

PA MOVES ONLINE: THE REVOLUTION CONTINUES

POLITICAL AFFAIRS A MARXIST MONTHLY

pa

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**ECONOMIC AND
ENERGY CRISIS**

**EUROPE FROM
FORTRESS TO PRISON**

**VIVA VIAGRA
AND OTHER
PROPAGANDA**

A NEW ERA BEGINS



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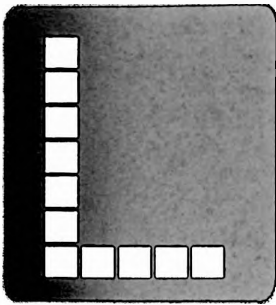
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Reviewed by Josef Gregory Mahoney



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.

Dear Readers,

Let me start by thanking you for your support *Political Affairs*. *Political Affairs* was launched many decades ago as a theoretical journal with the intention of developing, debating, and disseminating socialist and communist ideas. As a print publication it has uniquely served this purpose for over 80 years.

But as we move into the 21st century in which new forms of communication and publishing trump printed material it is necessary to look to new information technologies for cost-effective, "treeless" publishing.

That is why *Political Affairs* has made the decision to bring publication of its print edition to a close by the end of 2008. The decision was not taken lightly but with much discussion, both political and financial, and with input from you the reader.

All of our publishing beginning in January 2009 will take place online. We will pres-

ent articles on Marxist thought and ideas, international issues, struggles for peace and democracy just as before. We will also offer a more interactive and extensive place for readers to comment on and discuss articles. You can or soon will be able to access and comment on our editors' blog, listen to our weekly podcast, and participate in educational and forums.

Political Affairs will be in the struggle to defeat end Republican rule and the ideas and culture of the ultra right; we will be in the fight for workers' rights, peace, universal health care, democratic rights, and environmental justice.

With online publishing, we will be able reach tens of thousands of readers each month without the heavy cost in both money and labor time of publishing a print edition. This opportunity will give *Political Affairs* a circulation it has never had before.

Rest assured that *Political Affairs* will keep its character: a popular and fighting magazine of ideas, culture, and politics. Only this will take place in the dynamic environment of online publishing.

If you renewed recently you may be owed a reimbursement. However we would like to suggest that your renewal of *PA* this year be extended to a full one-year subscription to our sister publication, the *Peoples Weekly World*. If we do not hear from you to the contrary this is what we will do.

Please feel free to write me at jwendland@politicalaffairs.net.

Sincerely,

Joel Wendland
 Editor

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A NEW ERA FOR PA

By Joel Wendland and Peter Zerner

A few weeks back, we received an e-mail alert from a friend to take action on behalf of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees union (AFSCME) on standing up for California public workers in the face of steep budget cuts proposed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. After sending the e-mail on, the subsequent e-mail from AFSCME thanking those who took action included an invitation to stay connected with AFSCME on Twitter. That's exactly what we said: What the heck is that?

Well, it turns out that Twitter.com is a social networking Web site that allows friends and organizations to communicate both online and via cell phone. Being connected to AFSCME on Twitter allows you to get the latest blog posts from AFSCME's Green Blog on your iPhone or other wireless device while jogging through the park or working late nights at city hall. Learning more about social networks, labor's new push for online activism, and the growing impact of the Internet on news and information can help *Political Affairs* take some new steps into the 21st century world of publishing and movement building.

Labor has taken huge steps in how it uses 21st-century information technology to communicate with rank-and-file members and the broader public, educating and mobilizing union members and their families via blogs, new Web sites, e-mail action alerts, text-messaging, and more. On health care issues, organizing, and campaigning against John McCain and the Republicans, new information technologies are becoming more and more indispensable to the most organized

section of the working class, labor union members.

Both of the national labor federations have adopted online communication and mobilization technologies. You can read daily blogs by the AFL-CIO and regular posts from Change to Win. Today all the major unions have home pages, blogs, "spaces" on social networking sites, and even separate campaign sites on specific workers rights or political issues.

For example, the AFL-CIO has separate Web sites for each of its affiliate programs, from Working America, to CLUW, CBTU, Union Veterans and Pride at Work. Working America has separate sites whose sole purpose was to gather 1 million signatures in

Labor's presence on the Internet is growing rapidly. It is reaching members and building a more powerful and independent movement.

support of the Employee Free Choice Act. The Alliance for Retired Americans has both a standard home page and weekly e-mail alerts with news and action items. The AFL-CIO even purchased the domain name, McCainRevealed.com, for its campaign to educate members about John McCain's true record.

By way of one more example of among many, the Laborers' union (LIUNA), an affli-

ate of Change to Win, recently launched its online campaign to collect 1 million signatures on a petition to the next president and Congress demanding real investment in infrastructure repair to create jobs. It set up a separate site specifically for the petition and asks its members to sign up to receive text messages by cell phone for future actions and more information.

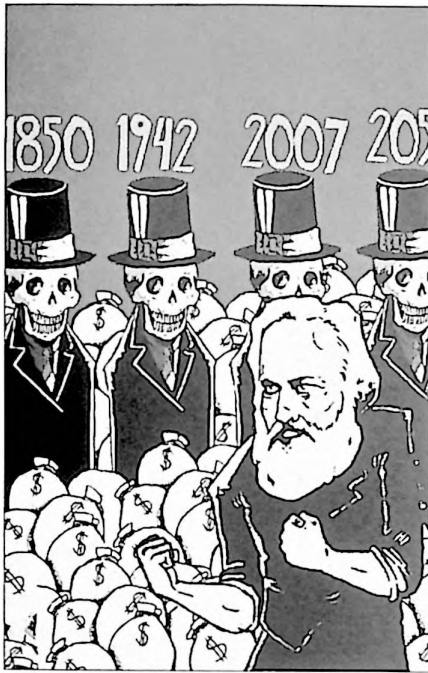
A list compiling all of labor's new online work would be too long to include here. Obviously, much of this new turn toward online organizing has resulted from lessons learned during the 2004 election campaign on the Democratic side, as well as the huge recent successes of the Obama campaign has seen with its work online, mobilizing voters, generating financial support to build the campaign, and creating excitement and broad participation. Suffice it to say that labor's presence on the Internet is growing rapidly. It is reaching out to its members from all backgrounds and building a more powerful, connected and independent movement.

This new labor-driven Internet mobilization is an important lesson for *Political Affairs* and the Communist movement generally. Labor is moving into the 21st century. The questions are: Will *Political Affairs* also make that leap? Is the Communist Party ready to be a 21st century political party?

More than a magazine

Shifting *Political Affairs'* focus to online publishing exclusively gives it the opportunity to be more than a magazine, to build a community of activists and readers who share a socialist consciousness and to reach out to a growing constituency of new participants who too can learn, share, and discuss the basic ideas of our movement. *PA* online, or PoliticalAffairs.net, provides far superior tools for doing this than the print edition ever could. *PA* was established decades ago as the theoretical journal of the Communist Party (at its founding called The Communist, and changed its name in 1945). In recent years, taking a cue from former party leader Gus Hall, former *PA* editor and current publisher Joe Sims sought to rethink what being "a theoretical organ" means and re-imagine and re-introduce *Political Affairs* as an in-print popular magazine of culture, ideas and politics combined with an online counterpart.

The Web site was originally conceived and created in 2001 as a sort of mirror for the



magazine, a billboard with which to promote the print magazine. Being new to cyberspace and the trends toward online publishing, we at first failed to grasp the full potential of the Internet and a Web site as its own unique mode of publishing and movement building, one aimed at a potential audience far larger than we could ever hope to achieve in print.

The results were staggering. Since becoming a regular online publication in 2004, *Political Affairs* has reached almost two million unique individuals in one form or another. With a peak circulation of around 3,200 in early 2007 for the print edition (approximately the same domestic circulation as two decades ago), there is no way the print edition could match the performance of the Web site. It is doubtful that *PA* in print throughout its entire existence equals this performance. The latest tools available to measure online readership also show that about 15 percent of these two million are repeat visitors to the site, which means that 300,000 people have returned to the site. Even further, about 10 percent of *PA* readers open our Web site on our homepage, indicating they have it bookmarked in their browser. In the past year alone, this figure reached about 65,000 people.

But a quick look behind the number raises some tough questions. Who are the people that read one or more articles on our Web site? Are they being exposed to articles that express the specific mission of *PA*, i.e.

promoting the theory, ideas, and culture of our movement?

The answers to these questions are complex. *PoliticalAffairs.net*, works on two basic levels. On the first level, our core mission remains doing the theoretical work of the communist movement, presenting our views the public on the socialist and communist idea, with debates and discussions, historical revisitations, and the ongoing development of ideas, old and new, that have been and will continue to be the foundation of our movement.

The second level is the product of necessity, the mother of invention and represents a different level of political work. When we began publishing online in 2004, it quickly became clear that in order to build the readership of our site, we had to have new content on a regular basis. This gave birth to regularly updated online edition that publishes or re-posts articles and content from the international communist movement, the labor movement, and other progressive sources. This activity helped build relationships with a number of groups and organizations that would not have happened otherwise.

It became clear that with these two levels of publishing taking place – one oriented toward the ideas of our movement, the other toward information and analysis of more immediate struggles – that one could now say that two audiences for *PoliticalAffairs.net* had emerged. As the numbers of repeat visitors to the site grew, however, it also became evident that the two audiences overlapped. The number of return visitors and unique visitors who open *PoliticalAffairs.net* at the homepage strongly suggests this.

Moving Forward

So the question then shifted from how to promote the print publication, to why have a print publication at all? More importantly, with such a large regular audience, how do we make *PoliticalAffairs.net* easier to use, encourage return visits, and tightly link the two levels of publishing described above together?

Once again the technological tools for doing this were already available. We created a *PA* podcast, featuring new content, including interviews with Party activists and leaders, *PA* editors and contributors, as well as activists in the broader movement. We also added a *PA* editors blog site, which allows edi-

tors and other contributors to express their often feisty personal opinions on key issues, to stimulate discussion, build a "online personality," and add some interesting discussion to the mix. In addition, a new comments function, Disqus, has allowed more and more readers to participate online in a way that was not available to them before. All of these new features have been a huge success, both in terms of attracting new readers to *PoliticalAffairs.net* and in building relationships with the broader all-people's coalition.

Other proposed new additions, such as regular educational features on the fundamentals of the communist movement, specifically the problems we face in the 21st century, new action resources such as circulating petitions and e-action items, topic-oriented online forums, and a chatroom are in the offing.

It is true that without a print publication, party members and our friends no longer have a physical object to circulate and discuss. The nature of a Web publication is different. It is open to everyone, except for potential subscriber-only information, and while it may be reproduced for the private use of a specific group of people (e.g. the Communist Party and its members), it is essentially an outward-oriented, public projection of our movement. Because of this difference, *PoliticalAffairs.net*, in its organizational role, needs to shift to more direct contact with member and non-member readers through forums, meetings, and e-mail contact.

As we wind up our print publication with this issue, *PoliticalAffairs.net* remains a vital tool both for spreading the ideas of the communist movement, recruiting new members to the Party, and enhancing the role of Communist Party members who do not have strong relationships to party organizations because of their remoteness from viable Party organizations. The aim should be to bring such people into Party work, help to educate them about the Party's strategic aims and theoretical positions, and to train them on Internet-based tools for disseminating those ideas. For all of these reasons, *PoliticalAffairs.net* has become more than a magazine. We are taking our exciting first steps into the 21st century. With your continued support, *PA* can remain a key component of the Communist movement, both here in the US and all over the World Wide Web. □

SOCIALIST CHECKS & BALANCES

By Wadiah Halabi

Every child in the US is taught that a system of "checks and balances" between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, keeps the US from being a dictatorship. There is a long history of "checks and balances" in exploiting societies with constitutional governments. However, power really lies in the hands of the strongest exploiters in business and their agents in government – backed by a top-down "body of armed men." A tiny group effectively "selected" the US president in 2000, and unilaterally decided to pursue the aggression in Iraq three years later despite great opposition, even within the government.

In 1991, Boris Yeltsin took over the government offices in the Soviet Union, with the backing of imperialism as well as domestic supporters of capitalism. Yeltsin did not take over the Communist Party, which he had left years earlier. He did not take over the trade unions, the army, women's, youth or any other mass organizations.

Soon, wages and pensions fell more than 90 percent (through currency devaluation). Spending on production stopped. Spending also crashed for education, health care, the transport and power infrastructure, housing, etc. The status of women fell sharply. Youth, once guaranteed jobs after finishing school, suddenly could not find employment. Yeltsin even tried to outlaw the Communist Party.

What happened to the Soviet trade unions? Why could they not defend their members against such a sharp loss in pay and pensions? What happened to the Young Communist League? What happened to the army, sworn to defend the socialist system? What happened to the Communist Party itself?

One answer is that none of the mass organizations, not even the Communist Party, was prepared for the destabilizing impact on the USSR from world capitalism's deepening

contradictions, and the resulting dangers to the state. Yet as capitalism's contradictions deepened, especially after 1980-82, it visibly escalated its economic, political, military and other pressures on the USSR. But the Party believed in the relative permanence of the two social systems on earth, and that they could peacefully coexist for a long time. (The 1993 book "Victory" by Peter Schweizer describes some of the mounting pressures from Wall Street/Washington.) These pressures, in turn, motivated exploiting tendencies within the USSR itself.

Furthermore, the Communist Party, the government, the unions, etc. were all deeply intertwined, all effectively under the same organizational discipline. None had genuine (relative) independence and strength among their memberships. As a result, there were also few or no mechanisms to balance out their respective tasks and responsibilities.

So when Yeltsin took over the government offices, the mass organizations, even the unions, effectively fell apart, unprepared and unable to mobilize their members in defense of their state. Seventeen long, disastrous years have passed.

Let us say that after a socialist revolution, the government proposes building a big new construction-materials complex (whether state-owned, foreign-owned, or a joint venture, it does not matter for this example).

The trade unions may point out that building this new complex would result in the closing of smaller factories, plus displacement of existing factories on the site of the proposed plant. The unions may propose that the budget for the proposed new plant include funding to retrain workers in any factories shut down by the new plant, plus preferential hiring of workers in factories on the existing site.

Women's organizations may point out that chemicals handled in the proposed complex are known to affect the development of unborn children, so that funding of the new plant must also budget for special measures

After socialism checks and balances forms a potentially mighty way to strengthen and defend workers' power.

to protect the status and employment of women affected by the new construction. Environmental organizations may point out that the proposed plant would almost certainly affect water quality in nearby cities, unless specific measures can be taken to avoid such an impact.

The Communist Party, on the other hand, may point out that factories in one or more capitalist countries could supply the products to be made in the proposed complex. Furthermore, because of a crisis in the capitalist housing industry, the owners of these factories were threatening to shut them down or "downsize" them, putting thousands of workers out of work. So the Communist Party may argue that instead of building the new complex, the government arrange for purchasing the products from capitalist countries, on the condition that workers do not lose their jobs, retain their union, health benefits, the right to strike, etc. (The Party may also make the argument that this would be cheaper than building a new complex, and allow resources to be redirected to other tasks.)

Various mechanisms are then necessary to evaluate the respective arguments of all the organizations with interests in the new complex – the government, the unions, the environmental organizations, the Party, and so on. Compromises develop between the proposals of the government, trade unions, and environmental organizations, and the complex is built. Or the Party's argument may prevail, namely that the historic interests of the working class justify purchasing the products from capitalist countries, in part because that would strengthen the hand of workers internationally.

Many considerations are necessary to

achieve effective "checks and balances." For one, each of the organizations must have real strength among its members; that strength can only be as effective as the corresponding control and interest from below. Control and interest from below is ultimately the best, and perhaps only, defense against potential corruption of officials.

The relative independence of the respective organizations is also essential; a single discipline weakened Soviet mass organizations. A productive practice in Cuba has been to release Communist Party members from party discipline when they participate in women's organizations. This practice has been good for both the women's organizations and the Party.

At the same time, mechanisms must exist, or be developed, to balance out the respective emphases and responsibilities of each mass organization. Periodic meetings between government and unions, or between unions and environmental organizations, may be one such mechanism. Special meetings of all the organizations with stakes in a proposal may be yet another. Legislative bodies and conferences are another. All this becomes easier as the new state develops its economy and the "culture" of workers' democracy.

The flow of prompt and accurate information to all concerned organizations, and within them, is essential for organizational democracy. How effective can unions be if they are not promptly informed of important proposals, or if they in turn fail to inform their members? If they are not effective, they will lose their mass strength, and their defensive capacity in the face of a Yeltsin, or lesser dangers. More generally, all organizations need accurate assessments of major economic and political developments, international and domestic.

Sometimes the government and the new state are confused. But they are not identical. The government has two critical tasks – overseeing the reconstruction and development of the economy after the revolution, and organizing defense of the new state against threats of capitalist restoration.

The government, however, is one of the many institutions forming the new state. Others include the trade unions, the equality organizations, the environmental

organizations, the Communist Party and youth leagues, and so on. Lenin also emphasized the importance of assemblies of non-Party workers, non-Party soldiers, etc.

The new state then properly includes all of the organizations of the working class, including the government, unions, etc. and, the periodic mechanisms to balance out their respective emphases and tasks.

These organizations independently and jointly form the new state created by a socialist revolution. Their shared commitment to building workers' power forms the essential reference point for compromises and resolution of problems.

This is very, very different from the tiny group of exploiters at the heart of capital-

ist states, backed by a repressive force of army, police, judges, prisons, and so on. Furthermore, it is a 'top-down-only' system, with neither interest nor real control from below. The capitalist system is therefore narrow and ultimately weak. This was especially evident in how it disintegrated in Cuba in the face of the mass organization of workers, in particular through the Committees to Defend the Revolution.

After a socialist revolution, a new system of checks and balances forms a potentially effective way to strengthen and defend workers' power, and human liberation. □

marxist IQ



1. When Marx and Engels said the capitalist class as the ruling class they meant that

- a. capitalists like to dress up as Queens and Kings.
- b. capitalists were classy people.
- c. capitalists owned the wealth and controlled the power in society.
- d. people at parties and sports events like to shout "capitalists rule."

2. Marx saw the working-class revolution as the most advance form of democracy because:

- a. the working class constituted the great majority of the people.
- b. the working class fought to establish economic and political rights.
- c. a the working class fought for real not paper equality.
- d. all of the above.

3. Lenin saw imperialism as capitalism's highest stage because

- a. it created a globalized "free market" that would solve capitalism's problems.
- b. it would spread liberal democracy through the world at gunpoint and end class struggle.
- c. the attempt to export of capital limitlessly would lead to war and revolution everywhere.
- d. rural Third World people would defeat and conquer industrialized capitalist states.

4. When Gus Hall wrote "Bill of Rights" socialism he meant:

- a. socialism in one country, the US.
- b. economic and social rights would enhance not eliminate the original bill of rights.
- c. a kind of socialism the US would try to spread around the world.
- d. something that would come in the near future.

How to score yourself:

- 0-2 correct: Read *The Communist Manifesto*, by Marx and Engels and *The State and Revolution*, by Lenin.
- 3-4 correct: With your sharp knowledge of history and ideology, you should write book reviews for PA.

Answers: 1] C 2] D 3] C 4] B

HOW THE LEFT SAVED CAPITALISM

By Gregory Esteven

There is an entire genre of theory explaining why the Western capitalist democracies did not undergo socialist revolution in the 20th century, as classical Marxism had predicted. Not surprisingly, most of this material comes from the left itself. This has led Slavoj Žižek to suspect – perhaps with some justification – that the left has long settled into a comfortable, moralistic posture, relishing defeat with the masochistic rapture that we project onto Christian martyrs of old. We can include Antonio Gramsci's work on hegemony in this genre, as well as the entire output of the Frankfurt School and other psychoanalytically-inclined Marxist theorists (Althusser comes to mind). Taken together, this work contributes greatly to our understanding of the complex dynamics of political and social change, reminding us to avoid oversimplifications and belief in quick fixes of all varieties. I do not want to diminish these contributions in any way, and am not challenging them here.

But at the same time I am suspicious of placing too much emphasis on the left's failures in order to account for the ongoing state of affairs. To supplement the theories I've already mentioned, I would like to propose a somewhat subversive reading of the conventional narrative. Couldn't we also say that the successes of the organized left (modest though they were) actually helped to preserve capitalism, saving it from runaway contradictions, and therefore temporarily reducing the need for revolution?

At first this may seem counterintuitive, but not when we take into account a key feature of capitalism that distinguishes it from previous modes of production – namely its need for instability. In the *Communist*

Manifesto, Marx and Engels assert that:

The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form, was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence for all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones.

I think that old saying, "Sometimes your greatest strength is also your greatest weakness" applies here. Capitalism sustains itself through its contradictions (e.g. the preponderance of the small owning class over the vast working class, the social nature of wealth-generation contrasted with the private nature of accumulation), while these same contradictions always threaten the integrity of the system itself. We know that the capitalist class benefits, for instance, from maintaining high profits and low wages, as well as from divisions in society, such as those of gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. But if the workers become too impoverished, or sexism, racism and homophobia become too pronounced, the system becomes destabilized to a dangerous degree; explosion, or rather implosion, is a real possibility. If wages drop so low that workers give up shopping, this starts to cut into profits. And although it is in the interests of the capitalist class to keep workers divided on the basis of race, they don't want crazy racist militias roving the streets murdering minorities. We have a delicate balancing act here. Capitalism can't



Illustration by Joseph Game

afford for the pendulum to swing too far in either direction (towards stability or instability).

Marx and Engels were writing when capitalist relations of production were at their most inhuman. Workers in most industrialized and industrializing countries weren't even afforded the bare minimum of workers' rights which at least some of us enjoy today, such as the right to organize, limits on the length of the work day and bans on child labor. Observing these conditions, along with growing concentrations of wealth, it's no wonder that Marxism's early proponents believed that revolution was not only inevitable in the economically-developed countries, but close at hand.

Something strange happened, however. The rise of labor unions and radical political organizing in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, though they faced intense, and often violent, opposition from the ruling classes, resulted in increasing positive gains for workers. The grossest contradictions of capitalist relations were reduced, precisely because the working class was winning important battles. In many countries workers won better wages, a shortened work day and safety regulations at the workplace. And with the birth of the welfare state in Western Europe and the New Deal in the United States, a new "capitalism with a human face" seemed to be on the horizon.

In fact, let's be clear. The level of prosperity and freedom which existed in the West, from roughly the early 1950's to the beginning of deep reaction in the 1980's, was unprecedented in world history. There were a number of reasons for this, and one of them was that the past and continuing successes of the left were ensuring that workers were getting a fairer share of the pie, thus providing economic stability and less intense contradictions. More of the wealth was going to more of the people than ever before. (Not to mention the fact that left and Progressive movements were working hard to reduce other contradictions, such as sexism and racism.)

It's probably hard for young people nowadays to imagine, but my grandfather – after fighting in Japan in World War II – worked for one company from the early 1950's to the early 1990's: United Gas. Until the 1970's, he and his family lived in houses provided by the company, which paid the utility bills and

offered many opportunities for job advancement and higher pay. With the money they saved over the years they were able to move up to the middle class, buy land and their own home, without going into debt to do it. They had a great health plan at low cost. And when my grandfather retired, his pension was more than enough to cover living expenses. He often remarked that although he never belonged to a union, he knew that he only enjoyed these kinds of wages and benefits because other workers did belong to unions. Now, his company was perhaps more kindly and paternalistic than most, but it does illustrate the more humane capitalism which existed in that period.

Of course, this increased sharing of the wealth with workers in the Western democracies was predicated upon the fact that those countries had largely built their fortunes through colonialism in the past and from the ongoing super-exploitation of workers in the world's periphery and semi-periphery. We can't forget this aspect of the picture. The kinder, gentler capitalism wasn't being experienced by all the world's peoples. Capitalism is an incredibly dynamic and adaptable system, since, as we have seen, it was able to adopt "socialistic" reforms in order to ameliorate the condition of the worker and avoid crisis and revolutionary upsurges in the core nations. But the question for us today is whether this (broadly-defined) Keynesian logic of amelioration has run its course, reaching its limits with the advent of the global economy, which is qualitatively distinct from the international trade of yesteryear. In other words, was the great wave of reaction, the end of capitalism with a human face, simply brought about by the initiative of certain interests represented by Thatcher in Britain and Reagan in the United States, or has a more fundamental, structural, change taken place in the world system? The possibility I hint at is that the more humane version of capitalism is irreconcilable with globalization, as the former was associated with more autonomous national economies which could offer greater protections to workers, shielding them from blows from foreign markets.

We all know what the picture looks like today. A global division of labor has emerged, with manufacturing jobs moving to the peripheral and semi-peripheral nations, and the core nations transitioning to "postindustrial" economies, dominated by information

and service industries. Whatever is left of the welfare state is being dismantled. Workers are watching the hard-won gains of the past disappear. Multinational corporations set the policy agenda and workers in one part of the world are pitted against workers in other parts of the world (e.g. the euphemistically-called "outsourcing"). In the year 2000, the richest 1 percent of the world's adults owned 40 percent of global assets.

While some say that Marx is irrelevant today, I maintain that the time of Marxism has just arrived. Isn't it in today's global economy that Marx has been vindicated? The concentration of wealth in the hands of the few, and the concomitant immiseration of much of the world's population, have occurred on a scale that makes Marx's predictions seem utterly conservative. He also couldn't have foreseen the contradiction of profit-driven environmental degradation threatening all life on the planet, as well as the total normalization of imperialist aggression, both of which support his theories.

And isn't it really in today's era of globalization that the old leftist dream of internationalism becomes conceivable, practically, and necessary, strategically? I've long thought that the Industrial Workers of the World's objective of organizing skilled and unskilled labor together, across national boundaries, was ahead of its time. Far from being relics of a bygone era, the work they are doing now is cutting edge. They have a better understanding of the present conjuncture than many mainstream unions, which have been slow to adapt to the realities of the postindustrial economy. The Industrial Workers of the World has worked to organize such service industry employees as Starbucks coffee shop workers: there are more of these kinds of jobs in the US than traditional manufacturing jobs today. My perverse leftist imagination can't help but envision workers at both ends of the chain (the people who pick the beans and the people who serve the coffee) organized into the same transnational union. But that may be a ways down the road.

Whatever the case with the IWW, Marx is definitely having his revenge, and it is not at all clear whether capitalism can continue to be reformed, in any significant way, as it was in the past. What comes next we cannot be sure, but it seems that the time to revive the socialist project has arrived, and it must be one adapted to the needs of the 21st century. □



Illustration by Victor Velez

WHICH WAY?

A CONVERSATION WITH MICHAEL ALBERT ABOUT THE FUTURE

Editor's Note: Michael Albert is a founder and current staff member of *Z Magazine* as well as systems operator for ZNet's Web system.

PA: In your recent article, "Which Way Venezuela," you share a large amount of information on some of the reforms currently underway in Venezuela, but for most of the article you also pose a series of questions, which point to the fundamental issue of whether Venezuela is on a path of social democratic reform that will revitalize capitalism, or whether it

is on a path to real transformation, what you might call participatory economy, and I might call socialism. What is your assessment of these issues with regard to Venezuela?

MA: My feeling is exactly what I write in the article, which is to say, I am very hopeful, but I lack sufficient information to be more than hopeful. I wasn't saying that only others need more information, though many other people do, of course. I also don't know enough to have clarity about where Venezuela is headed.

Yes, I did offer considerable little known information, most of which, I think, is very

positive and hopeful. It is strange but true, however, given the incredible importance of what is occurring in Venezuela, that many people, even on the left, know very little about the country and its struggles. Even among those who have access to all the available information, and who have some

How to create a feeling that partaking online and offline left ties is not only moral but wise ... is the real task we face.

or even a lot of first hand experience in Venezuela, few, I think, could provide evidentiary background about policy aims, and the plans and projects, including their basis, logic and vision, that are either underway or are in preparation, that compellingly and convincingly address the various points I raise in the essay. Of course, there are lots of reasons for this, but my point was, whatever the obstacles to greater clarity are, to the extent that there could be more clarity, it would have great benefits.

Regarding labels, I would call the type of society that I hope Venezuela is moving toward, and the type I would like to help attain, participatory society – and I would call that type of society's economy, participatory economy. Why not use the word socialism? Well, there are a few reasons.

Socialism, insofar as people describe it institutionally, is overwhelming just an economic goal, and I do not think we should conflate it with the whole of society. Indeed, doing this mistakenly implies that having economic aims is sufficient to deal with kinship, cultural, political, and other basic defining features, as well as with features of the economy. This is an old error that lives on in this terminological confusion, I think.

But further, I try to avoid using the word socialism even solely for the economy. I think this is quite analogous to when Chavez, for example, says he is for 21st century Socialism. I assume that label means he wants to acknowledge that he likes the underlying sentiments of many historic socialists and socialist movements, but he does not want to align with what they have institutionally put in place. I agree. But I think using the word socialism at all causes way

too many people to think of typical socialist structures including markets and/or central planning, corporate divisions of labor, class division between empowered and disempowered economic actors, remuneration for output or power, and other features as well, all of which I, and I hope Chavez also, reject. It seems to me, if – and it is of course still an if – we want a new kind of economy that is really classless, that doesn't have markets or central planning, that doesn't have the old typical division of labor and old norms of remuneration, class divisions, and so on, then we would do well to give what we seek a new name as well as a full description.

If I said I was for an equitable, just, and humane capitalism, you would say that's absurd, because the institutions of capitalism – private ownership, markets, corporations, etc. etc. – preclude equity, justice, and humanity. If I then said, but I don't want those institutions, you would reply, I bet, great – but then don't call what you seek capitalism, by which nearly everyone means a system with those institutions. I think if you said this to someone saying they want humane capitalism, you would be right.

Now if you say to me that you are for an equitable, just, and humane socialism, I say in turn, but the institutions of socialism – markets or central planning, corporate divisions of labor, top-down economic decision-making, remuneration for power and or output, etc. – preclude equity, justice, and humanity. If you then say, but I don't want those institutions, I reply, great – but then don't call what you seek socialism, by which nearly everyone means a system with those institutions. And I think that stance is sensible even without bothering to mention that, insofar as we expand our view beyond the economy, socialism has typically meant a one-party state or even harsh dictatorship, cultural homogenization, and continued patriarchy.

It is of course largely semantics, but there is also a real underlying issue. If what we want is truly different than what has gone under the label socialism, great, but then why not specify it sufficiently to make that difference very clear, and why not use words that highlight rather than confuse the key points?

PA: Do you think the traditional Marxist metaphor of quantita-

tive changes adding up to qualitative transformation (which, as Marx indicated transformed feudalism into capitalism) is useful in explaining the potential outcome of the systematic social reforms being taking place in Venezuela?

MA: I don't think that phrase means much. It can't help one predict, or probably explain, anything. For example, what causes a pile of accumulating little alterations to trigger, or add up to, something more fundamental? Well, it most certainly is not merely that there are lots of changes piling up. Lots of changes pile up in society, and in history, all the time. Every day, week and month – always. So if that alone meant there would be qualitative transformation, then there would always be qualitative transformation. Instead, of course, it is most often the case that small, if you want to call them quantitative, fine – changes take place but that they accommodate or reproduce qualitative, defining relations, in no sense overthrowing them, but instead typically bolstering them.

So my answer is "no" to the general question. For me what matters aren't quantitative changes piling up, but whether the changes are evolutionary – fitting the current defining relations – or revolutionary – militating against and tending to undermine or replace the current defining relations, even if only a little.

But my guess is that behind that general issue, you are asking, in this specific case whether the many policy innovations and alterations occurring in Venezuela add up to a revolutionary transformation of that society's basic institutions? And of course the answer is "yes," they could – but it is also, which is the point of the article, "no," they might not.

That is, if we take a positive attitude about what is occurring, a hopeful one, then we will feel that the many changes are aimed at fundamental alterations, but in a careful way that avoids violence and chaos as much as possible. If we take a less hopeful view, then we will feel that the many changes are addressing serious problems and bettering the lot of suffering people, to be sure, but either not leading toward basic transformations or, if they are leading away from existing relations, leading to new ones that are

suboptimal.

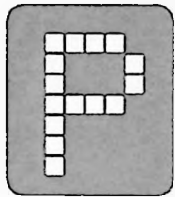
PA: How important is it that the state, under the Chavez administration, is an apparent ally of workers who want to rebuild their economic structures, communities, and so on, through building cooperatives and the like?

MA: Well, of course it is incredibly important. Which would you rather, to live in Argentina and take over a factory and have

the state immediately seek ways to undermine and reverse your efforts – or live in Venezuela and have the state urge you on to enlarge, diversify, and extend your efforts? That said, there is also a danger, of course, in that the innovations could become subordinate to new statist centralizing structures – that is one of the key issues about which we don't know enough to have confidence. About that and related issues, I hope, and I think I have some good reason to hope, that the efforts to create communal councils are a sincere attempt to replace old state forms with a new kind of self-managing polity.

But there are also contrary tendencies, and even this experiment could be only partial, or twisted from good to bad implications, depending on how things unfold, as well as on what the underlying intentions really are, not just for Chavez, but for different constituencies, etc.

PA: Generalizing from the specific situation of Venezuela, your article highlights the conundrum that puzzles many leftists to this day: the contradiction between reform and revolution. What are your thoughts on this?



POETRY

Thelma, Louise & Me

We're in Louise's jade-green T-bird convertible
heading west out of Deep-Shit Arkansas
to Ass-Wipe Oklahoma, gunning it-
The Eagles' "Take it Easy" in sync
with the tires' hypnotic whine.
Louise almost smiles, tossing me her pack of Salems.
Maybe she forgot about the gangbang in Texas,
but she won't forget blowing Harlan
away in the parking lot. We're trying like hell
to outrun our lives: Losers who never got asked to Prom.
Girls too drunk, too sad, too sexy, or not sexy enough.
Girls who always pick the wrong guys. Passing
me a diminutive bottle of Comfort
as if we're flying first class to Vegas,
Thelma says she likes the feel of the snub-
nosed .38 and the look on the faces of the folks she robbed.
It's a surprise party! only none of us gets the prize.
She also gives sage advice: "don't let the sound
of your own wheels drive you crazy."
The freeway's riddled with no-count cowboys
killer cops: more bullets than love out here, west of nowhere.
Bitches from Hell-that's us-who've had it
up to our asses with unpaid bills, the blues,
with bending over 18-wheeler semis.
Louise turns sharply south, pitching
Thelma & me like we're Raggedy-Ann dolls.
When the car soars over the Canyon,
we're awake among the sleepwalkers,
without fear, that unwanted guest
who's taken up residence in our guts.
Without fear for the first time in our lives.

Maggie Jaffe
Reprinted from www.pemmicanpress.com

MA: I think the question is posed a tiny bit wrong. The issue isn't reform or revolution, it is reformism or revolution. Why do I say that? Well, which revolutionary, when and in what country, would be against ending a horrible war, or redressing bad conditions with higher wages, or shorter work times, or having affirmative action, and on and on. None, of course. So revolutionaries are not against reforms. The only person against progressive reforms is someone who seeks to enhance only the well being of the powerful and rich.

But if revolutionaries favor, and work for, reforms, what distinguishes them from reformists? The reformist fights for an end to a war, or better wages, or for new taxes that are progressive, or a for new law that is good, affirmative action, say, or whatever else, and does so as an end unto itself. The reformist takes for granted that underlying defining features of society are not going to change. Because of that belief, in the reformist's view there is no need, indeed it would distract from viable concerns, to worry about making such changes, just as there is no need – and it would distract from viable concerns – to try to get people to flap their arms and fly instead of working on real modes of transportation. It would be nice if such wonderful things happened, but in fact they aren't going to happen, so we shouldn't waste time trying, and in fact, we should even deter others from trying – and we should do what we do based on knowing that things are not going to fundamentally change. That's the reformist viewpoint.

The revolutionary is very different. He or she might fight for the exact same reform as

the reformist, but will do so very differently. The revolutionary believes underlying defining institutions can be changed and wishes to contribute to that change. So the revolutionary doesn't fight for a reform as an end in itself, but first because it will help people, of course, and then second, in ways also designed to cause constituencies to seek more changes after winning, to develop organization and structure, and the aspirations and commitments leading toward new defining relations. The idea is to fight for and win the reform in a non-reformist way, in a revolutionary way that leads forward.

PA: Shifting subjects now, your article appeared on the new ZNet Web site. Could you talk a little about the new site, what readers can find/do there, and what convinced the ZNet crew to make these significant changes? How do you see online activism today – its role in generating political and social change? Has the left here really gotten a good grasp of its full potential? If not, why not, and what will change that?

MA: That's a lot to try to answer. The new site is far easier to navigate and traverse than the old, has more video and audio, but mostly has way more interactivity and participation. Users can comment, have blogs, upload photos and photo albums, chat with one another, instant message their friends or workmates, and on and on – with more features coming. Our effort is to have what we call ZSpace become like MySpace or Facebook in features, but without the commercialism and with serious content and mutual respect. Then we hope that leftists, all over, will benefit from using it, including group pages, calendars, forums, blogs, and so on.

Basically, when ZNet was born it was innovative technically, and also, I think, for its content. But as the years passed, while the content kept pace and developed, the technology of the site did not. We have now remedied that, I believe, not only with what is there right now, but by having a new infrastructure that facilitates continued

change. For example, despite just having done this immense combination of innovation and makeover, we are already hard at work on new features – for example, users are now going to be able to very easily create their own personal versions of ZNet, featuring the content they want easy access to, and likewise for their personal ZSpace page, not to mention using our new online school, among other new features coming soon.

I think online activity has major benefits for inexpensive communication and participation. But fully utilizing these possibilities is still a hope, not something in place. ZCom, the encompassing system that we have, is used by about 300,000 people weekly. But still only a relatively small number, thousands and sometimes only hundreds or less, use features that, if they were used by everyone, could have immense benefits. I am thinking of means of people communicating with one another, making shared plans, addressing one another's views in deep and sustained ways, sharing content, taking courses, entering preferences in polls, etc.

I am not sure what will change the extent to which people partake of these options – if I knew, we would do it. The obstacle may be time, as most people suggest is the case, but I actually don't think that's it. The same person who says they have no time for any kind of left interactivity or community may do Facebook, or may read things of marginal benefit, and so on. My own feeling is that the obstacle is more tenacious and disturbing. I think people feel funny, alienated or foolish doing leftist things. People are so skeptical of the efficacy of anything leftist that their doubts create a self-fulfilling prophecy – I won't answer a poll, I won't use a forum, I won't take a course, I won't upload pictures, won't share my opinions, won't search for people who live near me with views like mine whom I can work with – and so on and so forth – because, well, it seems so futile to expect anything good to emerge from leftist efforts, and so acting as if there is a potential makes me look like I'm unrealistic.

I know that is an odd and vague answer, but I think it is where the real problem lies. How to create a feeling that – far from being unrealistic – pursuing online and offline left ties, projects and activism is not only moral, but wise, and feels that way, is the real task we face – but it is not an easy thing to do. □



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THE ECONOMIC & ENERGY CRISIS

By John Case

You don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows!," Bob Dylan famously sang in 1965. And no one now debates that there is indeed an economic crisis upon us. Note that after at least 20 years of gridlock in Congress, an unprecedented "bipartisan consensus" has arisen to give Treasury Secretary Henry Paulson a "blank check" with which to save Freddie Mae and Freddie Mac – the quasi-public mortgage institutions created under New Deal and Great Society legislation which insure or own nearly half of all home mortgage assets in the United State. It passed by a bigger majority than the resolution giving Bush the authority to go to war in Iraq – near unanimity.

Finance capital is, in a word, scared to death.

The mortgage meltdown, by itself, will amount to upwards of \$2 trillion in lost value in the US alone. But while the major media are biting their nails over Wall Street, the "tail" of this free-fall among mortgage bank-

ers in the real economy is going to be very wide and broad. Few American workers, or workers anywhere in the world, will be spared sacrifice, and many will face ruin.

In reality, however, a mortgage relief bill just passed by Congress will bring little relief to those facing foreclosure. Nearly one-third of those who qualify for protection are expected to face foreclosure again under the harsher terms of their re-negotiated loans. I agree with others who have argued that Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac should not be allowed to fail. Nor should the Fed and Treasury departments spare necessary efforts to avert a financial collapse and its horrendous implications. But for all those of us who live primarily by selling our labor, we must struggle for policies that provide relief and protection directly to working-class homeowners, or there may be no protection for us at all.

Furthermore, the US economy is today perhaps the most globalized economy in the world. For this reason, it is possible that any federal efforts will simply be swamped by the task at hand, especially if too many external



Illustration by Victor Velez

Editor's Note: This slightly edited article was originally published in *The Guardian*, the newspaper of the Communist Party of Australia.

SOCIALISM INTERNATIONALISM AND CLIMATE CHANGE

By Peter Simon

In a recent *Guardian* article it is claimed that "To meet the climate change crisis society must find and adopt new economic and political policies and a philosophy that is based on the needs of humanity as a whole. That philosophy is Marxism."

But what precisely is the Marxist philosophy that is referred to here? Marx and Engels recognized that "man himself is a product of nature which has been developed in and along with its environment." (*Marx: A Criticism of the Hegelian Philosophy of Law*)

There is an inseparable link between human beings and nature. They are interconnected and the actions of people have their consequences in the natural world. That is what we are witnessing today in climate change. The hole in the ozone layer is

a direct consequence of CO2 emissions by man. In turn, the hole in the ozone layer has led to climate changes.

Cause and effect

It is a classic example of cause and effect. Unless emissions are substantially reduced and then stopped altogether, the quantitative changes could lead to qualitative changes in the earth's atmosphere, resulting in earth becoming uninhabitable for humankind and the other life forms inhabiting the planet.

This may seem to be so obvious that it is not worth repeating. Unfortunately these philosophical truths have not been understood by most political figures including many in the communist movement. There grew up the false idea that we could "control" nature and be its "master." This is a repudiation of the concept of "man himself [being] a product of nature." that nature is the mother and father of us – not the other way around.

Although arriving at this conclusion about 150 years ago, neither Marx nor Engels and other communist philosophers developed this concept. They concentrated on applying

and internal threats combine against it simultaneously.

Even with unprecedented government intervention, the credit squeeze on investment banks and brokers is still strangling growth. The first wave of foreclosures has struck. Financial losses are already far greater than those inflicted by Katrina. Millions of homes have now fallen below the value used to back the original mortgages, and before this is over banks may collapse by the hundreds.

A consolidation and restructuring of global finance capital proportional to the scale of its recent losses is already underway. This process, left untouched by reform, could result in even greater economic (and political) power in the hands of even smaller numbers than before.

The truth is, no one knows how bad it will get. Consumers can no longer come to the rescue. They are tapped out on credit and losing existing jobs in exchange for ones with less pay, or they cannot find new work at all. Even if the consumer could come to the rescue – the price of gas has made the trip

unaffordable. If you still have a job, getting to work in rural and suburban areas is now a very expensive proposition. The US automobile, airline, trucking and railroad industries all face serious restructuring – with far-reaching implications for the economy and workers.

Steeply rising energy costs are compelling technological and economic restructuring faster than nearly any event short of a general mobilization for war. The changes are being passed on to every sector of the economy at typhoon-speed, arriving simultaneously with the credit meltdown.

Many cite speculation as the source of enormous oil price spike, and there is volatile speculation in commodities like oil. However, unlike the mortgage bubble, no one is hoarding oil. Hoarding is a key indicator of speculative "frenzies", in which investors become intoxicated with the belief that rising stock prices will never end. This is known in economics as "the greater fool theory," i.e., there is always someone more foolish than you who will buy at an even more foolish price!

Regardless whether one accepts that the

world is running out of oil, and some experts do not, it is indisputable that demand is rising faster than the development of new sources. Drilling off the east coast or in Alaska will not change this equation. Barring an amazing breakthrough, the cheap energy, automobile-based vision of economic development imposed on us by 75 years of politicians bought-and-paid-for by the auto and oil industries is simply at an end.

I could go on – from the worldwide food riots generated by the Bush "ethanol fix" for reducing dependence on foreign oil; to the broken, but very expensive US health care system that is a huge drag on manufacturing and small business expansion; to the huge costs involved in preparing for and recovering from disasters related to global climate change; to the collapse of the 7-year "Doha Round" of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations to redress the crushing inequities in globalization and trade.

A Many-Sided Crisis

Despite the scale and complexity of the economic threats, there are some counter-

Marxist philosophy to human society and the necessity to change the existing capitalist order.

New world outlook

Even though Engels wrote about a "new world outlook", the emphasis was given to this concept as it applied to society rather than to the total relationship encompassing humanity and nature.

For its part, capitalism has never recognized or accepted the unity of nature and society. Capitalist societies regarded natural resources as their private property that was there to be used and exploited for profit. Nature was savagely abused, exploited and desecrated and this attitude is not going to change.

To understand today's society it is necessary to understand its roots in nature and to never isolate one from the other.

Unless this truth is recognized and applied humankind will lurch from one mistake to another even though, in the short term, climate change is mitigated and humanity pulled back from the edge of disaster. This is part of a "new philosophical

outlook" that must be adopted by humanity – applying Marxism and not distorting it in a one-sided way.

Kenneth Cameron, an American Marxist, makes a similar point in his book, *Marxism – A Living Science*. He writes: "Although they [Marx and Engels] laid the foundation for dialectical materialism, its development was left almost entirely to Engels, Marx being occupied by *Capital* and his work with the (First) International. They clearly intended, however, for both aspects of their 'world outlook' to be considered together. ... The importance of this emphasis on the scope of their total 'outlook' is especially clear today when the natural sciences are revealing new links between nature, people and society."

Advantages of socialism

This does not lessen the necessity of using the economic, social and political advantages of socialism to usher in a "new world outlook" in human society if it is to survive.

The advantages of socialism include:

- The education of all in society in the values and truth of Marxist philosophy as it

Marx and Engels recognized that "man himself is a product of nature which has been developed along with his environment.

applies to both nature and society.

- The long range planning of the use of resources taking into account the consequences of their use, using all the accumulated knowledge of science in making decisions.

- The public ownership of production enterprises and processes with production devoted to the needs of society as a whole. This is the only way to eliminate personal greed from the profligate use of resources and the abuse of nature in the production process.

tendencies:

Massive federal credit intervention has so far prevented the collapse of the financial market.

Exports stimulated by the falling dollar are having a positive, but probably temporary effect. The falling dollar is a mixed blessing, especially in recession – it saves a few jobs, but at the cost of higher overall prices.

The purchase, at bargain prices, of large stakes in US companies and financial institutions by oil-rich, dollar-reserve-holding nations, from Qatar to China. This is one of the most visible reflections of the international aspect of the current restructuring process.

Indeed, one of the most important international consequence of the current crisis is that global capital will be restructured in a way that profoundly reduces the US share of global assets relative to the emerging economies of China, India, Brazil, and – for better or worse – oil producing nations.

Clearly more intervention domestically is needed. There is not much disagreement among economists that the biggest stimulus to economic recovery is putting money in the hands of the lower-income consumers. Now that the tax rebate checks have mostly been spent, the best actions that could be

taken now include massive federal efforts to reduce the pressure on the housing, income, energy, health, education and transportation fronts. New actions should specifically aim to help people remain in their homes, create jobs and training programs, invest in renewable energy, and repair the country's dilapidated infrastructure.

On the mortgage-credit-housing meltdown, the key is to give the victims themselves a seat at the negotiating table, where who pays what and who has to move are being decided. The bank, the assessor, the sheriff, and the scavengers of foreclosed properties are already there – but homeowners threatened with foreclosure and renters facing eviction are not. For example, West Virginians are debating empowering counties to seize abandoned McMansions and convert them into more affordable multi-unit dwellings.

The goal is simple: improve the terms of the mortgage, or at least minimize the loss. The hardest part is getting beyond "it's the individual's problem" to "it's a problem that concerns us all."

On energy, everyone but the oil companies thinks there needs to be large scale intervention in energy policy.

On energy, everyone but the oil com-

panies think there needs to be large scale national intervention in energy policy. The labor movement's program is a good example:

- Investment in infrastructure repair that uses energy efficient products and clean energy alternatives.
- Investments in mass transit.
- Investments in building an alternative energy sector.

But also consider the following proposal by Alan Blinder, a former Federal Reserve Board member. It is the kind of reform that meets the multi-sided test. Action on it could be initiated at any level from local to national, even international. Blinder recommends a "cash for clunkers" program where the government buys up the oldest, most polluting vehicles at above market price, and scraps them. If done successfully, it performs a remarkable public policy triple-play – stimulating the economy, improving the environment, and reducing income inequality, all at the same time. Here's what it would do:

- Promote a cleaner environment. The oldest cars, especially those in poor condition, pollute far more per mile driven than newer cars with better emission controls
- Offers more equal income distribution.

- The eventual elimination of separate classes and the adoption of a "new world outlook" which recognizes the "common good" are alone capable of unifying society.

- Priority for the education of citizens in all branches of science and the phasing out of anti-scientific and obscurantist religious ideas and theories together with attitudes of confrontation, wars, violence and arrogant superiority.

International scheme

In his report Professor Ross Garnaut, an Australian climatologist, says: "An emissions trading scheme must be able to coexist and integrate with international emission markets as well as other financial, commodity and product markets in the domestic and international economies." He claims that: "Australia ... can play a role in the emergence of an effective, international

agreement".

He has, thereby, recognized that climate

The damage to the atmosphere is creating floods and droughts and is melting the ice caps resulting in the submergence of some island countries.

change is a world-wide issue and that nature has been changed by man's activities over many decades.

The damage to the atmosphere that encircles the earth is creating floods and droughts, and is melting the Arctic and

Antarctic ice caps, resulting in the submergence of some island countries as the sea's level rises. There are many other consequences. Everyone suffers these consequences in one way or another; no one can escape.

What solution?

The question is: what solution is both necessary and possible not only for Australia but internationally as well? Scientists have presented the facts and a number of schemes offering a solution are on the table. But, the recent G8 summit meeting of the world's leading industrial countries and the major emitters came up with virtually nothing. Climate change skeptics are still in control

Very few nations have adopted carbon emission trading schemes. Not even

Most clunkers are owned by lower-income people. So if the government bought some of these vehicles at above-market prices, it would transfer sustained purchasing power where most effective.

● Acts as an economic stimulus. With almost all the income tax rebates paid out, and the economy weakening, "cash for clunkers" could be a timely part of a broader stimulus in 2009 (along with other investment listed above).

Another example from economist Dean Baker directly addresses a practical, economic means of enforcing speculation reform: tax it.

A modest tax on all financial transactions will impose a serious penalty on those who actively speculate in oil futures, or any other commodity, while having almost no impact on those who use the market for hedging.

It can also raise an enormous amount of money. A 0.02 percent tax on the sale or purchase of commodity futures, and a comparable sized tax on options and other derivatives, could easily raise more than \$10 billion a year, even assuming large declines in trading. If a comparably small tax were applied to all financial transactions, including stock and bond trades, the revenue could exceed \$150 Billion a year, a take that is equivalent to 10

percent of the federal income tax.

Such a tax would be extremely progressive because the overwhelming majority of trading is done by the wealthiest people.

State lotteries are subject to taxes as high as 30 percent. Why shouldn't we tax gambling on oil futures at a rate of 0.02 percent?

A financial transactions tax could hugely increase productivity in the financial sector by restoring it to its proper function as an intermediary between borrowers and lenders. That would be great for the economy and the country, but really bad news for the Wall Street crew.

The Road to Recovery

Economists are divided about the underlying dimensions of the current crisis. Is it an accidental concurrence of shocks aggravating the normal business cycle? Or is it something more profound? Under capitalism, business cycles reflecting changes in supply and demand are well-known. Many, but not all, economists have been persuaded there are independent, stronger, "longer wave" cycles of financial expansion, collapse, consolidation, and expansion, which are inseparably connected to revolutions in technology, their deployment, and their consequent impact

on the division of labor throughout society. These technological revolutions have generally advanced human productivity, wealth and the average standard of living. But they have also stimulated very uneven and unequal distributions of wealth and welfare as well, tendencies which themselves are countered with waves of public intervention, each cycle dictating significant, often radical shifts in public vs. private roles.

There is much evidence that we are in the "collapse" phase of a long wave that began at the peak of the late 1990's tech boom. The "bubbles" since then, especially the mortgage "security innovation" one, are evidence of capital seeking refuge until the next round of true innovation emerges. The essence of public intervention and reforms in this process must thus be directed at market failures (like health care), the provision of the ever-expanding domain of "public goods" (infrastructure and intellectual property), protecting workers dislocated in the process from ruin, and investing in the education required for all to assume productive roles in the next expansion. □

the US and Britain have taken that step, Russia and China made it clear at the G8 summit that they are not ready to join an international scheme saying that the developed industrialized nations have to accept a bigger load as they are the much bigger emitters.

In a list of 20 emitter countries per head of population China ranks 16th while India is ranked 20th. The US heads the list with Australia in third place after Canada.

No scheme will work if it is based on the national interests of any one country or group of countries. Nor will it work if it panders to capitalist market forces and the profit interests of the corporate world. This is the fatal flaw in the Garnaut Scheme. It is a corporate plan.

It could be inferred from the Garnaut Report that trading schemes based on "market forces economics" are to be imposed on the rest of the world whether

they like it or not. There is a certain arrogance in the Report and in remarks by some commentators. Such expectations will not be fulfilled.

Equals

Only a comprehensive emissions agreement negotiated by equals under the auspices of the United Nations and which is based on the interests and needs of all countries is going to be internationally acceptable. Any scheme based on the selfish needs of more powerful countries and the greed of corporations is not going to work.

By their unrestrained exploitation and rape of the earth's resources, the corporations are mainly responsible for the current spiraling consequences of climate change. Those who have caused the crisis cannot be expected to now reverse their behavior and put things right.

That is why "a new world outlook" which accepts the interconnections between humanity and nature and adopts objectives and principles of mutual benefit and the equality of all nations is the way to go. Capitalism cannot but socialism can. □

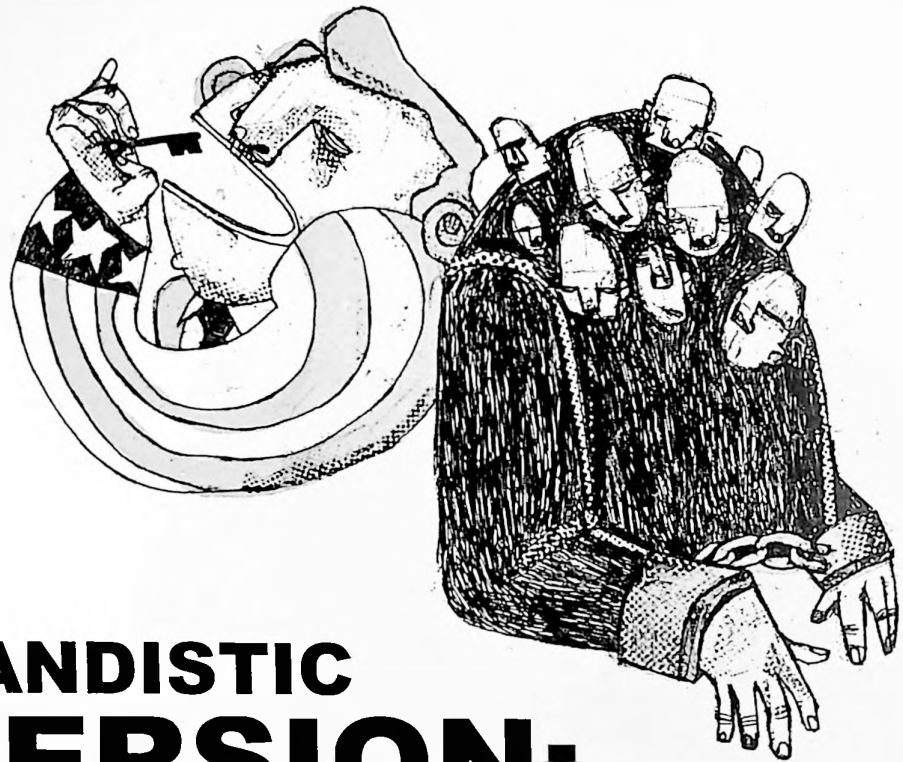


Illustration by James Heimer

A CASE OF PROPAGANDISTIC INVERSION: VIVA VIAGRA! AND OTHER PLOYS

By Gavin Callaghan

If you have been watching TV recently, it is very likely that you will have seen the new TV ad from the Pfizer drug company for their erectile dysfunction drug, "Viagra," an ad campaign produced in conjunction with a print ad in *Golf Magazine*. And if you have seen this television ad, it is very likely that you will have heard the catchy jingle which runs throughout the ad, although it is likely that this jingle will have passed below the threshold of most viewers' radar: a Latin music beat accompanying the repeated phrase, "Viva Viagra!". (In a more recent TV commercial in this ad campaign, aired shortly after I began this essay, the previous Hispanic music beat has been replaced by country and western guitars and

singing cowboys.)

This ad campaign, "Viva Viagra!", is merely one example of the process by which traditional grassroots and popular revolutionary motifs, images, and ideas are inverted and subsumed for a new purpose – usually on behalf of the marketing arm of manufacturers and corporations. In this case, the "Viva"" traditionally associated with such phrases as "Viva la revolución!" or "Viva Cuba!", is here applied, not to a peoples' revolutionary movement or a call to popular solidarity in Latin America, but to a propaganda campaign for a pharmaceutical product for the treatment of male impotence. The mass

appeal of the phrase is thereby reversed, and something which had been previously used to unite, to organize, and to mobilize, is here applied to a product solely designed for individual enjoyment – aside from Pfizer, which obtains its profits collectively.

Other, earlier examples of this propagandic process of inversion/reversal include a Verizon television ad of 2001, in which the traditional hand-sign for "peace" is subsumed under the Verizon company logo, and used instead to represent a letter "V" for Verizon. This commercial includes an image of two punks with spiked hair and leather jackets approaching two people in business

suits on a city street in slow motion, the punks smiling at the businessmen and giving them a "V" sign. The intended message is clear – the traditional meaning of the peace sign being inverted and altered into an affirmation of Verizon's company trademark, as well as into a broader assertion of the peace movement's supposed acknowledgement of the business community's power and ascendancy.

A similarly broad assertion can be found in Burger King's ad campaign of the late 1990's, which featured the campaign slogan "You've got to give the people what they want!!!", which utilized imagery of protest signs being waved up and down before a black background, ostensibly conveying "the peoples' demands." Save only here, the "demands" of "the people" refer only to the ordering options of customers in regard to special toppings on their hamburgers. A form of popular protest – in this case demonstrating with signs inscribed with the peoples' demands – has here been replaced with the customer service desires of hypothetical consumers, thereby subverting a method of popular protest via the findings of corporate marketing research.

Another Burger King ad, this one from the mid-1990s, utilizes a similar process of polemical inversion, this one featuring a Cowboy (interestingly, one of President Bush's favorite public personas), pictured standing before a montage of various shots of ostensibly patriotic American vistas, including the Statue of Liberty, Mount Rushmore, an amber field of grain, an Apollo rocket taking off, desert mesas and horses out West, fireworks and the White House – all with patriotic music ranging from "Stars and Stripes Forever" to Revolutionary War fife-music playing in the background.

The ad, which essentially consists of a monologue by the Cowboy, begins with the Cowboy giving a military salute, then addressing the viewer by saying, "You're an American. That means you've got the right to play Bingo, the right to Monster Truck Rallies, and the right to big juicy burgers. So what happens? Someone slaps a low price on a fried little burger and calls it a deal? That's Un-American. You have the RIGHT to go to Burger King; the right to get a Whopper, flame-broiled, not fried; and the right to get that Whopper any size you want, with fries and a drink, starting at just a \$1.99. It's all

right there in the Constitution. Look it up."

Here, the basic constitutional rights of Americans themselves – secured via the revolutionary defeat of the English crown in the American Revolution – are replaced by the consumer rights offered to the public by a major corporation. The right to vote, to free assembly, to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness – often cited by progressive and revolutionary groups attempting to realize the Constitution's idealistic promises – are here inverted into the mere right to buy.

This process of polemical inversion and reversal, the process by which an opponent's ideas and methods are utilized in an opposite form in order to undermine the opponent's own polemical position, is a basic component of propaganda and the propagandistic process. An early example of this process of polemical inversion and reversal is discussed by Biblical scholar Robert Eisenman, in his study of the polemical battle between Pauline theology and Jamesian theology in the Early

■ The right to vote, to free assembly, to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ... have been subverted into the mere right to buy.

Christian church. According to Eisenman, many of the features of the New Testament which most people are familiar with today, were actually created by Roman propagandists as a point-for-point polemical response to the xenophobic, anti-Roman revolutionaries operating in Judea in the first century A.D. According to Eisenman, for example, the figure of Judas Iscariot, a zealot who killed himself by throwing himself off a cliff after his supposed "betrayal" of Jesus, is actually an inverted caricature of Jewish zealots like those at Masada, who were said by 1st-century Jewish historian Josephus to have killed themselves en masse rather than capitulate to the Romans. The familiar idea, meanwhile, that Jesus and his followers were "peaceful fishermen" on the Sea of Galilee, Eisenman suggests, is actually an inverted caricature of zealot boatmen like "Jesus son of Sapphias," who, according to Josephus, "'poured out' their blood until 'the whole sea of Galilee ran red'" at the hands

of Roman fighters.

The architect of this anti-zealot polemic, Eisenman argues, was Saint Paul, who was the author of most of the epistles of the New Testament, and whom Professor Eisenman reveals to have been one of the greatest and most effective propagandists in history. As Paul himself put it:

I have made myself a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible. (...) To the weak I became weak, to win over the weak. I have become all things to all, to save at least some. (...) Do you not know that the runners in the stadium all run in the race, but only one wins the prize? Run so as to win.

Indeed, the extent of Saint Paul's success, and that of his followers, can be gauged by the fact that many of the polemical inversions of the New Testament are now taken by most people not only to be historical fact, but sacred history.

It is perhaps not surprising, then – given the radical Christian underpinnings of the much of the reactionary right – that many of its propagandists perpetuate many of the same means and methods in the polemics of the present day. One characteristic example of this process of propagandistic inversion can be found in the March 11, 2004 column of radical right pundit Rich Lowry, in which he discusses the Abu Ghraib prison abuse scandal. According to Lowry, the sado-masochistic practices depicted so graphically in the Abu Ghraib photographs – so familiar to those who know anything about human rights violations and prison abuse in totalitarian regimes around the globe – had less to do with militarism run amok, and the predictable violations of law attendant upon an Imperialistic invasion and occupation, than with too much freedom of speech and sexual expression back home – what Lowry calls the seeping into the military of "some of the poison of America's civilian culture." Writes Lowry, "in Abu Ghraib and its aftermath we see some of the seamy undercurrents of America magnified in a horrifying fashion – in particular, (...) the ubiquity of pornography, and a cult of victimhood." In America, Lowry goes on, "pornography is a \$10 billion-a-year business (...) If they [the American soldiers]

had done this stateside in different circumstances, they might be very rich and perhaps even up for an Adult Video Award.”

For Lowry, in other words, the real enemy is not a military which makes prostitution, sexual abuse, and pornography a way of life for thousands of women both abroad and at home, but rather a civilian culture which values intellectual and sexual freedom. In the process of making this assertion, Lowry ignores the extent to which big business benefits from the sex industry, and in the process obfuscates the way in which his argument blurs the clear distinction between rape – which occurred at Abu Ghraib – and sexual consent, as it is exercised by consenting adults in America’s supposedly “poisonous” civilian culture at home. Whether Lowry means that the victims in the Abu Ghraib photographs are mere subscribers to this “cult of victimhood,” which he decries in his essay, Lowry unfortunately does not say, but he implies that they are. Lowry attempts to tar the victims of America’s programme of torture abroad with the brush of America’s “poisonous” culture of freedom.

The disingenuousness of both Lowry’s essay, and his general method of reasoning, is revealed by Lowry’s warped characterization of Quentin Tarantino’s film *Pulp Fiction* in the same essay. Lowry writes:

Consider the iconic film of the 1990’s, Quentin Tarantino’s *Pulp Fiction*. It includes a scene of the rape of a man imprisoned and kept as a sexual slave, which prompted laughs in theaters. The victim, “The Gimp,” became a figure of fun (...) Cruelty, Tarantino tells us, can be fun.

Lowry’s summary of this scene, however – much like his intentional misinterpretation of the sources of cruelty in the photos taken at Abu Ghraib, utterly misrepresents both the facts and the intent of Tarantino’s film.

In this scene, a corrupt boxer, played by Bruce Willis, has just escaped from a hit man sent to kill him, played by John Travolta. Thinking he has gotten away “scot-free,” Willis is shocked to suddenly be confronted with the very gangster, played by Ving Rhames, who had sent the hit man against him in the first place. Willis’ bad luck continues, as suddenly both he and Rhames



Illustration by Vector Velez

find themselves being held prisoner by a trio of racist, sadistic, Southern degenerates: a racist policeman, his partner in crime; and a third, masked man, dressed in black leather bondage-gear, who is kept chained in a box. The humor in this scene, of course, derives solely from the turn toward the surreal and the unexpected which Bruce Willis’ flight from the hit man has suddenly taken, and the contrast which his current, surreal predicament presents with his belief – just a few moments earlier – that he was “scot-free.” Lowry’s attempt to rewrite Tarantino’s script, and present *Pulp Fiction* as a paean to or a justification for sadomasochistic cruelty, is thus very revealing – especially as Lowry here, just as in his rewriting of the script of Abu Ghraib, ignores the implicit critique which Tarantino is making against the often racist, corrupt, and sadomasochistic aspects of both American authority and American law enforcement, a system which Tarantino here criticizes as being no more elevated than such sadomasochistic American serial killers as Henry Lucas and his partner Otis Toole. One can easily understand why Lowry would find such an argument troubling, and why he

would try to either rewrite or obscure it.

Lowry’s turning of common sense on its head, however, and his reversal and inversion of traditional semantic meanings, reaches its apotheosis in his January 8, 2008 column discussing the book *Liberal Fascism*, in which Lowry approvingly describes how, “Jonah Goldberg (a colleague of mine) demonstrates...that fascism was a movement of the left and that liberal heroes like Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt were products of what Goldberg calls ‘the fascist movement’ in America early in the 20th century.”

Leaving aside the question of whether Woodrow Wilson is a leftist “hero” or not, Lowry’s Orwellian inversion of language reaches further heights when he calls the word “fascist” the “f-bomb of American politics (...), routinely hurled by the left at conservatives” – Lowry here seeking to associate leftism with bomb-hurling terrorism (thereby ignoring the right wing-fundamentalist nature of most of the terrorist jihadi organizations), even while he forgets that earlier “f-bomb” hurled by the right-winger Dick Cheney at his liberal opponents on the floor



Illustration by John Kim

of Congress. Ultimately, however, Lowry's labored attempts to philosophically associate the rise of Nazi militarism with socialism's aims to "mobilize and organize" society are not only unconvincing, they are also untrue. Lowry, for instance, pointedly ignores the role played by right-wing German militias in rise of nazism during the inter-war period, as well as the connections and support which the nazis had from right-wing conservatives in England, France, and America.

Lowry's argument, too, that "anti-Semitism isn't an inherently right-wing phenomenon – Stalin's Russia was anti-Semitic," is deeply flawed, as well – Lowry ignoring the basic fact that socialism, by definition, believes in and fights for the idea of the equality of all races and cultures. If Stalin's Russia was anti-Semitic, then its anti-Semitism existed in contradiction to its leftism. Right-wing philosophy, however – whether radical or conservative – with its ultimately nationalistic and militaristic basis, admits of no such inherent contradiction. If Stalin was an anti-Semite, it means only that Stalin was NOT a

good leftist or Socialist – which is hardly an adequate criticism of socialism itself.

Whatever Lowry and his colleague Jonah Goldberg have to say, regarding the supposed fascistic origins and underpinnings of the bourgeoisie democracy of Roosevelt and Wilson, it could scarcely be more acute than the Noam Chomsky's earlier critique of the authoritarian aspects of the liberal/pragmatic democracy of Kennedy, Johnson, and Carter, not to mention the Communist Party's much earlier, much more acute critique of the non-interventionist alliance between bourgeoisie democracies and the growing threat of the fascist states in pre-World War II Europe. Indeed, fascism has never had a more staunch opponent than communism, a fact of which the fascist regimes of Europe in Germany, Italy, and Spain were very much aware, given the number of communists which were later condemned to the concentration camps of right-wing/fascistic regimes.

It was the communists, for example, who first saw the dire significance of the fascist

rebellion in Spain, who realized that it prefigured the coming all-out fascist assault on all of European culture, and who rallied there to defend the values of freedom and democracy on European soil. As Georgy Dmitirov observed in 1935.

Why do the German fascists, those lackeys of the bourgeoisie and the mortal enemies of socialism, represent themselves to the masses as "Socialists," and depict their accession to power as a "revolution"? Because they try to exploit the faith in revolution and the urge towards socialism that lives in the hearts of the mass of working people in Germany.

Ultimately, these latest right-wing attempts on the part of Rich Lowry and various other pundits to confuse the facts of history, and identify socialism and communism with nazism, demonstrate nothing other than the basic bankruptcy of ideas which characterizes the radical right. Eight years of the second President Bush, instead of leading to the workers' panacea, the high national security, and the high moral perfection which right-wing pundits have long predicted, have instead led only to the exposure of the secret aims and tendencies of the radical right, and the natural results of right-wing policies: unending war, financial instability, failure to enforce environmental and industrial regulations, trampling of civil rights, and rampant profiteering on the part of the capitalist class. It remains to be seen whether, as in the case of Saint Paul, the caricature created by the right wing and their pundits will supplant the truth, and whether a fantasy will be accepted by future generations as reality. □

By Norman Markowitz

Political Affairs was born, as a publication of the Communist Party, in 1945 after the greatest war in human history, as colonial empires collapsed, the communist-led Chinese revolution took place, and the world revolution, a dream of the socialist movement since the *Communist Manifesto*, appeared to be developing rapidly.

PA was soon to fight against the longest red scare in US history, the political repression against communists and all who refused to kowtow to the phalanx of private and public red-baiters building their own domestic "iron curtain" against opposition to the Cold War.

PA analyzed and aided the mass movements for civil rights, women's rights and peace which advanced in the US in the 1960s and 1970s, movements which blossomed from the seeds of previous communist- and left-led struggles. *PA* also fought reaction to those movements from the 1980s to the present.

From the Start

Let's begin at *PA*'s beginning. CPUSA membership was around 70,000 on May Day, 1946. The conflict over Earl Browder's attempt to dissolve the Communist Party into a political association had ended with the reconstitution of the party's leadership. V. J. Jerome, a veteran party leader on cultural affairs, took over as *PA*'s editor, as he had been of its predecessor publication, *The Communist*.

The best way to tell *PA*'s story is to revisit some of its most outstanding articles over time that help tell the story of the struggles of the communist movement and the working class. In the November 1946 issue, Max Weiss warned prophetically that reactionary forces were in the process of "undermining the New Deal" and Wall Street was seeking a "Pax Americana, a peace which will insure the hegemony of American imperialism."

American imperialism took a giant step in that direction in 1947 with its Truman Doctrine and Marshall Plan, replacing the British and all other pre-World War II empires. In the CIO, anti-Communists used the 1947

POLITICAL AFFAIRS: A NEW ERA BEGINS



Illustration by Victor Valdez

anti-labor Taft-Hartley law to launch purges of communist and left activists, claiming such purges were necessary to keep the law from destroying the entire labor movement.

Having won the 1948 election on a progressive program that conflicted with its Cold War priorities, the Truman administration responded to attacks from the Republican Party about communist influence in government by arresting and staging a political show trial of the CPUSA national leadership in 1949.

The Truman administration also created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The Chinese revolution and the Soviets' exploding of an atomic bomb – which

ended the US nuclear monopoly – escalated the Cold War, which became a hot war with US involvement in the Korean Civil War in 1950, making nuclear war a direct threat.

By 1952, the Korean War was raging, the CPUSA's national leadership had been "convicted" in the Foley Square political trial, and the persecution of Communists and those who refused to collaborate with red-baiters was at its height. Yet the January issue of *PA* was filled with optimism and hope. The issue contained an article by Alexander Bittleman on the central importance of Lenin's thinking, "Lenin and the Liberation of Humanity." Harry Haywood, the prominent African American party activist, reviewed the

Civil Rights Congress (CRC) "We Charge Genocide Petition" originated by CRC leader William Patterson and Paul Robeson to bring evidence of the oppression of African Americans to the world community through the United Nations and demand international action. The international movement for peace and nuclear disarmament was also highlighted.

Despite the repression, the CPUSA fought a two-front war against attempts to segregate it from society by demonizing the party and making it invisible, the historic tactics associated with racial segregation. On one front was the campaign for peace, symbolized by the Stockholm Peace Petition that Communists circulated under the most disadvantageous conditions in the US. On the other front was the fight of the CPUSA to regain its civil rights, and the right of Americans to join organizations of their choosing, sign petitions, and act and think outside Cold War politics.

By 1956, there had been a "thaw" in the Cold War, and the courts were beginning to challenge some of the worst "McCarthyite" abuses. Most importantly, the Montgomery Bus Boycott encouraged hope for progressive revitalization nationally. A factional struggle inside the CPUSA, however, undermined its ability to regain and make effective use of some of these new victories or to adequately participate in the civil rights movement. Also that same year came revelations about a "secret speech" by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev denouncing the Stalin leadership and inaugurating a policy of de-Stalinization. These necessary revelations and reforms led to divisions within Communist parties through the world, including the US, between staunch supporters of Stalin and reformers.

The FBI, fearful that court decisions would undermine its open violations of the civil rights of suspected CPUSA members, launched a "secret" Counter Intelligence Program (Cointelpro) to sow division inside the CPUSA, and harass members, their families and their friends. The factional struggle, which developed inside the CPUSA, later internal FBI documents showed, while not created by the FBI, was seen as a boon to them in weakening the party. The conflict would cost the CPUSA thousands more members and help to create a new FBI-influenced "conventional wisdom" that media

and later scholarship helped to propagate – that the CPUSA disappeared after 1956 when the reality was (and is) that the CPUSA was the only party on the left that really survived and continued to advance the people's struggles.

The November 1956 issue of *PA* highlighted aspects of the internal struggle. John Gates, editor of the *Daily Worker* and leader of one section of the Party that called for reforms, called for a "revitalized" Communist Party in an article titled "It's Time for a Change." Gates viewed the "thaw" in the Cold War positively and seemed optimistic about developments in the labor movement at the time, including the merger of the AFL and the CIO, which created the AFL-CIO. In that article, Gates contended that "labor is already strong enough to win the 30-hour or four-day week when the situation presents itself."

The achievements of civil rights activists in the late 1950s encouraged peace activists especially and others to revive mass protest politics and helped convince many Americans that extreme political reaction would end. Communists were involved in both these struggles in significant ways, even though the FBI's Gestapo tactics often compelled them and their allies to hide their political affiliations.

The highlight of the March 1960 issue was an article by CPUSA leader, and recent Smith Act political prisoner Elizabeth Gurley Flynn on "The Golden Jubilee of International Women's Day." Flynn recounted the US origins and history of this world holiday, but she was interested in more than history. She looked at women in the workforce, in the professions and education and government, raising issues that would soon be raised by other feminists, in rallies and in literature, with the development of the women's rights movement.

Through the 1960s and 1970s, *PA* continued, as did the CPUSA, to struggle to loosen the political straight-jacket that Cold War anti-Communism had put both the left and the American people in, and strove to play the role of a responsible left, which was the exact opposite of what the red-baiters portrayed it as doing, and also the opposite of what the anarchist-influenced "New Left" was often actually doing.

PA consistently supported the civil rights, women's rights and peace movements, as they made huge gains in the period, opposing separatist trends represented by various Black nationalist and "radical feminist groups," along with ultra-left demands that divided the peace movement. *PA* kept its bearings, even as Lenin's famous post-revo-

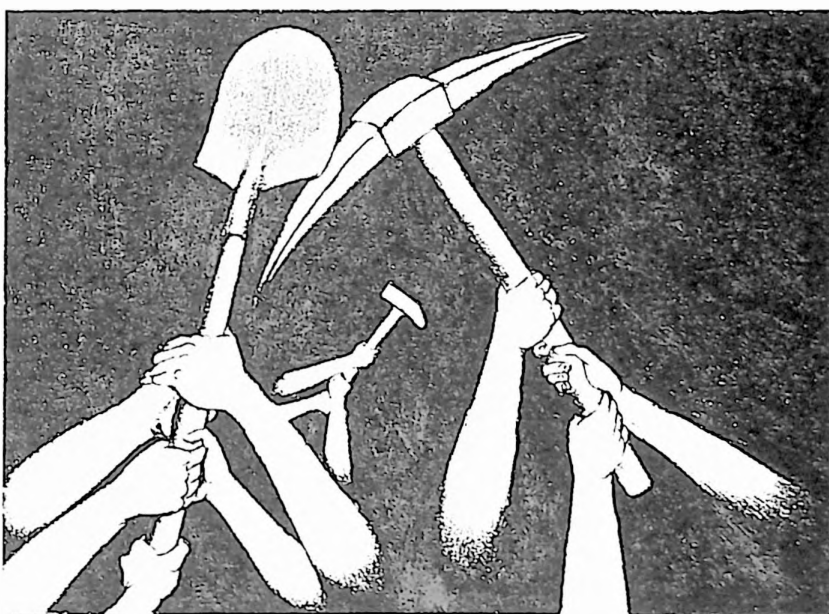


Illustration by Victor Velez

lution article "Left-wing Communism – an Infantile Disorder" sadly defined the period.

After riding the wave of mass protest, the New Left groups collapsed, split into sectarian groups, or were effectively destroyed by police repression.

The CPUSA Survives

In the 1970s, a sinister reactionary coalition seeking to destroy both the gains made since the 1930s and the "Soviet menace," even if it meant increasing the direct danger of nuclear war, began to gain ground against a rightward-moving Democratic Party, which took its working-class-based constituencies for granted. Ronald Reagan emerged as the political leader of these forces, representing both a qualitative intensification of the cold war against the Soviet Union and the socialist world, and a campaign to eradicate all of the gains made by labor and progressive forces since the New Deal.

Reagan pursued the policies of "deregulation, detaxation and privatization" associated with 1920s rightwing Republican governments, as he launched the greatest peacetime military buildup in history and brought relations with the Soviet Union to their lowest point since the Korean War.

The pages of *PA* were filled with warnings of the increased nuclear war danger. Party leaders Gus Hall and Henry Winston particularly stressed these themes. Winston, in "Big Lie – The Road to Nuclear Disaster" in the December 1983 issue described how anti-Communism in the US functioned to strengthen Reagan's profoundly dangerous policies, policies which CPUSA General Secretary Gus Hall in 1984 called a "whiff of fascism." Hall, Winston, and others showed how the acceptance of extreme anti-Communism by liberal, anti-Reagan groups and the media crippled their opposition to Reagan's policies.

Reagan's second term resulted in major setbacks for working Americans, as well as the world communist and progressive movements. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and a number of articles in *Political Affairs* expressed optimism about the reforms he proposed. Within six years, however, the world witnessed the collapse of the Warsaw Treaty Alliance and the dismemberment of the Soviet Union. The effects of Gorbachev's policies continue to be debat-

ed through the world. Subsequently, many communists came to agree that a multitude of factors, both internal and external to the USSR, caused the dissolution of that country and its system.

The 25th convention of the CPUSA held in Cleveland, Ohio came at the end of 1991. A factional struggle preceded it fueled by a number of ideological and political issues. The opposition did split and created a group called the Committees of Correspondence, which continues to this day, even though some of its members have rejoined the CPUSA. This split was both sad and tragic, since it distracted the CPUSA and its media from fully confronting the elder Bush administration's first Gulf War, and effectively mobilizing left and center forces against what was then emerging as a serious economic crisis.

Following this factional dispute, Joe Sims was elected as *PA's* editor, and the magazine turned to a discussion of the collapse of the Soviet Union and what this meant globally. *PA* also looked with growing skepticism at the Democratic Clinton administration, which the core constituencies of the Democratic Party had elected in 1992 to reverse the policies of the Reagan-Bush I administrations. In *PA's* March, 1994 issue, Norman Goldberg's cover showed Black and White, male and female demonstrators rejecting NAFTA and demanding universal health care, support for unions, and real job creation. In the same issue, Gus Hall wrote that "everybody knows that Clinton has taken giant steps to the right," as Clinton in a curious twist on Cold War "vital center" ideology, sought to portray himself as a "centrist" between conservative Republicans on the right and liberal Democrats, the largest group within his party, on the left!

Sam Webb, who at the time headed the CPUSA Labor Commission, in an article entitled "Labor after NAFTA" made insightful comments about both the emerging opposition to Clinton and the increasing militancy that the resistance to NAFTA had produced among working people and their unions. Webb also answered those on the left who accused the CPUSA of fostering "illusions about Clinton" (whom he referred to as "Slick Willie") by noting that CPUSA labor activists had sought to build support for a labor march on Washington to pressure the Clinton administration to reverse Reagan-Bush policies, only to be thwarted by the

AFL-CIO leadership, who saw it as "embarrassing" the new president.

Webb's analysis had a different political outcome than he and all progressives had hoped. Even with an economic recovery in 1993, the Republicans in 1994 won their greatest victory in Congress since 1946, regained control of the House of Representatives for the first time since 1952, and under Newt Gingrich's leadership in the House, embarked upon a far-right policy. Clinton was able to get himself re-elected in 1996, but right-wing Republican control of Congress continued (it would last until 2006, the longest period of Republican control since 1930). Clinton's second term centered on his impeachment, a bizarre, farcical and sinister set of events, which Rep. Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) called "sexual McCarthyism."

Modest Democratic gains in the 1998 elections after the defeat of impeachment led – to conclude incorrectly that the far right was in decline, as we prepared for the 2000 campaign with a renewed focus on the struggles of labor and the ravages of free-market globalization.

The stolen election of 2000, and the subsequent Bush administration response to the September 11th terrorist attacks, signaled the need for strengthened struggle against the ultra-right. *PA* editorialized that the Bush administration sought to use fear and hatred to revive the worst of the Reagan policies, while intensifying all of the contradictions with the US capitalist system and global imperialism.

The 1990s also saw *Political Affairs* undergo an important political and organizational shift in its role and basic purpose. Under guidance from Gus Hall, who had served formerly as *PA's* editor, the *PA* editorial board set aside the concept of fulfilling the role as esoteric "theoretical journal" in favor of striving to become a popular magazine of ideas, culture and politics. However, the core mission of disseminating, developing, and popularizing the ideas of the Communist movement has not been abandoned.

A New Era Opens

PA has gotten broader and better in the 21st century. In 2001, it launched an online edition, which now reaches reach tens of thousands of readers monthly, along with Internet podcasts, an editors' blog, and a vigorous discussion that has provided *PoliticalAffairs.net* with new breadth and



Illustration by Michael McNeal

depth. Cyberspace has freed *PA* to publish diverse articles, essays, interviews, poems, and short stories with progressive political content, allowing us to build new relationships with other forces and sections of the broad movement against the ultra right.

Starting in 2003, the new print *PA* from had remarkable "glossy" covers which future historians will surely note, a greatly enhanced culture section, and interviews with both CPUSA and non-CPUSA people, the broadest kind of coverage since the CPUSA supported the *New Masses* of the 1930s, which featured major writers, and the *Daily Worker* covered from a broad left perspective everything from movies to baseball. *PA* also had other new features, including the Marxist IQ feature, which became the most popular regular feature for readers.

The "new" *PA* now centered on hard-hitting themes such as the ravages of globalization, and were a distinct improvement over the inconsistently conceived and disconnected articles of the past. It also featured interviews with both prominent communist and non-communist progressives like Pulitzer-Prize-winning playwright Tony Kushner, award-winning novelists Russell Banks, and best-selling novelist Walter Mosley, along

with Pulitzer Prize historian David Levering Lewis, economist Doug Henwood, and many other labor activists, progressive community leaders, and cultural figures. The old *PA*, by contrast, even though it was frequently correct, and would be proven right by history, was sometimes a bit too dogmatic, preaching, to a choir of committed communists.

Let me conclude this article for the last print edition of *PA* with a look at a recent issue that captures best what the new *PA* is trying to accomplish, from April-May 2008. The cover depicts a wizened Uncle Sam holding on to a crumbling country of broken houses and toting oil cans. The cover article, "Things Fall Apart: Wall Street and the Decline of US Imperialism," by Joe Sims and Joel Wendland, addressed the ongoing economic crisis. David Scondras and Gary Dotterman in "Ending AIDS: Yes, We Can," highlighted preventive measures in the fight against AIDS, a battle which the Bush administration has refused to fight. Anna Bates had a valuable historical article, "Women Peace Activists and the Cold War," while Eric Green's article, "A New Moment in Film and Music" highlighted new work in these genres ranging from an Iranian animated film, *Persepolis*, dealing with Iranian history,

to Michael Moore's documentary, *Sicko*, on US health care, to remarkable new-technology music, including a duet between Natalie Cole and her late father, Nat King Cole, singing the classic "Unforgettable."

There was also a serious and nuanced theoretical article by physicist-philosopher Erwin Marquit, "Overcoming Unscientific Concepts of 'Working Class'," part of the new *PA*'s Problems of Marxism series, an interview with CPUSA leader Jarvis Tyner on the legacy of Henry Winston, a commentary piece by Gregory Esteven, "Homelessness Hurricanes, and Race," a short analytical article, "Africa Looks East," by Gerald Horne based on his new book, *Blows Against Empire*, and my article, "The Real John McCain." There are also fascinating book reviews and "Lost and Found Man," a moving poem by Jim Finnegan about the sick and homeless people we see and yet don't see.

Finally, the back cover of the issue shows a Colombian farmer running from a bayonet, with a caption that reads "Americans Don't Trade with Death Squads," calling upon readers to protest the Bush administration's Columbia Free Trade Agreement.

The issue breathes political life on every page, in every paragraph, poem and picture. As the print edition of *PA* ends, the online edition looks to expand quantitatively and qualitatively on the old and new strengths of this people's journal, as it reaches many new readers in a post-Reagan, post-Bush progressive America. □

By Rémy Herrera

The hardening of French immigration policy, following Nicolas Sarkozy's appointment as Interior Minister in 2002 and his subsequent election as President in 2007, is not the exception in the European Union but the rule. Since the end of 2002, the 27 EU member countries have begun a process of "harmonizing" their immigration laws. This convergence process seems to be headed towards the German model, which is far from being the most progressive in Europe, and on some key points much more reactionary than French immigration law. As a matter of fact, a European directive ordering the confinement (for up to 18 months) and deportation of undocumented immigrants has recently been adopted in order to promote an alignment with the immigration laws currently applied in Germany.

Levelling or lowering?

Several internationally-based documents exist which regulate the rights of immigrants; however, with few exceptions (on the right to shelter, for example), the European judicial framework regarding immigration policy remains quite heterogeneous. This is the case, for instance, with regulations involving the legal rights granted to undocumented immigrants and the duration of their confinement. The latter varies strongly from one country to another, and tends to rise in a northerly direction. Before the new EU directive went into effect, France had the shortest period of legal detention at 32 days.

Within the EU, three groups of countries can be distinguished: the first is Southern Europe (Spain, Italy, Portugal, and Greece) where legislation stipulates the shortest period of confinement after France: from 60 to 90 days. The second group is in Central and Eastern Europe (Austria, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Poland) with the duration stretching from six to 12 months. The third group includes the Northern countries (the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Lithuania, Estonia, and Finland), where laws authorize the unlimited imprisonment of undocumented immigrants (though, in actual practice, some cases involve a shorter duration of detention than in the Southern countries). With the new EU directive, however, the European norm has

EUROPE: FROM FORTRESS TO JAIL

now moved toward the duration of detention now in force in Germany: 18 months.

Similarly, three distinct groups of countries can be identified in terms of legislation regarding the confinement of immigrant children: a few countries where the detention of children is theoretically prohibited by law (Denmark, Ireland, Italy, and Hungary); those where it is tolerated under strict conditions (France, in transit zones [designated places where rejected migrants are physically detained ED]; Sweden and Belgium for a limited period of time; Austria for those over 16; Spain, Poland and Latvia for children accompanied by adults; and others – more numerous – where the confinement of underage immigrants is legal without restriction (such as Germany, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Finland, Greece, Portugal, Cyprus, and Malta). Thus, in line with the regulations currently in force in Germany, the new "harmonized" European regulations will be oriented towards the systematization of confinement, fewer legal protections against deportation, as well as a standardization of restrictions on entering a country.

Detention centers in and around the EU

The number of detention centers for immigrants arrested without legal residency has multiplied in the countries of the EU in recent years. Many of them are isolated penitentiary blocks, former military barracks, disused warehouses, sheds, even cages or containers (as in Italy), or floating platforms (like the Detentieboten Zuid Holland near Rotterdam). Within the transit zones, large-scale detention centers are also widely used. Among the most important are: Tenerife, Las Raices and El Camello in the Canary Islands (with 1,500 places each); Crotone in Calabria and Borgo Mezzonone in Bologna in Italy (1,000 places); Sandholm and Hvalsø near Copenhagen in Denmark (more than 800

places each); in Slovakia at Humenné, close to the frontiers with Poland, Hungary and Ukraine, and Vlachy in the North (more than 500 places); and at Caltanissetta in Sicily (500 places). The new EU member states, Bulgaria and Romania, have recently equipped themselves with similar centers, in particular at the Sofia and Bucharest-Otopeni airports.

Confinement centers have also been implemented on the peripheries of the EU. On the inner periphery, they exist in Europe itself: Rinas-Tirana and Babru in Albania; Zagreb, Jevezo and Sisak-Sasna Grada in Croatia; Chisinau in Moldavia; Oslo-Fornebu airport in Norway; Cheremetievo airport in Moscow; Padinska Skela in Belgrade in Serbia; Kiev, Lvov, Mukatchevo, Pavshino, and Odessa in Ukraine; and even in Byelorussia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Macedonia. There are more than 20 detention centers in Switzerland, in Basel, Bern, and Zürich. They are also found at the external periphery of Europe: from Morocco (Bouzakem military camp, El-Aioun, Ras El Oued) to Azerbaijan (Goytepe, Lenkoran), from Libya (Kara military camp, the El Fellah "camp of return") to Turkey (Istanbul, Kayseri, Konya, Silopi, Van, Yozgat), and Israel (Hadera, Ma'asiyahu Prison, Tsohar, and the Renaissance Hotel in Nazareth). There are also so-called "informal camps," like those along the Moroccan Atlantic coast adjacent to the Canary Islands.

Repression

Many organizations for the defense of the immigrant rights (for instance, Migreurop), have criticized this trend toward criminalization of clandestine immigration, a threat aimed at all who enter Northern Europe without proper certificates of registration. Furthermore, it should be observed that the conditions in which undocumented migrants are detained are very often intolerable. Harsh, prison-like regimes, overcrowding, lack of privacy, dismal material conditions

and substandard hygiene, the failure to notify detainees of their rights, lack of telephones, limited access to outside individuals (legal representatives, rights groups, family visits), impediments to communicating with the outside world (translators, lawyers), insufficient provision for the needs of the most vulnerable (children, pregnant women, the elderly, the handicapped), and a lack of adequate medical and psychological care are all rampant.

Over the past decade, the scandals which have arisen in these detention centers has shocked the public. Particularly memorable are those involving detention centers run by private security companies, scandals which occurred following the outsourcing strategy of the British Home Office, e.g. Yarl's Wood Immigration Detention Center near Bedford (run by the Geo Group, formerly known as the Wackenhut Corporation) – against which numerous complaints of racist abuse of detainees have been lodged; Harmondsworth Detention Centre near London's Heathrow Airport – managed by Kalyx, which was forced to repay the government for failure to provide an adequate level of service; Campsfield Centre near Oxford – condemned by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Prisons for its abysmal confinement conditions.

Hunger-strikes, suicides, riots, and other forms of protest are frequently seen in these centers. Recently, on June 22, the largest confinement center in France (in Vincennes, near the building of the national police academy) was totally destroyed by fire in a general rebellion of detained undocumented, after the death of one of them in suspicious circumstances.

An additional source of concern are the activities of Frontex, the European agency which manages operational cooperation between the countries of the EU at their "external frontiers." UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in Geneva Jean Ziegler described this recently created institution, located in Warsaw, as a "semi-clandestine military organization."

New forms resistance

To confront this rising repression, new forms of resistance have developed. Perhaps the most impressive has been the recent, massive uprising among undocumented workers in France. Since mid-April 2008, a series of strikes organized by "clan-

destine" workers has stretched across the country. More than 600 workers, mainly Sub-Saharan Africans, have stopped work and at times occupied their workplaces. The most affected sectors are construction, hotels and restaurants, janitorial services, and transportation and delivery.

The vast majority of the strikers have decided to join the CGT (General Confederation of Labor), the leading trade union in France, which is close to the Communist Party (PCF). However, the solidarity movement involves large portions of the French Left and enjoys widespread public support, as witnessed by the huge May 1 demonstrations. Furthermore, an important organization of French business owners, under intense pressure from the extreme right-wing Sarkozy government to lay off undocumented employees, expressed their desire to see immigrant workers legalized by the state, since they were facing persistent labor shortages because of firings.

As a matter of fact, in France, as in other Northern capitalist countries, the economic impact of undocumented workers is quite significant, both in terms of their contribution to economic growth as well as to the fiscal revenue. Nevertheless, systematic discrimination against such workers persists. One of the main forms of discrimination to which they are subject is that they contribute a great deal of money to the financing of social welfare programs, but are unable to receive any benefit from them.

The demands of the job market for a supply of cheap, illegal labor has been permanently fueled (in accordance with the needs of the capitalist owners) by a steady inflow of clandestine immigration, which, in the neo-liberal era since the 1980s, has been almost constant. In this context, "documented" workers (nationals or foreigners) and undocumented ones are forced into competition when searching for jobs, to the great benefit of the employers. However, actual repression, which rarely affects the enterprises, is fully directed against "illegal" workers, who are arrested, confined and expelled from the country, and who are themselves placed in direct competition with new clandestine workers entering the country through channels organized by big capital itself.

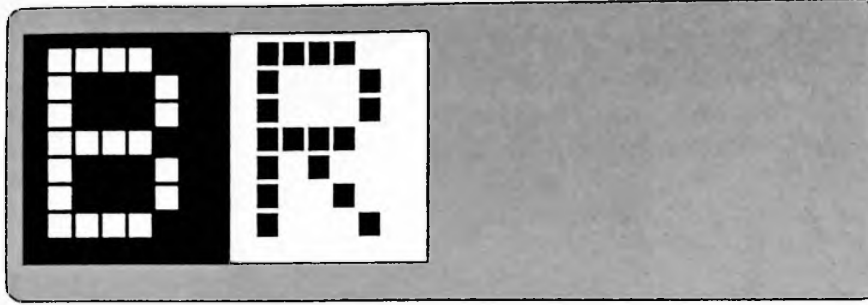
Urgent need of solidarity

There are huge barriers faced by the immigration rights movement in France.

The number of "legalizations" of undocumented workers accepted by the Ministry of Immigration and National Identity remains restricted (only a few dozen so far). A lack of militancy by the trade-unions also tends to slow down the extension of the strikes to other sectors. Also, on the part of some undocumented there has been a tendency to file claims for regularization of their status to the CGT, without actively and effectively participating in the struggle at their places of employment – although it is certainly true that strikes in some sectors would be very risky and even dangerous for such workers.

Nonetheless, the positive aspects of the struggle far surpass the difficulties. Unity is being forged between undocumented workers and the core of the workers movement, which in France is massive and militant. This has been amply demonstrated in recent years: from the "No" vote in the 2005 referendum against the EU Constitution, to the mobilizations against the casualization and precarization of labor in 2006. A solidarity front with the struggles of the undocumented has now been established in the French labor movement and among the broader Left as well. Added to this are the rebellion in 2006 by immigrant youth in the French suburbs against second-class status, the widespread struggle by homeless people for adequate housing in 2007, and the current mobilizations of 2008, which have included students, teachers, researchers, hospital personnel, pensioners, peasants, fishermen, truck-drivers, taxi-drivers, and even the gendarmes!

A key aspect of the current struggle of the undocumented is that it serves as a potential point of confluence between the struggles of working people in the global North and South. That is why the undocumented workers and strikers need our full and complete solidarity, in order to fight against their exploitation as a "clandestine" labor force, as well as to counter the repression of immigrants in general in French society, and in Europe in general. Here, for all of us, is an opportunity to build a common front of labor against capitalism, which is destroying jobs and social welfare in the North, and imperialism – capitalism's external face – which plunders the societies of the South. This is the way toward a socialism of the 21st century! □



Never Been a Time: The 1917 Race Riot That Sparked the Civil Rights Movement.

Harper Burns, Walker & Company, New York 2008.

Reviewed by Tony Pecinovsky

Harper Barnes' most recent book *Never Been A Time* tells the story of one of the most bloody race riots in U.S. history – the 1917 East St. Louis race riot. Barnes, a longtime editor and cultural critic for the St. Louis Post Dispatch, outlines the underlying and unique factors that lead to the riot – racism, political corruption, government incompetence, strike breaking and fear whipped-up by a sensationalist media – while also illuminating a moment in US history some would rather forget.

The first part of Barnes' book provides historical perspective that confronts America's long history of racism. "Decades before the civil war," he writes, "in such Northern bastions of abolition as Cincinnati, Boston, Pittsburgh, and New York, and in smaller cities and towns throughout the North, Blacks were attacked in the streets by gangs of whites and their neighborhoods were invaded and sacked." Often these attacks lead to hundreds of wounded and dead, mostly African Americans. Clearly, even in cities far from the open slavery, bondage and Jim Crow oppression of the South, African Americans lived in fear of mob violence and lynchings with little or no legal protection.

After the Civil War and Reconstruction, and into the early 1900's as the industrial revolution expanded, hundreds of thousands of African Americans moved from the South to the North in search of work and better living conditions. According to Barnes, "Between 1910 and 1920, at least half a million Blacks moved North, the great majority of them – four hundred thousand or more – in the second half of the decade."

Employers, eager to weaken northern unions, enticed southern Blacks with promises of good jobs and good wages. In fact, "Labor agents from Northern cities, including the major rail hub of East St. Louis, made weekly hiring trips to Southern cities." Some Northern employers even offered "free transportation to Blacks who wanted to work in the North." However, in spite of employer promises, "the great majority of the Black migrants found themselves, at best, with low-paying, menial jobs."

Northern employers, including those in East St. Louis, used Southern Blacks "as a highly visible ready reserve of workers desperate for jobs in case of a strike." And unfortunately, "Blacks became the scapegoats" for Irish, German, and other immigrant communities' failure to "achieve anything remotely resembling the American dream."

As the hot, humid summer months of June and July neared, and as the

U.S. entered World War I, tensions began to rise in East St. Louis. The aluminum workers union went on strike and the streetcar workers were going through bitter contract negotiations. The National Guard and "professional strikebreakers from Chicago" camped out around the city. And most white workers feared that Blacks imported from the South were about to take their jobs.

According to Barnes, workers fears were exacerbated by East St. Louis' notoriety as "one of the most corrupt and crime-ridden cities in America." East St. Louis, he wrote, had a "wide-open red-light district." In fact, in 1916, saloon licenses made up "an astonishing...43 percent of the city's \$400,000 income for the year." And "fines for illegal and unlicensed saloons (and brothels and gambling joints) were crucial to the city," he concluded.

So with little or no incentive to clean-up the city, politicians and government officials left most law-abiding citizens, Black and white, to fend for themselves. Just days before the riot broke-out, white gangs, encouraged by a minority of racist labor leaders and petty criminals, drove through Black neighborhoods shooting into houses. African Americans were also attacked crossing the bridge into St. Louis

as they tried to get away.

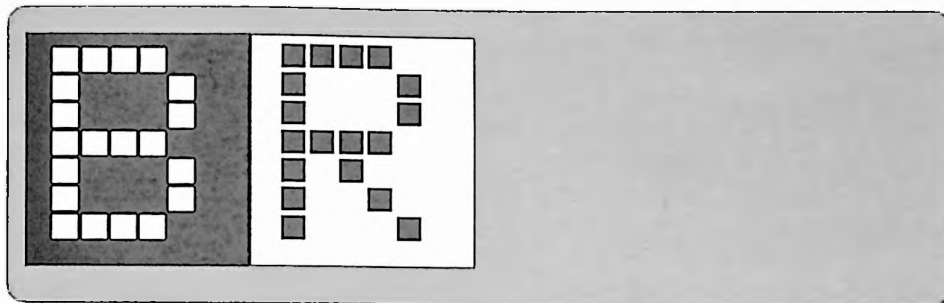
The powder keg – stoked by racism, fear of job loss, tensions around the war, and rampant crime – was about to ignite.

While the riot and its aftermath make up the bulk of *Never Been A Time*, Barnes does a great job building his narrative around the events as they unfolded, and providing context for the riot within the unique circumstances of East St. Louis. This is one of the book's major accomplishments.

With a keen eye for detail and a judicious use of local newspaper reports from 1917, Barnes relays a human story – one of irrational death and destruction, as well as, the insurmountable human spirit.

Never Been A Time is an important read and a story that needed to be told. □

The powder keg -
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The New Asian Hemisphere: The Irresistible Shift of Global Power in the East.

Kishore Mahbubani, Public Affairs, New York 2006.

Reviewed by Josef Gregory Mahoney

This new book is a sobering text that should be read with three points in mind. First, Mahubani believes that democracy, while a "virtuous idea" that is ultimately necessary for long-term political and economic stability, is nonetheless broadly incompatible with current demands. Second, through haphazard formulations of what he calls "pragmatism," he is perhaps Asia's most admired apologist for human rights' abuses, including above all, an overwhelming exploitation of workers at levels unseen since Friedrich Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England (1845)*. Third, the author's texts are widely-read and promoted by various political and economic elites celebrating current global capitalist development schemes, including Lawrence Summers, Strobe Talbot, Amartya Sen, and others.

Indeed, there is not enough space here to catalog all that is troublesome about this book. First, Mahubani resorts to an unfortunate "trifecta" of contemporary Orientalism: 1) he views "Asia" as a largely singular entity, obscuring serious regional and cultural differences (in his view apparently China=India=Indonesia=the Philippines); 2) he counter-poses this imagined Asia with an equally imagined "West," portraying the two as struggling over global dominion; and 3) he argues that should Asia prevail in this struggle, it would share with the world its competent economic development and political order on the basis of what he calls "Asian pragmatism."

Nevertheless, the conceptions underpinning Mahubani's pragmatist logic are hard to parse. For example, while correct in his belief that American attempts to "export democracy" to Iraq are flawed, inasmuch as America is not a democratic actor in global affairs, especially given its affinities for oppressive regimes like those of Jordan and Saudi Arabia, Mahubani notes that the "the Saudi Arabia-nization or Jordan-ization of Iraq need not be a step backwards, if it leads to stability for the people of Iraq and an end to a bitter civil war." Then he claims that it is indeed ironic that America works with so many non-democratic countries to create democracy in Iraq, but eschews "Iraq's only real democratic neighbor... Iran." As a former diplomat and supposed master of global realpolitik, surely Mahubani is aware that "Iranian democracy" is merely window dressing for a theocratic dictatorship?

The casual reader of this book might be seduced by a sort of post-colonial fantasy, where the "rise of Asia" marks a much needed rectification of Western imperial abuses. Indeed, such a narrative, if it were true, would be quite compelling. In fact, Asia's laboring masses have never been more politically oppressed or economically exploited than they are today. Further, however one measures history, whether in tens, hundreds, or thousands of years, the worst atrocities against Asians have largely been committed

by other Asians, whether through war, their own heavy-handed regimes, native bourgeois elites, or comprador classes. This history is a simple fact, and given his privileged perch in Singapore, Mahubani ought to know as well as anyone that this fact is truer today than ever before.

This brings us to an important point. Those familiar with Singapore understand that many different Asian countries would like nothing more than to emulate that city state's approach to political economy. Indeed, China's special economic zones were modeled on Singapore, insomuch as the SEZs are relatively small-scale "islands" dotting the Chinese mainland, replicating Singaporean investment and development strategies. But why was China's government so interested in the Singaporean model in the first place? The answer is depressingly clear: Singapore had long debunked classical bourgeois mythology, namely, that capitalism and democracy are two sides of the same coin. In other words, China learned from Singapore that it could vigorously pursue so-called free market reforms while eschewing meaningful political liberalization.

The biggest problem about this book is its fundamental misunderstanding of two complicated and interrelated topics: economics and China. For example, Mahubani states that China's response to the 1997 Asian financial crisis, i.e., its refusal to devalue its currency despite pressure to do so from the US and EU, is demonstrative of a more enlightened approach to global leadership, insomuch as devaluing the yuan would have been beneficial to China but damaging to the rest of Asia. The crisis, initiated by currency speculators exploiting corrupt financial practices among economic elites in Thailand, Taiwan, and South Korea, is one of the most important events in the history of global political economy and as such, demands careful attention. However, as my own study of the rest of the literature seems to indicate, China appears to have acted in self-interest alone as a matter of survival due to the extreme vulnerabilities the crisis exposed in the Chinese financial system itself.

If true, this poses two problems for Mahubani. First, he is unable to fully appreciate that China's go-it-alone strategy - in a sense, its refusal to accommodate the "Washington consensus" - was both bold and brilliant and perhaps the biggest reason that China was affected only nominally by a crisis that proved so devastating to workers elsewhere in the region. Second, if China did act in self-interest, then his central thesis, a global future of enlightened despotism has become pan-Asian volunteerism, is farcically construed. □

SE ACABA UNA EPOCHA Y SE ABRE ORTRA DIGTATES

Por Joel Wendland y Peter Zerner

Hace pocas semanas recibí una alerta por correo electrónico de un amigo, a tomar acción a favor de la Federación Norteamericana de Empleados Estatales, de Condado y Municipales (AFSCME, por sus siglas en inglés) defendiéndoles a los trabajadores públicos de California frente a los graves recortes presupuestales propuestos por el gobernador Arnold Schwarzenegger. Luego de enviar el mensaje recibí un correo electrónico de la AFSCME agradeciéndonos a los que tomábamos acción, con toda y una invitación para mantenemos en contacto con AFSCME en Twitter. Y yo me pregunté, ¿y qué diablos será eso?

Bueno, resulta que Twitter.com es un sitio de Web de conexión social que permite a amigos y organizaciones comunicarse tanto en línea que por teléfono celular. Eso de estar conectado con AFSCME en Twitter te deja recibir los últimos blogs del Blog Verde de AFSCME en tu iPhone u otro aparato inalámbrico mientras estás tomando el aire en el parque o mientras que trabajas tarde en la alcaldía municipal.

Ha tomado pasos gigantes el movimiento sindical en su manera de utilizar a la tecnología informática del siglo XXI para comunicarse con sus integrantes y con el público, educándoles y movilizándoles a sus integrantes y a sus familias por medio de blogs, nuevos sitios de Web, alertas por correo electrónico, mensajes de texto y mucho más. En cuestiones de cuidado de salud, organización, y campañas contra John McCain y los Republicanos, para el sector más organizado de la clase trabajadora, los trabajadores sindicalizados, vuelven siempre más indispensables las nuevas tecnologías digitales.

Ambas federaciones laborales nacionales ya han adoptado tecnologías digitales para la comunicación y la movilización. Ya puedes leer blogs diarios de la AFL-CIO y mensajes regulares de Cambio para Ganar. Hoy todas las uniones laborales más grandes tienen sitios de Web, blogs, "espacios" en sitios de contacto social, y hasta sitios especiales de campaña dirigidos a ciertos derechos laborales o cuestiones políticas.

Por ejemplo, mantiene la AFL-CIO sitios de Web distintos para cada uno de sus programas afiliados, desde Norteamérica Trabajando [Working America] hasta Orgullo en el Trabajo [Pride at Work]. Norteamérica Trabajando tiene distintos sitios cuyo propósito único es él de recoger a un millón de firmas en apoyo a la Ley de Libertad de Escoger para Empleados. La Alianza para los Norteamericanos Jubilados tiene tanto un sitio de Web normal que alertas semanales por correo electrónico que noticias y enfoques para la acción. Compró la AFL-CIO derechos a la página McCainRevealed.com [McCain revelado] para su campaña de educación a sus integrantes sobre los verdaderos antecedentes de McCain.

La unión de Jomaleros (LIUNA, por sus siglas en inglés), una afiliada de Cambio para Ganar, acaba de lanzar su propia campaña en línea para recoger un millón de firmas en una petición dirigida al próximo presidente y Congreso exigiendo una inversión real en la infraestructura nacional para crear empleos. Estableció la unión otro sitio distinto dedicado exclusivamente a la petición y pide a sus integrantes que se inscriban para recibir mensajes de texto por teléfono celular para futuras acciones y más información.

Cualquier lista completa de todo el nuevo trabajo en línea del movimiento sindical sería demasiado larga para ser incluida aquí. Obviamente, gran parte de esta nueva

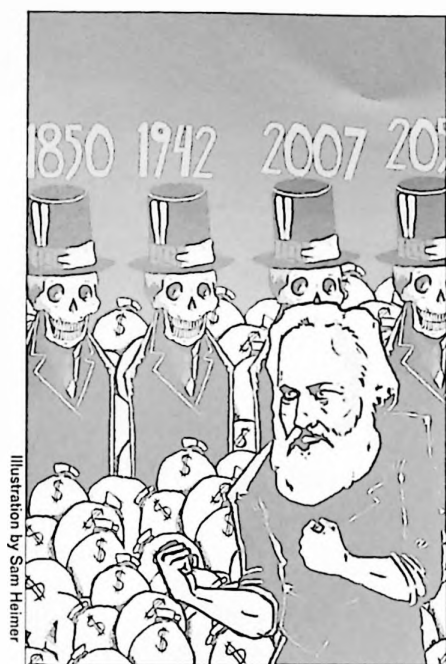
gira hacia la organización en línea se debe a las lecciones aprendidas durante la campaña electoral de 2004 al lado de los Demócratas, así como los tremendos éxitos logrados por la campaña de Obama con su trabajo en línea movilizándoles a votantes, generando apoyo financiero a su campaña y fomentando emoción y amplia participación. Basta decir que la presencia sindical en el Internet está creciendo rápidamente. Está alcanzando a sus integrantes en todas sus distintas situaciones, construyendo un movimiento más poderoso, conectado e independiente.

Esta nueva movilización sindical digital nos ofrece una lección importante a *Political Affairs* y al movimiento comunista en general. Los trabajadores están abrazando al siglo XXI. Las cuestiones son: ¿Hará este salto *Political Affairs* también? ¿Está listo el Partido Comunista a ser partido político del siglo XXI?

Cambiar el enfoque de *Political Affairs* a la publicación exclusiva en línea nos ofrece la oportunidad de llegar a ser más que una revista. PA fue establecido hace décadas como revista teórica del Partido Comunista (bautizado a su fundación "The Communist," cambiándose de nombre en 1945). En años recientes, tomando nspiración del ex dirigente del partido, Gus Hall, el ex editor y director actual de PA, Joe Sims, buscaba repensar el significado de ser "órgano teórico" para reinventar y reintroducir a *Political Affairs* como revista popular impresa de cultura, ideas y política, junto con una contraparte digital.

En su comienzo, el sitio de Web fue concebido como un tipo de espejo para la revista, un anuncio de publicidad para promover a la revista impresa. Pero, como recién llegados al ciberespacio y a las tendencias hacia la edición digital, no nos dimos cuenta al comenzar de las plenas posibilidades del Internet y de un sitio de Web como modo distinto de publicación y construcción del movimiento, dirigido a una audiencia potencial mucho más grande que nunca hubiéramos esperado alcanzar en forma impresa.

Los resultados estaban tremendos. Desde nuestro comienzo en línea en 2004, *Political Affairs* ha llegado de una forma u otra a casi dos millones de individuos únicos. Con una circulación impresa máxima de alrededor de 3.200 a comienzos de 2007 (casi la misma circulación doméstica que hace dos décadas), ni modo que la edición impresa



pueda igualar a los resultados del sitio de Web. Resulta dudoso que haya tenido la edición impresa durante toda su existencia resultados semejantes. Indican los últimos métodos para medir el número de lectores en línea que un 15 por ciento de estos dos millones visitan el sitio en varias ocasiones, que quiere decir que 300.000 personas han vuelto al sitio. Además, casi 10 por ciento de los lectores de PA entran a nuestro sitio de Web vía nuestra página principal, indicando que la tienen marcada como favorita en su navegador. Solamente durante el año pasado alcanzó esta figura a 65.000 personas.

Pero un breve vistazo detrás del número nos pone preguntas difíciles. ¿Quiénes son esa gente que lee uno u más artículos en nuestro sitio de Web? ¿Están siendo expuestos a artículos que expresan la misión específica de PA, es decir, promover la teoría, las ideas y la cultura de nuestro movimiento?

Las respuestas a estas preguntas son muy complejas. PoliticalAffairs.net, o PA digital, trabaja a dos niveles básicos. A primer nivel nuestra misión central sigue siendo la del trabajo teórico del movimiento comunista, presentando nuestros puntos de vista al gran público sobre la idea socialista y comunista con debates y discusiones, investigaciones históricas, y con el desarrollo sostenido de ideas, viejas y nuevas, que han sido y seguirán siendo el fundamento mismo de nuestro movimiento.

El segundo nivel es producto de necesidad, madre de la invención, y representa

un nivel distinto de trabajo político. Cuando comencemos la publicación digital en 2004, muy pronto se hizo claro que para aumentar el número de lectores de nuestro sitio, tuvimos que ofrecer contenido nuevo de forma regular. De esto nació la edición digital actualizada regularmente que publica o republica artículos y contenido del movimiento internacional comunista, del movimiento sindical, y de otras fuentes progresistas. Esta actividad nos ayudaba establecer relaciones con una cantidad de grupos y organizaciones que, de otra manera, no lo hubiera hecho.

Hay que notarse que este esfuerzo por ofrecer contenido actualizado regularmente nunca tuvo como intento duplicar al trabajo vital del semanario *Nuestro Mundo / People's Weekly World*, pero fue parte de nuestro trabajo: aumentar el tráfico digital a PoliticalAffairs.net.

Llegó a ser claro que con estos dos niveles simultáneas de publicación, uno orientado a las ideas de nuestro movimiento, el otro a la información y análisis de las luchas más inmediatas, ya se puede concluir que han surgido dos audiencias distintas para PoliticalAffairs.net. Sin embargo, mientras crecían los números de visitantes repetidos al sitio, también quedaba evidente la duplicación de las dos audiencias. Sugieren esto muy fuertemente el número de visitas repetidas y de visitas únicas que abren a PoliticalAffairs.net en la página principal.

Así que la pregunta ya cambió de ¿cómo promover a la publicación impresa? a ¿por qué mantener una publicación impresa? Más importante, con una audiencia regular tan grande, ¿cómo facilitamos el uso de PoliticalAffairs.net, animar a las visitas de regreso, y unificar a los dos niveles de publicación arriba enumerados?

Una vez más, ya estaban disponibles las herramientas para lograr esto. Hicimos crear un podcast PA con contenido nuevo incluyendo entrevistas con activistas y dirigentes del Partido, editores y contribuidores de PA, así como activistas del más amplio movimiento. También añadimos un sitio de blog de los editores de PA, que permite a los editores y otros contribuidores expresar sus opiniones personales a veces desafiantes sobre cuestiones claves para estimular a la discusión, fabricar una "personalidad digital," y echar a la mezcla una discusión interesante. Además una nueva función de comentarios, Disqus, ha ofrecido a más y más lectores una partici-

pación que antes no les fue posible. Todas estas nuevas funciones han sido un éxito rotundo, tanto en términos de atraerles a nuevos lectores a PoliticalAffairs.net que en construir relaciones con la más amplia coalición popular.

Están pendientes otras nuevas propuestas adicionales, entre ellas artículos educacionales regulares sobre los fundamentos del movimiento comunista, más específicamente los problemas que enfrentamos en el siglo XXI, nuevos recursos para la acción como circulación de peticiones y enfoques de acción digital, foros digitales sobre tópicos especiales y un cuarto de chat.

Es cierto que sin publicación impresa los integrantes y amigos del Partido ya no tendrán objeto físico que circular y discutir. La naturaleza de una publicación digital es distinta. Está abierta a todo mundo, salvo en el caso de información potencial exclusiva para suscriptores. Y, mientras que pueda ser reproducido para el uso privado de un grupo específico (por ejemplo, el Partido Comunista y sus integrantes), es esencialmente una proyección de nuestro movimiento, orientado hacia fuera. Debido a esta diferencia, PoliticalAffairs.net en su papel organizacional tiene que lograr un contacto más directo con sus lectores, sean del Partido u no, por medio de foros, reuniones y correo electrónico.

Aunque con esta edición dejemos de publicar a nuestra publicación impresa, PoliticalAffairs.net seguirá siendo herramienta esencial para compartir las ideas del movimiento comunista, reclutar al Partido a nuevos integrantes y aumentar el papel de integrantes del Partido Comunista que faltan fuertes relaciones con los organismos del Partido debido a problemas de distancia que les separan de las organizaciones viables del Partido. Nuestra meta debe ser la de atraerles a esta gente al trabajo del partido, ayudar a educarles sobre las metas estratégicas y posiciones teóricas del mismo, y capacitarles con herramientas digitales para poder diseminar a estas ideas. Por todas esas razones, PoliticalAffairs.net ha llegado a ser mucho más que una revista. Estamos tomando nuestros primeros pasos emocionantes para abrazar al siglo XXI. Con su apoyo sostenido, PA puede seguir siendo componente clave del movimiento comunista, tanto acá en EEUU que en toda la Web mundial. □

The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles. Freeman and slave, patrician and plebeian, lord and serf, guild-master and journeyman, in a word, oppressor and oppressed, stood in constant opposition to one another, carried on an unintermittent struggle, now hidden, now open fight, a fight that each time ended, either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes. In the earlier epochs of history, we find almost everywhere a complicated arrangement of society into various orders, a manifold gradation of social rank. In ancient Rome we have patricians, knights, plebeians, slaves; in the Middle Ages, feudal lords, vassals, guild-masters, journeymen, apprentices, 1) serfs; in almost all of these classes, again, subordinate gradations. The modern bourgeois society that has sprouted from the ruins of feudal society has not done away with class antagonisms. It has but established new classes, new conditions of oppression, new forms of struggle in place of the old ones. Our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses, however, this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms. Society as a whole is more and more splitting up into two great hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: Bourgeoisie and Proletariat. From the serfs of the Middle Ages spring the chartered burghers of the earliest towns. From these burghers the first elements of the bourgeoisie were developed. The discovery of America, the rounding of the Cape, opened up fresh ground for the rising bourgeoisie. The East-Indian and Chinese markets, the colonisation of America, trade with the colonies, the increase in the means of exchange and in commodities generally, gave to commerce, to navigation, to industry, an impulse never before known, and thereby, to the revolutionary element in the tottering feudal society, a rapid development. The feudal system of industry, under which industrial production was monopolised by closed guilds, 2) now no longer sufficed for the growing wants of new markets. The manufacturing system took its place. The guild-masters were pushed on one side by the manufacturing middle class; 3) division of labour between the different corporative guilds vanished in the face of division of labour in each single workshop. Meantime the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising. Even manufacture no longer sufficed. Thereupon, steam and machinery revolutionised industrial production. The place of manufacture was taken by the giant, Modern Industry, the place of the industrial middle class, by industrial millionaires, the leaders of whole industrial armies, the modern bourgeois. Modern industry has established the world market, for which the discovery of America paved the way. This market has given an immense development to commerce, to navigation, to communication. Land. This development has, in its turn, reacted on the extension of industry, and in proportion as industry, commerce, navigation, railways extended, in the same proportion the bour-