revolutions can hardly be imagined — certainly, not one so entertaining. Satrapi is true to the broad historical truths about the revolution, to the extent that she doesn’t spare herself, and by association her class, of short-sightedness and naiveté. If the reformist impulse under Khatami is stop-and-go, *Persepolis* makes us see why this is so, and also what must finally happen for Iranians to be a free people. We should find out in the next installment of *Persepolis* how after leaving Iran Marji sustained her good humor and unbendable will.

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Matrix Reloaded *and* X-2 Oh So Retro

KURT JACOBSEN

RAISE YOUR HANDS, THOSE OF YOU who never had paranoid inklings that you were/are a horribly hapless victim of laser-guided munitions fate? I'm talking momentary here, not hard core clinical cases. What's more, you suffered a cruel fate (is there another kind?) spun insouciantly not by a bunch of mythical weird sisters, who drop a stitch occasionally just to tantalize their target with a whiff of free will, but rather a sinister seamless fate concocted as expertly as a grand Hollywood production by bottom-line-oriented and very this-worldly producers (cf. *Wag the Dog*). They're out there manipulating and monitoring, and some of us even have heavily redacted red squad and FBI files, courtesy of a deteriorating Freedom of Information Act, to prove it. Of course, on closer inspection, those secret policemen having a ball assembling dossiers of mostly low-level fiction often turn out to be clowns (albeit with badges) who don't know a Trot from a trickle down their pants legs. And yet, and yet — they may be getting better at it. Why do we still have no word for justified paranoia? Could it be because of a conspiracy adroitly hatched between Websters and the OED? *The Matrix* and its sequel are the latest flicks to tap this weird throbbing vein in our heads, with truck loads of special effects but virtually no heart.

I wondered idly if John Travolta had anything dire to do with these neural cum digital chop socky adventures inasmuch as one hardly can get more scientologal than this icky plot does. One sneakily sympathizes with the maliciously traitorous

The matrix might be read as a gritty image of Marxist alienation at play . . . but swamping everything is the relentless quasi-religious thrust of the films.

Cipher in the first Matrix film who compellingly moaned: "Free? All I do is what he [Morpheus] tells me to do." The fitful and fierce Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) leads an astonishingly fashion-conscious cabal of the truly awake — a sort of 'hole in the wall gang' of outlaws roaming in a bleak fully-simulated world concocted by devilishly clever artificial intelligence machines. What is so seductive about the Matrix movies is that they tackle head-on the nagging claim every religion in its deepest recesses suggests: to wit, Everything is not what it seems and you ain't as free as you think, pal. And there's something to it. Go

ahead and try to think your way "outside the box," as suspender-wearing jerks in offices like to bray. It won't work in these movies, at least not without a helping hand. So who you gonna call? Matrix-busters. Who are they? They're a New Age priestly cast who, despite those real cool duds, lead admirably frugal lives

subsisting on undercooked tapioca pudding inside their rusting hulk of a rickety space ship, and fight the good fight against the digital Devils' work. Inside the core of the Matrix the victims — the whole human race who imagine they're free — are trussed up like plucked turkeys in plugs and wiring to fuel the machine-generated egos that rebelled in the name of order and enslaved, and engorged upon, humanity. Who will release them from the wicked spell? This is, underneath all the FX, awfully familiar stuff, cunningly packaged.

There admittedly are rueful radical resonances inside this flashy flick if you care to stretch it. Behold faceless billions of contented but deluded people who would not be very thrilled to learn that they are systematically milked and bilked for everything they have. Potent alien technological forces

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are at work and guess who created them? The whole point of Marxist-flavored critiques is that machines are products of labor that embody the knowledge of their makers. Society makes machines collectively, although few of us designate and control what the infernal things do. The matrix might be read as a gritty image of Marxist alienation at play — a vampire technology draining energy that it turns against the victims who created the vampire in the first place. You can go a long way illustrating alienation in these simple terms. But swamping everything is the relentless quasi-religious thrust of the films. The engagingly wry oracle, who serves piping hot cookies like communion wafers, does dish out dead accurate prognostications too. She almost won me over in the first film when she managed to detect the bleeding obvious fact that Neo the furtive hero (Keanu Reeves) was “not too bright.” Still, Neo wriggled manfully loose from the Matrix’s clammy core. Here, unlike Greek tragedy, you don’t tear your eyes out, you regain them by wrenching yourself free like a pale tumorous tadpole from a weird tube in which you have been force-fed a Xanadu version of reality.

Growing up absurd was all the generation(s) of the 50s and early 60s allegedly had to fear. I don’t know but I’ve been told that kids these days are growing up connected instead, only in an suitably ironic mode, which supposedly makes all the sanitary difference.

The nasty side of all this omnivorous connectedness is that people feel the prying eyes of the media, big business, the Pentagon, and internet spies tracking every tap we make on the keyboard. The most recent mass market hit of a super-paranoid flick was *Enemy of The State*, before that *Conspiracy* with gibbering Mel Gibson dashing around connecting unlikely dots, and don’t overlook Ken Branagh’s HBO remake of (the superior German version of) *The Wannsee Conference*, very appropriately called *Conspiracy* too, for how else did Nazis sneak the teeming devices and lore of industrialized mass murder past the willing executioners that all Germans were supposed to be?

The Straussians neocons gobble this stuff up: the self-selected elite, the bovine herd and a cult grown around an earthly messiah or keeper of the word.

Hollywood’s Revelations

HOLLYWOOD ALWAYS TAPS OUR apprehensions eagerly, if in an evasive way that covers their originating trail back to some of the same outfits funding the films we watch. The Matrix films are less a radical chic critique than cheap religious mysticism arrayed in opulent secular disguises. Here is the unveiling of Maya, the smashing of the illusion advocated by religious traditions since the year dot. Speaking of secularism, don’t forget the cleansing the doors of perception with the aid of a bit of mescaline à la Aldous Huxley, or the more industrial strength lysergic acid dythylemide-25.

Break on through to the other side, even if it ain’t all that hot over there. But someone out there is keeping track of your tiresome revelations. Since Jeremy Bentham’s panopticonic prison designs the only thing stopping authorities and private money-makers from snooping into every corner of your life is their own incapacity, a lack of technological knack, not will.

In *Santa Sangre* (1989), a far better film in this genre, Alejandro Jodorowsky, director of cult favorite *El Topo*, crafted a stunning psychotic journey flick which sent a stricken man on a dizzying free fall spin through a bad carnival reality until he ultimately emerges from psychosis with the tendrils of madness still clinging as he reaches the shores of sanity again. Hitchcock too played with the motif in *Spellbound*. (Psychiatrist R. D. Laing has long been savaged as a romanticizer of mental illness but had some savvy things to say about the subject too.)

So what do you do when you become aware you are snared in a matrix, a matrix of what exactly? The imperfect matrix of American media today proved impervious to dissent during the Iraq invasion; it consistently filters out information as to who wins and who loses in a systematically rigged system of taxes and hand-outs; and it excels at making the trivial seem profound and vice versa. In the Matrix flicks we are supposed to take heart from applecheeked stars of low watt intellects waving their fists and feet in mid-air against shape-shifting machines that are nearly as ruth-

less as old-fashioned COINTELPRO operatives. Resembling post-modern icons in shades and long leather jackets, our band of saviors also look alarmingly like postmodern Pinkertons. In *Matrix Reloaded* the liberated zone looks like nothing so much as a gigantic clubbing scene with everyone bathed in a honeyed haze of ecstasy. It's all self-satisfyingly and disturbingly tribal: a cult of the few who think they are really free; a Woodstock Nation in space standing up for peace, awareness and martial arts. These are our liberators?

Religious iconography pervades everything and kids who wouldn't set foot in church, temple or mosque hustle into the cinemas to savor this guff. The ferocious guardians resemble not so much FBI men as — when they remove the shades — tent preacher evangelists. They've been out to get us for eons. Morpheus (Laurence Fishburne) is winsomely sincere as a forlorn John the Baptist figure searching for the savior he has foretold. The oracle is a deliciously offbeat character — not oracular at all if by that we mean obscurantist and subject to anything any deconstructionist who happens along wants to make of a message. Speaking of fate, Fishburne, captured and tortured by Matrix guardians, surely radiates all the power of the old resistance fighter about to be heaved into a blazing furnace in the final pages of Andre Malraux's *Man's Fate* — but for the sake of what? Even the Matrix agents hate working this neighborhood and want to get out.

Why is everything attained Harry Potter style by sheer dint of splendid birth? Talents are acquired by loading nifty CD programs — fly a helicopter, learn Ju Jitsu, balance your checkbook in today's tough economy — into the slot conveniently located at the back of one's numb skull. One dystopic hint dropped here is that this simulation gone awry was intended to be a utopian vehicle. But predesigned utopias are always one person utopias, with highly idiosyncratic and grating controls built-in, like B. F. Skinner's *Walden II*. The gratuitous Alice in Wonderland allusions are laid on to convey a sense of profundity by association, as if deliberate nonsense were profound. In the ardently artificial universe of Hollywood I guess it is. Ultimately the Matrix films mix a morass of pseudo-philosophical, quasi-religious, and pulp science fiction froth into a computer-generated movie where humans barely keep up with

livelier machines. The ultimate message is not remotely progressive. The wrenching free of selves from illusions is exactly as congenial to neo-conservatives as it might be to the odd romantic leftie. The Straussian neocons gobble this stuff up: the self-selected elite, the bovine herd and a cult grown around an earthly messiah or keeper of the word. The gullible masses, alas, must go on admiring the shiny illusion while we happy few totter off to rue or, if possible, run it all.

Mutants Among Us

GIVE ME X-MEN ANYTIME. They aren't deliberately engineered. They never sought the volatile powers which they all endearingly handle with the panache of Mickey Mouse's sorcerer's apprentice riding a bucking bronco of a magic broomstick. Anna Paquin is touchingly confused and semi-suicidal in the opening saga when discovering that a kiss, for her, is not still just a kiss but a whopping misfortune for would-be lovers. X-men are mostly awkward misfits and more often than not quite loveable to behold in their adolescent struggle to master their new powers, which are neither welcome nor self-beneficial. A McCarthyite Senator, flourishing an archetypal list of enemy mutants, is after their hides — literally, in some cases. Every character is a unique mutation, as so many teens feel they are. Here the lucky ones find sanctuary, nurturance and guidance in a special School where Patrick Stewart helps turn their talents to a responsible use for themselves and for others, others outside the tribe, among all humans. The Stewart character, Professor Xavier, is posed against mayhem-maker Ian McKellen, who unleashes the raging dark side of Gandalf here as a mutant who owes nothing to dull-witted and bigoted mankind.

Apart from McKellen's Satanic renegades, the X-men are mostly pretty decent ordinary people endowed with extraordinary traits, and feeling like pariahs. A gift, one learns, can often be a double-edged thing. The message may be a bland one of the imperative for mutual understanding, but not by denying that conflict also arises from communicating all too clearly too. Recall when the longhaired sixties kids who called themselves proudly — in what Erikson would call affirming the negative identity — “freaks”? Mutants are still among us: Thank God.

THE PIRATES AND THE MOUSE: DISNEY'S WAR AGAINST THE UNDERGROUND

THEY FOUGHT
THE MOUSE AND
THE MOUSE WON
— BUT AT
WHAT PRICE
VICTORY?

FPO

Author Bill Ivin tells the story of Dan O'Neill and the Air Pirates, a group of leftist cartoonist rebels who took on America's mightiest corporation and the U.S. Constitution itself, all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. Based on his acclaimed essays in *THE COMICS JOURNAL* last year, *The Pirates & The Mouse* is a rollicking, hilarious and significant piece of not only comics, but U.S. history as well. Includes over 40 pages of Air Pirates comics and photos!

THE
PIRATES
AND THE
MOUSE



Ruben Bolling's "Lucky Ducky"

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MONTHS the *Wall Street Journal* has been running editorials complaining about the "lucky duckies" who are exempt from paying federal taxes either because their income is low, or because they benefit from "tax credits for things like child care and education," or both. "Consider what happens to those in the lowest bracket," urged the *Journal* in November, 2002. "Say a person earns \$12,000. After subtracting the personal exemption, the standard deduction and assuming no tax credits, then applying the 10 percent rate of the lowest bracket, the person ends up paying a little less than 4 percent of income in taxes. It ain't peanuts, but not enough to get his or her blood boiling with tax rage." This means that "the constituency for tax cutting, much less for tax reform, is eroding."

Shortly after this editorial appeared Ruben Bolling introduced a new comic strip character into his weekly strip — Lucky Ducky, "the impoverished duck who's rich in luck." Many terrible things happen to Lucky Ducky, but he always comes out on top, at least according to the anxious and easily confounded Uncle Scrooge character who closely monitors Lucky Ducky's every move. "Gotcha!" Lucky Ducky says, as he shows just how rigged the system is in favor of the most vulnerable members of society.

So far Ruben Bolling's sharp cartoon sarcasm has failed to pierce the armor of the *Wall Street Journal's* editorial writers, who continue to talk up the problem of "lucky duckies" who don't pay enough in taxes to know enough to hate taxes. But this at least gives Ruben Bolling, whose name outside of comics is Ken Fisher, a live target for his well-aimed satirical barbs.

Ruben Bolling's comic strip, 'Tom the Dancing Bug,' appears every week in the *Village Voice* and on-line via Salon. It employs a revolving cast of characters — including God-Man, an omnipotent but flawed super-hero; Billy Dare, Boy Adventurer; and Harvey Richards, lawyer for children

— but uses no set format, theme or storyline. No single character dominates the strip and even the most popular characters may disappear for months at a time. There has never been a dancing bug.

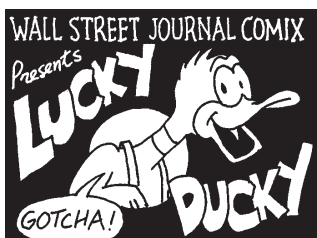
Many of Ruben Bolling's cartoons have more to do with stock cartoon situations than real world politics. For example, in a series of cartoons featuring "The Adventures of Sam Roland: The Detective Who Dies" he introduces

the main character, Sam Roland, only to bump him off by the end of the strip. At another point Bolling brought us "Shluff," a gigantic rock monster from "the planet Dormarr!" who comes to earth "to take a nap on your puny planet! Do not try to stop me!"

In the wake of 9-11, 'Tom the Dancing Bug' has taken a somewhat more serious turn, although the storylines continue to satirize comics as well as life. In one strip, "Things Are Normal Again!" Bolling uses comical, television anchor-type faces to report that while "Many people were concerned that 9-11 was a wake-up call . . . now we know it was merely an event which led to a brief, victorious war, which solved the problem." And in a sly Billy Dare, Boy Adventurer strip, Billy and his parrot sidekick Quentin find themselves chased by a large crowd while hot on the trail of evil Doctor Mordu. But while Billy thinks he's in "On the Trail of Evil!" everyone else thinks he's in "Dr Mordu: Righteous Avenger"; "when did I get into that insane comic strip?" he whines.

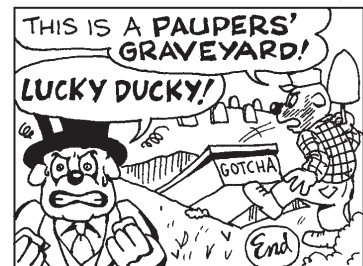
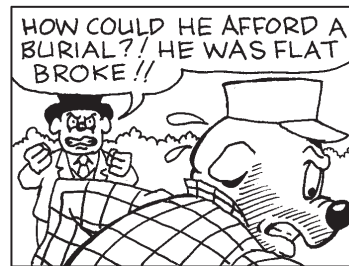
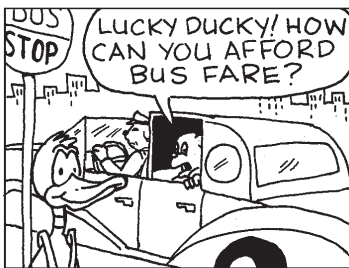
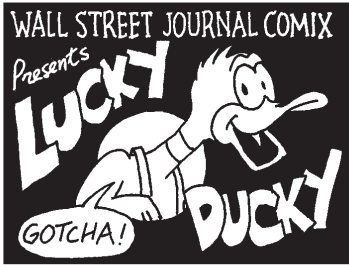
Judging from the Internet, the Lucky Ducky series seems to have resonated for an exceptionally large number of readers. In launching a new feature, "Words and Pictures," *New Politics* is pleased to present three Lucky Ducky strips — the premiere Lucky Ducky strip, in which the main character is buried in a paupers' graveyard; "Dividends," which lays out the case for trickle-down economics; and "At War," in which Lucky Ducky's bravery in combat is honored by a grateful nation.

KENT WORCESTER



TOM the DANCING BUG

BY
RUBEN
BOLLING

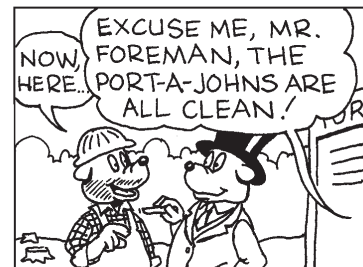
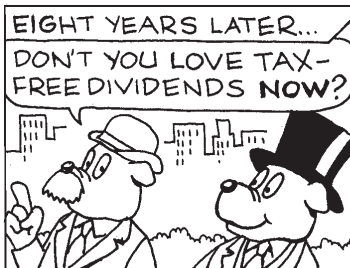
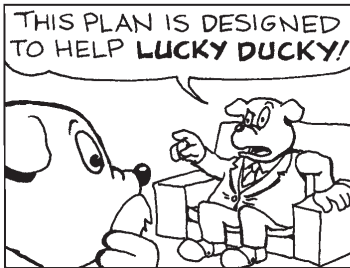
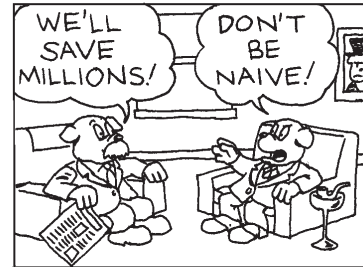
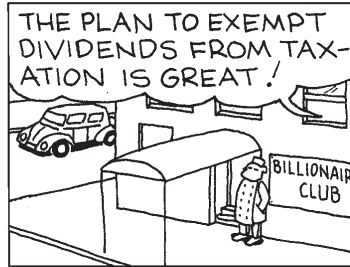
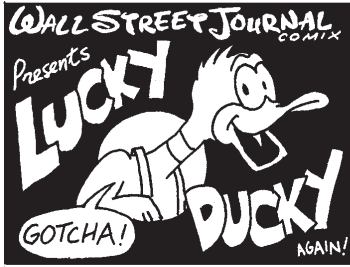


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TOM the DANCING BUG

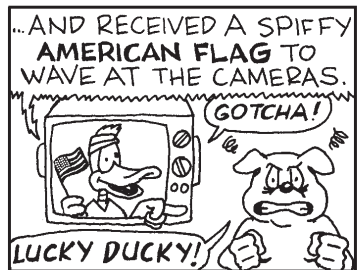
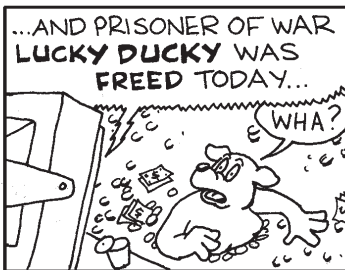
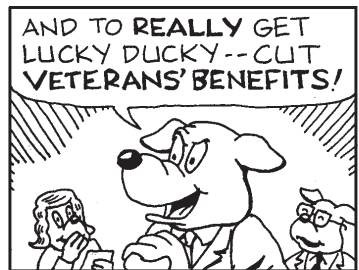
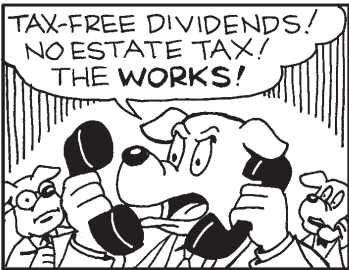
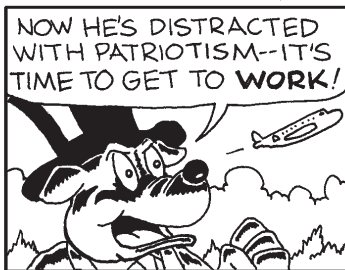
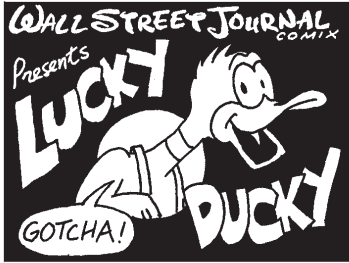
BY
Ruben
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