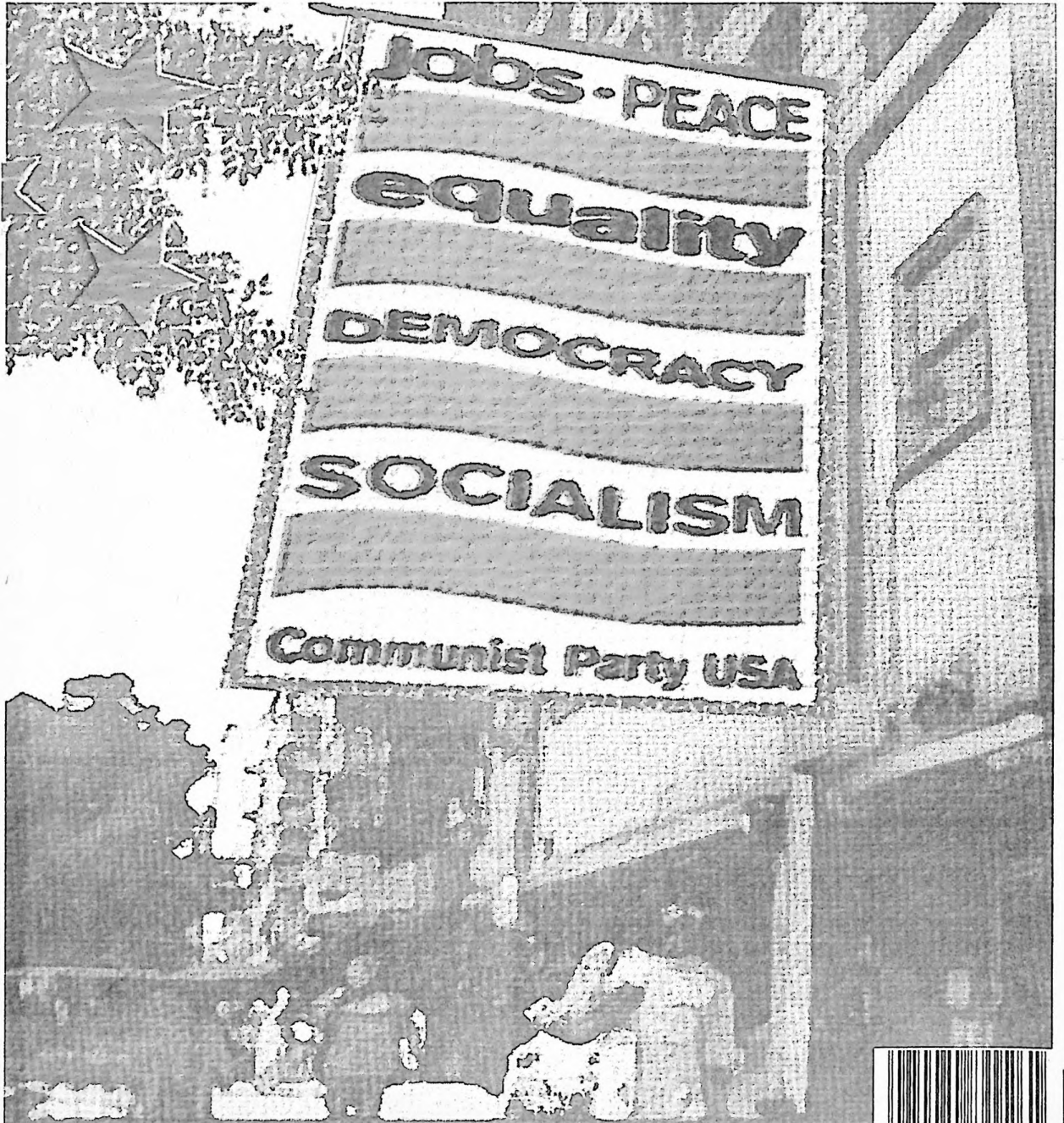


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Election '98

Jarvis Tyner



The 1998 elections can only be described as a major defeat for the ultra right and a victory for the people. After a long, difficult roller-coaster electoral struggle, on November 3rd, a broad multiracial electoral coalition with labor, African American, and Latino voters at its base, came to the polls

across this country and gave an historic defeat to the right-wing dominated Republican Party. This was also a defeat for the entire ultra right and their powerful corporate backers.

In politics as in life, there are very few struggles that end up so clearly in the win column for the people. This election was one of them.

Instead of the predicted Republican victory, the Democrats gained five seats in the House, defeated D' Amato and Faircloth and held their own in the U.S. Senate. There was also unexpected victories for Democratic governors and state legislators in a number of key states. The fact that Gray Davis won in California is no small victory. California is expected to have a substantial increase (five) in Congressional seats after the 2000 census. For the first time in decades, the California redistricting will not be in right-wing Republican hands.

There was a large protest vote in this election which produced the upset elections of Democratic governors in Georgia, Alabama and South Carolina. Widespread voter discontent with the Democratic and Republican parties in Minnesota led to the election of the conservative former professional wrestler, Jesse "The Body" Ventura.

And then there is the case of Newt "The Mouth" Gingrich. The people had such a strong feeling against him that the mere mention of his name provoked total disgust. He became a complete liability to his party. One comrade described Newt as "the

face that launched a million anti-Republican votes." Isn't it ironic that after working so viciously to elect Republicans, after spending \$40 million to force Clinton to resign, it is Newt Gingrich who was forced to go?

At this point, though the most extreme right-wing Republicans have not given up, impeachment was basically derailed by the voters. The Republicans don't have the votes and popular opinion is strongly against it. The November 3rd vote is forcing the Republicans to retreat and has set the stage for potentially big changes in a positive direction.

The multi-racial working class and allies are to be congratulated for going to the polls in such great numbers and voting their class interest in state after state. Despite a great well-financed effort by the Republicans to confuse, divert, divide and conquer, millions of working people showed a remarkable understanding and determination to defeat the right danger. They came to the polls and handed the Republican party one of its biggest defeats in history.

Congratulations is also in order for our Party which played an important role in bringing about this victory. Our Party put its full effort and resources into this struggle. We can be proud because we played a leading role in providing a clear political line and policy. Even when it looked like losing was a possibility the Party never faltered and that helped others. Our Party acted with great revolutionary confidence and maturity. We kept our eyes on the prize. We warned of the fascist danger and pointed out that the way to stop the right was to mobilize the class in the grassroots against the Republicans. The election results proved the correctness of our policy.

We knew that with organization, mobilization and unity the people could win. Our role was indispensable. We acted as a Communist Party should act. Our policy was based on the real world. As Gus Hall put it,

Our tactics are different for each election. We develop them according to the politics and balance of forces at the moment. In this election, because of the serious threat of

Jarvis Tyner is a vice-chairman of the Communist Party.

the ultra right, our Party's policy and slogan was to build coalitions to defeat all Republicans.

And that is what we did.

At the beginning of the year all of the bourgeois political pundits were predicting a Republican win. After the presidential scandal, they predicted a big Republican win. Pat Buchanan said it would be "a mini-landslide." Gingrich and the Christian Coalition forces thought they would win 40 additional seats in the House and 10 or more in the Senate. If they succeeded, the unpopular Newt Gingrich would have

The vote was so powerful that Newt Gingrich had to resign as Speaker of the House. It was so powerful that the Republican Party and its program are in disarray. So powerful was the vote that Newt not only had to withdraw as Speaker but starting January 1st, he will resign from Congress itself.

even more power to push "Contract on America II" with a vengeance. The Republican Party would have been almost a sure bet to win the White House in 2000.

We would be starting a new century

with all three branches under right-wing control. To carry out its program such a government would have to move in a fascist direction. Gus Hall was correct in describing this as the most important election in our history – it could have meant a qualitatively worse situation economically, politically and socially for the working people.

THE VOTE THAT DUMPED NEWT □ This election was a great tribute to the American people – to their decency and progressive, democratic nature. The great bulk of the voters saw through all the confusion and broke a mid-term election precedent. They kept their eyes on the great danger of the right and handed the dominant party in Congress an historic defeat. For 50 years, mid-term elections have resulted in losses (at times a big loss, e.g. 1994) for the

party in the White House. The precedent was broken before in 1934, during the first term of FDR, in the midst of a period of mass democratic upsurge of the working class.

A powerful anti-right-wing mandate was established in this election. The result came close to a total Republican defeat in the House. If 9,537 votes would have been switched in six key districts, the Republicans would have lost their majority.

The vote was so powerful that Newt Gingrich had to resign as Speaker of the House. It was so powerful that the Republican Party and its program are in disarray. So powerful was the vote that Newt not only had to withdraw as Speaker but, starting January 1st, he will resign from Congress itself.

Newt Gingrich was more than the Speaker of the House. He was the leading Republican personality in the country. Four years ago he was considered more powerful than President Clinton. For a while he was the Republican's best prospect for winning the presidency. He was the chief architect, spokesman and organizer of the ruling-class backed "Contract on America." He was the leading figure on the U.S. right: the leader of the so-called "Republican Revolution." He was the darling of the ultra right and their most articulate spokesman. He literally had almost a cult following among some Republicans. For him to be ousted is a historic victory for the people and a major blow to the Republican right – it may be a knock-out blow.

In the post-election period, the Republicans are admitting defeat. "The Republican Revolution has run out of steam," said Frank Riggs, retired Republican Congressman, from Windsor, California in the *San Francisco Chronicle-Examiner*. Republican Steve Largent of Oklahoma put it like this: "I think it's also abundantly clear that on November 3rd the Republican Party hit an iceberg."

Is this election the Republican's Titanic? The symbolism is too rich to resist. There they were after 1994, cruising along, winning their program in the Congress and increasing their influence. The Soviet Union had collapsed, the liberals and the left here were in disarray and weak. It seemed smooth sailing from then on out. They had "Monicagate" and the mid-term jinx on their side. They had more money (\$110 million more than the Democrats) stronger organization (with the Christian right). They thought that the "S.S.GOP," with the rich living in luxury and the poor in steerage, would never sink.

But it hit an iceberg. That iceberg was the people. It was the democratic and progressive majority of U.S. voters.

A GREAT MISCALCULATION ■ In this election, the Republican Party made one of the biggest election blunders in history. Robert Novak, who predicted a Republican gain said, "I've been calling these things for 30 years, and this is the first time I totally screwed up."

Newt Gingrich, after trying to play down the results finally had to face reality. He then confessed, "Things were happening out there that none of us fully understand. We totally underestimated the degree of rejection of the anti-Clinton strategy."

A lot of people are asking, what could they have been thinking when they decided to run anti-Clinton ads in the last days before the election? The polls showed that the people were weary of the whole mess. Their miscalculation will go down as one of the biggest electoral mistakes in history.

The Republicans must have been making a last-ditch effort to mobilize conservative voters in certain districts. But this attempt just showed their arrogance, cockiness, and blind faith that despite the polls they could still win.

The Party was one of the few groups that felt the attack on Clinton would backfire – and it did.

Instead of gaining seats in the Senate, as they had hoped, the Republicans barely held on losing two big Republican Senators, Lauch Faircloth in North Carolina who lost his seat to John Edwards and Alphonse D'Amato, who fell to the liberal Charles Schumer in New York.

They had hoped to defeat California Senator Diana Boxer but she scored a come-from-behind victory over GOP conservative Matt Fong. Boxer not only won big majorities among Mexican American and African American voters. She defeated Fong's – who is Chinese – attempt to win over Asian voters who usually vote Democratic. Boxer ended up winning about half of the Asian vote. Other Democrats held on and won reelection despite major Republican campaigns against them.

In Washington state, Senator Patty Murray soundly defeated arch-conservative, Linda Smith. Smith, who was a leading member of the Gingrich Gang in Congress gave up her seat to run for the U.S. Senate. Jay Inslee, who was the first Democrat to run an ad in support of Clinton ended up defeating incumbent Republican right-winger Rick White in Washington's first Congressional district.



The Congressional Black Caucus helped mobilize a large turnout. Above: CBC chairwoman Maxine Waters.

BREAKTHROUGH IN THE SOUTH ■ The most inspiring story was what happened in the South. The Republicans lost their bid to take the governor's seat in Georgia – it was an upset defeat for them. The same goes for the Alabama governor's race. Don Siegleman beat Republican incumbent, Fob James. Another upset was in South Carolina. There Democrat Jim Hodges beat incumbent GOP Governor David Beasley. Democrats haven't held the governor's mansion in South Carolina in more than a decade. The Republicans almost defeated Senator Ernest Hollings but he held on. And then there was the defeat of Faircloth in North Carolina. Faircloth is to the right of Jesse Helms, if that can be believed. A wealthy businessman turned politician, Faircloth was the leading proponent of "right-to-work" (for nothing) laws in the Senate.

What occurred in the South is very important. For some time now the South has been considered the most solid base for the Republicans. Their national presidential strategy depends on winning the South. But the South is changing. Today most Black people live in the South. The African American vote is a growing political power varying from



The Democratic Party held its own in the Senate.

29 percent to 39 percent of the vote in several states across the South. The South is the most industrialized part of the country – thousands of industrial workers now live and vote there. This also means a new base for the labor movement and labor votes.

And that's what won the day – the alliance between the African American equality movement and the labor movement. This new coalition is changing the political landscape of the South, making it possible for a number of African American members of Congress to win in majority white districts and a number of African Americans to be elected statewide. The Republicans completely miscalculated the rising progressive vote and the growing unity of Black and white. This vote is a big setback for the Southern strategy of the Republican Party.

The outcome of the vote in Illinois was very disappointing in light of national trends. Every member of the Congressional Black Caucus was reelected except Carol Mosley-Braun. The campaign against her was a total racist attack. Her opponent, wealthy businessman Peter Fitzgerald, launched a vicious personal attack on Braun, portraying her as a corrupt "welfare queen." The fact that Senator Braun

associated herself with the dictatorship in Nigeria and supported some of the worst Republican initiatives – like treating 13-year olds as adults – did not help her cause. She apologized for her personal mistakes but it was too late.

In California, the worst example of a racist campaign was that of Bob Dornan against Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez. Dornan, who could not accept the fact that a Mexican American woman beat him, was crazed with racism. There was no end to his racist arrogance, calling Sanchez an "air head" and declaring himself "the only Latino in the race." All the while Dornan was hoping to cash in on the racism of white voters in Orange County, which used to be one of the most conservative counties in the country. However, Orange County has changed. There is a large and growing Latino voting bloc there now that came to the polls. This was also the most expensive Congressional race in the country and even though Dornan had \$400,000 more than his opponent, Sanchez defeated him by a wide margin – a great victory for Latino representation and against racism.

NEW LEVEL OF BLACK, BROWN AND WHITE UNITY □

Overall this election showed a new level of Black, Brown and white unity. The role of the AFL-CIO has something to do with this new anti-racist unity. With labor as a more active ally it is more possible to defeat racism today.

The unity of Black and white played a big role in Maryland where incumbent governor Parris Glendening narrowly defeated a strong challenge from well-known right-winger Ellen Sauerbrey.

In New York state the only African American on the statewide ticket was Democrat Carl McCall running for state comptroller. McCall won his election by a wide margin despite some sharp attacks by the Republicans including Mayor Rudolph Giuliani. There is much talk about how popular a governor Pataki is, but there is little mention of the fact that Carl McCall who also appeared on the Working Families line, received more votes than Pataki or Schumer. In fact, he was the top vote-getter statewide. And in the Illinois where Carol Mosley Braun and Democratic candidate for governor Glen Poshard lost, an African American Democrat, Jesse White, won statewide for secretary of state.

In New York, D'Amato, whose racism is well known, went after Schumer with a sharp personal attack. Hoping to win big upstate he ran ads in

western New York that can only be described as anti-Semitic. He also publicly used a Yiddish slur against Schumer. At the same time he tried to use the Holocaust to win Jewish votes. D'Amato tried to paint himself as an anti-fascist. This backfired. His vote among Jewish voters dropped from 40 percent in 1992 to only 23 percent. His running mate for attorney general Republican Dennis Vacco, not to be outdone by D'Amato, made a racist statement against Latinos. This is a candidate running for the position of chief law enforcement officer in a state with a huge Latino and African American population. At this point it appears that Vacco was defeated as well.

An exception to the unity trends and most unfortunate was the passage in Washington state of the racist proposition 200, which outlawed affirmative action programs. This is a big setback. The wording of the proposition, like the one that passed in California, is based on racist demagoguery. Language was used to make it sound as if it was against racism. No doubt many voters did not think they were voting to support racial discrimination. Other voters were confused by the 20 years of intensive right-wing attacks on affirmative action.

That same electorate passed a proposition that now links the state's minimum wage to the rate of

inflation. Washington is the first state to require this. Voters also defeated two other right-wing-initiated propositions: a referendum that would have banned so-called "partial birth abortions" (which was also defeated in Colorado) and a referendum that made other kinds of late-term abortions a felony.

In South Carolina, voters removed a 103-year ban on interracial marriage. While already unconstitutional, it was an important act of anti-racism in the deep South.

In Wisconsin, the reelection of Democrat Russ Feingold to the U.S. Senate was a great victory for public campaign finance reform. Feingold refused to take any corporate or PAC money. His opponent spent millions and Feingold fell way behind in the polls. He is the co-author of a federal bill to promote public financing of elections. On election day there was a huge outpouring of support for Feingold. Voters in Madison, Wisconsin, came out in such numbers that they ran out of paper ballots.

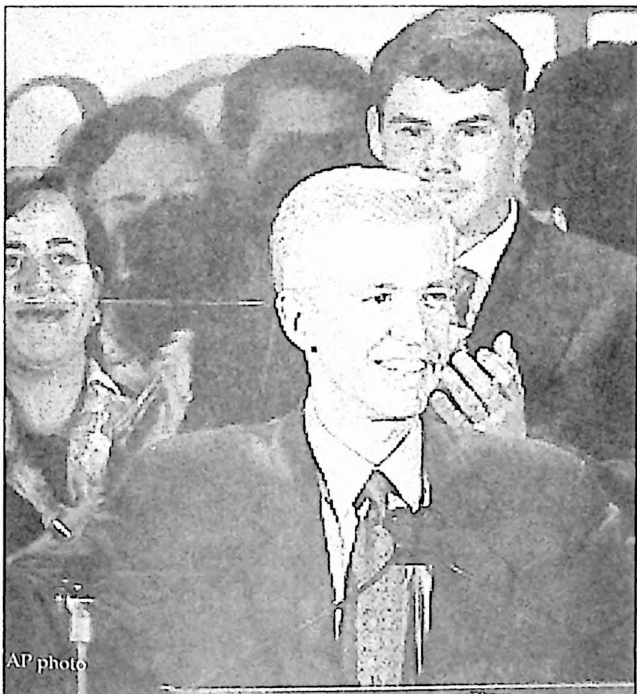
ANTI-ULTRA-RIGHT COALITION ■ The main thing that broke the historic pattern and brought voters out was the great opposition to the right-wing policies of the Republican Party. This was not a pro-Clinton or a pro-Democratic Party vote. In the main, it was anti-Republican. When Hillary Clinton described Starr's investigation as a right-wing conspiracy the people rallied to her. The tide of anti-Republican feeling broke when the Republicans in Congress voted lock-step to begin the impeachment process. This vote was in no way an approval of Clinton's behavior - it was a sharp rejection of the Republican's use of it to push their right-wing agenda on the country.

The best campaigner against the right the Democrats had was Hillary Clinton who pulled big crowds and made very effective speeches.

Labor's role in this election was critical once again. Labor has emerged on the U.S. electoral scene as the most effective vote-pulling grassroots operation in the country. At this point they are better than the well-financed Christian right and in most states they are better than the Democratic Party.

Because of the legal attacks of the Republicans labor had to cut back from running issue ads. Instead, they concentrated on the Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign in alliance with civil rights and women, youth and seniors and they won the day.

They took the historic experience gained in the Proposition 226 victory in California and applied it



California Governor Gray Davis celebrates victory.

all over the country. They concentrated on specific races and had a well-organized and financed machine in place. When Sweeney said that he hoped that the good judgment of the American people would prevail on election day, he knew that labor had the ground troops to guarantee that it would prevail.

What won the day was the united force of labor, African Americans, Latinos and other allies. This is what bourgeois pundits failed to see. And that's one reason their estimates were way off. Labor households accounted for 23 percent of all voters. The labor vote went up from 10.1 million in 1994 to 16.7 million this year.

AFRICAN AMERICAN AND LATINO VOTE ■ The African American vote played a big role in this election. There was a major effort to discourage African Americans from going to the polls. Two weeks before election day Louis Farakhan went on national television and advised Black people to not vote for Democrats or Republicans. Knowing the nature of the African American vote this tactic could only give aid and comfort to the ultra-right Republicans.

Too many forces on the left spent most of their time attacking the "lesser-evil" tactic. But the masses of African American voters had another view. They saw the danger and voted an astounding 89 percent against the Republicans - the highest percentage of any group of voters. Without that almost 90 percent anti-Republican bloc of votes, the results of this election would not have been as positive. Through the efforts of CBTU, PUSH, Dignity Day campaigns, Operation Big Vote and other labor, Democratic Party and left-progressive initiatives, it was possible to bring out a huge vote. The Black vote doubled from 1994 and represented 10 percent of all votes cast. The pundits consistently undercounted the Black and Latino vote and failed to accurately include them in the "likely voter" category. These days racially oppressed voters are coming to the polls in higher percentages than other categories.

Latinos constituted five percent of the vote nationally. In California, the Mexican American vote

was decisive to the victory of Gray Davis, Boxer and Sanchez. The most popular bumper sticker in the state was "Adios Pete Wilson." This was a response to the tremendous anti-Wilson feeling after he pushed Proposition 227 (against bilingual education) and the anti-immigrant Proposition 187. Latino voters were determined to defeat the Republicans statewide and they did. The Latino vote in California was 13 percent of the total and was the basis for the election of Cruz Bustamente as Lt. Governor. Record numbers of Latinos were elected to office in '98. The state legislature gained seven additional Mexican Americans and an additional nine were added to the state Senate. There was a new level of Black, Brown, white unity statewide.

This was the anti-ultra-right electoral coalition that won the day on November 3rd. This is a new electoral coalition. It reflects the new demographics in the country, the new role of labor and the new

levels of consciousness of the U.S. people. It also reflects the growing organic unity of the progressive forces in our country today.

If we understand what happened on November 3rd, a tremendous movement can be built in the post-election period.

The women's vote was not completely in the anti-Republican camp. In the House races 53 percent of women voters cast their ballots for the Democrats as compared to 47 percent for

GOP. Because of the sheer size of the vote it still played a big role in a number of key races. The Republicans had hoped that the Clinton scandal would swing massive numbers of women voters to their side. But that did not happen.

When the cold-blooded murder of Dr. Slepian in Buffalo occurred large numbers of pro-choice women took to the streets. This no doubt hurt the Republican candidates.

Ironically it was Hillary Clinton who played the biggest role in mobilizing women to vote against the Republicans. In House races, African American women voted 92 percent against the Republicans. The fact that such high-profile Democratic women incumbents like Moseley-Braun, Boxer and Murray

We did not panic. We did not exaggerate. Rather we adopted plans to check this negative direction and to move things along. First, we must work to defeat the party that is the main vehicle for these fascist-like policies. This is the Republican Party.

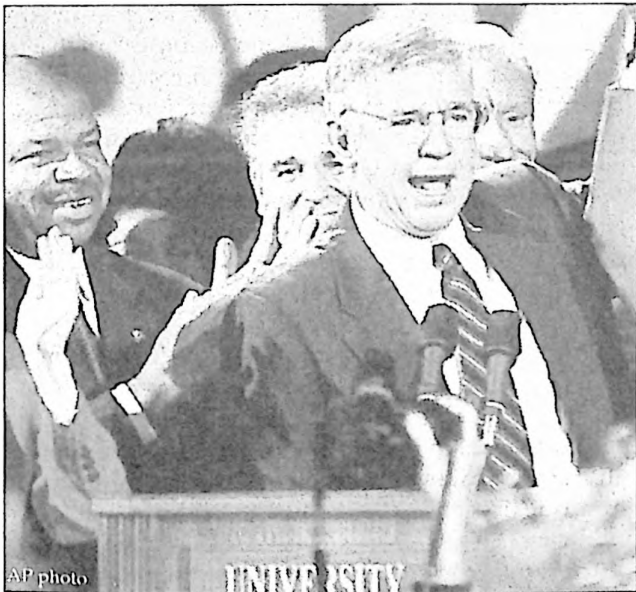
were under attack brought out many Democratic women voters as well.

Youth, especially students, registered at a high rate. Overall only 36.6 percent of the registered voters came out on November 3rd, however, for young voters the figure was 45 percent.

Overall the broad people's electoral coalition tapped into the real sentiments and the concerns of the voters. Larger numbers of Republican voters stayed home. Many voted for center candidates out of protest. The Christian Coalition reported that in 1994, 24 percent of their voters voted Democratic - this year the figure was nearly one-third.

PARTY ELECTORAL TACTICS ■ The policy of the Party in the elections was not motivated by illusions in the Democratic Party. We have a long history of rejecting the notion that the Democratic Party is the party of the people. By its very class nature, it cannot be a people's party. But we have never shied away from supporting Democrats or other non-Communist democrats and progressives when it advanced the interest of the working class and racially oppressed. Vito Marcantonio was a Republican. Henry Wallace was not a revolutionary.

Lenin, Marx, Engels, Ho Chi Minh - all of the great leaders of our movement understood the need for such alliances. Without that understanding as part of our tactical arsenal, we would have become



There were unexpected victories for Democratic governors. Above: Maryland Governor Glendinning.

an isolated sect. Go-it-aloneism, is the greatest illusion of all.

We are for the development of a people's party and will continue to work for its realization. In this past New York election, we supported the Working Families Party in order to build third-party formations. The key is fusion and building alliances.

We reject any notion that says that our electoral tactics reflect a change in principal. It does not.

At the bottom of questioning our tactics is the idea that there is no fascist danger or that we exaggerate the danger. First, we do not say that fascism is imminent or that fascism exists today. The Party's view is not that we currently have fascism.

Our policy is the ultra-right elements that dominate the Republican Party move in a fascist direction. What does union-free environment mean under advanced state-monopoly capitalism? Are they not moving toward outlawing unions? To eliminate affirmative action is to eliminate the enforcement of the laws against discrimination and racism. Does this not move toward pushing our country back to the days of Jim Crow? The elimination of public education, the privatization of Social Security, and the repeal of welfare are clearly moves in the direction of a state that only serves corporate interests and has no responsibility to the people. They've brought back the death penalty. Over one million people are behind prison bars - one out of every 270 persons, counting children, are incarcerated. How many more will it take before we realize we have the danger of a police state? Unions are being threatened and controlled so as to contain their membership. Outlawing unions means outlawing political parties that advocate worker's rights. What was that recent *New York Times* trial balloon reassessing McCarthyism all about? These policies are supported and promoted by powerful sections of the ruling class that are potentially capable of carrying out a change in the method of rule.

The Party, above all, must be vigilant and be able to see trouble down the road. We did not panic. We did not exaggerate. Rather, we adopted plans and programs to check this negative direction and to move things along. First, we must work to defeat the party that is the main vehicle for these fascist-like policies. This is the Republican Party. And that is what we did in this election. We are in step with the majority of working-class and racially oppressed voters. We are in step with the majority of the

America people.

The lesser of two evils does not accurately describe our policy. While we totally reject the notion that there is no difference between the Democratic and Republican Parties, our emphasis is not on supporting the Democratic Party. Our emphasis is on the need to defeat the Republican Party. And there is a difference. In this election, there were no independent parties capable of electing a bloc in the Congress that could have checked the dangers from the right wing. The choice before the voters, therefore, was to vote to elect the lesser evil. Most voters understood, as we did, that above all, we must not allow the worse evil to win. Voters consciously in race after race used the lesser-evil concept to defeat the worse evil. On that basis, the broadest unity of progressive voters was built.

The reality is that abstaining from the election or pursuing a sectarian third-party policy was in effect to allow the election of the worse evil. And that we could not do.

Unfortunately, the fascist danger was not understood by some who are supposed to be on the left. Some supported the impeachment and joined with the right wing, calling for Clinton to resign. They did not seem to care about the terrible consequences. After Michael Moore, the left political satirist and star of the show, *TV Nation*, came out with a call to vote out the Republicans, he was sharply attacked by some of the Greens. In New Mexico, the main target of the Greens campaign was to defeat the Democrats, which meant to elect the worse evil. In California, the main thrust was against Democrat incumbent Senator Barbara Boxer. A full-page ad against Boxer surfaced on the eve of the election.

Some forces on the left showed a complete indifference to the fascist danger and to the suffering of millions of working people that would result if the Republicans would have won their veto-proof Congress. In effect, in this election, they were in a tactical alliance with the ultra right.

In New Mexico, the Green candidate for Congress received over ten percent of the vote and the Democrat running for that same seat lost to the Republican by only six percent. The Republican won and the people lost. The Democrat even offered to accept the Green's program but they still refused to build an alliance. Knowing full well that they could not win, they were putting their narrow desire for votes above their concern for the environment. The

Republicans won again in a district with a two to one Democratic advantage among registered voters.

In sharp contrast, most of the Green parties in Europe are making great strides because they are now building alliances with others, without fear of the fusion approach. The U.S. Greens remain tied to sectarian go-it-alone policies. The Labor Party has a similar policy. Their candidates must run exclusively on the Labor Party line. No third party has ever succeeded with such sectarian anti-unity policies.

If these sectarian policies do not change, the fledgling U.S. independent third-party movement will never succeed in becoming a real force.

That the Republican Party lost this election and is in disarray put a check on the fascist direction and opened the way for profound motion in the other direction. This includes a real growth of independent forces.

THE WORKING FAMILIES MODEL ■ The same electorate in New York that defeated incumbents Alfonse D'Amato and Dennis Vacco gave over 50,000 votes to the labor-and-community-backed Working Families Party (WFP). This was accomplished the same way the American Labor Party achieved ballot status 50 years ago by running the gubernatorial candidate of the Democrats on their line too. While Peter Vallone was a centrist Democrat who was not expected to win, he needed the WFP. And the Working Families Party needed Vallone. It is this kind of a united front of progressive Democrats and independents that won the day. The Democratic Party candidate for Comptroller, Carl McCall, also ran on the WFP line. The WFP also endorsed Charles Schumer for Senate and Elliot Spitzer for Attorney General.

This tactic was successful because in New York state, a candidate can run on more than one line on the same ballot which is not permitted in many other states. It's winner-take-all on one line or no line. Winning this option in every state will help accelerate the building of progressive third-party movements nationwide.

The fight for proportional representation is a basic part of the struggle to democratize U.S. elections. Progressive third parties will gain power quicker with proportional representation than the winner-take-all elections we now have. Public financing is also a key to the building of independence. We must work for these changes nationwide. This is what we must work for in the next period.

Our Party did an outstanding job on this election. We played a leading role in critical races across the country.

Through our publications, literature and active cadres, the Communist's unique class perspective and historic sensitivity to the right danger reached millions and helped to build the fight-back mood of the electorate. When the CPUSA speaks, many forces listen. When a veteran fighter like Gus Hall says this is the most important election in history, many forces stand up and take notice.

The Party issued tens of thousands of pieces of literature including 64,000 copies of the special issue of the *PWW*. In fact, every issue over the last eight weeks was special and concentrated on the election. Districts increased their weekly bundles because they were out on the streets doing election work.

A great impact was realized when comrades everywhere distributed over 35,000 copies of Gus Hall's special pamphlet describing the significant dangers of a right-wing victory. We also issued a leaflet on saving Social Security and the Young Communist League issued an excellent popular anti-D'Amato leaflet. There were many other leaflets issued by individual districts. Altogether we gave out over 300,000 pieces of election material.

The results were seen when the ideas of the Party began to appear in the literature and speeches of candidates running for office. Many a candidate emphasized the right-wing danger and class issues in their speeches and literature which struck a cord with the voters.

In order to win, many Democrats had to go beyond liberalism. Many used our approaches and had to emphasize the class issues. Putting people first was widely used. And the AFL-CIO's working families concept which is a class concept was stressed in many presentations. Sharper emphasis on class issues was key to victory in this election. This helped shape a progressive mandate which will be important in post-election struggles.

Our biggest weakness was that we didn't have more comrades running for local offices this year. Coleman Persilly was the great exception. His campaign in Marin County in Northern California played a major role. He helped build unity to defeat the Republican opponent and received almost 3900 votes on the Peace and Freedom line in the process. That is a very good showing for an independent running for State Assembly.

Running comrades for public office always

helps strengthen the Party and the movement for independence. In 1999 we must have at least three or four Communists running for office in a number of states. We must prepare now.

I think every leading comrade from the club to the National Committee should seriously consider running first and foremost. We must not have a repeat of what happened this year.

Even though this election was a victory for the people the turnout in most states was lower than in 1994. Nationally it was under 37 percent. The difference was that the issues were so compelling that there was a stronger outpouring of labor, African American and Latino voters and many conservative voters were so disgusted by the right-wing conspiracy, that they voted against the Republicans as well.

There was a split in the ranks of the right-wing voters. Many conservative voters stayed home.

POST-ELECTION STRUGGLE □ There is an immediate struggle now raging on how to define the mandate of the 1998 elections. There is a major effort in the mass media to save the Republican Party from a serious decline. The *New York Times* warns the Democrats not to celebrate too much, as the Republicans are still a strong force.

Emphasis has been placed on the races, especially gubernatorial, where Republicans won. There is much talk about the victory of the Bush brothers in Florida and Texas. There is much talk about the need for the Republicans to pursue a centrist line. We can expect a lot of new Republican demagoguery about moving to the center.

The Republican split will deepen. Can the Bush brothers move to the center, without losing the conservative base of their party? That the Republican Party is now licking its wounds and is divided must not be ignored, for although it held on to its majority in the House and Senate, the split makes it very tenuous.

The schism in the right-wing alliance is a key element in how we struggle in the near future. The fight for the mandate is a part of their disarray.

In this post-election period it is possible to involve many of the nonvoters in a broad coalition around issues of jobs, peace and equality. We must take the offensive now and begin the process of reversing the 20 years of right-wing government police-state policies. Such an approach will create a broader coalition. □

U.S. Imperialism: Besieged on all Fronts

Gerald Horne

Although Washington and Wall Street continue to insist that U.S. imperialism remains the world's "sole remaining superpower" every passing day continues to provide evidence that there are rivals – particularly in Asia and Europe – who refuse to accept this conclusion. Indeed, of late relations between the European Union, Japan and China on the one hand and the U.S. on the other, have been marked by increasingly sharp exchanges. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, many progressives – perhaps disappointed with the course of international relations – have neglected to analyze carefully the global correlation of forces and its impact on domestic struggles. Such an approach is misguided, not least because it provides imperialism with too much of a free hand across the planet: history suggests that such an approach can only lead to a disaster for humankind.

This is particularly the case today. The recent U.S. elections and, in particular, the elections in Germany, showed a distinct trend away from the ultra-right. The ultra-right in the U.S. feels that it has a divine right to rule and, when electoral results expose this project as the fantasy it is, this force can become especially dangerous. At a time when the world is awash in weapons, nuclear and otherwise, this fantasy could easily be transmuted into a nightmare for the rest of us.

Though many cheerleaders for U.S. imperialism initially hailed the difficulties faced by certain economies in Asia, their smiles have turned to frowns as it has become apparent that this crisis has spread across the Pacific to these shores. California is the chief U.S. exporter to Asia, accounting for 27 percent of this nation's total, and, since the first quarter of 1997, this state's exports to the most populous of continents is down 11 percent. However, a more representative figure is the fact that Maryland's exports to Indonesia – where, perhaps, the crisis has had the most severe impact – are down 84 percent. Virginia's exports to this largest of Islamic nations are down 82 percent. The state of Washing-

ton, which ranks second only to California in exports to Asia, has seen a 77 percent drop in exports to South Korea.

Inevitably the Asian downturn has had significant impact on the U.S. economy. In fact, this is a reflection of what could be easily termed a general crisis of capitalism itself. Recently the World Bank identified banking crises in as many as 69 countries since the late 1970s. In every case the banking system ended up with zero or negative net worth. The International Monetary Fund estimates that almost 75 percent of IMF member nations experienced "significant bank sector problems" between 1980 and 1995. Virtually all of these banking crises were accompanied by recessions; often they were conjoined with currency crises, of which there have been 87 since 1975. In other words, what has happened in Asia is – in a sense – not unusual.

Bourgeois economists would prefer to believe that the U.S. economy is akin to a super-tanker that can sail through these choppy economic waters without being affected. This is, however, simply wishful thinking. The ballooning U.S. trade deficit broke a record in August 1998; the monthly \$23.2 billion trade deficit was the highest on record; in August exports of U.S. goods edged downward to \$53.7 billion from \$53.8 billion a month earlier while merchandise imports rose from \$74.9 billion in July to \$76.9 billion. The highest bilateral merchandise deficit was a whopping \$5.9 billion trade gap with China – the U.S. only exported a comparatively paltry \$888 million in goods to China. The deficit with Japan also climbed between July and August, from \$5.17 billion to \$5.2 billion. As shall be seen, these figures are representative of growing tensions between these Asian giants and the U.S. In any event, as Asian nations generally seek to follow IMF prescriptions by exporting their way out of their financial difficulties, inevitably this will cause difficulties with the U.S. – the prime destination for these goods.

As a result – and not unlike the 1930s – protectionism is spreading as nations strive to throw up tariff walls to block imports deemed to be too cheap. The most prominent among these nations engaging

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in "anti-dumping" measures is – of course – the U.S. Over 25 new cases have been launched in 1998, up from 16 in the whole of 1997. However, the U.S. is not alone. Canadian steelmakers are preparing anti-dumping actions against four nations; the European Union is investigating 13 steel cases from Slovenia to South Korea; the EU has just extended duties on magnetic discs from Japan, Taiwan and China and on electronic scales from Singapore. The anti-dumping fervor has spread as Mexico, Argentina and Brazil have launched a bevy of cases; so has South

Africa. Asian nations – the target for many of these measures – are striking back, as South Korea, India, Thailand and Indonesia have filed anti-dumping cases of their own.

In the 1930s, the Smoot-Hawley tariff in the U.S. provoked tit-for-tat responses across the globe helping to provoke a collapse of world trade and a severe Depression ... we may now be witnessing Smoot-Hawley in slow motion.

This is no trivial matter.

In 1997 the U.S. slapped a staggering 454 percent duty on supercomputers made by Japan's NEC – a major boon to U.S. companies like IBM and Cray. Even when these cases do not succeed, they exact enormous costs, particularly in legal fees. In the 1930s, the Smoot-Hawley tariff in the U.S. provoked tit-for-tat responses across the globe helping to provoke a collapse of world trade and a severe Depression. According to Gary Horlick, an anti-dumping lawyer at the law firm of former U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher, O'Melveny & Myers, we may now be witnessing "Smoot-Hawley in slow motion."

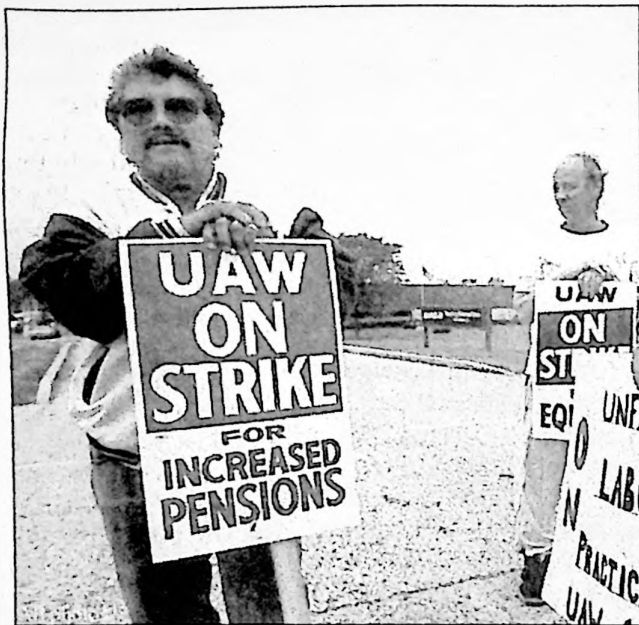
Oblivious to the manifest dangers, Washington continues to act as if its self-proclaimed status as the "sole remaining superpower" means that it can dictate to the rest of the world. Congress is currently studying 26 specific sanctions that would affect ten nations and another eleven general sanctions, so called because they could be used against any nation; this list does not include a further 14 bills being considered by local and state governments.

CRISIS OF OVERPRODUCTION ■ This rush to sanctions is not just a reflection of a typically bellicose U.S. jingoism; it is also a reflection of a deflationary global economy. Put simply, capitalism is undergoing a crisis of overproduction – a "global glut." Simultaneously, repression in nations that have been hit most dramatically by the world-wide downturn, e.g. Indonesia, has meant that the working class hardly has the means to consume what is being produced. Computer chips are one example. Numerous plants were built in the mid-1990s and prices for these chips went into free fall. This glut meant that although more personal computers and chips were being sold, worldwide sales of DRAM memory chips declined from \$41 billion in 1995 to an estimated \$13 billion in 1998, according to the Semiconductor Industry Association. Of course, few in the global working class have the means to purchase the computers that are being produced. This connection between global glut and immiseration of the working class is not just operative in the world of computers. Phelps Dodge, the copper monopoly, in eliminating 700 jobs in New Mexico and Chile and reducing output by 100,000 short tons, claimed that copper prices were at their lowest this century in real terms.

Monopoly capital, which has led the capitalist world to the brink of global depression, is seeking to make the working class pay the price for its own greed, failed policies and gross exploitation. By October 1998 the number of job cuts in the U.S. in this election year exceeded those made in every year of the decade, except 1991 and 1993; there were 91,000 job cuts in October alone and it is expected that 1993's high of 615,000 will be exceeded easily in 1998.

While jobs are being eliminated wholesale, industrial robots continue to proliferate in manufacturing. According to reports by the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the International Federation for Europe, new robot installations globally are predicted to climb by 84,900 in 1997 to 119,800 in 2001; Japan is the leader in this field, using 277 robots for every 10,000 workers – Germany is next with 90.

U.S. imperialism has sought assiduously to implant its system of exploitation across the globe. A useful case study of how this has taken place is visible, ironically, in cities from New York to California. In 1997 Wal-Mart had sales of \$118 billion and is on course to become, within 10 years or so,



Picket outside Navistar International's truck sales processing center in Springfield, Ohio, on Oct. 5, 1998. Class-struggle trade unionism is growing across the country.

the world's largest corporation. It now has 2400 stores on four continents. Shamelessly, Wal-Mart has used Asian child labor to make products displaying "Made in America" tags. When he began his operation in Bentonville, Arkansas, Sam Walton – who rivals William H. Gates of Microsoft as the nation's richest man – hired a union-busting attorney to quash worker organizing. The proliferation of Wal-Mart stores has driven many smaller stores out of business. This is the model that Walton seeks to export abroad.

U.S. unions have not ignored these developments. After revelations about garments carrying the imprint of Kathy Lee Gifford were found to be produced by child labor, a movement arose to correct this injustice. Recently Nike, Reebok and Liz Claiborne – among other manufacturers – set up a code of conduct to monitor overseas factories used by U.S. corporations. However, the Union of Needletrades, Industrial and Textile Employees (UNITE) sharply criticized the accord since it did not require these overseas factories to pay workers enough to meet their basic needs and for allowing U.S. companies to use clothing factories in nations that repress unions.

Increasingly, U.S. unions are recognizing that the 150th anniversary of the publication of the *Communist Manifesto* validates once more the idea

that "workers of the world" should "unite." Take the auto industry, for example. In 1978 hourly employment represented the vast majority of the industry; today it is less than half. The number of production workers in assembly and stamping operations – mostly GM, Ford, and Daimler Chrysler – fell to 258,000 in 1998 from 320,000 20 years earlier. Due to years of outsourcing the number of workers in the parts sector grew from 352,000 to 437,000 during the same 20-year period. While the auto-parts industry was 75 percent union two decades earlier, today it is only 13 percent. These unorganized workers are employed by a growing number of nonunion companies – a number of which are abroad – that provide lower wages and benefits. There are those in the United Auto Workers who have concluded that their own survival depends upon organizing these workers – including aiding the organizing of workers abroad. The Canadian Auto Workers, who split from the UAW in 1985, has won advances in shorter work time and job protection that the UAW could do well to emulate.

CRISIS IN STEEL ■ Steel has been an industry that has faced profound challenges in the global economy. As with other commodities, prices are plunging in a deflationary spiral, thus sparking the erection of tariff walls and "anti-dumping measures." CST, a Brazilian slab producer, has cut prices for November 1998 by almost a quarter compared with nine months earlier. Pasco, the South Korean steelmaker, cut prices by 10 percent in October 1998 for goods exporters in their nation. In Europe average prices for hot rolled coil products have fallen 16 percent since January 1998. Global overcapacity is growing, with much of this concentrated in Eastern Europe, then Asia, then Western Europe. For the first time in its history, the EU became a net importer of steel in the first half of 1998; both South Africa and Brazil have joined the ranks of low-cost producers.

Not surprisingly, U.S. producers – led by U.S. Steel and Bethlehem Steel – have filed demands for anti-dumping action to be taken against Brazil, Russia and Japan; strikingly, their action was joined by the union – the United Steelworkers of America. During the fourth quarter of 1998, U.S. Steel posted lower profits: steel imports were blamed. Indeed, all major domestic steelmakers are showing declining profits compared to a year ago; U.S. Steel claims that imports are the reason this firm has deactivated a

key blast furnace in its Gary mill and has laid off about 100 workers at its Pittsburgh plant. Of course, the profit picture of U.S. Steel is affected by many factors beyond imports – mismanagement and obscenely high salaries for executives, to cite two examples. Moreover, as noted, the U.S. dominated IMF precisely has advocated that nations like South Korea increase exports dramatically as a way to increase foreign currency reserves and rescue their faltering economy. Still, prior to the most recent complaint by the U.S. steel industry, the U.S. International Trade Commission imposed duties on stainless steel coil plate imported from Taiwan, South Africa, Italy, Canada – and South Korea. This move convinced U.S. steel producers that they should move forward more aggressively against their global competitors. When Weirton Steel – the nation's seventh largest producer – announced recently that it was laying off 300 workers, about 9 percent of its hourly work force, imports were underscored as a reason for this drastic maneuver.

Thus, days after the elections of November 1998, a high-level meeting at the White House was convened that included top executives of steel producers and leaders of the union. There President Clinton warned that the U.S. would not tolerate the "flooding of our markets" with imports.

Paul Wilhelm, president of U.S. Steel Group, speaking for his industry, has proclaimed solemnly, "We are in a crisis." His portentous words have been echoed in Europe where the EU has been urged to impose duties on Serbian steel, imports of which have increased by 77 percent in the first six months of 1998. This was linked with the fact that British Steel revealed a 24 percent cut in pre-tax profits for the first half of 1998. Thus, Eurofer, the EU steel companies' association, has filed anti-dumping suits against imports of hot rolled coil from Taiwan, India, Iran, South Africa, Bulgaria – and Yugoslavia.

That Serbia and Yugoslavia have assumed center stage in this steel drama serves as a warning of the dangers of allowing muscular nationalism – as opposed to socialist solidarity – to drive policy. As the deflationary spiral continues and workers are made to pay the price through layoffs and wage cuts and speed-ups, ineluctably nationalist and chauvinist tensions will rise. The need for working-class internationalism is rising. Unity between steel workers of different nations is required more than even before.

And as the unions rise to the challenge, inevitably the U.S. ruling class will be tempted to unleash the harsh forces of repression. Besieged on all sides – at home and abroad – yet still hungry for super-profits, monopoly capital is resorting to ever more ghastly measures. It is often said jokingly that capitalists are vampires who desire the very blood of workers; it appears that this is no longer a joke. John Moore, a leukemia patient underwent surgery at the University of California to remove his cancerous spleen. The university was later granted a patent for a cell line, called "Mo," removed from the spleen; this cell line was to be used for producing valuable proteins, commercially worth as much as \$1 billion. The California Supreme Court ruled that he was not entitled to any rights in his own cells after they had been removed from his body. The U.S. National Institutes of Health has sought to patent a cell line derived from the Hagahai people of Papua New Guinea, who are infected with a unique retrovirus potentially valuable in diagnostic tests and vaccine development for leukemia. According to Prof. Chan Chee Khoo of Malaysia, "beneath the civilized veneer of technological-legalistic jargon, there is little to distinguish these modern day buccaneers from the conquistadors who claimed the "New World" for the Spanish crown." It does seem that with the collapse of the USSR, imperialism has received a "new birth of freedom" and whatever restraints that were imposed by socialism have disintegrated.

A resurgent labor movement is not the only worry of U.S. imperialism today. Just recently, the Pentagon announced that the financial crisis in Asia was a "core security concern" for the U.S.; it was not spelled out but the implication was that as the whip-sawed masses begin to challenge the interests of U.S. imperialism in the region, this "security concern" must be confronted. Thus, despite the collapse of the USSR, reduction of the 100,000 U.S. troops in the region was not envisioned and North Korea particularly was pointed to as a "threat" to U.S. imperialism.

Another major "security concern" of U.S. imperialism is China. Despite President Clinton's lengthy trip there in mid-1998, which had been preceded by a lengthy sojourn in the U.S. by President Jiang Zemin of China, Beijing-Washington relations have been buffeted with difficulty. The list of conflicts seems to be growing. Beijing has assailed bitterly a bill recently approved in Congress that extends a

controversial missile defense system to Taiwan; Beijing's unease was not assuaged when Japan signalled its intention to research a "theater missile defense system."

Increasingly, Beijing is sensing that Washington may not be willing to live up to previous agreements concerning China's territorial integrity, including the notion that the rebel province of Taiwan – not to mention Tibet – are part of the People's Republic of China. After all, a successful tactic used against the former USSR was encouraging "independence" movements in the Baltics, Ukraine, Georgia, Azerbaijan, etc. Thus, in November 1998, U.S. Ambassador James Sasser was summoned to the Foreign Ministry in Beijing for a double protest against President Clinton's meeting with the Dalai Lama and the trip to Taiwan by U.S. Energy Secretary Bill Richardson – whose presence in the past often has signalled foreign policy departures.

Washington has expressed grave worry about Beijing's development of anti-satellite laser technology; the Pentagon claims it does not possess similar technology and stopped trying to develop it years ago. Such technology, according to Washington, could render the U.S. blind, as these satellites have become a major source of intelligence gathering for the U.S. In the same report, the Pentagon predicted that China would launch its first manned space flight in 1999, which would enhance Beijing's military capabilities. This report was issued in the wake of allegations that White House export policies allegedly fueled by campaign cash from China – had propelled these space efforts.

However, it is in the economic realm that U.S.-China relations seem to be undergoing the most severe strain. The U.S. interest rate cut in October 1998 was criticized as inadequate by China's leading newspaper; it was "like trying to douse a blazing cartload of kindling with a cup of water," it was said. Another PRC newspaper denounced as "immoral" U.S.-based hedge funds which had inflicted serious damage on Asian economies. In turn, China is being blamed for an infestation of the "Asian longhorned beetle" in Chicago, allegedly caused by their exports. Beijing argues that these insects could just as easily have come from Japan and South Korea but in the current climate, the U.S. Department of Agriculture is not listening and has slapped sanctions on China. U.S. sanctions are also expected on up to 400 Hong Kong textile companies, in a move backed by the "American Textile Manu-



China and Japan leaders confer.

facturers Institute."

Perhaps sensing the change in climate, Beijing has embarked on a vigorous diplomatic offensive, aimed at avoiding isolation. President Jiang Zemin arrived in Moscow in November 1998 for high-level "no necktie" talks, meant to symbolize the depth of the two nations' "strategic partnership." Russia and China have pledged to boost bilateral trade from the \$6 billion of 1998 to \$20 billion by 2000. Part of this increase in trade will be of the military variety. Russia already earns more than \$1 billion annually from arms sales to China; cutting-edge combat aircraft and air-defense systems account for more than 70 percent of this total. China has expressed an interest in Russia's advanced submarine and surface naval technology. All this – and more – was discussed when Russian Defense Minister Igor Sergeev arrived in Beijing in October 1998, where he met with his Chinese counterpart and delivered a well-received address at the National Defense University.

This visit occurred – interestingly – as a trip to Beijing by a visiting Vietnamese military delegation unfolded; this coincided with a five day official visit by Prime Minister Phan Van Khai. These two nations had waged war against each other in the recent past and the belated diplomatic recognition of Hanoi by Washington was thought to be an effort to entice Vietnam into an anti-China bloc; this visit was a response to these maneuvers.

November 1998 also found President Zemin in

Tokyo, the first visit ever by a PRC President to Japan. In 1997 Tokyo and Washington agreed on a bilateral defense arrangement to replace the 1978 Guidelines for Japan-U.S. Defense Cooperation; this will obligate Tokyo to take on a more wide-ranging military role in cooperation with the U.S. during "emergencies." This agreement was thought to be aimed at Beijing. According to Prof. Terumasa Nakanishi of Kyoto University, "China wants to weaken, if not to break up, the military alliance between Japan and the United States."

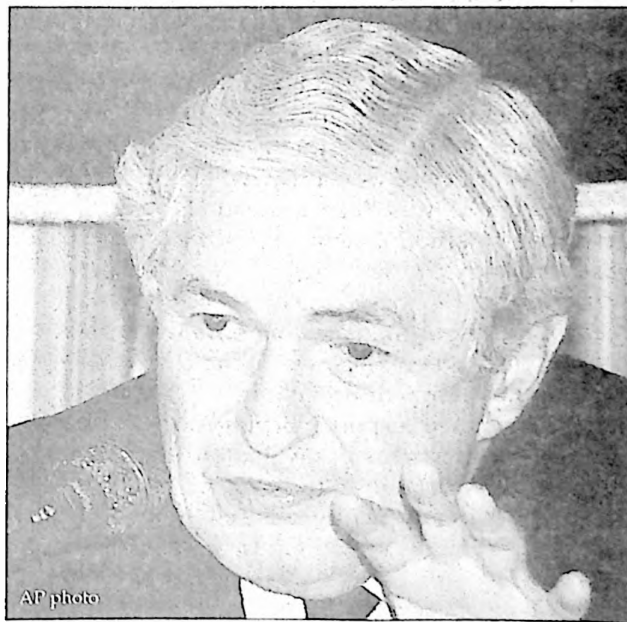
Certainly Japan and China have much to discuss, not least the pressure each receives from the U.S. because of the trade deficit with the latter. Two-way trade between Japan and China reached a record \$532.5 million in 1997, 70 times the figure of 1972, when relations were normalized. Japan has played a vital role in China's development with easy term yen loans, direct investment and technical assistance.

This triangular relationship among Japan, China and the U.S. will be one of the defining relationships of the next century. Tokyo, in particular, will seek to "run with the hares and hunt with the hounds" as it seeks to balance relations between Beijing and Washington to its own advantage. Washington's pressure on both may push the two Asian powers closer together, which could prove disastrous for U.S. imperialism. Perhaps sensing this possibility, the U.S. Export-Import Bank just announced that for the first time it will provide loans, guarantees and insurance for the sale of U.S. equipment and services to China's private sector. The U.S. has been disappointed by China's lethargy in privatizing its huge public sector and this measure is intended to provide a boost to this effort.

U.S. IMPERIALISM AND JAPAN ▣ Though there are those in Washington and Wall Street who would like to align with Tokyo against Beijing, this attempt has been hampered by the fact that powerful economic interests in the U.S. remain quite hostile to Japan – and vice versa. In November 1998, during the all-important Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) meeting in Malaysia, Tokyo and Washington again assailed each other in no uncertain terms. A Japanese ministerial spokeswoman said the U.S. was possessed by an "evil spirit," after Washington accused Japan of trying to buy the votes of other Asian nations with \$30 billion in aid. As usual, the U.S. responded no less harshly.

Such bitter exchanges have become the *de facto* norm in U.S.-Japan relations; one writer for the *Japan Times* has alleged that Washington treats Tokyo "like some upstart Third World nation ... Japan-bashing, though usually uncalled for, has become politically safe in most U.S. constituencies, and is enjoying open season." Certainly, since the Meiji Restoration of 1868, when Japan first embarked dramatically on the road to capitalism, Tokyo's relations with Washington have been marked by more than an iota of white supremacy, as the U.S. has feared that its own proclamation of racial chauvinism would be challenged in similar terms by its Pacific rival.

But even the APEC row, which threatened to split this organization, was dwarfed by the decision by Moody's Investors Service to downgrade Japan's credit rating, which now – amazingly – is lower than that of Italy, an economy, according to the *New York Times*, with "an irregular history and debt levels exceeding its output." For years now the U.S. has been accused of manipulating powerful agencies – the IMF in the first place – in pursuit of its own narrow goals. Many in the international community viewed Moody's decision in this light, just as they viewed this agency's decision in August 1998 to lower Toyota's rating though this transnational has \$20 billion in hand and very little debt. Such decisions will make it more difficult to borrow further



World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn in Japan

expansion – hampering Japan’s ability to better challenge U.S. imperialism. Eisuke Sakakibara, Japan’s well-known Vice Minister for Financial Affairs, suggested that the downgrading raised more questions about Moody’s credibility than Tokyo’s. Even the *New York Times* had to concede that “given Japan’s big trade surplus, impressive savings rate and vast foreign-currency reserves, no one really thinks Japan will default on its credit obligations.” Though it was not their intention, Moody’s startling decision only served to signal that inter-imperialist contradictions are reaching a dangerous new level.

Yet, Washington striking out at Tokyo – to an extent – is self-inflicted harm, given the intertwined nature of the two economies. The U.S. borrows from Japan to buy imports and Japan’s exporters use the profits to build more capacity – e.g. the Nissan plant in Tennessee and the Toyota plant in Kentucky and the Mitsubishi plant in Illinois – to sell to the U.S. Any breakdown in this flow threatens global capitalism, since loss of Japanese capital would likely force interest-rate hikes in the U.S. and crimp global liquidity. In words rarely heard since 1945, *Business Week* has declared that the two rivals are “caught in a fatal embrace.”

Japan, which has been devoting more spending to the military of late, is well aware of the ill intentions of some acolytes of U.S. imperialism. After the U.S. conducted a nuclear test in Nevada in September 1998, Prime Minister Keizo Obuchi demanded urgent consultations, just as the mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki both criticized the U.S. sharply. This opposition to U.S. militarism is nothing new in Japan. There are 27,000 U.S. troops in Okinawa and 23,000 U.S. civilians and military dependents. Their presence has been protested repeatedly, not least because since 1972 over 200 Okinawan women and girls have been raped by U.S. servicemen. Many Japanese wonder if U.S. troops on their soil are aimed at China and North Korea – or themselves.

However, it is not Japan alone that has a bone to pick with Uncle Sam. The currency crisis in Asia has led many self-proclaimed U.S. vultures to swoop down on distressed businesses throughout the region. Leading the charge has been Goldman Sachs, the firm of U.S. Treasury Secretary Robert Rubin – who has been executing policies that, coincidentally, have been benefiting Wall Street.

Following U.S. advice Thailand, agreed to the sale of a finance company. Lehman Brothers both advised the government on the sale – then success-

fully bid \$314 million for the company! Obviously, being both player and referee assists Wall Street enormously in winning financial games. The same thing happened when Indonesia was obligated to sell Semen Gresik, that nation’s biggest cement maker: Goldman Sachs was adviser to both buyer and seller. Though the U.S. has berated Indonesia and other nations for “crony capitalism,” it seems that they have replaced the local version with the U.S. variety.

Thus, Robert Rubin is becoming one of the most despised figures in Asia. In July 1998 in South Korea, the trade union federation blasted the IMF devised restructuring program, which the US – and Rubin – pushed. Endorsing a measure initially bruited by Japan but nixed by the U.S., these unions called for “Asian nations to build an Asian version of the IMF.”

RUSSIAN AFTERSHOCKS ■ Europe and Asia have been for decades the seat of major opposition to the imperial designs of the U.S. For years the USSR could be depended on to serve as a counterweight to U.S. imperialism but the dissolution of this nation changed this. Still, ironically enough, it was the default by Russia on August 17 1998 that signalled that the general crisis of capitalism continued. This default weakened the Yelstin sell-out regime, strengthened Marxist-Leninist opposition and helped to spread capitalist instability to Brazil and elsewhere.

Nevertheless, progressive forces in Russia face formidable obstacles. Privatization has helped to create a powerful capitalist class that will not give up power without a tussle. Boris Berezovsky, a member in good standing of this new parasitic elite, claims to be worth \$3 billion. “I and six others control half of Russia’s economy,” he boasts. In 1996 when it appeared that Communist Gennady Zyuganov would win the presidential elections, Berezovsky and his cronies backed Yeltsin in exchange for large shares of the yet-to-be privatized economy.

At one time, the director of the central bank, the minister of energy and the assistant chief of staff for the Kremlin were all men “out of the pipeline,” as they say at Gazprom. Gazprom’s political party, “Our Home is Russia” – referred to jocularly as “Our Home is Gazprom” – controls 10 percent of the seats in the Parliament. Under Yeltsin, Gazprom had enormous influence over Moscow’s foreign policy:

even Harvard's Jeffrey Sachs – known notoriously as the Dr. Kevoorkian of the global economy because of his one-sided advice about privatizing everything in sight – says that Gazprom should be renationalized since it was “stolen from the Russian people.” Minimally, this company owes \$400 million in back taxes, while Russian workers have gone unpaid for months, if not years. After Prime Minister Sergei Kiriyenko tried to collect some of this booty, he fell victim to their power: Gazprom owns stakes in 29 television companies and newspapers and they fell upon the soon-to-be former P.M. with gusto and he was ousted after serving five months.

His replacement Yevgeny Primakov has been denounced repeatedly in the U.S. as a “dupe” of the Communists. The fact remains that he is today's favorite to succeed Yeltsin as president in upcoming elections. Certainly Russia is in need of radical surgery after the post-1991 devastation symbolized by Yeltsin's poor health and incompetence. According to a recent World Health Organization study, people from the Baltics and Russians are Europe's gloomiest people: they have the continent's highest suicide rates and these rates have soared “since the fall of Communism.” Why? “The rapidity and trauma of social change, crumbling welfare systems and ... unemployment, all contributing to alcoholism and depression.”

EUROPEAN UNION ■ One of U.S. imperialism's most valuable assets is the dollar itself and its widespread use abroad, which amounts to tribute paid to Washington and Wall Street. Now with the common EU currency, the euro, coming on line, this tribute will be facing a staunch challenge. A report recently issued by Deutsche Bank has stated what has become apparent: the euro will soon rival the dollar as the preferred currency for debt issuance. In Octo-

ber 1998 Jacques Santer, President of the European Commission, made the first trip to China in 12 years by a head of the EU. His express mission was to encourage Beijing to use the euro for their bulging foreign currency reserves and as a means of financing debt. China quickly agreed. Said the *Financial Times*, “China has long regarded Europe as vital to its vision of a ‘multi-polar’ world, through which the influence of the U.S. can be balanced by competing interests elsewhere.”

Actually, the EU has its own vision of global hegemony – a vision that correspondingly will require a reduced role for the U.S. Washington and Wall Street have not been ignorant of this development and of late both have been voicing grave concern about European developments. Vance Coff-

man, chairman of Lockheed-Martin, has warned about the creation of a “Fortress Europe” as the continental defense industry consolidates. His concern did not abate when British and German aerospace companies – backed avidly by their respective governments – offered Poland a program to upgrade military aircraft and train personnel; this was “regarded as a counter offer to that made by the US. in the run-up to [Warsaw's] NATO entry” in April 1999.

Lockheed-Martin has reason to be worried about “Fortress Europe,” particularly since the mili-

tary advantage is one of the chief assets held by U.S. imperialism. However, now British Aerospace and Germany's Daimler Benz Aerospace are merging and this union may come to include arms manufacturers in France, Italy, Sweden, and Spain. “The Americans are already complaining,” asserted one UK official, as he contemplated the prospect of an EU combine confronting Boeing and Lockheed. One EU official conceded that this combine would not put “Euro” or “Europe” in its title, so as not to alarm unduly U.S. imperialism. However, a cosmetic name change could not obscure his stated intention: “to



Indonesian students, waving the national flag, are blocked by soldiers from marching to the Presidential Palace, Dec. 3, 1998.

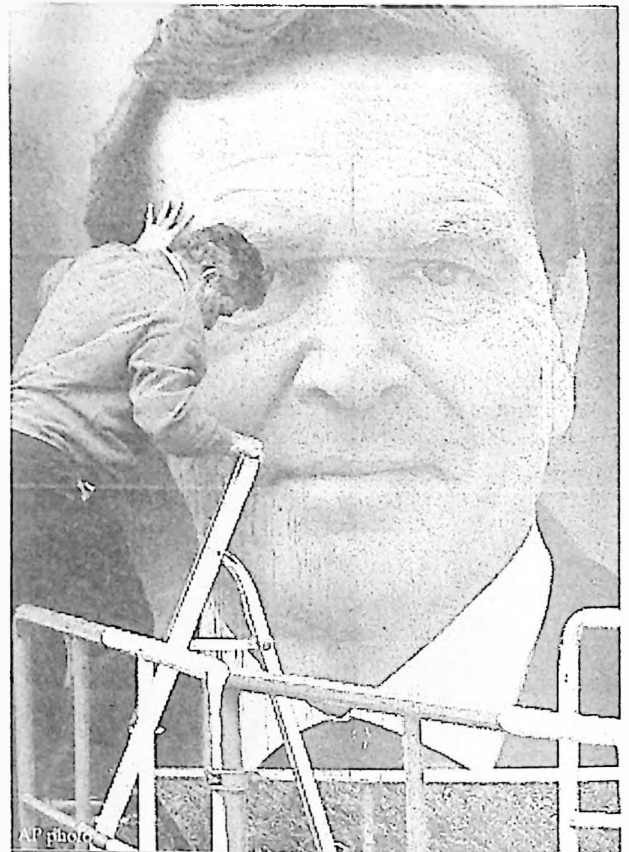
create one of the world's biggest aerospace/defense companies, so that in a few years we could buy one of the U.S. giants."

The arrogance of U.S. imperialism already is benefiting this EU combine in its efforts to gain market share in the lucrative multi-billion dollar arms industry. Just recently South Africa chose Swedish, German, Italian and British groups as the preferred companies to refurbish its armed forces. U.S. companies were not invited to bid because of a U.S. arms embargo against Pretoria – only lifted recently, to South Africa's immense consternation.

This intense competition between the U.S. and EU is beginning to manifest itself within NATO, as more and more European nations feel more attention should be devoted to the Western European Union. Rifts were revealed as the U.S. moved to bomb Iraq in November 1998 for allegedly violating UN decrees. One writer in the *Financial Times*, which often reflects elite EU opinion, spoke of "resentment and frustration" with the U.S. If the U.S. had bombed Iraq, "the rupture within NATO might have been as serious as any since De Gaulle expelled that organization from Paris. Reaction across continental Europe would have ranged from the outright hostility of France, to dismay in Italy and, perhaps, acquiescence in Germany."

These inter-NATO rifts have become all too public and bespeak a fervent EU desire to escape the hegemony of U.S. imperialism. As the U.S. moved to bomb Iraq, Senator John McCain of Arizona – mentioned as a Republican candidate for president in 2000 – condemned Paris for allegedly tipping off Baghdad about the arrival of U.S. bombers. A further fissure in NATO was revealed when the Scottish National Party, poised to seize power as the UK undergoes devolution, pledged to withdraw Scotland from NATO and rid their land of nuclear submarines. Then the newly installed Green Foreign Minister of Germany, Joschka Fischer, called upon NATO to renounce the possible first use of nuclear weapons: this was deemed to be insane heresy by the Pentagon and confirmed their suspicion that the Green-Social Democrat government in Berlin will not be reliable in the crunch.

This unease about Germany was captured by the architect of the Cold War, George Kennan, who recalled recently in the *New York Review of Books*, that he was not altogether pleased with Germany's reunification. Some on Wall Street are displeased with the onslaught by German corporations, which



The recent U.S. elections and, in particular, the elections in Germany, showed a distinct trend away from the ultra-right.

Above: New Social Democratic Chancellor's Schroeder campaign poster.

has seen Bertelsmann gobble up Random House and Deutsche Bank swallow Bankers Trust, while Daimler Benz is digesting Chrysler. Some of this unease is because Daimler executives make salaries eight times smaller than those of their Chrysler counterparts and there is a fear that the relative strength and influence of German unions will spread across the Atlantic.

As if all of this news were not sobering, U.S. imperialism now faces the prospect that its chief asset other than the military – the domination of popular culture – is likewise under siege. Newly-minted T.V. networks in the EU are beginning to produce their own programming, thereby calling into question Hollywood's profit projections. Western Europe is a crucial region for Hollywood, representing almost 80 percent of the estimated \$4 billion in revenue that Hollywood generates.

Still, it has been the EU that has been the most assertive in challenging U.S. imperialism in this and other arenas. Now the EU is demanding that the U.S. increase privacy safeguards for electronic commerce. The mainstream economist Robert Kuttner averred that this EU demand should not be viewed as a "little cheeky" by the U.S. since routinely the U.S. makes demands on other nations, e.g. insisting that Japan should change its distribution system and that the Brazilians should accept Washington's concept of intellectual property, etc. That the tables now have turned is a reflection of the

rapidly changing correlation of forces globally. This conflict over cyberspace has reached the point where the Dutch have threatened to prosecute any company in the Netherlands they find sending electronic data to the U.S. for processing. The EU feels that U.S. privacy protections are too weak and that any EU subsidiary of a U.S. company creates the possibility of exporting these weaknesses back to Brussels. This is just the latest of the many examples that have threatened to ignite a "trade war" between the EU and the U.S. These threats must be taken seriously since "trade wars" often precede shooting wars.

Certainly the rhetoric on both sides of the Atlantic has become more extreme. EU Trade Commissioner Sir Leon Brittan has charged that the U.S. is "playing with fire" in its confrontation with the EU. This inflamed statement came after Washington charged that Brussels was not doing enough to welcome imports from Asia and Russia so as to solve the crisis there. Washington responded with similar outrage when Brussels threatened to bar U.S. meat exports unless hormones and other "contaminants" were removed.

But this war of words has been dwarfed by the ongoing dispute over bananas, as the U.S. has threatened to impose 100 percent tariffs on certain EU exports.

At the heart of this dispute is Carl Linder, chairman of Chiquita Brands – formerly the United Fruit Company – who has contributed heavily to Democrats and Republicans alike. The EU has mandated that their bananas should come from their former colonies in the Caribbean, while Chiquita's bananas come mostly from Latin America. Banana sales in Europe amount to a hefty \$1 billion annually, so this is no small matter. Linder's influence has caused the U.S. to order the EU to buy less from the Caribbean and more from Linder. Interestingly, though Democratic and Republican leaders alike have stood with Linder, the Congressional Black Caucus has stood apart, backing the Caribbean islands, i.e. St. Vincent, Grenada, Dominica and St. Lucia. As much as anything else, the U.S. is upset because of the EU intervention in a region deemed to be Washington's "backyard." This ire did not diminish when Jacques Chirac of France recently became the first French president to visit Mexico in two decades. This was followed by an effort by the EU to negotiate a free trade agreement with the southern neighbor of the U.S., the first between Brussels and a Latin America nation.



French workers protest Levi.

Labor and the Equality Struggle

George Fishman

This is in response to the invitation by *Political Affairs* (April 1998 issue) for discussion towards a Communist Party program on African American equality. Congratulations to *Political Affairs* for calling for and arranging this collective discussion.

The special oppression of the African American people shows itself in double unemployment rates, lower wage rates and benefits, (lowest for Black women), denial of adequate health care because of low income, much higher incarceration and death penalty rates, and a shorter life span.

It shows itself in discrimination and rampant segregation in employment, housing and education. The Party program is of the greatest importance to raise mass demands and to generate united action to meet head on and overcome this shameful, capitalist-bred mass poverty.

Dee Myles' opening essay sets the stage for the discussion and gives a solid outline for a Party program. Cardinal propositions in her opening give a big boost to the equality struggle. They should be endorsed. For example:

- The labor movement is a necessary condition to fight for better working conditions and higher wages. Inseparably, it is also a necessary condition for effective, united action by workers, Black, Brown, and white.

- It is necessary to step up demands that government carry out and expand its public responsibilities towards the needs of the people. It is necessary to demand multiplication, not subtraction of people's programs.

- Unemployment kills!

The programmatic demand of equality must be seen in its interconnections and fought for unitedly. The urgent need for living wage jobs, a federal public jobs program, such as is called for by the Martinez Bill, and job upgrading is central to every other equality and working-class demand.

Another example is the struggle for equal, quality, desegregated-integrated, multilingual public education. The very existence of public education represents a hard-fought public and democratic rights gain. Already the labor movement, some 75

years ago, made public education, linked to ending child labor, its number one demand. Using newly won political rights as part of a broad coalition, it was able to win this demand. The African American people's and women's rights movements broadened and democratized this right further with demands for access and equality.

Today this working-class democratic public gain is under all-out frontal attack by a transnational corporate far-right cabal. This reactionary, anti-people's attack has a sharp racist, sexist, anti-working-class edge.

Beset with insoluble escalating systemic crises on both global and growing domestic scales, the corporate, Wall Street would-be privatizers, smelling obscene profits ahead, are driving full throttle to reduce public schools to market places for investment and monopoly-controlled TV commercials.

The grubby privatizers work in tandem with private school entrepreneurs, parochial school supplicants, and far-right fundamentalists, seeking to snare public funds. Their fascist-leaning irresponsibility is highlighted by the fact that they are ready to shred church-state separation and the Bill of Rights itself in their rush. More, their swindle of profits before education fans anti-working class discrimination, segregation and racism in education.

The struggle for equal, quality public education must be an integral part of a Party program for African American equality. It goes hand in hand with the struggles for living wage jobs, universal health care, strengthened Social Security and Medicare, and restored and expanded federal welfare programs.

Education is vital for the lives and future of youth and society, but it does not stand in splendid isolation. It cannot be separated either on a learning level or an institutional/political level from capitalist economic crises.

The defense of public education has multiple dimensions. Yes, it involves meeting the learning needs of all children, youth, and continuation of adults for modern, stimulating learning environments and material. It also inseparably involves meeting the socioeconomic needs of students and their families. It includes tackling segregation and implementing affirmative action in employment,

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housing and education. Nutrition, health care and living wages are dimensions of learning.

The program should resolutely call for massive increases in federal funding for public education and all federal people's programs, with fund-equalizing and affirmative action guarantees. It should view positively proposals for expanded public education. This includes, for starters, the \$20 billion proposal of the Clinton administration for smaller class size, teacher training and school buildings. It includes the proposal in the Martinez bill for \$50 billion for school infrastructure. It should also call for the necessary labor-led mass electoral struggle to realize the proposals.

Massive federal support for the nation's public schools is not only needed to reverse the galloping deterioration of school buildings and programs nationwide and especially in inner cities, barrios, reservations and rural areas. It is key as a concrete measure to defeat the privatizing drive of global capital and the far right – a drive enunciated by Gingrich in the *Contract on America*, and demagogically in his profitable book, *To Renew America* (1995).

Massive federal funding is a direct answer to a cynical form of the assault on public education – underfunding. Citing deterioration of public education which they caused through underfunding in the first place, the privatizers and far right come up with their solution – surprise! Transfer public funds to private, fundamentalist and parochial coffers. Nothing doing! Fund public education massively! This demand should be coupled in the program with cutting the U.S. military budget and building world peace and international labor solidarity.

The program should indict all forms of assault on public education, including school vouchers and charter schools outside the quality public school framework. An example of how corporate privatizing forces use charter schools as a stalking horse is the Edison Project.

Unlike educators who may view charter schools, within the public school framework as an opening to fertilize new ideas, the Edison Project is out to manage schools as a for-profit business and to advance privatization. It is a Wall Street outfit using schools as chips in the stock market.

On the other side of the class fence are the working class and allies as champions of public education. For example, the AFL-CIO, through its legislative lobby activity and political clout, has to date been able to spot and defeat right-wing efforts in

Congress to enact school vouchers on a federal scale.

Ranged against capitalist-bred oppression is the struggle of the African American people and allies for freedom, equality and dignity. It is a struggle of the entire African American people, mainly working class but also non-working class. Black workers make an especially important contribution in leadership in the equality struggle and in the labor movement overall. The role of Black women, and especially Black working women, is pivotal. The African American people's movement advances the cause of all racially, nationally oppressed people, as well as the entire working class.

BUILDING CLASS UNITY ▣ Of special importance is the strengthening of alliance between the multiracial, multinational, male-female working-class struggles. The global corporations that ruthlessly assault the working class in the drive for maximum profits, also assault racially, nationally oppressed people at home and abroad. Here is a basis and necessity for mutually-supporting, mutually-benefiting alliance. The marrow of the alliance is working-class and labor leadership, and mass involvement on all fronts. This alliance is also the core for building a broader labor-led people's coalition. The alliance is key for going on the offensive.

Crucial for a united struggle is the urgent need to combat and eliminate racism in all aspects, not least of which are chauvinist caricaturing, hate crimes and police brutality. This is a major task, not only of the African American people but also of the entire working class. Broad working-class and labor support is many-sided. It includes both support to the special equality needs and demands of Black people and also to Black workers as a sector of the working class, starting with effective affirmative action and closing racist and sexist wage gaps.

Racism is harmful not only to those racially, nationally oppressed but to the entire working class. A glance at deteriorating working-class living standards, job insecurity, assaults on democratic rights and safety net programs, exposes the ruling class ideological snare that racism is in the interest of white workers. The united struggle against racism and for equality strengthens the struggles of the entire working class and the building of labor-led alliance of the working class and the racially and nationally oppressed.

IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE ▣ The program should go into the important ideological, as well as the economic, political and structural components of the anti-racist struggle. It should help the entire working class recognize and combat white supremacist ideas in all their wrinkles as ideas in the interest of the global monopoly ruling class and its exploitative capitalist system. Deceptive ideas of white genetic superiority and white worker privilege are used consciously and cynically by the ruling class, their institutions, and servitors to poison the minds of white workers against their class and solidarity interests. The ruling class' purpose is to undermine united struggle against the transnational corporate perpetrators of declining living standards and unnecessary social misery.

"The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas." This teaching of Marx and Engels, founders of the world Communist movement and its science of progressive and revolutionary social change, points to the need to build struggle against these essentially racist, sexist and exploitative ideas. Workers should know that buying into white supremacy ideas and practice is being taken in by "scab ideology." The answer is to build united economic, social and political struggle, and on this basis, build working-class ideology and class consciousness – the best antidote to racist ideology. Class consciousness encompasses commitment to



the solidarity of the entire working class and its leadership role in society. Building it requires recognizing, combating and rejecting the ruling class trap of white supremacy, and its first cousin – class collaboration. Building class consciousness constitutes a powerful working-class contribution, in which the Party and its program play an indispensable role.

The anti-racist struggle is advanced hand in hand with the class struggle at home and internationally. As an integral part of its revitalization, the AFL-CIO shows strong recognition, combined with action, of the great importance of the equality struggle for the labor movement. A recent example is a feature article in *America @ Work* (August 1998) giving a union membership breakdown along racial, national and gender lines and pointing out that "African American men and women have the highest unionization rates in the country."

Also, the strong stand by the AFL-CIO for affirmative action, the advancement of racially, nationally oppressed and women to leadership posts, and the role, as by the United Mine Workers of America, in organizing the people of Ebensburg, Pa. against the KKK, are all impressive. They show confidence in the working class as a powerful and leading force in society against racism and for equality. This confidence is based on class and social realities: the position of the working class in production, its numbers, its organization, its absolute need for class unity, and the historic record to which the CPUSA has pioneered and made indispensable contributions, and continues to do with the Party program in progress.

In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels identified the leadership role of the working class in society. They wrote:

The proletarian movement is the self-conscious movement of the immense majority in the interest of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself, without the whole super incumbent strata of official society being sprung in the air.

This is the route of class struggle, of building the labor/racially, nationally oppressed people's alliance. This is the route whereby the "immense majority," led by the working class in united struggle can make long run gains and achieve fundamental solutions to exploitation and oppression. □

'98 Elections and the Ultra-Left

Emil Shaw

Election '98 is over. The results are in. However, it appears that some have learned nothing from the results and still maintain their old positions. Never mind the fact that the voters' repudiation of the far-right tactics of the Republicans have forced Newt Gingrich out of office. Never mind the fact that some of the most far-right political figures such as D'Amato and Dornan in California have been sent to the bleachers. This means nothing to various bourgeois radicals who accuse the CPUSA of collaborating with the class enemy.

This is expressed ideologically in different forms. It was expressed in reservations within the Communist Party toward the policy. And it is further indicated by the rather sharp post-election discussion with individual Greens on the outcome of the election.

It therefore seems important to review the ideological correctness of our position. It not only impinges on our work in this state, but also in other states such as New York and California. California faces the challenge of the ultra-left through some forces in the Peace and Freedom Party. New York faces the challenge of a Green movement that seems to ape the developments in New Mexico.

The sharpest disagreement between the position of the CPUSA (that is in sync with the broad people's movement) and petty bourgeois radicals is on the nature of the two-party system and the importance of focusing to defeat the ultra-right. While paying lip service to the fact that the Christian Coalition dominates the Republican Party, their main focus is to attack the liberal Democrats for their wavering positions. Day-to-day defenses against the privatization of Social Security, the privatization of the public service sector, protecting labor's rights, the struggle against racism, and the general defense of the New Deal mean nothing to these drawing room idealists. Their equation of center-liberal policies of the Democrats with the far-right policies of the Republicans in the electoral arena in many instances resulted in their candidates helping to elect reactionaries. Such was the case in

'96 in New Mexico, when the Greens ran Carol Miller, a health care worker, in the 3rd District Congressional race against Democrat Eric Serna, corruption-tainted Corporations Commissioner, and far-right Christian Coalition preacher Republican Bill Redmond. The result, in a 2-1 Democratic, Latino working-class district Bill Redmond won, with the Green's getting 17 percent of the vote. The fact that the Republican Party thanked the Greens for helping in the election meant nothing to these "purists."

In '98, when Miller tried again, this time confronting a fighting Democrat, Tom Udall, against Redmond, Udall won with 53 percent of the vote, against Redmond's 43 percent. Miller's vote dropped dramatically from 17 percent to 4 percent. In the 1st District, Bob Anderson, a Green, received 10 percent in the race between Republican Heather Wilson, who secured 48 percent, and Democrat Phil Maloof, received 42 percent. Anderson consistently proved to be the balance of votes that put Heather Wilson back into Congress.

And again, the fact that the Republican state chair publicly thanked the Greens for their support must have some bearing on people's thinking. What is ideologically missing from the thinking of the petty-bourgeois radicals is the basic position of the Communists since the writing of the *Manifesto*. After 150 years, certain specific references by Marx to European conditions must be interpolated to the USA but we would like to allude to some quotations and discuss them:

In what relation do the Communists stand to the proletarians as a whole? Communists do not form a separate party opposed to other working-class parties. They have no interests separate and apart from those of the proletarians as a whole. They do not set up any sectarian principles of their own by which to shape and mold the proletarian movement. The Communists are distinguished from other working-class parties by this only: (1) In the national struggles of the proletarians of the different countries, they point out and bring to the front the common interests of the entire proletariat, independently of all nationality.

In the various stages of development which the strug-

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gle of the working class against the bourgeoisie has to pass through, they always and everywhere represent the interests of the movement as a whole.

The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement.

From this one can see that even at the time of Marx, the concept of coalition politics versus purism was very important. Even the most elementary study of his writings indicates that Marx was very particular as to details and nuances and differences between various political groupings, and even the smallest advances on the part of the working class were important to him.

From these concepts flows the general tactics of the Communists from the Paris Commune to the Soviet Revolution, the united front against fascism, the various trials and tribulations of the Second World War, and the fight for world peace and against atomic war after the Second World War, always seeking to march in the ranks of the working class, seeking to broaden the front, and giving ideological lead to its advances.

The cancerous takeover by the Christian right of the Republican Party has been traced by our Party's leadership for the last 12 years, and therefore our efforts to defeat the most reactionary forces of the bourgeoisie should come as no surprise.

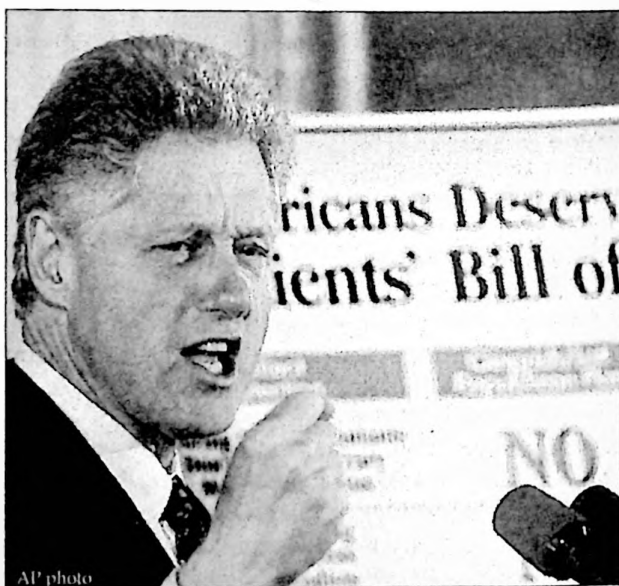
Even though for the last 12 years we have been hammering on the dangers of the far right, what makes such bourgeois radical formations as the Greens attractive to certain segments of the population? For one, they parade around as being anti-corporate, and thereby help to vent a growing revulsion in this country to the large corporations. For another, they are sharply critical of every possible failure of the liberal Democrats to fight for the people. Thus, in a two-party environment they become a barometer of people's frustrations, a barometer which ultimately helps reaction.

In instance after instance in New Mexico we have found that, in competition with credible Democratic candidates such as Tom Udall, the Greens' vote declines. However, in a three-way race where the liberal Democrat is weak, the Green vote goes up. They present themselves as being anti-corporate, but have no specific day-to-day plans of organizing masses of people to defeat the corporations on specific issues.

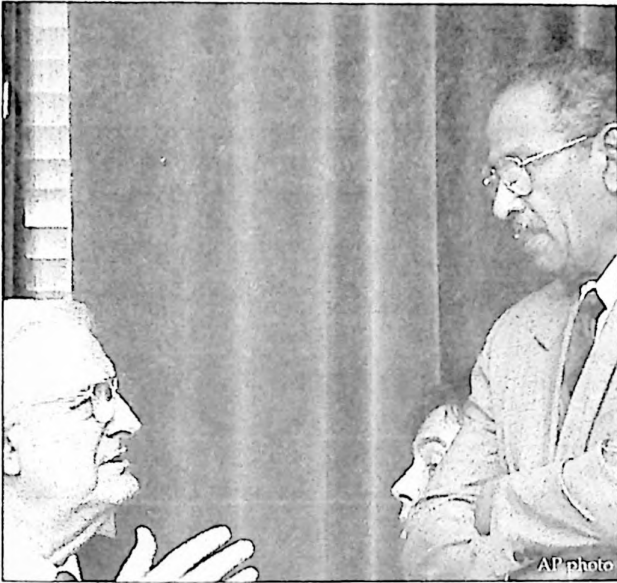
They claim to be a working-class party, but in reality, in their program they oppose the class struggle and proclaim that they are the third force in the constant struggle between capital and labor. Invariably, such a third force becomes a deception that leads working people back into the jaws of capitalism. One might say that the Greens are the green barnacles that attach themselves to the weak part of the political timbers in order to live off them.

They have no resources of their own. Their strength comes from being paraded around by the media as an "alternative" to a "corruption-tainted" vote for the Democrats in a tight race. By their lack of central organization they will debate forever items such as labor support or solidarity that Communists and other working-class groups would take for granted.

What is their class composition and outlook? In the first instance, their working-class composition is very, very small. Their representation amongst Latinos is almost non-existent. Their main leadership consists of various intellectuals and government employees very much removed from the struggles of the people. Politically, they are composed of liberal democrats, libertarians, anarchists and Trotskyites. The one thing that unites them ideologically is a vehement rejection of the concept of the class struggle and anti-Communism. As such, they have consistently earned the mistrust of the labor movement, even though individual Greens have been out



Ultra-right campaign to unseat Clinton was blunted by the November election



Hydeon on left is leading attempt to impeach Clinton.

there on the picket line supporting strikes.

Despite the fact that their statewide registration has increased, during this last election they were in total disarray as to the role of their candidates in helping to elect conservatives. In both the 1st and 3rd districts of New Mexico, Greens and Green supporters publicly broke away from their candidates on the question of defeating the far right. This went far beyond anything that the Communists were capable of doing. The split within their ranks on coalition politics is sure to lead to a development of either causing them to disappear or to radically change their tactics.

Politically, at the heart of this situation is the fact that a two-party system leaves us no choices but to go for the lesser evil. The objective decline in voter turnout indicates that more and more people are turned off by the system. Election reform, therefore, is not only on the order of the day in New Mexico, but certainly throughout the country. The concepts of one person one vote have to be extended so that that vote does not wind up in the hip pocket of any politician because the voter has nowhere else to go.

As a result of the various election outcomes an understanding has been reached among both New Mexico labor leadership and the liberal Democratic Party leadership that election reform is on the order of the day. One aspect of this election reform is a concept called Instant Runoff (IRV). As critical as we are of the Greens as spoilers, we must give credit to them for having first proposed this concept in New

Mexico. Basically, it is a variation of the idea of proportional representation, in that voters for any statewide or federal office cast their vote in a 1-2-3 preference, with the candidate with the least amount of votes being transferred to the other candidates until an absolute voting majority has been achieved. Of course, the pioneers in election reform were the leaders of the American Labor Party of New York and the Communist Party of the '30s and their fight for proportional representation. Thus we see that as the struggle develops, ideas become reality when their time has come.

One final point on the issue of racism and the ultra-left. Some prominent leaders of the New Mexico Greens think of themselves as a working-class party. Unfortunately American capitalism was built on racism and exploitation of workers based on their color. Therefore one of the prime needs of any working-class party is to struggle against racism, and be sensitive to the concerns of nationally oppressed workers, to fight for their just needs and by such actions to help unite the whole class, in the common struggle against capitalism.

The New Mexico Greens have a history of vacillations on the questions of racism. We have observed that they will have great concerns about social injustice in Mexico or Latin America. They will demonstrate at the Mexican Consulate about injustices in Chiapas, but are less concerned about Latino representation in Congress. They will march around the Albuquerque federal building, yelling their heads off about lifting the blockade against Cuba, but not be overly concerned if the northern New Mexico Chicano small farmers do not have enough fire-wood because the Socialist-Green led Forest Guardians caused a moratorium on wood gathering on public lands. They moralize about Indian gaming, but have very little to say about the over 40 percent unemployment rate on the reservations and the disastrous health care facilities on Indian lands. Of course they are totally mute on the question of preserving bi-lingual education in New Mexico. (Maybe because the attack against bilingual education in New Mexico is led by Linda Chavez of the Center for Equal Opportunity a Christian Coalition offspring). Their lack of sensitivity on questions concerning peoples of color is one more reason why they are distrusted by the working people of this state. □

Today's Russia

David Lawrence

This article briefly discusses the economy of contemporary Russia and the role of multinationals in the economy. The story is one of corrupt bureaucrats selling off the stolen wealth accumulated and owned by the working people of the former Soviet Union. Under the so-called "transition to capitalism" workers are not paid for months, then inflation steals the value of their late paychecks. The public sector has been sacked, access to adequate health care for workers has been destroyed, pensioners beg for food in the streets, and the youth have no hope for the future. On the other hand, the workers are increasingly fighting back through thousands of strikes and massive demonstrations every year.

After the destruction of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Russian Federation inherited the bulk of the national wealth accumulated by the Soviet people. Russia continues to be a leading producer and exporter of minerals, gold, and fuels which are the main sources of hard currency. The Russian fishing industry is the fourth largest in the world, and Russia produces a quarter of the world's fresh and frozen fish, and a third of the world's canned fish. In addition, Russia has a substantial manufacturing industry, primarily in machinery manufacture. Nevertheless, since the destruction of the Soviet Union the economy has been looted and destroyed. According to official statistics the Gross Domestic Product (the total value of goods and services produced) fell nearly 40 percent between 1992 and 1997. Inflation rose to a peak of 30 percent per month in 1993 and has periodically been high since then.

On August 17, 1998, the ruble was devalued and payments were defaulted on domestic debt. The ongoing destruction of the economy was accelerated as imports fell by 45 percent, and the internal distribution of both retail goods and money nearly ceased to function. Agricultural output plunged 22.9 percent in August 1998 compared to August 1997, and industrial output fell by 11.5 percent during the same period. Savings in banks were frozen, credit

cards usually were useless, many salaries fell by half, and millions of workers lost their jobs. Inflation rose to 15 percent in the month of August, and to 67 percent annually. Investment was less than a quarter of what it had been in 1990. While this is clearly a disaster for the Russian working people, it is a great opportunity for foreign capitalists. American management consultants are pushing this catastrophe as the perfect time to grab trained staff at rock-bottom wages, reduce the cost of doing business across the board, and expand operations.

Western capitalists have viewed the public assets of the former Soviet Union as a bonanza of almost unlimited profit potential, and have rushed in to scoop up the wealth. Cumulative foreign investment in Russia was about \$11 billion in 1995, with the share of the United States approaching 20



The freedom to starve: soup line in Moscow.

David Lawrence is a contributor to *PA*.

percent of the total. Europe is Russia's biggest trading partner with the United States ranking second. American-based multinationals have snapped up privatized former Soviet production facilities in the energy, food processing, telecommunications, and automobile industries. Additional major European and American investments, often in the form of joint ventures, have focused on the capture of service industries. Some of these investments include:

- Russian/American International space station contracts which include \$400 million in contracts for the provision of hardware, joint technology, and on-board research support by U.S. firms;
- A \$10 billion project involving Marathon, McDermott, Mitsui, Mitsubishi, and Shell to develop large oil and gas fields offshore at Sakhalin Island;
- A \$2.5 billion oil exploration project involving Texaco in the Komi republic;
- The use of Western engines and electronics by Russian manufacturers to bring the Russian civil fleet up to world standards;
- The privatization of many Russian defense firms and their subsequent development of financial partnerships with U.S. firms.

Since 1992 the United States has spent billions of dollars of government funds to speed up the privatization of what had been the public wealth of all the Soviet people. For example, in 1994 the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) provided over \$1.6 billion to "develop" democratic institutions and transform its state-controlled economy to one based on market principles. These funds – directed toward the looting of the people's wealth – targeted agriculture, energy, housing, health, mass media, and other key sectors of the economy and society. In addition the U.S. Export-Import Bank (Eximbank) approved about \$2 billion in loans, loan guarantees, and insurance for transactions in Russia from 1991 to March 1995 to assist privatization, with a special focus on the very profitable energy sector of the economy. To date, the U.S. government has provided a total of \$4.7 billion in grant assistance to Russia including \$2 billion in economic and technical assistance, \$1.7 billion in humanitarian and food assistance, and \$1 billion in security and weapons dismantling assistance. An additional \$6 billion has been provided to support financing and insurance. Finally, a recent CIA profile of Russia notes that:



October revolution celebration.

American business centers have been opened in St. Petersburg, Nizhnevartovsk, Novosibirsk, Volgograd, Nizhny Novgorod, Yekaterinburg, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, and Chelyabinsk to help U.S. and Russian companies do business in Russia. The Commerce Department has also established a Special American Business Internship Program (SABIT) in Russia.

U.S. Information Agency (USIA) public diplomacy is active in the areas of promoting the growth of democracy and civil society, encouraging economic reform and growth of a market economy, explaining and building support for U.S. foreign policy objectives, and building understanding of U.S. society and culture. Professional and educational exchanges cover such diverse fields as journalism, public administration, local government, business management, education, political science and civics education. Over 20,000 Russians have participated in USIA-funded exchanges over the past five years.

UNPAID WAGES AND PENSIONS ■ One Russian worker in four – totaling more than 20 million people – is not regularly paid wages he or she has earned. Delays can be as long as six or even twelve months. And when finally paid, steep inflation has turned the income into a pittance. At the beginning

of September of this year (1998), Russian working people were owed more than 84 billion rubles in back pay. The total sum of unpaid wages in 10 basic industries in Russia rose 6.5 percent during the month of July alone. Also during July the sharpest increases in back wages were registered in the public health, culture and arts, and the education sectors, at 33.9 percent, 28.4 percent and 16.6 percent respectively. Note that many of the Russian workers who are considered to have been paid for their work actually are compensated with commodities rather than cash – such as items produced in the plant, spare parts, food, or alcoholic beverages.

At the same time, year after year of rampant inflation has forced down the standard of living for those lucky enough to keep their jobs. Just in the one-year period between August 1997 and August 1998, real incomes (i.e. adjusting for inflation) plummeted nearly 10 percent. During the same period of time the number of people living in poverty grew by 2.2 percent to 33 million, over 22 percent of the Russian population. Official unemployment figures were pegged at 11.4 percent in July, but this figure does not take into account underemployment nor does it consider those who are technically employed but who have not been paid for months.

Among the poorest of Russian citizens are those forced to survive on meager pensions. Their situation worsens by the day. Payments are often delayed and these delays will likely increase. As of September 1, 1998, pensioners were owed 19 billion rubles in back payments. Even when they are paid, however, the government's policy of simply printing more money has caused 15 percent per month inflation rate, which rapidly turns the minimal pensions into little more than pocket change.

Naturally, the late payment of wages can have disastrous consequences for Russian families. The following interview was reported in the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) Campaign on the Non-Payment of Wages in Russia Newsletter, No. 2, Sept. 1997:

Larisa Seliverstova is the chairperson of the trade union committee of school number 10 in Prokop'evsk, Kemerovo oblast. She was first asked about the budget of her own family:

A: My salary is now 620,000 rubles (\$108) per month, I work one shift, which amounts to 23 hours a week, although almost everyone in our school works a double shift. I have been paid for October 1996, 60 percent of my

pay for January 1997 and 27 percent of my pay for the summer vacation. I have not received any child benefit (that would add about 70,000 rubles a month to the family budget) since April 1996. We have one child, a nine-year-old son. My husband works in the special department for preventative maintenance for the suppression of underground fires. He earns 1.2 million rubles, but he was last paid in September 1996.

Q: If you hardly ever receive any money from your main job, do you or your husband have any chance to earn something on the side?

A: We don't have any additional earnings. Basically we work on our garden plot.

Q: Why does your husband not go somewhere else, if he has not been paid for so long?

A: He still has two and a half years to work to qualify for a special pension. Then, certainly, if it goes on he will look for work with pay.

Q: How do you survive? Does someone help you?

A: Our parents help: my husband has two and I have one. My father gives us all of his pension – he is still working. My husband's mother helps with food. Grandpa and grandma completely support our child. They live in a private house which has a garden, and they also have an allotment. In July, on the eve of the all-Kuzbass day of



Gennady Zyuganov, leader of Communist Party of the Russian Federation.



AP photo

action, my husband received his wage for last September. His director has gone on vacation so he cannot expect to get any more money before October.

SOCIAL ISSUES ■ While foreign capitalists are buying the privatized people's wealth for pennies on the dollar, and local corrupt officials and the new Russian bourgeoisie are selling it, the Russian people are suffering widespread poverty for the first time in decades: According to the *Chicago Tribune*:

While a government minister warned ... that Russia is enduring mass poverty but is too broke to stop it, dozens of people lined up near the Kremlin walls to sell the miserable items whose proceeds will pay for one more meal. Barter lines and urban soup kitchens for the elderly and those who have not been paid pensions for months or cannot live on the \$20-a-month payouts are a daily reality. Women wrapped in ragged overcoats and men staring straight ahead offer any item: a mushy cucumber, a bar of chocolate, a pair of old boots, a vodka bottle half filled with gasoline – in exchange for cash.

Numerous polls indicate that the youth of Russia believe they have no future in the new corrupt capitalist society. They are not alone. Their parents and grandparents are increasingly finding suicide a

desperate but preferred alternative. According to World Health Organization figures, youth suicide rates in Russia doubled since the destruction of the Soviet Union to 26.2 per 100,000 people in 1994. This brings Russia's overall figure up to 31 per 100,000, compared to the United States which has 12.4 suicides per 100,000 people each year.

Russian prisons hold a higher percentage of their citizens than most countries of the world, but both the prisons and the prisoners are in abysmal condition. A recent speech by Justice Minister Pavel Krashennnikov indicates that during the first nine months of 1998 the prison service received two billion rubles less than it was allocated in the federal budget. In addition prison workers are now owed 750 million rubles in back wages. According to human rights organizations 10,000 to 20,000 prisoners died in a single recent year – 1996 – primarily due to overcrowding and lack of adequate medical care.

ORGANIZED LABOR ■ Russian workers are fighting back through massive mobilization organized by the trade unions. During the first six months of 1997 the number of strikes in Russia shot up 500 percent compared to the previous year. The average reached 5,000 stoppages per month from January to March. Last April saw nationwide mobilization, as did last October:

April 9, 1998 saw workers from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad, and most points in between, marching on the streets in support of the all-Russian trade union action under the slogan Wages! Employment! Legality! About 14 million people took part in all forms of protest of the Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR). According to the union, the people expressed their protest in the form of rallies, marches, pickets, strikes and suspension of work at enterprises. In particular, about two million workers of 12,000 Russian enterprises and institutions suspended or fully stopped their production activity on the day.

Under socialism the Soviet Union had an extraordinary national health service which provided good quality health care to all Soviet citizens and residents at no cost. The health care system was internationally noted for its primary care, its prenatal care, a number of world-class institutes, and the development of innovative surgical procedures. Capitalism, however, has almost entirely destroyed the health care system that guarded the people's



AP photo

Children are the greatest victims of the restoration of capitalism in Russia:
Above: Children at a Red Cross canteen.

wellbeing.

Death rates have soared to war-time levels. Curable infectious diseases such as diphtheria and measles have spiraled out of control to levels common many decades ago.

Rates of cancer, heart disease, and tuberculosis are now higher than in any other industrialized country. Russia under capitalism now devotes less than 1 percent of its national budget to health care. Half of the hospitals in Russian have no hot water, and 25 percent have no sewage system. About half of all Russian surgical patients contract infections from unsanitary hospital environments. Most drugs have been priced so high that they are entirely unavailable for the working population. Pharmacies are characterized by empty shelves and exorbitant drug prices. Prices have shot up by 50 percent to 200 percent on imported drugs and by 20 percent to 100 percent for domestically produced drugs. Major national drug distributors will only continue supplying the stores if paid in advance at a maximum possible mark-up. The destruction of the Soviet health care system by capitalist forces has resulted in an unprecedented assault on the lives of working families and retirees in the former Soviet Union. The magnitude of death and destruction under capitalism among the former Soviet people can be likened only to genocide. This is the reality of health care

under capitalism.

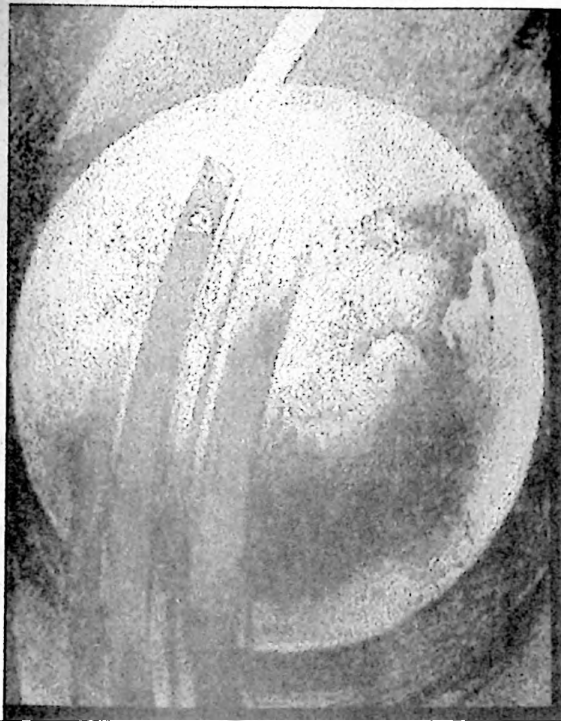
Angry and outraged health care workers have been fighting back with at least as much commitment and energy as industrial workers. In 1992 over 2.5 million medical workers shut down Russia's healthcare industry for three weeks when the government appropriated only 40 percent of the money required to adequately finance the health care system. Doctors and nurses recounted stories of operating on patients with razor blades, and without anesthetics because cuts in state subsidies had stopped production of medical supplies. Conditions have deteriorated considerably since then.

In the former Soviet Union the wealth of the state belonged to the people, and was entirely in their service. Since 1991 the former Soviet Union has been dismantled. The people's wealth - accumulated at great personal sacrifice in the course of decades - has been stolen, squandered, or sold. Capitalist interests from the United States, Europe, and Asia have raided and looted the people's wealth. The Russian working class has been left with memories, pocket change for pensions, and IOUs for wages. However, their heritage from the Soviet Union is also a heritage of organization and struggle. Organized labor, with millions of members in the streets, is fighting back. □

WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT

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CZECH REPUBLIC

The pollsters predicted that the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (KSCM) wouldn't succeed in getting through to the second round in any of the 27 Senate contests in the elections held on Friday and Saturday (November 13/14), because voting would be based not on proportional representation, as used in elections to the lower house of the Czech Parliament, but on a modified version of the first-past-the-post system. The heavily foreign-owned capitalist and state-controlled media did their best to make their fantasy come true by imposing a water-tight information blockade on the policies the KSCM was putting before the two million Czechs eligible to vote – basically a call for a move to the left on the part of the Social Democrat government – but the Communists had the

last laugh.

TV results show hosts biting their lips. In one of the first results to be declared, the North Bohemian industrial constituency of Ustí nad Labem, the Communists not only beat the ruling Social Democrats' candidate. They came within 186 votes of beating the main right-wing contender, standing for

ex-premier Vaclav Klaus's Civic Democratic Party (ODS). In the second and decisive round there will be a straight fight between Communist Jaroslav Doubrava, who polled 27.63 percent in the first round, and ODSer Zdenek Kavina (28.34 percent).

Worse was yet to come. In the North Moravian constituency of Bruntal KSCM, candidate Rostislav Harazin topped the poll with 26.92 percent – 2,572 votes ahead of the ODS candidate (18.11 percent), with the retiring Social Democrat Senator beaten into fourth place (15.54 percent). Miroslav Stepan, general secretary of the so-called Party of Czechoslovak Communists (SCK) and former presidium member of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (KSC), who contested the seat as part of his continuing vendetta against the KSCM leadership, finished in

eighth and last place, with 716 votes (2.45 percent).

The Communists notched up a third success in Brno-Venkov in South Moravia, where Pavel Pavlik (23.67 percent), advanced to the runoff next weekend by coming second to the ODS candidate (30.78 percent), with the Social Democrat candidate (16.72 percent) again finishing fourth.

These results mean that the Communists have a good chance of increasing their present two seats in the 81-member Senate. In the lower house of the Czech Parliament, elected by proportional representation, they already hold 24 of the 200 seats.

In six other Senate seats, including the traditionally left heartland of Ostrava-Mesto, the Communists finished in third place, beating the Social Democrat candidate in one case and finishing close behind them in the other five, taking between 18 percent and 20 percent of the votes. In a further four seats where they didn't finish in the first three places, they nevertheless polled between 18 percent and 21 percent. Their candidates in the other 14 contests averaged 13.5 percent.

Overall, as the German news agency DPA noted, it was the surprising Communist gains and the success of the ODS which were the main features of the Senate elections, as well as Social Democrat Prime Minister Milos Zeman's promise that heads would roll as a result of the party's poor performance.

The turnout at 42.37 percent was low, but a little higher than at the first Senate elections in 1996, when all 81 seats were contested. Commenting on the low

The Communists also did well in the local elections, where they stood 23,203 candidates (26 percent of them women) for 62,471 seats on city, town and village councils, almost 7,000 more than the Social Democrats and 5,000 more than the conservatives.

turnout in both the Senate elections and elections to 6,332 local councils all over the Czech Republic, which were also held last weekend, KSCM leader Miroslav Grebenicek said that it reflected the state of democracy in the country. The other parties and the media, he said, had only been playing at democracy for the past nine years, and at the weekend many voters had refused to play the game.

Of the Social Democrats' poor performance, Grebenicek said that they were paying the price for not having kept promises they'd made at the 1996 Senate elections in order to win the support of Communist voters in second round runoffs. Certainly, all the indications are that, influenced by this and the dismal performance of the Zeman government to date, the Communists are

winning back voters they lost to the Social Democrats at the 1996 general election.

The Communists also did well in the local elections, where they stood 23,203 candidates (26 percent of them women) for 62,471 seats on city, town and village councils, almost 7,000 more than the Social Democrats and 5,000 more than the ODS. Their best performance was in Prague where, despite the efforts of the ODS-controlled city council and Lord Mayor Jan Koukal to rig the elections against the Communists by a reorganization of the electoral district, the party won 14.5 percent of the vote and increased their number of councillors from six to eight. The party improved its position in other cities and large towns, where it also won 14.5 percent of the vote. □

Postmark Prague

ISRAEL

On October 24, 1998, the Communist Party of Israel issued the following statement "From a Withdrawal - To a Palestinian State Alongside Israel" on the agreement signed in Washington on October 23, 1998.

The agreement on an additional Israeli withdrawal from the Occupied Territories (the "Second Beat") and the enlargement of the territory that is under full or partial control of the Palestinian Authority, that was signed in Washington on October 23, was forced on Prime Minister Netanyahu and on his rejectionist government, the settlers' government.

The Communist Party of Israel, which in the framework of its struggle for a just and stable Israeli-Palestinian peace support-

ed the Oslo agreements and fought for their implementation - considers the agreement that was signed in Washington, if it is fully implemented, to be one more positive step on the long road towards peace between Israel and the Palestinian state to be established alongside it.

Following the agreement, which was signed by Netanyahu and Arafat, the CPI has no illusions that Netanyahu and his government have changed their dangerous policy, that prefers territories and settlements and places countless obstacles on the road towards a permanent settlement. Therefore, the CPI, together with its partners in the Democratic Front for Peace and Equality (Hadash) and all supporters of peace, Jews and Arabs, will work for the implementation of the agreement with the Palestinian Authority and for carrying out the additional withdrawal, while at the same time it will conduct an intensified campaign to topple the right-wing Netanyahu government and to isolate the settlers and the other enemies of peace. The years-long struggle of the Palestinian people and of the supporters of peace in Israel, which was supported by the nations of the world, is what forced Israeli governments to consent to withdraw from the Occupied Territories. This struggle has not yet ended. The CPI calls on all supporters of peace to conduct a public campaign for stable peace, based on the ending of the occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state, with East Jerusalem as its capital, alongside Israel; for dismantling the settlements; and for solving all disputed issues by means of diplomatic negotiations. □

International Department

SURPRISED?

In the May issue of *Political Affairs*, Norman Markowitz writes on *The Communist Manifesto: 150 Years After*. He comments: "... fighting a relentless economic war against socialist countries, the capitalists saw, largely to their great surprise, a political counterrevolution engulf the Soviet Union in the early 1990s"

One is moved to ask why, "largely to their great surprise?" After all they paid for it! In 1920 the expeditionary forces thought they had "strangled the Soviet infant in its cradle." After that they gave minimal opposition to Hitler as long as he continued the "Drang Nach Osten," then joined World War II, but never for a moment in military moves forgot to position themselves to be the major power in a post-WW II world – they paid the bills.

They bought Soviet scholars with all kinds of advanced degrees and also government officials. First they paid for junkets and when they made the grade they received tenured professorships in American colleges. They just plain bought garden variety dissidents. They bought anyone, anywhere, who would yield to their seduction. And the head-hunting continues, wherever necessary today. They weren't surprised at all.

Regards
Dan Wade

FROM THE HEART OF A NEW MEMBER

There is only one way in which our country can reduce crime, increase the general welfare of the country and eliminate joblessness – the way is socialism. Every evolved society must one day come to the development of a socialist state. Yes, countries can regress, but in time socialism will come to be realized as the only true benefit to all people.

In the United States today we are facing an economic crisis, and the threat of a right-wing fascist takeover. The fascists are out to protect the rich, promote bigotry and other forms of prejudice that increase big business profit.

The U.S. is ruled or owned by a tiny minority of very rich people. But they are only rich because they exploit workers. Capitalists will use any excuse they can find to pay the workers of this country as little as possible. This is why racism and sexism is so prevalent. It is the direct result of our capitalist society. Republicans will downsize and make the remaining workers work much harder with no pay increase. This is not just the fascist way, but the capitalist way as well.

The workers of this world far outnumber the CEOs and when they come to the realization that with unity they can

overcome their oppression and regain the right to a safe environment and a job that pays enough to support the cost of living; that is when revolution will take place.

It will not be the Communists who will start it; after all they are merely asking for what every American should have. But the fascists who will see the uprising of the middle and lower classes as a threat to their big money profits will be the ones to fire the first shot, the whole time knowing that the Communists are in the right and they are in the wrong.

The common mentality is: "Well, I'm just an average working-class person, I can't affect the way my government works." What the people who think this fail to realize, is that the working class is the largest, and most militant of all classes, and that with a little unionism they could make the government go down on its knees.

Well then, we could vote the Communists into power, but that will never happen because people vote based on what they know and see, and in America what people know and see is produced by pro-fascist high-profit private businesses, who care not for the welfare of the people of this nation, but for their own greedy money making purposes.

The only answer is revolution. Gays, Lesbians, white men, African Americans, women, Indi-

ans, and all those who are oppressed, (and unless you're very rich this means you), must unite and fight and win back America for the people, and institute a socialist state wherein a stable economy is ensured and all who can work will, and those who cannot will be provided for.

But what about the Soviet Union, why didn't that last," one may ask? Well, the answer is simple. America's government pushed and pushed for the collapse of the Soviet Union so that its pro-fascist, worker-exploiting big money businesses could buy socialist land and businesses cheap, so that the tiny minority of CEOs could become all the more wealthy, while workers get paid less and less. If the people of Russia hated socialism so badly as our pro-fascist media would have you believe, then why are there so many Russians

still for Communism? It's because they like it; because it protected their interests and their welfare.

While the our media and government tell you it's the Russians' and Asians' fault for our current economic crisis, the truth is that it's the fault of our own ruling class that caused the breakdown of the socialist states in those countries, which in turn caused our own stock market to decrease. All this to make a tiny minority of rich people even richer. But that is the capitalist way. Until the people of this country realize that we are not the bad guys, and we are fighting for their welfare they will continue to be exploited and underpaid. □

Raymond Andrew Reitz



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America Besieged, by Michael Parenti. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1998. \$9.95

With Republican extremists nursing the wounds the people inflicted upon them in the November elections, its time to focus on really important things, like building a powerful movement to secure the better things in life for all working-class people. Its time, too, for a revolutionary agenda, a program that will transform our social and economic relationships and radically democratize our political system.

As we begin, we must listen carefully to the people and really understand their problems and their aspirations. As revolutionaries, we must speak clearly about our intentions, our principles and our socialist program. Real communication, empathic and empowering, has to happen. This is never easy. Language is complex, subtle and constantly changing. The problem is compounded by the foggy double-speak of bourgeois political discourse. Consider, for example, the fleeing Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich.

There are more pernicious examples of the discursive degradation and outright mendacity that serves the ruling class at our expense. Think about the following: "welfare reform," a cozy term that many poor people loath as a formula for exacerbating their overtly and cruelly extinguishing their hopes for a better tomorrow, or "right to work" laws, an anti-union slogan that really means "the right to work for less." The possibilities are endless: "campaign finance reform," and the "liberal media."

How can we break free from this web of deceit? What is to be done? Well, in the first place, we must say what we mean and explain what the ruling class really means. Few do this better than does Michael Parenti, one of America's most sensible and engaging political analysts.

In his latest book, *America Besieged*, Parenti probes beneath the superficial daily news commentaries that are the standard fare of our monopoly media, and focuses on the essential and abiding forces and relations that comprise U.S. monopoly capitalism. In doing so, he has provided revolutionaries and the working-class with a guide for demys-

tifying bourgeois obscurantism.

With remarkable concision, Parenti exposes the many fraudulent aspects of the dominant ideology. Right away, he chides the ruling class and their media for pushing "lurid images of Communists infiltrating our national institutions." "Never was the possibility considered," writes Parenti,

That the Communists were doing no such thing, that they played a leading role in the struggle for industrial unionism, civil rights, and peace, and that in fact they were loyal Americans, dedicated to the needs of of common people and opposed to the free-market abuses of the capitalist system. Capitalists manufacture villains to keep the focus off their own depredations, their own greed and avarice, and their own unambiguous criminality. Lately, as the currency of anti-Communism is continually devalued, the monopoly media is busy slandering "radical environmentalists," "cultural elites," immigrants and Islam. The framework of lies is the same, a subordinate and disoriented polity is always the aim; only the images are recast to appeal to the latest media created fashion in bigotry and national chauvinism, a cynical and insidious ploy to keep people riveted to the lowest common denominator.

Parenti cuts through this rubbish with stunning cogency and brevity. Readers will delight in the author's wit and wisdom as he deflates dozens of neoliberal shibboleths by exposing their vacuity and indefensible principles, when measured against bothersome things, like facts. The text is divided into five sections: "Strange Politics," "An Unjust Economy," "A Dangerous State," "Managed Media" and "Conclusions," wherein Parenti offers up a sound prescription for capitalist pathology. In each section, Parenti highlights the basic premises of capitalist apology and sets the record straight in an irrepressible style that openly and fairly gives Marx his due. While his thesis is not as sweeping and imaginative in *America Besieged* as the one he constructed recently in *Blackshirts & Reds: Rational Fascism & the Overthrow of Communism*, it is a compelling book that deserves the widest possible audience. □

Chris McKinnon

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