

POLITICAL AFFAIRS A MARXIST MONTHLY

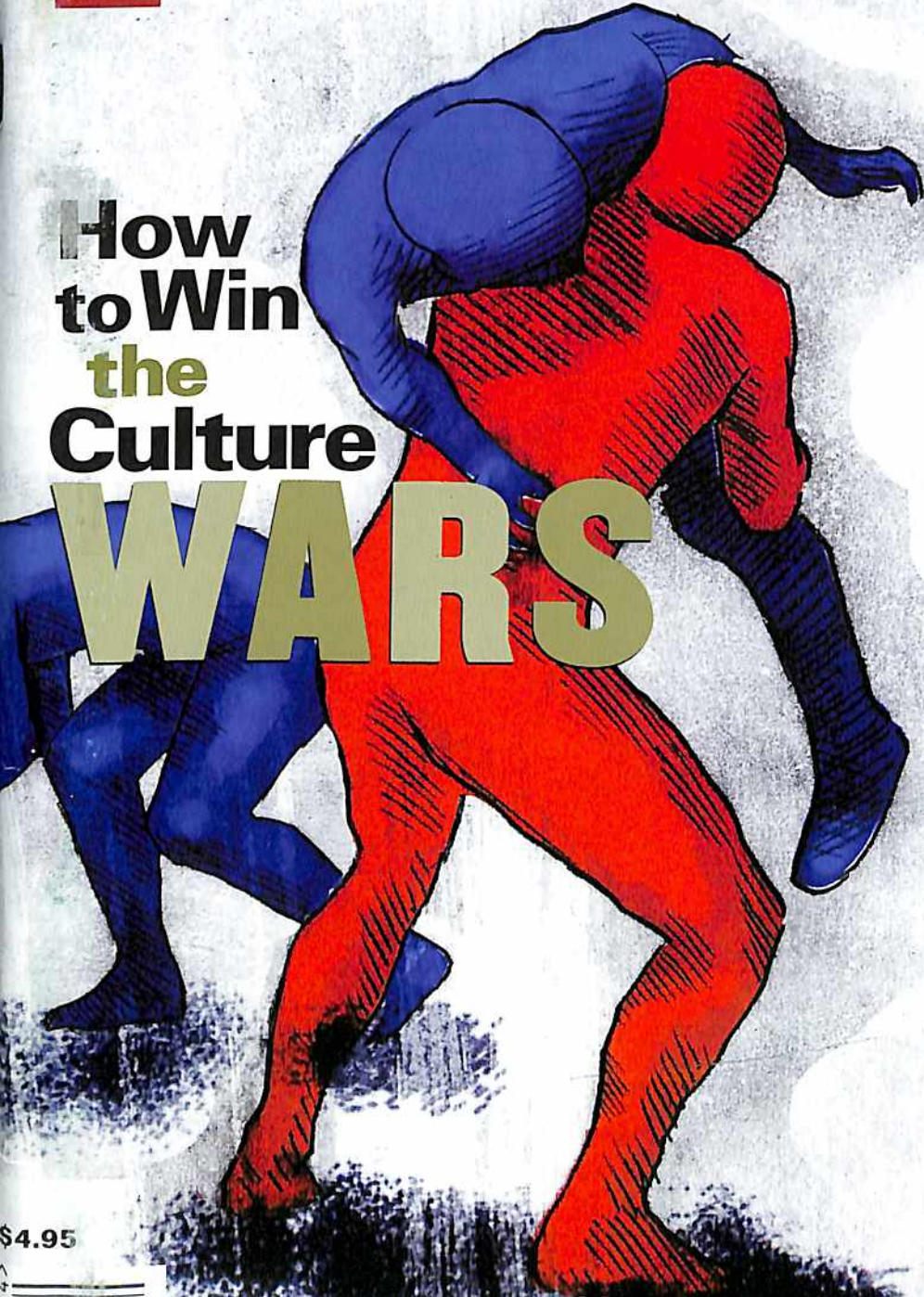
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April 2005

www.politicalaffairs.net

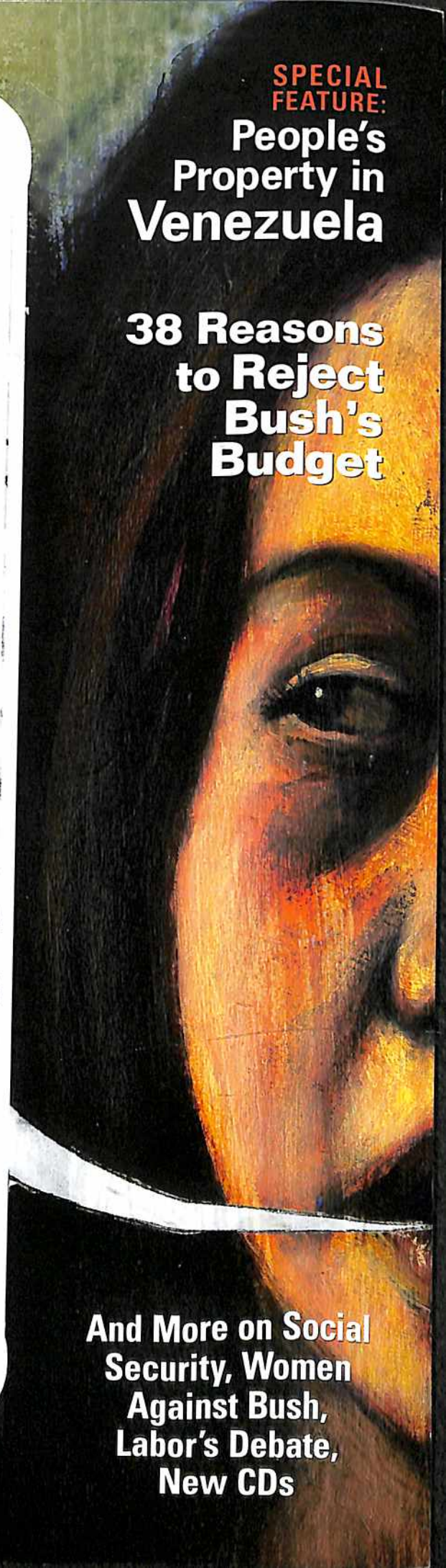
How
to Win
the
Culture

WARS



**SPECIAL
FEATURE:**
People's
Property in
Venezuela

**38 Reasons
to Reject
Bush's
Budget**



\$4.95



**And More on Social
Security, Women
Against Bush,
Labor's Debate,
New CDs**

IN THIS ISSUE...

With the US and its mighty military machine stalled in Iraq, other nations of the world are finding ways to say no to US imperialism, especially China as *PA* contributing editor Gerald Horne argues in this issue. Our interview with Iran's Tudeh Party (Workers' Party) examines both the international context and domestic dynamics that surround the current confrontation between the US and Iran. Ron Bunyon's cursory examination of the developing democracies in Africa shows the potential for Africa's emergence as a global democratic leader.

On the US scene, Elena Mora dialogues with historian and activist Lisa Duggan on the so-called cultural questions and the aims of the far right that are behind them. *PA* contributing writer Owen Williamson suggest a few tactics for framing the message of the left in the struggle to defeat the agenda of the far right. Former NOW New York President Rita Haley tells *PA* about the importance of continuing the fight against the Bush agenda. Commentaries on the Social Security struggle and the fight to stop the back door draft inform us about important current issues. Phil E. Benjamin contributes to the ongoing debate in the labor movement by arguing that health and safety departments cannot be dismantled in order to save money. And, as always, poetry, a story, a marxist quiz, and much more makes this issue of *PA* worth your time.

In struggle,

PA Editors



Celebrate the 35th Anniversary
of Earth Day, April 22nd

april

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Political Affairs (ISSN 0032 3128) is published monthly except for combined September/October, by Political Affairs Publishers, Inc. 235 West 23rd Street, New York, NY 10011 [This address is for all correspondence.] Phone: 646-437-5336

Subscription Rate: \$22 for one year (individuals), \$44 for one year (institutions); foreign subscriptions: Canada and Mexico add \$7.00 to domestic rates; foreign sea rate add \$10.00 per year to domestic rates; foreign airmail rate on request.

Periodical postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send changes of address to:
Political Affairs, 235 W. 23rd St., NY, NY 10011

Please send your letters to

pa-letters@politicalaffairs.net or by mail to

Political Affairs, 235 W. 23rd St., NY, NY 10011.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

Greetings from Cuban Five US Prison, Florence, Colorado

Thank you for your messages of solidarity. I received a copy of "No Mandate, No Surrender" by Sam Webb and a book of excerpts from Marx, Engels and Lenin. I already read all Sam's report and some parts of the book. Both are important materials in our struggle for a better world. You, members of the Party and the YCL, know that a great and difficult time lies before you. You live where the roots of war, racism and discrimination in all of its forms are embedded, and where the class struggle is deepest. This requires more dedication and courage. We admire you for all you are doing. It gives hope of peace and justice for the whole world.

**A big fraternal hug,
¡Hasta la victoria siempre!
Antonio Guerrero**

Editor's note: Antonio and his four comrades are Cuban citizens imprisoned by the US government for monitoring the activities of organizations in the US that are trying to overthrow the Cuban government. They have been in prison for five years. Write to Antonio Guerrero at #58741-004, USP Florence, PO Box 7500, Florence CO 81226. Send your messages of solidarity also to Rene Gonzalez, Reg. #58738-004, FCI Edgefield, PO Box 725, Edgefield SC 29824; Gerardo Hernandez #58739-004, USP Victorville, PO Box 5500, Adelanto CA 92301; [For Ramon Labarino] Luis Medina, #58734-004, USP Beaumont, PO Box 26035, Beaumont TX 77720-6035; [For Fernando Gonzalez] Ruben Campa #58733-004, FCI Oxford, PO Box 500, Oxford WI 53952-0500.

Boxer Rebellion Melba, Idaho

Hats off to California Senator Democrat Barbara Boxer for being the only senator to join with several representatives of the House standing up for the thousands of Ohio disenfranchised voters. Another kudo for Senator Boxer for raising important objections to secretary of state designee Condoleezza Rice. Boxer's fellow California (senior) Senator Feinstein obliged herself to support and introduce Ms. Rice.

Most Democratic leaders, starting with Kerry and the Democratic National Committee (DNC) appeared to be hiding under their desk ignoring the disenfranchised voters and the 750,000 voices for peace demonstrating with

students, union and human rights groups at the Republican convention in New York 2004, and in the Democrats Boston "Dog Pens."

Kerry and the DNC had major setbacks yet progressive Democrats won overwhelmingly. The Democrats need to come out from under their desk or expect more moves for independents. Right on to Senator Boxer and her Democratic "Boxer Rebellion."

Rhon "Grandpa" Webb

Political Affairs Rocks! via e-mail

The following is in praise of *Political Affairs*. For some time now I have been subscribing to your journal, and the time has now come for me to both applaud and thank the PA community for its courageous work. As a subscriber, I have seen a steady increase in the quality of work being put forth by PA. Indeed, the monthly journal is now, in my opinion, a tremendous asset to the reading audience. The profound and critical writing contained in PA is imperative in times of imperial war and terror. Fortunately for those who believe in justice and goodwill, *Political Affairs* comes around once a month. Continue your struggle and continue your much appreciated and valiant work!

Alexis M. Montes

Social Security Article Helpful via e-mail

Your "Golden Fleece" article by Joe Wendland was very informative (February 2005). I have been trying to wrap my mind around this issue, since I qualified for Social Security disability in December 2002. The rhetoric has gotten increasingly hostile. I heard a guest on a conservative talk show say, (paraphrasing) anyone who doesn't support Social Security privatization is stupid. I wish that more knowledgeable people across the country like you would unite to combat this demagoguery while average guys like me continue to try to separate the wheat of knowledge from the chaff of deliberate misinformation. Our president has intimidated and misled too many people too often without being held accountable. I hope Lincoln was right. The war over there has successfully distracted us from the war in our own

backyard. A massive power grab has begun with as much compassion for the victims here as over there.

George Ziszi

Nationalism vs. Patriotism via e-mail

There are two separate ideas on how someone feels about their country. The war in Iraq has divided us very deeply. And it is along very clearly marked lines.

We see a number of Americans who are nationalistic in their sentiments. They believe the United States must be supported in all cases. One should salute the flag and stands behind the president; one should not question policy, especially since we are engaged in military combat.

The other side of the coin is patriotism. This is a form of citizenship that requires more concern about the nation. It is rooted in the idea of the First Amendment and our right to question those in authority. These individuals believe that power comes from the people. Leaders must come before the people and state what they are doing. It is based upon reason and not listening to demagoguery.

Patriots ask the hard questions. When going to war, we ask all to be a part to this effort. If our nation is truly threatened citizens will willingly sacrifice for the cause of their nation. Journalists will question the political leaders to justify their actions.

These two forces are diametrically opposed and one questions the other's motives. That is the way systems are intended to operate. Both sides truly believe in their cause. Yet, in our system that is absolutely how it must operate. Vigorous debate is an essential element for the survival of a democratic republic. Such debate must take place.

In our form of government we must clearly understand that debate and discussion is essential to the continuance of a strong nation. Leaders who hide behind the shield of the office of the president are going down a very dangerous course. We lose the concept of the power emanating from the people. Hopefully we can wake up before it is too late. That is true patriotism.

Raymond Nowicki



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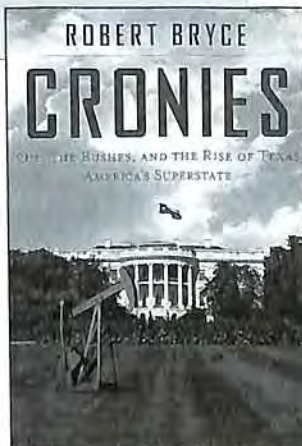
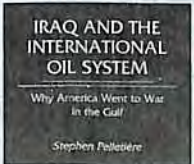
67 FICTION

The Wolf

By Karl Mundstock

The Choo-Choo Train

By Nancy Robinson



Homophobia In The Age Of Dubya

By Anna Bates

Gay and lesbian issues are once again among the national headlines. The uproar over C.A. Tripp's biography of Abraham Lincoln, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, which suggests that the former president was gay, shows that most Americans are unable to see their forefathers tainted with, in poet Carl Sandburg's words, "shades of lavender." Given that Lincoln was a visionary and a great leader, accusations about his private sexual behavior seem inappropriate. But the reaction to those accusations reveal much about the prevalent homophobic atmosphere of the Age of Dubya. Bush's support for the Defense of Marriage Act and other homophobic national policies reveal shades of paranoia during a time of perceived national insecurity.

George W. Bush was not the first American policy maker to associate homosexuality with national weakness. Bush's tirades against gay marriage reverberate the fears of the Cold War. Historian Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound* connected non-traditional sexual behavior with containment theory, arguing that the American home was a "sphere of influence" within which dangerous social forces could be tamed. Homosexuals were viewed with suspicion, and often associated with Communism.

This fear precipitated a wave of officially sponsored homophobia. During the early 1950s, the persecution of homosexual men and women became more intense than ever before. Gay baiting rivaled red baiting in its ferocity, destroying careers, encouraging harassment, creating stigmas, and forcing those who "confessed their guilt" to name others with whom they associated. In 1950, the Senate issued a report called "The Employment of Homosexuals and Other Sex Perverts in Government," which asserted that "those who engage in overt acts of perversion lack the emotional stability of normal persons.... Indulgence in acts of sex perversion weakens the moral fiber of the indi-



PWW file photo

▲ LGBT demonstrators at 2004 Gay Pride march in New York City.

vidual." Like Communists who presumably infiltrate and destroy the society, sexual "perverts" could spread their poison simply by association. "One homosexual can pollute a Government office," claimed the Senate report. The sexual behavior of employees thus became a legitimate focus of investigation. Both in the government

Bush's support for homophobic national policies reveal shades of paranoia during a time of perceived national insecurity.

and the private sector employees were screened for signs of sexual deviance.

In October, 1953, President Eisenhower signed Executive Order # 10450, which tightened loyalty and security regulations and, for the first time in civil service law,

explicitly stated that "sexual perversion" was necessary grounds for not hiring and for firing federal workers. With Eisenhower's executive order, the government's anti-homosexual policies expanded to include every agency and department of the federal government and every private company or corporation with a government contract, such as railroad companies and aircraft plants. This affected the job security of over six million workers. By the mid-1950s, similar policies had gone into effect in state and local governments. More than 20 percent of the labor force had to sign, in addition to loyalty oaths, oaths attesting to sexual moral purity to keep their jobs. Policies that started with the military spread to all of society.

The United States is, in 2005, once again experiencing national paranoia. The targets are different, of course, but the resulting policies are horribly familiar. Between 1998 and 2004, the military discharged 20 Arabic and six Farsi speakers, according to Department of Defense data obtained by the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military under a Freedom of Information Act request. ■

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Communist Party USA.Healthy in
Cuba

By Don Sloan



▲ Expensive medical care for children in the US is available only for those with enough money. Growing poverty has seen a growing child mortality rate.

Despite the US blockade of Cuba, reports are creeping into the mainstream media about the remarkable Cuban health care system that is gaining more and more worldwide recognition and praise. The Cuban Ministry of Public Health's (MINSAP) accomplishments are what just about every

informed politically conscious person in the medical industry has been aware of since the Cuban revolution took place. The statistics from almost every aspect of health care from maternal mortality to infectious diseases reveal their successes and accomplishments.

In 1959, by comparison, the last

year of the Batista regime, one out of five Cuban newborns succumbed to simple infectious diarrhea in the first year of life. Now, that syndrome has been relegated to the history books.

7,500 foreigners including, almost 100 people from the US. These students will return to medically underserved communities in their countries of origin. Simply put, Cuba makes



File photo

▲ The for-profit health system ensures that the poor stay sick.

In a word, that kind of success happens when something, anything, becomes a priority.

The Castro government has put living over dying, health care over war, education over illiteracy, sanitation over contamination and nutrition over debilitation. Cuba has exceeded most expectations in these areas as well. It has just been announced that the

Why does the most affluent nation on earth have such shameful statistics on infant mortality?

entire island now has potable public water supplies, a feat unheard of in all of the rest of the third world.

As another glaring example of its commitment, while we created and foster a school in Georgia that trains militant mercenaries and assassins, Cuba has a fully funded medical school program exclusively for over

doctors, not killers. While the US has over 1.4 million soldiers fighting worldwide on battlefields and in occupations, Cuba has over 10,000 physicians working in the undeveloped world as healers.

An important statistic for measuring the delivery of medical care are the latest UN figures on infant mortality and the U5MR, the under-five-mortality-rate, which simply records the number of children alive at age five per 1,000 live births. These numbers have become UNICEF's most accurate barometer of the health of a nation. Singapore, Japan, the Scandinavian countries and Switzerland lead the way. Infant mortality in sub-Saharan Africa and western Asia are 50 to 100 times higher, a sad commentary if ever there was one. Cuba, as expected, ranks among the best.

But this leads to arguably the most tragic statistic of all. The US is the only country in the world that must report two figures for infant mortality, the U5MR or whatever. Why? Because without a universal health care plan for all, a unique dubious distinction we hold among the world's industrialized nations, we must report

Among our contributors



Dan Brook, Ph.D., teaches sociology at San Jose State University and can be contacted via Brook@california.com or through CyberBrook's ThinkLinks www.brook.com/cyberbrook.

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marxistIQ

miq

1. CPUSA activists helped create mass organizations that pushed politics to the left. Which of the following was not such a mass organization?

- a. The American League Against War and Fascism.
- b. Unemployed Councils, USA.
- c. The America First Committee.
- d. The National Negro Congress.

4. The Communist Party maintains an international outlook that is:

- a. committed to critical support of countries such as China and Cuba seeking to develop socialism regardless of their differences in policy.
- b. opposed to China because of its concessions to foreign and domestic capitalists.
- c. opposed to Cuba because of its use of the death penalty.
- d. supportive of China because it sees a "social market economy" as a step forward for socialism.

2. Today trade union membership is around 10 percent of the work force. Right after World War II, trade union membership was about:

- a. 15% of the non-agricultural work force.
- b. 20% of the non-agricultural work force.
- c. 30% of the non-agricultural work force.
- d. 35% of the non-agricultural work force.

5. Marxists see racism in the US:

- a. as increasingly insignificant given the reforms of the last 50 years.
- b. as a capitalist ideology imposed to divide workers.
- c. as a central material force providing super-profits for capitalists, super-exploitation for racially oppressed workers, and an ideological superstructure fostering bigotry.
- d. something unique to US monopoly capitalism.

3. Through its more than 80 years of existence the CPUSA, changing its tactics in response to changing conditions, has remained true to the principle that:

- a. world revolution is on the horizon.
- b. building the Communist Party, the movements for labor rights, against racism, sexism, and homophobia, and working in solidarity with the anti-imperialist and socialist movements abroad are the primary ways to advance working-class empowerment and a socialist USA.
- c. working within the Democratic Party is the primary way to advance toward working-class empowerment and a socialist USA.
- d. working to establish a third party is the primary way for Communists to advance toward working-class empowerment and a socialist USA.

How to score yourself:

0-2: Check out the "Readings" section on the CPUSA website at: www.cpusa.org.

3-4: Your knowledge of labor and Party history is strong, but could use some fine tuning.

5: Consider writing articles and book reviews for *Political Affairs*.

Answers: 1] c 2] d 3] b 4] a 5] c

our health care situation for Black and white, the differences being so stark. Not only do we rank below many nations in infant mortality and U5MR, it appears that Black males in the US do not have the life span and health numbers of their counterparts in most of the underdeveloped nations of the third world. Newborns in Manhattan above 96th Street, more heavily populated by people of color, die at twice the rate of those below.

Why does the most affluent nation on earth have such shameful statistics? Because we are without health care coverage for all, and because we have made health care a privilege instead of a right. Wars in Korea, Vietnam, the Middle East and Latin America seem to have taken priority over nutrition, sanitation, inner city infrastructures, schools, libraries and mass transit and universal health care. Our resources, as vast as they are, are even-

tually finite, and as long as both major parties show such disdain for the people's welfare and well being, future reports will expose a worsening of the debacle that is our health care delivery system.

It was that wonderful billboard in Woodstock an era ago that cried out how wonderful it would be if we had all the money needed for health care but had to hold a church supper and bingo game to raise funds for B-1 bombers. ■

We the People? Not Anymore

By Steven Laffoley

The Reagan revolution is nearly complete. All that remains to do is gut Social Security and then make a small change in US Constitution – just remove “We the People” and add “Hooray for Me, and Screw You”.

It's not as flippant an idea as you might think. Let me explain.

fundamental principle of “We the People.” Or so I thought at the time.

I figured my grandfather was disappointed that Jimmy Carter had lost, and that the election of Ronald Reagan meant the rise of “trickle-down” economics (“Pissing down economics,” he later grumbled). And I knew, too, that my grandfather believed Ronald Reagan had

opposed McCarthyism in the 1950s, The Vietnam War and Nixon in the 1960s and 70s. And I still remember, in 1976, his deeply felt hope for America in the honesty, decency, and humanism of Jimmy Carter.

Interestingly, my grandfather was not politically a Democrat. Rather his politics embraced something more basic: he simply cared about the American people – all of them. He believed deeply in the first words of the US Constitution: “We the People.” But by 1980, politics reflected the ideas of a new generation. And my grandfather suddenly seemed old.

As with Bush's Iraqi WMD public relations campaign, Americans are being inundated with dazzling statistics to prove that Social Security is going bust.



University of Michigan

▲ Bush's right wing agenda is founded on the principle of “Hooray for me, and screw you.”

In a town just south of Boston, on the day after the 1980 American presidential election, my grandfather and I sat at the kitchen table eating breakfast. Sometime between buttering my toast and drinking my orange juice, I asked my grandfather to explain the political philosophy of president-elect Ronald Reagan.

“That's easy,” he answered, “Hooray for me, and screw you.”

I was relatively young at the time, and his comment struck me as terribly sharp. After all, Republicans or Democrats, we were all Americans, all committed to the

betrayed his generation and a solemn social contract with Americans forged nearly forty years before by Franklin D. Roosevelt.

I wondered if my grandfather's politics had just passed with the times. After all, his politics were shaped by historical experiences mostly forgotten by the post World War II generation. He came of age during the Depression, riding the rails in the early 1930s looking for work. Later, during World War II, he fought for real liberty and freedom, sailing with the Merchant Marine (he was 4-F because of his poor eyesight). He

“Remember,” my grandfather often reminded me after 1980, “you take care of your own.” It was a message that I never forgot. He was still fighting that fight, in the middle of Reagan's revolution, when he died in May of 1985.

Why share his story now?

Well, after nearly 25 years, I find myself remembering my grandfather's blunt assessment of Reagan's politics as Reagan's philosophical son, George W. Bush, begins his ideological attack on Social Security. I say “ideological” because the Bush attack on Social Security is not just a “think-outside-the-box” idea for protecting “We the People.” It's something far deeper and darker.

Already the Bush administration has brought a WMD-like fervor to their "concerns" about Social Security. The crisis in the program, they say, is large and looming, and the program's collapse is imminent. And as with the Iraqi WMD public relations campaign, Americans are being inundated with facts and figures and dazzling statistics to prove that the Social Security system is fast going bust.

And surprisingly – or perhaps not so surprisingly – some prominent Democrats agree. *Time Magazine* columnist and former Clinton adviser Joe Klein, for one, thinks privatizing Social Security has merit. Like Bush, Klein sees a cataclysmic future for publicly funded Social Security. And also like Bush, he looks to the "success" of the Chilean and Swedish privatized retirement programs as models for America to imitate. But Klein and others on the Democratic side who share the Bush vision about Social Security are missing the larger ideological attack under way.

By privatizing Social Security, what the Bush administration is proposing is nothing less than a revolutionary shift in the American commitment to "We the People." The proposed changes mean Americans will no longer be obliged to take care of their own: of their elderly, of their weak, of their downtrodden.

For a Republican Party whose supporters include so many Christian fundamentalists, one wonders: where, in Bush's privatization plan, is the Christian ideal of being one's brother's keeper? The irony, of course, is that this is the Christian ideal already informing the existing Social Security system introduced by Franklin D. Roosevelt: that working Americans invest their tax dollars to ensure the safe retirement of those who came before them, that each generation will care for the next.

In this final stage of the Reagan revolution, "we" becomes "me." The "freedom" and "liberty" that President George W. Bush plans to export to the world are simply the new brand names for 21st century social Darwinism – a ruthless, extreme, acquisitive individualism.

Or better yet: Hooray for me, and screw you. ■



Illustration by Victor Velaz

NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

By Don Sloan

- 1 Only those who risk going too far will ever know how far they can really go.
- 2 Because the middle class is shrinking, the average US employee works the longest hours in the industrialized world, with increases as we speak.
- 3 The new Bush budget for 2005 has actually tossed off 160,000 veterans from their health care allowances.
- 4 Once beneficiaries on Medicare sign up for a drug plan, they are locked in for a year. But the plan can cancel a medication whenever and raise co-payments ad lib.
- 5 Little known via the media, over 6,000 US service men and women have deserted to Canada to avoid Iraq service.
- 6 Without fanfare, Congress has passed a "doomsday" provision that would allow just a handful of members to run the Congress (read: USA) in event of terrorist attack. The definition of "attack" has not been clarified.
- 7 Over half of the 1.5 million annual personal bankruptcies are caused by medical bills that cannot be met.
- 8 Word has it that Washington is exerting undue influence on Canadian mail-order outlets to limit inexpensive drug shipments to US buyers.
- 9 There is no such thing in anyone's life as an unimportant day.
- 10 The only measure of generosity is not the giving of what you have plenty but of what you have little.
- 11 Global warming could cause the polar bear population to become extinct by the end of this century because it depends on the ice floes to sustain their lives.
- 12 Give someone a fish and he eats one meal; allow him to fish on your land for the two of you and he eats at your whim; but only when he owns the pond will he eat forever.

38 Reasons to Reject Bush's Budget

By Joel Wendland

Not only does Bush's 2006 budget punish veterans, the poor, retirees, and other working people for not being rich, it is a blatant power-grab. Bush's budget, one commentator notes, is based on three propositions: poor people have too much money, the rich have too little and our problems abroad can be solved only by the military. Despite the president's claims, his budget isn't about fiscal discipline. He doesn't present real numbers about the cost of his wars in Iraq or Afghanistan, nor does he even hint at the cost of Social Security privatization he proposes. Some of this budget is simply cruel, some of it is downright stupid, but it is all about class warfare.

Bush's budget is an ideologically driven, partisan agenda designed to benefit the rich and large corporations that backed Bush in the election and the expense of working people. Bush's budget proposes spending \$2.57 trillion with revenues of \$2.18 trillion, an optimistic deficit projection of nearly \$427 billion, and spending cuts in the hundreds of billions. Bush's numbers prompted one economist to scoff that Bush's numbers are "not credible," saying they "haven't been for the last few years and they shouldn't be looked at with much seriousness now." In fact, Bush uses one set of economic projections to paint rosy pictures about the effects of tax cuts for the rich and the deficit, while using a much bleaker set of numbers to predict Social Security's imminent collapse. Which fantasy does he expect us to believe?

Proposals in the budget are also meant to eliminate constitutionally-mandated checks and balances between the president and Congress. Bush proposes to do away with rules that give oversight of the budget process to Congress. His plan uses backdoor maneuvering and strong-arm tactics to force Congress to accept his extremist agenda. These proposed rule changes would concentrate enormous power in the hands of a single individual as never before in US history. Apparently, Bush wasn't kidding when he implied in his 2000 campaign that he wouldn't mind being a dictator. We offer here 39 reasons to reject Bush's budget:

Bush's power grab:

1. Bush seeks to limit the amount of annual appropriations for "discretionary programs," including for defense, education, veterans' medical care, housing, biomedical research and international affairs programs.
2. Bush wants a "pay-as-you-go" rule: any new law that increases the cost of an "entitlement" program would have to be "paid for" by other cuts. Tax cuts for the rich are exempt, however.
3. Bush is demanding line-item veto power, allowing him to strike any parts of a bill sent to him. This would force Congress to pass only what he wants.



Dept. of Health and Human Services

▲ Bush proposes a new round of rich tax cuts, while cutting funding for programs like community health centers.

4. Bush wants the power to sign or veto Congress' annual joint budget resolution, its guide for various committees to plan their spending. This power would give Bush control over what Congress asks for.
5. Bush wants his spending proposals to be automatic, if he cannot agree with Congress on budget items. This would give him power to push his agenda without having to negotiate with other elected officials.

What Bush wants to cut:

6. Assistance for 300,000 children by 2009.
7. \$12 billion from funding to needy schools, reneging on his campaign promise.
8. Veterans' Administration funds, while doubling co-pays charged to veterans for prescription drugs and imposing a new \$250 yearly "user fee" for veterans' health care services.
9. \$45 billion from Medicaid, including funds to provide health care for 1.8 million low-income children.

10. 8.4 percent from low-income Home Energy Assistance Program, which helps people pay their heating bills.
11. Over \$400 million from Trade Adjustment Assistance and eight other federal job training programs for teens, other jobless adults and veterans.
12. Over \$16 million from worker safety and health programs: \$6.7 million from OSHA, \$4.9 million from MSHA and a \$5.1 million from NIOSH. This is less than \$8 per worker to protect us from job injuries, illnesses and death.
13. Pell Grants and work-study funding for low-income college students.
14. \$530 million from education funding.
15. \$360 million from the Clean Water State Revolving Funds.
16. \$3 million from Fish and Wildlife's endangered species programs.
17. 30 percent from the FIRE Act, which provides equipment, training and staffing to local fire departments.
18. \$587 million from farm subsidies.
19. \$50 million from Department of Energy's energy efficiency and renewable energy programs.
20. 6 percent from the EPA's budget, including \$47 million from science and technology research.
21. State and local sewage treatment funding.

Some of the 150 programs and benefits Bush would eliminate:

22. Food stamps benefits for up to 300,000 working families.
23. Eliminate over 48 programs in the Department of Education that total \$4.2 billion in cuts.
24. Community Development Block Grants that help cities build and maintain clinics, day-care facilities and housing developments.
25. Even Start literacy program that helps poor children learn to read.
26. Healthy Communities Access Program.
27. Rural health care grants.
28. The Community Food and Nutrition program.
29. Migrant and seasonal farm worker training programs.

30. Amtrak funding.

Bush's new spending and other backdoor cuts:

31. Cuts federal grants to state and local governments by nine percent, while increasing the Pentagon's budget by \$19 billion, not including for the wars in Iraq or Afghanistan.
32. Adds new tax cuts that will cost \$1.6 trillion over 10 years, more than half of which would go to households that earn more than a \$1 million yearly. About 97 percent of the benefits of the cuts go to the top 2.7 percent of the population, while virtually nothing will go to households earning less than \$100,000.
33. Adds money for nuclear weapons, while condemning Iran for developing a nuclear weapons program. Altogether the US spends \$40 billion annually on nuclear forces.
34. Adds \$38 million for failed abstinence-only "sex education" programs, bringing the yearly total to \$206 million. Cuts \$301 million from programs that train doctors at children's hospitals.
35. Bush's pension-related funding proposals restrict the amount of pension benefits that workers can get if their employers declare bankruptcy.
36. Increases subsidies for dangerous nuclear power plants.
37. Raises the low electricity rates charged by the federally owned and operated Power Marketing Administration. PMA supplies large parts of the country with inexpensive electricity generated mostly from hydroelectric dams. This proposal is seen as a first step towards privatizing federal electrification projects by giving them to corporate-owned utilities that will charge much higher prices.
38. The proposed budget for the Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service calls for allowing the meat industry to fund meat inspection. If the industry funds its own regulators, then the effectiveness of inspections would be dangerously compromised.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, increases in programs that provide benefits and services for needy families, children and elderly and disabled people account for only six percent of this year's cost of Bush's policies. Meanwhile Bush's tax cuts that have primarily benefited the wealthy account for almost half of the increase in the 2005 budget deficit. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the cost of Bush's rich tax cuts will be over three times the cost of all domestic program increases enacted over this period, yet Bush targets domestic programs for cuts rather than elimination of the tax cuts aimed at the already very rich. The total cost of Bush's tax cuts will be about \$2.1 trillion by 2015 and the deficit will spiral to \$1.4 trillion in five years. ■

Back (door) Stabbed

By Kyle Tucker

President Bush created the back-door draft in Executive Order 13223 on September 14, 2001, three days after 9/11. It implemented the stop loss program, granting the Defense Department the authority to keep military personnel on active duty "involuntarily" during times of war or national emergency. As a result, thousands of reservists have been forced in active duty beyond the 24 month maximum that policy states Reserves can be used. And about 20,000 troops – regular, Reserves, National Guard, most of them in the Middle East – have seen their retirement dates extended, thus involuntarily drafted beyond their enlistment. Thousands more troops in the Middle East could be effected by this very soon. On the back-door draft, Luke Hiken of the Military Law Task Force said, "To say to these people, 'we've gotcha, and now you're in indefinitely, and you signed up voluntarily,' they know that's outra-

Soldiers were told if they refused to re-enlist they would be deployed to Iraq and have their duty involuntarily extended in a war zone.

geous." Bob Herbert in the *New York Times* wrote, "That's not a back-door draft. It's a brutal, in-your-face draft that's unfairly limited to a small segment of the population." The veterans based Operation Truth stated the back-door draft remains "yet another indication that the original plan for war was flawed."

The backdoor draft has also been exploited for coerced re-enlistment. At Fort Carson, Colorado, soldiers nearing the end



US Air Force

▲ US Air Guard recruits sworn in. Bush uses new regulations to prevent enlistees from leaving and forcing others out of retirement.

of their commitment were told if they refused to re-enlist they would be deployed to Iraq and have their duty involuntarily extended in a war zone. One of the multiple soldiers at Fort Carson who testified to this said, "Why not just let me finish what I signed up for? It's a shame a policy like this exists. We're supposed to be a volunteer army." Also having heard from other Congress members that this type of extortion has occurred at other military bases, Colorado Representative Diana DeGette stated,

This is an outrage. Soldiers who served honorably, fought in Iraq and are near the end of their service should not be threatened with impressment.... The question remains: How widespread is this? How deep does it go into the Pentagon? How far does it go up to the Oval Office?

Another example of the exploitation of the back-door draft is best illustrated in the case of oral surgeon Dr. John Caulfield. Though he retired from the Army in 1980,

the Army contacted him last year asking him to volunteer to "backfill" for a military doctor on the East Coast, Hawaii or Europe who could then be deployed to the Middle East. Caulfield agreed to backfill, but when his orders arrived, he was sent to a field hospital in Afghanistan instead. Caulfield is 70 years old, and is one of around 200 over the age of 60 known to be serving in the US military, many likely to be victims of backfill deception.

The back-door draft also exploits the National Guard's "Try One" program, open to veterans who want to test-drive the Guard for a year before making a longer commitment, as Try One Guardsmen have been called up to active duty and seen their enlistment extended indefinitely in Iraq. David Qualls, a Try One Guardsman home on leave from Iraq, filed suit against the back-door draft, but a US District Judge ordered Qualls back to Iraq, ruling the contract Qualls signed stated his duty could be lengthened in times of war or national emergency – despite the fact (1) there is no declared war and (2) Iraq is not America's national emergency; America is Iraq's



Dept. of Defense

▲ They came from the high schools and the unemployment lines to the killing fields in Iraq for George Bush's lie.

national emergency. Representing Qualls, the Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) had to ask the court to issue an order requiring the Army not to retaliate against him. CCR Legal Director Jeffrey Fogel stated, "enlistment contracts servicemen sign are not worth the paper they are written on," and that the judge's decision "reinforces the myth that we have an all-volunteer army." CCR Vice President Jules Lobel said, "Qualls was the victim of a fraud."

Several soldiers have filed restraining orders against the Pentagon regarding the back-door draft. Oregon National Guardsman Sgt. Emiliano Santiago, with three months remaining at the end of an eight-year enlistment, saw his unit mobilized for Afghanistan and the termination date of his enlistment extended by 27 years! That should constitute slavery. A district court judge ruled against Santiago stating the military would endure "hardship" if he ruled in Santiago's favor. Capt. Jay Ferriola and David Miyasato both had their honorable discharges reinstated after they agreed to drop their lawsuits against the Army for violating their constitutional right to be free of "involuntary servitude." Some soldiers have gone openly AWOL instead, including Texas Army National Guardsman Carl Webb, a leader in the Austin, Texas peace movement. For information on one's legal options in avoiding compulsory

military service, try the GI Rights Hotline (1-800-394-9544); they handle about 3,000 calls a month.

The government's blatant disrespect for its own military has helped cause (re-) enlistment numbers to plummet, and the back-door draft will likely cost the military more soldiers than it adds. It is a typical corporate move: penny-wise but dollar-dumb. The Army has lowered recruitment quotas to make it look like people are still enlisting at the same rate. The *Guardian* reported re-enlistment collapsed by 30 percent last year, and the Army Research Institute projects only 27 percent of National Guard and Reserves intend to re-up, an all-time low. As stated by retired army colonel and Boston University Professor Andrew Bacevich, "to change the rules will almost certainly backfire and accelerate the deterioration of the reserves." Back-door draftees in Iraq have also begun Vietnam-like refusal of orders.

The Pentagon's defrauding of servicemen's contracts should be considered a form of corporate crime. It proves that if one is militaristic it does not automatically mean one is pro-military (actually, if one is militaristic, one is most likely anti-military). Since the government has institutionalized indentured servitude into the ranks, not to mention the continued crass treatment of America's disabled veterans, the military remains the industry that most needs to unionize.

The military should go on strike. ■

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APRIL 17 - 24 2004 Vol. 18, No. 44

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Voice
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Soldiers' kin tell Bush: Bring our kids home

By Tim Wheeler

WASHINGTON - Family members of troops deployed in Iraq walked to the gates of the White House, April 14, holding besuquets of carnations in memory of the 660 American soldiers and thou-

sands of Iraqis who have died in the Iraq war. They carried, as well, hundreds of letters from military families demanding the safe return of their sons and daughters.

The protest came the morning after George W. Bush's prime time news conference in which he

faced sharp questions about the war's progress. He brushed off critics who demanded to "stay the course" and "bring our boys home." Bush lies and dies in this immoral war. Solar of San Diego, father of his son, Lance O.



En

In a performance that was both poignant and at times comical, George W. Bush on a rare "prime time" press performance, Bush faced the American public and was under pressure to bring our boys home with the Bush ad-

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The Great Debate

By Phil E. Benjamin

It's no secret that today, a powerful debate rages in the labor movement. For most union members and supporters, notwithstanding the newspaper articles and discussions taking place in their union halls and work sites, there is probably more confusion than clarity. Everybody seems to be for or against the same things.

There is a great danger that the everyday health and safety of workers might become a casualty of this great debate. The purpose of this commentary is to not take sides with one group or the other. On the contrary, it is argue for the expansion of the historic mission of organized labor to protect workers from increasingly dangerous working conditions.

There is no disagreement that labor did a rather good job in mobilizing members to vote in 2004. Most of labor agrees that the Democratic Party dropped the ball. The independent role of labor is a principle that most agree on.

Labor is also of one mind in believing that increasing the number of workers under union protection is essential to increasing labor's power. Some however have argued that numbers is not the only issue. A militant and progressive vision is needed to motivate and encourage workers to join and stay in unions.

There is also general agreement that the struggle to increase wages and lessen working hours is essential. Similarly there's a consensus that negotiated health benefit programs must be protected and expanded as labor continues to fight for a national health program that covers everyone.

Not as openly highlighted is the imperative that working conditions be improved. This issue, working conditions or occupational safety and health, has become a bone of contention by a number of the unions.

Eliminate S&H Departments?

One recurring theme from a number of unions that once formed the New Union Partnership (NUP) was to eliminate safety and health departments from all unions including the national office of the AFL-CIO and to spend that money on organizing. With the dismantling of the NUP, it was hoped that this proposal would be set aside. It hasn't been.

The unfortunate aspect of this largely behind-the-scenes debate is the separation of two major issues: organizing on the one side and health and safety on the other. This division makes no sense.

International unions with safety and health departments have always been supportive and in many instances participated in



Chase Mining Historical Society

▲ Workers rely on health and safety regulations and protections to save lives.

organizing drives. And, labor organizers and union organizing drives have practically always had to respond to occupational safety and health hazards raised by angry workers and their families. Every organizing survey shows safety and health as a major reason for workers seeking union protection.

What better use of staff expertise in worker safety and health than organizing workers and keeping them organized?

Corporate Expertise and Political Action Must Be Challenged and Defeated

At stake in this debate is the danger of underestimating the willingness of corporate power to use its own medical and scientific experts to redetermine what is and what is not safe in the workplace. And, the same goes for influencing state capitals and Congress to change and pass laws allowing employers to further exploit their workers.

Since the passage of the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health (OSHA) law, labor has been able to reverse decades of corporate control over the workplace. Granted, the OSHA law has been stripped of many of its powers under Reagan and the

two Bushes (and, Clinton didn't help matters). But, abandoning safety and health in Congress and in state capitals to corporate power is a victory that the Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers and the Heritage Foundation could not have won themselves.

Let's Get Real

Eliminating safety and health departments from unions and the AFL-CIO national office will not solve the problem of low union membership and inspire more organizing. And, the diversion money spent on safety and health to organizing will not significantly increase organizing budgets. There is simply no proof that either will happen: neither will net the results being trumpeted.

Some activists worry that elimination of safety and health departments is actually a reaction by some union officials against an issue that they find hard to control. It is true that safety and health conditions are never fully resolved. That they often are used by rank-and-file activists to rally forces in insurgent election campaigns is probably true. But, here again, this is not the reason to try to sweep resolving safety and health conditions under the rug – they won't go away.

Every organizing survey shows safety and health a major reason for workers seeking union protection.

So What Is the Answer?

Combining the power of an aggressive, union medical/scientific safety and health department with an organizing and political action department will attract tens of thousands of workers into labor unions. If it means larger union departments with subdivisions for health and safety, so be it. The problem with that approach is that with any organization, budget minded officials may cut corners and provide less financial support to the "super" department that health and safety resides in. Organizational behavior is organizational behavior. It makes much more sense for health and safety leaders to sit at the table when staff leadership meets and executive boards deliberate.

Racist Edge

There is a racist edge to this issue. It is well known that employers hire "people of color" into the worst jobs in the plant. Nowadays that means immigrants from all over the world. That is the net result of employment discrimination. And, department, not plant-wide, seniority keeps people in their original departments. It is not a political stretch to postulate that closer attention to issues like employment discrimination and dangerous jobs might get lost under this downgrading of health and safety. It is an issue to keep track of.

In the meantime, as the debates continues, make sure that rank-and-file, staff and union leaders don't negotiate out health and safety for workers for other important goals. The health and safety of workers is not negotiable, anywhere and anytime. They all fit into the new labor movement. ■

In the months before last year's election, Choice USA mobilized thousands of students and young people to vote, and strengthened the networks we need to build the pro-choice movement's power from the ground up.

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Tsunamis

By Dan Brook



childrenhelp.org

▲ Much global concern was rightly raised for the victims of the South Asian tsunami, but capitalism kills the poor and the sick daily.

Tsunamis come in many forms. The tsunami that erupted in the Indian Ocean from the massive earthquake on December 26, 2004 was incredibly powerful, immensely destructive, and very deadly. I felt and continue to feel the pain of this event not just as a fellow human being but also as a person who has been to a few of the places now devastated. In fact, I spent my first wedding anniversary on the beautiful beaches of Krabi in Thailand, while living in the country teaching English.

Though it was a natural disaster, the consequences were unnatural and not entirely random. Generally, the areas with the most destruction, with the possible exception of Banda Aceh, Indonesia, near the giant earthquake's epicenter, were the areas where there had been the most economic growth, capitalist development, and therefore the most environmental degradation, e.g., tourist infrastructure and shrimp farming that, among other

Poverty is a chronic tsunami and the big wave of malnutrition, hunger, and starvation are ever present.

things, destroyed the mangrove forests and coral reefs that serve as rich ecosystems and natural barriers against tidal waves.

My eight-year old son asked if the people affected by the tsunami were/are so poor, why didn't we help them before the tsunami? A very good question indeed.

Poverty is a chronic tsunami and the big wave of malnutrition, hunger, and starvation are ever present. With about a billion people having insecure and irregular access to enough food and clean water, millions of poor people die each year, tens of thousands of poor people each day, another poor person every few seconds of every day of every year. It boggles my mind and pains my heart.

Food and water are the most basic necessities for all sentient beings, whether people, other animals, or plants. Yet, in most places of the world, food is a commodity for sale, a product in search of private profit, a privilege for those who can afford to pay the parasitic price. As basic and essential and material and requisite

as it is, food is purposely withheld from those with absolute physical need for those simply with economic demand. Sometimes food is freely given to those in desperate need; mostly it isn't.

It is wonderful that we have scientists and others researching and working on treatments and cures for various ailments and diseases. That should certainly continue. But we should also work on the treatments and cures for hunger, dysentery, gastroenteritis, and other very well-known, very easily-treated causes of mass suffering and death. Treatment involves taking proper care of suffering people; cures imply removing, reforming, or revolutionizing the structures and systems that result in such massive yet unnecessary tragedies. It may be complex, but it is not complicated. Food must be an absolute right, not a privilege.

Tsunamis come in many forms. Global warming is a slow tsunami. We are overheating the Earth, cooking the planet, slowly boiling ourselves and all other forms of life to death. We already know what happens when we overheat a car; when we overcook a meal; when we overheat ourselves; we can surmise what will happen if we continue to overheat the Earth. It isn't pretty and it will get much uglier.

Tepidly called global warming, some such as Rabbi Arthur Waskow call this type of climate change "global scorching." Apparently, reports for and from groups as disparate as the Arctic Climate Impact Assessment, Greenpeace, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Oxfam, the Pentagon, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the World Bank, the World Meteorological Organization, and a vast number of other scientists, political economic analysts, and environmentalists agree. The Pentagon Report (www.commondreams.org/headlines04/0222-01.htm), for example, states that global warming "should be elevated beyond a scientific debate to a US national security concern," higher even than terrorism, warning of riots and declaring that "future wars will be fought over the issue of survival rather than religion, ideology, or national honor."

The signs of an overheating Earth are clear and the evidence is rushing in and quickly rising: hotter weather in many places, though colder weather in some places; more frequent and violent storms; mass species extinctions; eco-spasms; melting glaciers and polar ice caps; earlier springs; rising water temperatures; rising ocean levels; disturbed ocean conveyor and jet stream systems; submerged islands; and the threat of submerged cities such as New York, Miami, New Orleans, San Francisco, Bangkok, Dhaka, Tokyo, Shanghai, Sydney, and many, many other coastal cities.

While the world has chosen to take gradual steps to reduce climate change with the Kyoto Protocol, which went into effect on February 16, 2005, the US government has chosen to bury its bipartisan head in the sand. It may be searching for oil under the sand, but it may eventually find rising and polluted water.

Thankfully, many individuals, organizations, and localities are taking action and taking the lead from the grass roots. Reducing consumption, reducing waste and emissions, recycling and using recycled goods, using renewable energies instead of fossil fuels such as oil and coal, protecting and replanting forests, reducing or eliminating meat consumption (www.brook.com/veg), and reducing or eliminating smoking (www.brook.com/smoke) are some of the things that are being done. In addition to these, we also need to pressure our governments to do much more.

Tsunamis come in many forms. I mourn for those killed by the Indian Ocean tsunami. I mourn for those killed each day by the chronic tsunami of poverty. I mourn for the current and future generations who will suffer from the slow tsunami of global warming. We need to stop the tsunamis before they reach land and affect us with disastrous results. We can do it, but we need to be alert and aware, and we need to take immediate action. ■



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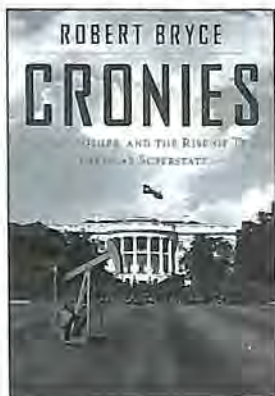
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Cronies: Oil, The Bushes, and the Rise of Texas, America's Superstate.

Robert Bryce, New York: Public Affairs, 2004.

Reviewed by Gerald Horne



The "Texas nexus," says the author of this book, is "the place where energy money, political power, lobbying and government are all combined into one big cocktail." George W. Bush and Dick Cheney are the latest representatives of the apostles of petroleum. The "United States has colonized the Persian Gulf," and "the lead colonizers are Texas companies," e.g. Cheney's Halliburton. It was no accident a Texan – Lyndon Johnson – was the prosecutor of the Vietnam War, enriching one of his sponsors: Texas-based Brown and Root.

But it is not just the Texas based oil business that has been the poster child of exploitation. The savings and loan industry scandal – during the presidency of George H.W. Bush – was "one of the largest transfers of wealth ... to the Lone Star State." Texas led the nation in failed savings and loan institutions. The wealth pouring into Texas was often deposited in these institutions, which lent it out at a premium, and led to over-building, an inability to repay, and a government bailout. This scandal cost the nation about \$300 billion.

The S&L scandal pales compared with the Enron debacle. Enron was the "biggest cash machine" for George W. Bush, when he ran for governor of Texas.

Enron was "Bush's biggest career patron, giving him a total of \$736, 800 to his gubernatorial and presidential campaigns." After Enron plunged into bankruptcy, Bush who had counted this company's boss, Kenneth Lay, as one of his closest confidantes distanced himself.

Nevertheless, the Bush White House showed that it had not forgotten about the energy industry as a whole when it launched the ill-fated invasion of Iraq. In this case, the interests of Texas oil barons dovetailed with those of a clique of "neo-conservatives," who sought to redraw the map of the Arab world, not least because of a concern about the future of Israeli hawks. According to the author, in 2003

pro-Israel hawks inside the Pentagon began talking to the Israelis about building a pipeline from the Iraqi oilfields near Kirkuk to the Israeli port of Haifa... ensuring a reliable supply of oil to its ally Israel had been one of America's main obligations in the region for nearly three decades. In 1975,

Henry Kissinger signed an agreement that requires the US to guarantee the flow of oil to Israel during times of crisis... the deal requires the United States to supply oil to Israel even if it causes domestic shortages of oil in America....

As the author sees it, this confluence of interests between Texas oilmen and pro-Israel hawks is the key to understanding what drove the war in Iraq. For the time being the idea of the pipeline taking Iraqi oil to Israel appears to be on the back burner.

That is not all. Of late, the air in Washington has been polluted with full-throated cries for a military attack on Iran, yet another oil power. A silent force behind this proposed newest quagmire is Hushang Ansary, a former member

of the cabinet of the deposed Shah and, also Iran's former ambassador to the United States. Presently he is the largest individual shareholder in Houston-based National Oilwell, Inc. and a major contributor to the various political campaigns of George W. Bush and his brother, Jeb Bush, presently the governor of Florida and a rumored aspirant for the White House in 2008.

Yet despite this deployment of state power on behalf of a gaggle of oilmen, the working class of Texas has not benefited appreciably. Texas is

first in number of citizens incarcerated....first in the number of prisoners executed....first in the percentage of adults without health insurance.... first in the percentage of children without health insurance....first in the overall number of firearms deaths and the number of children killed by guns....

Texas is a state "in which the poor are wretchedly poor and the rich are wretchedly rich and getting richer." Now Texas is in the process of "exporting its low-tax, low-service model to the rest of America." Then Governor Bush pledged during his race for the White House that he would do for the nation what he has done for Texas – and, it appears that this is one of the few campaign promises he is keeping.

Fortunately there is a growing movement in both Texas and Iraq that is pushing to insure that Bush's macabre plans for the nation and the world are crushed. And, even more fortunately, both movements are growing steadily with every passing day. One reason why is the kind of informative analyses that are being produced in the lone star state by progressive writers like Robert Bryce.■

Fortunately there is a growing movement in both Texas and Iraq that is pushing to insure that Bush's macabre plans are crushed.

Cultural Studies: From Theory to Action.

Edited by Pepi Leistyna, Malden, MA, Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Reviewed by Jennifer Lavy



"How can theorizing be used as a form of social practice that inspires people to not only read the world critically, but to also act within it?" around this central question, editor Pepi Leistyna has built *Cultural Studies: From Theory to Action*.

With this anthology, Leistyna, an associate professor in the University of Massachusetts-Boston's Applied Linguistics Graduate Studies Program, challenges the linguistic privilege university theoretical jargon has held in the field of cultural theory. While the language employed in the text remains demanding, Leistyna's efforts to ensure that *Cultural Studies* will engage as wide a reading audience as possible and his efforts to ground this anthology in "tangible life experiences and struggles for social justice around the globe" are remarkable.

By examining moments of political articulation, *Cultural Studies: From Theory to Action* seeks not only to identify those forces which are reactionary or transformative but also to tease out the relationship between those forces and other social considerations.

In his introduction – a valuable critical formulation in its own right – Leistyna works to remove those obstacles which have traditionally separated theory and practice. Among these, he counts the modern/post-modern divide, the difficulties of reconciling local and global concerns for activism, and the balancing act between political unity and cultural diversity.

The anthology offers models for thinking about culture politically as well as for thinking about politics culturally. Many essays demonstrate that the symbiotic relationship between culture and politics is not closed but, rather, can be opened to new cultural spaces when pressured by effective political mobilization. Moreover, it is through progressive cultural shifts that political movements with the possibility to be transformative materialize.

Capitalism – its material, structural, political, and cultural effects – is of serious import to the anthology: "The virtual elimination of national sovereignty in many countries makes it that much easier for invading corporate interests to smash democratic grassroots movements, environmental protections, and social policies and institutions developed to help secure the public's well being." Especially in these post-9/11 days, Leistyna argues, "as the United States government, guided by corporate imperatives, is using, ad nauseum, the words 'freedom,' 'democracy,' and 'security' to continue to exploit the planet," we must carefully consider "analyses of, and actions against, this kind of imperialism."

This book seeks to help readers develop political consciousness and an activist engagement aimed at "radical but achievable democratic change."

The anthology has been structured to emphasize developing alliances across issues and interests: "The idea is not to create a hierarchy of oppression that renders insignificant certain struggles, rather the intention is to analyze political moments, identify influential factors, and consequently develop critical responses that have both local and global dimensions."

Predicated on the assumption that it is not possible to fully reconcile the tension between liberty and equality within a liberal democracy, Leistyna's text invites dialogue that works to envision possibilities for new public spheres, policies, and institutional practices not obligated to existing power structures. Leistyna carefully sets out an agenda intended not simply to instigate forms of resistance rejecting existing power structures – not simply to engage in crisis management – but to help readers develop political consciousness and an activist engagement aimed at "radical but achievable democratic change."

Structurally, the text supports a productive plurality of perspectives. The sections, divided topically, include *The Politics of Economic Oppression: Anticolonialism Meets Globalization*;

Representational Politics: Making Up Your Own Mind by Minding the Popular Media: Identity and Ethnicity in the Face of Discrimination and Racism; Gendered Identities in the Realm of Patriarchy; and Heterosexism and Homophobia: Critical Interventions. Leistyna's success in bringing a truly international perspective is confirmed in the 38 essays – which tackle global media, organized labor, the political activism of punk rock, factors contributing to the predominant whiteness of anti-WTO battle in Seattle, the Korean Women's Movement, and the political ecology of health and poverty in Africa – by a diverse list of contributing

authors such as Henry Giroux, Edward Said, Fidel Castro, Fernanda Navarro, Rosemarie Garland Thomson, Jewelle Gomez.

In the anthology's final section, Leistyna has compiled three superb resources: an international list of activist organizations and web resources, a list of journals "that go against the grain," and an extensive list of suggested readings organized along the same divisions as the anthology. This last encompasses dictionaries, introductory texts, activist readers, cutting-edge theory, classical approaches, and more. It will be a valued reference not only to scholars of cultural theory but also, because Leistyna has flagged those texts he considers fundamentally significant, to newcomers looking for their next step.

This anthology will no doubt quickly become required reading in higher-education cultural studies courses; its organization lends itself to logical application in academic terms. At the same time, its readability and its grounding of abstract, complicated theory in contemporary essays that provide concrete examples do promise to produce Leistyna's goal of "making *Cultural Studies* practical as part of a broader discourse of democratic change." ■

The Second Bill of Rights: FDR's Unfinished Revolution and Why We Need It More Than Ever.

Cass R. Sunstein, New York: Basic Books, 2004.

Reviewed by Martha Kramer

Constitutional scholar Cass R. Sunstein's recent book on the legacy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt is an effortless read and a thoroughly argued account of the former president's call for social justice. In our era of the ultra right's continuous attacks on "big government" serving as an ideological basis for dismantling beneficial social programs, Sunstein provides a thoughtful counter based in a long tradition of US legal thought. Sunstein's point is that FDR correctly viewed the state as a tool that protects both collective and individual liberties and rights by making social benefits universal.

As the basis of this claim, Sunstein points to FDR's state of the union address delivered in January of 1944. In this speech, FDR called for expanding both legally and culturally our concept of our basic rights. FDR challenged the American people to think beyond the rights listed in the Bill of Rights and include:

- the right to a useful and remunerative job
- the right to earn a living wage
- the right of business owners to be free of unfair competition from monopoly capital
- the right to adequate health care
- the right to housing
- the right to Social Security, social insurance, unemployment insurance
- the right to a good education

In a period of war, FDR connected the heightened concern for security with economic and social justice. FDR unswervingly called for the universalization of the economic benefits of US wealth and productive capacity. FDR insisted that national security was bound up with equality and social justice. Despite the contradictory practice of imprisoning 110,000 people of Japanese descent in concentration camps and failing to challenge Jim Crow directly, FDR's vision remains a powerful force that needs to be put into consistent practice.

According to Sunstein, FDR based his views on a belief in potential benevolence of the government. FDR and his advocates believed that the right wing's claim that a "laissez-faire" or free market system is best was simply a cover for the demand that government should protect the interests of corporations and the rich.

The "laissez-faire" concept was a myth, they argued. Everyday, capitalists depend on the government to protect their property rights, to subsidize their business ventures, to provide public land, raw resources and necessary labor for their activities, and to safeguard their interests from competition domestically

and internationally. Capitalists don't think twice about this enormous role the government plays daily. FDR correctly understood that the corporate influence on the political process through campaign contributions contradicted claims about free competition.

FDR thought, Sunstein argues, that in a democratic society, government had a far better role to play. The state is also responsible for protecting the interests of working people. It should provide services – social insurance, health care, education, jobs, housing and so on – and protect the rights of workers who unfairly face the profit motives of huge corporations and powerful capitalist interests. The main vehicle for worker rights, in this view, was assuring the right to organize unions and also serving as a neutral arbiter in labor disputes. Hence, the Wagner Act and National Labor Relations Board were born.

These developments, of course, drove big capitalists crazy. As a result of a shift in the balance of class power and the movement of resources from capital investment to socially beneficial spending, the programs and institutions that FDR did establish or were created in the wake of his leadership – Social Security, social welfare, public housing, unemployment insurance, jobs programs, and since his time, the GI Bill and other higher education programs, Medicare and Medicaid – have been under attack by monopoly capital ever since.

Since monopoly capital composes only a tiny fraction of the population and can't on its own vote these programs out of existence, it developed a strategy of funding and maintaining a far-right constituency – using xenophobia, racism, sexism, fundamentalist religious beliefs as a mobilizing tool – with the main goal of dismantling the New Deal. Eventually this constituency succeeded in bringing the far right to power beginning in the 1980s and culminating in Bush's current administration.

A major drawback to Sunstein's account of FDR's policies and philosophy is the persistent failure to recognize the role of the working-class and democratic movements behind what FDR was able to accomplish. Surely FDR's presidency isn't the tale of a lone figure in history implementing democratic change. This version makes a nice

cowboy movie, but bad history. The labor movement, social movements, community organizations and the large and influential Communist Party were the main engines of the social policies and progress accomplished in that crucial period.

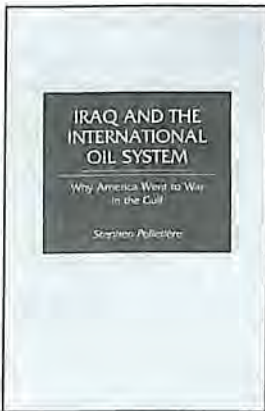
Alone, FDR was an elite, snobby, upper-class patrician with little sympathy or interest in the needs and desires of working people. But with the powerful social agitation and labor organizing that called for "jobs or wages," for unemployment insurance and health care, housing, the right to organize unions and more during the depths of the crisis of capitalism in the 1930s, FDR's administration took on a whole new character. He was given, not born with, the mantle of a people's president. ■

FDR called for universalizing the benefits of US wealth and productive capacity.

Iraq and the International Oil System: Why America Went to War in the Gulf.

Steven Pelletiere, Washington, D.C.: Maisonneuve Press, 2004.

Reviewed by Thomas Riggins



Stephen Pelletiere, a former professor at the US Army War College, was, during the Iran-Iraq War, the CIA's senior Iraq specialist. In this book he has written a history of the development of the oil industry since the nineteenth century with special emphasis on its international development most notably with regard to Iraq.

His major thesis is

that America's occupation of Iraq is a bid to recoup what the oil companies lost when they were forced to disgorge in 1973 [as a result of the OPEC Revolution – tr]; that is, control over the world oil industry and beyond that control of the global economy."

Pelletiere, marshals facts and statistics to substantiate his thesis. It is refreshing to have this conclusion proven by a former CIA big shot.

He further maintains that America had to go to war due to Iraq's "unexpected defeat of Iran" in the 8-year long war fought between those two major oil producing countries. From the US point of view the victory of Iraq would lead it to become a regional superpower, a superette-power, that would eventually "have contested the west's grip on the region."

All the talk about spreading "democracy" and "wanting to over throw a tyrant," "of dangerous weapons of mass destruction" are stories for children. Anyone familiar with the Middle East and US policy, as Pelletiere is, with his years of CIA experience, as well as his PhD from Berkeley and knowledge of Arabic, knows perfectly well that Iraq's oil, and that alone, was at the heart of US ambitions in the region.

The book is divided into six chapters. The first two describe the history and development of the international oil industry and the establishment of the great oil cartel (the Seven Sisters) created by the oil magnates.

In chapter three, Pelletiere discusses the attempts by the US government to control the cartel and how the cartel came out on top by effectively enlisting the State and Treasury Departments to do its bidding.

The fourth chapter concentrates on the conflicts between successive Iraqi governments and the oil cartel – not just the government of Saddam Hussein but his predecessors as well.

In the fifth chapter we learn about the oil cartel's biggest defeat. How OPEC (the organization set up by the

major oil producing and exporting countries) took over the production and pricing of their own oil from the power of the cartel (the so-called "OPEC Revolution" of 1973).

The last chapter (the sixth) is all about the first Gulf War. The book was basically written to explain how this war came about. One of the most interesting sections is Pelletiere's discussion of the role of the mass media in drumming up support for this war – exactly as they did for the invasion of Iraq.

The major American media got their information basically from the CIA which slanted everything to favor the aims of the U.S. government and its interpretation of events. The media then uncritically put this propaganda out to the American people as "the news." This explains why the American people don't know anything about what is really going on in the Middle East – or the rest of the world for that matter.

The lesson here is, once the U.S. government decides on an "enemy" you cannot rely on the mass media to present truthful and reliable information. All the more reason to rely upon the alternate press.

In the postscript, written for the second edition of his book, Pelletiere attempts to demonstrate, convincingly I think, that the invasion of Iraq, like the Gulf War, was brought about by "America's determination to control Persian Gulf oil and to hang on to its arms-trading relationship" with Middle Eastern countries.

The basic argument here is that after the "collapse of communism" the military-industrial complex feared that US spending on arms might go down and that some of the money it was used to getting might actually be invested in programs benefiting the American people.

The neo-conservatives are part of this complex but they are not "the real movers and shakers" of US policy – that honor goes to "all of the major defense contractors, who, with their hefty donations, subsidize the conservative think tanks, and contribute to candidates to the Congress and for the Presidency": these are the real powers behind the US war policies: they get the billions spent on the military.

The American people will never hear this from our mass media because the Bush-Blair team's use of the media, Pelletiere shows, is an example "of a technique previously pioneered (or at least made famous by) the National Socialists in Germany: this was the so-called Big Lie." We all know this fascist technique. If you just keep repeating the lie people will eventually believe it. Everyone tired of being lied to should read this book.■

The major American media got their information basically from the CIA.



Human Interlude

for Terry Garvin

She was standing against
the wall near
the Tevere Hotel holding
a plastic cup
as it began to rain.

I dug for a coin, walked
up to her
and dropped it in.
It fell to the bottom
of an orange drink.

I blushed, looked into her
ravaged eyes and skin
and hair prematurely
greying, and said
I was sorry. I'd thought

she needed some bread.
"I do," she said
and smiled. "I was
just having a little
drink."

And we stood there
laughing together
as we watched the raindrops fall
on the orange lake
above the drowning money.

Jack Hirschman

SUPERMAX

The guards hate their mothers;
They who got no love in childhood.
Only anger breeds
Like Norway rats
Inside a city of stone and steel.
The prisoner asks simply
Not to be beaten or maced.
In the isolation cell
Not a spider to kiss
Or a neighbor's hand to touch.
A naked light bulb sponges up
Healing dreams.
Six officers -
An infestation of dark green toads -
Pile on the naked man;
Excrete all over him.
Their penises still hard
When they go off shift -
Return home to beat their wives
And kick the boys for being "pussies."

William Witherup

Pemmican, 2004, www.pemmicanpress.com

Cannery

sat on the dock
all night, listening
to the water whisper
a sea shantey

tomorrow
the boats will be back
full of salmon

and workers on the line
standing next to loud machines
will sing during twelve-hour shifts

Jonathan Hayes is the author of *Echoes from the Sarcophagus* (3300 Press, 1997) and *St. Paul Hotel* (Ex Nihilo Press, 2000). He edits the literary/art magazine *Over the Transom*. "Cannery was published by Pemmican, 2004, www.pemmicanpress.com.

Bridging the Culture Gap:

Interview with
Lisa Duggan

Editor's Note: Lisa Duggan is an activist, journalist and cultural historian. She teaches at New York University and is the author of *Twilight of Equality*. She was interviewed by Elena Mora.

PA: What is the connection between cultural issues (gay rights, abortion, etc.) and economic issues and why is it important?

LD: After the election there was a lot of pressure to separate cultural issues from economic ones and to say that cultural issues led in a conservative direction. Progressives are all arguing even more strongly than ever, like Thomas Frank (author of *What's the Matter with Kansas?*) did, that economic issues are really what people need to emphasize. That's not wrong – that economic issues need to be emphasized – it's just that they are not separable. The economy is a culturally constituted thing, how people live their economic interests – that's a cultural question. There's no sense in which you can ever talk about how people relate to the notion of their economic interests without taking into account the vocabulary, concepts, institutions and the whole cultural context.

My book, the *Twilight of Equality*, has a couple of case studies, apart from gay marriage, which we can get back to. Not too



Illustration by Giancarlo Romero

long ago there was a big scandal at SUNY New Paltz about a women's studies conference there, called "Revolting Women." It had several panels on lesbian sexuality, safe sex, etc. The "right wing" came in and attended the panel, including one of the

trustees of SUNY, and they generated a high profile exposé about how your taxes are being used to talk about these completely non-academic things. It got national visibility. The defense of the conference was staged primarily on the grounds of aca-



democratic freedom — the “everybody has a right to free speech on campus” response. People tried to defend the women’s studies program for having a conference partly organized by students who had a right to raise any issues they wanted to.

But nobody saw that the trustee belongs to a group called Change New York. It’s actually a group of CEOs of major corporations in the state of New York. They didn’t care about the lesbian panels at the conference, but they’d been trying

to downsize the state education system. They had been working to lower taxes on corporations and to shrink the size of CUNY and SUNY, to centralize their administrations, de-democratize them, limit access and do away with some programs.

COVER STORY

So, they sent in one of the trustees to do this exposé. Attacking public higher education in New York is not easy to do, people will defend it. So how do you create a public opinion that's willing to go along with downsizing public education?

see it as in their interest, so they got blindsided.

The right understands that the way to succeed politically is by generating a cultural conflict that feeds into its economic interests. The classic strategy that the

on property owners and businesses, leaving out renters for instance. They then used coded racist rhetoric to create anti-tax sentiment among people who were actually going to be hurt economically by the provisions of the final anti-tax bill. The rhetoric led them to believe that they were losing money or that their money was being re-distributed down, when in fact most of them were recipients of that redistribution. The only reason it worked was because of the racial politics: cultural politics drove tax reform. Now anti-tax sentiment is one of the central mechanisms by which all kinds of heinous goals are achieved.

Almost any issue where the right has gotten a lot of mileage has depended for its success on the separation of culture and economics on the part of the left.

PA: How do you make this point when talking about abortion?

LD: The shift from a broad, progressive reproductive freedom politics to abortion rights politics was a disaster. When you talk about abortion rights that aren't separated from support for childbearing, the right to choose in the broadest sense, to afford to have children, support for child care and households, and freedom from sterilization abuse, then it's more appealing and harder to attack. It talks to more people. When you just have abortion rights pulled out of that, a lot of folks see it as like eugenics.



University of Texas

▲ Culture wars in higher education are directly related to right-wing attempts to cut funding for public universities.

They created this scandal and used it against the president of the SUNY New Paltz campus because he held out against corporatization. He was just a garden-variety liberal, but he was holding out for the liberal ideal of higher education. They had wanted to get rid of him for a long time, but they couldn't until this scandal.

The problem is that this controversy was received as if it were merely cultural, and had nothing to do with economics or corporate interests. Almost no one, except Alisa Solomon, who was writing in the Village Voice at that time, put it together and said that the culture wars, in many cases, are attacks on institutions that create public democratic culture, that re-distribute resources downward and that make it possible to expand the political public sphere. This was about money, corporate interests and democracy. It was an instance where seeing things as only cultural meant missing the point, which means they get away with it.

And the left just let this go by. People who try to defend public education did not

conservatives had for shrinking the New Deal was their creation of anti-tax sentiment. Proposition 13, the anti-tax referendum in California, started out as an effort to lower the taxes on renters and raising

Most of the people who are voting for the banning of gay marriage support gay rights in every other way.

the taxes on business and some property owners. Anti-tax sentiment didn't start out as necessarily having a conservative bent, but it was reshaped in California by savvy organizers who used race in a coded way. They said, "Where are your tax dollars going? Are they going to public housing projects and no-good welfare recipients?" They shifted the ground of the anti-tax movement toward calling for lower taxes

It sets abortion up as an issue that can be appropriated into a right-wing vision, and separated from all the other issues related to reproductive freedom. It's an economic issue too when it's understood as how people deal with their reproductive choices and make decisions about constructing a household caring for children. It's all about the way that households and peoples' intimate lives are bound up with

the economic foundations of their lives.

Abortion is part of that. Abortion is one of the things that people need to have access to in order to be able to make decisions. But when it's separated out as if it was merely a cultural issue and a single, isolatable issue, it can be appropriated by the right. The Reproductive Rights National Network really made the progressive case, but there's nobody around now who does. NARAL and other organizations will support a Republican if s/he's pro-abortion. They've completely separated it from its context. So it has become a religious issue – is it a life or not? That becomes the discussion, rather than how we can collectively support people's choices to have or not have children in a way that is supportive of them.

If it's just about abortion, we won't get far. But how about preventing unwanted pregnancies? We can all agree on that. We need to talk about the range of reproductive freedom issues. That means providing economic support for having a child as well as the social support for not having a child. That's a conversation that can go somewhere.

PA: So what does the right get from turning complex issues into single cultural issues? Is it just keeping people in a tizzy? Thomas Frank says they don't care about winning, they just want to make people confused. But it seems to me they have won on abortion rights: abortion isn't available in 80 percent of US counties.

LD: I have a problem with the idea that people are simply being duped or that they have "false consciousness." This is the wrong approach, because so-called cultural issues are real. People have conflicting interests, and the right appeals to just one, at the expense of all the others.

It is self-defeating for the progressive movement to do that. It creates a situation where these "identity" constituencies can be co-opted by neoliberalism. For example, this has happened to a large section of the gay movement. People will vote for a Republican on the single issue of their stance on gay marriage. Disaggregation is not in our interest. We are the majority; the

more we can connect, the stronger we are.

If you envision the abortion issue as just a Supreme Court decision, then the right hasn't won it—yet. If you envision it as people's access to medical care, then the right has made substantial progress. Abortion politics on the right are actually part of a strategy to bring together constituencies who don't have a lot of overlapping interests, for example, churches whose congregations aren't rich people. So they may be anti-abortion on religious grounds, but actually in the larger reproductive politics question they have more in common with us. Abortion is the only issue that they would disagree with us on. So, the right takes that issue and pushes it to the fore and brings these churches into their alliance. Like with taxes – they brought together people whose economic interests were not in common by producing a rhetoric that created an alliance.

It's alliance politics, but they have to be able to separate the issues in order to make that happen. The left collaborates in that by allowing the issue to be separated in our own framework. Single-issue equal rights politics have largely replaced a broad progressive framework. This allows single issues to be re-appropriated into another more conservative framework.

If the contest were between the right's context and our context, we win. But they take the single issues out, and then they build an alliance around this thing and this thing, and they win with people who really agree more with us on most things.

PA: You're saying there are big majorities on a range of women's rights issues, equal rights, equal pay, etc.?

LD: And gay rights, which is a harder issue. There are solid majorities on every issue. Civil unions: 60 percent. Non-discrimination in terms of economics: 75 percent. Housing non-discrimination: 85 percent. Huge majorities on almost every gay rights issue. But you can focus on marriage and actually produce the illusion of an anti-gay populace, and put into place policies that are functionally dangerous not just to gay people.

That's the other invisible thing. A lot of anti-marriage amendments are doing away

with domestic partnerships, which are not just for gay people. For example, I went to sign up for domestic partnership in New York after 9/11, because I was worried about hospital rights, etc. We got into a long line and were the only gay couple there. It was all straight people who didn't want to get married, but wanted next-of-kin protection, etc. Domestic partnership is an alternative to the one size fits all, sanctified marriage arrangement.

Given that most people don't live all their lives in those kinds of households anyway, having multiple recognitions serves everybody. So you have reciprocal beneficiary in Hawaii and Vermont, which allows people who are not romantic couples, for example, sisters, to qualify for some of the benefits of marriage or domestic partnership without asserting a sexual relationship. A lot of elderly people live that way, elderly women especially, because they live so much longer. If they could have certain benefits of marriage, it would be very helpful to them. So, multiplying these benefits and rights is good for everybody. That all of these other alternatives are being wiped out at the same time as gay marriage is not visible publicly.

Even in states where gay marriage has succeeded like Massachusetts, they're doing away with domestic partnership, because there's gay marriage. A lot of the corporations and universities say we don't need this anymore. If domestic partnership is gone, you get a one-size-fits-all institution with all of the ideological baggage and the economic assumptions. So, the whole debate has narrowed when actually the trend had been to diversify. The exclusion of gay people made this pressure to come up with new statuses: civil unions, domestic partnerships and reciprocal beneficiaries. All of these new things had the function of de-sanctifying marriage, making all of these other things possible. Now it's shrinking, and it's not only or even primarily affecting gay people. And it's not even anti-gay sentiment that's driving it – but it looks that way.

PA: How can we talk about the gay marriage issue as being economic?

LD: Marriage is in decline statistically, because most people live in much more



Catholic Charities

▲ Cuts to public services make families more responsible for many social services they are less and less able to afford.

complicated ways. Households don't usually line up with the ideal of lifetime marriage. Private households are being more burdened with responsibilities, because the social safety net is being cut back. With the attack on Social Security, it will mean even more. Child care, care for the elderly, care for the disabled, care for the sick are more the responsibility of private households. At the same time that private households are being stripped of resources, people have fewer benefits and lower wages. This institution is being piled up with responsibilities and stripped of resources and is being idealized. What a

fantastic template for a right-wing agenda. They say, "Look at this important institution where people take care of each other." And as the household is being stripped of resources, people who are in this situation are more terrified for their future than ever. Their jobs are less secure; they have fewer benefits. They don't know what they're going to do when they retire. They don't know how they're going to take care of their aging parents. They're panicking, and the institution that is supposed to provide all of this is exclusively more and more the private household. So they panic and say, "If we're not

going to have health care and we're not going to have Social Security, we'd better have a stable marriage, because without that, we're at sea."

So then somebody comes out and says, "Gay marriage will undermine the stability of marriage." And people react by saying, "Oh no, we need marriage, because we need a stable household. It's starting to be all we got." So there's panic. But people also know that marriage is not stable and that marital households are not stable. People are responding to the part of the message about stabilizing and preserving marriage, at a moment when they are more and more dependent on it.

People who aren't married are becoming more and more at risk economically. Marriage promotion programs in welfare reform are mainly aimed at women (who are the ones opting out of marriage), promoting the idea that you should get married because that's how your economic support should happen. Meanwhile, the right is doing away with other sources of social support. In an indirect way, corralling women back into marriage as a source of economic support serves the interests of privatizers who want households to take on all these responsibilities, so that corporations and the state can shed them.

The strategy all around is to create insecurity, and then play on it. The gay marriage issue isn't about what it seems to be about, I don't think.

PA: So it isn't driven by anti-gay feelings?

LD: Most of the people who are voting for the banning of gay marriage support gay rights in every other way. Someone will go in and vote in favor of an amendment to ban gay marriage, but they'll be in favor of civil union – which is the same thing. They're opposed to economic discrimination and housing discrimination. The numbers of support for basic gay rights, are big majorities everywhere, but not when you make it about gay marriage.

The gay movement is as colossally misguided on that as the reproductive rights movement was to isolate abortion. Instead of making it about democracy and diversity, many are making it about one institution and using rhetoric that plays right into the right wing rhetoric of respon-

sibility. That's what they used in welfare reform; it was called the "personal responsibility" act. So the rhetoric that the gay movement is using actually plays into the strategies that are used to corral poor women into marriage.

PA: The privatization issue is key.

LD: Every single person is affected by the fact that they are losing social services of one kind or another and they have fewer resources. Most people, except the very rich, have to meet all these needs with no help. Everybody is panicking about that, and people are thinking this is my private problem.

The issue is to get people to see that making private households carry this burden is impossible, insane, redistributive in the wrong direction – all of those things. I don't think it's that hard to explain. There just need to be the situations where this can be addressed. It's not complicated. We have to say this is how marriage politics has to do with social security – they're all related. The right cannot succeed if people make these connections.

a choice of forms of household or partnership where sexuality and romance are not the issue.

PA: What's your take on the red state-blue state paradigm used to describe the country?

LD: I think it's profoundly distorting, because what we have are all kinds of shades of purple. For example, the difference between whether a state is red or blue can be a very small percentage. What's scary is that if you look at the map, it's the more or less the Civil War map. It tells you right away that racial politics played a crucial role in producing the electoral outcome. It also has to do with patterns of corporate development and low-wage industries.

In every state the vote is much more complicated. What people voted for and why is complex and becomes distorted by that red-blue. It also feeds into a mistaken condescension to the red states, creating the strangest alliances. For example, we're at this moment where it appears that leftists can be aligned with cool corporate progressives, but not with working people? Then it makes it look like working people are

bound together, and also in building alliances around single issues. The left has been really dumb on this. Listening to the debate now makes my ears bleed! Some people are saying we need to move to the right on the cultural issues, and others say we need to just ditch the cultural issues, and just talk about economics. That's the wrong way to go.

PA: What's your experience with working-class audiences on these issues?

LD: The most positive thing is the project of trying to bring "cultural" issues in, not just for the purpose of bringing them in, but because it's crucial to the effectiveness of the labor movement. When the labor movement has a very narrow focus, just wages and benefits, for example, they just become part of the management structure. Of course it's better that they're there than not there, but when unions look in a larger way at the way people live and what their needs are, they're able to actually be an oppositional force.

People's interest in their unions grows when this is the case. If you talk about sex, in the union hall, about safe sex education, about AIDS, whatever, lots of people will come out. If you turn the union hall into a place where people can come to talk about the conditions of their lives and what can be done to improve them, you get a more energized union. This means dealing with workers as working people with whole lives, rather than just employees of a certain corporation. Even if everyone doesn't agree, you do get energy and interest, and you also get opportunities to talk about things in a way that makes these connections.

Labor can be an oppositional force, a progressive force. After World War II, unions, because of anti-communism, were pushed strongly towards the business union model. They rejected earlier models of the more whole life approach where union halls were cultural centers. People want to be whole, functional, cultural, spiritual, intellectual beings who determine the course of their lives. So bringing all these so-called cultural issues is part of that. I think the union movement is the only institution we have, that reaches everyday life. The unions can't be separate from the cultural issues. ■

People want to be whole, functional, cultural, spiritual, intellectual beings who determine the course of their lives.

PA: How should we describe what we are for?

LD: What I would hope we would be for is the multiplication of the types of household and partnership recognitions that provide things that people need: next of kin recognition, joint tax filing ability and to allow a range of civil recognitions that provide benefits that you can choose. Marriage should be a religious institution that the state has nothing to do with. So people can get married if they want to. What people should be able to do in terms of the state is to have

aligned with the interests of free market capital, which is crazy. And those alliances are then considered cultural reality.

I'm from a red state, so I feel like, "Come on, you have no idea what you're talking about." New York is incredibly diverse, so you have to look at what the interests are that might drive one red county might be so totally different than another. In every case, the way economics and culture intersect produces transient alliances that get these results. Conservatives have just been really smart about seeing culture and economics as

The Fine Art and Science of Progressive Persuasion

By Owen Williamson

Once, long ago, the ruling classes feared "communist propaganda" at home as much as revolution abroad, and their fairy tales credited leftists and their ideas with near-supernatural persuasive powers. That day is long gone. Why? The quality and creativity of leftist writing is as good as it has ever been, the internet provides more people access to Left materials than ever before, yet a national Marxist weekly (or a monthly labor or senior-citizens' newsletter) that speaks for or represents the collective interests of millions has far less public influence than a "major" daily newspaper or network that speaks only for its owners and executives (a group far tinier than the most microscopic leftist political formation!) who have the power of the system and the money of major advertisers behind them.

It is in no way defeatist to suggest that in recent decades left persuasion has fallen upon lean times. With the tremendous upsurge of popular participation surrounding the 2004 elections that situation may be turning around, but what is the best way to stay on the offensive? The challenge is to create a leftist outreach that once again makes the ruling class bite their nails, and, much more importantly, that gives working people cause to cheer and to be eager to join the struggle for a better world.

Theoreticians from Marx and Engels on down have emphasized that material reality, not fancy talk, persuades masses of people to join the struggle. When war, racism, discrimination, deception and greed are the dominant values, life itself creates discontent, in spite of the best efforts of those in power to "hold the lid on" by covert or overt repression on the one hand, or by bribery with easier debt and ever flashier and trashier "stuff" on the other. Yet, theorists have always suggested that even in the worst of cases, discontent cannot progress beyond basic economic demands (better salaries, benefits and job security) without an explicitly socialist analysis. Providing such an analysis is our job. How well leftists share this analysis, and much more importantly, how effectively we convince others of its correctness and central relevance to their lives, becomes ever more critical. How successful we are at persuading our fellow working people that "another world is possible" may well be decisive in whether America slides further toward more war, authoritarianism and inequality, or begins a significant upturn.

Spreading the message

Virtually every progressive worth the name works to "spread the word" every day, usually in action more than in words. But is it good enough to spontaneously "do the best we can" at the retail level when people's lives are at stake wholesale? How do we best reach out systematically beyond our immediate community and workplace? How can progressives reach beyond the microscopic number of "ready-made leftists" in this country to effectively advocate for democracy? What is the best way to motivate other working people to grab those ideas as their own and run with them? "Talk is cheap," and the best form of persuasion is always action. But in this process, progressives have always used press, pamphlets, media and internet along with personal or collective action in the task of recruitment, agitation and persuasion. How can this process be optimized to gain the initiative with friends and foes alike?

The task before us is urgent; yet today the English language no longer even includes a really good word to describe what must be done. "Propaganda," which once meant simply "advertising" or "publicity" (and in Spanish still does), has been so thoroughly demonized by generations of anti-communist propagandists that in English it has become synonymous with "lie," "brainwashing," or even worse. "Advertising," "public relations" or "publicity" all carry a strong whiff of corporate flimflam, while old-time words like "agitprop" have simply evaporated from the language. It is ironic that in an environment more saturated with corporate persuasion than ever before in history a really contemporary term to describe the process of promoting leftist ideas, gaining popular support, agitating and recruiting activists has not yet been invented. Yet, this is our task – not only to simply present masses of working people with the idea of socialism, but to reach them in a way that is attractive, persuasive, and audible above the 150-decibel din of corporate static that fills our social environment wall-to-wall, 24/7.

Corporate power has already created a "science" of public persuasion, with focus-groups, surveys, pilot-studies, eyeball-cams and brain-scans to pick up people's innermost reactions to new products, advertising, political candidates or fake "hot-button" issues like flag-burning or "partial birth abortion." With their virtually unlimited financial resources, unquestioned control of the commercial media and the best creative and scien-

tific minds money can buy, their persuasive domination lacks only one thing to be total: truth. And the truth, the material reality that no amount of hype can hide, gives us the confidence to challenge the corporate information monopoly.

However, this does not mean that we can ever afford to putter around with amateurish or static

people into buying poisonous medications, gas-guzzling dinosaurs or mendacious candidates, much less "brainwashing" them into becoming Marxists, but rather offering a healthy antidote to the social toxins of fear, deception and inertia.

Experts suggest that there are three major ways to verbally persuade and motivate others:

1. facts and reason,
2. emotion, and
3. reputation or character.

Any effective persuasion involves all three, in a broad array of specific forms and techniques developed and proven over history. These are the tools we find at hand, along with existing 21st century media and technology. We cannot afford to ignore or rule any resource off limits in a struggle that is literally life-and-death.

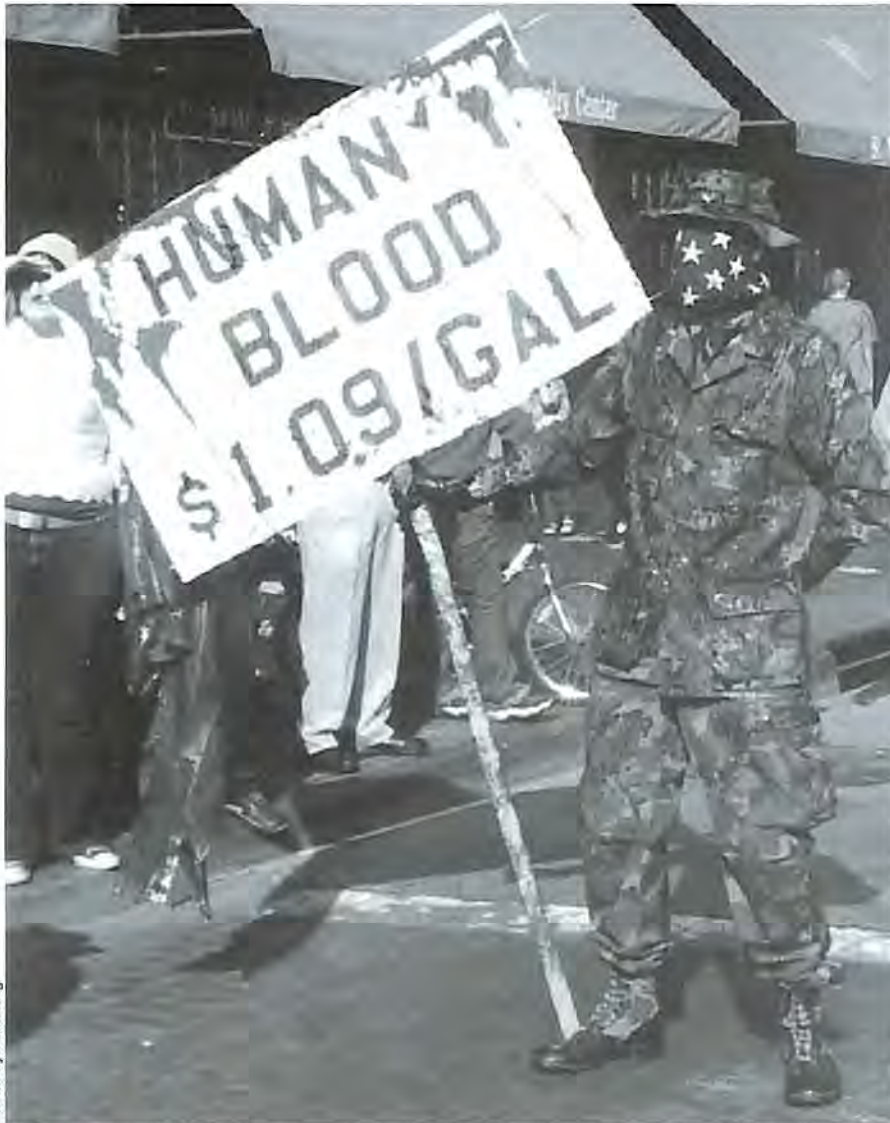
Just the facts?

Facts, figures and reasoning are essential for persuasion, to show the true extent of corporate domination and corruption, the titanic amounts of resources being funneled into the coffers of the great rich in our country (stolen out of the pockets of the working people who produce all wealth), and the monumental waste of money and lives caused by American wars of conquest and occupation. Sometimes numbers speak more clearly than words, and it is hard for even the most hostile critic to argue with cold, hard facts. Most importantly, the facts are on our side.

Emotion

Yet, the facts are usually not enough. Lenin did not build the Bolshevik movement by coolly and dispassionately placing the facts before the Russian people and waiting for their intellectual assent. His cry to action was both a faithful echo and an impassioned amplification of the outcry of the people against the existing system. The cry of the mother who lost her child in Iraq, the shouts of those repudiating racism, the sighs of the jobless worker and her children, the firm footsteps of the striker on the picket line; all these must ring louder than words in the vocabulary of today's leftist.

But even as we cry out against injustice, we must also harness the power of positive emotion. America in 2005 is in many ways a land of generalized unhappiness, dread, pessimism and fear for the future. We need to do more than simply denounce the pain of capitalism – we must draw a clear contrast between the bleakness of the present system on the one hand, and the joy of unity in struggle on the other. We must once again speak out loud about the radiant future that is ours (or our children's, or



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▲ Since most people don't have access to the Madison Avenue propaganda machines, they put ideas and arguments on the streets.

methods of information and persuasion. Working people win by plugging knowledge, skills, techniques, discipline and collective work style learned from the workplace into the task of freeing humanity from monopoly domination – "using any tool that comes to hand" – a principle which applies as much to communication and persuasion as to any other area of the struggle. The left may not have eye-movement sensors or brain-wave monitors, but can still use long-tested, proven methods of persuasion and recruitment, not with the aim of "snookering"

our children's children's) to win if we only try. To be truly persuasive the left must speak as often from joy as from anger, from hope as often as from pain, from strength as often as from protest. We must dispel once and for all the inhuman, cartoonish image of leftists as furious rebels surviving on bad coffee and worse cigarettes, making love as fiercely as politics; laughing only at an exploiter gone bankrupt and smiling only at a strike won, but postponing all true happiness until the final triumph of "The Revolution." In everything we do, we need to "keep our eyes on the prize," which is ultimately human happiness right here on earth, both now and in the future.

Because of the incredible pressures of predatory capitalism and its ongoing destruction of social and family support structures, 21st century America is a solitary, unhappy place for far too many working people, fertile ground for the growth of an evangelical right which offers warm fellowship, a "home," and another worldly hope while it preys on lonely people's solitude, guilt, fear and pain. What persuasive appeal do we offer these victims of emotional starvation?

When war, racism, discrimination, deception and greed are the dominant values, life itself creates discontent.

Optimism and confidence, solidarity and warm comradeship are the rightful heritage of the left, and need to be proudly featured every day in our attitudes, actions, public communications and organizing just as much as anger or outrage. Author Stephen Hart, in his 2001 book *Cultural Dilemmas of Progressive Politics*, reminds us that rage and protest, while vital, are not enough by themselves. "Occupying the discursive high ground, calling upon all the life-affirming resources in American culture, is essential to having any chance of success." It is a serious error to abandon the legions of lost and lonely working men and women to the religious right or to "anonymous lives of quiet desperation," rather than actively inviting them "home" to the high ground of sisterhood and brotherhood in struggle.

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Key ideas

- The challenge is to create a leftist outreach that makes the ruling class nervous and, gives working people cause to join the struggle for a better world.
- How can the left succeed in its task of reaching millions of people with its message of peace and socialism above the din of corporate static that dominates the media?
- The left can use proven methods of persuasion and recruitment, not with the aim of "snookering" people into becoming Marxists, but rather offering a healthy antidote to the social toxins of fear, deception and inertia.
- Persuasive arguments are founded on facts and evidence, emotional appeals and the good reputation and principled character of those who make them.
- Our purpose is never simply to make radical gestures or feel better by throwing a collective finger at the enemy and showing that we are more radical than the radicals.
- Our purpose is to transform the material world by fulfilling the dreams of the great majority of Americans for peace, safety, prosperity, justice, democracy and equality.



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▲The volume and saturation of the big corporate media makes independent, left voices difficult to hear.

the "family" of comradeship, the supremely life-affirming promise of the better future that can be ours right here in this world if we all unite in action.

Character

It was the material relationship of forces, not Lenin's words, which led to the Bolsheviks' victory, but part of what created that favorable balance was the overwhelmingly motivating character and reputation of the Soviet founder and his movement, and the character of the Russian working classes themselves. Our persuasive efforts must be a no less faithful amplification of the voices of the over-

worked machine-operator, the victim of racial profiling, the GI on the firing line overseas or the citizen who sees democracy going down the tubes day by day. Our words should not only bear the stamp of the working class – they should carry the stamp, the postmark and the return address of the proud working people of this country, the only ones who make America great.

However, we must not have any illusions that a generalized feeling of discontent or unhappiness leaves the field ripe for leftist ideas. As only one example of the system's defenses against such persuasion, today's ruling class has finely developed the immensely persuasive and quintessentially capitalist rhetoric of "stuff," and holds the threat of "losing it all" (mortgaged house, leased SUV, extortionate credit cards) over working people's heads if they dare to step out of line or even slow down. George W. Bush's version of an "ownership society" really is a potent defense against social progress, though he conveniently neglects to clarify who is the owner and who is the owned.

So is "You have nothing to lose but your chains" an obsolete slogan? Not quite. In 2005, the bumper sticker slogan "I owe, I owe, so off to work I go" is no joke; it expresses something profoundly political. Our task is always to persuade working people "where they are at" in a way that addresses immediate concerns and very real fears of change and insecurity, and gives material hope for the future. One suggestion might be to develop a trumpet-clear left line on the issue of debt burden (personal as well as social), credit cards and financial exploitation (or rather, to wrest this issue from the teeth of debt-consolidation sharks and away from the guilt-orgies of the religious right). Debt-relief crooks are already ripping-off the left's native language of "liberation" when promising freedom from debt-slavery. Yet, do we have anything special to offer the millions of working people who are brutally exploited from three sides, as workers, as consumers, and as debtors? This issue begs for a new and clear leftist call to action, preferably some time before the tottering structure of consumer debt that has sustained capitalism in recent decades comes crashing down around our ears.

Against the madness

Politically, there is a technique of "placing oneself in the middle" which was practiced by Lenin when he charted the only viable course for Russia between the vicious beast of czarism on the right and the nihilist crazies on the ultra-left. American left factions who proudly declare themselves "radical, more radical, most radical" attract small, extremely dedicated cadres of cultural and philosophical "rebels" and adventurers, but thoroughly alienate mass working-class support, as do public figures

who imagine they "fight for freedom" by openly insulting widely-held cultural norms. Today, the murderous greed and corruption of the American ruling class is so monstrous that it is indeed tempting to proclaim one's "radical" rejection of their crimes in the strongest possible terms. But, our purpose is never to make gestures, never just to feel better by throwing an individual or collective finger at the enemy – it is to transform the material world by fulfilling the dreams of the great majority of Americans for peace, safety, prosperity, justice, democracy and equality – middle-of-the-road values if ever there were any.

By default, we have allowed rightist "culture warriors" to shape people's view of the left. We need to constantly reaffirm and reemphasize which side we are on. We, not the right wing, are the ones who stand for front porch swings, hand-me-downs, piñatas and paper plates, for old dogs, homemade cracklin' bread and pickup trucks, for loggers and truckers and folks who come home from night shift in steel-toed boots and dirty blue jeans. It's the other side, not us, who do the stretch limos and BMW sedans and million dollar birthday parties in the Caymans; they're the ones who throw a fit if their nanny is late or their lobster thermidor isn't served just right. We're the ones who struggle against the coarsening of our culture and for women's equality; it's the other side that's making the millions off of potty jokes, porn, slasher flicks, silicone silhouettes

It was the material relationship of forces, not Lenin's words, which led to the Bolsheviks' victory.

and sex as commodity-fetish, not us. We're the ones who are into love, reason and humanity, kids and flowers, hard work and honest values, while today's real radicals, the crazies who would destroy the world in a heartbeat if it served their mad purposes, lurk in Washington, D.C. and Wall Street even more surely than in caves, spider-holes or far-off mountain fastness.

Delivering the message

Any message, no matter how attractive or persuasive, must first of all reach its audience before it can persuade in any way. The left's resolutely materialist, realist orientation scorns any kind of "motivational lies," and thus cannot hide the reality that at present even the best quality and highest-circulation leftist publications and most visited websites probably have less readership than the most miserable suburban shopping-supplement (a stern reality check for any left writer who dreams of saving the world single-handedly!). And, even the most persuasive words count for nada if they do not take a form, style and character that attracts that audience's attention. To imagine one can address the working class in the 21st century as undifferentiated "masses" may be as serious an error as trying to recruit in English only. Our common material interests bring us together, but our diversity is our own best character, and must be fully reflected in left persuasive efforts. A variety of new and creative means and resources for delivering the message are crucial for future success. And this demands the effort and creativity of everyone on the left.

"They" may have almost all the money, but we (potentially) have almost all the people. Our mission is to make that potentiality a reality. Today is not too soon for every activist and anyone on the left to grab a pen, a paintbrush or a computer printer, load it with red ink, aim and fire. Let the ruling classes tremble at the prospect of a left persuasive revolution! ■

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Pro-Choice, Pro-Life: We Are Both

By Elena Mora

Editor's Note: The following article was submitted as a pre-convention paper in preparation for the CPUSA convention in June. For more information go to www.cpusa.org.

Last fall, I went to Ohio to participate in the battleground state mobilization to defeat George Bush. Going door-to-door, I talked with more than a few men and women who said the deciding issue for them was abortion, and that they supported Bush because he was against it.

And while I don't believe that Bush won the election because of the abortion issue, clearly it is an important question that influenced the thinking of millions, and will have an impact on political life and the prospects for victory in the period ahead.

In the wake of the elections, some have said we should backburner these "cultural issues," while others have called for greater emphasis on "economic" issues. I would agree with those who argue that what we must do is to frame the debates more broadly. This is especially true with the difficult and contentious issue of abortion.

Before going further, we should be clear: we do not cede an inch on the principle that women must have this basic right. The attempt to turn back the clock on abortion rights is a matter of life and death, and demands greater commitment and attention by all sections of the progressive movement.

What we must do is argue for including abortion rights in a broader continuum, in which all women have access to the resources necessary for healthy living; where there are living-wage, union jobs and job training so that women can support themselves (and their children if they have them); where women can be free from fear, safe from violence and legally protected from discrimination.

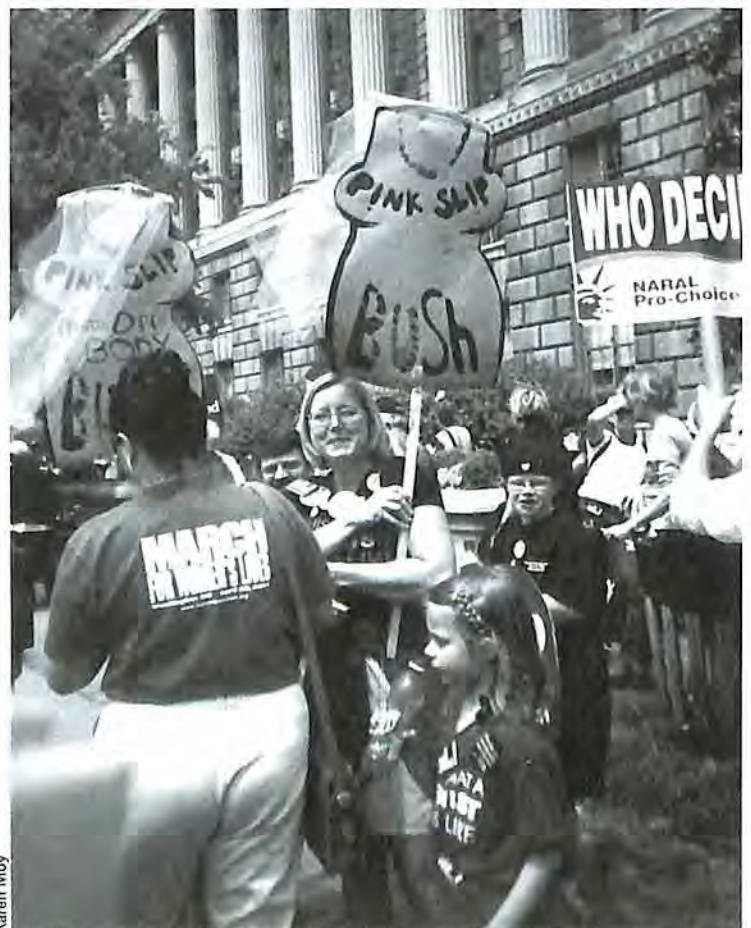
Reducing reproductive rights — "choice" — to abortion rights alone leaves out the other "choices" that are also increasingly unavailable to millions of women, choices having to do with the ability to safely bear, care for, and educate children. And in so doing, we buy into the right's strategy of separating off the issue of abortion rights.

Women's reproductive freedom is constrained from many directions. Here are some of the facts:

- Although *Roe v. Wade* remains the law of the land, it is threatened by imminent rightward changes in the Supreme Court;
- Despite *Roe v. Wade*, abortion services are unavailable in 87 percent of counties overall and 97 percent of non-metropolitan counties in the United States;
- Since 1977, federal health dollars are prohibited from being used for abortion services;
- Most medical schools do not include abortion training in their core curriculum, and only five percent of abortions happen in hospitals where most medical students and residents receive their training;



Bobby Wood



Karen Moy

▲ March for Women's Lives, April 25, 2004, in Washington, D.C.

- Many state and local laws limit access to abortion, via age and notification restrictions and waiting periods, and by allowing doctors and (federally funded) hospitals to "opt out" for religious reasons.

Equally relevant facts include the following:

- The Bush budget cuts more than 150 programs, a large percentage of which serve children and their families, including Head Start and other pre-k programs, health care and after-school programs;
- In New York City the waiting list for day care vouchers exceeds eight years; the average cost of private day care for a four-year-old in New York State is \$9,000 a year;
- At around 18 percent, infant mortality Washington, DC is more than twice the national average and ranks with other countries at about 85th in the world;
- Women are the majority of minimum wage workers; women still make 75 cents to the dollar earned by men.
- Single women (19 percent) and female-headed households (26 percent) make up the great majority of our nation's poor.

We must add that for every example cited above, the problems are hugely magnified for African American and other racially and nationally oppressed women. Racist attitudes, practices and structures impinge on women's reproductive rights in a myriad ways and must be part of all struggles for equality of rights and resources.

Despite – or because of – all of this, we can and must engage in the debate on reproductive rights with confidence that we can win. Why? Because November 2 notwithstanding, we've come a long way, baby. Big majorities in our country are firmly in the camp of women's equality. Big majorities, including among Republicans, list equal pay and equal rights for women, women's

The truth about the right-wing agenda is that children are being robbed from birth through young adulthood.



Karen Moy



Libero Della Piano

▲ March for Women's Lives, April 25, 2004, in Washington, D.C.

health services, and the struggle against discrimination, sexual harassment and domestic violence as major concerns.

Thus the reframing of the abortion rights issue in a broader way makes possible bringing together the sizable majority necessary to defeat the right-wing agenda. It also allows us to focus on the gross contradictions in the right's claim to be "pro-life." In George Bush and Karl Rove's world, children and families are idealized and "promoted" – with words, of course, not deeds. The reality of life for children and their families is far from ideal. In fact, the truth about the right-wing agenda is that children are being robbed, from birth through young adulthood. You have a right to be born – but no right to a doctor's care. You have a right to be born – but no right to day care or early childhood education. You have a right to be born – but no right to quality education, after school programs, job training.

All of this occurs in the context of the erasing of the lines separating church and state, the dismantling of the public sector, a general attack on democratic rights and the immoral right-wing agenda of war, privatization, corporate greed and power, and racism.

The same right wing that argues fervently for the right to be born has sent more than 1,500 young American men and women to their deaths in the war against Iraq, along with the tens of thousands of dead and maimed Iraqi children and youth.

In the debate on abortion, both "sides" have employed a single word to make their point: "life" and "choice." We have to stretch our understanding of these concepts and bind them together into a position that can win the broad support necessary to challenge the ultra right, and that can win hearts and minds as well as elections. ■



Imperial INTRIGUES

By Gerald Horne

With every passing day it becomes increasingly apparent that the crisis of US imperialism is deepening. There were those who assumed blithely that the re-election of George W. Bush would give US imperialism a longer lease on life but it seems the opposite is occurring. Indeed, Washington seems to be falling victim to the malady that ultimately undermined its immediate predecessor, the once heralded British Empire: "imperial overstretch," to use the term coined by Yale historian, Paul Kennedy, i.e. the resources of US imperialism are stretched to the limit in a vain attempt to keep the lid on the planet's majority which is yearning for deep-seated change.

Writing in London's *Guardian* on January 27, 2005, former Clinton aide Sidney Blumenthal cited the sobering words of Lt. General James Helmly, chief of the US Army Reserve, who lamented that as a result of the quagmire in Iraq, his units were "in grave danger of ... rapidly degenerating into a broken force." More than 40 percent of US forces in Iraq are composed of these "volunteer" units who did not contemplate such onerous duties when they enlisted; thus, "re-enlistment is collapsing." The US has a "military in extremis," says Congresswoman Ellen Tauscher.

US fatalities in this war have increased fivefold since May 1, 2003 when President Bush declared an end to major combat operations. The number of wounded has increased seven fold. At the close of 2003 the US authorities estimated that the number of insurgents were a mere 5,000. Yet recently General Mohammed Abdullah Shahwani of Iraqi intelligence has estimated that this number has mushroomed to over 200,000, confirming the dire words of CIA Director Porter Goss, who told Congress recently, that Iraq has become a magnet for "jihadists" from all over the world. Though it was argued in the *LA Times* on November 30, 2004 that Washington has intentionally inflated the size of Al Qaeda and the forces beholden to Osama bin Laden for its own malevolent reasons, it

can hardly be denied that the illegal invasion of Iraq has been a shot in the arm for so-called "Islamic fundamentalism."

Scrambling for answers, US imperialism has veered toward science fiction of late. How else to explain the February 16, 2005 report in the *New York Times* that the Pentagon is investing heavily in developing military robots to fight their future wars of aggression. "They don't get hungry," said Gordon Johnson of the Joint Forces Command at the Pentagon. "They're not afraid. They don't forget their orders. They don't care if the guy next to them has just been shot. Will they do a better job than humans? Yes," he added emphatically. Perhaps. Yet this macabre scheme ultimately only reveals the desperation of US imperialism in crisis.

One of the major objections – among many – to the use of military robots is how their deployment could lead to even more human rights violations since these machines would have no conscience and, thus, would be more capable of engaging in mass slaughter. In fact, it is bracing to contemplate "troops" who would exceed the present US forces in marauding rampages. Recently Mehemet Elkatmis, head of the human rights commission of the Turkish parliament accused US imperialism of committing "genocide" in Iraq. "Never in human history," he wailed "have such genocide and cruelty been witnessed." Such rhetoric from a member of the ruling elite of the erstwhile US ally, Turkey – a nation whose entry into the European Union has been backed by Washington on the premise that Ankara would then serve US interests – suggests what a blunder the invasion of Iraq has become for US imperialism. These comments also serve to underscore the rising opposition to Washington's imperialist braggadocio in oil-rich Iraq.

The brazen attempt to loot the oil-wealth of this predominantly Arab nation reflects US imperialism's deepening crisis. Central bankers globally are seeking desperately to diversify out of the dollar, thus ending what has amounted to easy loans to the US Treasury. Indeed, the advent of the euro – the common currency of the

European Union – and its challenge to US imperialism is only the most visible aspect of this tendency. On November 29, 2004 *Financial Times* reported that

the share of the US dollar in world foreign currency holdings fell to 63.8 percent at the end of 2003 from 66.9 percent at the end of 2001. Meanwhile, the euro's share has risen from 16.7 percent to 19.7 percent during that period.

This same journal reported on January 24, 2005 that the "members of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries OPEC have cut the proportion of deposits held in dollars from 75 percent to 61.5 percent in the past three years." At the annual Davos forum in Switzerland in January 2005, where the global elite come to meet and greet, jaws dropped when Chinese leader, Fan Gang announced that his nation had lost faith in the US dollar and its "first priority" was to diversify into other currencies, e.g. the euro. The dollar, he said, was "no longer... seen as a stable currency and is devaluating all the time."

If this trend continues it could mean a sharp plunge in the dollar's value, creating a huge hole in the accounts of central banks holding dollars – e.g. Japan and the US in particular – with results resembling a depression. The price of imports – cars, consumer electronics, etc. – would rise sharply. The real estate market – which has become a piggybank for numerous families in the US – would suffer grievously. Even if this does not occur, peril still rests in the fact that – as the December 4, 2004 *New York Times* announced – "central banks" in "Asia are holding America's purse strings," suggesting that this nation's fate is dependent upon the kindness of strangers.

The overall decline of the dollar – a precipitous drop that, intriguingly, coincides with the November election, as if the international community were holding their own referendum on the GOP – sheds light on Bush's February 2005 visit to Brussels, headquarters of the EU. The German leadership had announced even before his February arrival that they thought that

NATO – where Washington dominates – had outlived its usefulness and that US-EU channels were the preferred avenue for the trans-Atlantic relationship. France agreed. This epochal announcement was greeted with stunned disbelief in Washington.

Likewise, Wall Street was startled when German-based software giant, SAP, announced that it was going after the market share of US-based Oracle in the profitable market of business applications. This blunt challenge incensed Oracle founder, Larry Ellison, the nation's third richest man behind Bill Gates and Warren Buffett. This battle bids fair to be even more hostile than that now existing between the EU's Airbus and the US's Boeing, a conflict that has been marked by ever more contentious acrimony.

The gulf between Washington and Brussels cannot be bridged easily, as in many ways it involves jousting for imperialist hegemony. Brussels argues that it is on the side of the angels, however, pointing to Washington's reluctance to adhere to the strictures of the International Criminal Court or its hostility toward the Kyoto treaty on global warming. All 25 members of the EU have signed this accord that US imperialism rejects – though the website of Washington's own Environmental Protection Administration declares:

rising global temperatures are expected to raise sea level and change precipitation and other local climate conditions. Changing regional climate could alter forests, crop yields and water supplies.... Deserts may expand into existing rangelands and features of some of our National Parks may be permanently altered.

Yet, like a latter day Nero, Bush fiddles while sea levels rise. This has upset Brussels tremendously.

One would think that with relations with Brussels deteriorating that Washington would seek to "balance" this trend with improved relations with Moscow. Yet the Cold War reflex – apparently – has yet to be extinguished, as Washington continues irritating Moscow, most recently seeking to use a Houston court to block Russia's attempt to seize the assets of the privately owned oil giant Yukos – which had garnered its ill-gotten booty by looting the state sector as the former Soviet Union

was collapsing. Perhaps in response Russia announced recently that foreign-owned companies might not bid for the nation's most lucrative natural resources this year – an edict widely seen as aimed at ExxonMobil and ChevronTexaco.

Yet with all this tension raging between Brussels-Moscow, on the one hand, and Washington, on the other, perhaps the most potentially contentious conflict exists between US imperialism and the Communist Party of China. This is somewhat anomalous since this Asian giant has become a major creditor of the US, buying US Treasury bills in profusion, not to mention a major site for US foreign investment and a leading supplier of the ever ubiquitous Wal-Mart.

Yet despite these ramified ties, both Pentagon chief, Donald Rumsfeld and CIA honcho, Porter Goss, have issued stern

It is easy to understand why Bush denounces China, as it is standing frontally in the path of US imperialism.

warnings of late about the supposed growth of Beijing's military and the alleged threat it poses to China's rebel province of Taiwan – and, ultimately the US itself. Bush's trip to Brussels was marred by the EU's intention to lift the arms embargo against China – proclaimed in 1989 – a move that Washington sees as a direct threat to the already besieged US military. Likewise, the same month that Bush made his ill-fated trip to Brussels, Chinese leader Tang Jiaxuan met with Russian President Vladimir Putin, where the former termed Moscow his nation's "main partner for strategic cooperation." "This is the first time ever," he proclaimed portentously, "that China is establishing a mechanism of national security consultations with another

country." Already China is the number one customer of Russia's still sizeable arms industry and is expected to make purchases in the billions during this year alone. Significantly, the February 3, 2005 edition of the China Daily noted that

the Russian-Chinese military exercises set for later this year...were seen by many observers as Russia's response to the cooling of relations with the United States and other western nations, most recently over the presidential election in the Ukraine.

And just as a court in Houston sought to stop Moscow "re-nationalizing" Yukos, China agreed to provide up to \$6 billion in loans to the Russian state bank Vnesheconombank (VEB) to help state oil firm Rosneft finance its purchase of Yukos assets.

Such episodes underscore why future historians may mark 2005 as the year when US imperialism finally awakened to what it had wrought when it made the fateful decision to forge an alliance with China against the former Soviet Union, thus opening the door to capital pouring into this Asian nation and a remarkable transformation of its economy, not to mention altering profoundly the global correlation of forces.

Thus, just as the recovery of the Japanese economy after the ravages of the Pacific War led to numerous scare stories in the press about how this nation presented a mortal danger to the continued hegemony of US imperialism, today Beijing has assumed the role formerly played by Tokyo, the chief difference being that the role of the Chinese Communist Party in this process has added a peculiar poignancy since US imperialism's proudest accomplishment is the so-called "death of communism." Few have noticed that a Communist Party continues to rule the planet's largest nation – with the most sustained growth rates.

Thus, on December 6, 2004 *Business Week* carried a typical story of fright:

The China Price. They are the three scariest words in US industry. In general, it means 30 percent to 50 percent less than what you can possibly make something for in the US.... Makers of apparel, footwear, electric appliances and plastic prod-

ucts, which have been shutting US factories for decades, know well the futility of trying to match the China price. It has been a big factor in the loss of 2.7 million manufacturing jobs since 2000

said this journal, which typically, has sought to overlook the blunders of US management in this process.

The *Economist* may have exceeded the hysteria of its trans-Atlantic competitor, informing its upscale readers on January 8, 2005 that the Communist Party

decided some years ago that 30-50 of its best state firms should be built into 'national champions' or 'globally competitive' multinationals by 2010... the most impressive are the resources groups. Three big oil companies, PetroChina, Sinopec and CNOOC, are aggressively buying overseas and building pipelines across central Asia to satisfy China's fuel demands.... Shanghai-based Baosteel, China's top steel producer, already sits on the Fortune 500 list of the largest global companies by sales...like Baosteel, Chalco, China's leading aluminum group, and Yanzhou Coal, the largest listed coal producer, are relatively new companies with similar ambitions. China Minmetals, the biggest base metals company, has gone further with its recent approach to buy Noranda, a Canadian copper and nickel miner, for a reported \$7 billion.

A startled *New York Times* reported on December 6, 2004 that by 2034,

bank assets in China would surpass those in the United States...from steel to oil to cars to credit cards, China is poised to become the world's biggest producer and market for many goods and services.

China, it was said nervously, "has come to terrify many foreign business executives."

China's enormous footprint is remaking the global economy and is stretching its tentacles to these shores. Appliance manufacturer, Haier, has set up shop in South Carolina and is a major employer of labor in the conservative Palmetto State. China International Marine Containers, a large shipping company based in Shenzhen,

Key ideas

- US imperialism is stretched to the limit in the vain attempt to keep the lid on the planet's majority, which is yearning for deep-seated change.
- The Iraq war exposes US imperialism's weaknesses: militarily and economically.
- The scramble for oil and other resources and the collapsing dollar are the major economic weaknesses of the US.
- Corporations in other countries are competing with US corporate dominance: especially Russia, Germany and China.
- China's economic growth and its ability to financially shore up the US debt place it in a unique position in relation to US imperialism.
- China's strengths have led some neo-conservatives to complain about the inability of US corporations to compete adequately with China's state-owned enterprises.
- China is working to develop trade relationships with numerous countries, especially in Latin America, formerly regarded as the US's "backyard."
- China's economic strength and its growing relationships with many other countries could lead to displacing the US as the single "superpower" and block key pieces of the US imperialist agenda.



▲ The growing strength of China's state-subsidized and state-owned sectors have neo-conservatives worried that private corporations can't compete.

recently bought a bankrupt manufacturer of trailers in Monon, Indiana. It is the largest private employer in the town.

Bold Beijing has moved into the so-called backyard of US imperialism, investing heavily in nickel production in socialist Cuba and supplying consumer goods, e.g. televisions. In February 2005 Chinese Vice President Zeng Qinghong and several of his fellow leaders, made an impressive swing through the Caribbean doling out cash for investment projects. Thus, in Trinidad – birthplace of the late great US communist leader, Claudia Jones – which contains the region's largest and most prosperous economy, Beijing approved a

\$25 million soft loan allowing business-people there to buy Chinese products and machinery. The interest rate? A mere two percent. This budding Asian superpower also agreed to buy additional amounts of asphalt from Trinidad. In Guyana China is building a multi-million dollar conference center adjacent to the secretariat of the Caribbean Community.

Most controversial from the viewpoint of US imperialism are the deals China inked with Venezuela. The 125 strong Chinese delegation signed 19 agreements covering agriculture, technology – and oil. The deals involved the construction of a railroad in eastern Venezuela and the pur-

INTERNATIONAL

chase of radar to tighten security on its border with Colombia – where US “advisors” have decamped in growing numbers.

President Hugo Chávez, whose nation to this point has been a major supplier of petroleum to the US, has declared that he seeks to change this state of affairs. Already there are 15,000 medics from socialist Cuba in his country and in turn Caracas sends 53,000 barrels of oil a day to Havana: this has upset US imperialism to no end. It

South American nations and Brazil in response has invested in more than 300 projects in China.

Oil is the “glue” that is binding Cuba-China-Venezuela and Brazil and it is also what concerns a White House dominated by oil interests. Colombia is being primed as Washington’s base of subversion against this gathering quartet and it is there that Occidental Petroleum of California has invested heavily. When insurgents there

recent years, a development that hampers the organizing of Occidental workers.

Yet it is Iran – not Colombia – that is viewed in Washington as an “outpost of tyranny.” Simultaneously, a “major new alliance is emerging between Iran and China,” according to the *Washington Post* of November 17, 2004. The two allies

signed a preliminary accord worth \$70 billion to \$100 billion by which China will purchase Iranian oil and gas and help develop Iran’s Yadavaran oil field, near the Iraqi border. Earlier this year China agreed to buy \$20 billion in liquefied natural gas from Iran over a quarter-century...in turn China has become a major exporter of manufactured goods to Iran, including computer systems, household appliances and cars.

This trade was “weakening the impact on Iranian policy of various US economic embargoes.” Washington is upset that the European Union has been reluctant to endorse a militant US posture toward Teheran but, instead, has favored negotiation of differences concerning Iranian development of nuclear energy. At the same time, the US itself refuses to adhere to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty which calls on those that develop nuclear weapons to draw down their stocks over time. Instead, US imperialism is developing “bunker busting” weapons that require ever more sophisticated nuclear technology. US imperialism views nuclear weapons like the British Empire once viewed the “gatling gun,” i.e. as the ultimate weapon that will intimidate other nations, hence its outrage at Iran, the EU – and China.

In Zimbabwe, another “outpost of tyranny” according to Washington, the impact of similar embargoes has likewise been blunted by a burgeoning relationship with China, with the bulk of its main export crop – tobacco – now headed for China.

As one traverses the globe, it is easy to understand why Bush administration officials have seen fit to denounce China despite the extensive economic ties between the two nations, for Beijing is standing frontally in the path of US imperialism.

Even Israel, which heretofore has been seen as one of the most reliable allies of US imperialism, is beginning to hedge its



US Army

▲ While the US desperately works to impose its will in Iraq, overstretch has limited its domination elsewhere.

is suspected that Caracas may be interested in re-directing its enormous oil reserves to China – and, reportedly, urgent consultations are being held in order to address the logistical barriers to this eventuality.

The bold Chávez has also moved to deepen relations with neighboring Brazil, particularly in the strategic area of oil – also a key priority for the former Texas oilman now occupying the White House. In turn China has become Brazil’s third largest export market as 70 China-based firms have been established in this largest of

assaulted one of their oil fields in that nation’s Arauca province, Washington promptly dispatched US “advisors” there to train Colombian soldiers in counterinsurgency in a maneuver that may cost US taxpayers \$100 million at a time when funds for housing and veterans’ benefits are on the chopping block. In short, our tax dollars are being used to subsidize a police guard for Occidental, a multi-billion dollar corporation that could easily afford the costs involved. Similarly, trade-union leaders in Colombia have been murdered in the hundreds in

bets. This may shed light on why the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) – one of the most influential lobbies in Washington – is presently being investigated by a federal grand jury and why Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has begun to make noises about removing settlements. Thus, Washington is demanding that Israel confiscate parts of Harpy drones they have sold China, which were sold in the 1990s. These unmanned aircraft that can stay in the air for seven hours, fly to a distance of 550 kilometers and crash into radar and US imperialism sees anti-aircraft batteries as a major weapon for China against the US or its allies. This dispute follows closely on the heels of a controversy surrounding the Phalcon, a tactical surveillance system that monitors airborne and surface targets and gathers signal intelligence. It was to be installed in a Russian-made IL-76 aircraft. Israel was equipping the plane for China when it buckled under enormous pressure from Washington and cancelled the deal. Treating Israel as if it were the 51st state, Pentagon hard-liner Douglas Feith demanded that Israel fire Defense Ministry Director General Amos Yaron. Interestingly, Feith resigned shortly thereafter.

This dilemma faced by Israel is not unique. Long-time US ally Australia is facing a similar problem, as it seeks to maintain a close relationship with Beijing and Washington, a feat which is becoming increasingly difficult. Even neighboring Canada is facing this problem, as China is seeking to invest in the oil-rich tar sands of Alberta. "James Monroe" must be "spinning in his grave," said the conservative *Weekly Standard* of February 7, 2005, referring to the "Monroe Doctrine" and its demand that other powers stay out of this hemisphere. This right-wing journal of opinion, controlled by the media baron, Rupert Murdoch, seemed to become apoplectic in reporting that a state-owned firm in China was plotting a "\$13 billion takeover of Unocal," a US-based giant.

It was noted that:

Russia and China are using state-owned companies that are not bound to profit-maximize to achieve their long-term goal of weaving a web of relationships that will stand them in good stead in any diplomatic confrontation with the United States.

Seething with rage it wondered,

whether America can continue to rely on its private sector to provide us with comparable clout is no longer certain. After all, when companies that have to maximize profits compete with companies that seek to maximize influence and power, the latter will engage in projects that the former simply cannot.

China's enormous footprint is remaking the global economy and is stretching its tentacles to these shores.

This idea of state-owned firms challenging US based corporations at a time when the "death of communism" was thought to have buried such developments for all time, has stoked outrage.

The interests of international oil companies – such as BP, ExxonMobil and the other 'majors' – are increasingly being challenged by the growing power of oil-producing governments such as Libya when striking deals reported the *Financial Times* on December 9, 2004.

Ambitious national oil companies from countries such as Russia, India, Malaysia Brazil and Algeria are also expanding international operations...government-owned companies control 72 percent of the world's oil reserves, 55 percent of its gas reserves and half of its production of oil and gas...there is a belief that aggressive national oil companies from China, India and elsewhere will be able to outspend their international rivals when paying for licenses, and accept lower returns on capital, because their investments are driven more by their governments' desire to secure energy supply than by a need to keep shareholders happy.

Hence, if the Cold War is redefined as a battle between private capital and the public sector, it is easy to see that US declaration of triumph in this conflict is as wildly premature as Bush's May 2003 declaration that major combat in Iraq had come to a close.

This prospect of competing with the public sector – frightening for US imperialism – no doubt caused Dave O'Reilly, chair and chief executive of ChevronTexaco, to proclaim, "we're seeing the beginning of a bidding war for Middle Eastern oil between east and west," he said in a veiled reference to the challenge provided to US imperialism by state-owned Chinese oil companies and their Indian counterparts.

This sentiment has caused the acolytes of imperialism to fret that China is invading oil-rich Africa, heretofore a happy hunting ground for imperialism. A China-Africa Business Council reckons that two-way trade was some \$18 billion between the two in 2003, a nine-fold increase on 1999. China only recently provided a \$2 billion soft loan to oil-rich Angola – a major supplier of oil to the US – in exchange for 10,000 barrels of oil per day. Reportedly, similar deals are being brokered with oil-rich Gabon and Nigeria. Chinese firms have spent some \$100 million of late investing in Zambia's copper mines, which have been abandoned by European and North American firms. In Sierra Leone, a nation – like neighboring Liberia – that has been virtually abandoned by its erstwhile patrons in London and Washington, China has become a major force in the economy in fisheries, construction and agriculture.

Thus, US imperialism increasingly views China as a major barrier to its hegemony. But it is not just China, even the EU is cooling toward the US, not least because of reluctance to continue the anti-Beijing arms embargo. Erstwhile allies like Israel and Australia are seeking to develop relations with Beijing. Slowly but surely US imperialism is awakening to the grim reality that sharp contradictions with the Chinese Communist Party continue to persist. It is evident that the US is out of step with a world that refuses to move as far to the right as Washington. As a result, the world is declaring a loud "no" to US imperialism, in tones that are destined to become ever louder and more insistent.■

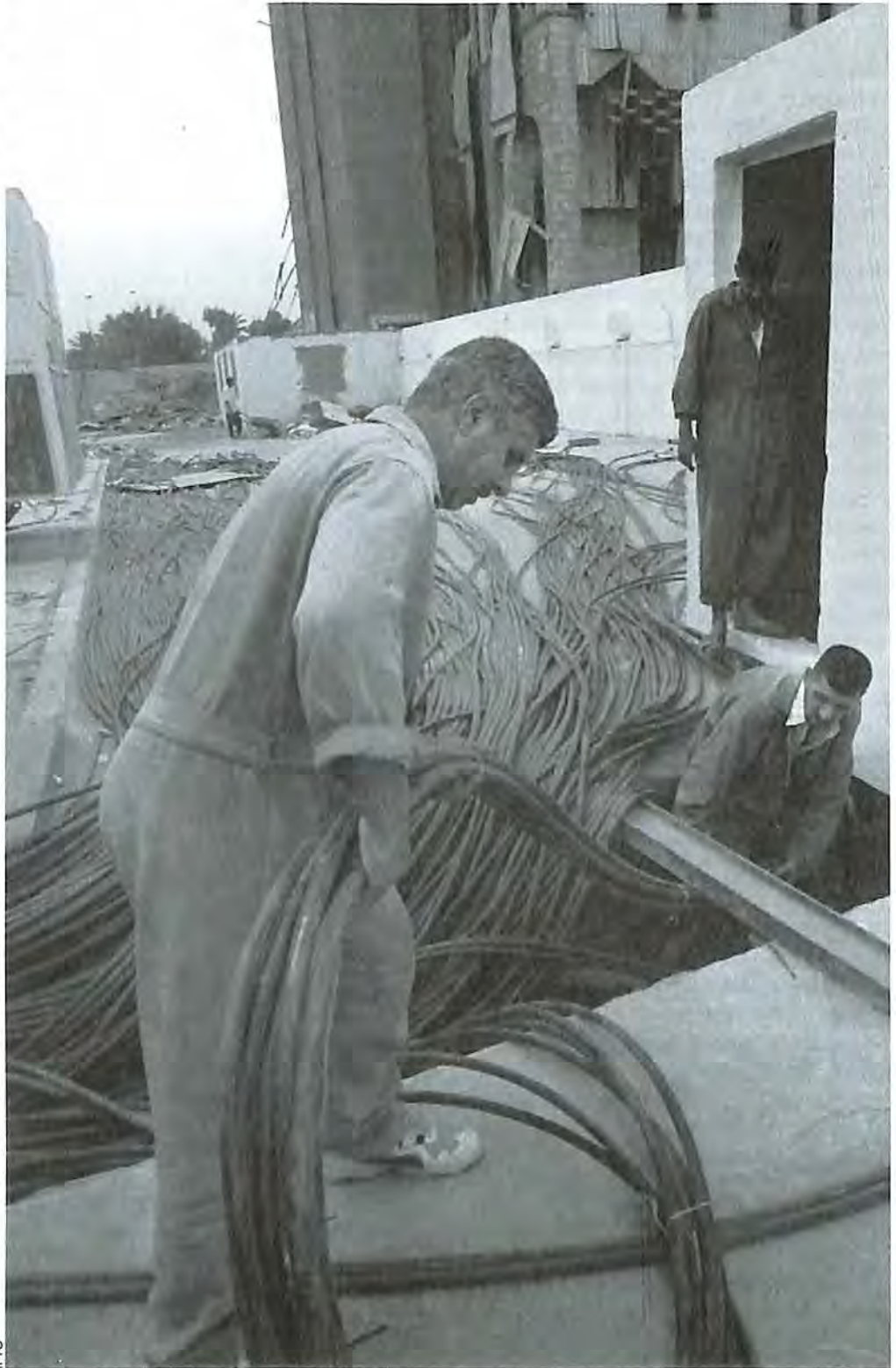
Resistance Is Not Futile:

Labor and the struggle for Iraq

By Joel Wendland

Now that elections in Iraq have produced a representative interim government responsible for constructing new legal and political structures, there is no longer any excuse to postpone US troop withdrawal. While no one should have illusions about a perfect election or the transfer of full national sovereignty as yet, most Iraqis, burdened by 20 years of war, political repression, sanctions and occupation see these past weeks as the first steps in a political process to restore peace, democracy and sovereignty. If the election has produced progress, it is not attributable to the Bush administration or US imperialism. In fact, Bush's goals and tactics have been antithetical to the interests of the people of Iraq. The illegal and deadly war, occupation and the disastrous failure to adequately aid in the reconstruction of Iraq have blocked progress. If democracy arises from the ashes of the Saddam dictatorship and the Bush occupation, it will be because of the concerted efforts and determined actions of the Iraqi people.

The broadest possible movement is still necessary to oppose the illegal war and occupation in Iraq. Some on the left, however, insist on the politically irrelevant tactic of fostering images of a militant Iraqi insurgency fighting the US military and its Iraqi collaborators as the reason for ending the occupation. Fantasies of armed bandits delivering military defeats to the US are unconvincing and won't mobilize tens of millions of people needed to bring the occupation to an end sooner rather than later. Additionally, painting in broad strokes the victims of car bombings, assassinations, beheadings, and other attacks as collaborators who deserve death is futile and barbaric. Finally, representing the Iraqi people as completely dominated by US imperialism without the ability to resist – unless enacted as violent and destructive – is a paternalistic, and



▲ Iraqi workers are fighting to organize unions and to keep Iraqi control and ownership of their country's services and utilities.

not helpful, portrayal of the Iraqi people. This distorted view of the situation confuses the true struggle for peace and sovereignty. While the Bush administration miscalculated Iraq's determination to shed the occupation, critics of the political process underestimated the Iraqi people's insistence on a peaceful and political struggle.

Most of the "insurgency" is motivated less by opposition to the occupation or US imperialism than by finding more advantageous positions within the political framework established by the occupation. It arose primarily as a political rivalry among factions working desperately to provoke ethnic conflict in the period before the election. Rather than an anti-imperialist or a democratic struggle, they sought to foment conflict between Sunnis and Shi'ites. Much of the insurgency originated in Sunni majority cities and is aimed at the security apparatus, other Sunnis who wanted to participate in the political process, civilians operating the infrastructure, and at Shia civilians.

Sunnis comprise about one-fifth of Iraq's population and some expressed concern over an election that would create a Shi'ite-dominated National Assembly. Extremist elements – mainly Saddam-era Ba'athists and religious fundamentalists – turned this concern into violent attacks on the political process couching their fight in anti-occupation language. While the Shi'ite majority favored the election, many insurgents hoped that ethnic divisions and violence would dominate the political process and prevent the formation of a Shi'ite majority interim government. The basis for an ethnic conflict of this nature has little popular backing in Iraq.

Despite low rates of participation in the election in Sunni majority areas, leaders of 13 Sunni parties have agreed to participate in the political process. A large turnout by Kurdish Iraqis indicates that a much broader multiethnic national movement can be forged in the new political system than election observers on the right wanted and election critics on the left deemed possible. About 86 percent of Iraqi voters rejected the US-backed Ayad Allawi-aligned candidates, showing their determination to establish a legitimate and sovereign national government.

A more fundamental aspect of the situation that has received scant attention, from either the corporate or alternative media, has been the involvement of the organized section of Iraq's working class in the political struggle for national sovereignty and reconstruction. The leading elements of this section of Iraqi society are the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP), the coalition that formed the People's Unity List for the election, and the Iraqi Federation of Trade Unions (IFTU). The largest and most rooted is the 200,000 member IFTU. The labor movement's size after only two years of existence suggests that Iraq's



▲ Baghdad residents who supported Ayatollah al-Sistani's demand for elections last summer forced the Bush administration to accept a political process that may thwart US domination.

working class intends to set the course for a democratic, independent and economically stable Iraq.

Background on Iraq's Labor Movement

The Ba'ath Party came to power in 1968 and immediately launched a campaign to control the trade-union movement. Leaders and activists who refused to side with the Ba'athists were removed from power. At that time, the General Federation of Trade Unions (GFTU) held elections that "took place without secret ballot and in an atmosphere of intimidation and reprisal," says a brief history of Iraq's trade-union movement written by the underground Workers Democratic Trade Union Movement (WDTUM) in November 2003. (The WDTUM was formed in 1980 as an opposition underground union movement. It received widespread international support, and worked tirelessly to expose the corrupt GFTU. WDTUM activists would eventually surface after the collapse of the Hussein government to organize IFTU.)

When Saddam Hussein took power in 1979, he "ordered a series of purges within the ruling party to obliterate all potential rivals or critics." He installed his henchman in GFTU leadership positions, including former military commander Ahmed Muhsin Al-Dulaimy whose career was made in the fascist "National Guards" and other paramilitary

groups with personal loyalty to Hussein rather than as a union leader loyal to workers.

Unions became Saddam's tool for repressing workers and for domestic "security." Suspected subversives were subjected to spying, harassment, detention, interrogation, torture and killings. According to the Center for Human Rights, an arm of the Iraqi

The involvement of Iraq's working class in the struggle for national sovereignty and reconstruction has received scant attention from either the corporate or the alternative media.

Communist Party, Saddam's repressive measures would result in the deaths of tens of thousands and even more imprisoned and tortured at places like the now infamous Abu Ghraib prison. The WDTUM unearthed evidence in mid-2003 that shows "the horrors of physical liquidation, mass and summary executions of thousands of political prisoners and detainees, with lists including the names of scores of workers."

During the 1980s, GFTU leaders ordered support for the war against Iran and turned itself into an apparatus for quashing anti-war sentiment. It confiscated wages from workers and turned the money over to the government for military expenses. The union even forced many workers to enter military service. Some 60 percent of workers were conscripted for service at some point during the war with Iran. One million Iraqis are believed to have been killed.

An Independent Union is Organized

After two decades underground, WDTUM activists organized the Iraqi Federation of Workers Trade Unions (IFTU) in late 2003. Through its strong ties to the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU), International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the influential Kurdish trade unions, the World Federation of Trade Unions, and through the association of its members with the Iraqi Communist Party, Arab nationalist and Kurdish democratic parties on the Iraq Governing Council (IGC), IFTU received the IGC's recognition, though, significantly, not the Coalition Provisional Authority (the occupation's political arm up to June 2004).

Among the first international delegations to meet with Iraq's new labor movement was Britain's Trade Union Congress (TUC). A TUC report published in April 2004 described a fact-finding mission to Iraq by representatives of the TUC, ICFTU, ICATU, the AFL-CIO and other labor organizations in February of 2004. This delegation, as the report says, "came across lively, muscular (even argumentative) trade union grassroots," even though many of the workplaces they visited had only been organized for a few months.

Since the Hussein government's collapse, according to the report, "workers have thrown out managers ... and union leaders strongly aligned with the Ba'ath Party, and created more active trade union organizations, often breathing new life into formal legal provisions such as on industrial democracy." According to union spokesperson Abdullah Muhsin, dock workers in Umm Qasr, upon hearing of a visit from a delegation from the ICFTU in late 2003, gathered at the Port Administration offices to demand a union. Unions of professionals demonstrated similar militancy.

The TUC delegation's report highlighted the successes of the

new union movement. "Unions are dealing with problems of vandalism (...), unemployment (at over 50 percent...) and inadequate management – failure to pay wages on time and so on." In general, union members saw their wages growing faster than inflation.

The numerous organizing committees that sprang up in different parts of the country highlighted IFTU's immediate organizing capabilities. According to Abdullah Muhsin, the Basra federation of the IFTU organized "10 trade unions in the Basra region including those for Mechanics, Construction, Transport, Oil, Railways, Dockers and Public Services, for workers in restaurants, hotels, hairdressers, public health and municipalities, water and cleaners" representing tens of thousands of regional workers.

Of great concern in that early period after the collapse of the Ba'athist regime was the continued role of Saddam loyalists in the competing parallel union, the GFTU. After an initial period of competition, Iraqi workers removed Saddam's bureaucrats and demanded democratic unions.

Some GFTU structures were dismantled and others merged with IFTU. There are important indications that the GFTU's pro-Hussein leadership was removed or left.

The workers and union leaders whom the TUC delegation met in April 2004 indicated the need for "practical solidarity." Training, practical resources, material support, and information technology were high on their list. Workers also expressed a desire to restore a positive image of unions "tarnished by compulsory membership and slavish adherence to the [Hussein] government," says the TUC report. The delegation also spoke with union activists who were optimistic about greater leadership and participation by women workers in the movement.

While the Transitional Administrative Law, imposed by the CPA and adopted by the IGC, confirmed "the right to join trade unions and the right to strike and demonstrate, along with

more general rights to freedom of assembly, of expression and protection from discrimination on the basis of race, gender, religion etc.," union leaders are concerned that legal structures created by the CPA will influence the National Assembly's views on labor law.

The CPA refused to consult with Iraqi labor leaders about the labor law it imposed. It adopted provisions from the Hussein labor code of 1987 and appointed administrators to local and regional departments that have expressed interest in imposing and enforcing the 1987 code. This 1987 law prohibited unionization in the public sector and pillaged workers' pensions to enrich the regime and finance its wars. Because most of Iraq's economy is nationalized (in the public sector), the CPA's use of this labor code signaled its intention to prevent any further organizing efforts in Iraq's most important economic sectors and to block



▲ The US couldn't find WMD in Iraq, but US companies did find other stuff they wanted.

organized opposition from workers in those public industries slated for privatization. The international labor movement has rejected the 1987 code and calls for protections of the rights of Iraqi workers to organize.

The occupying authority's antagonism to the IFTU and its organizing objectives surfaced during a US military raid on the union's headquarters in Baghdad in December 2003, which according to one news account

involv[ed] 10 armored vehicles and dozens of soldiers. The U.S. troops ransacked and destroyed the IFTU's possessions, removing documents including minutes of union meetings. They tore down union banners and posters that condemned acts of terror. They smashed windows on the front of the building and smeared black paint over the name of the IFTU.

IFTU spokesperson, Abdullah Muhsin called the raid "an attack on Iraq's working people."

Meanwhile, the IFTU continues to work closely with the International Labor Organization and other labor-related organizations to develop a code that adopts the major pro-labor provisions encoded in Iraq's Labor Law No. 151 of 1970. This law, which guaranteed such rights as the eight-hour day, pensions, and the right of public sector workers to organize, appeals more to the interests of rank and file workers.

**The national assembly should not be timid about exercising real power and "should seize back control over security matters, as well as the economic policy and other sovereign powers, from the occupiers."
(Iraqi Communist Party)**

Present Prospects for the Future

The completion of the national elections intensifies demands for the withdrawal of foreign troops and a sincere effort to contribute to an Iraqi-controlled reconstruction effort. Despite attacks from insurgents and harassment from coalition authorities, the organized sections of the Iraqi working class continue to press on for worker rights, a secure and stable country, and end to the occupation and war.

Forces that want to maintain the status quo of instability and violence, according to both IFTU and ICP spokespersons, were behind this wave of attacks on Iraqi National Guard troops, police, and civilians in the months prior to the national election and since. Many civilians and workers killed are not affiliated with either the US or British occupying armies or corporations.

Among this rash of terrorist violence, numerous Iraqi trade unionists have been killed. Railway workers have suffered numerous terrorist attacks in the outskirts of Baghdad and on the railways into the southern part of the country. Over the last few months many have been killed and injured.

In a statement published in early January, the IFTU denounced

further attacks on its members on the railway line between Basra and an-Nasiriyah and on union premises in Baghdad. These criminal acts designed to intimidate workers and trade unionists follow a well-established pattern of targeted campaigns of assassination and terror which have been waged by those loyal to the former fascist-type, dictatorial regime of Saddam Hussein against individual IFTU activists and ordinary workers in recent months.

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The screenshot shows the website for Political Affairs Magazine. At the top, it says "Political Affairs Magazine" and lists navigation options like "Forward", "Stop", "Refresh", "Home", "Favorites", "History", "Search", "Autofill", "Larger", "Smaller", "Print", "Mail", and "Preferences". The main header features the "pa" logo and the text "politicalaffairs.net Marxist Thought Online". Below this, there's a "Participate" section with links for "Contact Us", "Feedback Form", "About Us", and "Web Links". A "Current Issue" section highlights "September/October" with a "Table of Contents (print edition)" and lists articles such as "GOP Up a Tree?", "Swinging Votes in Missouri", "Book Review - Socialism Betrayed", "From the Ashes of the Old: An Interview with David Labman", and "What Difference Does it Make?". A "Browse" section offers options to "Archive by Date", "by Author", and "Site map". A "Hot deals" section advertises a "1-year individual subscription" for \$12.50. On the right, there are sections for "September 2004 - Table of Contents (print edition)", "The World Still Says NO In this issue...", "Dump Bush movement says 'we can do it' (online edition)", and "Chavez Wins Re-election". A small image shows John Kerry and John Edwards at a Democratic National Convention.

Terrorists targeted numerous trade-union leaders including Nuzad Ismaiel, president of the IFTU in the Kirkuk region, who was nearly killed twice. Just days after the attacks on the railways, long-time union leader, founder member and IFTU international secretary, Hadi Saleh, was found strangled to death in Baghdad, his eyes blindfolded and hands tied with metal wire. This method was the preferred handiwork of the experts of the Saddam regime. Hadi Saleh was also a leader of the Iraqi Communist Party (ICP). His assassination sparked immediate international furor from the world's labor movement.

IFTU praised the trade-union leader's life and work in its official statement in early January: "Hadi Saleh opposed Bush's illegal war against Iraq. He returned home to Iraq after the ignominious collapse of the disgraced Saddam Hussein dictatorship. Hadi worked tirelessly to end the occupation and set about the task of



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▲ The broadest possible peace movement is still needed to end the occupation of Iraq.

re-building independent trade unions in Iraq." Despite attacks directed against Iraqi workers, the IFTU expressed its commitment to "continue the struggle and fight to build a democratic trade union movement and participate in the rebuilding of Iraq."

In its statement the AFL-CIO remarked: "Hadi was a courageous trade unionist fighting for Iraqi workers.... Like all trade unionists, Hadi believed in peaceful solutions to working people's problems." The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, the UK's Trade Union Congress, the International Labor Organization, the Canadian Labor Congress, along with labor movements in Pakistan, Italy, Spain, Japan, Ireland, Australia the US Labor Against War organization, and other international unions and community organizations expressed outrage at the assassination of Saleh.

Just weeks after Saleh's murder, IFTU leader Talib Khadim Al Tayee, the President of the Iraqi Mechanics', Metalworkers' & Printworkers' Union (IMM&PU) was kidnapped and subsequently released.

Saleh's assassination follows the murder of ICP leader Wadhah Hassan Abdul Amir, a member of Iraq's interim National Assembly, last November. ICP spokesperson Salam Ali states that 16 Party members have been assassinated in the rash of violence. These people "were active on the grassroots level, elected to local councils and leading organizational work in poor and working class districts," Ali said.

Ali told the British newspaper *Morning Star* last January that terrorist attacks in general are committed with the aim of

strengthening] the hand of those elements, whether in the government or within the political life of the country, who call for an iron fist policy – it's not difficult to see that these forces are most closely associated with the Americans and also those who, lacking a power base, have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo.

The vast majority of the insurgency in his view is comprised of either loyalists of Saddam or religious fundamentalists. "These people want to regain their position. It has nothing to do with liberating the country or achieving progress or a democratic alternative. They are enemies of democracy," he contended. Ali told *Political Affairs* prior to the election that

some of these acts were aimed to stir up sectarian strife. They aim to alienate the people, marginalize them in the ongoing political process, and spread despair and fear among them. This agenda holds no prospects whatsoever for liberating Iraq and present no prospects or real hope for a better future for the people.

The overwhelming majority of Iraqis, says Ali, oppose the agenda and tactics of these groups.

The Iraqi Communist Party along with other progressive organizations put together a list of 257 candidates known as "People's Unity" for the January 30th elections. The People's Unity coalition included communists, democrats and independent patriotic and social figures, included 91 women candidates and covered all of Iraq's provinces. According to the People's Unity platform, "The candidates represent the full social, ethnic and religious spectrum of Iraqi society."

Ali pointed out that the "ICP's agenda, calling for eradicating the legacy of both dictatorship and occupation and opening up prospects for a truly sovereign, independent and democratic Iraq is diametrically opposed" to the real goals and objectives of insurgents who fought to undermine the election.

The tactic of spreading terror through killing "holds no prospects whatsoever for liberating Iraq," Ali added, "and present no prospects or real hope for a better future for the people."

In fact, the violence, insisted Ali,

only serves to perpetuate the occupation, provides a pretext for increased foreign military presence (as recent events have shown), helps to bring further death and devastation,

and continues the vicious cycle of violence which clearly serve the schemes of extreme right-wing circles in the US under the cover of war against international terrorism.

Ali sees the elections preparing the next phase in the political process. According to UN mandate, the National Assembly will draft the country's new constitution and prepare the groundwork for the general elections next year. Because the national assembly will represent a broader section of Iraq's population it will be "more legitimate," Ali said, and will have influence and oversight on the current transitional government and representative.

Most importantly, the national assembly should not be timid about exercising real power and "should seize back control over security matters, as well as the economic policy and other sovereign powers, from the occupiers," Ali insists.

Iraq's Communist Party proposes to be an important part of the process of regaining sovereignty and building a democratic society. "After decades of repression, fascist terror, wars, sanctions and finally foreign occupation," Ali concluded, Iraqis are longing for "freedom and a dignified life."

The People's Unity platform calls for full civil rights, religious freedom, and equality for all members of Iraqi society. It envisions a federal democracy that guarantees the rights of minority nationalities. It calls for an end to the occupation and full national sovereignty and control over state apparatuses and policies.

The platform's main focus, however, is on repairing the economy and recovering from the effects of dictatorship and Bush's war and occupation. It demands the reduction of unemployment, adequate wages for working people, helping the disabled and pensioners, enforcement of workers' rights, abolition of Iraq's debts incurred by Saddam Hussein, full social security, a free health care system, and reforming the public education system. Additionally, the platform calls for the reconstruction of the public economic sector and development of the private sector.

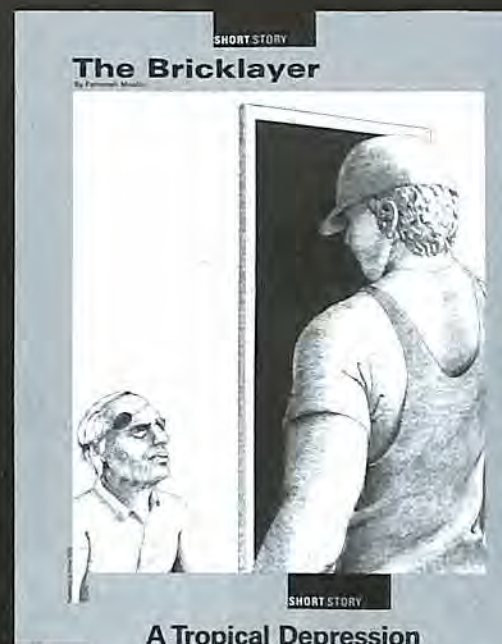
As the election results trickled in and some reports of election irregularities and abuses marred the project, the People's Unity candidates released a statement that described the election as an "historic event, when the Iraqi people defied the forces of terror, violence and crime." While People's Unity won only a fraction of the national vote, its role in reconstructing a democratic society cannot be underestimated.

No one can, with certainty, say what Iraq's future will be. In fact, peace and progressive forces outside of Iraq haven't the right to try to determine that future anymore than George W. Bush does. But we can side with Iraq's working class and with its broad democratic movements. As we work to end the occupation and for provision of adequate resources for reconstructing Iraq, we should also include the call for the protection of the rights of Iraqi workers. We should remember and echo the appeal Hadi Saleh made just weeks before his assassination:

We call our brothers and sisters in the international community to support us to make sure that our rights in organizing formal unions freely and openly is guaranteed and ensured. That our struggle for fair wages, better working conditions, is guaranteed. We consider ourselves as fledglings in the trade union movement, and we need support to build our union. The international labor movement has a lot of expertise, knowledge on this, they could assist us. ■

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NOBODY'S PAWN:

Iran's Struggle for Independence

By Comrade Mohammad Omidvar





Illustration by Victor Velez

PA: The Bush administration has made hypocritical pronouncements about Iran's nuclear program and has even threatened sanctions and violence to stop it. What are the Tudeh Party's views of nuclear non-proliferation and the correct direction for avoiding nuclear standoffs and war?

TP: I think I need to briefly explain how we evaluate the background to the current standoff and the real issues behind the spin and claims.

It is not an exaggeration to state that we have been going through very difficult times in international relations. The election of George Bush to the White House in 2000 marked a significant shift in the US policy to a more aggressive and militarist approach aimed at resolving international conflicts in favor of the US hegemonic positions and with catastrophic results for our region and the world over.

The 9/11 terrorist attack provided the pretext for the US administration and its close allies to implement militarist, expansionist policies planned well in advance, according to well placed

Our party has made it very clear that we are firmly against any external interference in the internal affairs of our country under any pretext.

and informed leading figures in the US administration. In its statement at the time, our party, alongside many other progressive forces strongly condemned the attack and expressed solidarity with the ordinary people and particularly families of the victims. We also warned, however, against using the tragedy as a pretext to push right-wing reactionary policies, particularly in our region, with the aim of gaining the overall control of the oil-rich Persian Gulf and drawing a new political map with new political realities in the Middle East.

The past four years of relentless militarist policies followed by imperialism in our region from Afghanistan to Iraq has been nothing short of reintroducing brutal colonial policies in the Middle East. The war against Iraq under false pretexts and lies fabricated by the US and British intelligence agencies and disseminated by imperialist dominated media showed that the new emerging ultra-right-wing reactionary policies is determined to push its agenda of open global domination at any cost.

A year since the horrendous military attack against Iraq, dur-

ing which, according to various independent international agencies, more than 100,000 Iraqi civilian have lost their lives, the country is a total ruin. Meanwhile, not a single shred of evidence has been found to prove the existence of weapons of mass destruction which were supposedly ready to be "deployed" in "45 minutes" to attack the West. Furthermore, no serious politician or even close ally of the Bush administration could either claim that there has been an victory against terrorism nor indeed is the world safer than it was prior to 9/11 events. The events in Iraq and similar policies followed by the right-wing reactionary government of Sharon against the Palestinian people under similar pretexts have created nothing but more resentment and hatred towards foreign occupiers who are brutally trampling upon people's rights in our region.

It is important to remember that the Iraqi regime acted in coordination with the US strategic interests during 1980s. It was at a certain juncture that this previously friendly government suddenly was added to the list of rogue states. The conflict between Iraq and the US in the 1990s was not due to fundamental conflict between their policies or any significant change in the nature of the brutal Saddam regime, but in fact resulted from the change in the worldwide balance of forces that caused the Iraqi regime to lose its significance as an ally of US. Iraq's importance to the US diminished partly because the Iranian revolution had been stopped due to some degree to the eight-year long Iran-Iraq war instigated by Saddam in 1980. Since then, the US position changed to one of dual containment of Iraq and Iran.

It is also important to consider that the US administration is playing a sophisticated game with the regime in Iran. Despite the rhetoric, the Iranian regime provided significant assistance to US forces in their military interventions in both Afghanistan and Iraq. The fact that the administration sent John Bolton, a hawk openly hostile to the regime in Iran, to Tehran from his position in the State Department, and that Halliburton succeeded in signing lucrative oil and gas deals with the Islamic regime in Iran are not accidental.

This context governs the recent standoff between the US and Iran. Our party has made it very clear that we are firmly against any external interference in the internal affairs of our country under any pretext. Our party alongside the entire progressive forces in the region seeks a Middle East free of weapons of mass destruction in any shape or form. But we cannot fail to point out that while right-wing governments such as the Sharon government in Israel and the Pakistani military dictatorship are building stockpiles of nuclear weapons with the financial and technical assistance of US and other imperialist powers in our region, the focus of world attention on Iran's nuclear policy is not only a clear double standard but a cynical ploy and political brinkmanship in line with US plans for "Greater Middle East."

At the same time our party believes that the reactionary, irresponsible and adventurist policies carried out by the Iranian regime plays into the hand of the neo-conservatives dominating the Bush administration who are trying to exploit the volatile situation in the Middle East and prepare the ground for further intervention.

What is also clear is that the massive international outcry and the protest by tens of millions of ordinary people has made it very difficult to embark immediately on another military adventure in the region. Keeping the international pressure on, demanding an immediate end to the occupation of Iraq and a Persian Gulf free from US military presence and developing the massive popular peace movement into a lively and influential political force are clearly key factors in trying to stop another catastrophe.



▲ The supreme religious authority and its security forces hold the power that controls the Iranian government.

PA: What is the present condition of human rights and democracy in Iran?

TP: Iran has been going through a very eventful eight years. In May 1997, more than 20 million Iranians, despite a tightly controlled and anti-democratic presidential election where the reactionaries disqualified more than 380 other candidates for their lack of full commitment to the "Rule of the Supreme Leader," or as we called it "Velayat Fagieh," rejected the official candidate of the regime and elected a little known middle-ranking religious figure, Mohammad Khatami, as president, who promised "reforms, democracy and civil society." While our party expressed its support for the people's movement for reforms and change, we made it very clear from the start that despite Mr. Khatami's optimism about the regime's potential for reform, the medieval dictatorship ruling Iran under the banner of the "rule of the supreme religious leader" is incapable of meaningful reforms from the top. The small opening in society created a tremendous popular force, including the working class, the students and the youth, women and the intelligentsia, as well as a broad spectrum of political forces into the arena of struggle.

This force if organized and united could effectively force the reactionary leaders of the regime into further retreat.

Eight years later, it is clear even from Mr. Khatami's own admissions that they failed to capitalize and seize the historic opportunity that presented itself to bring fundamental, democratic and lasting changes to our country. The problem always was that, according to Khatami himself, he was not opposed to the regime but tried to be its savior. The failure of Khatami and his government to deliver on their promises created an atmosphere of mistrust amongst the social forces that backed him and resulted in the disillusionment of all sections of the popular movement who played an important role in bringing him to power. The relentless attack by the security and military forces of the regime controlled directly by the supreme religious leader, and the arrest and continuous torture and killing of opposition activists made it clear that the Khatami government has little influence, if any, in making key decisions or controlling the real levers of power.

On the socio-economic front, the policies followed by Khatami's government have been a carbon copy of the policies of the previous administration and are based on the directives of the IMF and the World Bank. The policies have had disastrous effect on our country pushing more than 40 percent of the population below the poverty line making life a misery especially for the working class and ordinary people.

Khatami's term in office will come to an end in May 2005 and the right-wing reactionaries headed by Khamenei (the supreme religious leader) are preparing the ground for a massive purge and a return even more brutal suppression and total control. During the past year they first purged all Khatami supporters from the Iranian Parliament in a sham election, which was boycotted by more than 75 percent of the population.

Since the election human rights violations in Iran has worsened. The closing down of many newspapers and Internet news sites and the subsequent arrest and torture of writers and journalists indicates a return to the brutal policies of the past when, for instance, in 1989, they massacred more than 5,000 political prisoners including hundreds of our party leaders, cadres and members. The alarming increase in human rights violation is timed to create an atmosphere of fear in the country prior to the election so that the right-wing reactionaries could produce the result they require.

PA: Can you talk about the danger of religious fundamentalism as the basis of political power? Terrorism has acquired new features in today's world. How does the Tudeh Party see grappling with this problem?

TP: The Iranian revolution brought fundamental changes to our country and our region. The anti-dictatorial movement which top-

pled the Shah's regime and included almost all the political and democratic forces in our country was hijacked by fundamentalist Islamic forces who dreamed about the resurrection of an "Islamic Empire" covering not only the Middle East, Afghanistan and Pakistan but also parts of the former Soviet republics.

It is also important to mention that this fundamentalism was used by imperialism as means of stopping the growth of socialism and development of progressive alternatives in our region. It is not an accident that groups like "Al-Qaeda" and Osama bin Laden as well as the Taliban, rose to prominence by CIA money, training and backing and the help of the Pakistan intelligence agency. They were labeled as "freedom fighters" battling communists and received billions of dollars of financial support and other material support from the oil rich Arab states in the Persian Gulf. Furthermore it is also clear that the roots of many of so-called terror attacks lie deep within the injustice created as a result of the policies facilitated, and conditions, imposed by imperialism and its allies. The continuous occupation of the Palestine and the savage policies of apartheid carried out by suc-

cessive Israeli governments despite worldwide condemnation fuel the fires of hatred and frustration leading to suicide attacks. It is clear, and as Lenin also clearly stated Communists cannot agree or support terrorism, which in the final analysis plays into the hand of the reactionary forces, but to deal with terrorism one must deal with its roots and causes.

We believe that in the Middle East, it is the imperialists, the reactionary regimes and forces, the Israeli ultra-right-wing government

that benefit from war and militarization. In Iraq, Palestine, Iran and Afghanistan there are strong forces calling for a peaceful road towards developing a democratic society. Peace is only possible within the context of a political solution to the problems facing the Middle East – the past decade has demonstrated very clearly that military intervention obstructs rather than fosters the creation of a democratic and popular alternative. The denial of democracy itself more or less inevitably leads towards unstable and violent societies.

Religious fundamentalism in most cases is characterized by repression of women and democracy and by the violation of basic human rights. It is a fact that peace, the creation of conditions in which the struggle for democracy and socialism is possible, and the movements for fighting for the rights of women and minorities are indivisible.

Islamic fundamentalism as a significant trend is barely 30 years old. The democratic forces in many countries in the Middle East are deeply rooted in their societies and are potent entities. Let us not forget that the fate of the struggles waged by the Tudeh Party of Iran, or the Iraqi, Lebanese, Palestinian or Algerian communists do have resonance and impact within the movements for peace and progress in Europe and elsewhere and vice versa. ■

The alarming increase in human rights violation is timed to create an atmosphere of fear prior to the election so that the right-wing reactionaries could produce the result they require.



Nothing to Lose But Our Chains:

Workers Seize Paper Factory

By Jorge Martín



Illustration by Giancarlo Romero

On the morning of January 19th, in the Ayacucho room of the Presidential Palace in Caracas, and with the presence of Venepal workers and trade-union leaders, Chávez signed decree no. 3438, which expropriates Venepal. From now on it will be co-managed by the workers and the state. This is a very important victory for the workers of Venepal, but more than that it is a massive step forward for the Bolivarian revolution.

Venepal is one of the main producers of paper and cardboard in Venezuela and its plant is located in Morón, in the industrial state of Carabobo. At one point it employed a total of 1,600 workers, controlled 40 percent of the national market and was one of the

“In Venezuela we are at war, but not invading other countries or violating other countries’ sovereignty.... We are at war against misery and poverty.”

– Hugo Chávez

main Latin American producers in this sector. But the company’s management allowed the paper mill to slowly lose market shares and revenues. In April 2002, at the time of the short-lived military coup against Chávez, some of its main shareholders were present at the swearing in ceremony for the new, illegitimate “president” Pedro Carmona. During the bosses’ lockout against the Chávez government in December 2002-January 2003 the workers resisted attempts by the employers to paralyze the plant.

In July 2003, the owners declared bankruptcy and the workers responded by occupy-

ing the plant and running production under workers' control. Rowan Jimenez, a trade-union activist and member of the action committee, explained how during the occupation, "the workers organized production, broke all productivity records and reduced unproductive waste to a level never seen before." After a 77-day long struggle an uneasy truce was reached. But that was not to last. On September 7th of last year, the company again ceased operations and the workers' struggle started again.

From the outset of the struggle the workers adopted the demand for nationalization under workers' control that was being proposed by the comrades of the Revolutionary Marxist Current. There were a number of demonstrations in Moron and in Caracas, and solidarity actions were organized by workers in other factories,

"Capitalism wants to annihilate the workers... here we are carrying out a process of liberation of the workers."

— Hugo Chávez

particularly by the Carabobo region of the newly established trade-union federation, the UNT.

After months of struggle, finally, on January 13th, when a delegation of Venepal workers went to Caracas to demand a solution, the National Assembly declared Venepal and its installations to be of "public usefulness and social interest." This was the prelude for Chávez signing decree no. 3438. This is the result of the struggle and the resilience of the workers in Venepal who consciously sought the support of the local community in their struggle. In his speech at the signing ceremony, in front of a large number of Venepal workers and UNT trade-union leaders, Chávez said "here we are creating a new model, and that is why in Washington they are angry... our model of development implies

Spotlight On Venezuela:

Interview with Omar Sierra

Editor's Note: This interview was conducted by Karen Wheeler for Dynamic.

The host country for the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students has seen amazing changes over the past few years. Recently, the US has started to indirectly threaten intervention with Venezuela's internal affairs, claiming that the state "supports terrorism." Omar Sierra, a founding member of the Bolivarian Circles, talks to *Dynamic* about people power at work in Venezuela.

Dynamic: Tell us about the work of the Bolivarian Circles.

OS: The Bolivarian Circles are one of the types of grassroots organizations most active in Venezuela. They are community-based groups working in popular education and community issues. In October 2001, President Chávez called for the creation of the Bolivarian Circles. At that time, the people of Venezuela were not as organized as we are today. Now we have many different levels of organization: women's committees, cooperatives in the countryside, indigenous movements, and more.



Enrique Hernandez/VENPRES

▲ In election after election, the people of Venezuela have affirmed Hugo Chávez's presidency and program.

a change in the productive apparatus. The working class must be united, learn and participate."

Edgar Peña, General Secretary SUTIP, the oldest worker in Venepal, took the stage and described their four month long struggle and the sacrifices they had had to make. He explained how the workers had drafted a project that proved the company could be profitable and how this paved the way for expropriation. Peña also asked for National Guard protection of the installations, since there are still those bent on sabotaging them. He also explained that, when they resume production, the first products would be destined for the government's social programs (Misiones), "for the benefit of the working class."



▲ President Hugo Chávez has instituted reforms in Venezuela to fight poverty, illiteracy, disease and corruption.

In his intervention, Chávez stated that capitalism is a model based on slavery,

and this is why in Washington they are angry, because we want to liberate ourselves from capitalism, in the same way that they were angry many years ago with the ideas of Libertador Simon Bolivar.

Referring to Condoleezza Rice's recent criticisms of Venezuela, he said that there are good remedies in the market to cure ulcers, "for those who might need it." He added that some might be annoyed at what is happening in Venezuela, but "they will continue to be annoyed by the revolutionary process, because no one is going to dislodge us from it." Chávez added that the "role of the workers in this

The circles are also mass action organizations. During the attempted coup in 2002, the Bolivarian Circles were in the streets protecting the neighborhoods and mobilizing people to demonstrate in defense of the constitution. The economic elite in my country lie about the Bolivarian Circles, calling us armed guerrilla groups. But people inside Venezuela know the truth.

Nearly 80 percent of the country was living under the poverty line, even though Venezuela is a country very rich in resources, especially oil.

Dynamic: What is the Bolivarian process? How has Venezuela been changing?

OS: The Bolivarian revolution is a process for social justice that aims to involve all levels of Venezuelan society. Before President Chávez was elected, Venezuela was in a critical situation. Nearly 80 percent of the country was living under the poverty line, even though Venezuela is a country very rich in resources, especially oil.

Since President Chávez came to power, the goal of the government and the people's movements has been to redistribute the wealth of the country to the poor, the excluded, like the working class, peasants and the indigenous peoples. In this sense, multiple social programs have been implemented to empower the people and help them start building their own future.

In 1999, Chávez called for a constitutional assembly, elected

by the whole country, to reform the constitution. The rewritten constitution was then approved by popular referendum.

The new constitution states that the "latifundio" – the big concentration of land in just a few hands – is against the social interests of the majority of the population, and endangers the country's food security. The constitution also guarantees full rights for the indigenous peoples of Venezuela.

A major achievement of the women's movement in Venezuela was the incorporation of an article in the new constitution stating that household work is like any other work, and entitles house workers to social security with retirement and pension.

The constitution also protects our natural resources, such as the natural gas and the oil, by forbidding privatizations and ensuring the state's majority stake in joint ventures. It is important to emphasize that the oil industry was in the hands of the elite until the Bolivarian government and nationalist workers took over total control after the oil lockout sponsored by executives and managers during December 2002 – February 2003. Now, the revenues of the oil industry are being used to finance social missions and development programs.

Of course, you can have a beautiful constitution, but if you don't put it to work, it is just words on a piece of paper!

Dynamic: So how is the constitution put into effect? For instance, what changes have happened in health and education?

OS: The government is investing a huge amount of resources in human capital. Under the old government, poor people were dying from preventable diseases because of lack of access to health care. A new program called "Barrio Adentro" (Inside the Barrio) has placed doctors in the most impoverished communities.

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model is fundamental and this is the difference between this model and the capitalist model." He emphasized that "it is necessary to change the productive relations."

"Capitalism wants to annihilate the workers... here we are carrying out a process of liberation of the workers, and this is why they are annoyed in Washington." Paraphrasing Lenin, Chávez said,

neoliberal capitalism is the highest stage of capitalist madness." "In Venezuela we are at war, but not invading other countries or violating other countries' sovereignty... here we are at war against misery and poverty."

He explained that the recovery of factories on the part of the state is



▲ Venezuelan workers fought the corruption and collaborationism of the old trade union confederation and are rebuilding their movement.

aimed at changing the conditions of exploitation the workers have been submitted to by the capitalist model and the recovery of the country's industrial capacity. He added that these new companies should not be viewed through the lens of state capitalism, but rather as co-management. "We must not fear the workers since they are the soul of the companies."

Chávez also announced the "recovery" of a maize processing plant and all of the basic industries in Guyana (this means the massive SIDOR steelworks amongst others). Though he said that "today's expropriation of Venepal is an exceptional measure... we are not going to take away land, if it is yours it is yours," he was also clear that "any factories closed or abandoned, we are going to take them over. All of them."

Now there are around 20,000 Cuban doctors, as well as nurses and sport trainers, who are providing absolutely free health care in the poor neighborhoods throughout the country. Many Venezuelan doctors are now being trained in Cuba. They are being educated in a system that sees medicine as a social issue, not a profit-making venture.

The government's investment in education has been huge. The new Bolivarian schools provide free lunch, breakfast, snack and after school programs. Also, poor and working people are receiving economic incentives to stay in school and to finish school, so they won't leave for economic reasons.

The Bolivarian University is another new institution that has opened up access to education: the main requirement for getting in is coming from a working-class or low-income family.

Around 1.3 million people have gained reading and writing skills through a national literacy campaign. New neighborhood-based 'missions,' which began with the literacy campaign, are helping people to finish school and to enter the Bolivarian University with financial aid.

I want to give you one more recent example: The land law. In many cases in Venezuela the landowner has obtained the land illegally or has a fake property title. Several governors in my country, as well as President Chávez himself, have put a huge amount of land under government investigation, to check out its status. The ultimate goal is to end the latifundio completely.

Many landowners stand against any challenge to the latifundio, and they have a huge influence in the media. But the fact is that the land should belong to the people who are working in it, and the landowners will receive fair compensation for the land.



▲ People to Bush: "Don't mess with Venezuela!"

"I invite the workers' leaders to follow on this path," he said. This is a clear appeal to workers in other factories who were also involved in the struggle of the occupied factories in July-August 2003, like the CNV, Fenix, Industrial de Perfumes, CODIMA, among others. Workers in these factories have already started to remobilize.

This is without doubt a massive step forward in the right direction. But it must also be extended to all those other sectors of the economy that are under monopoly and imperialist control. This should include the banking system (which is largely in the hands of the two Spanish multinationals), the telecommunications sector (in the hands of US multinationals), the food distribution sector (in the hands of a couple of Venezuelan companies



▲ President Hugo Chávez is greeted by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

tionals), the food distribution sector (in the hands of a couple of Venezuelan companies

owned by known coup organizers) and others.

This needs to be done, as in the case of Venepal, under workers' control. In this way the whole economy could be planned to the benefit of the majority of working people. This would be the only way of guaranteeing the final victory of the revolution. Workers' control or management, if it remains isolated in one single company, cannot, in the longer term, fundamentally solve the problem. Through its own experience, the Bolivarian revolution has come up against the wall of capitalism. Now it needs to break it down and move to a democratically planned socialist economy in order to win the war against poverty and misery. ■

Dynamic: How do ordinary citizens take part in these reform efforts?

OS: Participatory democracy – Venezuelans organizing themselves to advocate for and fulfill their own needs – is the backbone of the Bolivarian process.

One example is the local councils of public planning, which are elected directly by the community. Mayors are now required under law to get the approval of the local council for any kind of development program, because politicians should not be the only ones who decide what to do with the community's resources.

In the shantytowns around the cities, which usually lack plumbing and sewers, new urban land committees are working on planning and infrastructure in the neighborhood. The government is regularizing the possession of land, giving people titles to public land where they have lived for years, so they can get access to low-interest loans for development projects.

Also, in order for a neighborhood to get a doctor through the Barrio Adentro program, the community has to organize a health committee. Of course this is all a process of learning and deepening democracy. These programs are about community participation, but with the government's help. I think the attempted coup against Chávez energized the people even more to form organizations in every kind of community and around every kind of issue that affects them.

The peasants are also creating cooperatives to put to produce the land collectively and workers are also taking part of the Bolivarian process. Recently, after a long struggle, one of the biggest paper factories in Venezuela – Venepal – has been nationalized under workers' control.

Dynamic: What's the current political situation?

OS: After President Chávez won the referendum, it was a huge setback for the opposition. They really believed that they had the majority of the population with them.

The opposition again faced a setback in the regional elections a few months later. Pro-Chávez governors won 20 out of 22 provinces! Part of the opposition has been rethinking their ideas and trying to regroup. They are realizing that trying to overthrow Chávez only made him more popular!

However, that is not a reason for the people to let down our guard. The opposition is made up of the country's elites, and they still have huge economic power. They control the media and they have international connections, and sooner or later they will regroup.

Dynamic: Venezuela is making a major contribution to friendship and solidarity between young people by hosting the 16th World Festival of Youth and Students this year.

OS: I'm very excited about the festival! Festival participants will have the chance to see how Venezuelans are looking for our own model of development; the cooperatives, the local councils, the Barrio Adentro program, the missions, the indigenous development groups, the factories under workers' control... In short, it will be a chance to learn about how we are struggling to carry on the Bolivarian revolution.

Also, we cannot ignore the power of the media and how it has been brain washing people in the US. Young people coming for the festival will see for themselves what's happening in our country, and compare that with what the media says. Definitely, it will be a wonderful experience that will disappoint no one. ■

On the Inevitability of Socialism

By Thomas Riggins



Are the contradictions, described by Marx, in the capitalist mode of production only overcome by the establishment of socialism as a higher form of production? Marxists have always believed that the answer to this question is "yes."

Does this mean, then, that socialism is inevitable? This, I think, is a different question entirely, and the answer to this question is "no." Many critics of Marxism have, however, confused these two questions and have maintained that Marxists hold that socialism is "inevitable."

There are certainly quotes to be found in Marx, Engels and Lenin which could lead one to that conclusion. In the *Communist Manifesto*, for example, we are told "the victory of the proletariat" is "inevitable." Also, in the preface to the first German edition of *Capital* Marx says, regarding the laws of capitalist production, that they work "with iron necessity towards inevitable results." And

Engels, in his 1886 preface to the English edition of *Capital*, wrote, "at least in Europe, England is the only country where the inevitable social revolution might be effected entirely by peaceful and legal means." So we have here mention of inevitable victory, inevitable results, and an inevitable social revolution.

Lenin also seems to subscribe to the notion of inevitability. In an article he wrote in 1914 ("Karl Marx") for *The Granat Encyclopedia (Collected Works, vol. 21)* he wrote that Marx deduces the inevitability of the transformation of capitalist society into socialist society wholly and exclusively from the economic law of the development of contemporary society.

And further, "The proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie... inevitably becomes a political struggle directed towards the conquest of political power by the proletariat ('the dictatorship of the proletariat')."

Capitalism may inevitably break down – but the question is – is socialism the inevitable result of the capitalist breakdown?

And further, "The proletariat's struggle against the bourgeoisie... inevitably becomes a political struggle directed towards the conquest of political power by the proletariat ('the dictatorship of the proletariat')."

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This same notion of "inevitability" pops up six years later in 1920 ("Left Wing' Communism an Infantile Disorder," *Collected Works, vol. 31*) when Lenin writes apropos of the Russian Revolution: "At the present moment in history, however, it is the Russian model that reveals to all countries something – and something highly significant – of their near and inevitable future."

Eighty-five years down the road, and in a new century, if not a new historical epoch, we may be permitted to have a different outlook on what the "near future" bodes and perhaps doubt the accuracy of Lenin's words. Eighty-five years is a long time considered from the point of view of an individual, but from an historical perspective we may, nevertheless, still be waiting for that "near future." But what we are interested in determining is if we are talking about an "inevitable" future.

In an attempt to answer this question, I will rely on the speculations of Istvan Meszaros, an Anglo-Hungarian philosopher, who deals with this issue in his *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition*.

Within the system of capitalism there are inevitabilities it makes sense to talk about. For example, as capital expands globally it seeks out the cheapest possible labor market and attempts to reduce as much as possible the necessary labor time it takes to create its products.

These actions result in a redundancy of workers – an increase in the numbers of the unemployed, because unnecessary, workers. Thus the growth of a surplus population is an inevitable result (all things being equal) of the inner workings of the capitalist system. The system also leads to monopoly and imperial rivalries and war. This is just how the system works.

It is not this type of inevitability we are seeking to determine. Capitalism may inevitability break down – but the question is – is socialism the inevitable result of the capitalist breakdown? It is one thing to say that socialism is the inevitable logical solution to the problems of capitalism, but quite another to hold that it is the historically inevitable solution – that is, that it will really come about.

Meszaros quotes the late Hungarian Marxist Georg Lukacs who wrote "The objective economic evolution could do no more than create the position of the proletariat in the production process. It was this position that determined its point of view. But the objective evolution could only give the proletariat the opportunity and the necessity to change society. Any transformation can only come about as the product of the free-action of the proletariat itself." The workers have the opportunity to move towards socialism – but there is no guarantee they will take it.

Meszaros also quotes Marx's remark from his famous preface to *A Contribution to a Critique of Political Economy*. In this work Marx maintains that humanity only confronts the task it can solve (or must solve), "when the material conditions for its solution are already present or at least in the process of formation."

But to "confront" a task is not the same as "solving" it. According to Meszaros this means that Marx realized that socialism is not inevitable. He concludes that deducing from this preface, as some have, the "vulgar-fatalist view" that Marx was maintaining that socialism was therefore inevitable "is nothing short of preposterous."

Meszaros claims that the best Marxists can hope for is to analyze economic reality and state the case for the workers being the only agency or social force capable of "eradicating capital." But, "if that agency proves to be unequal to the task there can be no hope for the socialist project."

Therefore, the use of the term "inevitability" with respect to the establishment of socialism by Marx, Engels and Lenin should, I conclude, be seen as hyperbole, or more as an optimistic assessment of the future than as an absolute claim of an historically necessary outcome. There is always the possibility put forth in the *Communist Manifesto* of "the common ruin of the contending classes." ■



POLITICAL AFFAIRS A MARXIST MONTHLY

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W Stands for Women Fighting Back:

Interview with Rita Haley

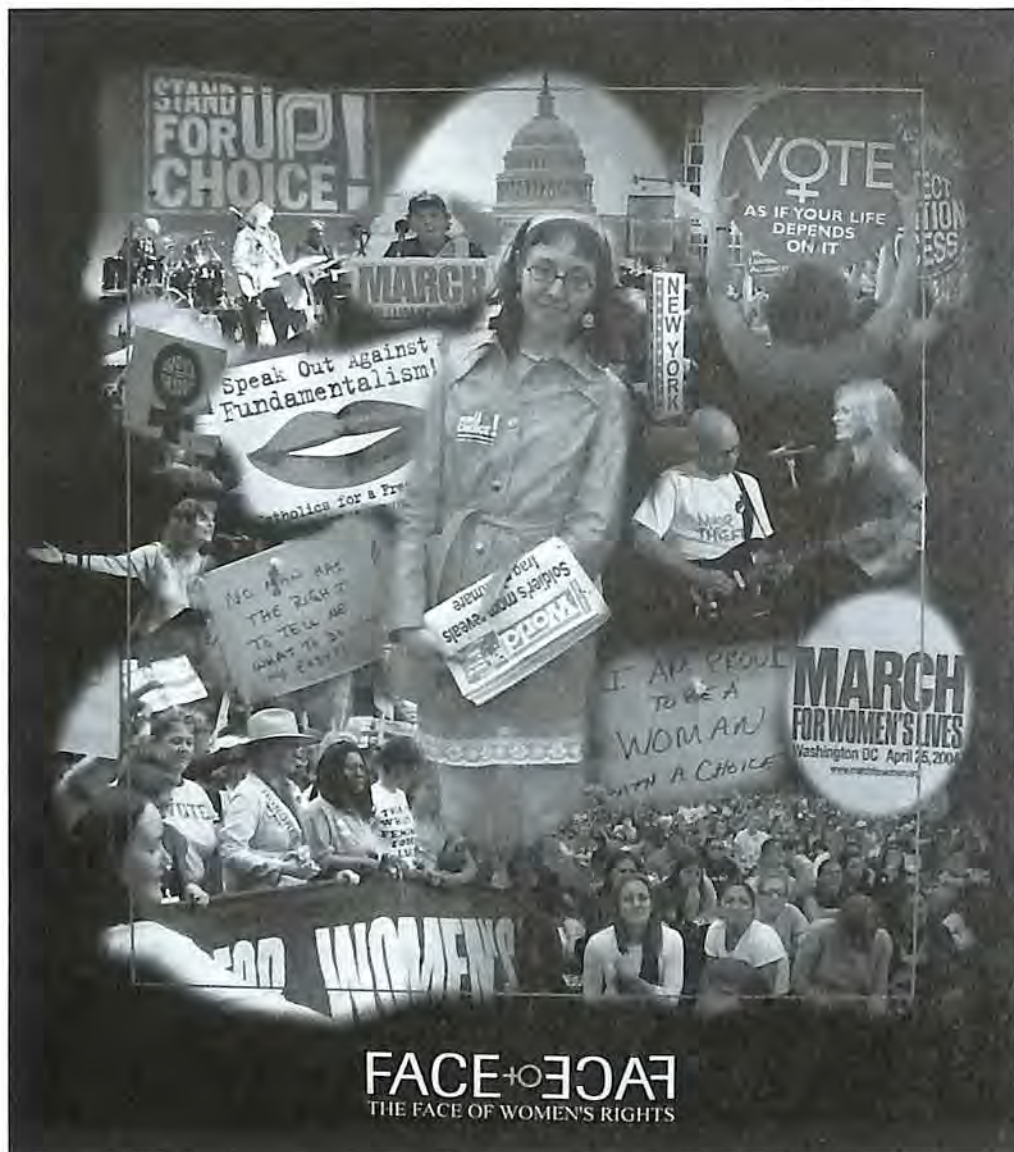
Editor's note; Rita Haley works for NY state NOW. This interview was conducted by Dan Margolis.

PA: How did you become active in the movement for women's equality?

RH: I have been active since 1975. I actually got into it sort of sideways. I started out in college as a math major, and then decided that I didn't really want to be a mathematician. I was in a graduate program, and took my master's in math and applied psychology, and one of the interesting courses was the psychology of women. That was the beginning of my feminism, as my consciousness was raised through reading. Those were the days that we were in the ERA fight. It was the ERA that drew me in and was truly my passion. One of the first big actions that I coordinated, after being a member for only two years, was the walk-a-thon in Pittsburgh to raise money for the ERA. We raised several thousand dollars, which for Pittsburgh in those days was a lot of money. I went on to chair an ERA taskforce for Pennsylvania NOW, and then became an officer in Pennsylvania NOW. I remained active with peaks and valleys in terms of the level of my activism, and obviously the past two years have been a peak.

PA: What was the atmosphere like back then?

RH: One of the things people who are younger don't realize is that even though we didn't win the ERA, we really changed the social outlook. We changed the culture. I remember when people just thought it was normal and acceptable to pay women less than men and there were sex-segregated help-wanted ads. It was help wanted for women and help wanted for men. All the good jobs were for men, and all the receptionists, manicurists and sec-



retary jobs were for women. Now people would think that that was an outrage – which it is – but we didn't have that consciousness then. We really changed the outlook: of course women should be allowed into all schools, education should be equal, and women should get equality and sports opportunities in their education. Before the ERA fight started, all those things were just accepted as "Oh, yeah, that's just how it's supposed to be."

PA: What's your take on the past year or so?

RH: NOW and many other organizations in the women's movement had the 1.5 million March for Women's Lives, that of course received less coverage than the 750,000 male Promise Keepers march. It certainly was a monumental event with exciting and wonderful speakers.

And then, for NOW-New York City, one

of the big things we did was our Code Red: Stop the Bush Agenda protest demonstration in Central Park during the Republican National Convention. That was a highlight of my presidency on a personal level. As far as I know it was the largest demonstration that the chapter ever held, because we had 15,000 people participating. We didn't stop; we just kept going. We went into a campaign of sending postcards to Kerry and Bush. We had blue postcards and red postcards asking both of them to bring reproductive rights and emergency contraception to the forefront. We can take some credit for the fact that Kerry did, in the final presidential debate.

We're not going to wait eight years from now or two years from now to start working on the elections; we're thinking about it from the get-go.

He really did talk about women's rights. Of course, that was not all NOW-New York City's doing, but we certainly helped and were a force.

Of course the outcome was disappointing to all feminists and progressives. NOW-NYC did everything we could. I know on a personal level that I did everything I could, so there's no feeling of, "if I'd only done more." That does make the loss somehow go down smoother, because I don't have regrets. I have regrets at the outcome, but not at our behavior.

I think NOW and myself in particular are very practical and down-to-earth. I am already thinking about what we need to be doing going forward. We had an outrage demonstration on December 18, 2004 to express anger at the disenfranchisement and the apparent election fraud.

Our activists will go forward and continue working on both feminist causes and what we need to do to make sure that progressives start doing better in elections. In fact we set up a state-level election reform

task force. We're not going to wait eight years from now or two years from now to start working on the elections; we're thinking about it from the get-go.

PA: With all of that action and movement, how did we lose in November?

RH: I attribute it to some inappropriate actions on the electoral front in terms of polling places having insufficient machines, having machines that seem to have been fixed or were working wrong. In a county that has a few hundred people, you can't have thousands of people voting for Bush. Clearly the decision was made to disenfranchise people. Many votes were not counted, and it's not even possible to count the votes of the people who couldn't stand on line for ten hours. I know I couldn't stay for ten hours. Most people can't stay that long, whether for physical reasons or because they have to go to work.

We have less to spend on political work because the right wing is forcing us to pay more for social welfare. Progressives are paying for it instead of their political needs. I just heard several progressive millionaires were setting up a \$100 million think tank, but compared to the right, \$100 million is just a drop in the bucket. Progressives need to start to think about whether it is more important to help people a little today, or to get power so we can keep on helping them for a longer period of time. I'm an activist so you know what my view would be.

PA: What are the prospects for the next four years?

RH: I actually don't like to think about four more years of Bush. I find it beyond discouraging. It seems that unless we really get our act together and are out on the streets doing everything we can to ensure that we have a fair election process, we will get nothing that we want. Why would anybody give us anything we want if they know that they are going to get selected in there? They know that if "John" controls the election process and who wins, all I have to do is make John happy. I don't have to worry about any of my constituents. So I'm going to do what John

wants me to do. It's very discouraging to me in terms of how we're going to get anything done. If you don't have filibusters, then how do you deal with the Supreme Court justices? Even with filibusters, look how hard it was to get even one senator to stand up and complain and challenge the Ohio electoral votes. There were plenty of people in the House. I admire Barbara Boxer, but there's going to be a tremendous campaign to get rid of her.

PA: Do you think the coalition that emerged in the run up to the election can make a difference now?

RH: It depends on what we do with this coalition. There's hope if we can stay unified and start coordinating our efforts and have a good strategic plan. The most essential thing is for us to be making sure that the voting system is fair, and that we need to come up with an overall plan for doing that. There needs to be some type of alliance of progressive organizations that is balanced in terms of the population, some way of having it fairly distributed. I don't even have a concept yet of how to do that. I've been thinking about having some sort of an alliance of progressive organizations where there're regular meetings, which is what conservatives have been doing for 40 years, and determining strategy. Once you determine strategy, you find out who's doing what. If we'd had that this time, we could have really poured people into Ohio within a day or two of the elections to be in the street and really being demanding a fair recount and not have to wait until Jesse Jackson goes in. We should have all been sending everybody who was available to Ohio. There's hope because we saw this outgrowth, I just want to see it better coordinated and that we work together and not see what typically happens: the success of the right wing in using divide and conquer tactics which they are so skilled at doing.

PA: The prospects are daunting.

RH: It's more than daunting; it's terrifying. If you look at the history of Nazi Germany you see the parallels even down to the Patriot Act – they had their own Patriot



▲ *Roe v. Wade* can be defended with mass pressure.

Act. It wasn't called that, but it gave all kinds of power to the government and took power away from the people. It was terrifying, because it was so close to what our Patriot Act is. Once you have that power, you can put your opponents in jail. There are reasons to be really frightened, but not to let ourselves be immobilized by our fears. To recognize that what we need is to stop spending time being afraid, angry or depressed and get determined. We have to figure out our marching orders and start marching.

PA: Is *Roe v. Wade* doomed?

RH: No. The *Roe v. Wade* decision didn't just happen because the courts decided "Oh gee, we really think this is fair." It took an enormous amount of political pressure. As some NOW people I know say, "Judges look out their window, too." Even judges appointed for life respond to

political pressure. They don't want to go down in history as being jerks that stood in the way of progress.

PA: The huge anti-Bush movement is a victory in itself, but is there anything else that you can point to as something we won in the elections?

RH: We have cut into the control that conservatives have in the New York State Senate. That's really important because they'll be voting on some important pieces of legislation, including on the voting machines, reproductive rights issues, and other issues like violence against women and these horrendous custody battles in which battered women are losing custody of their children because their batterers have a lot of money. We get a lot of heartbreaking letters, and I assume NOW-New York State will be working on that. We've always done family law, I just think we're going to need to make sure we encompass

this area. I think that there's a good chance for success. I see that we had some victories and some successes, but that's more within the state, not nationally. I think that's partially because we were all mobilized to turn out and vote, and the more people who vote the more likely you are to get a Democrat than a Republican in office, because New York has more Democrats than Republicans. So yes I do see some short-term victories that can be used as leverage for various measures that we'd like to see.

PA: What about short-term victories?

RH: We're coming up to the mayoral races here in New York City, and I think New Yorkers are very angry with Bloomberg, because of the whole way he handled the RNC. We didn't want them here, and then he comes and puts people in jail because

we were protesting? We were not even allowed to use our own city; people had to leave their apartments because nobody could get mail or food. It was just totally inappropriate behavior, and it shouldn't have happened. I'm sure that in the long run it cost us a lot more money than we could ever have gotten because of the cost of security that the city provided. The masses of police that were out, many of whom didn't like Bush any more than we did, but they were on the police force. I mean it was terrifying. I walked out, and they were all over the city. I felt like I was in a city under siege. You felt like another terrorist attack had happened and no one had told you about it.

You have to make sure that there are enough seats on the train, so that nobody has to fight about where they are on the line to get on the train.

PA: So what do we do now?

RH: I think that we really have our work cut out for us. But if I thought there was no hope, I'd be planning to go to Italy – I decided on there because it's warmer – but I'm staying here because there is a lot to do. We just have to work hard, and work together. Put aside any petty politics. Find ways to make sure that we stay true to each other. A good friend of mine, another NOW person, says that you have to make sure that there are enough seats on the train, so that nobody has to fight about where they are on the line to get on the train. The way that we're made to fight with each other is to keep the pie small, so that we're fighting over who should get a sliver. If the pie were as big as it should be, and it were equally shared, we'd all have a good amount, and we could all go off and be happy. This is the richest country in the world, yet we have homeless people sleeping on the street. ■

The Wolf

By Karl Mundstock, Translated by Joan Becker

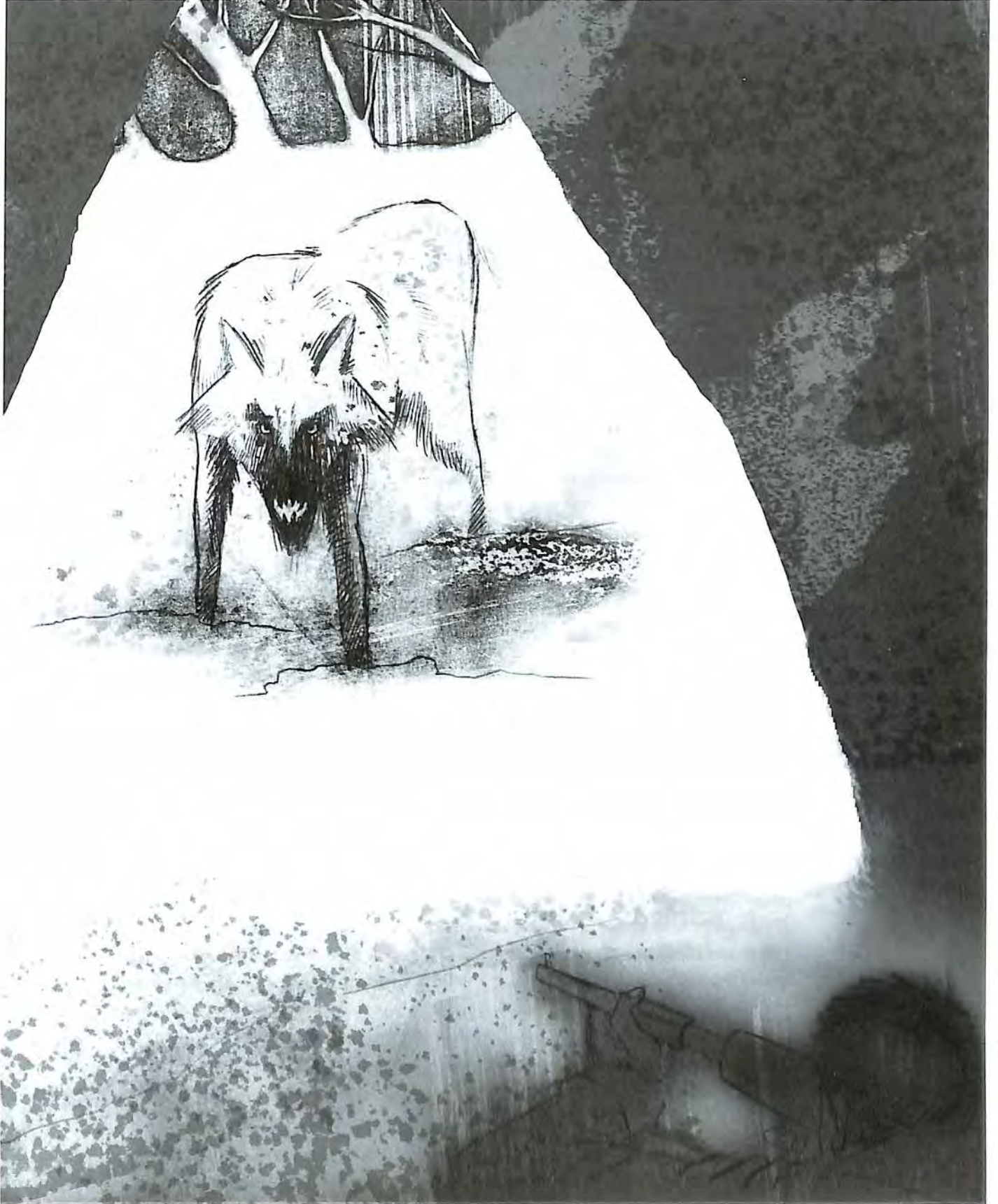


Illustration by Giancarlo Romero

Searching without map or compass for the tracks of his platoon that led behind the Soviet front lines, Lechner lost his way in the white night in which harmless snowdrifts turned into blackish humps in the moon's shadow and snow-covered humps into harmless snowdrifts when the moon shone on them. In the morning he had no idea where he was in the ups and downs of what all looked like the same hills and valleys. There was no smoke, no tent, no line of trenches to be seen, nothing but a rolling, flickering void in which, here and there, a green-covered crag showed up blackish against the southern slopes. Gullies hollowed out the snow blanket. He broke through into water holes. Marching through snow that melted by day and froze to a pitted crust at night wore him out. Feeling sure that he would quickly meet a Soviet unit, Lechner had eaten his provisions in, two days. He shot a grouse to pieces with a volley from his sub-machine gun. When he tried to light a fire to roast it his lighter gave out. The raw meat resisted his teeth. He still had his iron ration, and he divided it up to last for another two days. It could hardly take longer than that to contact the Red Army. On the evening of the fourth day he scraped the last shreds of pork out of the tin. He still did not reckon with starving or freezing to death, but he made up his mind to make the remaining mouthful of hard biscuit last for the next two days. He lived through the first night in which hunger kept him awake, tossing and turning, wrapped in a blanket and a piece of tent canvas, on a patch of moss at the foot of a steep, snow-covered mountainside, and dreaming of steaming bowls of Tyrolean noodles and great plates of mushroom omelette followed by a huge bowl of lentils that he spooned up more and more ravenously. Every night after that, and later on in his daydreams as well, his gluttonous gobbling ended up with this brimful, never-ending bowl, for he did not care for stewed fruit or other sweet things. His mossy bed was sheltered from the wind by the branches of bent-over birches huddled together for protection and warmth. In the morning he chewed leaf buds and spat them out. He could not bring himself to swallow them. He abandoned his ammunition belt and his bread pouch with the hand grenades in it. On the fifth evening he heard a grey wolf howling near by, he saw the eyes gleaming in the dark but his volley only sprayed up snow. He seemed to have forgotten that he could also fire single shots with his submachine gun. His strength waned faster than his rations. On the sixth night he shot at the wolf again and missed it. He stayed prostrate until well into the forenoon the next day. On this, the seventh day, he only crept forward step by step.

When he looked back about midday, he saw the wolf on his track, its snout to the ground. The wolf was yellowish-grey with dark spots on its head. Its flanks were shrunken, the matted fur on its breast turned to bristles towards the neck. Its bushy tail trailed in the snow. It squatted down on its haunches, yawned so that Lechner could see its yellow fangs between its rosy jaws, and uttered a mournful cry. The war had frightened away the herds of reindeer. They were his food. Only the leaping snow hares with their underground hiding places and the flighty grouse that fluttered away before his nose into the bushes still lived their anxious lives in his hunting grounds, making a fool of him, the hungry tundra wolf hunting alone in the spring. Lechner shot twice more. The third time he scabbled up some earth to rest

his gun on. White needles pricked his eyes and he saw the wolf, flickeringly now, through blinding tears, creeping nearer, step by step through the day, foot-lengths nearer every hour, his wretched snout and tail trailing in the snow. On the evening of the seventh day he came to a region he thought he had seen before, although the white needles now pricked his eyes constantly. He followed a track not yet obliterated by the change from thaw to freezing, so that he could see it through his snow glasses in spite of the painful flickering. He thought he must have wandered up into the southern sector of the Litsa front – weak, snow-blind, without a compass – hundreds of miles straight to the north. “So it’s the same old thing,” he murmured, for he had got into the habit of talking to himself. “So you can start all over again, you can’t get away from yourself, you’re stuck with yourself. Nobody’s going to do it for you. Your place is with your own chaps, the Rosskopf platoon is your job, you’ll have to live or die with it. Ha! my friend, you wanted to make things easier for yourself, you swine, you wanted to have it easier, didn’t you?” He found a slope free of snow, a mossy patch, a little copse of budding birches. When he lay down he felt his bread pouch with the hand grenades in it at his back. “So you’ve been going round in a circle, always back to where you started from, that’s it,” he murmured, laughing wildly and, raising himself with a groan, threw the hand grenades one after another into a swampy puddle. A fountain squirted up after each explosion. Clumps of marsh flew through the air with the splinters. Lechner was too weak to crush the percussion caps with the butt of his submachine gun, so he chucked his re-found ammunition belt into the puddle, too. He scratched under the snow in search of berries, shoved moss into his mouth, tried to eat birch-leaf buds again and after he had vomited up again and again everything he tried to swallow, he gobbled up the last hard biscuit that was his ration for the next day. He dropped off to sleep with an indifferent glance at the wolf’s gleaming eyes, now nearer than ever; the wolf stretched out, raised his snout, ran his tongue over his lips and howled his misery to the stars. Lechner woke up and saw the wolf five paces away, on his haunches, the spittle running down from his mouth into the bristles and snarls of his fell. Was it an animal with his own human feelings – hunger, love, loneliness, longing for company? Lechner felt as light as a feather, free of the pangs of hunger, he need only rise and fly away from the deserts of the earth. He would certainly hit him if he shot now. But on the point of doing it his index finger slipped off the trigger. The thin volley tore a bloody strip in the animal’s fell. If he had been capable of a clear thought in the black world behind his snow glasses, Lechner would have cursed himself for destroying the hand grenades and the reserve ammunition. If he had been capable of it, with his confused brain and the pain of the white needles, he would have sworn to keep his last three shots until the moment when the wolf – or man – was certain to leap. But the human animal or animal man waited a mass of greed for living flesh, a mass of skin and bone. His deadly enemy’s hands could still hold the thundering pipe. Lechner abandoned his skis; they had become leaden weights on his feet. He marched on before daybreak. Marched! Not looking for a path behind dark glasses through the flickering slits of his bloodshot eyes, no, feeling his way across the next couple of yards of gleaming white, he dragged himself a few steps farther, fell on his knees, crawled a stretch, then

dragged himself up again, walked bravely a few yards farther, sank down in the squelching snow, dragged himself along by the green brush and managed to cover five miles or so from dawn till dark through a valley sheltered from the wind, to a Lapland hut made of clods of earth. Here he scabbled up a small pile of bones from the hearth and gnawed them clean of leathery scraps of muscle. He could not chew them. He gathered the bones together under him before the eyes of the lurking wolf at the entrance hole. Then he gloried in dumplings swimming in mutton stew, twined spaghetti round a fork, but that was too slow and he shoved it into his mouth with his fists and the fat dripped out of the corners of his mouth. In between he saw the wolf's fangs gleaming between its rosy jaws. After that it was lentils, just plain lentils, that he spooned up out of the ever-brimming bowl. The queer thing was that his hunger grew the more he gobbled out of the brimming bowl, whose steaming, glorious-smelling contents never got less. Night fell, the eyes gleamed at the entrance hole, and then platoon commander Rosskopf was there, he drank schnapps in gurgling swigs, without stopping, and threw the empty bottles out of the window. He – or the wolf – had shoved his chest through the hole, crept half a pace further in and Lechner could almost have grabbed him. He would have to get him alive, he thought, and take him home to the zoo. Then your name will be on the plate: "Canis lupus rosskopf, Lapland, presented by Lance Corporal Lechner, 141st Mountain Infantry Regiment." He covered back the half pace that the wolf – or Rosskopf – had advanced into the hut. He knelt down, and through the burning slits between his swollen eyelids, through the night of his snow glasses, he searched in the twilight seeping in through the hole the shape of the schnapps-drinking wolf who had just thrown the empty bottles through the window.

When Rosskopf leapt, the gun was between him and the living flesh, breastbone pressed against the mouth of it, the flame bit into him, the thunder drove him back. Lechner pressed the trigger while Rosskopf, with burning eyes, crept towards him on his belly. In a last flare-up of the will to live he pressed the trigger wildly with his index finger. The hammer clicked in the empty gun. Rosskopf, bleeding, still tried to leap, but at each effort blood spurted out of his chest. Inch by inch he crept nearer his deadly enemy. Lechner was too weak to hit him, too weak to escape him. Whoever gave in first would be the other's prey.

Towards midday Lechner stared out over Rosskopf in his death throes at the shimmering glaze of the rolling desert and saw his last mirage in that desolate end of the world. He wanted to curse, shake his fist, draw his pukko – but all he could do was to crouch down on all fours, a brother to the wolf, and turn his blind face up to the shadow moving towards the entrance hole. He and Rosskopf, who was dying, rolled over together, then, as the first shadow bent down to the hole, a remnant of his dying consciousness suggested that the Red Army men had come.... "Tovarishchi," he tried to say, but he saw and heard and said no more.

Along with the unconscious mountain infantryman, the scout patrol summoned by the sharp tack-tack of the salvos, brought back to the first-aid station behind the German-Finnish line the skull and fell of a wolf that the raving man had called "Rosskopf."

The Choo-Choo Train

By Nancy Robinson

The dry brown sycamore leaves were drifting gently from the trees as the sun sank toward Mountain Creek Lake. The temperature was a perfect sixty-eight degrees and the sky so clear it seemed to sparkle. We had loaded the luggage in the old black and white '57 Oldsmobile and settled the children in to the back seat for the drive to Union Station and the beginning of a new adventure for them. This was their first time to ride a "choo-choo" train.

I was apprehensive, an attitude taught to me years earlier by my mother. She was always worried. She was afraid that we'd miss the bus or train or that our papers wouldn't be in order or that her hat would be "wrong." These horrible things never seemed to happen, but she believed that it was best to be emotionally prepared. I had tried to prepare my two, three, and four-year old children for a long train ride away from Daddy. I didn't know whether or not they understood, but they did seem to realize that they were going on the "choo-choo" train.

Tom, the eldest, was on his very best behavior. His excitement was visible in his controlled motions. A hand would reach of its own volition to touch something. He would see it and pull it back. The feet would wander off to allow the eyes to inspect some new visual wonder in the huge train station, and he'd notice and direct them back to the group.

On the other hand, Dick, the second child, had no such scruples. As usual, when he saw something that he wanted to touch or hold, he did just that – quickly, preventing anyone from intercepting him. Keeping ahead of Dick was a constant challenge.

The baby Harriet was confined in my arms, so she was no problem. Her sparkling, blue eyes seemed to take in everything around her, promising a lively time with her when she became mobile.

We purchased our tickets and walked through the station, down the long tunnel to the trains. The youngsters were subdued at the sight of the passenger car, much larger than they had imagined. They were delighted to find that the tracks came right inside the building, and they were awed by the size of the wheels which were as high as the baby was tall.

The conductor, impressive in his blue uniform and gold braid, leaned down and assisted Tom up the high steps, then offered his hand to Dick, who, for once in his life, stood absolutely still. The combination of the strange man in blue, the giant step, and the glimmering steel monster had overwhelmed this child. I carried him into the car. Harriet was quite pleased to be transported by the friendly conductor.

After the children were settled in their seats there was a moment of quiet as the Silver Eagle glided almost silently down the gleaming twin rails leaving the old station. I pondered the improvements in rail travel since I was a child. This passenger car was conditioned with clean, filtered air, its temperature thermostatically regulated. The lights were bright, and the windows were sparkling. The streamlined engine put out no black puffs of coal-dust filled smoke, and it traveled smoothly, without the jerk-chug-jerk-chug of the old locomotive.

My reverie was interrupted by an anguished cry from Tom, and I looked up to see tears rolling down his suddenly sad little face. Surprised, I asked him, "What's wrong, Tommy?"

His reply gave me some food for thought, as my choice of words in explaining this trip had caused disappointment for my child.

"It doesn't go 'choo-choo,'" was his answer. ■

