

POLITICAL AFFAIRS A MARXIST MONTHLY

# pa

July 2006

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# EVER WONDER WHAT'S INSIDE?

COCA-COLA  
CLASSIC  
UNION BUSTER  
(pg. 22)

BUSH'S  
NUCLEAR  
THREAT

BROKEN UP  
OVER  
BROKEBACK  
MOUNTAIN

FRENCH  
YOUTH  
REVOLT

THE TROUBLE  
WITH  
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# IN THIS ISSUE...

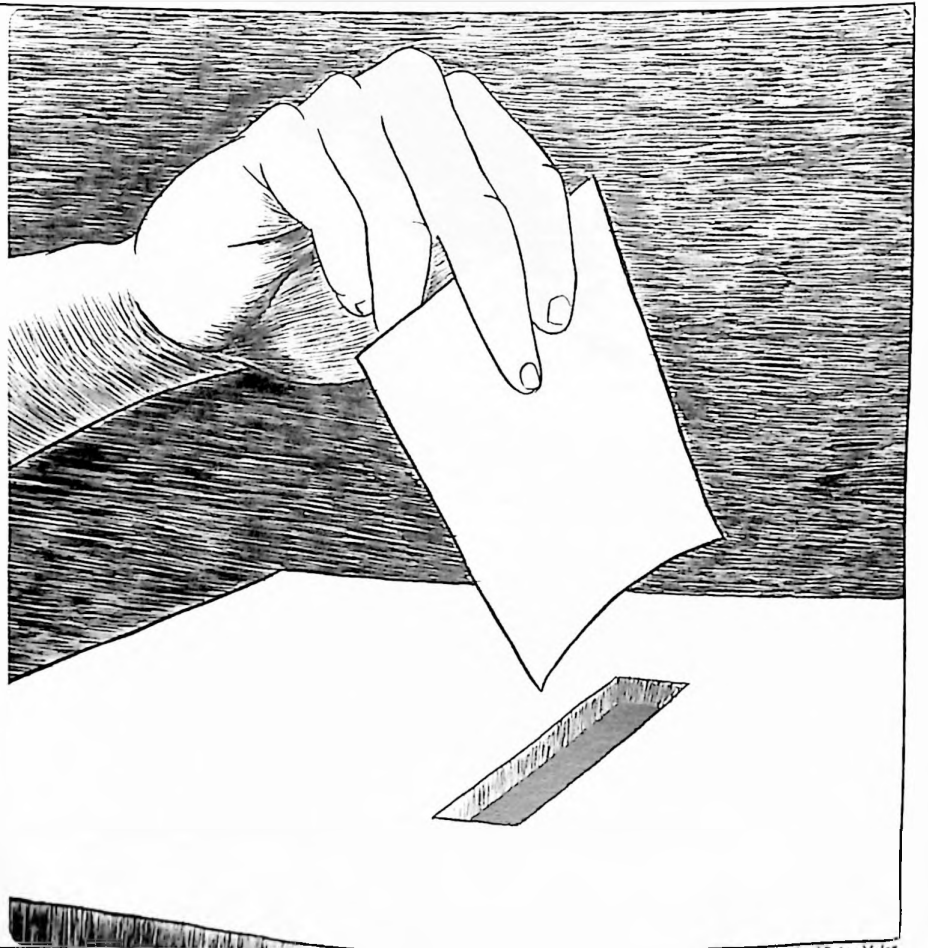


In this month's cover story, Joel Wendland examines the broad international campaign led by labor and youth to boycott Coca-Cola. Lawrence Albright addresses the history of public housing and the struggle against corporate interests. Ben Sears interviews labor activist and Communist Pat Barile. Ken Knies delves into the murky waters of Marxism and culture with fresh insights. On the international scene, Rémy Herrera, writing from France, gives background on the popular struggle by French youth and the French labor movement to defeat anti-worker laws proposed by the government. Find other articles on the real Slobodan Milosevic and his role in the dissolution of Yugoslavia, the US-Iran crisis as a struggle for dominance in the Middle East, the unity of labor and civil society groups in Europe against neoliberalism and much more.

Please send us your comments, criticisms, questions and concerns.

PA Editors

THIS MONTH DECLARE  
YOUR INDEPENDENCE  
FROM THE PARTY  
OF WAR, CORRUPTION,  
AND THE RICH.  
**TODAY**  
**WE ORGANIZE;**  
**NOVEMBER 7TH,**  
**WE VOTE TO**  
END REPUBLICAN RULE.



Illustrations by Victor Velez

# pa

Ideology, Politics and Culture

## ATTENTION

Due to a printer's error in collating the June issue, some copies of PA are missing pages. We apologize. Please contact us if you need a replacement. If we are unable to replace this issue, we will extend your subscription.

PA editors



Robert Sumner/Gaety Images

Volume 85, No. 07 \ july \ Features

22

### Cover Story

#### COCA-COLA: CLASSIC UNION BUSTER

Unfair labor practices and environmental destruction have provoked an international boycott against Coke.

By Joel Wendland

16

#### THE TROUBLE WITH SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC

Slobodan Milosevic fostered nationalistic policies that led to violence and the eventual break-up of Yugoslavia.

By Goran Marcovic

20

#### TO THE BARRICADES: YOUTH ROCK FRANCE WITH REVOLT

French youth revolt against unfair labor laws.

By Rémy Herrera

26

#### SAFE, DECENT AND SANITARY? THE RISE AND DECLINE OF HUD

Public housing faces a severe crisis under Bush's slash-and-burn budget policies.

By Lawrence Albright

30

#### THE VALUE OF APPRECIATION

Should Marxists only care about culture from a critical standpoint?

By Ken Knies

34

#### TURNCOATS AND RED HERRINGS: HOW ANTI-COMMUNISM DIVIDED LABOR

Labor-union activist and Communist, Pat Barile, talks about labor's struggle in the early cold war.

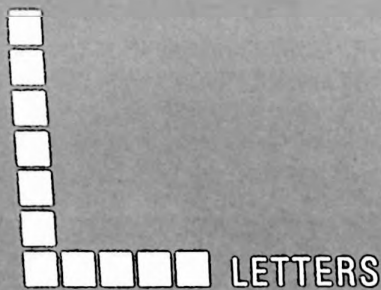
By Ben Sears

44

#### CONDUCTIDO AL BORDE DEL DESASTRE

Lew Moye, trabajador de la industria del auto discute la crisis de la industria, y cómo fortalecer el sindicato de trabajadores.

Por Tony Pecinovsky



Please send your letters to  
[pa-letters@politicalaffairs.net](mailto:pa-letters@politicalaffairs.net) or by mail to  
Political Affairs, 235 W. 23rd St., NY, NY 10011.

Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

## Keeping Up the Fight

Via e-mail

The USSR may have fallen and the modern bourgeois society may have rejected the ideals of communism...but it is always good to see when a magazine bringing the ideals of truth and Marxism into our modern society succeeds in such a way as yours has. The problem with publishing now is manifold...there are countless newspapers and publications, which makes the readers of them very few and thus the writers unheard – another behind-the-scenes truth of bourgeois “freedom of speech” – the right to speak but not to be heard. Marxism is and has been the driving force of world politics for the past two centuries...and eventually now as our capitalist systems are crunching down on the third world abroad and at home, the need for the publication and distribution of magazines such as this is even more vital now than ever before.

Peng Dehuai

## Thanks for the Gift

State Prison, Huntingdon, PA

I am writing to thank you for your gift sub. Your publication is excellent, filled with truth and point-blank analysis of worldwide issues. I will write again later with an article you will no doubt find interesting.

Tom Fetters

## PA Unites Theory and Practice

Cambridge, Mass.

I have regretfully decided to subscribe to PA. Regretfully because I am flooded with progressive literature that exposes the machinations of the corporations and their government and with theoretical journals that explore the intricacies of Marxist analysis. But the two issues of PA that were sent me do both – giving the underpinnings of present issues so that we are not swamped by the problems of the moment but see them in context. I do not need the special rate to subscribe.

Dick Levins

## Unity to Protect Immigrants' Rights

Seattle, WA

President Bush plans to spend billions of our dollars to turn the Mexican border into a war zone, using paramilitary troops and high tech equipment. It's a horrible idea that Congress should quash immediately. Immigration is a result of social and economic forces that the US has a major part in creating, such as poverty and joblessness in South America. The great wealth that undocumented workers create in the US is unacknowledged, while the government illegally declares war on bor-

Millions of immigrants and their supporters in the streets on May Day displayed a powerful force for change.

der communities in the US and Mexico. Who can doubt that Chicanos and Mexicans, and other brown-skinned people, will be abused and killed by trigger-happy, privatized soldiers whose bosses care only for the money they make. The dismal record of privatized prisons shows what poor and working-class people of color can expect.

Millions of immigrants and their supporters in the streets on May Day displayed a powerful force for change that can also help US citizens who are feeling the contempt of our government for their jobs, wages, pensions, and freedom of speech. It's time that unions, women, the elderly and all people of color join undocumented workers and stop the destruction of their rights and ours.

Adrienne Weller

## Of Hypocrisy and Hunger

New York, New York

A lot of people criticize Haiti and call it savage and uncivilized. I recall reading *Time* magazine during the time of the “boat peo-

ple.” Someone wrote that the government should torpedo the boats and let the fish eat the bodies. This person said the fish would be healthier. What an inhuman thing to say about another human being.

But these people don't talk about what was done to the Indians of the Americas who they pack together on a small piece of land. And they are the real citizens of this country. A similar thing was done to people of African descent. That is why Fidel Castro once said in a speech to the UN that if “big countries” don't do something about hunger in this world, hunger will bring about an apocalyptic war because the minority has everything and the great majority have nothing. It's a real mess.

Rony Lazare

## Grazie

Milan, Italy

Dear Comrades,

Only a few days back did we receive the February issue of your wonderful magazine in which we found with great pleasure the article by Sergio Ricaldone, “Fighting Fire with Fire: the Italian Resistance and World War II.” Your kind willingness to print the article allowed us to render comrade Ricaldone, whose history as a communist we are all proud of, a fine gift on his 80th birthday.

We gratefully thank you and extend to you our best wishes for your precious political work.

Giuliano Cappellini

Ismael Parra

## Sailors of the World Unite

Keizer, Oregon

Please tell Gerald Horne I enjoyed his biography of Ferdinand Smith. It is well written and interesting. I learned a lot from it. Years ago I shipped out of Seattle briefly with the NMU as a deck hand. I knew nothing of its history. Anyway I am sending a contribution to the fund drive. I look forward to *Political Affairs* every month.

Lou Shuster



Don Emmert/AFP/Getty Images

28

july \ Departments

04

**Letters**

12

**Book Reviews**

06

**Commentary**

**THE BEIJING CONSENSUS**  
Reviewed by Gerald Horne

**BUSH'S NUCLEAR THREAT**  
By Prasad Venugopal

**AGAINST GRAVITY**  
Reviewed by Clara West

**RACING TO JUSTICE**  
By Vittorio Longhi

14

**Poetry**

**THE BROKEN BACK  
OF COUNTERFEIT  
LIBERALISM**  
By Karin S. Coddon

**LONDON ELEGY**  
By Luis L. Tijerina

**CLEANING UP YOUR MESS**  
By Remi Kanazi

07

**Marxist IQ**

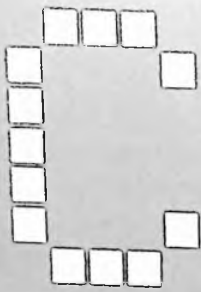
09

**Nobody  
Asked  
Me,  
But...**  
By Don Sloan

38

**Fiction**

**FAITH**  
By Karin S. Coddon



COMMENTARY

## BUSH'S NUCLEAR THREAT

By Prasad Venugopal

**W**hat is at stake in the US-Iran nuclear crisis? Muddy rhetoric and media reports have not helped to clarify the situation. Saber-rattling and swirling reports about a possible US or Israeli military strike on Iran's nuclear facilities, plans for the use of nuclear "bunker busters" by the US in any military attack, a clandestine nuclear weapons program in Iran and so on have obscured the underlying issue. Nevertheless, the current nuclear standoff is only a symptom of a greater struggle for control and dominance of the greater Middle East and Central Asian region.

In a recent *New Yorker* article Seymour Hersh exposed the possibility of a US nuclear (or other) strike on Iran. Despite immediate denials by the Bush and Blair regimes, it became clear that the US military had drawn up a number of military scenarios regarding a possible attack on Iran. Some of these plans included the use of nuclear "bunker busters," officially known as the Robust Nuclear Earth Penetrator (RNEP), at alleged clandestine nuclear facilities buried deep within the ground at various sites in Iran. Other plans include the possibility that Israel may unilaterally attack Iranian nuclear facilities in a manner similar to its illegal attack in the early 80's.

Iran has insisted on its right to enrich uranium and continue other aspects of its nuclear program "for peaceful purposes" in accordance with its treaty rights and obligations under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). The International Atomic Energy Agency recently determined that there is no evidence that Iran has developed a clandestine nuclear weapons program. The United States has demanded that Iran, regardless of its compliance with the NPT, immediately suspend its uranium enrichment activities and open up its entire nuclear program for unrestricted, intrusive access to the IAEA. The Bush administration has made it clear during these past few



The National Archives/Newslinkers

▽ Reports show that the Bush administration has planned attacks on Iran that may include the use of nuclear weapons.

months that "all options" including sanctions and unilateral military assaults "remain on the table" in its dealings with Iran. Iran, for its part, has threatened retaliation for any military attack, including the withholding of oil supplies from the international market.

The aims of current US policy in the Middle East and beyond can be deciphered from the Bush administration's National Security Strategy, which, in turn, is based on the much-publicized report of the Project for the New American Century. Key elements of this strategy include: (1) The prevention of the rise of any power in the world that can challenge the military and economic might of the US and threaten its global interests; and (2) The elimination or transformation of existing treaties and laws that bind the actions of the US within globally-accepted restrictions. One can see the fingerprints of this policy all over the current crisis over Iran.

One of the consequences, unintended or

otherwise, of the US bombing campaign in Afghanistan and its occupation of Iraq, has been the rise of Iranian influence in the region. The fall of the Taliban immediately cemented Iranian influence in western Afghanistan, and the dominance of the Shiite factions in Iraq has solidified Iran's role in the future of that occupied state. The Bush regime sees the growing influence of Iran in the region, coupled with its oil reserves and civilian nuclear program, as a threat to its interests in the Middle East and Central Asia.

The nuclear standoff has also provided the Bush regime with an excellent opportunity to dismantle the NPT in favor of a more unilateral approach that promotes its interests. The recent US-India deal on the sharing of nuclear technologies and weapons systems is a gross violation of the Non-Proliferation Treaty, which prohibits their proliferation. India's refusal to sign onto the NPT and its open development of nuclear weapons has been ignored by the Bush administration in its attempts to promote India as a strategic ally against the growing dominance of China in the region. In contrast, Iran has been portrayed as a "rogue state" that cannot be trusted despite its compliance with the NPT thus far. Overall, the US seeks to divert attention away from its own treaty obligations which call for complete disarmament by the declared nuclear states, focusing instead on using its existing arsenal and newly developed weaponry, such as the "bunker buster," to threaten countries that it views as challenging its global hegemony.

Given the grave and dangerous context of the current nuclear flashpoint in US-Iran relations, it is essential that the peace movement call upon Congress "to oppose military action against Iran, uphold the law, support diplomatic solutions to any crisis, and put an end to U.S. nuclear hypocrisy." As demanded by United for Peace and Justice ([www.unitedforpeace.org](http://www.unitedforpeace.org)), the

United States should also demonstrate leadership by fulfilling its own disarmament obligation under the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty. This will require the United States to stop blocking negotiations on abolition and to take meaningful steps towards the elimination of its vast and sophisticated nuclear arsenal.

Call or write your senators and representatives today. Call the United Nations and demand that it not cave in to threats of unilateral military actions from the United States. □



# marxistIQ



## 1. Marxists have seen tests like the IQ test as

- a. a scientific measure of intelligence.
- b. proof of innate differences between people.
- c. a way to both track people along class lines and hide the class divisions in education.
- d. a test which proves that all people are basically equal.

## 2. In a socialist society, education should

- a. help people enter into conversations about classic Marxist texts.
- b. be ongoing, combining theory and practice in and out of schools, to create more developed individuals who contribute to a more developed society.
- c. prepare people to both out-compete their peers and conform to the dictates of their superiors.
- d. be centered on technical and scientific subjects.

## 3. Marx and Engels characterized the differences between socialism and communism this way:

- a. socialism and communism are both best represented by the principle, from each according to his each according to his need.
- b. socialism and communism are both best represented by the principle, from each according to his ability, to each according to his work.
- c. socialism and communism exist as signifiers for the readers of texts.
- d. socialism represents the principle, from each according to her ability, to each according to her work; communism is best represented by the principle, from each according to her ability, to each according to her need.

## 4. Which of these major revolutionary events did not happen in July?

- a. the fall of the Bastille in France.
- b. the attack on the Moncada Barracks in Cuba.
- c. the proclamation of the People's Republic of China in Beijing.
- d. the signing of the Declaration of Independence in the North American British colonies.

## 5. Marx and Engels looked to the working class to establish socialism because it

- a. envied the rich.
- b. had the collective strength to do so and the necessity, given deepening capitalist crisis, to do so.
- c. wanted better working conditions.
- d. wanted to make more money.

### How to score yourself:

**0-2 correct:** Continue to read *Political Affairs* carefully for a better understanding of Marxism.

**3-4 correct:** You should lead a *PA* discussion group.

**5 correct:** You are awarded the Lenin Prize for your deep understanding of history and Marxist thought.

Answers: 1] C 2] B 3] D 4] C 5] B

## AMONG OUR CONTRIBUTORS



Gerald Home is a contributing editor of *PA* and author of *The Final Victim of the Blacklist: John Howard Lawson, Dean of the Hollywood Ten*.

Pat Barile is a longtime member of the national board of the CPUSA and labor activist.



Goran Markovic is a founder and president of the Workers' Communist Party of Bosnia and Herzegovina.



Joel Wendland is managing editor of *Political Affairs*.



Prasad Venugopal is science editor of *Political Affairs*.

Karin S. Coddon is a freelance writer from Southern California.



## ▶ COMMENTARY

▽ French anti-globalization protestors run ahead during a massive antiwar protest in May in Athens, Greece. These activists participated in this year's European Social Forum.



Milosa Bicanski/Getty Images

# RACING TO JUSTICE

## THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUM PRESENTS ALTERNATIVE

By Vittorio Longhi

**O**pposition to war, resistance to neoliberal economics and defense of a European social model are issues that still unite European trade unions and social movements. During the London Social Forum this relationship seemed to crack, first over the EU Constitution, which many trade unions backed but which most social movements opposed, then over the support of some antiwar groups for Iraqi armed resistance. But since 2004, some significant steps have been made together, most notably over the Bolkestein directive for introducing market forces to essential sectors such as education, health care and national social welfare systems.

The common fight against Bolkestein led to a significant victory; after a 50,000-strong demonstration in Strasbourg this February, the European Parliament decided to cancel the worst part of the directive. "The defeat of this directive shows that the European social model is still strong," said John Monks, general secretary of the European Confederation

of Trade Unions (ETUC), "and helps to re-encourage our unions in the struggle against further plans to liberalize services." On the relationship with social movements, Monks was less enthusiastic, stating that they are "good allies and can cooperate from time to time, but trade unions are not NGO's, they have a different role, as they have to deal with companies and make agreements."

However, away from European bureaucracies, union branches have found ESF's to offer unprecedented opportunities for an exchange with social movements, producing a positive cross-fertilization of ideas and projects. At the Florence Social Forum, for example, branches of CGIL built a network with other institutions, like municipalities and universities. "This network (that will hold a seminar in Athens) is trying to explore the relation between labor rights and citizenship rights' explained Dino Greco, CGIL secretary of Brescia, northern Italy, "between public assets and participatory democracy."

At the ESF 2006, ETUC is officially involved and many European unions gave their support, starting with the Greek

Confederation of Labor (GSEE), one of the main promoters of the forum. They have planned workshops on issues such as collective bargaining at the European level; attempts by governments and corporations to casualize jobs and weaken welfare systems; the role of the UN in defending basic social rights, especially for migrant workers; and the next steps of the European Constitution. But other unions decided to leave the forum this year, either because they don't agree with some groups' positions on issues like terrorism, or because they are not so interested in non-labor issues. On the other hand, inside the movements some people fear that too close a connection with unions might lead to a loss of their autonomy. There is a danger that all the achievements so far could be lost.

We need to find a way of building on the success of the campaign against Bolkestein and the very good start of the first ESF in Florence when labor organizations helped to give the antiwar movement a more structured organization and hence decisive impact on public opinion and, at the same time, unions widened their concerns. □



POLITICAL AFFAIRS A MARXIST MONTHLY

pa

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## NOBODY ASKED ME, BUT...

By Don Sloan

■ Just remember that if an impeachment of President Bush would ever be successful, we would end up with Dick Cheney in "his" Oval Office. The trouble is, that in this administration, with the legal line of succession, no matter how far down you go, the country's in trouble.

■ Halliburton's 2005 1st quarter earnings were \$365 million, or 72 cents per share. In 1st quarter 2006, it came in at \$488 million earnings, or 91 cents per share. The benefits of war.

■ In 1985, the Forbes 400 were worth \$285 billion. Today their worth is \$1.3 trillion, more than the GDP of Canada.

■ Governor Mitt Romney (R-MA) is trying to put to rest doubts

that his fake but much ballyhooed state health care program was nothing more than a sleight of hand for the insurance companies and his 2008 presidential bid.

■ The Alabama state legislature is debating expunging the records of all people arrested for breaking racial segregation laws. Lillie Mae Bradford was charged with sitting in a "whites only" section 55 years ago with no pardon pending.

■ Adjusted for inflation, the federal minimum wage has dropped over 40 percent since its peak in 1968.

■ Right-wing hero radio host Rush Limbaugh finally made his plea bargain for his drug addiction charges. Without his fixes, he will be getting quite warm, for despite what he insists, January 2006 was the warmest

on record, with an average temperature of 39.5 Fahrenheit.

■ US children are not being left behind – much. In 2005, 13 million kids lived in households suffering from actual hunger or food insecurities.

■ Latest Las Vegas odds on Saddam Hussein come in at 3 to 2 he goes to prison, but 2 to 1 he gets the death penalty.

■ Just a coincidence? In every southern hemisphere nation that voted in leftist parties, from Venezuela to Chile to Uruguay to Brazil, etc. there had been a recent state exchange visit with Cuba's remarkable Fidel Castro. We should try to get him to come here.

■ An old Lebanese saying: it is better to have a smart enemy than a dumb friend. □

# Fund Drive 2006

## \$40,000

Dear Friends,

*Political Affairs* is in the fight for democracy and a socially-just world. We cover the issues at the center of this year's election, from war to immigration, affirmative action and civil rights, workers' rights and international solidarity. Online and in print, we uncover the truth and bring to light the class struggle behind the ultra-right smokescreens and corporate fog.

We have fought this good fight for more than 80 years but never have received a penny from corporate sources. Subscriptions pay a substantial amount of the cost of printing, mailing and labor, but they do not cover everything. This is why we rely on our closest friends, you the reader, to help us cover the rest. We can't put out a professional-quality magazine that fights for the working class without your support.

Some readers have given generously already, and we can't express our gratitude enough. Right now we have received close to \$10,000, about one-quarter of our \$40,000 goal. Unfortunately, we are more than half way through our fund drive, which lasts only until Labor Day.

How can you help us reach this goal? If 200 readers wrote a check for \$100 today, we would be in a good position to accomplish this task. Can you pledge to send \$100, even if you have to give it in smaller amounts at a time? Can you dig a little deeper? Can you encourage others to give?

Remember, this is not just a financial issue; it is political. Can a pro-working-class, Marxist-Leninist magazine survive in today's world? Our survival is not an option. Plain and simple, we must be able to continue. And we need your gift to do so.

Also, continue to give us your thoughts and opinions with your letters and e-mails.

In struggle,

PA Editors

\$10K  
so far

## WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT

**YES!** I want to support Political Affairs' 2006 Fund Drive!

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## COMMENTARY

# THE BROKEN BACK OF COUNTERFEIT LIBERALISM

By Karin S. Coddon

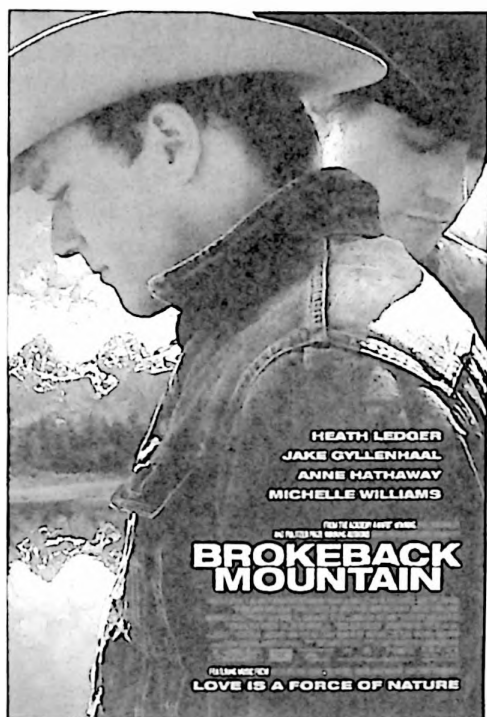
**M**onths after the event, an event that I concede is the quintessence of triviality, I am still pissed.

I'm pissed that the Academy Awards snubbed *Brokeback Mountain* in favor of the "surprise" choice of *Crash*, a film described by *Los Angeles Times* critic Kenneth Turan as a "feel-good movie about racism."

It's not that I am a rabid cinephile or that *Brokeback*, which I truly loved, was the best or boldest film I've ever seen. Nor is it simply that the *Brokeback* slight was clearly fueled by a combination of homophobia and cowardice. But several friends and I remained angry for the next couple of days after the Oscars. My sister and I remained angry for a good two weeks. Here it is months later, and I'm still fuming. My spleen was jump-started by my coming across an old issue of *Entertainment Weekly* in which one of my literary heroes, Stephen King, also takes the Academy to task over bypassing *Brokeback Mountain* for Best Picture. One of King's comments particularly struck me, gesturing as it did toward the true basis for my umbrage in excess if not of the facts, then of the context. The Academy, observes King, is at heart "as conservative as the current US House of Representatives" (IE 858, Mar 17, 06, 126).

Exactly – yet mainstream political culture continues to label Hollywood "liberal" and thus out of sync with the values of the heartland, just as the right-wing punditocracy assails "tenured radicals" whose rarefied and indecipherable post-fill-in-the-blankism is cited as proof of a concerted leftist indoctrination project. Both targeted and demonized by the right-wing side of the "culture wars," Hollywood and academia alike proudly wear the banner of contestation while remaining in

essence as reactionary in membership and institutional practices as their adversaries on the right. The banner of contestation is in reality the emperor's new clothes. These liberal bogeymen play the valuable role of lightning rod against which the right wing can rally the



troops even while knowing that these threats are as counterfeit as the Red-under-everybed of the 1950's.

Thus for me the *Brokeback Mountain* incident embodies – and lays bare – the vacuity at the core of much of what passes as culturally subversive in this, the Bush era: the self-deceived complicity of those demonized as much as the facile demonization. I am left to ponder two questions. First, what are the available modes of leftist contestation if popular and academic culture offer only safe, sham versions? And second, with the rare acts of honest liberal/leftism – *Fahrenheit 9/11*, gay marriage legislation, even Randi Rhodes's passionate anti-Bushism on Air America Radio – appropriated as mobilizing tools by the right no less effectively than the faux liberalism of Hollywood and the university, is a refusal to engage at all the only remaining option? Is it better to say nothing than to risk feeding the reactionary beast?

Let me address this latter point first. A friend of mine in the Bay Area, with whom I generally see eye-to-eye on political matters, is bitter to this day over San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom's attempts to legalize gay

marriage. For her, all Newsom's doomed gesture did was play into Republican hands in 2004, providing sure impetus for a big evangelical Christian turnout. But consider the alternative, I counter. Should our various elected leaders affect either indifference or acquiescence to oppressive social policies for fear of galvanizing the opposition? This, sadly, is the strategy of most Democrats in Washington: keep quiet and wait for the bastards to hang themselves. It is a strategy that played a key role in inflicting two terms of Bush upon the nation, and one whose continued practice bodes ill indeed for 2008.

The same friend of mine, though she was just as outraged by the *Brokeback* snub, argues that the film industry merely blinked in the face of a guaranteed right-wing backlash had it given its top honor to Ang Lee's controversial movie. But I think it's perilous to downplay the role of homophobia. After all, isn't cowardice precisely what allows us both to obfuscate and rationalize bigotry? Moreover – and I admit this may be erroneous and indicative of my own prejudices – does anyone really think Jack Nicholson cast his

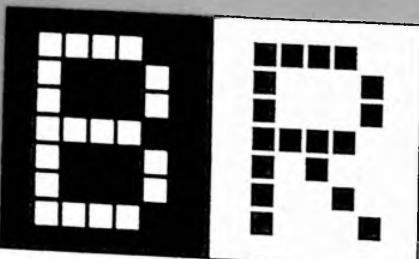
## Should our various elected leaders affect either indifference or acquiescence to oppressive social policies for fear of galvanizing the opposition?

vote for the gay cowboy movie?

Or maybe Jack is one of the good guys, for all I know. Honest liberalism, though often chastised by many of us on the hard left for its timidity and accommodationism, can serve a progressive function; while it may not provoke sudden, radical epiphanies leading to structural intervention, it can help nudge the undecided, or provoke reflection from those who might not have given much thought to an issue theretofore. It's probably true that most of the people who went to see *Brokeback Mountain* or *Fahrenheit 9/11*, for that matter, were at least not predisposed against these films' respective themes. (To be fair, you couldn't have paid me to see *The Passion of*

*the Christ*.) But nearly impossible to quantify are the subtle shifts in social and political attitudes these works of popular art might have germinated. Coincidence or not, two years after *Fahrenheit 9/11*, the highest-grossing documentary to date, most people oppose the war in Iraq and believe Bush lied in making his case for the invasion. Might *Brokeback Mountain* yield similar, incremental changes in attitude? Perhaps, but how much stronger a chance the movie would have had to foster such a shift had it received the Best Picture award, a proven catalyst for increased box-office and DVD revenues.

Obviously, then, fear of rocking the right-wing boat is as unacceptable as outright prejudice. But, to return to my first question, is authentic contestation even possible in the current political climate? I write this in the immediate aftermath of the May Day boycott by immigrant workers and those in solidarity with them. Already the mainstream media is dismissing the notion of any tangible effects of the nationwide one-day strike, but this perspective is as short-sighted as it is self-serving. The boycott was a costly wakeup call to those who both exploit and denigrate immigrant labor. Moreover, there is good reason to hope that it will spark similar collective activism against the war, the epidemics of poverty and racism exposed by Katrina, the institutionalized inequities of our economic system. Given the importance of collective activism, the boycott is a reminder that radicals and honest liberals can, and should, work together. My sister, who really is a film aficionado, told me that the Oscar results tempted her to boycott all Hollywood movies. While not even I think the Academy's shameful decision merits mass protest, the point was well made. Each of us has the powerful right of refusal – to work, to purchase, to remain silent in the face of injustice. It is a right rendered all the more potent when exercised en masse. And it is a right abdicated every time the "safe" choice is made, whether in the faux-liberalism of Hollywood, the confusion of teaching Deleuze and Guattari with active radicalism, or worst of all, the conviction that protest is futile. □



## The Beijing Consensus.

Joshua Cooper Ramo, London: Foreign Policy Centre, 2004.

Reviewed by Gerald Horne

Historians of the future no doubt will find it curious that as legions of bourgeois analysts were prattling and prating about the "death of communism," the Chinese Communist Party was building the economic dynamo of the planet – or, as these comrades might put it, "socialism with Chinese characteristics." These analysts remain in a state of denial – or, perhaps, it is deeper than that, more like willful ignorance. Whatever the case, anger – and let us hope, acceptance – are sure to follow and when that does occur, this useful study will prove invaluable.

The author has impeccable bourgeois credentials as he serves as a senior advisor to the fabulously wealthy investment banking concern, Goldman Sachs, formerly toiled as an editor at *Time* magazine and once was a CNN analyst. The title of this book is meant to raise profound and searching questions about the viability of the so-called "Washington Consensus," which for years now has been forcing nations too numerous to mention to accept a stifling diet of deregulation, privatization and so-called free markets (i.e. opening one's markets to plunder by US based transnational corporations). But, Beijing, Ramo says, presents an alternative course of development. Interestingly, he is not opposed to this alternative, asserting forcefully that "the Beijing Consensus offers hope for the world" since "the essential ideas of what is happening in China – innovation, asymmetry, a focus on equality, the exploration of new ideas of citizenship – are appealing to nations that have ambitions for development and security but have seen hundred years of failure of development models that rely too much on developed nations for assistance."

"What is happening in China at the moment," he adds, "is not only a model for China, but has begun to remake the whole landscape of international development, economics, society and, by extension, politics." What is happening in China, he declares, "replaces the widely-discredited Washington Consensus" which has "left a trail of destroyed economies and bad feelings around the globe." Though the "Beijing Consensus" gives pride of place to the role of a vanguard political party guiding development and a state sector, it does not reject inward foreign investment.

In April 2004, President Hu Jintao of China spoke of the "Four No's," i.e. "no hegemonism, no power politics, no alliances and no arms races. It's like a Chinese Monroe Doctrine," according to the author. "Notably...the US model fails every single one of these tests," he adds cogently, which suggests that, ultimately, Washington must endure a severe adjustment to comply with the "Beijing Consensus." Indeed, the author is correct when he suggests that the "Beijing Consensus" is "fraught with contradictions, tensions and pitfalls."

This contradiction is reflected in the US, where a sector of the ruling elite seeks to make fortunes in China – and another sector seeks

Even those who may not subscribe to the "Beijing Consensus" recognize that the "Washington Consensus" is well past its sell-by date.

to destabilize this nation and overthrow Communist Party rule. The problem for US imperialism is that for the "overthrow" faction to prevail, unity in the class is a must and, as of now, this is not prevalent. Nor is there unity in the class transnationally, as ruling elites in France and Germany are gung-ho about partnerships with China. And, despite tensions between Beijing and Tokyo, the Japanese ruling elite has invested more heavily in China than its US counterpart.

They all want to take advantage of a startling development. China is "doubling output (and incomes) every 10 years." It has just replaced Britain as the planet's fourth largest economy and is on track to replace the US. By forging deals with nations that Washington would prefer to see as pariahs – e.g. Zimbabwe – it is thwarting US foreign policy.

And it is becoming the workshop of the world. "Intel's Andy Grove has described a not-too-distant future where China will have more software programmers working than any place on earth." The links China is developing with other nations gives them a stake in the "Beijing Consensus." This has "helped establish an ever-tighter alignment between the economic interests of China and other developing countries. When US trade talks in Mexico collapsed in 2003, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula de Silva and other Latin American leaders' first call was to China for support in jawboning the US to adjust its agricultural policies." China also plans to double trade with African countries in the next three years.

Such a state of affairs is flummoxing US imperialism. Bush was abashed in 2003 when he was greeted with jeers during his visit to the Australian Parliament and President Hu Jintao of China was greeted with cheers. After all, US imperialism is tied down in a conflict in Iraq that cannot be won and has lost considerable prestige as a result.

Ultimately, what is striking about this work is its lack of hostility to Beijing. During the cold war, the slightest glint of support for the Soviet Union could lead to swift marginalization. Now, Beijing is friendlier to the stalwarts of US imperialism – General Motors, Kodak, Motorola, etc. – than Moscow ever was and this sheds light on the author's friendliness toward China. Yet, having said that, there is little doubt that this book represents growing revulsion at the crimes of the US right wing. For even those who may not subscribe to the "Beijing Consensus" recognize that the "Washington Consensus" is well past its sell-by date. □

## Against Gravity.

Farnoosh Moshiri, New York NY: Penguin Books, 2005.

Reviewed by Clara West

**A**gainst Gravity, Iranian writer Farnoosh Moshiri's latest stirring novel, is set mainly in Houston, Texas in the 1980's. The events of this story are interwoven with the global circumstances of the cold war at a time when the Reagan administration vigorously supported brutal regimes and terrorist movements in Central America and the Middle East in the name of fighting Communism. On the home front, the administration refused to address the growing AIDS epidemic or the deepening economic crisis as poverty and ultra-right social policies drove the sick into the streets, the poor underground and the working class to near despair.

This context shapes the lives of the novel's three main characters who narrate the novel's three sections. Madison Kirby, struggling with mental illness and HIV/AIDS, is haunted by memories of his father, tormented by social alienation, drug addiction and unfulfilled love. Roya Saraabi is an Iranian immigrant mother who escaped with her daughter from the tyranny of the fundamentalist regime that rose to power after a broad national movement overthrew the US-backed despot Shah Pahlavi. After living in Afghanistan and India, she reluctantly makes her way to Texas where the "American dream" proves violently contradictory. Ric Cardinal is a radical but disillusioned social worker whose political and romantic entanglements leave him isolated.

The stories of these three people collide and intertwine over a decade, finally climaxing just before the launch of the first invasion of Iraq. Throughout the novel the characters examine their lives and memories, trying to understand who and where they are and how they get there. Madison is rapidly closing in on death, which he laments is like being pushed out just before he was able to make his mark in the world. "I was worthless," he thinks in a moment of sheer clarity. "I had done nothing. I was being pushed out of life before I had left a mark. What had I done in my life? What had I created or achieved?"

Having grown up in an intellectual household (with its own skeletons) and with so much of his own potential having gone to waste, Madison is driven to the brink of madness when he realizes death foreclosed on his chances to have done something brilliant. When Roya and her daughter move into the dingy apartment next door to him, will he find one more chance for love?

Roya has been in the country three days when she meets Madison. Victimized by the regime in Iran and unconfident about her ability to speak English or to even interact with her new neighbors, Roya withdraws from Madison's clumsy and maniacal advances. Struggling with two or three jobs at any given time, a daughter who is uncomfortable with life in Houston, and her memories, Roya has little time for romance. Yet, she yearns for intimacy and validation.

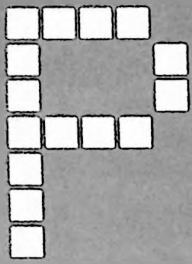
Her ongoing existential struggle is between her memories and her present life. "Didn't the people of my past deserve remembering?" she wonders at one point. "Wasn't I finally acquiring an identity by forgetting who I'd been?" Success in the US seemed to be dependent on shaking loose from the anchors of the past, but Roya isn't ready to lose herself that way.

**Against Gravity** is an honest, sensitive and intensely sophisticated tour de force.

The three characters are brought together when Madison suggests that Roya seek help finding work and counseling for her daughter from his close friend Ric Cardinal who co-founded a social agency that aids some of Houston's underprivileged. Ironically, Ric helps bring material and medical help to the victims of capitalism, but he too is anguished. Childhood abandonment by his parents and the grotesqueness of his grandfather's embalming business have fostered in Ric deep fears of loss and death. A series of failed dysfunctional relationships, political disillusionment fueled by the revelation that his close comrade was an FBI agent, and his son's growing mental illness, cause Ric to resist forming strong personal attachments. His dog Willy seems a more suitable companion. Will he find the emotional resources he needs to not only carry on, but to continue to believe in fighting for people's needs, for justice?

Moshiri weaves a beautiful tale from the fabric of real life. This novel is an immigrant's tale, but not in the usual sense. It isn't a story about making it in a land of opportunity, or other mythical views of what life is like here. It is a story about the intersection of wounded lives trampled on by forces larger than themselves. It is about loss, sadness, rejection and hopelessness, yet in these people and their stories we can see mirrored our own struggles to survive, to find happiness and worth, even as we are confronted by life. Along with violence, anger, hate and despair, we can see hope and potential happiness, not as a result of some myth of the "American dream," but rather as a result of our solidarity with one another and the continued faith in the rightness of our struggle.

*Against Gravity* is an honest, sensitive and intensely sophisticated tour de force. It is novel that shines brightest among Moshiri's three brilliant novels. Moshiri has also authored *At the Wall of the Almighty* and *The Bathhouse*, both set in Iran during the rise of the fundamentalist regime. □



## POETRY

### London Elegy

"When there is distress of nations and perplexity  
Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road"  
From *Four Quartets*,  
T.S. Eliot

The cock's crow is heard outside of London...  
on a dull morning in July,  
the pavements towards King's Cross are silent,  
where once the living walked.  
Now the evening comes, parting those from  
their beloved buried in fire and ash.

In tube trains,  
the distraction reigns, a motion of loss in terror.  
The bells sound their mourning almost in droning airs,  
English names of Aldgate, Paddington, and Tavistock Square  
echo with quiet bitterness: the secret thoughts  
of revenge not against those who hate, but those  
who claim to defend England along the lea, and proud hills of  
London.

*La Guerra no est finie.* The Thames moves on in quiet ripples,  
double-decker buses pass Tavistock Square,  
where those who went to work died without protest,  
in the sudden summer heat, never to return home.  
Time has no meaning on Westminster clock,  
the hands on the face are the hands of loss.  
Carnage lines the routes, as Londoners  
go to work, the path of tears, and furious hate,  
the world synchronized in death, the lotus flower once alive  
in a poem, now dead.  
the Kingfisher only a myth, now seen  
for what it is: human dust and memory  
of those who lived and died.

Those who traveled to their deaths left messages,  
cell phone texts,  
A gallery of photos at a bus stop: pleas for peace  
scribbled on crumbling walls, where peace  
is the terror of explosion.  
A photo caption says,  
"Karolina is still missing".  
There is no discrepancy in her death,

Her death is the chronology  
of Everyman's death.

Forever are those buried a hundred feet  
Below in a darkened tunnel, the River Styx beneath greater  
London.  
Not far from Edgware Road, a mosque calls for prayer,  
While others in Paini Café are served tea,  
Life goes on.  
London Tower, pillar of history,  
Here, where there is no reason,  
except to kill and be killed,  
bears witness to decadent England.

Luis L. Tijerina

### Cleaning Up Your Mess

I came to this country because I was hungry  
To get my shirt dirty and pay my dues  
And I know I'm not you  
I wasn't born here  
Without the fear of not feeding my family  
Some people can't stand to see me walk around this city  
But I'm not the enemy they paint me out to be

I work more than nine to five to survive  
I slave for twelve hour days to pay the rent  
To put smiles on my children's faces  
To send my relatives money in different places

My wife's a chamber maid  
Making less than minimum wage  
But this is our way to go  
We work harder than any citizen we know  
Because we've seen worse  
We were cursed  
Brought up in poverty  
I left my country to make a life better for my family  
I don't know why you're so scared of me  
We have furthered this society  
And we do it quietly  
We work the jobs you won't do  
We clean your pools  
Your schools  
Pick the fruit that sits on your tables

We clean your stables  
Groom your lawn

And we're still pawned by politics  
You don't want us to drive  
Or further our lives  
You just want us to work and barely get paid  
No social security  
No health care  
Just slavery in a bigger cage

We help  
Not hurt this country  
You're lucky we don't just get up and leave  
Because then you'd have to rake your own leaves  
You'd have to bus your own dishes  
Make your own sandwiches  
You never once mention your advantages  
You just want to get a bigger edge  
A larger slice of my small piece of pie

But I've worked hard to be here  
And I've done my work with pride

I'm not going back Mexico  
I'm staying here for good  
Unless you know a cheaper mechanic  
That can pop that dent out of your hood

Remi Kanazi



Illustration by Victor Veloz

By Goran Marcovic

**W**ho was Slobodan Milosevic and what did he stand for? Milosevic began his political rise in 1984, when he was elected president of the City Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia in Belgrade. Two years later he was elected president of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia. In 1987 Milosevic organized a meeting of the Central Committee of the League of Communists of Serbia where he politically liquidated a faction under the leadership of the then-president of Serbia Ivan Stambolic, who for many years had been Milosevic's political patron. After that session Milosevic became uncontrolled leader in Serbia.

His party faction was not only bureaucratic but nationalistic. For these reasons, almost all old Communist cadres were against Milosevic and his methods and politics. His opponents included Draza Markovic, one of most famous Communist leaders in Serbia and former president of the Federal Assembly of Yugoslavia and member of the Central Committee of League of Communists of Yugoslavia, and Milos Minic, illegal party worker from the 1930's, organizer of the national liberation struggle and Yugoslav minister of foreign affairs in Tito's era.

Before April 1987, Milosevic was not well known in Serbia and Yugoslavia. That month, he visited Kosovo where he met with leaders of mass demonstrations by local Serbs who were being oppressed by Albanian separatists. Later, upon his arrival in Belgrade to assume power as Serbia's president, Milosevic advocated a radical approach to solving the Kosovo problem. Namely, suppression of Albanian separatism through ending Kosovo's autonomy.

To fully appreciate the significance of this consider for a moment the following background. Although Kosovo had been Serbian territory in medieval times, it was under Turkish occupation until 1912. After that, it was returned to Serbia. Since then the Albanians have always been the majority

## THE TROUBLE WITH SLOBODAN MILOSEVIC

there, but they were harshly oppressed by the Serbian monarchy. After 1945, the new communist government gave the Albanians new national rights, and Kosovo became an autonomous province in the framework of the Socialist Republic of Serbia. The Albanians had the right to use their national language not only in elementary and secondary schools but also at the University of Pristina, which contributed considerably to the creation of an Albanian intelligentsia in Kosovo. Kosovo was the most underdeveloped region of Yugoslavia, but the federal Yugoslav state devoted special attention to its socioeconomic and cultural development. During the decades following the war, mostly thanks to federal funds contributed by all of the Yugoslav republics, Kosovo developed quickly, and its working class became skilled and educated. As a province, Kosovo's government had an assembly and presidency as well as the Communist Party organization where Albanians were in the majority. According to constitutional changes in 1967 and 1971, Kosovo sent representatives to the Assembly of Yugoslavia as well as to the

Presidency of Yugoslavia.

In this period, Kosovo, on a practical and legal level, became more than a province, according to the 1974 Constitution. Representatives of Serbia were unhappy about that, but politicians from other republics considered it a way to weaken



△ Former Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic appears before the Yugoslav war crimes tribunal in 2001 in The Hague, the Netherlands.

Michel Porro/Gaety Images



Serbia's dominance in federal institutions. In 1968 and 1981, Albanian separatists organized mass demonstrations. In 1981, they demanded the formation of the Republic of Kosovo as a first step toward separation. All of the Yugoslav republics agreed that this was a kind of counter revolutionary revolt that should be stopped by force. Federal police along with the Yugoslav People's Army were sent to crush the rebellion. Even after the uprising, however, Albanian nationalists remained in control of Kosovo. They began a campaign to pressure Serbs to leave Kosovo. This action prepared the ground for growing Serbian nationalism. Thus by 1987, Milosevic had already won popular support in Serbia for his radical nationalist approach. In turn, Milosevic's plan intensified the Albanian separatist movement. In fact, radical Albanian nationalist Adem Demachi, who was in government prisons for more than 30 years, said that Albanians from Kosovo should set up a monument for Milosevic for making it possible to wage a successful struggle for independence.

In 1989, the Assembly of Serbia under Milosevic's control enacted constitutional amendments that ensured the integrity of Serbia and its control of Kosovo. Although it was necessary to do it, Milosevic made a great error by using completely unconstitutional means. By changing the constitution of the Socialist Republic of Serbia in this manner, he effectively changed the Yugoslav Constitution. But he used this means to show himself to be the real father of the Serbian nation. Another great error was his suspension of the legal institutions of government in Kosovo where Albanians held majorities. Instead of organizing new elections, Milosevic imposed from Belgrade unelected bodies composed of Serbian nationalists. This was exacerbated by the fact that from 1990 to 1999, there were no elections for the parliament and government of Kosovo. Before 1990, the Albanian majority terrorized the Serb minority. After 1990, the Serb minority terrorized the Albanian majority. One nationalism replaced the other.

In 1988, in the autonomous provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo and the Socialist Republic of Montenegro, Milosevic's regime organized mass meetings against existing leaders. These gatherings caused these governments to fall. After that, Milosevic tried to overthrow the leadership of Slovenia by export of mass demonstrations and demon-

strators from Serbia, but he failed. These attempts were the results of Milosevic's endeavors to control the majority in the Presidency of Yugoslavia (which consisted of nine members – one from each republic and autonomous province and a president of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia). The other republics were terrified by this power grab.

From 1987 on, the Slovenian leadership began its own secessionist movement. It organized campaigns against the Yugoslav People's Army. Slovenian intellectuals who belonged to liberal political circles drafted a so-called Slovenian national program based on claims that Slovenia was exploited in Yugoslavia and that it should become an independent state. A propaganda war between Serbia and Slovenia erupted soon after, which contributed a great deal to the development of nationalist sentiments.

In January 1990, the League of Communists of Yugoslavia dissolved at its 14th Congress, resulting from the fact that party leaders from the republics and provinces failed to reach agreement about the future of the country. A delegation of the League of Communists of Serbia, under Milosevic's leadership, came to the Congress with the idea of setting up a new

His party faction was not only bureaucratic but nationalistic. For these reasons, almost all old Communist cadres were against Milosevic and his methods and politics.

kind of organization under the control of the Serbian party. Because of its size, the Serbian party tried to dominate the Congress. For their parts, the leaders of the League of Communists of Slovenia and the League of Communists of Croatia came to the Congress intending to show that a joint Yugoslav party was not possible any more, and they walked out of the Congress before it ended. In 1990, there were attempts to renew the Yugoslav party but all of the leaderships from the republics refused. Party

organizations changed their names and programs. The League of Communists of Serbia became the Socialist Party of Serbia, with a social democratic program and a nationalist practice. Although in December 1990 the League of Communists – Movement for Yugoslavia with 260,000 members was formed, Milosevic and the other parties' leaders refused to join it.

In the spring of 1991, Milosevic and Milan Kucan, president of Slovenia, agreed that Slovenia could become an independent state. It was, of course, an informal and unconstitutional agreement between the two nationalist leaders. It was also an act of betrayal. Milosevic, Kucan and Borisav Jovic, Milosevic's closest associate and president of the nine-member Presidency of Yugoslavia, admitted that such agreement had been achieved. It must be said that in light of this fact, Milosevic and Kucan had the same responsibility for the dissolution of Yugoslavia. On the other hand, such an agreement could not be achieved between Serbia and Croatia because the latter included in its borders large numbers of Serbs. In 1990, the neo-ustashi Croatian Democratic Community won the elections in Croatia and immediately started implementing legal discrimination against Serbs. Up to 1990, the



Serbs, as a 15 percent minority of the population, had equal rights with the Croats. After the neo-ustashi victory, they lost constitutional guarantees of their position, and many of them lost their jobs, were beaten or even killed. Although most of them in 1990 voted for the Party of Democratic Changes (formerly the League of Communists, which had become a social democratic party), former Communist bureaucrats had not done anything to protect them. That is why they became easy pillage for Serbian nationalists from the Serbian Democratic Party.

When Communists and other anti-fascists, organized in the League of Communists – the Movement for Yugoslavia and People's Front of Yugoslavia, tried to organize resistance, even an armed one, in coordination with some officers of Yugoslav People's Army, they were sentenced and even killed both by Croatian and Serbian nationalists. While Franjo Tudjman, head of the Croatian nationalist state, started organizing paramilitary neo-ustashi troops, armed with equipment bought in Hungary and Germany, Slobodan Milosevic took control of the Yugoslav People's Army. The Croatian regime advocated Croatian independence including territory from parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina (project Greater Croatia). For its part, the Serbian regime advocated preservation of Yugoslavia in words only. In practice, Milosevic's government greatly contributed to Yugoslavia's dissolution with the agreement between Milosevic and Kucan and with the agreement between Milosevic and Tudjman about division of parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia.

In 1991, the Presidency of Yugoslavia, where Milosevic's associates were in the majority, ordered the Yugoslav People's Army out of Slovenia and two-thirds of Croatia, where the Croats were in the majority. It was a clear act of betrayal. Thus all the prerequisites for civil war were there. Milosevic declared that only Serbian territories were going to stay in framework of "Yugoslavia." It was impossible, however, to divide territories without blood and crimes. When civil war started in late 1991, the Croatian and Serbian regimes had at their disposal organized paramilitary troops who committed many crimes. The regime of Slobodan Milosevic hired criminals and thieves who were recruited into special units under the command of Secret Service officials and officers of the Serbian Interior Ministry. Also, the Serbian Radical



Patrick Hertzog/AFP/Getty Images

△ Belgrade, 1988: At the start of Milosevic's leadership, thousands of his supporters fill the streets of Belgrade at a Serbian nationalist rally to counter Albanian protest against Serbian dominance. Milosevic used the protests to announce his plan to dissolve unilaterally the autonomous state of Kosovo.

Party under the leadership of Vojislav Seselj, who stands accused of war crimes, was formed according to an agreement between him and the Serbian Secret Service. His volunteers, so-called chetniks, were trained in special camps in Serbia and then sent to Serbia and Bosnia where they committed mass war crimes. Vojislav Seselj himself promoted the most distasteful chauvinist and fascist propaganda against all non-Serbs. In 1998, he became vicepresident in a coalition government with Milosevic's socialists, and ministers from his party began monstrous attacks on the freedom of the press.

The Yugoslav People's Army became a Serbian nationalist army. It provided Serbian nationalists in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina with arms. At the end of March

Milosevic's regime became a kind of coalition of criminals, mafia bosses, the powerful political elite and managers of state-owned enterprises.

and beginning of April 1992, the well-known Serbian criminal and commander of the so-called Serbian Volunteer Guard was sent with his unit to northern Bosnia to help local Serbian nationalists in establishing their control over this region on the border with Serbia. During the war, Serbian military officers in Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina received salaries from Belgrade, and local Serbian nationalists received all kinds of support, including arms, from Belgrade. Many prisoners of war from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina were removed to Serbia and then killed in jails or camps. Although Milosevic controlled the Yugoslav People's Army and the Presidency of Yugoslavia, he did not try to save Yugoslavia by imposing military control over the republics where separatists acted. Through his agents in the Presidency of Yugoslavia, he ordered the army's retreat from Slovenia and parts of Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

It could not be said that Milosevic is the only one responsible for the dissolution of Yugoslavia or for war crimes. Nationalist leaders played the same role in the Yugoslav crisis, although some of them clearly expressed their separatism while others hid their separatist intentions behind false concern for the country's survival. But Milosevic played the role of a politician who was for Yugoslavia and who fought imperialism. He is the one, however, who ordered the withdrawal of the army from almost half of Yugoslav territory in 1991 and 1992 and who signed the so-called Kumanovo Agreement in June 1999 according to which Yugoslav troops had to leave Kosovo. This, too, was a betrayal. Milosevic was the one who lost Kosovo, and who agreed with NATO's arrival there. To their credit, Yugoslav Communists were able to hold off Albanian separatists in Kosovo by ensuring its autonomy and nation-

al rights. There was no civil war, until Milosevic's shortsighted nationalist politics threw the Albanians into the arms of separatist forces. Although the Communists never supported the Kosovo Liberation Army (its methods and aims were considered nationalist and separatist), it can not be overlooked that the KLA was a guerilla army with mass support of the Albanian population who controlled 60 percent of Kosovo territory. The Serbian police and army were not able to suppress the mass separatist and nationalist movement of Albanians because of one simple reason – one nationalist movement could not be suppressed with another.

During the wars in Yugoslavia and total blockade of Serbia, Milosevic's regime became a kind of coalition of criminals, mafia bosses, the powerful political elite and managers of state-owned enterprises. Milosevic was the one who first introduced capitalist measures in Serbia. Until 1990, workers in Serbia had pretty wide rights in managing their enterprises. In 1990, the Socialist Party government abolished all of them and gave enterprises to shareholders or to managers nominated by the state. During Milosevic's

rule, two or three different laws on privatization were enacted. In 1997, the Socialist Party government sold Serbian telecom to foreign interests. Of course, it was not possible to complete the process of capitalist restoration because big state enterprises and banks were necessary to the regime for wars and solving most crucial social problems. It is well known, however, that the ruling elite (which included most powerful officials of the Socialist Party who held the most important positions in state and economic structures) used their posts to develop the black market and control trade with drugs, cigarettes, alcohol and petroleum in order to finance the war and their private needs as well. Socialist Party officials became a new ruling class in Serbia – new capitalists. One of the most famous criminals was Milosevic's son.

What about Milosevic's struggle against imperialism? We should pose this question another way: what struggle against imperialism? German imperialism had the most important foreign role in the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Facts are cruel for Milosevic's defenders, but he clearly collaborated, togeth-

er with Tadjman, Izetbegovic and others, in this process. While Tadjman and Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic were creating the National Guard (in Croatia) or Patriotic League (in Bosnia and Herzegovina) and arming them illegally, Milosevic used the army for his purposes. To sum up, Milosevic arranged with the Slovenian leadership for it to separate. He arranged with Tadjman a division of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Officers of his secret service trained and commanded war criminals recruited in so-called volunteer units. With his signature, NATO troops came to Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, and he agreed with the removal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo in 1999. His claim that these moves were victories in a struggle for peace was simply an excuse for his betrayals. Above all, he acted as a father of the nation who was going to save Serbian freedom and dignity. But after the imperialists' pressure, he behaved as a well-trained puppet. At the same time, he was the first leader of Serbia to introduce capitalist restoration. The opposition parties who came to power in 2000 did not have to change much. This was one of Milosevic's "merits." □



Srdjan Sulejmanovic/AFP/Getty Images

▲ A Croatian-Serbian mother from Knin in the Croatian Krajina rests with her daughter in a refugee camp in the Serbian town of Nis during the 1993 civil war.

# TO THE BARRICADES

## YOUTH ROCK FRANCE WITH REVOLT

By Remy Herrera



Jack Guenz/AFP/Getty Images

▲ Thousands of students and workers demonstrate against proposed labor laws that would hurt younger workers in the streets of Paris, April 2006. The French government withdrew the proposal after weeks of mass protests across the country.

To use a US baseball metaphor, the French right-wing government has three strikes against it. First, the "no" vote rejecting the European Constitution in May 2005; second, the uprising in the working-class public housing projects from October to November 2005, and now a third moment: the mobilization against youth job insecurity. The first-hiring contract or "CPE" (*contrat première embauche*) constitutes one of the "reforms" of the labor market recently adopted by the right-wing, neoliberal government in Paris.

These neoliberal proposals were at the center of a debate about fighting unemployment. As a matter of fact, for more than 20 years, the unemployment rate in France has been around 10 percent. Today, around 7.5 million persons are affected by lack of

employment or underemployment: 3 million of all categories including 1 million not registered, 1.5 million with temporary or "interim" contracts, and 2 million with part-time jobs. The unemployment rate was 22.8 percent in 2005 for 15-24 year olds (618,000 persons), and over 50 percent among those of African origin in the poorest districts of the suburbs.

The aim of these proposals is suppressing contracts of unlimited, permanent duration ("CDI," or *contrats à durée indéterminée*) and substituting them with precarious jobs (CPE) in large-scale firms of more than 20 persons. Enterprises resorting to this type of contract are allowed to forego employers' social security contributions.

Its next of kin, the "CNE" (*contrat nouvelle embauche* or new hiring contract), concerns all workers in small and medium-sized

firms of less than 20 persons, regardless of age. Since last August, more than 300,000 CNE contracts have been signed. Granted to owners under the excuse of cutting labor

The CPE would have made it possible for owners, during the first two years of employment, to lay off young people without procedure, justification or even legal recourse.

costs, these gifts have proved their inefficiency in creating stable jobs. They resulted only in expanding public deficits and in reducing demand, thus in exerting new unemployment pressures – since unemployment, contrary to neoliberal ideology, is not due to excessively high labor costs, but to the submission of enterprises to demands for higher profits imposed by shareholders.

The more recent “first-hiring contract” would have made it possible for owners, during the first two years of employment, to lay off young people without procedure, justification or even legal recourse. This contract of insecurity is in fact worse than one of limited, temporary duration (“CDD,” or *contrat à durée déterminée*). The young worker, under it, is trapped day after day in an arbitrary state of uncertainty, prohibiting a stable and worthwhile existence, forming a family, being secure from want, seeking decent housing, and acquiring consumer goods.

One understands the main objective of the CPE: to exacerbate competition between workers, to make employment for youth insecure while using them to dismantle the structure of permanent wage-earner job statutes. Mainly, it was an attack against one of the accomplishments of existing labor laws in France: protections against arbitrary dismissal. Thanks to the struggles of workers, this protection against arbitrary dismissal – based on the requirement that employers must provide reason for any dismissal and the right of employees to file a claim in the event of abuse – imposed limits on the absolute power of the capitalists. The proposed new law fell under the general process of making the French labor market more “flexible,” as recommended by advocates of neoliberalism (suppression of the minimum wage, creation of a single flexible work contract, etc.), who have been long dreaming of putting an end to the “French exception.”

How did the young people of France, joined by workers united in a trade-union front, react? They mobilized themselves, organized general assemblies, took the floor when the dominant classes attempted to gag them, and informed themselves about the current reforms, as they did during the campaign against the European Constitution. They then closed down universities and colleges, blocked roads, stations and airports, and took to the streets to massively demonstrate their resistance to this social war. Over 500,000 marched on February 7, one million

on March 7, one and one-half million on March 18, between two and three million on March 28, and more than three million on April 4. In a number of provincial towns, it was often the very first massive demonstration.

Contrary to all appearances, the team of Prime Minister Dominique de Villepin and Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy functions rather “well.” The first one undertook to destroy the labor laws, while the second one aimed at breaking the resistance by intimidating the youth. After the repression of the “rioters” in November, thousands of anti-CPE demonstrators (perhaps 4,350) were arrested. Sentences were passed by the hundreds (probably more than 630, including around 270 in first court appearances), against young people for having taken part in confrontations with the police in the streets. At the end of April, 71 prison sentences of up to eight months were decreed, as well as 167 trial decisions of imprisonment with remission of sentence. Is the government offering French youth a choice between job insecurity or prison?

Let’s imagine the buildings of the University of La Sorbonne in the Latin district of Paris surrounded for weeks by two lines of police-vans, La Sorbonne square itself surrounded by anti riot steel-plate movable barriers, through which one could distinguish a multitude of police vehicles and a significant number of CRS agents in battle dress – the “CRS” (*Compagnie républicaine de sécurité*, or Republican Security Company) are parts of the official forces responsible for order. This deployment of force, however, did not make the students lose their sense of humor. On the anti-riot barriers around La Sorbonne, one could read “do not feed the CRS, please,” an inscription that one can read usually in the zoo, but for the animals. Another banner read “because of the risks of contagion due to avian flu, containment of chickens” (in French slang, a “chicken” is a policeman).

After almost three months of crisis, two general strikes and a series of demonstrations gathering nearly 10 million, President Jacques Chirac and Premier Dominique de Villepin announced, Monday April 10, one day before a new massive demonstration, the “replacement” of the law creating the CPE with a plan for youth employment.

The plan called for public funds of 150 million euros in 2006, to be compared to the 23 billion euros granted to employers in the

The French youth mobilized themselves and closed down universities and colleges, blocked roads, stations and airports and took to the street to demonstrate by the hundreds of thousands.

previous scheme (CPE). De Villepin declared: “The necessary conditions of confidence and serenity are not met, neither on the side of the young people, nor on the side of the enterprises, to allow the application of the CPE.” And he added: “I wanted to propose a strong solution. This was not understood by all, I regret it.”

The anti-CPE organizations applauded this decision, but were waiting in order to know the content of the newly proposed laws. The students’ leading trade union (UNEF) called for a new day of action on April 11, while recognizing that the suppression of the CPE constituted a first decisive victory. The CGT (General Confederation of Labor, the leading union of the French workers, close to the Communists) declared the withdrawal of the CPE as a “success of the convergent action of the workers, students and high-school pupils as well as of trade-union unity.” On April 13, 16 universities were seriously disrupted by the strikers; three others blocked, in Toulouse, Montpellier, and Aix-Marseille; and also Rennes, a spearhead of the anti-CPE mobilization, was closed again. On April 18, after the expulsion of the young strikers occupying La Sorbonne by the police forces, students voted for a “reorganization and remobilization of the movement” until the complete withdrawal of the CNE along with the neoliberal law “on the equality of opportunities” (including provisions promoting apprenticeship contracts for 14-year-olds and restoring night work for those aged 15). They also demanded the satisfaction of salary claims, the lifting of anti-immigrant laws, and the ending of repression. But on April 19, the return to work was voted for everywhere. After the demonstration of May 1st, what is the next step of the French revolt? And in the other countries of Europe?□

# COCA-COLA: CLASSIC UNION BUSTER

By Joel Wendland

The "Coke side of life" is not paradise for thousands of Coke workers or the many communities forced to give up land and water resources to the multinational giant. Anger at the company's practices have led to an international campaign to decrease Coca-Cola's market share to punish the company for

ongoing complicity in human, environmental and workers' rights abuses in Colombia, India, Peru, Nicaragua, Chile and numerous other countries. One major organizer of this campaign, the Campaign to Stop

Killer Coke, is working with labor and students around the country to block Coke's access to college campuses, public schools, union halls and other venues and to publicize Coke's role in human rights abuses.

Ray Rogers, director of the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke, described the origins of this broad campaign in a recent telephone interview with *Political Affairs*. The main impetus for the current international campaign against Coke was the assassination and intimidation of members of the SINALTRAINAL union that organized workers at Coke-controlled Femsa bottling plants in Colombia. Paramilitaries have assassinated a number of union members and leaders since 1990. It is widely understood that the killers are friendly with

Along with union-based efforts to either boycott Coke products or use other means to pressure the company to address its record, university students have organized several successful campaigns on their campuses to stop the sale of Coke.

the bottling plant managers who want to rid the plant of the union in order to boost their power over workers and their bottom line.

Between 1990 and 2002, seven SINALTRAINAL leaders were assassinated, and in 2005, three members of the families of hunger strikers were murdered for protesting workers' rights violations and human rights abuses. In addition, one plant manager who expressed sympathy for the workers was also killed. Indeed, a fact-finding mission led by New York City Council member Hiram Monserrat in January 2004 to Colombia found that Coke managers are responsible for at least 179 incidents of human rights violations. This mission also described collusion by paramilitary groups listed on the state Department's "terrorist" list and Coke plant



▲ Members of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters rally against the Coca-Cola Company in New York City. The protesters are accusing the soft drink company of poor treatment of union workers in Guatemala, Colombia, the Philippines and Zimbabwe.

Matt Campbell/AFIP/Getty Images

Managers and those of other corporations as "an open secret in Colombia" that have led to the murders of about 4,000 union members since 1986.

These killings and the subsequent failure of the company to investigate or even address the problem, Rogers stated, led to a 2001 USW and International Labor Rights Fund organized lawsuit under the Alien Tort Claims Act in conjunction with SINALTRAINAL against Coca-Cola for "complicity" in these anti-union attacks on SINALTRAINAL members. Absent any agreement on Coke's part to use its power to stop the violence and in the face of evidence that Coke ignored pleas by SINALTRAINAL leaders to intervene to stop the actions of the plant managers in the facilities they partially own and hold enormous power over, the call for a boycott arose.

### Labor's Role in the Campaign

Rogers expressed the need to be sensitive to concerns of the 18,000 workers who earn their livings by driving trucks that carry killer Coke products that a boycott would harm them. Still, Rogers added, large sections of labor have sided with the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke. Some Teamsters locals, the men and women who drive the trucks that carry Coke products, have endorsed the objectives of the campaign to force Coke to address its role in human and workers' rights violations in plants under its control. Members of the Teamsters joined a protest called by the Campaign to Stop Killer Coke at the company's annual meeting in Wilmington, Delaware last April.

The Service Employees International Union (SEIU) endorsed the campaign at its recent national convention. Several SEIU locals in California, New York and other states have gotten rid of the Coke machines in their local union halls. The International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) and the United Steel Workers have endorsed the boycott.

The national convention of the Communications Workers of America (CWA) called for a boycott of Sun Trust Bank, a company described by Rogers as "Coke's bank" that shares many interlocking directorates with the cola maker. The American Postal Workers Union has agreed to pull nearly \$14 million of union funds out of Sun Trust and is working to get Coke machines out of postal facilities.

The New York State United Teachers

called for a boycott and is working to pull Coke vending machines out of facilities under its auspices, including schools. The California Federation of Teachers has endorsed the boycott as well. Other labor organizations, including the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA) and several locals of the Canadian Autoworkers (CAW), which represents 3,000 Coca-Cola workers, have adopted resolutions supporting the goals of the campaign and educating their members about the actions of Coca-Cola.

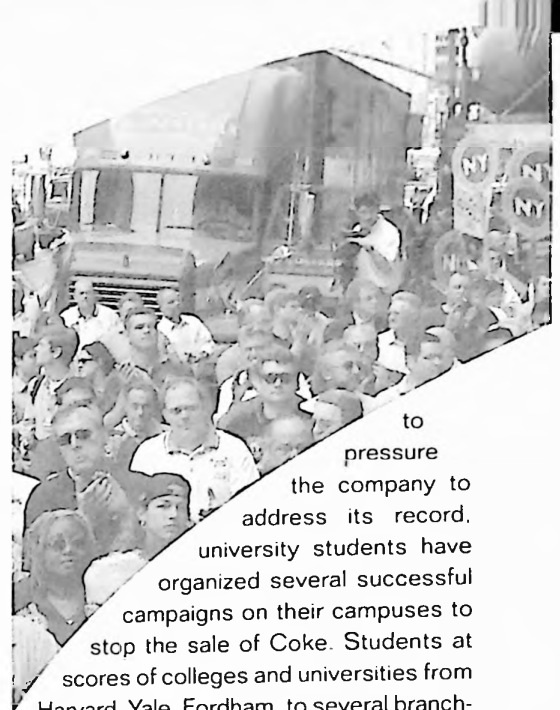
According to Rogers, international unions such as Unite Here and SEIU have, on this issue, broken with their parent international organization, the International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers Associations (IUFA), which "has come to the aid of Coke" by denouncing the boycott, says Rogers. IUFA opposes the boycott because of a jurisdictional dispute with SINALTRAINAL, the Colombia-based union that had organized most Coke bottling plant workers.

Great Britain's largest union of public employees, Unison, supports the boycott and calls for open investigations into human rights abuses leveled at union workers in Coke-owned or controlled bottling plants in Colombia.

Coke's anti-union behavior has not been confined to Colombia, according to a report published by the UK-based group War on Want. In Nicaragua, workers at the Coke bottling company Panamco have been denied the right to organize. Members of the Sole Union of Coca-Cola Company Workers (Sutec) have been fired or threatened for trying to organize Coke-controlled facilities there. In Peru, Chile and Russia, Coca-Cola workers attempting to organize unions since 2004 have been harassed and threatened with firings and other punitive actions by company officials in order to block unionization. Coke workers in Guatemala fought to unionize since the 1970's, ultimately winning recognition after an international boycott of Coke products in the 1980's. Despite this victory, in 2002 union members were once again subject to death threats, unfair dismissal and other harassment in an effort to bust the union.

### Student Activism

Along with union-based efforts to either boycott Coke products or use other means



to pressure the company to address its record, university students have organized several successful campaigns on their campuses to stop the sale of Coke. Students at scores of colleges and universities from Harvard, Yale, Fordham, to several branches of the universities of Michigan, California, Illinois, Wisconsin and smaller institutions like St. Louis University, West Virginia University, Oklahoma University and the University of Detroit Mercy are pressuring their administrations to accept some kind of restrictions on Coca-Cola until that company addresses human rights issues with some successes. Universities in Canada, Britain and Ireland have also conducted successful campaigns.

Student activist groups such as United Students Against Sweatshops and the Student Labor Action Project (SLAP) have worked together with local groupings of students to restrict Coke products on their campuses. According to Carl Lipscombe, national coordinator of SLAP, "Over the last few years students have played a major role in holding Coca-Cola accountable for its human rights violations." Lipscombe said that SLAP's role has been to help link student activists with labor activists, especially with Teamsters locals that are working to force Coke to address these issues.

Lipscombe cited student work in hosting international delegations of students, and community and labor allies to countries where Coca-Cola has been responsible for human rights violations. He also noted the conduct of many successful campaigns to get Coca-Cola removed from campuses with the most recent victories at New York University, Rutgers, and Oberlin. Students have also hosted tours of Colombian Coca-Cola workers in the US and have gathered thousands of signatures on petitions in support of the campaign.

**Water Heist**

Coke's complicity in attacks on trade union members in Colombia and other countries isn't the only issue fueling anger at the company. In the state of Kerala, India, where the South India Bottling Company manufactured the soft drink exclusively for Coke until 2004, labor union and environmental critics of the company charged the Coke bottler with depleting and contaminating the water table. The local city council and the Kerala High Court agreed with the community and withdrew the company's license, forcing the plant to close. According to War on Want, subsequent analysis of the water in the area

Coke has spent millions, not to change the conditions of workers in its bottling plants or to improve the safety of the water supply in local communities, but to pressure, cajole and mislead consumers, to keep its products available and to suppress the truth.

showed that it had become unfit for both human consumption and irrigation as a result of Coke's usage. Communities in the states of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra have had similar experiences, though Coke-controlled bottlers remain in operation in those places.

Last year, a local union leader in Kerala affiliated with the Center of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), R. Karumalayan, said,

The track record of Coca-Cola in India is not encouraging. Moreover, several parts of Tirunelveli already face drinking water problems and if the company is to draw five lakh liters of water from the Tamiraparani River as proposed, the region is sure to face severe water crisis in the future.

In effect, killer Coke demands that local communities exchange their free drinking water for cola.

In 2003, Indian youth organization, All-India Youth Federation (AIYF), called for the closure of Coca-Cola bottling facilities due both to the water shortages and the increase in toxicity levels in well water created by the plant's operations. While both CITU and AIYF have maintained strong pressure on Coca-Cola and the state and national governments in India, neither organization has endorsed the international boycott. The Democratic Youth Federation of India, the largest youth movement in India with 12.5 million members, however, has endorsed boycotts of both Coca-Cola and Pepsi and other goods manufactured by US-based multinational corporations.

**Killer Coke's Publicity Stunts**

Coke's initial response was to ignore the charges. After the campaign for a boycott gained headway, the company changed its tack to simple denial. Still, it could not fend off the campaign's growing list of successes. When the denial tactic failed to convince their critics and, most importantly, institutional consumers of its products, the company launched a multimillion dollar public relations campaign to give the impression that they are doing something about the problem.

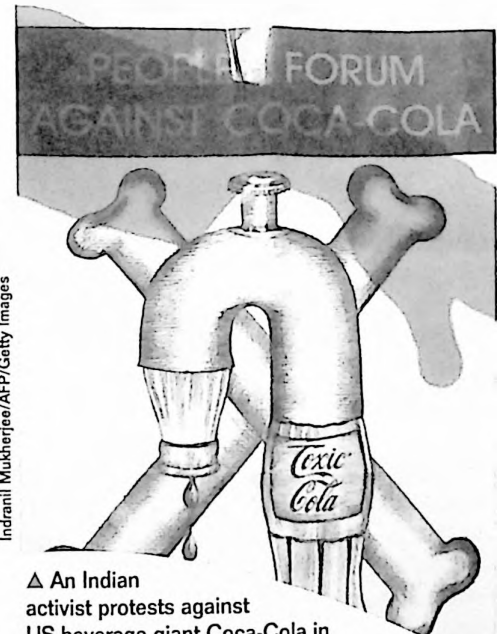
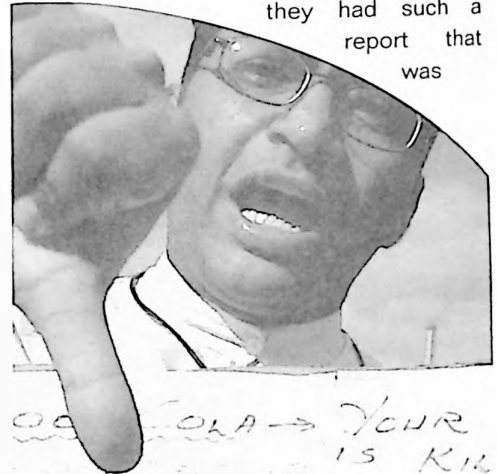
Coke downplays the immense power they have over bottling companies and even local governments. Coke has tremendous control over the operations at its bottling plants as well as the actions of its plant operators and managers. Not only does Coke partially own these companies – in the case of the Colombia bottler Femsa, they own 46 percent – but they also hold a monopoly over what the bottlers produce, Rogers said. In essence, this means that the bottling plant managers do little that is not in the best interest of Coke, as they see it.

One of the main demands of the campaign is to pressure Coke into addressing human rights and workers' rights violations and use their influence to stop them. In fact, many universities and schools have told the company that they will stop selling Coke products until the company proves to them that they are producing real results. Coke has taken advantage of this good faith by creating phony commissions to produce official-looking reports to convince administrators that "the Coke side of life" is a paradise

once again.

In 2004 in a desperate attempt to convince one group of college students not to vote to remove Coke machines from their campus, Coke claimed to have been exonerated by an independent investigation of human rights abuse allegations. When campaign supporters confronted the company about the authors of the report, company officials admitted that a group called White & Case published it. But the company refused to release the report to the public. "You and,

I know," Rogers opined, "that if they had such a report that was



▲ An Indian activist protests against US beverage giant Coca-Cola in Bangalore, India. The consumption of huge quantities of groundwater for the production of soft drinks at the plant has caused a severe depletion in the groundwater level within a radius of 2.5 kilometers of the plant thus threatening the lives of the villagers. Reports released by pollution control groups and environmentalists indicate that water supplies are unfit for use.

Indranil Mukherjee/APP/Getty Images



legitimate that exonerated them, they would have printed up a million copies."

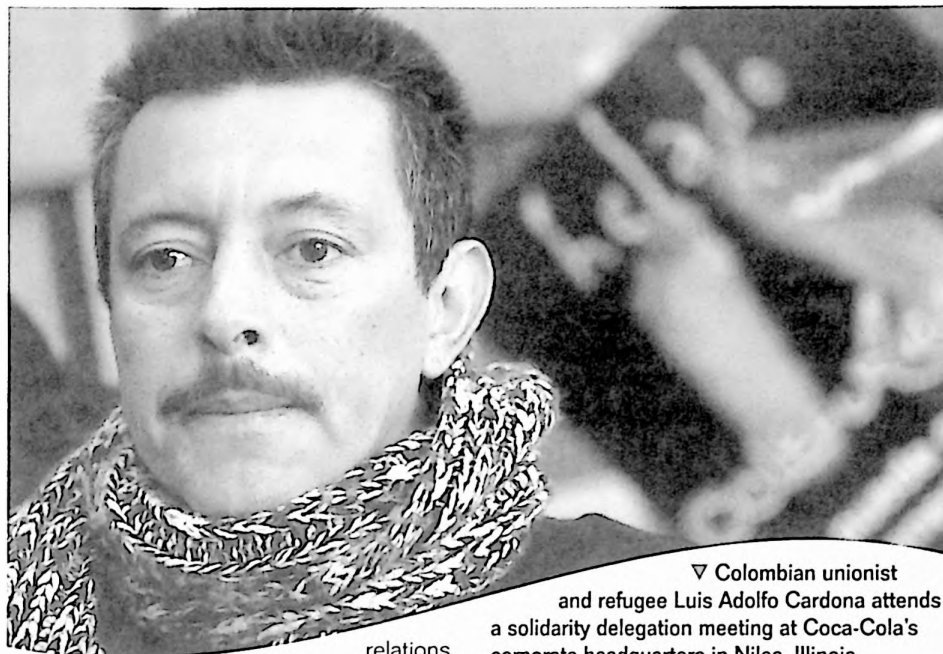
Further digging revealed, however, that White & Case is the law firm that represents Coke in the lawsuit filed by the labor groups on behalf of the SINALTRAINAL members. In addition, one of the executive partners of White & Case sits on the board of directors of Coca-Cola-Femsa, the plaintiff in the lawsuit and the very entity accused of complicity in the violence in Colombia.

In at least one case, Coke's phony campaign has worked, Rogers said. After two years of hard campaigning, students at the University of Michigan convinced the administration to stop selling Coke products on campus this past January until the company could produce positive third party studies into the conditions at its plants. According to Rogers, Coke then sent a letter to the university claiming that two important independent organizations were investigating claims of human rights and environmental abuses. The International Labor Organization (ILO), Coke claimed, would undertake an investigation of "present and past labor relations practices." The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI), Coke also claimed, would make "an impartial independent third party assessment" of Coke's water resource management in India. University of Michigan administrators subsequently dropped the boycott in April.

An investigation by Rogers showed, however, that Coke's claims were at least serious misrepresentations of what was in fact is happening. Rogers said, that ILO representatives told him that they were not conducting an official investigation, but are merely making an assessment of current conditions only in some Coke bottling facilities.

Rogers expressed concern that Coke resources would be used to provide funding for the assessment and thus undermine its objectivity. He cited the example of the ILO's "Better Factories Cambodia" project, which sought to expose labor abuses in Cambodian sweatshops. According to the ILO itself, Rogers pointed out, Cambodian garment Manufacturers were a major financial backer of the investigation. If a similar practice is allowed in Coke's case, there can be no doubt that any resulting assessment will lack credibility as independent.

Added to that is Coke's relationship to the United Nations, the parent organization of the ILO, through its various partnerships, as well as the fact that Coke's head of global labor



Tim Boyler/Cathy Images

▽ Colombian unionist and refugee Luis Adolfo Cardona attends a solidarity delegation meeting at Coca-Cola's corporate headquarters in Niles, Illinois.

relations also heads up the business section of the executive council of the ILO, Rogers stated. The ILO is governed by a tripartite executive council composed of 28 members appointed by governments, 14 from labor unions, and 14 from the global corporate sector.

Likewise, TERI's independent status is even more dubious. According to Rogers, Coke is listed as a corporate sponsor of TERI, one of the members of TERI's governing council sits on the advisory board of Coca-Cola India and Coke has sponsored at least two major projects undertaken by TERI. "TERI is interlocked with Coke in India," Rogers said.

Similarly, Coke has boasted that it has built a number of rainwater harvesting projects to counter claims that it wastes the water supply in India. These projects, reports War on Want, have yet to function.

Rogers summed up Coke's abuse of people and the truth in a concise statement:

The world of Coca-Cola is a world full of lies, deception, immorality, corruption and widespread labor, human rights and environmental abuses. When people think of the Coca-Cola Company, they should think of a company that has brought great hardship and despair to many people and communities throughout the world. When consumers think of Coca-Cola beverages, they should think of them as unthinkable and undrinkable until this company cleans up its act.

Rogers praised the commitment of the Colombian Coke workers and student and labor activists in the US. SINALTRAINAL and its members "aren't just going to roll over," Rogers said. Coke has come up against a "very tough union that isn't just looking for a settlement to save face." Coke is going to have to really address its role in human rights violations before this campaign will end. "Unless Coke does the right thing," he concluded, "they are going to have a hard time snuffing out this campaign."

Nevertheless, Coke has not failed to include some of these misleading claims in an expensive nationwide campaign. It has paid for costly full-page ads in several university newspapers to head off pro-boycott campaigns. It uses letters similar to the one sent to the University of Michigan to convince administrators to bring Coke back. In the end, Coke has spent millions, not to change the conditions of workers in its bottling plants or to improve the safety of the water supply in local communities, but to pressure, cajole and mislead consumers, to keep its products available and to suppress the truth. Living on "the Coke side of life" is dangerous for Coke workers and pure fantasy for consumers. □

▼ CHA worker Reginald Goolsby sweeps debris from in front of a vacant, closed building in Chicago Housing Authority's Cabrini Green public housing.



Tim Boyle/Getty Images

SAFE,  
DECENT AND  
SANITARY?

## THE RISE AND DECLINE OF HUD

by Lawrence Albright

**W**ho is Alphonso Jackson? This question probably won't appear on the television show *Jeopardy!* or as part of the *Trivial Pursuit* board game any time soon. Yet, it wouldn't be completely out of place. Alphonso Jackson is the current secretary of housing and urban development.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, media coverage has been concerned with the Bush administration's military adventures in Iraq and the emergence of the recently created Department of Homeland Security. More recently, there has been extensive coverage of that new department's failures in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. At the same time, there has been virtually no coverage of efforts by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to promote housing for the victims of that disaster.

How did it come to pass that an agency charged with the development of housing opportunities for lower-income families, certainly an important mission with rental and home purchase costs increasing beyond the

means of most working-class people today, garners so little attention?

The answer is only partially tied to the massive disinterest of the Bush administration in domestic matters, and the ultra-right's contempt for working-class and lower-income families. In fact, the current state of affairs with HUD owes as much to internal, departmental issues as it does to neglect by various administrations. From its birth during the New Deal to its apex as part of the Great Society in the 1960's, HUD's slow decline has occurred as it has attempted to redefine its goals and mission – or as it has had its goals and mission redefined by outside forces.

### A New Deal Baby

The origins of HUD go back to the New Deal of President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Or to be more precise, the law that gave impetus to HUD was a product of the New Deal, since the HUD did not become a cabinet-level federal agency until 1965.

The law in question was the United States Housing Act of 1937. This legislation, signed by President Roosevelt, sought to deal with the widespread homelessness that

was a by-product of the worldwide economic depression which began eight years earlier. This legislation created what is today known as public housing authorities. The US Housing Act of 1937 established that public housing authorities would be municipally run and would own the buildings (which became known as "projects"), and these buildings would be subsidized by the federal government. These projects would be run so as to provide "safe, decent and sanitary" housing – a key part of HUD's mission that exists to the present day.

The legislation also mandated that the housing was intended to be "transitional" housing. The intent of the legislation was that public housing was a temporary alternative for those families who could not afford private, non-governmentally supported housing. As conceived, the idea seemed to be that families who were harmed by the economy could find temporary shelter until there was an improvement in their economic circumstances.

Of course, the drafters of the US Housing Act seemed to be operating under an extraordinarily naive assumption about the real nature of capitalist economics. They

seemed to feel that with an end to the economic depression (which can be said to have ended with the entry of the United States into World War II and the accompanying surge in the economy spurred by war production), the economy would rebound and the widespread financial distress experienced by millions of families would abate.

This vision of an across-the-board economic recovery was illusory. While there was an upturn in the economy during and immediately after the Second World War, there remained an entrenched racism that was not limited to the Jim Crow areas of the South. And while unions had won gains during the 1930's and 1940's, speed ups, unemployment and harassment were constant fears as the quest for profits, combined with an all-out attack on the Communist Party and other progressives, became characteristic of the US economy.

There was a second issue the framers of the legislation didn't anticipate or address. Specifically, that out of this "transitional" housing emerged full-blown communities in which bonds were established by friendships, family ties and shared experience. The projects, in short, replicated what was occurring in other cities, towns and neighborhoods throughout the country.

Public housing was little more than a commodity for the government officials who brought it into being. But for the people who lived in the projects, it was never such nor was it but rarely viewed in terms of dollars and cents or an investment. It was home.

### **The Great Society – The Baby Comes of Age**

Although he is today viewed primarily as the person most responsible for the escalation of the US military involvement in Vietnam, as president Lyndon B. Johnson also presided over a series of domestic reforms he referred to as The "Great Society."

In essence, the Great Society as an initiative was oriented toward improvements in domestic political and economic conditions for lower-income families, and based on the theory that government had an obligation to provide opportunities essential to the goal of eliminating poverty.

This is not to suggest that President Lyndon B. Johnson was a political liberal, since such a label is far too simple to describe this complex man. Johnson was,

like his assassinated predecessor, a political pragmatist and power operator. Aware that he had obtained the presidency as a result of murder, rather than at the ballot box, Johnson sought every opportunity to wrap himself in the Kennedy mantle. Following his 1964 landslide victory against arch reactionary Barry Goldwater, President Johnson sought to eclipse his predecessor by broad and sweeping legislation, most notably the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

As a native of Texas, Johnson was aware of his home state's poor record on matters of race. He saw the Civil Rights Act as very much his legacy, when in fact it was the result of years of struggle that involved thousands of women and men from across the United States. It was a united and multiracial movement inspired by women like Rosa Parks and men like Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. At the same time, Johnson turned a blind eye toward the violations of civil and constitutional rights presided over by J. Edgar Hoover at the FBI, and his temperament as a cold warrior led him to believe his bellicose posture and military strength would humble Ho Chi Minh, the Communist Party of Vietnam and the National Liberation Front.

One of the results of the Great Society was, however, the elevation of HUD to a cabinet-level executive agency. Robert C. Weaver became the first secretary of housing and urban development on January 18, 1966.

Two years later, when Dr. Martin Luther King was assassinated while supporting a strike by janitorial workers (and also speaking out against US involvement in Vietnam), the Johnson administration sought to dilute the emotions caused by King's murder by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1968. This act, also known as the Fair Housing Act, made it illegal to discriminate in housing based on race and other classes of protected individuals.

Public housing was little more than a commodity for the government officials who brought it into being. But for the people who lived in the projects, it was home.

HUD was given responsibility for enforcement of the Fair Housing Act.

The Great Society ended that same year. Senator Robert Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles two months after Dr. King's murder. President Johnson, whose policies in Vietnam were being repudiated by a growing number of people both inside and outside the United States, had previously decided not to seek the Democratic Party's nomination. The nomination instead went to Vice President Hubert Humphrey following an acrimonious Democratic National Convention in Chicago, which featured mass violence and Gestapo-like tactics used by the Chicago Police Department, all broadcast on prime-time network television.

With the election of President Richard M. Nixon, the domestic priorities of the Johnson administration were recast. Nixon announced a moratorium on housing and community assistance programs in 1973, but by the following year the Democratic majority in Congress had succeeded in establishing both the community development block grant program as well as the government housing program which is today known as Section 8. Moreover, despite the fact that the head of HUD is a presidential political appointment with Senate confirmation, there remained at HUD a large number of civil servants who had been inspired by Johnson's "Great Society" and who held genuinely liberal political opinions.

### **The Reagan Era – The Baby Suffers from Abuse**

It is safe to say that what is often referred to as the "Reagan era" in US politics had the greatest impact upon HUD as the agency exists today. Significant changes occurred in HUD's mission and goals, and the agency itself suffered through the worst scandal in its short history as a cabinet-level agency.

For the purposes of this article, the Reagan era can be said to have begun with Ronald Reagan's election to the presidency in November of 1980, and conclude with the election of Bill Clinton to that office in November of 1992.

President Reagan tapped Samuel R. Pierce Jr., a well-to-do African American attorney who had served as general counsel for the Treasury Department during Nixon's administration, to be his secretary of housing and urban development. A story was circulated, possibly apocryphal, that Reagan did-

n't recognize his HUD secretary and, on seeing Pierce at a reception, referred to him as "Mr. Mayor." With the knowledge we have today that Reagan was diagnosed as having Alzheimer's disease, it may be speculated whether Reagan could have been showing the symptoms of Alzheimer's so early in his first term.

Pierce was hailed by the *National Review*, an ultra-right magazine then edited by writer and pundit William F. Buckley Jr., as the "unsung hero of the Reagan revolution." And, in fact, Pierce was the only member of the cabinet to serve throughout both of Reagan's terms in office.

However, by 1989, it became clear that Pierce, whose nickname was "Silent Sam," had headed an agency that had become tainted by scandal. Federal indictments alleged that hundreds of millions of dollars connected to the moderate rehabilitation fund had been awarded on an informal, undocumented and discretionary basis. Deborah Gore Dean, who had been the director of the HUD executive secretariat and the official responsible for the moderate rehabilitation program, was convicted for her involvement in the scandal. The US Court of Appeals reversed her conviction on five counts, but upheld the remaining seven counts while vacating the sentence imposed by the lower court (*United States of America v. Deborah Gore Dean*, US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit, 94-3021 (1995)).

It is perhaps of some historical interest that Gore Dean's mother was the companion of John N. Mitchell, the former attorney general during the Nixon administration who was convicted for crimes related to Watergate. Although Mitchell was named as a co-conspirator by the government in the HUD case, he died in 1988 before the matter came to trial.

The result of the scandals was the passage of the HUD Reform Act of 1989, signed into law by President Bush on December 15, 1989. By that time, Jack Kemp had been appointed HUD secretary. Kemp liked to refer to himself as a "compassionate conservative." Indeed, he may have been the first politician of national stature to use the term. Unlike his predecessor, Kemp had an active management style while at HUD and, having served for years in the House of Representatives, had a keen eye for getting legislation through Congress.

One of Kemp's cornerstone projects was the promotion of free enterprise zones. While free enterprise zones became a watchword for ultra-right politicians in Washington DC, the origin of these zones as a concept actu-

Although millions of families currently benefit by their participation in HUD programs, they too are threatened by the current Bush administration that is completely out of touch with, and unconcerned about, the realities of their lives.

ally derives from a similar scheme that came to prominence in Britain during Margaret Thatcher's tenure as prime minister.

Free enterprise zones, in theory, are designed to provide tax breaks and other incentives for businesses to invest in targeted, "distressed" areas. The object of this, so the theory goes, is to stimulate jobs and provide a measure of economic stability to the area. In practice, however, free enterprise zones were little more than a means by which businesses could maximize their profits by paying sub par wages, shutting out labor unions and receive rewards from the government at the same time. Even many supporters of free enterprise zones concede they have a mixed record in terms of success, at best.

Kemp's other pet project while at the HUD helm was the promotion of home ownership. In Kemp's vision, some of the problems associated with public housing could be solved by offering the residents of these projects the chance to own their public housing unit, and for residents to manage the project themselves. Community ownership of housing resources is certainly not a bad idea. But Kemp, who is nothing if not a shrewd politician, pursued his objectives somewhat cynically. His Home Ownership for People Everywhere (HOPE) initiative was marketed

as a model endeavor by the federal government. At the same time, HUD took a very top-down approach which is the very antithesis of community ownership and control. Instead of listening to community leaders and learning from their experiences, HUD officials imposed their own goals on the community. The outcome, in many instances, was sadly predictable.

Finally, Kemp's other remaining contribution to affordable housing was the privatization of several public housing authorities, a trend that continues to the present day. Public housing was very much a mixed bag, with some very professionally managed and maintained while others featured housing that was just this side of uninhabitable. There are doubtless many factors in this situation: There was an increased need for affordable housing that was not matched by its development. Public housing suffered from some city administrations whose political officials had no understanding or appreciation of affordable housing. The amount of federal funding was inadequate or misused. Public housing was subject to HUD's increasingly complex and often capricious regulations and initiatives.

### The Baby Cries Out

With the inauguration of President Bill Clinton, leadership of HUD passed to Henry G. Cisneros. Cisneros had been the mayor of San Antonio, Texas and had gone on the public record during his confirmation hearings that he viewed HUD as being an obstacle to progress in urban areas. Cisneros's tenure would be brief, however, as he resigned following the disclosure that he had been less than candid during his background investigation concerning an extramarital relationship in his past. President Clinton replaced Cisneros with Andrew Cuomo, the son of the former governor of New York.

HUD during the Clinton administration continued with staff reductions that had begun during Jack Kemp's leadership. And while the Clinton administration made efforts to increase funding for affordable housing, they also pursued some initiatives that would have long-range impact.

In 1996, HUD and the Justice Department announced "One Strike and You're Out." In essence, "One Strike" says residents of public housing can be evicted if any individual associated with the residents,

such as a family member, guest, or a visitor, engages in drug-related criminal activity on or near the public housing property.

The draconian nature of "One Strike" is exemplified by provisions which could result in the eviction of the entire family, including those not involved with or aware of the criminal activity. And there need not be a conviction for the activity; an arrest is sufficient. "One Strike" resembles some of the mandatory sentencing guidelines which exist for drug-related convictions in criminal law, and may have taken its inspiration from these guidelines.

In 1998, President Clinton signed into law the Quality Housing Work Responsibility Act (QHWRA), which included a number of public housing reforms as well as other provi-

And it was generally regarded as a dangerous place. In addition to other factors, Cabrini-Green's location, a short distance from Chicago's ultra-affluent "Gold Coast" made it attractive to those engaged in crime.

Much has been made of the apparent proliferation of crime in public housing. Crime born of economic circumstances is as old as history. In the wake of the Civil War, criminals like Jesse James, the Younger brothers, Billy the Kid, and the cowboys of Tombstone, Arizona became household names. Likewise, the Depression-era of the 1920's and 1930's made folk heroes out of Al Capone, John Dillinger, Charles "Pretty Boy" Floyd, Lester Gillis (better known as "Baby Face Nelson") and Bonnie and Clyde.

Unemployment, the fear of homeless-

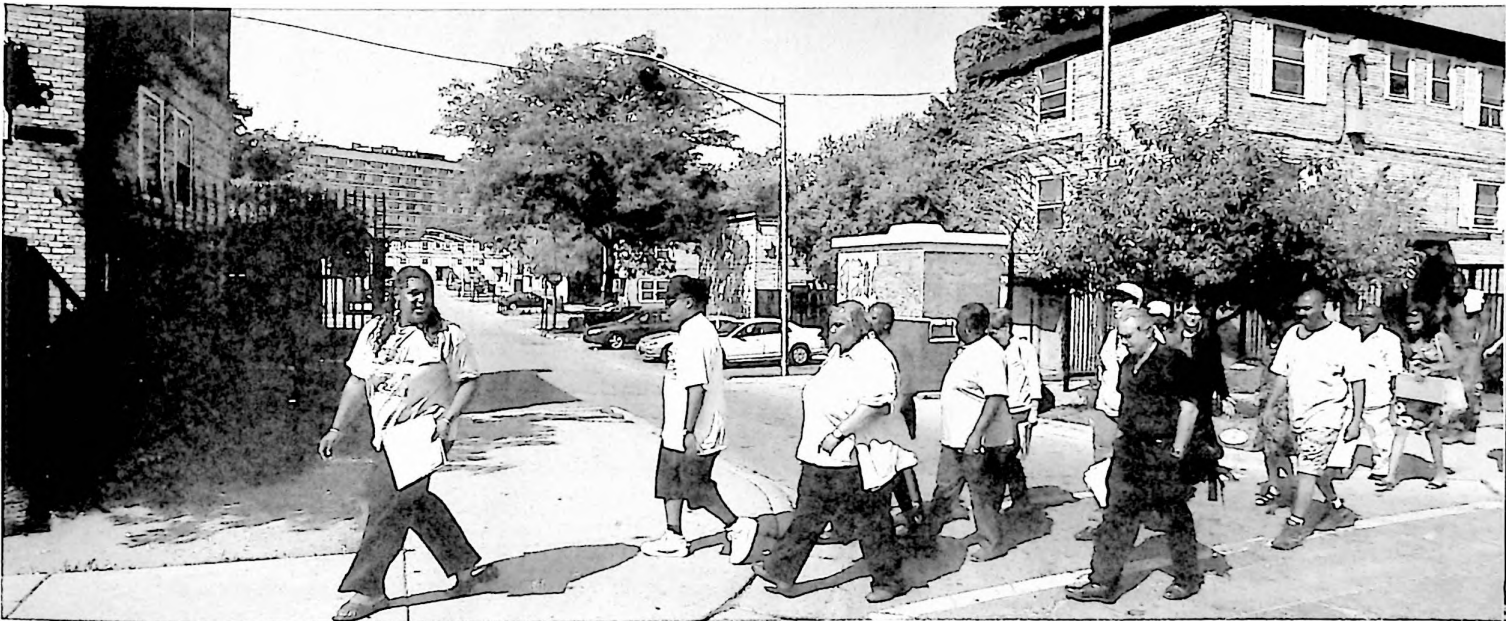
most potentially lucrative property in Cook County.

## Conclusion

The plight of HUD is, in its largest sense, a crumbling monument offering testimony to the inability of capitalism to provide safe, decent and sanitary housing to all but those who can afford it. And that number is shrinking daily with the increase in rental and housing prices.

Although millions of families currently benefit by their participation in HUD programs, they too are threatened by the current Bush administration that is completely out of touch with, and unconcerned about, the realities of their lives.

The Section 8 voucher program, once



Tim Boyle/Catly Images

▲ Demonstrators, Cabrini Green residents and supporters of the Coalition to Protect Public Housing demand that the Chicago Housing Authority provide vacant units in Chicago's public housing to families made homeless by Hurricane Katrina.

sions for the demolition of public housing.

One prominent example, even though its demolition began prior to the passage of QHWRA, is the Cabrini-Green Homes in Chicago. Cabrini-Green was constructed over a period of two decades, with the original row houses having been built in the 1940's. Subsequently, high rises were built and more than 15,000 households called Cabrini-Green home.

As a result of poor construction, and even poorer oversight by the Chicago Housing Authority, Cabrini-Green became known for various types of criminal activity,

ness, and the increasingly unattainable "American Dream" myth, have driven many to crime. And in many circumstances, it is not the residents of public housing who are engaging in crime, but individuals who have come into the projects from outside to use it as a base of operations.

In the modern era, and the epitome of "blaming the victim," the solution sought is not to provide employment and economic security; it is to bulldoze your home to the ground. In the case of Cabrini-Green, nothing could please real estate speculators more than having access to some of the

touted as the long-term solution to the need for affordable housing, has been drastically cut back in many areas. Waiting lists for apartments or vouchers are extensive.

There is no more basic a human need than that for adequate shelter. The acute need for housing should not be blamed on a federal agency like HUD, but on the systematic failures of various administrations that left unscathed a system of profits at the expense of human decency. □

# THE VALUE OF APPRECIATING

By Ken Knies

**A**cquiring an appreciation is a strange pursuit. Having no goal other than to expand the scope and depth of the pleasure we find in things, it is nonetheless a discipline. Looking beyond what initially seems appealing, it seeks to develop a fondness for those difficult pleasures in which the untrained sensibility finds little beauty. To the extent that acquired appreciation places these pleasures above the others, it sets up a hierarchy of those who know and those who do not know how to enjoy. So it is easy to resent the aficionado. For why should we need to know in order to enjoy? Why should we interrupt our naïve capacity to delight in things and subject ourselves to an education whereby we will learn to distrust simple pleasure? Is there not something perverse in this? Even more, if expertise is able to decide upon matters of proper taste, a culture of appreciation seems to reserve genuine aesthetic experience for elites who have access to the "fine things" in life – the rest of us being left to our "crude" pleasures. Treating appreciation as the path to an elevated pleasure thus seems not only an artificial attempt to make enjoyment a matter of judgment, but also a means of devaluing the pleasures of the majority. Isn't it simply a subtle form of oppression?

This suspicion of appreciation has good motives. There is always the danger that the pursuit of "refined taste" will alienate us from our gut-level response to beauty. Here, our own bodies are finely attuned to the beautiful and the ugly, the uplifting and the repulsive, the exciting and the dull. Without a thought, the eyes, the ears and the tongue already know how to discriminate their favorite objects. Of course, it is true that this carnal knowledge is not at all "natural," and that it depends upon the entire history of our bodies, which is what links us with others and a broader social life. Yet there is still a clear difference between feeling the exhilaration that makes us aware of being in the presence of beauty, and knowing that we should consider something to be beautiful. To try to overrule this embodied understanding with "informed" aesthetic judgment should prob-



Illustration by Victor Valdez

ably count as a form of repression. And, like all forms of repression, it results in a double life where we lie to ourselves about what we really want. This is why we often suspect the person who has a "high appreciation of culture" of being a pretender. For who has not questioned whether the sophisticated museum-walker, who has a mouthful of fine words in front of every painting, is not really left cold by all she sees, and secretly wonders what all the fuss is about? Or the enthusiast of some avant-garde music form: does he really take pleasure in his listening, or rather in showing that others cannot understand him, that his taste could not possibly coincide with that of the crowd, etc.? Such things may be psychologically meaningful for him. But is it an honest encounter with what is musical about the music?

Suspicious like these can never be

allayed. Nor should they. At the very least, they can serve the critical function of exposing a relationship to culture that is prudish, hypocritical and elitist. Neither should the class content of this critique be overlooked. "Refined" people, who only discover themselves in isolation from the masses, will inevitably insist that even their pleasures be refined. So the populist will always be able to point to a fundamentally bourgeois scene, full of pretension, snobbery and shallowness, that chases after an appreciation of "high" culture as a means of social distinction rather than the way toward a genuinely elevated enjoyment. But should this suspicion and this critique be the last word on the value of appreciation?

We should first ask whether appreciation is really a way of distinguishing high from popular culture. Isn't it rather the case that we

find the appreciative sensibility at work in nearly all cultural domains? There are aficionados who approach boxing or hot dogs with the same discernment as others do ballet or fine wines. Everywhere the educated eye, ear and tongue are prized. Everywhere the aficionado believes that she enjoys better than the novice. And, to tell the truth, only in a few extreme cases do economic factors deter us from having access, in some form, to the things we appreciate. So if the real elitism lies, not in valuing appreciation, but in deciding that certain cultural forms are not worth appreciating, then we will have to reconsider everything.

We should also examine a common idea that blinds us to the value of appreciation.

**Appreciation elevates our enjoyment because what engages our sensibility simultaneously appears as an accomplishment of the human spirit itself.**

This is the idea that our primary relationships to culture are those of enjoyment and critique. Even if, in our experience, we find ourselves valuing appreciation, our reflections on culture generally adopt one of two distinct perspectives, both of which overlook its importance. Either, culture is a matter of enjoyable consumption, in which case the task of reflection is to provide good information by judging the quality of the product according to criteria recognizable by the taste of whatever niche-market. Or else, the cultural product is a matter for critical judgment concerning precisely its non aesthetic dimensions: what it shows us about the politics of the society in which it was produced, etc. In neither case does reflection set itself the task of encouraging appreciation. Instead, it assumes that we encounter cultural products as things naively enjoyed. Then it is only a question of whether we bask in this enjoyment, or whether we expose it as the opportunity for the formation or reproduction of some kind of political or moral conviction. On neither side do we discover an attempt at that strange discipline of enjoyment, which aims

at pleasure rather than knowledge, but which places genuine pleasure at the end of an education.

The question of whether it is worth pursuing a self-conscious cultivation of appreciation is ultimately a societal question. University departments of literature and art history, traditionally charged with the task of instilling appreciation, are increasingly devoted to "theory" whose end is critical judgment rather than a capacity for elevated enjoyment. This trend, which happens to coincide with questions about what constitutes "the canon," has too often been reduced to a debate between cultural conservatives and progressives over which pieces of art or literature are worth serious study. But beyond the question of what we study lies the question of how we study it. Is appreciation a value in itself, or is the very idea of cultural appreciation (as opposed to criticism or enjoyment) bound up in an essentially bourgeois attitude? Or consider the issue of increasing admission costs at museums. Is it particularly important that "fine" art be universally accessible? To answer this question, we should have to understand what makes "fine" art fine, and account for why an encounter with it might be especially reward-

we have discovered its inherent value, then we might be able to come to terms with its social and political significance.

### What is Appreciation?

We have been calling appreciation a "discipline of enjoyment." And we have been considering this discipline in relation to what we have been calling "culture" or "cultural products." Now, we will try to become more clear. After exploring what makes appreciation a kind of discipline, and how this discipline can "elevate" enjoyment, we will see that appreciation is the very discovery of what is cultural about culture. Appreciation is to the cultural what gratitude is to the ethical and thankfulness to the religious. Against a background of things taken for granted, it lets what is good stand forth as a gift, and provokes a respect for the giver. Appreciation elevates our enjoyment because what engages our sensibility simultaneously appears as an accomplishment of the human spirit itself.

On our way toward this understanding, it is important to make some distinctions. If appreciation is a discipline, this is because it does not rest with what is immediately enjoyable, but attains pleasure at the end of a



Michael Bradley/Cathy Images

△ Members of the Auckland Academy of Dance perform in Aotea Square as part of the Auckland Dance Festival.

ing.

If we are going to understand what is really at stake in issues such as these, we will have to reflect further on appreciation. Once

process. But not every "coming to like something" counts as acquiring an appreciation. Sheer repetition is often enough to adjust our taste to our surroundings. And popular music

## PROBLEMS IN MARXISM



Geth Images

△ Should we simply rely on our gut reaction to music to determine how we appreciate it? Or, should we attempt to learn about why it pleases us?

has given us all the experience of coming to take pleasure in something even against our will, simply because of its persistence. But coming to enjoy through habit or repetition is not appreciation.

To begin to appreciate requires a special kind of "looking behind" what originally surrounds us in our cultural world. In our everyday living, cultural events and products are there for us in the context of the functions they serve. They bring people together and allow us to distinguish ourselves from others, provide easy topics for conversation, fill our stomachs, ease our boredom or distract us from our problems, and, above all, bring us some experience of aesthetic enjoyment. To begin to appreciate a piece of culture means to follow up this enjoyment by getting curious about why the object of enjoyment is enjoyable. This curiosity, in turn, isolates the cultural product or event from its context of functions, and leads us to experience it as a human work.

Let's get a sense of this beginning of appreciation with some simple examples from everyday life. Suppose I have rented a DVD because I am bored, or because everyone at work has been talking about some movie. As I watch it, I realize that, in my naïve opinion, I "like the way it's filmed." Now suppose this opinion provokes me to watch the director's commentary. Here, I learn about dolly shots, lighting arrangements and just

how long it can take to shoot one minute of film. Or, suppose I am catching up with a friend by eating dinner over at her apartment, and I am struck by how much better this dish, which I make for myself all the time, tastes when she makes it. Here, I might learn something about marinating techniques, spices or special contraptions for cooking about which I had never heard before.

These examples only touch the surface. They do not lead to an appreciation for film noir or steak. But even here, what is essential is that the new knowledge actually makes possible an enhanced enjoyment of the movie or the food. How can this be? From a scientific perspective, I see the same images and taste the same flavors as I did before. But is this actually true? What we really experience here is not the same sights and tastes coupled with abstract knowledge about how these sights and tastes were brought about. The way we talk about these experiences is truer to the facts. We say that we can now "see" the smooth execution of the dolly shot, or "taste" the finely grated ginger. And, somehow, this educated sensibility makes us better enjoy what we are seeing or tasting.

From these beginnings, it is always possible to pursue a full-blown appreciation. Through a more detailed knowledge of various techniques of cultural production, their histories, and their great practitioners, we can develop a taste capable of discriminating the "fine" from the "common." The "fine" is

the product of a particular care or attention to detail that betrays a mastery or creative flare in relation to the canons of the cultural form. The paradox here is that what appears as "fine" to the sophisticated taste seems to have been produced only for such a taste. The connoisseur of imported beers knows that he has to tell me why I "should like" this funny tasting German ale. And I will hear all about the details of the fermentation process. But he actually tastes the difference between this beer and the average ale. Or better, he can actually taste the fermentation process. And that's part of why he likes it.

So what does our aficionado really gain from his refined taste? Why should anyone spend time acquiring an appreciation for funny tasting beer, or dissonant music, or paintings that seem, to the uneducated eye, as if anyone could have made them? Why not rest content with liking what we know? Or, even in cases where sophisticated and common taste happen to agree on what's good, why should anyone invest the effort necessary to come to enjoy something "for the right reasons"? If Picasso's paintings have always fascinated my vision, why not rest content in that? What profit comes from a disciplined encounter with the techniques of Picasso and their place in the history of modern European painting?

To see the value of appreciation, we will have to recognize that it fundamentally alters the kind of thing we enjoy in our encounter



Tim Boyle/Getty Images

△ Why do we enjoy what we enjoy? Or does introspection and knowledge spoil the fun? And why would Marxists care about these questions?



with cultural products. Within the realm of the sensible itself, appreciation lets stand forth an accomplishment of human diligence, care and creativity. It thus leads us from the surface of sensible enjoyment, where our liking something depends upon an indescribable "way" it looks, sounds or tastes, into its depth, where this "way" appears as evidence of hard-won accomplishment, and a commitment to excellence. This transformation is nothing less than a humanization of the cultural world. When I savor the ale or take in the painting, the object of my sensible enjoyment is no longer an array of flavors or colors, it is these flavors or colors as a manifestation of artistry. Appreciation thus transforms the cultural domain from a surrounding world of entertainments, distractions and simple pleasures, into an opportunity to encounter a



Mario Tamara/Getty Images

△ Philip Melancon plays an accordion at the Crescent City Farmers Market in New Orleans.

## Commodity fetishism leads us to see the value of useful things (including labor itself) in terms of their price rather than in terms of their social significance.

tradition of human endeavor, and see what is best in it.

This is why it is even worthwhile to cultivate an appreciation of things that I do not already enjoy. Our examples earlier began from experiences of naive preference for a cultural product that provoked a curiosity as to how such a result was achieved. In these cases, uneducated enjoyment is increasingly enriched by cultural knowledge. But it is also possible to develop an appreciation in which knowledge produces enjoyment. Suppose the world of fine wines is a completely closed book to me. And suppose I simply decide to take up an interest in them because my brother has, or because someone, mistakenly thinking I do have this interest, gives me a book on the subject. If I pursue this appreciation seriously, my mouth will discover a whole world of distinctions in taste to which it was insensible before. And these distinctions in taste will attune my sensibility to the artistry and craftsmanship involved in the tradition of wine making. Of course, it is important to recall the potential for pretense here.

The appreciation is genuine only if it actually enhances my taste, not if it makes me divorce my body from my judgment.

### The Political Significance of Valuing Appreciation

There is a definite parallel between the attitude toward cultural products we arrive at through the discipline of appreciation and the attitude Marx encourages us to have toward economic goods. One decisive accomplishment of Marx's critical political economy was to provide a theory that allows us to see beyond a deeply entrenched prejudice we have in relation to useful things. This prejudice he called commodity fetishism. Marx is always clear that commodity fetishism, while it is borne by the whole capitalist mode of production, is a matter of how goods appear to us. It leads us to see the value of useful things (including labor itself) in terms of their price rather than in terms of their social significance. To overcome this prejudice is a concrete affair concerning how we see the economic world. When we understand Marx's work, and take it as a living doctrine that pertains to our surroundings, we perceive automobiles or the produce at the grocery store in a different way. We see these things as the products of socially valuable labor, not as free standing objects-in-themselves that seem to exude their value from some unknown metaphysical source.

Similarly, appreciation attunes us to the human effort and achievement responsible for a cultural world that normally surrounds us

as something taken for granted and in which we naïvely indulge. But there are obvious differences. The most important of these is that appreciation, if it is genuine, is always a matter of relating to cultural objects in their aesthetic aspect, never in their economic aspect. To appreciate an excellent ground of coffee is to taste all the methods of growing, harvesting and processing in terms of their relation to the flavor. It thus redirects our enjoyment from its myopic focus on a thing and brings it into contact with the human techniques of creativity responsible for the excellence of that thing.

All the same, because this creativity is not sensed as "labor," questions of working conditions and exploitation are not in view. Is the correct response to this situation then to say that one cannot justify appreciation of anything produced under an inhumane economic order? Are we to develop an attitude toward culture that is alternatively one of unthinking enjoyment and austere criticism? Of course, an ideal world would be one in which an appreciation of cultural excellence would not be troubled by knowledge of economic injustice. But if there is an inherent value to appreciation that consists in its humanizing the cultural domain as cultural, then we cannot stop with politico-economic critiques of cultural production and consumption. Between naive pleasure and sophisticated criticism, we will somehow have to champion appreciation as a discipline of enjoyment that brings the meaning of human creativity into view. □

# TURNCOATS AND RED HERRINGS

## HOW ANTI-COMMUNISM DIVIDED LABOR



PWW file photo

**PA:** Would you tell a little about your background and early involvement in labor struggles?

**PB:** I was born in Jersey City in a working-class community, a working-class family. I grew up during the Depression and learned the bitter lessons that a depression teaches. We saw many sad things; there was no such thing as welfare, even distrusted as it is now. People were hungry and poor. In my block, kids died from consumption because there was not enough food. I remember one time a truck pulling up to the corner of Brunswick Street and Railroad Avenue where I lived – right down the block – an excess food truck, and they would just throw the food off the truck; people clamored for it. Those were the kind of lessons we learned in Jersey City.

My father was a political person. Let me tell you one story about him. During the Depression there were lots of mobilizations. Jersey City was a town composed of mainly Polish, Irish and Italians. Mayor "I am the law" Hague really ruled like he was the law. He had mounted police to back him up, and all kinds of patronage jobs to keep the city under his control. There was a rally one time in the Italian community where the people were protesting about jobs. The police came in, broke up the rally – about 700 people – and chased the speaker down the street. My father mounted the platform and yelled out to everybody that was scattering, "Stop! Are we mice or are we men?" And he made a speech; that's one of the first lessons I learned.

He was a political center for all the unemployed guys in the neighborhood. They would come around and discuss what was in the paper. He read the Italian newspaper and translated it, and they had discussions in English. I remember some of the unemployed guys would cry because they had no work,

**Editor's Note:** Pat Barile is a life long labor and political activist. During the 1940's he served as president of Local 428 of the United Electrical Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE). He was chair of the Westchester County Committee of the American Labor Party and was the party's congression-

al candidate in the district in 1948. Today, as the US labor movement wrestles with hard issues of unity at home and its relations with workers in other countries, his memories and insights will enrich and deepen the discussion. This interview was conducted by Ben Sears.

no hope, no nothing. That was the nature of the Depression where I grew up. And I think we could say that about tens of thousands of people – or millions of people around the country.

During World War II, I got a job in a war plant in White Plains at Sonotone Corporation. We made headsets for the tanks and signal corps – hearing equipment and other things for the war. That was early 1943, and there were a couple of thousand people working there. A lot of new people came in, and we all got to know each other fairly quickly because we had something in common to do. The UE had already organized there. There were a couple of Communists in the plant, and one got on my case about joining the union. It was a union shop. I paid my dollar initiation fee and my first month's dues right away.

In a few months I was elected steward in my department. Of course the Communists paid attention to my learning about the union. I knew nothing about the union, but I began to learn. Read the contract. Study the contract. What is a grievance? And I went to the union hall a lot – to stewards' meetings Friday after-

The CIO was part of our lives. We understood what it meant, and we didn't want it to be broken. We claimed the CIO. We thought the CIO was the embodiment of the working class – the workers in the shop.

noons when we brought in the dues. We would bring the dues to headquarters and would have a meeting to discuss the problems in the shop.

I was elected president of Local 428 in 1944. We kept fighting for the production on the lines. I got medals like a lot of people did for production during the war, but we were also fighting to build the union and build consciousness. We always held our stewards' classes. We learned who the boss was and where the profits come from. We would get people from the national office in New York City to come up and teach classes. People

like Nat Spero and Dave Rattner would come up and teach finances and how to run a union. The lawyers would come up and teach us labor law.

We studied a lot about the industry and what the union as a whole was about and what GE and Westinghouse represented historically. We learned a lot of labor history. We got introduced to Joe Hill and all the early struggles, the founding of the CIO and how it happened, and how the UE came together.

When the war began to taper down there was a demand in the shops for a wage increase, never mind the contract terms. Wages were frozen, and the cost of living had risen by one-third. So we started to place our demands on the bosses, and our local union broke through; we got a 13-cent an hour increase, which was very modest, but we were the first ones to break through. Nothing pleased the national leadership more than to see that we made a breakthrough. They wanted all the locals to demand wage increases in the middle of the contract.

But even with all this going on, there was a group in the union that was unhealthy. There was a dissident movement against the UE already in process. It was there when I came into the shop, and it was mainly around the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists (ACTU). They didn't run for office until after the war, but they were always there trying to weaken militancy and disrupt membership meetings. But after the war, ACTU became much more blatant in their attack on the lead-

ership, and they decided to run for office. Never successfully. In 1945, 1946, 1947 they ran for office and were defeated each time.

In 1947 the Taft-Hartley Act was a critical turning point for the CIO. The process of building the labor movement, building a labor party and the idea that we could take labor actions came under attack. Taft-Hartley nullified most of the rights of labor that had existed under the Wagner Act. Before Taft-Hartley, you could organize a shop, put the cards on the table, get recognition and sign a contract.

With Taft-Hartley a whole new procedure appeared. You had to provide the cards to the labor board, and there were preliminary hearings and formal hearings, and all of that took weeks. The boss took advantage of the time to propagandize against the union, to threaten, to buy off, do whatever he could do. It was called "free speech" under Taft-Hartley. Under the Wagner Act they were restrained from interfering with the rights of the workers to organize freely. Under the Taft-Hartley law they could interfere to their heart's content.

**PA:** Labor leaders didn't agree to cooperate right away, did they?

**PB:** It was boycotted by the unions for a time, but then some started to break the line. And I remember Jim Matles making a speech at a



△ UE workers employed at Morse Twist Drill on strike, New Bedford, Mass.

UE convention after that, in which he said, "They think they're getting on a chow line. They think they're going to eat up everything the labor movement's done; raid and so on." He said, "But they're really getting on a poison line. That's what they're going to find out."

And so once the line was broken, other unions began to use the facilities of the board. In my own shop after the IUE (International Union of Electrical, Electrical, Salaried, Machine and Furniture Workers) had come into being and challenged our bargaining rights, there were hearings of the National Labor Relations Board here in New York City. The hearing officer was hostile to the UE. We proved that we had a solid membership, that we had a majority. Our attorney offered proofs all the time, but they were rejected out of hand. Then when I testified, I just couldn't get my testimony straight

what I'm saying?"

I said, "I understand what you're saying."

■ UE was under red-baiting attack as a political organization rather than as a union because its union record was impeccable. The right to have a contract was under attack, and the only way to do that was through red-baiting and hysteria.

"comport or else." Well "comport or else" wasn't around the per capita tax, because the UE was the most faithful union in paying its per capita. It was around the question of the Marshall Plan and the cold war.

In Fulton, Missouri, when Churchill spoke, he coined the phrase "the Iron Curtain." Then we saw how the Marshall Plan developed and the bailing out of the British Empire, and the US moving into Western Europe, and expanding US imperialism. The union was opposed to that kind of plan – that kind of cold war – and looked toward building alliances, to maintaining alliances after the war, as a way to move ahead in life. That's what it was about, and Murray had shifted from that position.

**PA:** Why do you think Murray and other CIO leaders were so determined to bring member unions in the CIO in line behind the Marshall Plan?

**PB:** I think Murray was never as progressive as the CIO. The CIO was born out of the struggle of the 1930's, and only the war got in the way of further militant developments because of the no-strike pledge and so on. In my opinion, Murray was an accident of history. The fact of the matter is Gus Hall could have been the president of the CIO, or the steelworkers' union in any case. I think John L. Lewis's history in that situation left it possible for Murray to move in and become the president. I don't think he ever was that militant.

**PA:** But Murray and others made it a litmus test. If you didn't support the Marshall Plan, you were on the wrong side, in their view.

**PB:** It was enough to get them on the wrong side of history. And it wasn't just some subjective question with the UE leadership or the UE, you know, as such, but it was a turning point in history, and a whole number of CIO unions said, "You're going down the wrong road. That's not the fork to take. That's going to put you in the boss's pocket. You're supporting GE and you're supporting Westinghouse, and you're supporting all the



▲ Versatronex workers on picket line in Sunnyvale, Ca.

because I loved the UE and the CIO. To me UE-CIO was the UE. By that time, we were no longer in the CIO, but our literature and our buttons all had "UE-CIO" on them.

Frank Shine, our attorney, asked, "Who owns the contract?"

I said "UE-CIO."

Because it was in the contract, and as many times as he tried to get me to say "UE" without the "CIO" I couldn't say it.

So at one time he said, "You understand

He said, "Well, can you do it?"

I couldn't say it. The CIO was part of our lives. We understood what it meant, and we didn't want it to be broken. We claimed the CIO. We thought the CIO was the embodiment of the working class – the workers in the shop. The 1949 UE convention in Cleveland was the point at which the union left the CIO. The argument was ostensibly over withholding per capita tax, and [CIO President Philip] Murray issued an order,

others," and history has proven them right.

**PA:** Do you think the UE could have stayed in the CIO? I've heard the argument that the UE "jumped the gun" by leaving before they were actually expelled. What's your opinion?

**PB:** The 1949 UE convention was the critical point. At that convention, the whole debate around this question came up, and the debate around withholding per capita tax came up, and it was at the convention that the Carey forces walked and precipitated the split. They could only have done that if they had prior agreement with Murray that they would get support from other sources, such as the corporations who were attacking UE, the right to bargain and whatnot. They couldn't have made that move without prior knowledge, agreement and substantial support.

**PA:** The expulsions took place at the CIO convention a few weeks later, right?

**PB:** But the deed was already done. If you read Julius Emspak's speech at the 1949 UE convention, he put history on the line in his speech, warning what was being done. The action on the part of Harry Block, Carey and a few others - they were destroying the union in the industry and giving in to the boss. "Remember," he said that "UE was built on the idea of one union, one contract" in GE and Westinghouse, Sylvania and so on. Well, that was splitting it, and that was giving in to the boss. He laid it right out there in that speech.

Did we jump too soon? They can interpret history as they wish from where they are. I know I sat in every convention from 1944 to 1954. I sat in all those conventions and served on committees. I knew the people, the union, and I know that nobody wanted to split the CIO. As I said, the CIO was the parent union of the UE, but somebody had to say, "We're not going to have class collaboration." And "we're not going to bed with the boss," and that's what the UE was saying. And the boss - if you start with Churchill, or Truman, with anybody you want to start it

with, but "the boss is the boss and we're not going to get in bed with him." That's what we were saying. Just like when Matles said Taft-Hartley was not a chow line.

The Marshall Plan was not a chow line either; it was a poison line. It opened the door for all that came next. The shipping of whole industries abroad, as it's developed now. History is a process, and the process shows that the UE was right then. That when they fought against the idea of US domination of the European economy and the world economy, it only meant that the US corporations were going to do what they started to do and continue to do to this day with their agreements and tariffs and trade and so on. It's just a larger thing today than it was then, but it's the same acorn which has sprouted this whole tree which we call now, globalization: US domination.

**PA:** What do you recall of the period after the CIO split, say from 1949 up until 1955?

**PB:** Well, the battle took place at the plant gates. Every local union was under attack and had to defend itself. The local leadership had to be there with leaflets day after day, month after month. Everybody's bargaining rights were challenged at the NLRB. Newspapers in every community carried stories with a tag line about the UE: the "Communist-dominated, Communist-led UE."

UE was under red-baiting attack as a political organization rather than as a union because its union record was impeccable. Its contracts were superior. The contracts weren't under attack. The right to have a contract was under attack, and the only way to do that was through red-baiting and hysteria. The UE just hung in there. We lost a lot of shops; we lost a lot of members, but for the first long period of years, it hung in.

Clear evidence of what I say to be so is the fact that there were these negotiations that eventually took place in 1956 or so between the UE national leaders and IUE national leaders to unite. If UE didn't have the muscle, or was dead, or about to die or moribund or anything, IUE wouldn't have done that. They would have said, "We'll just cut it off." They couldn't. And they haven't even to this day, but that's a little different period of time to talk about. □

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Current Issue  
September/October

- September 2004 - Table of Contents (print edition)
- GOP Up a Tree? (in print)
- Swingin' Votes in Missouri? (in print)
- Book Review - Socialism Betrayed, by Roger Keehan and Thomas Hanney (in print)
- From the Ashes of the Old: An Interview with David Le Brian (in print)
- What Difference Does it Make... (in print)

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- Archive by Date
- by Author
- Site map

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September 2004 - Table of Contents (print edition)

The World Still Says NO In this Issue...

- GOP Up a Tree?
- Swingin' Votes in Missouri
- Book Review - Socialism Betrayed, by Roger Keehan and Thomas Hanney
- From the Ashes of the Old: An Interview with David Le Brian
- What Difference Does it Make?
- Marxist Quiz

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# Faith

By Karin S. Coddon



Illustration by Victor Velez

PHOTO BY AP/WIDEWORLD

Sister Cordelia's hometown of New Orleans rose to the occasion of national, and in some cases, international, notoriety. Ordinarily the country's undisputed mecca of wanton carnival and drive-thru daiquiri stands, home to Mardi Gras and the Sugar Bowl, voodoo queens and streetcorner jazz, New Orleans showed itself capable of staging an appropriately somber, if typically baroque, theater of mourning. Reporters, often accompanied by camera crews, interviewed tourists in French Quarter bars, pilgrims who'd journeyed across the continent to say goodbye to Sister Cordelia, and here and there, sincerely devout Catholics and grieving African-Americans who'd known all along of Sister's good works and commitment to social justice. The occasional, callous redneck remark was carefully edited out of "special reports," except on Italian TV, which had no stake in showing the world a grieving America untriven by the racial divide or moral quandary of the death penalty.

Jessica had heard this from one of the CNN technical people, and she wished heartily she'd taken the time to study Italian, instead of French, to fulfill her undergraduate language requirement. At the last minute, the network had decided to send her and another analyst – a prominent theologian from Washington's Catholic University – to New Orleans for live, on-site commentary on Sister's funeral, along with their chief correspondent. Thank God Gregg had been available to take Jordan (and the faithful nanny Vicky) for the weekend. He'd actually told Jessica he was proud of her work on TV, proud she was standing up for a woman they had both admired.

She'd thanked him stiffly. Only residual Catholic guilt kept her from telling him to go fuck himself.

It was macabre, even surreal, the way the Sister Cordelia story continued to grow. Almost like a crazy strain of cancer, the germ had taken hold the morning the nun had been murdered on live television, had metastasized to become a raging national disease. Better her than Sonny Bono, Jessica repeatedly reminded herself, but she still felt ghoulish, vaguely complicit in whipping the country into a collective frenzy that seemed to have little to do with what the nun had accomplished, what she had stood for. The Vice President was due to attend the high funeral Mass at St. Louis Cathedral, as were delegations from Rome, France, and each of the tiny Central American countries to whose needy Sister had ministered.

Jessica had dashed from the Georgetown Law School vigil, held in front of the Lincoln Memorial, to the incongruously monikered Ronald Reagan National Airport, where she caught a plane to New Orleans. On the short flight, she reviewed notes and struggled not to beat herself up over leaving Jordan, if only for a weekend. He'd been cranky this morning, a little sniffily; would Gregg know enough to monitor his temperature, his appetite? It took a martini and the knowledge that Vicky, who'd been with Jordan from the day they'd brought him home, would be there to soothe the raw ends of Jessica's nerves.

She arrived in New Orleans just after eleven, early for the Big Easy. A harrowing cab-ride transported her from Kenner to the French Quarter and the majestic, appropriately rococo Monteleone Hotel on Royal Street. A handful of faxes awaited her, all from CNN, advising her as to the schedule and logistics of tomorrow's coverage. The funeral was due to start at three p.m.; she needed to be at the makeshift headquarters, at the riverfront Hilton, by noon for makeup and briefing.

A porter insisted on carrying her overnight satchel and garment bag up to her fourth floor room. "You here for Sister's funeral, Miss?" he asked morosely.

She fumbled for a couple of bills. "No – I'm on vacation," she lied. She knew her lie was transparent; it was splashed across her face. But she just didn't want to get into it.

After he left, she unzipped the garment bag, removed the black Calvin Klein gabardine jacket and matching sheath, and hung them up carefully. Luckily, the January weather was moderate, in the low sixties, for she hadn't brought a coat. She'd flown out of DC in her usual travel gear – wool sweater, jeans, and Nikes –

Shit!

She'd forgotten dress shoes! "Oh, I'm going to be a sight tomorrow," she said aloud, imagining the lean tailored lines of the Calvin Klein suit "complemented" by a worn pair of Air Jordans. Her mind worked frantically. She'd been to New Orleans a few years before, for the ABA; wasn't there a mall nearby, on Canal Street, where she could possibly secure for herself a pair of plain, black serviceable pumps?

She flipped through the "Guest" book in the room, and assured herself that Canal Place was only a few blocks away. She'd get up early tomorrow, and dash over to Saks for a simple pair of Bally's. One could never have too many pairs of Bally's.

Listen to yourself, you goddamn hypocrite. Caroline Bruckner also probably thinks one can never have too many pairs of Bally's.

Jessica winced as she tried to muffle the inner reproach. She needed to cut back on these stupid TV legal panels; she was starting to internalize the sniping, opposing voices.

"Room service," she said aloud, decidedly. She found a menu, chose a cup of seafood gumbo, a cheeseburger, and glass of white wine. She scanned the push-buttons on the phone, then pressed "5."

"Sorry, Mrs. ... Anders," came an apologetic voice. "Room service stops at eleven. However, we do have a restaurant next door that serves until one."

"Forget it," she said, almost amused. "It's my fault – this is New Orleans. Nobody orders room service here."

She tossed on her jacket, rode the elevator to the grand, chandeliered lobby. She glanced a moment or two toward the bar; she could probably get peanuts or pretzels if she ordered a cocktail. She decided against it. This was, after all, New Orleans, and it seemed a shame to waste her one night in a hotel bar, not when she was only a block away from Bourbon Street.

At the corner of Bienville and Bourbon, she bought a spicy, steaming hot dog from a vendor's kitschy red stand. As she ate the hot dog, doing her best to avoid spilling mustard on herself, she observed the hurdy-gurdy unfolding against a backdrop of nightclubs, bars, souvenir stands and pom shops, most housed in historic stone and stucco buildings with their characteristic lacy iron grillwork balconies. Live blues, jazz, and Cajun music strained against canned pop hits from humbler bars and the random saxophonist blowing a sultry melody on the sidewalk. Yellow neon letters above the Royal Sonesta's oyster bar Desire seemed as much motto as literary allusion. Rollicking tourists guzzling Hurricanes from eighteen-ounce plastic cups staggered down Bourbon in Mardi Gras sweatshirts. Mounted police kept a watch over the revelry astride nervous, nostril-flaring horses. Across the street, Jessica saw a bull-necked teenager in a Denver Broncos T-shirt reel out of a topless club, take one wobbly step before vomit-

ing what looked to be a gallon of nauseous, half-digested slop into the gutter.

Revolted, Jessica tossed her half-eaten hot dog into a trashcan. Maybe she should've stayed at the Monteleone bar after all. It wasn't just the guy puking his guts out; the Quarter's carnivalesque atmosphere, no more Bacchanalian than usual and downright tame compared to the revels of Mardi Gras or even New Year's Eve, tonight struck her as ghoulish.

The liveried doorman back at the Monteleone smiled at her pleasantly. "Gettin' a little chilly out there, ain't it?"

She hadn't even noticed, but she just nodded and headed for the dark, slowly revolving Carousel Bar. Before her first stay at the Monteleone for the ABA, she'd never even heard of a revolving bar that was street-level; the notion seemed quaint, almost absurd. On the other hand, the rooftop revolving bars at the Westin in Toronto and the Bonaventure in L.A., despite their dramatic skyline views, tended to give her vertigo. She'd come to consider the designer of the Carousel Bar an architect possessed of uncommon good sense.

Though the night was early by New Orleans standards, only a handful of other patrons – all looking like serious media types with their notes and cell phones – hunched over tables in the soothingly dark room. Not eager to engage in any shop-talk, Jessica took a seat at the bar. She ordered a glass of cabernet, and found herself inordinately pleased by the bowl of "party-mix" the bartender brought her along with her drink.

"Y'all stayin' here at the hotel, Miss?" he asked casually. He was a weathered bear of a man with a slow drawl and that uniquely Southern courtliness that not even the most ardent feminist could mistake for condescension. A nametag pinned to his neat black vest identified him as "Kip."

"Yes, I am. It's a great old place. Much better than those Leviathans over on Canal Street."

He seemed to take the compliment personally. "Now, didn't you hit the nail on the head! The Sheraton, and the Marriott, and the Hilton, and the Westin – they all got the feel of a giant, brand-spanking-new airport to me."

It felt oddly comforting to have a bona fide meaningless conversation. It seemed she hadn't had one in years. "You should see the J.W. Marriott in DC. It's like a self-contained metropolis – it's got everything but gridlock and muggings."

Kip chuckled. "That where y'all are from, Washington?"

"I'm afraid so." She prayed he wouldn't start grilling her about Sister Cordelia.

"Just don't get me started on all those politicians," he grinned, setting a cocktail napkin in front of a newcomer two stools down. "Crooks, all of 'em, both sides of the aisle." Then he caught himself. "I beg your pardon, Miss, for all I know you're an important lady senator –"

She laughed. "Let me assure you, I have absolutely no aspirations to political office."

Assured he hadn't offended, the bartender then turned to the other customer. "What can I bring you, sir?"

"Gin and tonic."

Absently, Jessica glanced over. A tall man of slim athletic build, around her own age, in a suede jacket and Levi's. Shaggy black hair,

olive skin. Dark, impatient eyes. Great cheekbones. In fact, one of the better-looking men she'd seen in quite a while. Half-embarrassed by her own fleeting shallowness, she reverted her eyes to her wine glass.

The stranger lit up a cigarette. "Do you mind if I smoke?" he asked.

Jessica was momentarily startled, at first not realizing he was addressing her. "Oh," she said, recovering. "Not at all. I quit myself three years ago, and second-hand smoke makes me sort of pleasantly nostalgic."

"I guess I brought my smoking paranoia with me from L.A., where you're better off shooting heroin into both arms than lighting up a Marlboro in a neighborhood dive."

Kip brought him his drink.

The man lifted his glass to Jessica. "Cheers," he said in patent irony.

So he wasn't in town either just for a vacation.

He took a sip of his drink, then set the glass down and extended a hand over the empty stool. "I'm Alex Trujillo. Nice to meet you."

She shook his hand, cool from having clutched the icy gin and tonic. "Jessica Anders."

"Yeah, that's what I thought. That must mean you're here for the same reason as I am."

The dreaded subject had been raised, but his demeanor – cynical and no-bullshit, even a little brusque – served, oddly, to put her at ease. (It didn't hurt, either, that he was great-looking, she had to privately admit.) "The whole thing's so bizarre," she said slowly, shaking her head. "After it's all over, I've got to really sit down and think things through."

She hardly noticed him ease over to claim the stool right next to hers. "What's there to think about?" he carped. "A great little lady had the fucking misfortune to be blown away on national TV. Bingo – it's a quote, unquote, Event." He took another gulp from his glass. "Makes me damn proud to be a member of the media."

"Television?"

"Haven't stooped that low yet. Nah, I write for the *L.A. Times*. Supposedly specializing in Latino affairs. They sent me out here because Sister Cordelia's been a saint for years in the barrios."

"Especially in California, I'm sure," she said, sipping her wine. "I remember how she raked that idiot Wilson over the coals about that awful anti-immigrant bill."

"Prop 187," he confirmed. "See, that's the problem. To that community – my community – her death really does mean something. It's more than just the flavor of the day for MSNBC."

"You're really hard on us, you know that?" She motioned to the bartender for another glass of wine. "Unfortunately, I tend to agree with you."

"Put that on my tab, amigo," Alex instructed Kip.

"Absolutely not," Jessica said.

"Look, don't think of it as a sexist display of Latin machismo. I'm just assessing myself a fine for being an obnoxious asshole."

"Hmm. In that case . . ."

"Seriously, Jessica, sorry about bashing what you do. I must have seen that clip of you a dozen times – the one when that sonofabitch shot her. I thought you did a hell of a job."

A kind of melancholy had fallen over him; it was clear he wasn't



merely flattering her. "Tell you what," she said, trying to lighten the mood. "Let me bum a cigarette from you and pay for your next drink. Then we'll be square." She slipped a Marlboro Light out of the pack on the bartop.

Her ploy worked. "That's right, make me responsible for your falling off the wagon," he said, smiling and proffering his lighter. "Besides, you strike me as one of those lawyers itching to file a monster class-action suit against Big Tobacco."

"And you strike me as the kind of muckraking journalist drooling to write an exposé of how the industry specifically targets minorities," she teased back, taking a deep drag. It made her a little light-headed, reminding her of how she used to savor, like the headiest of drugs, that first smoke after a long, nicotine-deprived plane flight.

She was flirting without realizing it. For had she realized it, she would have been appalled by herself, and then, awkward and self-conscious, mentally calculating precisely how many years had elapsed since she'd cast even a sideways glance at a man other than Gregg.

Their conversation took a decidedly less philosophical turn. They talked basketball. He was a huge Lakers fan, and chided her about her loyalty to the Washington Wizards. She conceded that the Wizards had the stupidest team name in all of pro sports, but reminded him of the indelicacy of continuing to call a DC team the Bullets. She confessed that she and her soon-to-be ex-husband had named their infant son after Michael Jordan, and happily, Alex didn't pry about the specifics of the break-up. He offered little about his personal life, but he didn't wear a ring. However, she respected his privacy and knew better than to make any assumptions.

They talked about California, of its problems and allures. Though born and bred in Los Angeles, Alex had gone to Stanford, and shared her appreciation of the fierce beauty and chic urbanity of the Bay Area. When he asked her how her brother Steve could stand working for a paper as mediocre as the *Chronicle*, her answer was succinct: "San Francisco." But she got her comeuppance when, turning the tables on him, she wondered how he could abide living in L.A. "Easy – the *Times*."

Then all of a sudden, it seemed, it was after two, and they were the last ones in the bar. Not that Kip, the garrulous bartender, was rushing them; he maintained a discreet post at the far end of the bar, tallying receipts.

Despite his earlier promise, Alex insisted on paying the entire tab. "Cool it. I'm on an expense account – wouldn't you rather stiff the Chandlers than Ted Turner?"

"Ted Turner hasn't run CNN for years."

"OK. You can buy me dinner at the Commander's Palace tomorrow night, and send the bill to Time-Wamer."

Reality returned with a thud. She was at once conscious of the dull throbbing between her temples after three glasses of Cabernet. "I have an eight o'clock flight back to Washington," she said, as they strolled out of the Carousel Bar. Funny how the entire time, she'd never noticed the structure revolving. He asked for no elaboration, but she offered one anyway. "This is the longest I've ever been away from my kid."

To her mild disappointment, he shrugged, as if it were no big deal. "In that case, maybe we'll run into each other tomorrow during Disneyland on Ice."

He walked her to the elevator but made no move to get in the car with her. "I'm gonna hit Al Hirt's over on Bourbon and see what's going down."

"Oh, the advantages of being in the print media – you don't have to worry about looking human the morning after." She fumbled in her purse. "Here's my card. If you're ever in DC, give me a call."

He pocketed the card without looking at it. "I probably won't be, but who knows? Maybe this Sister Cordelia thing will turn out to have 'legs.'"

"I doubt it," she sighed. "Goodnight, Alex. Thanks for the drinks."

She reached out her hand, which he pressed rather than shook. "'Night, Jessica. Don't beat yourself up too much over all this bullshit, OK?"

Then he released her hand, the elevator door slid shut, he was gone, and she was alone.

Overnight, barricades were erected around Jackson Square and majestic, Gothic-style St. Louis Cathedral. Platforms to accommodate media crews and their equipment blocked pedestrian access to St. Peter and St. Ann Streets between Chartres and Decatur. NBC, and its cable-sisters CNBC and MSNBC, had somehow managed to secure the prime site of the "overview," the small, raised concrete park between Jackson Square and the muddy Mississippi, a spot where on an ordinary day, tourists brought their cameras and their beignets from nearby Cafe du Monde for far more innocuous, personal photo-ops.

Though Sister Cordelia's convent was actually located just outside of the city, in Metairie, city planners had deemed a full-scale funeral procession unfeasible, given security interests, traffic, and the unpredictable nature of New Orleans weather in January. The archdiocese had made an extraordinary gesture, allowing Sister Cordelia's body to be housed temporarily at the old Ursuline Convent, only a few blocks away from the Cathedral in a southeastern corner of the Quarter. The serene, austere white convent, with its high scrubbed walls and exquisite garden, was now closed to sightseers and would be until the end of the month, the bishop decreed. It was not simply that the local Church hierarchy appreciated the symbolism of sheltering the body in the convent, the oldest French colonial building in the region, dating back to 1734. They also understood the logistical sense the site made, both from a civic and media perspective. The cortege would take a tidy, L-shaped route: one block south on Ursulines, then four blocks west on Decatur to Jackson Square and the Cathedral.

Because of the relatively short distance from the convent to the church, many of Sister's devoted followers were complaining that they were being excluded from honoring her in death. Charges of racism circulated; was New Orleans afraid of showing the world that a majority of Sister Cordelia's Louisiana acolytes were African American? Fearing unrest, the city and archdiocese made a few hasty concessions. Bleachers would be put up along Decatur Street and in Jackson Square, just so long as room was still made for the media, with giant TV screens providing coverage of the funeral Mass itself. And, almost more importantly, Sister's coffin would be open, that the whole world might not forget for a moment that Cordelia Marie Davis was not only a holy woman, but a Black woman.

Her assassin had shot her through the heart; the bullet would still

be lodged there had not the coroner removed it, at the D.A.'s request, for evidentiary reasons. Her killer had left her lovely face intact, an image to be admired and mourned by what was predicted to be a huge television audience.

Despite her fatigue, Jessica had slept poorly. She might as well have accompanied Alex Trujillo to the jazz club, for all the repose abstaining had afforded her. By the cold, drizzly light of morning, she felt she'd made an utter idiot of herself last night. She vowed not to think about it, about how she'd laughed and bantered and on cue, spilled her soul, as if to demonstrate to him she was indeed a woman of substance.

And she found she missed Jordan terribly, ached for him, in fact. Before leaving her hotel room, she made herself phone Gregg. "I don't want to get into anything," she told him flatly. "How's Jordy? Does he still have the sniffles?"

Gregg knew better than to press matters. "He's fine, Jessie. He hasn't even sneezed. He's just been playing with his bunny and acting like an all-around happy camper."

"Put Vicky on the phone."

Vicky, sweet-tempered as always, confirmed Gregg's report. "He's doing great, Jessica. Gregg's spoiling him rotten, but Jordy isn't exactly complaining. Stop worrying. We'll see you tonight."

More or less appeased, Jessica showered and dressed, clomped over to Cafe Beignet in her chic Calvin Klein ensemble and hightop Nikes for a cafe au lait. Royal Street seemed unusually quiet, even for a Saturday morning. Sipping her buttery, chickory-flavored coffee, she walked slowly toward Canal, pausing here and there to admire antique armoires and bric-a-brac in the windows of closed curio shops.

At Walgreen's, she stopped to buy a cheap umbrella and (hating herself) a pack of Merits. Damn Alex! Damn her own foolishness! Well, she'd smoke a few today, then toss out the rest at the airport. No way was she going to subject Jordan to second-hand smoke.

She smoked a couple of cigarettes on her way to Canal Place, where she atoned for her venality and bought a pair of plain, ninety-eight-dollar pumps at Saks. The leather was cheap and cardboardy, and her feet would be eligible for federal disaster relief should she wear them for more than an hour's sitting, but she was commenting for CNN, not running the Boston Marathon.

She resolved to dump the shoes along with the cigarettes in a handy trash receptacle at New Orleans International.

At the riverfront Hilton, the CNN producer promptly informed her of a change in plans. "We don't think it's appropriate for a legal analyst to be commenting directly on a funeral," he said.

She read between the lines: in short, no one at MSNBC was doing it. "Fine. How soon can you get me to Kenner and the airport?"

"No, no, no, Jessica, don't get me wrong," the producer said with a nervous laugh. "Father Finnerty will offer commentary while the procession and funeral are happening. You want inside the Cathedral to report after the service is over. You're Catholic, right?"

"Recovering," she said acidly. "But Lee, I'm not a reporter, for Christ's sake, I'm a lawyer. Why put me in the church?"

Lee looked miserable. "Gianelli's got food poisoning. Or so he says. Shit, this happens every time we come to New Orleans. Next time we have a breaking story, I hope it's in fucking Salt Lake City."

"Michael Jordan got sick from the pizza there."

Lee snorted. "Yeah. I buy that about as much as I do that Gianelli ate a bad bowl of gumbo. You game, Jessie?"

"Whatever."

Mass, she was thinking. All that goddamn standing and kneeling. If there was a God, He was indeed vengeful, laughing at her for thinking herself virtuous for buying cheap Brazilian shoes.

They briefed her, powdered her, and credentialed her. A CNN security crew escorted her through the swarms of mourners amassed in Jackson Square. Despite her uneasiness about media exploitation, she was moved by the faces of genuine sorrow she saw. Black people, white people, nuns in old-fashioned wimples and veils. Many were crying, and most held flowers and candles whose flames flickered weakly against the steady drizzle.

She thought of what Alex said: To this community – to my community – she really did mean something. To these people, nameless and uncelebrated assembled in Jackson Square, Sister Cordelia meant something, too. They weren't simply extras in a real-life, media-spawned blockbuster that both CNN and MSNBC were currently titling "Murder and Martyrdom: The Life and Death of Sister Cordelia."

Even with her CNN credentials, the Secret Service agent at the door of the Cathedral triple-checked her, uttering terse comments into a walkie-talkie before he nodded and admitted her. She wasn't terribly surprised. The Vice President's attendance at the funeral was somewhat controversial, given the administration's pro-execution stance. Just two nights before Jessica had hotly debated Caroline Bruckner over the propriety of the Vice President's appearance at the funeral in an official capacity. "It sends the wrong message," Bruckner had snickered. "Why should a death penalty opponent's funeral deserve more acknowledgment than the victim of a drug-related killing?"

Out of habit, Jessica dipped her fingertips in a marble holy water font and blessed herself. The Vice President had yet to arrive, but most of the front and center pews were either occupied or reserved. Incongruously, it reminded her of the time, years ago in New York, that she and Gregg had gone to see *Cats*.

She claimed a space in the last row of center pews, on the end. Few others back here seemed to be mourners; likely they were media voyeurs themselves. She cast her eyes upward, lingered over the stained-glass saints, the stations of the cross, the dizzying beams and gilt and sacred murals above her.

I wish . . .

The half-formed thought would remain incomplete. The Vice President and his delegation were entering. A single Secret Service man genuflected briefly, and Jessica bit back her amusement. The Vice President was escorted to a pew directly in front of the altar, the altar adorned with "PEACE" banners made by local schoolchildren and grand vases and wreaths of flowers fragrant enough to scent the entire cathedral. Above the array, the carved figure of Christ crucified hung in still indifference.

More luminaries were shambling in. The Italian ambassador, and the Vatican assembly. The archbishops of Managua and San Salvador. The first lady of France. Representatives from Amnesty International, the ACLU, the NAACP, the Southern Poverty Law

Center. TV cameramen, poised on the far right and far left aisles of the Cathedral, were actually doing their best to be unobtrusive.

And then a familiar voice whispered at her elbow. "What's a nice girl like you –"

She smothered a smile with her palm. "Don't. We're in church."

Alex, his press-pass dangling from the pocket of his leather jacket, eased into the pew beside her. "It's insane out there."

"I thought the people in the square seemed incredibly sincere."

"I'm not talking about the square. The procession's begun. People are wailing and carrying on and trying to hurl themselves on the hearse."

Tears stung her eyes. "Christ, that's ... sick." She knew he wasn't alluding to the dignified, sincere mourners with their candles and flowers outside. It was people – no, leeches – determined to seize upon their proverbial fifteen minutes, maybe even some of the same swaggerers and frat-boys she'd glimpsed last night on Bourbon Street hooting mindless obscenities and puking on their shoes.

All to get their fucking faces on TV.

"C'mon, Jessica, don't cry," Alex urged quietly. "Look, here comes the Harlem kids' choir."

Through bleary eyes she saw them, sweet and solemn in their gold-and-white robes. Darling and delicate their perfect black skulls, their huge, serious eyes. Who the hell did she and Gregg, and the multitudes of well-heeled white people, think they were, naming their babies after Michael Jordan as if that merited a plaque in the Civil Rights Hall of Fame?

The boys' choir began a sonorous, heartbreaking Ave Maria, and her heart broke accordingly. She wept, not just for Sister Cordelia and all the little black boys who had about as much chance of "being like Mike" as she did of being like Mother Teresa, but also for Mama, who didn't have to die so stupidly, for herself and Gregg and the failure of their marriage, for her lost faith, that made her fear all the more for the world Jordan was inheriting.

She shuddered with sobs, barely aware that Alex's arm clasped her shoulders tightly. "C'mon, c'mon," he whispered. "Wake up, woman, they're bringing in the coffin."

She struggled to compose herself. After all, she had a job to do.

He was either wrong, or had deliberately misled her. The monsigneur, resplendent in his gold and white alb and mitre, was following the solemn processional of the Book and cross down the Cathedral's center aisle. A ritual that had always moved her, despite its patriarchal implications. She found a Kleenex in her purse and dabbed her eyes.

"I'm OK," she mouthed to Alex, without looking at him.

Then came the pallbearers, hoisting the casket on their broad shoulders. They were all male, of course; mostly black; a couple wore the collar of the Catholic cleric. They gently lay Sister's coffin before the altar.

Even from the back of the Cathedral, Jessica gasped at her first true glimpse of the nun's waxen face. Gowned in a simple navy dress and plain crepe veil, Sister Cordelia seemed a hauntingly beautiful mannequin. The rich mahogany skin, high cheekbones, full, generous lips might as well have belonged to a pretty doll, stripped of the animating force of those wide, passionate dark eyes.

Jessica had chosen not to view her mother's body. Steve had,

and he'd told her that it had helped: "I knew for sure Mom was really gone." Still, Jessica had never regretted her decision. Looking at the nun's lifeless body, she knew she'd done the right thing.

The priest, hands folded in prayer, stepped up to the microphone at the center of the altar. "The Lord be with you."

Automatically, Jessica, and Alex, and most of the people in the Cathedral, responded: "And also with you."

Sister Cordelia sat up.

Amid gasps and even a few random screams, Sister nonchalantly swung her legs around and lithely hopped down from her white-satin-lined casket. She fell to her knees and blessed herself before the altar, where even the priest gaped, dumbfounded.

Then Sister Cordelia faced the shocked congregation. "The Lord raised Lazarus from the dead," she spoke in a clear, no-nonsense contralto that those who knew her recognized as her own. "In His infinite mercy, He has seen fit to raise me." She turned again to face the cross. Not my will, but Thine, be done!"

Tears streamed from those famous dark, round eyes.

And then wild, joyous shrieks burst forth in the Cathedral. Sister's longtime followers swarmed about her, laughing and hugging her and each other, even while the Secret Service jockeyed to shove them back. Somehow Sister managed to emerge from the throng, stepping back onto the altar. She addressed the ashen Archbishop quietly, and though the church fell silent, not even those in the front pews were able to tell what she was saying. He blessed her, then took her arm and led her away into the sacristy, out of sight of the world's incredulous eyes.

A handful of people – Sister's followers, a few particularly aggressive reporters – started to rush the altar, but the rector serving Mass along with the Archbishop raised a warning hand. "This is the House of God," he said sternly, though even he looked a bit surprised that his words were uniformly obeyed.

The Cathedral remained hushed, now the only sounds muffled sobs throughout the congregation. Father, plainly improvising, spoke again. "The Mass will proceed, in celebration of the miracle God, in His infinite love and mercy, has seen fit to bestow on us. Praise be to You, Lord Jesus!"

Now most of the media in attendance rushed toward the Cathedral's great double doors, to report first-hand what millions of television viewers had witnessed telegenically, some to camp behind the church, from where Sister Cordelia would sooner or later have to exit.

Jessica was shell-shocked, genuinely fearful she had lost her mind. The last few minutes had seemed to whiz by at a manic fast-forward rate, and yet to have stretched out for an eternity. She was ice-cold and her knees trembled.

She was on the verge of fainting, and Alex saw as much. "We gotta get you out of here," he said softly. He glanced over his shoulder at the bottleneck of journalists pushing their way out the doors. "Damn."

"Alex," she said in a shaking voice little more than a whisper. "What the hell just happened?"

"Looks like we may have either just witnessed the hoax of the century, or an honest-to-God resurrection." □

# CONDUCIDO AL BORDE DEL DESASTRE

## DISCUTIENDO LA CRISIS DE LA INDUSTRIA DEL AUTO CON LEW MOYE



Illustration by Victor Velez

**Editor's note:** Lew Moye es el presidente de UAW del local 110 y es un miembro fundador, además es presidente del capítulo de la coalición de trabajadores de comercio Africano Americano. Moye fue entrevistado por Tony Pecinovsky de PA.

**PA:** Antes que nada cuéntenos algo sobre ti y tu participación en el movimiento sindical.

**LM:** Bueno, yo he trabajado aquí en la planta en San Luis de Chrysler por casi 42 años. Hay unos 3,500 miembros de la Union de Trabajadores de Automóviles (UAW). Yo soy el presidente del taller de la Local 110 de la UAW y a la vez he estado envuelto en la comunidad por la mayoría de esos 42 años.

He organizado coaliciones entre la comunidad y los sindicatos y luchado por la inclusión de afro-norteamericanos en varias de las industrias en San Luis. En los 1960 ayudé a elegir al primer afro-norteamericano en Missouri al Congreso. He trabajado en campañas políticas locales. Soy un miembro fundador de la Coalición de Sindicalistas Negros (CBTU) de San Luis y he sido su

presidente por más de 25 años.

He participado en campañas de salud, para organizar por los derechos de los inquilinos y en el movimiento por la liberación de África del Sur. Durante la Guerra de Vietnam estuve bien activo en el movimiento por la paz. Participé en los movimientos en apoyo a los obreros agrícolas desde el boicot de las uvas. Yo he viajado por todo el país apoyando el derecho de los trabajadores a organizarse.

**PA:** Así que tu ha sido un líder de la UAW y la CBTU por mucho tiempo. Las cosas han cambiado mucho durante los años. ¿Cómo compara la administración Bush y su política con la de pasadas administraciones?

**LM:** En primer lugar, y esto no debe sorprender a nadie, a la administración de Bush no le importa los trabajadores. Su política favorece a los ricos, a los adinerados. Su política va dirigida a debilitar la clase obrera. Y esto se puede ver de muchas maneras: la política de comercio que erosionan a los sindicatos en este país, el nombramiento de

políticos antiobreros y antisindicales a puestos de gobiernos, y recortes de contribuciones para los ricos entre otras cosas. La administración Bush no diseña su política con los trabajadores en mente. Ellos toman decisiones y hacen cosas que destruyen las comunidades y a los trabajadores. Toman decisiones sin tomar en cuenta el sufrimiento humano que causan. La administración de Bush está continuando esas políticas de las administraciones de Reagan y Bush, padre, mientras los trabajadores siguen sufriendo.

Estados Unidos (EEUU) es un país muy rico, el más rico del mundo. Pero a la vez tenemos personas que no tienen albergue, que no tienen cuidado médico, que no pueden encontrar un trabajo y no tienen una educación básica. Somos el país más rico del mundo y así es que se funciona aquí.

**PA:** Ford anunció recientemente que tiene la intención de cesantear 30,000 trabajadores para el 2008. La planta Hazelwood aquí en Missouri que emplea como 2,000 trabajadores va a cerrar pronto. Ford plantea que es un "problema de capacidad." Pero cuando se anunció los despidos el valor de las acciones de Ford aumentó. ¿Puedes explicar esto?

**LM:** Las malas noticias para los trabajadores son buenas noticias para otros. Cuando las compañías despiden a trabajadores esto beneficia a los inversionistas. Es difícil entender. ¿Por qué van a aumentar las acciones cuando empobrecemos a los trabajadores y destruimos comunidades?

En una economía de mercado esto se repite una y otra vez, señalando que este es un problema del mercado no un problema provocado por los trabajadores. Los trabajadores pagan por los problemas del mercado.

Es un problema grande del sistema. La industria automotriz está cambiando. Estamos viendo este cambio. Las personas

están comprando carros. Se están vendiendo más carros que nunca. Lo que nos tenemos que preguntar es: ¿a dónde están comprando los carros? ¿Estos carros son producidos en talleres sindicalizados con beneficios sindicales, con plan de salud, planes de retiro, sistema de antigüedad, lo que se negocia en un convenio colectivo? Mientras los trabajadores en la Ford son despedidos, Toyota, que no tiene sindicato, está construyendo fábricas nuevas. La industria automotriz está creciendo a costa de los trabajadores sindicalizados.

Uno de los gastos más grande que

## La administración Bush no diseña su política con los trabajadores en mente. Ellos toman decisiones y hacen cosas que destruyen las comunidades y a los trabajadores.

enfrenta esta industria son los costos de los planes de salud. GM casi gastó 6 mil millones de dólares en planes de salud. En el 2004 gastaron \$5.2 mil millones. Ford gastó 3 mil millones de dólares y Chrysler \$1.9 mil millones. Los planes médicos en este país están basados en quien tu trabaja por. Tus beneficios médicos dependen de como les va en el mercado. Afortunadamente la UAW negociado algunos de los mejores planes medicos en el mundo.

Ahora que la competencia no unionada está debilitando a la UAW es más difícil conseguir los planes médicos. Bush pudiera pagar por los planes médicos. Eso le daría la oportunidad a la industria norteamericana de conseguir la tecnología para continuar produciendo y proveer más empleos. El no va a hacer esto. Los tres grandes productores de automóviles tendrán que enfrentarse a los cabilderos de los planes médicos. Esta es una política que es clara que Toyota no tiene una política de planes médicos. No tienen trabajadores retirados. No han estado produciendo carros suficiente tiempo para tener medio millón de retirados.

Estos cambios tienen que alarmarnos. Está afectando al movimiento sindical de muchas maneras. En el pasado la mayoría de los carros que se vendían en este país eran producidos por trabajadores sindicalizados,

pero ahora esto ha cambiado. Se venden más carros producidos en talleres no sindicalizados que antes. Ahora hay igual número de trabajadores no sindicalizados y de trabajadores sindicalizados. Y la tendencia es de más trabajadores sin sindicalización.

La mayoría de las plantas que se están construyendo son anti-sindical. Las construyen en áreas donde los sindicatos tienen muy poco apoyo. Reclutan trabajadores que no favorecen la unión. Es como una ciencia para ellos. Cada paso que dan es parte de un plan para mantener la unión fuera. Cada decisión que toman – dónde construyen la fábrica, cómo la construyen, y qué incluyen en la misma – es parte de un plan anti-sindical. Ellos no se oponen al sindicato por un día nada más.

Como resultado de la política anti-sindical y el cambio que les está quitando su parte del mercado a GM, Ford y Chrysler los trabajos con representación sindical están disminuyendo. Se espera que en algún momento durante este año Toyota pase a GM como el productor principal de carros. Como puedes ver el público todavía está comprando carros pero están cambiando de GM, Ford y Chrysler a marcas no unionizadas, y eso que Chrysler está mejor que los otros, esto es algo que no nos hubieramos imaginados 15 o 20 años atrás.

La pregunta es ¿Qué efecto tendrán estos cambios sobre la clase obrera aquí?

to sindical en los años 50 y 60 para apoyar el movimiento por los derechos civiles, dónde estaría ese movimiento hoy?

La UAW ha ido de 1.5 millones de miembros durante 1979-80 a unos 500,000 miembros hoy día. Hemos perdido un millón de miembros y seguimos perdiendo miembros. Tenemos problemas graves. Los Toyotas, Nissans y Hondas tienen que organizarse. Ese es el reto que enfrenta a la UAW.

Yo soy de la opinión que no estamos utilizando plenamente nuestras fuerzas. La mayoría de las plantas nuevas se están construyendo en el Sur. El estado de Alabama se va a aparecer a Michigan ya mismo. Si quieres organizar en el Sur tienes que construir coaliciones. La comunidad negra debe ser el foco principal de los esfuerzos para organizar en el Sur. Son nuestros aliados naturales. Pero no creo que estamos utilizando estas fuerzas. Deben ser una parte clave de una campaña nacional para organizar plantas sin sindicatos. Nos hemos descuidado grandemente.

**PA:** ¿Y la crisis en Delphi?

**LM:** La industria sindicalizada de piezas para automóviles ha sido debilitada a través de los años por la sub contratación. Vimos el comienzo de esto hace 20 años atrás cuando las plantas de piezas comenzaron a cerrar sus



▲ El trabajador Robert Robertson instala el motor a un Mercury Mariner Hybrid en la planta de ensamblaje Ford de Kansas City, ubicado en Claycomo, Missouri.

¿Cómo la afectará políticamente? ¿Qué efecto tendrá un movimiento sindical debilitado sobre el rumbo que tome nuestro país? ¿Cómo afectará la capacidad de librar luchas por los derechos civiles y los derechos humanos? Si no hubiera habido un movimien-

puertas y mudarse a los estados del Sur. Esto desencadenó una competencia para ver quién podía tener más ganancias con menos gastos. Lo que ahora llamamos una carrera al sótano. En general, las plantas compiten para las ofertas. Las plantas que se han mudado para



Dave Kaup/Cathy Images

△ La trabajadora Joie Leonard pega el logotipo a un Mercury Mariner Hybrid que se produce en la Planta de ensamblaje Ford de Kansas City.

áreas no sindicalizadas tienen una ventaja injusta. Pueden presentar ofertas bajas porque sus gastos son más bajos que los de un taller sindicalizado. Ellos no proveen cosas que cuestan dinero: beneficios médicos, pensiones ni sueldos de unión.

Estas plantas sin sindicatos producen piezas para GM, Chrysler y Ford. El resultado es que se reduce el mercado para las piezas producidas por Delphi. Los miembros del sindicato son cesanteados. Hay compañías sin sindicato de piezas por todos los lados produciendo piezas baratas porque pueden explotar a los trabajadores y las comunidades donde se establecen.

Comenzó con los que proveen las piezas y ahora está en los talleres de montaje. No hubo la preocupación necesaria cuando empezó a surgir este fenómeno en la industria de piezas. Acuerdo asistir a una convención de la UAW hace veinte años cuando los miembros de la división de piezas estaban piqueteando afuera avisándonos de lo que estaba sucediendo. Ellos ya estaban perdiendo sus empleos. Las compañías estaban mudándose de Ohio y de Michigan para Arkansas y Alabama. Las plantas de montaje en esos días estaban seguras, pero ya no están tan seguras. La tecnología a mejorado tanto que es más barato construir nuevas plantas que mejorar las viejas. Comenzó con los proveedores y ahora envuelve a toda la industria. Tenemos retos mayores.

**PA:** ¿Cómo están los sindicatos norteamericanos, especialmente la UAW, bregando con una economía global donde las plan-

tas se cierran y abren en otro lugar, donde los trabajadores ganan una fracción de lo que ganaban los trabajadores sindicalizados aquí?

**LM:** La UAW siempre ha mantenido algún tipo de relaciones con sindicatos de trabajadores de la industria automovilística en otros países. Yo he estado a todas las convenciones de la UAW como delegado desde el 1977, y siempre hemos tenido representación sindical de otros países. Siempre hemos tenido esas relaciones pero no hemos tenido la fuerza colectiva, unida de esas organizaciones. No hemos tenido una estrategia internacional y no hemos mostrado nuestra fuerza internacionalmente. Eso es lo que necesitamos para bregar con los problemas que enfrentan los trabajadores estos días.

Los sindicatos a través del mundo deben mandar representantes a otros países para ver como son tratados los trabajadores y buscar como trabajar juntos.

En mi opinión, los sindicatos en la industria automotriz deben organizar una cumbre mundial o una cumbre de sindicatos industriales. Trabajadores de la industria automovilística en México tienen mucho en común con los de aquí. Y los de Corea, Japón, Francia, Brasil y Rusia y otros países necesitan estar trabajando juntos más a menudo. Tenemos que enfrentar estos problemas juntos. El capitalismo es global de naturaleza. El movimiento laboral tiene que ser global también. No vamos a poder resolver todos nuestros problemas aquí nada más.

**PA:** ¿Estará el modelo organizativo de los sindicatos industriales perdiendo su relevancia ahora que estamos encaminados hacia una economía basada en el sector de servicio y de información?

**LM:** Las personas están diciendo "ya no vamos a ser constructores otros se encargarán de construir por nosotros." Es un poco temeroso. Si podemos comprar todo lo que necesitamos de otros, si nos estamos convirtiendo en una sociedad basada en servicio, si todo esto es verdad (y no creo que lo es) tarde o temprano no vamos a poder producir carros. No vamos a saber hacer nada.

Debemos ayudar a otros países construir su infraestructura y su base industrial para que ellos se pueden beneficiar no para que las corporaciones multinacionales ganen más dinero. Necesitamos ayudar a otros para que puedan desarrollar su propia industria y economía. Tenemos que organizar contra esos que intentan concentrar toda la riqueza en las manos de unos cuantos. Las multinacionales solo se preocupan por ganar más dinero.

Todos los países deben tener una base industrial. De eso no hay duda. Aquí hay suficiente trabajo para que los trabajadores puedan estar ocupados construyendo por años y años. Nuestra infraestructura, nuestras calles, nuestras carreteras, nuestros edificios, escuelas, y hospitales están desmoronándose. Tenemos que reconstruir a New Orleans. Si hemos aprendido algo de Katrina es que nuestra infraestructura ha sido ignorada por años. Tenemos mucho trabajo industrial que realizar. Pero la administración de Bush tiene otras prioridades.

Es más fácil organizar el sector de servicio. Sus trabajos no están siendo exportados a otros lugares. Necesitamos involucrarnos en un esfuerzo global, mundial para organizar el sector industrial. No estoy en contra de organizar el sector de servicio, tenemos sindicatos que pueden hacer esto. Pero más y más estamos observando más sindicatos industriales organizando en el sector de servicios. El modelo organizativo de los sindicatos industriales aún tiene relevancia. Hay bastante trabajos industriales que necesitan ser organizados. Tenemos mucho que hacer todavía. □

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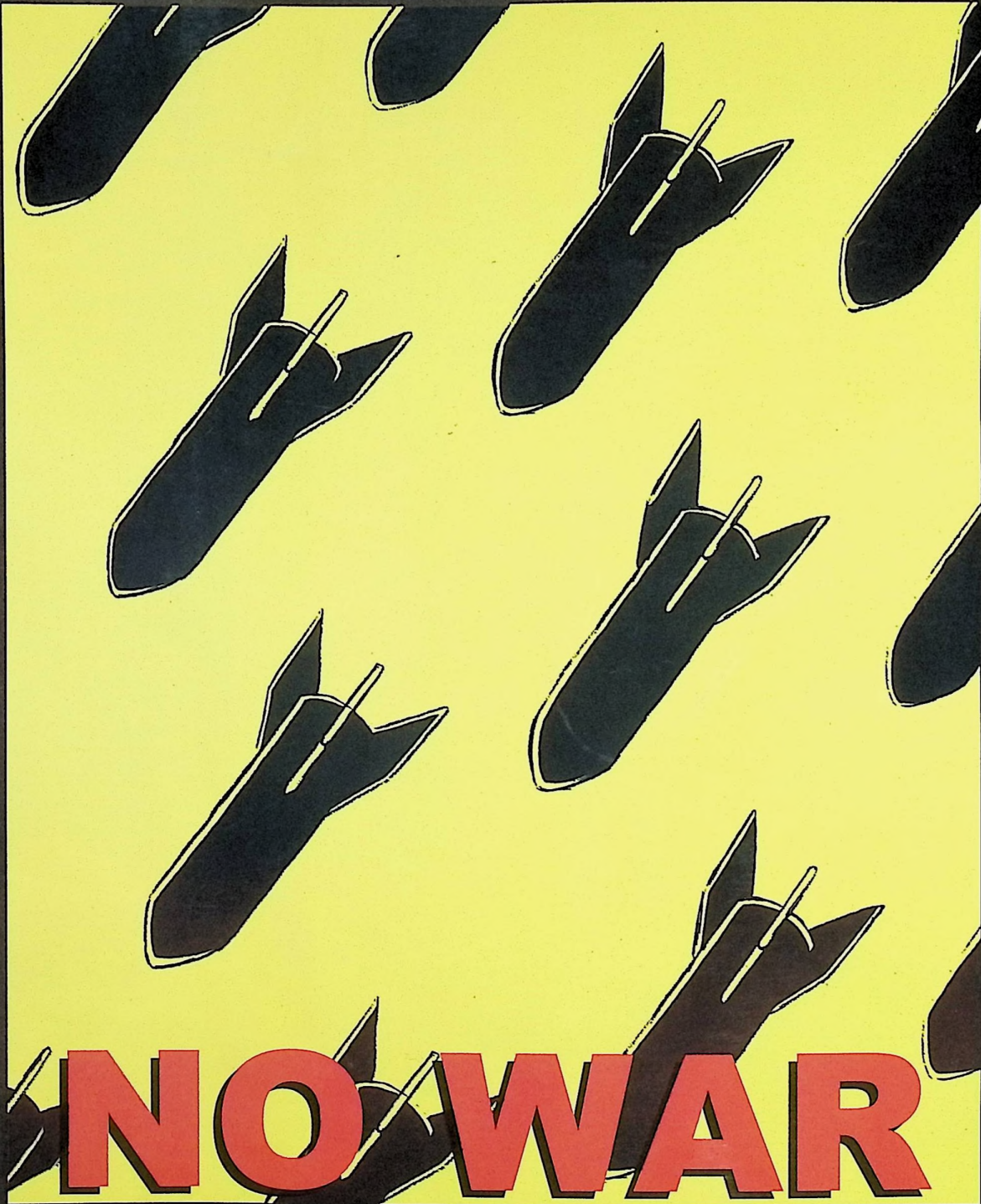
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