

Vol.13,  
No.5

\$2.00

# RADICAL AMERICA

FEMINISM & LENINISM



ANTI-SEMITISM  
URBAN STRUGGLE

Cover: The woman with the crossed arms is by Nicole Hollander. The portrait of Lenin is from his *Collected Works*, Progress Publishers, Moscow.

Editors: Frank Brodhead, Margery Davies, Marla Erlien, Phyllis Ewen, Linda Gordon, Jim Green, Allen Hunter, Anne Kenney, Neil McCafferty, Jim O'Brien, Nick Thorkelson, Ann Withorn.  
Editorial interns: Deborah Fuller and Karin Stallard.

Thanks to Dorothy Klubock for her help on this issue.

Associate Editors: Peter Biskind, Carl Boggs, Paul Buhle, Jorge C. Corralego, Ellen DuBois, Barbara Ehrenreich, Dan Georgakas, Martin Glaberman, Michael Hirsch, Mike Kazin, Ken Lawrence, Staughton Lynd, Mark Naison, Brian Peterson, Sheila Rowbotham, Annemarie Troger, Martha Vicinus, Stan Weir, David Widgery.

RADICAL AMERICA (USPS 873-880) is published bi-monthly by the Alternative Education Project, Inc. at 324 Somerville Ave., Somerville, MA 02143. Copyright © 1979 by Radical America. Subscription rates: \$10 per year, \$18 for two years, \$7 per year for the unemployed. Add \$2.00 per year to all prices for foreign subscriptions. Double rates for institutions. Free to prisoners. Bulk rates: 40% reduction from cover price for five or more copies. Bookstores may order from Carrier Pigeon, 88 Fisher Ave., Boston, MA 02120. Typesetting by Carrier Pigeon.

Second class postage paid at Boston, Mass. and additional post offices.

# **RADICAL AMERICA**

September-October 1979

Vol.13, No.5

INTRODUCTION	4
THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND ORGANISING FOR SOCIALISM Sheila Rowbotham	9
FEMINISM, LENINISM & THE U.S.: A COMMENT Allen Hunter & Linda Gordon	29
THE DISTURBING CASE OF FEODOR FEDORENKO Matthew Rinaldi	37
HOT CHILD IN THE CITY: URBAN CRISIS, URBAN RENAISSANCE AND URBAN STRUGGLE Philip Mattera	49
"WITH BABIES AND BANNERS: STORY OF THE WOMEN'S EMERGENCY BRIGADE" A Review by Susan Reverby	63
LETTER	70

---

This issue of **Radical America**  
is dedicated to the memory of  
**HERBERT MARCUSE**  
(1898-1979)  
whose vision continues to inspire us



---

# “**BE REALISTIC DEMAND THE IMPOSSIBLE**”

—Wall poster, Paris 1968

---

“The new sensibility...emerges in the struggle against violence and exploitation where this struggle is waged for essentially new ways and forms of life: negation of the entire Establishment, its morality, culture; affirmation of the right to build a society in which the abolition of poverty and toil terminates in a universe where the sensuous, the playful, the calm, and the beautiful become forms of existence and thereby the **Form** of the society itself.”

—from **An Essay on Liberation**, 1969

---

# INTRODUCTION

## FEMINISM AND LENINISM

One way to define our situation today is to say that socialism is increasingly relevant to broader sections of the population, and the number of people who consider themselves to be “socialists” has grown significantly during the 1970s. Yet, paradoxically, it appears that the proportion of such people who are also members of socialist or communist parties has actually declined. The situation of many people reading this magazine, we suspect, includes the belief that to be a socialist implies participating in organized activity, that some form of “party” structure is necessary, but that the socialist parties in the United States at this time are unattractive. At the same time, the dominant conception of socialist activity, certainly of the “revolutionary seizure of power,” is predicated on the (often implicit) Leninist model of building a vanguard party which is capable of seizing the bourgeois state apparatus and transforming it into a revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.

During the last century Marxism has been pushed this way and that way by changes in the world situation, and particularly by the emergence of new forms of insurgency. Leninism itself was certainly one such development, emerging out of the collapse of social democracy in the First World War. During the last decade the most important source of organizational experiments and theoretical insights has been the women’s liberation movement. Far from transforming the theory and practice of Leninist parties, however, the emergence of a mass insurgency of women has generally been perceived as something occurring outside the terrain of socialist politics. Though parties have recognized the women’s movement as a fruitful



---

place to interject socialist politics, generally summarized as fighting for "democratic rights," and as a potential source of new recruits, the women's movement has resulted in few changes in the theory and practice of the parties themselves, beyond minor adjustments to deal with extreme cases of chauvinism or the need to have party organs or slates sexually balanced between men and women.

Why has the women's movement had so little impact on Leninist parties? To what extent can the Leninist party tradition adapt to include the insights of the women's liberation movement, and to what extent do these insights imply scrapping the Leninist party altogether? These are the questions raised by our associate editor Sheila Rowbotham in her essay on "The Women's Movement and Organizing for Socialism." Basing her insights both on her decade of activity in the British women's liberation movement, and also on her participation in the International Socialists, Britain's most important Leninist organization to the left of the Communist Party, Rowbotham argues that Leninism is rooted very deeply and structurally in practices and values which are fundamentally antithetical to the experiences and insights of the women's liberation movement. Moreover, she argues that the same theory, structure, and practice which prevents Leninist parties from opening themselves up to the advances of the women's liberation movement are closely related to the reasons for the relative weakness of Leninism in advanced industrial societies. A socialist movement that will be successful in addressing the real needs and aspirations of people, she concludes, will have to begin with the theory and practice of the women's movement, and not with existing Leninist parties.

The short article by Allen Hunter and Linda Gordon was originally written for our editorial introduction. After discussion, however, we

decided to publish it separately out of deference to a minority of our editorial group with strong reservations about some of the article's views. We all agree with Hunter and Gordon that a strong commitment to feminism is essential if the Left is to challenge all the oppressive aspects of our society. We are also unanimously critical of the historical and current Leninist Left for its resistance to the most radical criticism raised by feminism. However, some editors are unwilling to condemn Leninist practice as totally as are Hunter, Gordon, and the majority of us. We disagree about the possibility of better forms of Leninism, or viable alternative models, and about the compatibility of Leninist theory and strategy with a feminist vision. Our internal discussions are continuing. We hope that the Rowbotham and Hunter-Gordon articles will encourage similar questions and reactions from our readers.

#### ANTI-SEMITISM

In the summer of 1978 a Florida court ruled that a former member of the Ukrainian division of the SS, now living in Miami Beach, was entitled to keep his citizenship. Though the defendant admitted that he had served as a guard at Treblinka, the most infamous death camp in Poland during World War II, the judge refused to strip him of his citizenship, as the law allows. In fact, the judge was openly scornful of the testimony of six witnesses who were among the handful of Jews to survive Treblinka, and who came from Israel to testify against the defendant.

Matt Rinaldi uses the case of this particular defendant, Feodor Fedorenko, to illustrate the larger context of how thousands of non-Germans came to serve in the concentration camps, and how many of them have been re-integrated into the societies of the U.S. and other countries as "good citizens." Moreover, the article

---

illustrates the particular biases of the Immigration and Naturalization Service: in contrast to the thousands of Haitians whom the INS is now attempting to deport to Haiti, often jeopardizing their lives because of their past political activities, the INS refuses in principle to return illegal immigrants with Nazi pasts to Communist countries; and there is some evidence that the INS is collaborating with the CIA concerning the fate of right-wing immigrants from Communist nations.

Here, as elsewhere, the natural desire of the victims of the concentration camps to obtain justice and retribution for the crimes committed against them runs headlong into the systematic indifference, the historical amnesia, of the "uninvolved." While it may be unfair to speculate about the motives of Roettger, the judge in this case, it seems safe to say that many members of the U.S. government and judiciary would look upon a man like Federenko with more empathy than horror — "There but for the grace," etc. Why would a U.S. judge be more inclined to identify with a death camp guard than with a death camp survivor? Part of the answer lies in anti-semitism, but an anti-semitism that must be seen in the context of a general fabric of reactionary thought, tying anti-semitism to anti-communism and anti-radicalism, if not fascism. In this context, Judge Roettger's attitude must be seen as one of not mere indifference but rather a deep hostility to the unforgiving and unforgetting victims, for not allowing the world's memory of that embarrassing period in history to fade properly. For our part, we at *Radical America* were moved to publish this article, in spite of its being outside of our usual scope, because of the light it sheds, the "fix" it gives us, on the crimes of that era, as well as the implications it has for our politics in an era of gathering momentum to the Right.

A large part of the article chronicles the

anti-semitic record of Ukrainian nationalism and the friendly relationship between the Ukrainian nationalists and German fascism, beginning long before the German invasion of Russia. This serves to remind us that even though fascism achieved state power in only three countries during the '20s and '30s, it was in fact an international movement, and found plenty of friends wherever the German armies went. Anti-semitism and anti-communism were the internationalist elements in fascist ideology which allowed Germany to recruit French aristocrats to fight in Russia, and Ukrainian peasants to exterminate Jews in Poland.

Today, when the memory of the holocaust makes explicit public anti-semitism taboo in the U.S., the disposition of the Fedorenko case serves to remind us that anti-semitism persists as a working assumption in the thinking of plenty of Americans, at all social levels. The perception of Jewishness as *alien* can still unite a Florida judge with a Ukrainian killer.

In this country, where mob violence has been directed at Blacks, Latins, and Chinese more often than at Jews, the Left has been unwilling to recognize anti-semitism as a force that requires political intervention. This can be seen in left denunciations of the U.S. Nazi Party for its racism against blacks, which don't even mention its anti-semitism! The left's blind spot about anti-semitism has been most painfully expressed by the failure of some leftists to distinguish anti-zionism from anti-semitism in the pronouncements of Palestinian and Arab groups, assuming that when Arabs rail against the Jews they must not really mean it.

In Europe, opposition to anti-semitism was the cutting edge differentiating socialism from populism, playing the same role in this regard that anti-racism has played for the U.S. left. For all the differences between anti-racism and anti-semitism, they both must be seen as types of false consciousness that cannot be left



---

unchallenged in our political work, whether in the name of an immediate issue that's supposed to have a higher priority, or out of a more general assimilationism into a social group we would like to see as our base.

### THE URBAN CRISIS

The "urban crisis" is far from over. The semblance of recovery that exists has been purchased at the expense of the cities' workers, poor and minorities. Philip Mattera analyzes the situation in New York City and provides evidence of the ways, legal and illegal, that workers and the poor have attempted to cope with their worsened situation. His argument pushes to consider once again the choices available to workers and the poor in response to a diminishing social wage.

In the course of his discussion of the fiscal crisis of the cities, Mattera notes the increasing use of "self-management" proposals by the bourgeoisie to shift the burden of the crisis to the working class and the poor. Thus workers cooperating with management to reduce expenses or tenants taking over the management of declining housing projects have been used in New York as efforts to control the crisis. Mattera points out the limitations of such plans to protect people from worsened economic circumstances, arguing that while self-manage-

ment may sometimes give people a sense of more control over their lives, ultimately it may simply be another way for people to participate in their own exploitation.

Mattera also discusses the contradictory nature of popular "adjustments" to the crisis, such as the blackout, "Black Christmas" riot of 1978, and the increasing activity of the "underground economy," with the rise in welfare fraud, petty crime, and under-the-table work. Faced with little hope for organized opposition, the poor fight back in whatever ways are available, with their primary goal being to maintain consumption, not to take power or even strike out at the enemy.

It is hard to say what these developments mean for a socialist strategy. It is difficult to oppose all self-management schemes — they may be cooptation, but they also may be one way for workers to regain some power over their work lives. Similarly, the angry responses of popular "repossession" and fraud may take back some wealth, but they primarily seem to continue the victimization of the poor. Yet few grass roots, militant organizations exist to focus the anger; most unions are hopelessly compromised and the widespread pressure from the "New Right" reduces the inclination of liberals to protect the poor.

WHERE DO CORRECT IDEAS  
COME FROM?  
DO THEY FALL FROM  
THE SKIES?  
ARE THEY INNATE IN  
THE MIND?  
**NO!**  
THEY COME FROM  
SOCIAL PRACTICE



# THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT & ORGANISING FOR SOCIALISM

Sheila Rowbotham

I see the growth of new forms of organising within the women's movement as part of a larger recovery of a libertarian socialist tradition. I think that this requires a sustained re-evaluation of the tradition of Leninism, and in Britain, because of its particular influence, of Trotskyism. I will confess to being a reluctant contributor to this process, for such a realisation is still in its early days with confusion and doubt on one side and a more tenacious clutch of doctrinal purity on the other. While there is a growing muttering and mumbling among the dissatisfied it is still being met by a pother of rhetoric from the Trotskyist and neo-Trotskyist leaderships.

Not only fear at stirring the pother has restrained me but respect. Organising ideas, male dominated and handed down from above or not, are laborious creations and root themselves through usage. There certainly *are* skills which need to be passed on. There *are* things you need to learn from people who know more. Everything does not pop up in our heads. I know I have learned from both Lenin and Trotsky. Leninist ideas have obviously been well tried and practice sanctions. Whatever criticisms I'd make of Leninism there was always some friend at the Communist Party or one of the left groups to explain Lenin hadn't meant it like that or he'd said something different. Sometimes I feel even naming the problem as Leninism is wrong. For I know that in all left organisations there are always people with complex understandings which are lived in many dimensions. So I've thought for years perhaps it *was* best to leave well alone whatever uneasiness I felt. Why tussle and worry when you have no worked out alternatives?

---

Now though, it seems to me to have become inescapably important to bring the real disagreements about how to make socialism which exist in the left and the labour movement out into the open in order to develop new understandings. We can best begin by examining our own political experience and see what might be generalised from that. We need to uncover what we have been actually doing without claiming an ascendant correctness or disguising weaknesses.

All this is just the story behind the main plot which in summary is: how I think some of the approaches to organising which go under the headings of Leninism and Trotskyism are flawed; how I think the assumptions of what it means to be a socialist carried within Leninism and Trotskyism and which prevail on the left now block our energy and self-activity and make it harder for socialism to communicate to most people; and why I think the women's movement suggests certain ways of reopening the possibility of a strong and popular socialist movement.

I want to begin to explore the challenge I think the women's movement is making to the prevailing assumptions of how revolutionary socialists should organise. These involve how theory is conceived, how the political organisation sees its relationship to other movements, how consciousness is assumed to change, how the scope of politics is defined, how individual socialists see themselves and their relationship to other people, now and in the past.

I don't see this as a matter of biological people, women, scoring off biological people, men. Feminism for me is a movement to assert the interests of women as a sex. But more than this it is a means of releasing and communicating the understandings which that subordination holds in check. The movement for women's liberation is part of the creation of a society in which there are no forms of domina-

tion, and this society cannot be separated from the process of its making.

Relationships between men and women have undoubtedly changed historically along with the great upheavals in which the production and reproduction of all the means of social life and material existence have been transformed by people in the past. This does not mean that sex-gender relations can be either dissolved into economic changes in how things are produced or seen as a function of biological difference. We know very little of the forms these relations have taken for most people in the past. But socialist feminists have begun to assert the need to look at the sexual division of labour and the power relations within kinship networks as they have appeared historically. We are not arguing then either for a biologically universal kind of relationship or for one which is totally contingent on change in the mode of production.

Potentially marxism is a valuable means of understanding how historical transformations affect our lives and how we are both limited by these processes and help to make them. The existing shape of marxism has itself been made by the forces and dilemmas uppermost for socialists in the past. The emergence of the women's movement has shown the underdevelopment of marxism on relations between sexes and the connection between this and women's subordination within the left. It has meant that socialist women, both inside and outside left groups, have challenged the power of men to determine marxism in their own image. The imperatives of feminism requires that we make many aspects of marxism anew.

The experience of feminism has been that the specific gender oppression of women requires an independent movement in order for us to develop and assert a new collective consciousness of being female, whether this is seen as separatist or autonomous. Bea Campbell has described how this autonomy was defined in

---

practice from the start as autonomy from men. Implicit in this though was the assertion of sex-gender relationships as an area of social conflict neglected by socialism; this went beyond any definition of femaleness. In delineating what was specific to us as a sex we were necessarily transforming the boundaries of identity.

‘... feminism necessarily identifies both the subjective and objective condition of existence as problems of politics. In other words, the person became a political problem. This challenged a way of practising politics that treats revolutionary personnel as agents rather than subjects.

Feminism proposes that the lived relations of subordination, the way of being subordinated, must be a central problem for revolutionary strategy. (It is not alone in doing that, but it is the most coherent and persistent of the ‘new’ politics.) This prompts a form that is about mass engagement, that is about a process of preparedness.’<sup>2</sup>

## THE POWER OF DEFINITIONS AND ICONS...

I don’t mean by this subtitle the necessary effort we all make to define and distinguish different aspects of reality. I mean the false power which avoids and actually prevents us thinking about the complexities of what is happening by covering it up in a category. All references have to be in terms of the categories. Once named, historical situations and groups of people can be shuffled and shifted into neat piles, the unnamed cards are simply left out of the game. They don’t exist. The named are branded ‘ultra-leftist’ or pensioned off as dozy but harmless ‘progressive peoples’. Guilt is by association — the Stalinist use of ‘social fascist’ is the most notorious — but Trotskyists have their own hold over names. The game is rigged to dispose of the ‘baddies.’ The slots for those

labelled only come in certain shapes. So criticism of particular forms of organisation has to be disposed of down one slot marked ‘anarchism’, questioning of a particular idea of leadership goes down into ‘spontaneism’, some baddies are stricken with a terrible hereditary disease and called ‘middle class’. They have only one chance of survival — join the something party. It all sounds absurd when it is put like this. It is an absurd activity. But nonetheless the power of naming is a real force on the left today. It *deflects* queries about what is going on. It makes people feel small and stupid. It is a part of the invalidation of actual experience which is an inhibiting feature of many aspects of left politics now. Part of its power is in the strange lack of self-consciousness which the left has towards its own values. The power of defining is reduced as soon as it is itself described. But the silences within the Leninist language of politics make it impossible to expose these hidden sources of power. They also make it hard to see that behind, for example, the Trotskyist approach to history, there is a personal vision. It is this vision which sustains certain concepts of consciousness, leadership, and the form which it is assumed that the struggle for socialism will take. It is a self-confirming system which is why it is peculiarly difficult to oppose within its own terms.

Individual intention is constantly overridden in practice and sustained by the organisation. These choices are rarely clearly stated, the opponent is dismissed as “backward” or “opportunist” or whatever or becomes caricatured as morally evil behind the phony objectivity of “reformist”, “centrist”, etc. This is a language you learn. It is part of the training about how to organise. The words are some of the tools of the trade. The names do have a fascination when you try to see through them to the diverse realities which they encapsulate. But

Although the Leninist left eschews discussions of its personal values and self-image, it nonetheless carries a version of what it means to be a socialist in images and assumptions. All kinds of dusty icons lurk behind the public face. We need to bring them to the surface. Once we have them out in the open we can examine whether this really is how we want to be and whether it is likely to make most people want to become socialists. For example, what about all those comparisons to nineteenth century armies marching in orderly formation and retreating smartly at the officer's command? Why is there such a horror of cosiness, as if cosiness were almost more dangerous than capitalism itself? Now it may well be true that at certain times we will all practise drill and that cosiness is inappropriate for some of the circumstances of conflict. But there seems to be an imbalance in the contempt it evokes.

'During the strikes against General Electric in 1974, women at Heywood, Lancashire, made themselves a picketing base by occupying an empty house owned by the firm just outside the factory, putting in carpets and cooking apparatus and even decorated the mantelpiece with flowers. They inhabited the picket.'

12

---

diversionary passions, at best, ignorant, needing to be hauled to a higher level. In the hauling the faint-hearted fall by the wayside, the cuddly retire into cosiness and all the suspicions of the elect are confirmed. Being an elect they can rely on no-one and being an elect means they have to do everything. And always the weight of the burden of responsibility, the treachery and insensitivity of everyone else is bearing down on them.

It's a stark, bleak vision of sacrifice and deprivation which when stated explicitly appears to be a caricature. Nonetheless it strikes some chords of recognition on the contemporary left. It surely owes something to the strange things done to little boys in preparing them for manhood in capitalism. More particularly it presents in cameo a nostalgic and romantic yearning for the pristine clarity which is seen as 1917. How often do we need to say we are not in Russia in the early twentieth century before it becomes a felt reality? The Tsar is dead!

Even the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists have clustered round these high points where power is seen by them as becoming coercive. They have been more concerned with the corruption of the powerful — including the Communists and Trotskyists and their suppression of popular resistance. But in this critical emphasis on the leadership and on their moments of confrontation, they have nonetheless excluded most people, including most women from their version of history. The dramatic instances of conflict are extracted from their longer term context, the to-ing and fro-ing of resistance which is so evident when you focus on women's lives.

So the women's movement is contesting not simply at the level of programs and constitutions, which is why we could never find adequate words to meet the aggressive question from men in left groups in the early days 'Well

what is it that you want?' The dispute is about an idiom of politics. It is about how we think about what we are doing; how we situate ourselves historically; how we see ourselves and one another in relation to the movement for change and how we see the forms in which we resist capitalist society. These open up fundamental disagreements about how you organise for socialism and what is the relationship of parties to other movements. They involve the power to define what is politics.

### THE PROBLEM OF DEMOCRACY

If there was an ideal equal relationship between organisations and movements we should just pool our strengths and weaknesses and get on with it. Unfortunately it is not that simple. Bolshevism has a particularly long and sinister record in these matters which I think it's too easy to foist off onto Uncle Joe. More immediately the left groups have often been wrong in the last ten years or so but this seems only to make them more certain they hold the most complete understanding. This absurd paradox might begin to be cleared but for an enormous reluctance at the center of organisations to say simply that they were wrong, that they have learned this or resisted that out of fears and misconceptions. These seem obvious enough things for human beings to say, not as a great beating of breasts and tearing of hair but as a basis for working together as equals. But it seems to me that a Leninist approach to organisation (and here the name is important) is inconsistent with such equality regardless of the intention of individual Leninists.

For although Leninist and Trotskyist groups acknowledge the need to learn from the working class movement, I think that secretly they feel deep down they already know better. After all why would they be there if they did not know better? What else could distinguish the member from the 'contact'? Along with this



---

inner assumption there is an acceptance of hierarchy within the organisation itself. If members know better than non-members then the leaders know better than members and the world is felt to be an orderly place. Why else would they be leaders — mere staying power? The thought brings a rash of intolerable anxiety. Away with it — such psychologising leads into the black holes of cynicism.

But there is democratic centralism, that wonderful device without which it would be impossible for everyone to do everything at the same time. *We* know the enemy alright. Here is real socialist democracy, none of your liberal nonsense. And haven't we learned from the crimes of Stalinism? Don't we allow factions even. Don't we just!

Democratic centralism was one of the issues raised in 1956 by the men and women who left the Communist Party to form the new left. They argued that it was inherently undemocratic. Behind the versions of democratic centralism in the Trotskyist groups and the neo-Trotskyism of the S.W.P. now is the conviction that it is a neutral form which can be adapted in a non-Stalinist context. With this goes the belief that the basic problem of making socialism is primarily the making of a leadership through the creation of an 'efficient' organisation.

Richard Kuper in 'Organisation and Participation' questions the separation between efficiency and democracy. He pointed out the way in which Leninist groups still tend to reduce the criteria of success to an old-style managerial concept of efficiency at the expense of democracy, long after the real managers have caught on to the 'efficiency' of limited forms of participation.

As for the 'efficiency' of democratic centralism he says that the question of the degree of centralisation we might decide is necessary, depends on our assessment of the nature of the task in hand. It requires also that we have a

very general kind of agreement. If that is not present 'democratic centralism' is merely a tool to quell opposition. Richard Kuper argues that when it is presented as an absolute rule the concept itself tends to provide a structure which is 'uniquely vulnerable to a certain kind of degeneration and one extraordinarily difficult to regenerate.'

Whether we argue for a more generous or a more scrupulous interpretation of democratic centralism, or a more relative concept of the relationship between centralism and democracy, or whether we believe with Ralph Miliband that it '...has always served as a convenient device for authoritarian party structures' and should be simply dumped, we have to concede that the evidence of this century indicates that it is not a 'neutral' form. There has been something very funny indeed about it in practice. This has not only been a feature of Stalinism but of the more recent experience of the Trotskyist groups in the last decade. For instance it is a curious fact that the hard core of the leaderships of these groups, despite a series of palace revolutions, manage to tuck themselves into the centre into perpetuity and that bits of broken off leaderships resurface within the splinters. They have a permanent advantage against all incipient oppositions because they are at the hub of communication and can organise to forestall resistance quicker than people who are scattered in different branches and districts. Also they are known — and better the devil you know!

Even if it gets a bit hot at the top now and then, there is a loophole. The members — poor old things, tramping around getting sore feet on their paper sales up and down all those concrete council flat steps, getting calloused hands lassoing elusive 'contacts' over the balconies. Well they have a tendency to get routinised. Not the leadership. It is up to the leadership to spot when this is happening and leap out

towards 'the class' to knock the members into shape. Whoosh — Superman. Poor old members they look on with awe. Some get a bit grumpy. Why isn't democratic centralism binding on the leadership? Because the leaders know best. How else could they possibly be leaders? Whoosh goes Superman again, only doing his duty. How does Superman leadership know when to go whoosh towards the advanced sections of the class? Because he is leader of course. Pop go the poor members. The cosy ones fall by the wayside to seek comfort in discussion circles while the neurotic ones disappear to be cuddled in therapy groups. The intransigent form a small splinter replica. And the leaders go whoosh, whoosh all the way back to the center.<sup>6</sup>

Soon they are safely ensconced again with the added authority of the patent they have out now on 'the class'. No wonder leaders of Leninist groups have staying power. They are further legitimated by the respect in Leninism due to leaders and by the assumption that just as the members know better than non-members leaders know better than opposing members. The factions can stand up democratically and be counted. They can thus be rapidly isolated. But even if the opposition is based within a campaign, a movement, a trade union or community activity, there is a strong possibility that the leaders' position will prevail. The individual member will face a split loyalty between a commitment to an autonomous group and the organisation. The theory says the Party must be more important. The choice is either to get out of the organisation, (which seems from within to be leaving socialist politics itself) to ignore the center (in which case democratic centralism has proved unworkable) or to accept the line. So however unsectarian this socialist may be, he or she has very stark choices and a political ideology which sanctions accepting party discipline more than helping to



*Women: A Journal of Liberation*

develop the self-activity of other people.

I am not trying to assert against this that the women's movement has found *the* answer about how we should organise. Though it is certainly worth noting that the women's movement *has* found a means of remaining connected while growing for a decade, and that shifting and spontaneous initiatives have been taken by an extremely large number of women within the movement. But I *am* arguing that the form in which you choose to organise is not 'neutral', it implies certain consequences. This has been a growing recognition on the left since the late sixties. If you accept a high degree of centralisation and define yourselves as professionals concentrating above everything upon the central task of seizing power you necessarily diminish the development of the self-activity and self-confidence of most of the people involved. Because for the women's movement the development of this confidence and ability to be responsible for our own lives was felt to be a priority this became part of the very act of making a movement. The enormous weight of the inner passivity which was the result of the particular nature of the subordination of the women who became involved meant that the

effort to struggle, both against the personal forms of men's control and our oppression within capitalist society, became inseparable from the struggle against the ways in which these had become internalised. We had to learn to love ourselves and other women so we could trust one another without falling back on men. We inclined consequently towards small groups, circles rather than rows, centres as information and research services, open newsletters. The attempt to avoid individual women being isolated as exceptions, either as spokesperson or as freak, the need for our *own* movement and the feelings of sisterhood came from this understanding.

I am not suggesting that such concerns are unique to women or that such forms are biologically determined. Indeed I believe that the problem of how people can overcome the passivity, self-hatred and lack of trust which is peculiar to modern capitalism is crucial for making a socialist movement — which is not to say that recognising this as central solves the problem of how to do it.

Basically the women's movement accepts a form of 'participatory democracy' which has a long tradition from democratic religious groups to the American New Left of the late 60s and the anti-authoritarian currents in the student movement. The problems about participatory democracy are evident. If you are not able to be present you can't participate. Whoever turns up next time can reverse the previous decision. If very few people turn up they are lumbered with the responsibility. It is a very open situation and anyone with a gift for either emotional blackmail or a conviction of the need to intervene can do so without being checked by any accepted procedure. Participatory democracy only works if everyone accepts a certain give and take, a respect for one another's experience, a desire and need to remain connected. If these are present it can work very



*Glenda Jones*

well. If they are not it can be a traumatic process. Despite obvious inadequacies though, 'participatory democracy' does assert the idea that everyone is responsible equally and that everyone should participate. It concedes no legitimating respect for permanent leaders or spokespeople.

It has been modified in the practice of the women's movement by women bringing in other concepts of how to organise from tenants groups, trades councils, trade unions or from the Labour Party, the C.P. and from Trotskyist and Maoist groups. Sometimes these have been met with a defensive suspicion and dismissed as simply male-dominated. But in cases when the women's movement has been stronger and more confident we have been able to meet these ideas and recognise the validity of some of their criticisms. The resilience of the women's

---

movement has been partly because of this openness. In practice what we have been doing is adapting several forms of organising to fit the particular circumstances we are engaged in. This does not remove the dangers of 'substitutionism', or centres losing contact with local groups, or small groups of people doing all the work, or people not knowing what other people are doing. All the problems of democracy do not magically disappear. But it does make for an approach to organisation which is prepared to test forms and discard or select according to the situation rather than asserting a universally correct mode. It also means that the 'movement' is perpetually outwards. As women encounter feminism they can make their own kinds of organising dependent on their needs. It is this flexibility which it is extremely important to maintain. It means that for example groups of women artists or groups of women setting up a child care center or on the sub-committee of a union can decide for themselves what structure is most useful.

The women's movement shares with the 'anti-authoritarian' movements of the late 60s a commitment to a notion of democracy which does not simply recognise certain formal requirements of procedure. Obviously the danger of this is to reject completely any understanding of how these formal procedures have historically come to be used. When the dust of the first rush of enthusiasm settles it is often handy to have them. But if we simply respond to this by dismissing 'anti-authoritarian' movements as naive and just ignorant of the 'correct' political procedure, we miss an insistence which carries a deeper meaning of democracy. Faced with the opposition of women and workers in 'Lotta Continua', an Italian revolutionary organisation, Adriano Sofri, its founder and undisputed leader, made a self-criticism. He said democracy involved not only formally contesting theories of organisation which left

politics to the professionals. It involved examining his own inner sense of being a professional. It meant uncovering in public his own capacity to survive and not be frightened by political opponents. He could no longer take refuge in the objectivity of the socialist theoretician. His desire for power could no longer assume a paternal legitimization in a sense of responsibility. There was a strange sense of history repeating itself. He compared the confrontation that he faced to his own opposition, with others, to the Communist Party leadership in 1968. This was 'not a conflict over political line, but a conflict over what politics was all about.'

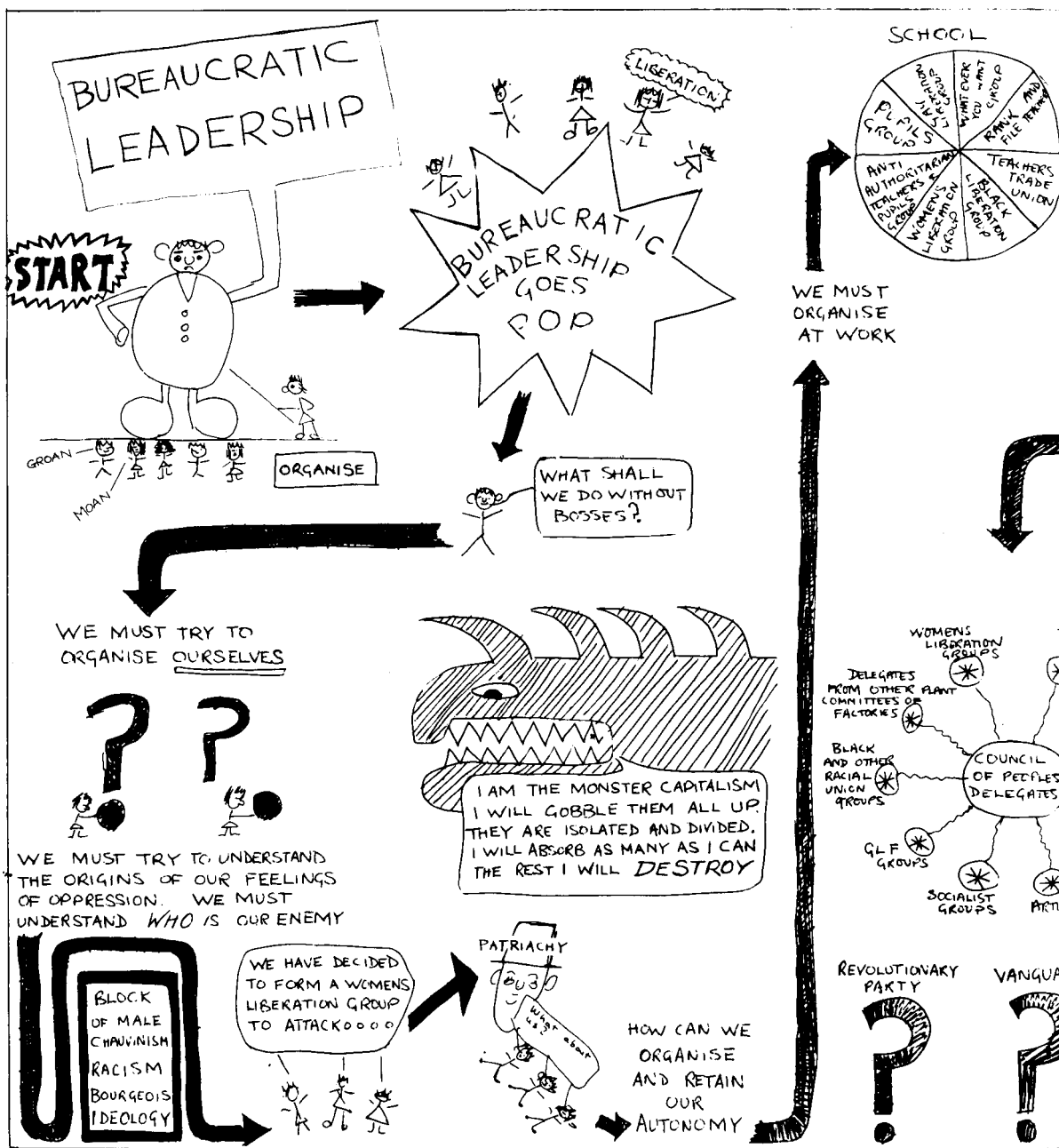
### THE LENINIST SLEIGHT OF HAND

Values, attitudes and forms of organising are carried and recreated by people in the ways in which they associate. We learn not only from what is said or what we read but from our relationships with other people. This process does not mysteriously stop when we desire to associate in order to create a socialist society.

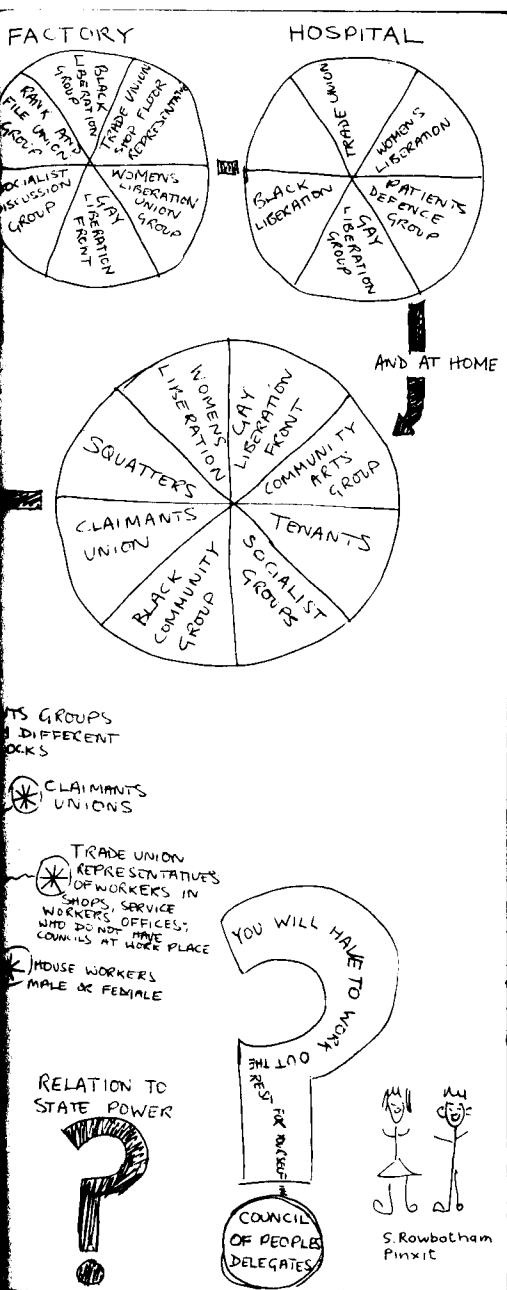
Our encounters with other people in capitalism are not free, open and equal. But there are different degrees of inequality, distance and coercion involved. These differences in degree make it possible to imagine how things might change. They force the cracks which open to illuminate the soul.

If our imagination is to be sustained by our associating, the ways we meet and co-operate and feel towards one another must develop not from our experiences of the most repressive and authoritarian encounters, but from our understandings of more loving, free ways of connecting to others and acting.

A vital feature of Lenin's concept of the Party is based on its supposed capacity to bring together, spread and transcend the limited, uneven notions and experiences of an alternative to capitalism which are present in the



from Red Rag #3 (1973)



various sections of the working class and among the groups of people who support them. Now this is obviously a real and enormous problem. We *are* limited and cut off by our specific experiences of oppression and by the conflict of interests between us. The disagreement is about how this can best be overcome.

Let's pretend for a moment that there *was* a revolutionary party in real life which did bring together all the elements most 'advanced' or developed in their opposition to capitalist society. Why does it follow from their bringing together in this pretend ideal Party that their limitations are transcended rather than partially reflected and reproduced? If there is no conscious acknowledgement of the need to create and develop political forms which seek to overcome inequalities, and release the full potentialities of all socialists, what is there to prevent power consolidating with the powerful but moral strictures? How can the real antagonisms which are the source of division between oppressed people in capitalism disappear within the Party? Isn't this assuming that the Party is an island?

If we descend from the ideal Party in the sky to more earthly groups and parties the prospect is even more gloomy. Central committees scurry like a lot of white rabbits through a series of internal and factional documents and the smaller the party the greater the hurry. In such circumstances the pressure to neglect inequalities within the organization in pursuit of the ultimate goal are great. But the theory of what a Leninist Party should be leaves hardly any space to help people participate more equally much less to develop their potential. Without any theory or structure it seems to me idealistic folly to expect 'the Party' to overcome rather than simply reflect and harness these inequalities of power which we are opposing in capitalism.

The argument used against these criticisms is

---

always to deny that 'the Party' or 'parties' should be places where people experience anything other than the relationships which dominate capitalism. This gruesome state of affairs is presented as being necessary for the working class to take power. Though it is not the working class who are to be relied on to reach this conclusion but 'the Party' which by a process like apostolic succession inherits Lenin's words.

The black, gay and women's movement have been bringing the criticism more closely home, because they have raised inequalities actually *within* Leninist organisations. They have demanded that changes have to be made now. These changes involve examining how real life inequalities as opposed to ideal interpretations are disregarded and perpetuated within socialist parties. They have argued that it is not enough to declare that people should not be 'prejudiced'. The socialist organisation has to create forms of associating and relating which actively seek to overcome the sexism and racism within it. It has become more and more difficult to dismiss these demands as 'utopian'. Not only do they involve a loss of membership, but they come up again and again.

Now the problems of relationships within the Party have been discussed by Leninist organisations in the past though not in these terms. They have been seen as particular deformities which arise and have to be dealt with as they emerge. The emphasis in the Communist Party historically has been on the relationships between workers and middle-class intellectuals (mainly men). More recently it has been a tortured and painful area in the Socialist Workers Party, because of the effort to change the class basis of this organisation. Both the Communist Party and the Socialist Workers Party have relied formally upon political education and informally upon guilt to try and curb the confidence of middle class intellectuals.

Sometimes it has been used by one group of middle class administrators against another, or by the permanent administrators against intellectuals who might challenge the central bureaucracy. It has also been used, more understandably, by working class people as a defence against being made to feel ignorant and humiliated by the intellectuals' use of theory as a form of power against them. But whatever the reasons this negative control through the public orchestration of personal guilt has a terrible record and disastrous ramifications. It is certainly not caused by Leninism. For instance, guilt between blacks and whites, women and men, gays and heterosexuals bedevilled the American New Left in the late 60s and early 70s. Leninism serves in fact to hold the extremes of this negative response to power relations at bay. But this is not the same as providing a solution by going directly to the sources of the antagonisms producing guilt and allowing them free expression which implies trusting the imaginative capacity of human beings to enter one another's predicaments and learn from the attempt....

Not until the 1960's, when the black question was raised by the growing militancy of American blacks and revolutionary movements in developing countries, was the power relationship between autonomous movements and socialist organizations seriously contested. In the course of this confrontation the need for autonomous movements of self definition was clearly asserted. This was to be a decisive influence on the emergence of the womens liberation movement.

We have no clear alternative of how to combine the advantages of autonomous movements with the strengths of a more general combination. But at least we must now recognise it as a problem to face. Leninism does not 'know' the answer. It merely asserts an ideal transcendence.



There remains then no effective guarantee within Leninism that the groups who are in a dominant position in capitalism won't bring their advantage into 'the Party'. Worse there is an effective sleight of hand which conceals this inherent tendency in the assertion of the *ideal* of the Party transcending the interests and vistas of its sections.

This does not imply that we should deny that people can become stuck in their own grievances and not see the wood for the trees. There is always the temptation to attack the people in the same boat as you as this takes the least effort and involves the least risk. The argument is about how to overcome this. We need a form of organisation which can at once allow for the open expression of conflict between different groups and develop the particular understandings which all these differences bring to socialism. For if every form of oppression has its own defensive suspicions, all the movements in resistance to humiliation and inequality also discover their own wisdoms. We require a socialist movement in which there is freedom of these differences, and nurture for these wisdoms. This means that in the making of socialism people can develop positively their own strengths and find ways of communicating to one another what we have gained, without the transcendent correctness which Leninism fosters.

The attitude towards power relations within socialist organisations has an important bearing on how such an organisation will relate outwards....

## VANGUARDS AND CONSCIOUSNESS

It is not difficult to demonstrate that Lenin's notion of the vanguard was not devised to give comfort to bossy socialists but to illuminate the strengths and weaknesses of the forces of resistance to capitalism. In theory, it provided a means of channelling for the greatest effect all

the elements in struggle, not only the economic conflict of workers against employers but all the experience of social and cultural struggles. The idea was to bring the strengths of the most 'advanced' to the assistance of the less developed through the Party.

According to one current version of this Leninist intention, 'advanced' consciousness by definition finds its way into 'the Party'. This internal definition of the vanguard tends to be a characteristic of Trotskyism. It becomes a tautology. The 'Party' is the expression of advanced consciousness therefore advanced consciousness is to be found in the Party.

In the attempt to break with this narrow and internal idea of the vanguard various attempts have been made to locate the vanguard in struggles outside the Party. This was an argument internationally within Trotskyism after the 2nd World War. On the Italian left after 1968 some socialists argued that the workers in struggle are the vanguard rather than the Party. In America by the early 1970s, the vanguard was up for grabs. Everyone claimed to be the vanguard, blacks, women, gays. In fact they all fell out with one another over this.

This notion of the vanguard assumed it applied to either the most oppressed or the most foolhardy and illustrates the problem in defining the vanguard in terms of whoever is struggling....

Criticisms of the Leninist idea of the 'vanguard' have tended to assume that the attempt to assess consciousness itself was at fault. I think this needs shifting into a different area of dispute. The argument is really about who has the power to define how the estimation is made and the acknowledgement that none of us are the embodiment of the pure abstract reason of correct ideas.

So in reaction against Leninism there was a tendency in both the American New Left and among British libertarians to dismiss the very

---

attempt to assess consciousness as inherently elitist. Less clearly this dismissal of the problem has been present in the women's movement.

The trouble is that if you disregard all attempts to work out who is likely to stick their neck out in particular circumstances and who can sustain attack in particular places you are left wide open. Without any historical and social estimation of different kinds of consciousness you are left with only static categories of the oppressed. You have no means of deciding how various sections are likely to respond to change. As your oppressed constituency is both enormous and inert and as there is no difference between the oppressed category and conscious politics there is nothing to stop you acting on their behalf. There is not even the awareness that is present within Leninism of the dangers of 'substitutionism'. Here a sleight of hand appears in an over-generalised concept of a static condition of oppression. A politics of example by self-appointed small groups has often been the undemocratic consequence of a critique of differentiation as elitist. This has bedevilled anarchism historically and was a paralyzing feature of libertarian marxism in the early 1970s. It has been a rumbling source of confusion in the women's movement.

Instead of examining the actual social composition of our movement and the forces and experiences which have radicalised certain groups of women, the feminism of the women's liberation movement can be presented as the consciousness of women in general. This makes it impossible to begin to work out the relationship of the movement to women not already involved. Their absence is in fact being dismissed and explained away. They need simply to be reached and enlightened by the propaganda of the movement. Any opposition they might make is because they have been hopelessly brainwashed by men. Under a 'false'

non-feminist consciousness sits a 'true' natural feminism in every woman. Feminists just need to plumb the depths of this well of common sense to reach what every woman knows. It is true that every woman knows but we happen to know somewhat differently depending on our circumstances and the openings created by the process of change. We need to examine what is specific as well as what is shared by women in differing situations. If circumstances and consciousness are concentered we fold an abstract category 'Woman' into a particular historical movement which has emerged out of changes in the life of some women.

Thus if we are to distinguish the various ways in which women approach their situations we need to understand the different nature of the power relationships which enmesh us. This means that we do not present relations in the family simply as the equivalent of relations on the cash nexus, or assume that the condition of a sex is the same as class relations. It also means we need to assess very carefully changes in class composition and their impact on women's consciousness.

Some socialist feminists in America have been drawn to analyses of class in which professional, service, administrative and communications workers are equated with the working class. This recognises the emergence of new kinds of work closely connected to the welfare of people and the communication of values which have become crucial areas in modern capitalism. It also focuses on the radicalisation of men and women in these jobs. But it makes it difficult to understand the specific ways in which changes in class composition have affected various groups differently. In Britain the emotive force of class has led to similar elliptics in practice. For example the I.S. Rank and File groups and Working Women's Charter tended to emphasize the similarity between white collar trade unionists and



manual and lower grade service workers. They were all trade unionists. This was important to assert against the traditional suspicion in the trade union movement of white collar workers and the dismissal on the left of women. But this meant that other important power relationships were dismissed. These were in fact vital to an understanding of consciousness which could avoid fatalism, a notion of an intact true consciousness or an external vanguard bringing understanding. The 'Red Collective' pointed out in a criticism of the Charter in 1974 that the simple assertion of a common trade unionism denied '...the experiences that brought these women into women's liberation, and the difficulties they must meet in their jobs as 'handlers' of people which ought to make them aware of other divisions, based on a hierarchical division of labor.'

While resistance to 'handling' was certainly part of the personal experience of women in local Charter groups and also in the real rank and file of 'Rank and File', it was not accepted as part of the theory of organisation and consciousness of the I.M.G. and I.S. who had hegemonic positions in these groupings. So individual understandings were passed over as by the way. But in fact the women's movement and the whole process of radicalisation among

people in these jobs were providing vital clues to the puzzle of how to oppose modern capitalism and how to go about a more complex assessment of consciousness.'

The women's movement has broken the circle in the concept of a vanguard Party by questioning the criteria used in assessing the meaning of 'advanced' and 'backward' and arguing that this assessment is not a neutral and objective process but a matter of subjective control.

The women's movement's criticisms of the ways in which the Leninist left assess activity and the manner in which consciousness changes have come not from a completed theory of organisation but from the experience of a particular group of women's lives. The wide ranging areas of women's oppression, the complexity of the subordinated relationship with men, and the deep personal hold of women's sense of secondariness have combined with significant changes in class composition and social relations.

It is not enough for left groups to simply widen the range of subjects which can be discussed in their publications or meetings — the crucial question is what significance is given to these subjects and how is that estimate reached? If a political or economic scale is used

the same judgements of advanced and backward forms of consciousness can be retained with a few sexual political frills. But if you take into account other kinds of struggle like resistance to the domestic control of the state which has been part of a wide range of community politics or the emotional personal challenge to sexual domination, the old scale of measuring consciousness becomes ungainly because you are moving in several dimensions at the same time. People can be so backward and so forward at the same time that the scale won't work any more. There is no way of marking consciousness off on a straight line to assess it in this clear and simple way.

Of course Leninism recognises that consciousness is uneven. But this still assumes that it can reach one level. The notion of the vanguard suggests a tough poky thing moving in the same direction at the same time. The approach to consciousness in the women's movement has uncovered many aspects of experience neglected by socialist politics but it also has the awareness that formal theoretical or practical public abilities are not the only important areas for growth. Our personal relationships with our families and friends, how we connect to other women in the movement and our inner spiritual and sexual life are never separate from our feminism. Indeed as we resist subordination most strenuously in one area it has a way of creeping up on us from some completely different direction. The feminist approach to consciousness perceives its growth as many faceted and contradictory. The model of the vanguard doesn't fit into this way of thinking. It's not even like trying to put a square peg into a round hole. It's like dropping it down a well. The criteria used for 'advanced' and 'backward' elements can no more be applied to this more complex view of political consciousness than a spirit-level can be used for assessing an electrical current. This does not

mean that we should abandon the attempt to estimate the consequences of different forms of consciousness at various times. But it means we need a much more delicate kind of socialist theory to gauge them. The Leninist approach simply blots out immense but fragile processes of transformation.

Left organisations, particularly since the Bolsheviks, have assumed a kind of pyramid of levels of activity. Near the top are struggles for political power and conflict at the workplace. Community struggles follow, traditionally seen mainly as the housing question and tenants movements. After them education, welfare and cultural issues may be considered with an optional cluster of sexual politics, 'personal' politics, ecology and what not under a rather dusty heading of 'quality of life'.

Feminists have criticised these levels, arguing particularly against the over-emphasis on wage work, which excludes many women. The problem can't be solved by recognising demands for a changing quality of life and just widening the areas of activity.

We also need to challenge the notion of consciousness which is behind this approach to activity. For consciousness is also being chopped up into categories of significance. The women's movement has enabled us to understand that such divisions do not reach the roots of oppression. Presenting consciousness in the compartments of political, economic, cultural, social, personal, makes it impossible to begin to see how the different forms feed and sustain one another. Feminism has shown how consciousness spills over these boundaries. I don't think this need imply that particular groups of socialists should not make certain forms of activity a priority given resources of time, energy and skill, and the forces of opposition. For example it would be evidently absurd to expect that the possibilities present for women in a democratic capitalist society would be the

same as the narrower options for resistance under fascism. It is not an absolute moral principle which is involved but the power to challenge the criteria in which priorities are decided....



*Glenda Jones*

## CONCLUSION

It has required a big argument on the Leninist left to take up even one aspect of 'personal' power relationships — the question of inequality between men and women within socialist organisations themselves. The feminist movement has challenged this reproduction of inequality within the left. After nearly a decade sexism (like racism) is now admitted to exist even within left parties themselves by most organisations on the left. This used to be denied or it was said that it was utopian to expect anything else until after socialism. The ground has shifted because men and women affected by sexual politics have been saying both inside and outside socialist groups that we can't wait. We have to find effective ways of struggling against

these inequalities for they are not only wrong in themselves, they paralyse many socialists and restrict our communications with many people who can see little difference between socialist and right-wing organisations. They also block understandings vital for the making of socialism.

However the implications of this recognition are still not followed through. The assumption within left groups has continued to be that the remedy for inequalities was the exhortation to improvement. It is presumed that within the organisation itself change can be a result of an effort of pure reason. It is true that we can change our minds when confronted with 'facts' and argument. But they are inadequate on their own to touch the full extent of the problem. This emphasis on reason and will is the reverse side of the coin to the fatalism which denies the possibility of prefigurative change before socialism. Leninists are saying at once no change is possible and yet all changes necessary can be made by political education in the Party.

Feminists have been arguing a form of politics which enables people to experience different relationships. The implications of this go beyond sex-gender relationships, to all relationships of inequality, including those between socialists. Leninist organisations *have* made piecemeal concessions to the women's movement and the gay movement under pressure. They have been affected also by the contradictory pulls in modern capitalism which have led to questioning certain areas of control in everyday life. But they have resisted the implications of these social changes and movements as a more general challenge to their notion of politics. The notion of organisation in which a transforming vision of what is possible develops out of the process of organising questions some of the most deeply held tenets of Leninism. The weight of Leninist theory (Gramsci apart) and the prevailing historical practice of Leninism is

towards seeing the 'party' as the means by which the working class can take power and these 'means' have a utilitarian narrowness. Other considerations consequently have to be deferred until the goal of socialism is reached. But socialist feminists and men influenced by the women's movement and gay liberation have been saying that these are precisely the considerations which are inseparable from the making of socialism. These involve considerable disagreement about the meaning of socialist politics and what it means to be a socialist.

So I don't believe it is a matter of adding bits to a pre-existing model of an 'efficient' 'combative' organisation through which the working class (duly notified and rounded up at last) will take power. You need changes now in how people can experience relationships in which we can both express our power and struggle against domination in all its forms. A socialist movement must help us find a way to meet person to person — an inward as well as an external quality. It must be a place where we can really learn from one another without deference or resentment and 'Theory' is not put in authority.

This will not just happen. It goes too deeply against the way of the world. We really cannot rely on common sense here. We need to make the creation of prefigurative forms an explicit part of our movement against capitalism. I do not mean that we try to hold an imaginary future in the present, straining against the boundaries of the possible until we collapse in exhaustion and despair. This would be utopian. Instead such forms would seek both to consolidate existing practice and release the imagination of what could be. The effort to go beyond what we know now has to be part of our experience of what we might know, rather than a denial of the validity of our own experience in face of a transcendent party. This means a conscious legitimisation within the theory and practice of socialism of all those



aspects of our experience which are so easily denied because they go against the grain of how we learn to feel and think in capitalism. All those feelings of love and creativity, imagination and wisdom which are negated, jostled and bruised within the relationships which dominate in capitalism are nonetheless there, our gifts to the new life. Marxism has been negligent of their power, Leninism and Trotskyism frequently contemptuous or dismissive. Structuralist marxism hides them from view in the heavy academic gown of objectivity. For a language of politics which can express them we need to look elsewhere, for instance, to the utopian socialists in the early 19th century, or to the Socialist League in the 1880s, or Spanish anarcho-syndicalism. We cannot simply reassert these as alternatives against the Leninist tradition. There are no 'answers' lying latent in history. But there is more to encourage you than meets the Leninist eye. We have to shed completely the lurking assumption that Leninism provides the highest political form of organising and that all other approaches can be dismissed as primitive antecedents or as in-

correct theories.

The versions of Leninism current on the left make it difficult to legitimate any alternative approaches to socialist politics which have been stumbling into existence. These Leninisms are difficult to counter because at their most superficial they have a surface coherence, they argue about brass tacks and hard facts. They claim history and sport their own insignia and regalia of position. They fight dirty — with a quick sneer and the certainty of correct ideas. At their most thoughtful intensity they provide a passionate and complex cultural tradition of revolutionary theory and practice on which we must certainly draw. Socialist ideas can be pre-Leninist or anti-Leninist. But there is no clear post-Leninist revolutionary tradition yet. Leninism is alive still whatever dogmatic accoutrements it has acquired. The argument is about the extent of its usefulness for making socialism now.

I know that many socialists who have lived through the complicated and often painful encounters between sexual politics and the left in the past few years believe we must alter Leninism to fit the experience gained in sexual political movements. I have been edged and nuzzled and finally butted towards believing that what we have learned can't be forced into the moulds of Leninism without restricting and cutting its implications short. Moreover the structures of thought and feeling inherent in Leninism continually brake our consciousness of alternatives. I don't see the way through this as devising an ideal model of a non-authoritarian organisation but as a collective awakening to a constant awareness about how we see ourselves as socialists, a willingness to trust as well as criticise what we have done, a recognition of creativity in diversity and a persistent quest for open types of relationships to one another and to ideas as part of the process of making socialism.



Painting by Francesco del Cossa (c. 1435-1477), from *Redstockings*, Feminist Revolution.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. For a discussion of Trotskyism as an identifiable political tradition see Geoff Hodgson, *Trotsky and Fatalistic Marxism*, Spokesman Books, 1975. (\$3.50 postpaid from Carrier Pigeon, 75 Kneeland St., room 309, Boston, Mass. 02111.) Jim O'Brien's summary of the histories of American Leninist groups makes for an interesting comparison with Britain. Jim O'Brien, 'American Leninism in the 1970s', New England Free Press, 1979. This article originally appeared in the Nov. 1977/Feb. 1978 issue of *Radical America*.
2. Bea Campbell, 'Sweets from a stranger', *Red Rag*, no. 13, p. 28.



3. Bea Campbell and Sheila Rowbotham, 'Women workers and the class struggle', *Radical America*, Vol. 8, no. 5, Sept.-Oct. 1974, p. 63.
4. Richard Kuper, 'Organizing and participation', *Socialist Review*, July-Aug. 1978, p. 36. (Ed: This is the British S.W.P. journal.)
5. Ralph Miliband, 'The future of socialism in England', *The Socialist Register*, 1977, p. 50.
6. For a recent example of whooshing see Chris (Super) Harman, 'For democratic centralism', *Socialist Review*, July-Aug. 1978, p. 39.
7. Adriano Sofri, *Italy 1977-78: Living with an Earthquake*, Red Notes pamphlet, no date, p. 95. See also the criticisms made by women in 'Lotta Continua' of the leaderships' response to feminism.
8. Red Collective, 'Not so much a charter, more a way of organizing', mimeograph, 1974. (The Red Collective were a small group of men and women concerned to relate socialism and sexual politics.) This statement is quoted in Barbara Taylor, 'Classified: Who are we? Class and the women's movement', *Red Rag*, no. 11, p. 24.

9. See, for example, *Case Con*, Women's Issue, Spring 1974, and *London Educational Collective in Women and Education*, no. 2, 1973-74, on Rank and File's resistance to taking up women's subordination in education.

---

*SHEILA ROWBOTHAM, a Radical America associate editor, is a British socialist-feminist activist, writer and historian. Three of her books are available in paperback in this country — Women, Resistance and Revolution; Hidden from History; and Woman's Consciousness, Man's World. In addition to the pamphlet from which this article was taken, she is working on a history of the women's liberation movement in Britain.*

---



*Women of the Paris Commune, imprisoned at Chantiers*

# FEMINISM, LENINISM & THE U.S.

## A Comment

Allen Hunter & Linda Gordon

Our enthusiasm for Sheila Rowbotham's article published here prompts us to add a few comments to our U.S. readers. We want to comment on the feminist contribution to the much-needed critique of Leninist organizing and Leninist definitions of socialism. Then we will go on to suggest some ways in which Rowbotham's comments, and our musings on them, point to the particular significance of feminism for revolutionary movements in the U.S.

Before setting out, it might be useful to explain how we use the word "feminism," since — both as movement and theory — it is composed of diverse tendencies. We are focusing on certain insights of feminism and aspects of feminist organizing which have often been ignored or misunderstood by socialists. Since we are addressing ourselves primarily to nonfeminist socialists, we want to suggest the richness and potential of feminism for revitalizing socialism. We make no extravagant claims for all feminism, and recognize that many elements in contemporary feminism are flawed and even antisocialist. Still, we do not find it helpful to make categorical statements about what is and is not feminist; we are trying neither to write some women out of feminism nor to define parameters of feminist activity.

As there are numerous feminisms, there are also numerous Leninisms, and we do not view them all the same way. Leninists fight with each other over which party is the legitimate heir

---

We want to thank the *Radical America* board, and particularly Frank Brodhead and Phyllis Ewen, who hurried to make critical comments to meet a production deadline.

---

to Lenin's own (itself a rather patriarchal way of proceeding). Put off by this approach, we nonetheless admire many Leninist achievements, and the practice of many Leninist activists. We are here addressing, and criticizing, a core of Leninist political thought and practice as it is applied in the industrial west.

I. At the outset we note that Rowbotham does not find her dedication to building a socialist movement incompatible with her primary commitment to the women's movement and feminism. She does not feel it necessary to defend her socialism or her commitment to working-class activity. This is because British feminism has developed in a context different from the U.S. Class consciousness pervades British society in a way that it does not in the U.S., and this common assumption influences debates on the Left. It is generally assumed that disagreements about strategy and organization take place within a context of general agreement with the classic socialist stress on the working class. Rowbotham's essay was intended for a British audience and assumes that class-conscious context, something which we must keep in mind as we read her essay.

Turning to the feminist content of Rowbotham's criticisms, we were first impressed by her style of argument and writing, which itself is unusual among writers approaching theoretical issues. Unlike most Marxist-Leninists, she does not counter what she considers distortions of Marxism by alternative quotes from Marx or other prophets. Nor does she aim at establishing abstract "correct positions." Unlike many previous theoretical critics of Leninism, she avoids jargony, academic and scholastic language. Most theoretical anti-Leninists, lacking a movement, have often retreated to the academy or to narrow groups of intellectuals for their frame of reference and idiom. By contrast, Rowbotham has the advantage of a

real social movement — women's liberation — providing her with not only an audience, but also active, critical comrades. She uses as evidence for her arguments her experience as a participant in socialist and feminist organizations. She includes much that is subjective, emotional, personal.

In our view three major feminist challenges to socialism stand out: the insistence that exploitation is not the only or the essential form of domination; the criticism of a facile use of the means-ends distinction; and the redefinition of what is political.

Feminists expand the meaning of domination to include not only class but sexual inequality. They show that power relations within each sex as well as between sexes are not just products of class relations or merely personal quirks. They deny that these inequalities stem only from the mode of production. Many Leninists recognize forms of domination other than exploitation — sexism, racism, or national oppression, for example. Their strategic errors, common to much of socialism, follow from the privileged place they give to the exploitation of class by class. Challenging this view has at least two important strategic implications: that a strictly anticapitalist strategy is not the same as a socialist one; and that there will be the need for many special-interest groups with the right to autonomous organization before and after a revolution. Furthermore, as Rowbotham argues persuasively, the Leninist view that democratic-centralist discipline can transcend special interests and create a movement of the whole has never been argued satisfactorily theoretically and has existed only fleetingly and partially in practice.

Feminism, like libertarian socialism, also helps to reveal, criticize, and explain the recreation of domination that exists within communist parties and governments. Anarchists, council communists, and eastern European



dissidents have been criticizing the Leninist lack of democracy for decades. Bohemians, surrealists, and sex radicals (such as Wilhelm Reich, Emma Goldman, and Edward Carpenter) have also been criticizing Leninism (and much of socialism) for its lack of cultural radicalism. In part, contemporary feminism is an outgrowth of the New Left emphasis on participation, antiauthoritarianism, and a search for cultural expression. In Rowbotham's work, feminist perceptions about domination and about the politicalness of the personal are fused with concerns for democratic forms of leadership and discipline, for civil liberties, and for freedom in personal and cultural expression. As she argues, contemporary Marxist-Leninists reduce feminism to a struggle for "democratic rights" because they reject its critical implications for their own theory and practice. Containing feminist demands in this

way means that all kinds of problems can remain submerged — problems like relations between the sexes, patterns of authority and submission, and ways in which male bonding suppresses dissent. Some Leninist organizations have turned their attention to sexism within the party in reaction to concerted efforts of women, but this concern is seldom institutionalized in practice or outlook, and is usually confined to dealing with blatant examples of chauvinism.

Feminists have also criticized the subordination of process to goals, of means to ends. They attack the sexual division of labor in socialist organizations, not reserving that principle for an "ultimate" goal. Rowbotham refers to the issue of comfortableness — "cosiness," in British usage. In challenging a view of revolutionary activity as an arduous, self-sacrificing

---

labor associated with unusually heroic individuals, feminists have tried to think seriously about the style and process of a movement that is genuinely mass and participatory. Emphasizing process, the interactions between people in all contexts, and the links and sometimes unity between the personal and the political, feminists have been able to criticize — if not to overcome — the dichotomy between organizer and organized.

The idea that the personal is political addresses not only the processes but also the substance of politics. In this way feminism forces a rethinking of the content of socialism, and to some extent makes the task of revolution seem much more complex and difficult. If we are to visualize a society without any forms of domination, there are few social relations which can remain unchallenged. For example, not only the family norm, but the heterosexual norm itself must go, and nonreligious modes of comprehending and communicating values of human worth, social order, and legitimate authority must be found. Child-raising without adult tyranny must be figured out. Only utopian writings have tried to conceptualize a society without gender.

Some of these challenges to Leninism have been made by libertarian socialists as well as by feminists. However, male-dominated libertarianism, whether socialist or anarchist, has not been much less sexist than Leninism. Council communists usually identified the working class (and the future ruling class!) with male workers. Sex radicals continued the objectification of women and the definition of the male as the human norm. Nevertheless, there is an antidogmatic, antiauthoritarian, inquiring tendency of thought in these non-Leninist radicalisms that feminists have benefited from.

It is important for feminists to recognize potential allies. It is even more important for

feminists to recognize false friends. The Marxist-Leninists were often the first to grant a formal place in their platforms to the “woman question.” But in recognizing “it,” they thus defined what the question was. And they did so in terms that are, from a feminist perspective, nonrevolutionary. In many respects, Marxist-Leninist programs for women are indistinguishable from liberal feminist ones.

Leninists often argue that their Left opponents can only criticize; that only Leninists have led the way to revolutions which have made enormously better lives for the majority of the world's people. We find this a powerful argument, particularly as residents of a country that has done so much to make life miserable for the world's majority. It is not, however, relevant as an argument for the significance of Leninism to “late” capitalism, as it is hopefully called. The relevance of organizational forms should be argued in terms of concrete conditions and traditions, not previous successes elsewhere.

It is true that feminism, like non-Leninist socialisms, has so far not offered alternative models of how to construct a planned but nonbureaucratic economy, how to run a complex national industry with workers' control, and so on. Nor is there a feminist conception of how to take power. But the dismantling of old and inadequate models is a constructive and urgent task right now. The Left is constrained by parties, preparty formations, and even study groups that do not (or will not, because of their vested interests) understand the inadequacy of received ideas about the seizure of state power, political organization, leadership, representation, and the content of people's grievances and aspirations. In the face of this self-interest and rigidity we think that it is worse to cling to a bad model than to have no plan. (And as we write this we are thinking of certain friends who will not cut themselves off from the M-L movement because they think that flawed as it

---

is, it is the best we have.)

II. The Trotskyism that Rowbotham criticizes shares many features with a range of U.S. Marxism-Leninisms. Here we want to characterize briefly certain differences in the recent histories of the Left in the two countries and then turn our attention to the U.S. itself.

Khrushchev's 1956 speech at the Twentieth Party Congress revealing the "crimes of Stalin," and the Hungarian revolution and its suppression through Soviet invasion, were cataclysmic events for European communist parties. In Britain these events precipitated action by CP members whose doubts about Stalinism had been growing for some time. A large number of people left the British CP, and a British New Left began by early 1957. The New Left thus originated earlier in Britain than in the U.S., and within an orthodox Marxist milieu. In contrast to the situation in the U.S., the British CP retained some influence in the nation's political life, particularly in some industrial unions. During the radicalization of the late 1960s, therefore, young British activists needed to develop not only a critique of British capitalism, but also of the CP. While in France or Italy this critique came primarily from the Maoists, in Britain Maoism was eclipsed by the relatively open "neo-Trotskyism" of the International Socialists, and to a lesser extent by the revival of orthodox Trotskyism.

In contrast, the New Left in the U.S. developed in response to the civil rights and antiimperialist movements, and in the absence of a strong CP. The powerful examples of Leninist-led Third World liberation movements and the Chinese Cultural Revolution help to explain why the turn toward Marxism was largely embodied in an embrace of Marxism-Leninism.

Thus in the U.S. the rebirth of a revolutionary Leninism was largely idealist. It was based neither in a radical heritage nor on analysis of current social conditions. Today the new Leninism is primarily exemplified by study of classic texts, emulation of Chinese Maoism, and study of the history of the CPUSA where, it is believed, the most advanced expressions of U.S. proletarian practice and consciousness are to be found. We do not discount learning from communist parties, nor do we wish to detract from the importance of the CPUSA itself. Still, many other radical traditions are as deeply rooted in U.S. political culture as the Communist Party — some even more. Feminism, populism, civil rights, civil libertarian and community-reform movements, direct action, voluntary associations, single-issue protest movements, church-based social movements, syndicalism — all these and others have more currency in the U.S. than do vanguard politics.

Similarly, a look at U.S. social conditions does not bode well for the Leninist model. The U.S. working class is extremely heterogeneous — ethnically, racially, linguistically, and regionally — making the dream of a unified proletariat remote. Managerial and professional strata have grown even faster than the petite bourgeoisie has declined. The size of this country, and its large number of cities and states with relatively autonomous political power militates against centralism. Our culture is notoriously ambivalent about central control and administration, wavering between a great pride in efficiency and jumbo-sized projects and glorifying individual antiauthoritarian rebels. Cultural crises — the family, sex, religion, crime, abortion, homosexuality — easily compete with economic ones for popular attention and anxiety. Leninists, of course, often claim some of these very conditions as reasons for the necessity of party-building. But we find their "reasons" to be mere assertions

---

that follow from fixed beliefs about organization, not from analyses of social struggle emerging from actual social conditions.

The U.S. has always been the location of the strongest feminist movement. If there is any merit to the Marxist prediction that the strongest opposition to capitalism would emerge where capitalism itself is strongest, then the case of U.S. feminism would have to be the most promising instance. Feminism was first directed primarily against patriarchal domination, toward the recognition of women's individual rights. In the U.S. patriarchy was weak almost from the origin of the country, and women had more individual rights here than elsewhere. Thus, one might have expected a weaker feminism here, since women had fewer obstacles to their incorporation into a capitalist economy and society. Instead, feminism in the U.S. was not only strong, but also more radical than elsewhere. From the early nineteenth-century women went far beyond seeking higher status and sought to change the system. They focused on family crises, sexual repression, and the breakup of community forms; they were among the first anticapitalists.

Feminist attempts to challenge overall social organization and values increasingly address the needs of men as well as women. In this way feminism is more central to the development of a socialist vision in the U.S. than elsewhere. In less industrialized countries it could more reasonably be argued that democratic rights would meet women's *sectoral* interests and they could then join with men in the class struggle and construction of socialism. Skeptical that women's equal entry into the economy and culture would bring satisfaction, U.S. feminists have had to be concerned with the quality of life. Furthermore, even when socialists were concerned with cultural and social crises, they too often looked backward for solutions. They understand that capitalism is revolutionary and

wanted to halt the revolution. For example, they lamented the industrial disruption of family life and sought the restoration of the old family. Feminists also understood that capitalism transforms daily life and disrupts community; unwilling, however, to go back to earlier oppressions, they had to seek new forms of community, leisure, and education. This search represents a contribution not only to a socialist vision but also to socialist organizing in the present.

Further, it is a contribution to class- as well as sex-based organizing. The dynamic of capitalist development transforms sex as well as class relations; and class and sex relations interact with and modify each other within and between classes. Class experience, class consciousness, and class solidarity are created not only at the workplace, but also, for example, through neighborhood and kinship, local recreational activities, and religion. These aspects of working-class life, and work relations themselves, in some ways strengthen and in other ways suppress working-class opposition to exploitation. For example, male solidarity within a class, clearly empowering in some ways, can also dissipate the power of the class when women are excluded, marginalized, and treated as secondary. Male solidarity across classes, between managers and workers, for example, can build unity that is much more retrograde than cross-class feminist organizing. Understanding the totality of working-class experience is important for successful organizing, and feminist insights can add to that understanding.

The explicit focus on cultural questions, already evident in the New Left and now a central feature of feminism, has several levels of relevance for socialism. First, these explorations of cultural issues, such as friendship, violence, beauty, or child-raising, contribute



---

toward projecting an image of socialism attractive to people in an industrial society. Second, these concerns negate the self-denying quality of many earlier radical movements, a self-denial unappealing in a secular, technological, and potentially affluent society. Instead they remind us that the experience of "the movement" should be rewarding as well as personally empowering. Third, these cultural issues are essential to building a socialist strategy. We have plenty of evidence that passions about family, morality, and sex can be as strong and as politically directed as struggles for higher wages. Concern with the quality of life can allow socialists to address fundamental questions of power and help militate against economic politics.

The cultural emphasis of feminism has led to some erroneous views that somehow women's issues are more psychological and less fundamental than class issues. Leninists, particularly, point out that the U.S. women's movement has not created durable or national organizations, and some feminists also regret that failure. We think both these perceptions are only partially valid. In the first place, durable national organization may not be an appropriate measure of success, and a decentralized set of groups may be the best form for a U.S. socialist movement in this historical period. In the second place, the nature of feminist organizing hides from some observers both the extent of that work, its base in the working class, and the radical nature of its issues. There are dozens and dozens of women's health projects, day-care centers, shelters for battered women, rape crisis centers, women's schools, and ad hoc

committees for improving education and housing in local areas. Around particular issues there are networks of communication, newsletters and journals, meetings and conferences. Demonstrations, lobbying, and leafleting attempt to affect court decisions, congressional action, and bureaucratic regulations. Many of the initiators of these projects are, of course, educated women from professional class backgrounds — how unlike socialist organizations! — yet there are also many working-class activists, and many of them primarily serve working-class women. And, although class differences are, no doubt, partially replicated within these organizations — again, how unlike most socialist organizations! — the emphasis upon active participation, democracy, personal support, and less bureaucratic forms of organizing means that these projects at least attempt to attack both passivity and professional arrogance.

In organizing around such issues feminists seek to create new forms of collective work. They challenge what Rowbotham calls an "idiom of politics" that is common to both Leninist and libertarian traditions and organizations. That idiom militates against including women as equals, tends to replicate the division between mental and manual labor, romanticizes restraint and self-denial, punishes subjectivity, and thereby limits the range within which change is sought. The conditions that give rise to these traits are not only historically constituted psychological dispositions of the male ego; they are also deeply rooted in objective social conditions. They cannot be willed away.



# THE DISTURBING CASE OF FEODOR FEDORENKO

Matthew Rinaldi

On July 25, 1978, the Southern District Court of Florida ruled that a former member of the Ukrainian SS now living in Miami Beach was entitled to keep his U.S. citizenship. The ruling came despite the admission by defendant Feodor Fedorenko that he had served as an armed guard at Treblinka, one of the primary Nazi killing centers in Poland.

Fedorenko has been living in the United States since 1949. At the trial, he admitted that during World War II he had been trained as an SS *wachmann* (guard), that as part of his training he had assisted German operations in the ghettos of Lublin and Warsaw, and that upon completion of training he had been assigned to Treblinka. At Treblinka he became an *oberwachmann* and, at the very least, had helped on "one or two occasions" to detain Jewish prisoners on their way to the gas chambers. Not surprisingly, he had neglected to mention these facts when applying for immigration in 1949, or upon receiving citizenship in 1970.

Six survivors of Treblinka, all of them Israelis, came to Fort Lauderdale to testify against Fedorenko. It is difficult to find such witnesses. There were very few survivors of Treblinka; there were meant to be none. Of the estimated 700,000 to 1,200,000 Jews sent to Treblinka in 1942 and 1943, only forty were still alive at the end of the war. The six Israeli survivors had each spent between six months and a year in the camp before managing to escape. Some of them had already testified at the trials of Treblinka personnel in Dusseldorf, West Germany, in 1965 and 1970.

In Florida, these survivors retold their stories. Gustaw Boraks, now 77, testified that he

---

*An earlier version of this article appeared in the summer issue of JUDAISM. Copies of JUDAISM may be ordered from their offices at 15 East 84th Street, New York, NY 10028. Reprinted by permission.*

From *Without Surrender: Art of the Holocaust*, by Nelly Toll (Running Press, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1978). Drawn in Buchenwald.

"had seen defendant chasing people on the pathway to Camp 2" (Camp 2 was the site of the gas chambers); Schalom Kohn, now 65, told of being whipped by the defendant on two separate occasions; and Eugen Turowski, now 64, testified that Fedorenko "carried a leather whip with metal balls on it" and "many times" beat and shot arriving prisoners. Turowski went on to say that Fedorenko "shot prisoners who, after escaping and then being recaptured, were hung upside down as an example to other prisoners."

Judge Norman C. Roettger found that the testimony of the Israeli witnesses was "not credible," and that Fedorenko could not be found to have "participated in the commission of crimes and atrocities" at Treblinka. In his defense, Fedorenko maintained that he was drafted into the Red Army in June of 1941, captured by the Germans within a few weeks, and from that point on, was an "involuntary prisoner." Judge Roettger found this story "credible," and declared that Fedorenko was himself a "victim of Nazi aggression." On the basis of this conclusion, and in view of the defendant's exemplary behavior in the United States, Judge Roettger entered judgment for the defendant on all counts.

The survivors, now home in Israel, are justifiably angry. One witness called the trial a mockery, and said the judge had created an atmosphere of skepticism and disdain. Rifka Abramovitz, who was one of only two women to survive the camp and who had previously testified in Dusseldorf, said of her experience in Florida, "They treated us like we were on trial. In Germany, they would never do such a thing. In Germany, they would be very correct. But in Fort Lauderdale, they heard our testimony and they laughed at us."

The case of Feodor Fedorenko is unfortunately not unique. The Justice Department is currently investigating over 200 alleged Nazi

war criminals living in the United States, and a number are soon to come to trial. Many of the individuals involved are non-Germans; some were also in the Red Army in the early years of the war. In light of this situation, it is important to explore the way many Ukrainians came to be members of the SS and what winds of history brought some of them to the United States in 1949.

## EARLY YEARS

Feodor Demyanovich Fedorenko was born in the peasant village of Sivaschi, in the Kherson region of western Ukraine, on September 1, 1907. He was baptized into the Greek Orthodox faith and registered as a subject of the Muscovite Czar.

When Feodor was six, Russia went to war with Germany, and his father was killed at the front; when he was nine, the Czar was overthrown. The resulting political chaos provided an opportunity for Ukrainian nationalist sentiment to flourish. When the Bolsheviks seized power in Moscow, the Ukrainian Peoples' Republic was formed, and on December 9, 1917, all relations were broken with the infant Soviet Union. A state of war was declared.

At that time, there were approximately one and a half million Jews in a total Ukrainian population of thirty million. Although not sharing the general nationalist fervor, the Jewish community was at first on good terms with the government. A Ministry of Jewish Affairs was created which encouraged and supported Jewish national culture, and a law of national personal autonomy was passed which protected the civil rights of the Jewish population.

As the war progressed, right-wing military elements, particularly the Cossack legions, became increasingly dominant in Ukrainian society. General Skoropodski overthrew the civilian government and was, in turn, over-

thrown by a rightist coalition called the Directorate. The Ministry of Jewish Affairs was abolished; the law of national personal autonomy was repealed. Much of the nationalist ideology pictured the Jewish people as an internal enemy. Thus, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), formed by the forces of the Directorate, wrote of the Jews, "They are living at the expense of the Ukrainian population, giving the latter absolutely nothing in return as a proper reward. . . . From the political point of view, they are enemies of the Ukrainian independent nationalist ideas. So far as culture is concerned, they are bacilli-carriers of degradation; judging from the social point of view, they fail as commercial elements to make the slightest return for the exorbitant profits they extoll from the population."<sup>2</sup>

Despite the fervor of the Directorate, the war for a Ukrainian nation was lost on the front lines. What began as an uncertain struggle in 1917 became by 1919 the absolute rout of Cossack and Ukrainian nationalist troops. As these troops retreated from east to west across the face of the Ukraine, pushed inexorably backward by the Red Army, they took out their frustration and vengeance on the Jewish population. The pogrom of 1919 brought death to an estimated 100,000 Ukrainian Jews. As Feodor Fedorenko reached his twelfth year, his home region of Kherson witnessed twenty-three recorded pogroms by civilians and retreating Cossacks.

By 1920, the Bolshevik regime had taken firm control of the Ukraine and absorbed it as the Ukrainian SSR. The political leadership of the Directorate and the OUN fled to refugee communities in Poland, Austria, and France, while a network of OUN sympathizers remained active and secretly armed in the Ukraine. At first, the rule of the Soviets allowed and encouraged both Ukrainian and Yiddish culture, but as Stalin asserted his

leadership in Moscow, the right of nationalities to express minority cultures was severely curtailed. In the thirties, the Ukraine was the target of forced collectivization, as well as intense political repression, costing the lives of at least a million Ukrainians and further alienating the populace.

As the power of the Nazis grew in western Europe, many Ukrainians began to look to Germany for a solution to their problems. The OUN felt particularly sympathetic to the anti-Semitism of the National Socialist German Workers Party (NSDAP), and political ties were developed between Berlin and the refugee communities. By 1940, the Germans had entered into a secret alliance with the OUN and were providing military training for the refugee Ukrainians, often under the pretext that the trainees were *Volksdeutscher*, or ethnically German. Under the direction of OUN military officer Roman Shokevych, the all-Ukrainian Nachtigall Division was created within the Wehrmacht (Armed Forces).

When the decision was made by the Nazi leadership to invade the Soviet Union, the Ukrainians were brought in on the planning. The OUN alerted its network of military cells throughout the Ukraine. When the invasion of the Soviet Union was launched on June 22, 1941, the Nachtigall Division struck alongside the Wehrmacht, playing a major role in the battle for Lvov, while the OUN military units struck behind the Red Army lines. By the end of the summer, there were Ukrainian nationalist troops in Vinnitsa, Odessa, Kirovograd, and Kiev. Seizing the opportunity, the OUN National Congress met in Lvov and proclaimed the birth of a sovereign Ukrainian state.

This went beyond the limits acceptable to Berlin. Despite the advantages to be gained from the alliance, Hitler's plans called for the eventual subjugation and settlement of this rich area; the Ukraine was declared a Reich Pro-



*Ukrainians welcoming the German army*

tectorate. Nonetheless, many levels of the German bureaucracy continued to work closely with the nationalists. Within this situation, the OUN maneuvered to build an independent Ukrainian power base while at the same time aiding the German struggle against the Red Army. When the Germans proposed the creation of a Ukrainian Waffen SS Division composed of 60,000 men, the OUN enthusiastically participated in the recruiting efforts, and the Germans found themselves swamped with over 100,000 volunteers.

This collaboration had a more sinister side. As the Fuhrer Order for the elimination of the Jews and undesirables went into effect, members of the OUN participated in the roundups and executions carried out by the SS Einsatzgruppen. Many of the citizens of Kiev lined the streets and applauded as the SS, aided by the OUN, marched the city's Jews to the ravine at

Babi Yar. By 1942, the burden of the "final solution" was shifted from the roving Einsatzgruppen to the more efficient *vernichtungslagers* (annihilation camps), where Ukrainians played a major role. Four highly secret installations — Chelmno, Belsec, Sobibor, and Treblinka — were built within a 200-mile radius of Warsaw with the sole purpose of slaughtering the Jews. These camps were primarily staffed by Ukrainians serving in the SS. At Sobibor, there were 100 Ukrainians and thirty Germans; at Belsec, there were 200 Ukrainians and forty Germans; at Treblinka, there were 150 Ukrainians and forty Germans. In style and methodology, these killing centers shared historical roots not only with the German concentration camp system, but also with the traditionally murderous pogroms of the Ukrainian Cossacks.

When the war erupted, Fedorenko was living in the Crimea. As the Red Army staggered and retreated under the onslaught of the Wehrmacht, it sought to expand its base rapidly in those areas of the Ukraine which it still controlled. Hundreds of thousands of men were quickly drafted into the Red Army, given limited training, and sent to the front. Fedorenko was among them. Within weeks, his unit was surrounded and overrun by the Germans. By the end of the summer, Fedorenko was in a prisoner-of-war camp in Zytomir.

Conditions in the German POW camps were brutal. Prisoners often had no barracks facilities and very little food; tens of thousands died of starvation and exposure in the opening months of the war. But there were elements in the German military who understood that there were potential allies in these camps. Men were given an opportunity to change sides. Odilo Globocnik, the SS chief from Lublin who was put in charge of the *Vernichtungslagers*, created a special camp at Travniki, Poland, to train Ukrainian SS *wachmann* for participation in the "final solution." Recruits were drawn from the POW camps, as well as from the civilian population. One of these recruits was Feodor Fedorenko. He maintained at the trial that he was forced to become a guard; many sources maintain that the SS took only volunteers.

Whatever the method of selection, it is agreed by all sides that Fedorenko underwent *wachmann* training at Travniki. The men were divided into units and given practice on the rifle range. As they became more proficient, they assisted the German SS in the roundups in Jewish communities throughout Poland. During this time, Fedorenko and his unit were used in Lublin and Warsaw. Upon completion of their training, they were sent to Treblinka.

Construction of the camp had begun in the spring of 1942. The first transport arrived at the camp on July 23, filled with Jews from Warsaw

who had been told they were being resettled in the east; they were killed that day. Fedorenko arrived in September. For thirteen months, he worked in the camp as an armed guard, patrolling the outer perimeter, standing watch in the guard towers, and aiding in the unloading of the transports. At least once he worked as a guard at the crematorium; Rifka Abramovitz remembers seeing him there often. At the trial, Fedorenko maintained that he had been unaware of what was being done at the camp.

Treblinka was not large enough to keep many secrets; the entire camp was contained in an enclosed area roughly equivalent to forty-five acres. One entrance for the Germans and Ukrainians, a gate in the southwest corner, led to their living quarters, mess hall, sick bay, and recreation area. A separate entrance for the prisoners, a rail line in the southeast corner, led to a phony railroad station. The myth of resettlement was perpetuated as long as possible. As the prisoners poured off the trains under the watchful eye of the SS, a Jewish work commando collected their belongings. Any act of resistance was met with immediate violence by the guards. The prisoners were quickly sent to the undressing area, the women to the barracks where they had their hair cut, the men to the open square. Here, the Germans and Ukrainians often used force, building an atmosphere of terror in order to maintain control. When the prisoners were finally naked, they were forced toward a corridor ten feet wide and four hundred feet long, lined with SS men who literally whipped the horrified victims into a frenzied run to the gas chambers. Two Ukrainians, Ivan and Nikolai, locked the chamber doors and turned on the gas. Within two hours of arrival at the camp, the victims were dead. A Jewish crematorium commando cleaned out the chambers and burned the corpses.

It is difficult to imagine someone working at

Treblinka without being aware of the purpose of the camp. Tens of thousands arrived each week; virtually all of them disappeared. The screaming of the victims could be heard periodically throughout the day, followed by an awesome silence as they were gassed. The Polish farmers who worked nearby were keenly aware of the camp's true function. One of them, Pan Zabecki, has said, "You must imagine what it was like living here; every day, as of the early morning, these hours of horror when the trains arrived, and all the time — after the very first days — this odor, this dark foggy cloud that hung over us, that covered the sky in that hot and beautiful summer, even on the most brilliant days — not a rain cloud promising relief from the heat, but an almost sulphuric darkness bringing with it this pestilential smell."<sup>3</sup>

During the winter of 1942, the Jews in the work commandos began to plan a rebellion, realizing that it was only a matter of time until they too would be executed. Despite enormous difficulties, they managed to spark a general uprising on August 2, 1943, in which almost a thousand prisoners attempted to escape. While a score of SS men were killed in the uprising,

casualties were far more severe among the prisoners. Hundreds were shot down by Ukrainian guards in the watchtowers. It is estimated that 400 managed to break out of the camp and flee toward the forest, where they were mercilessly hunted by airplanes, detachments of SS, and hundreds of dogs. Only thirty-five people managed to survive. The six Israeli witnesses were among them.

In the fall of 1943, the *vernichtungslagers*, having accomplished their task, were gradually abandoned. The executions in Treblinka were terminated in October. In the two months that followed, the barracks, watchtowers and all wooden buildings were demolished, the gas chambers and crematorium were destroyed, and the entire camp was plowed under. Young pine trees were planted in an effort to camouflage the site, a field was sown with corn, and a Ukrainian family was brought in to settle the land. All traces of the camp were erased from the face of the earth; the Jews had simply disappeared.

After leaving Treblinka, Fedorenko's unit was transferred, first to Danzig and then to the POW camp in Poelitz, Germany. Here, Fedorenko again worked as a guard. When the Third Reich collapsed, he was in Hamburg, where he managed to work for the British from 1945 to 1949. While the Allies were checking former soldiers of the Reich in the search for war criminals, Fedorenko and his Ukrainian companions managed to pass themselves off as Polish refugees.

World politics shifted dramatically in the post-war years. The focus of U.S. foreign policy changed from the anti-fascist alliance to the struggle against world communism. In 1948, Congress passed the Displaced Persons' Act, primarily to aid the victims of the Nazis. Under its provisions, however, thousands of eastern Europeans were able to enter the United States as "refugees from communism." Fedo-



*Without Surrender.* Drawn in Buchenwald.



renko was among them. In 1949 he filed for immigration, listing his birthplace as Sarny, Poland, and scrupulously avoiding any mention of his work for the Germans. Sponsored by the right-wing Tolstoy Foundation, Fedorenko entered the United States in 1949, and settled on a farm near Litchfield, Connecticut.

#### THE U.S. AND TRIAL

For twenty-eight years, Feodor Fedorenko lived undisturbed. He tried a few different jobs and finally settled down in a factory in Waterbury where he worked in the foundry. His fellow employees describe him as "a real gentleman" who was "very conscientious;" his foreman remembers him as a man who never filed a grievance. Fedorenko worked at this job for twenty years. In 1970, he was granted U.S. citizenship. In 1976, having retired, he moved to Miami Beach.

But while Fedorenko's life was quiet, his name and face had not been forgotten. A collection of photographs and documents had been captured from the SS, and there were Treblinka survivors who identified him as a guard at the camp. Research done by private investigators led to the discovery that he was living in Connecticut. In the mid-sixties his name and Waterbury address were included on a list of fifty-nine war criminals living in America. The list was compiled in Europe and Israel and forwarded to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) in the United States. No action was taken.

The inactivity of the INS in regard to this list may be the result of more than simply ineptitude. There is evidence that the CIA recruited eastern European Nazi collaborators as "reliable anti-communists" during the Cold War. Some were used for intelligence gathering, while others worked for Radio Free Europe. In 1947 General Reinhardt Gehlen, chief of Wehrmacht intelligence on the Soviet Union, pro-



*General Reinhard Gehlen, CIA collaborator*

vided his services to the CIA; it is known that Gehlen's network relied extensively on Ukrainians from the OUN. There is speculation that the CIA actively discouraged any thorough investigation of the list by the INS.

In the early seventies Congressional Representatives Joshua Eilberg and Elizabeth Holtzman initiated a series of hearings on this question and succeeded in generating a full investigation by the Government Accounting Office (GAO). The GAO did discover that at least twenty-one alleged Nazi war criminals had at one time worked for the CIA, but it declared that it could find no CIA conspiracy to hamper the work of the INS. However, one result of the pressure brought by Eilberg and Holtzman was the creation of a Special Litigation Unit in the

INS with the sole responsibility of investigating the Nazi cases.

The information supplied in the mid-sixties was now put to use. In 1977 the INS furnished material to Justice Department prosecutors which finally led to a civil suit to strip Fedorenko of his U.S. citizenship. Such an action is the necessary prerequisite for deportation and trial overseas for war crimes.

The trial first opened in Waterbury, where testimony about the good character of the defendant was taken. It then moved to Florida. The first day of testimony was greeted by a noisy demonstration; residents of Miami Beach, many of them concentration camp survivors, were brought in to the District Court in Fort Lauderdale on buses chartered by the local Jewish Defense League.

The Treblinka survivors traveled to Florida at the expense of the Justice Department, accompanied by Martin Kolar and Maria Radwicher, Israeli police investigators who had helped supply information for the INS. There were problems from the start. When the Israelis met the Cuban-born Hebrew interpreter chosen for the trial, there was a shared feeling that she had only a limited command of the language, but their objections were dismissed by the prosecuting attorneys. The Israeli police also came prepared with material and photographs to aid the Justice Department, but much of this material was not used. The Israelis began to develop a sense that things were not being done properly.

As the trial progressed, this concern grew stronger. The first two survivors to testify, Eugen Turowski and Schalom Kohn, gave detailed accounts of their treatment at Treblinka and the role of Fedorenko in the camp. While they testified, Judge Roettger passed a few short notes to one of the court clerks, notes which the judge said later were simply "little jokes." One journalist was apprehended trying

to retrieve one of these "jokes" from the judge's wastebasket. When Turowski and Kohn had completed their testimony, Judge Roettger held a briefing for the press in which he declared that he did not believe in the veracity of the Israeli witnesses. Yet, at that time there were four survivors still to testify.

None of this behavior brought an objection from the prosecution. In fact, the prosecuting attorneys did not present a single procedural objection throughout the trial. As the Israeli police watched this performance, they became deeply embittered. According to Kolar, "It isn't what they did as much as what they didn't do. They didn't prepare for the case; they simply did not know the material. They hadn't read the transcripts from the earlier trials in Germany; they hadn't read the journals and memoirs of the SS or of the prisoners who survived; they couldn't even explain to the judge the uniforms worn at Treblinka. It was very disturbing to us."<sup>4</sup>

The testimony continued. Josef Czarny described how in Warsaw, after his parents and three sisters had died of starvation, he had surrendered to the SS for three kilos of bread. He had been sent to Treblinka, where he had seen Fedorenko shoot a prisoner near the camp "hospital." Rifka Abramovitz testified that she had seen the defendant shoot a prisoner near the crematorium. And Pinchas Epstein, who insisted upon and was finally granted a new translator, told the court how Fedorenko killed a man from Epstein's village.

The court was unimpressed.

Later in the trial, Fedorenko took the stand. Throughout questioning, he denied having committed any atrocities. At the close of cross-examination, the judge took the opportunity to ask his own questions. In the judge's words:

"... the court instructed the translator to ask whether defendant had done any of the shooting and beating of the prisoners as testified to in



*Federenko's unit participated in roundup of Warsaw Ghetto Jews.*

the courtroom, and instructed defendant to 'Please look at me, tell me either nyet or da, did you?'

From about ten feet away, with unobstructed eye contact, defendant's answer was sincere and strong: Nyet.

The court considered the answer credible.'"

On July 25, Judge Roettger delivered his verdict. His most fundamental decision was to reject the government's contention that Fedorenko had "participated in atrocities at Treblinka." The entire verdict was constructed from the logic of this decision. Judge Roettger accepted the government's contention that Fedorenko had suppressed information on his immigration form, but declared that "a suppressed fact is not material unless the truth would have justified denial of a visa." He cited *U.S. v. Chaunt* as the legal precedent for this

finding. Since Fedorenko had not harmed anyone at Treblinka, his failure to mention his service at the annihilation camp was not considered a "material" fact. Hence, the judge ruled, "This court specifically finds that petitioner lawfully entered the United States."

Likewise, Judge Roettger agreed that Fedorenko had lied when applying for citizenship, a misrepresentation which "would have been cause to deny defendant's application for citizenship," but ruled that now that citizenship had been granted, the misrepresentation must be proven to have been "material" in order to affect defendant's status. Again, service at Treblinka was declared immaterial. Consequently, "...the court cannot find under the circumstances that defendant was guilty of the kind of willful deceit which alone might justify a revocation of his citizenship."

Judge Roettger presented three basic reasons for disbelieving the survivors. He challenged the in-court identification of the defendant as "unreliable" because Eugen Turowski at first chose the wrong man, and Schalom Kohn and Josef Czarny chose the right man too quickly. Yet, in-court identification is clearly problematic when the defendant has aged thirty-five years, grown a mustache, and acquired dark-frame glasses. The alternative is identification of the defendant based on photographs from the years in question, the method which was used in Tel Aviv. Judge Roettger lodged his second objection on the grounds that the photo identification methods used by the Israeli police were unfair and suggestive because some of the witnesses were shown only eight different photographs and these were of varying sizes. The verdict states that "The photo spread simply does not pass muster under American law." Yet, the court record shows that the photo spread in question was prepared not by the Israelis, but by the American INS, whose own rules state "The witness should be shown a minimum of three photographs of other individuals" for suitable identification.

The third objection made by Judge Roettger was that the Israeli witnesses seemed to have learned the testimony by heart. This brought the strongest reaction from Rifka Abramovitz. "We did not need to learn the testimony by heart," she declared. "These things you remember always, with your heart, and you do not need to learn them again."

The judge's attitude appeared to flow from a basic trust in Fedorenko. He found that the defendant had been sent involuntarily to Travniki, had been forced to become a *wachmann* at Treblinka, and was, in effect, a "prisoner-guard." Of the defendant, Roettger declared, "It is clear that he was transported from place to place and was obliged to obey orders under penalty of death and was not free to do what-

ever he chose." Yet, such a set of circumstances would accurately describe any soldier in any army in the world. Fedorenko was indeed subject to the restrictions enumerated above, but this was in his capacity as an *oberwachmann* of the SS. It is true that Fedorenko and some of his comrades were originally POWs and were treated very badly in the German camps. It is also true that once they had completed training at Travniki and were issued Ukrainian SS uniforms, whips, pistols, and machine guns, they lost the stigma of prisoners and earned the status of military rank.

The judge's view can stand only in the absence of any real information on the voluntary role played by Ukrainians and the OUN in perpetrating the "final solution." Such information was at no time presented by the prosecution. Instead, they put forward an expert witness, Kempton Jenkins, who was familiar with the concentration camps in Germany, but totally unfamiliar with the annihilation camps of Poland. This was symptomatic of the general lack of preparation. The unsettling aspect of the trial was the systematic failure of the Justice Department to use adequately the information with which it had been provided. As Kolar expressed it, "The fact is that the evidence was there. The best job wasn't done, but there was certainly enough evidence to convict. The problem was that the way in which the case was presented actually helped the judge reach his verdict as he did."

The Justice Department filed an appeal in the Fifth Circuit Court in New Orleans. The Anti-defamation League and the American Jewish Congress submitted an *amicus curie* brief, written in part by historian Raul Hilberg. The brief argued that the court's decision "amounts to a proclamation to other suspected war criminals now in hiding or concealed in this country: live an anonymous life in New York, in Detroit or Chicago and it won't matter what

you did at Auschwitz, Treblinka, and Buchenwald."

On June 28, 1979 the Fifth Circuit Court reversed Judge Roettger's decision, based not on a different reading of the facts, but upon a disagreement with Roettger's interpretation of *U.S. v. Chaunt*. The Fifth Circuit ruled that a suppressed fact is material not only if truth would have justified denial of an immigration visa, but even if the truth would simply have prompted an investigation which would have led to the denial of a visa. On this basis the Court ordered Fedorenko denaturalized.

The case is now being appealed by Fedorenko's attorneys to the U.S. Supreme Court.

## AFTERMATH

The insufficient preparation by the Justice Department in the Fedorenko case does not augur well for the numerous cases soon to come to trial. There have already been charges of similar mishandling in the cases of Vilas Hazners and Harlis Detlavs. One case deserves particular attention. In the mid-sixties the notorious "Ivan", the young Ukrainian diesel expert who ran the gas chambers at Treblinka, was identified as Ivan Demjanjuk. Since 1952 Ivan Demjanjuk has been living in Cleveland, Ohio, where he is employed by the Ford Motor Company as a diesel mechanic. In early 1977 denaturalization charges were filed against Demjanjuk in Cleveland, but the Justice Department has yet to complete the necessary pre-trial hearings.

Voices in the Jewish community continue to wonder if the Nazis in America are being protected by powerful friends. The Jewish Defense League has called for the death of war criminals in the U.S., and during the past year an underground group calling itself the Jewish Armed Resistance has made four assassination attempts against alleged Nazis. While the appeals verdict in the Fedorenko case and the

recent upgrading of the Special Litigations Unit leave room for hope, the preparation and prosecution of well over a hundred other cases lags far behind. If the situation is not rectified, it is possible that scores of participants in the Final Solution will find permanent refuge in the United States.

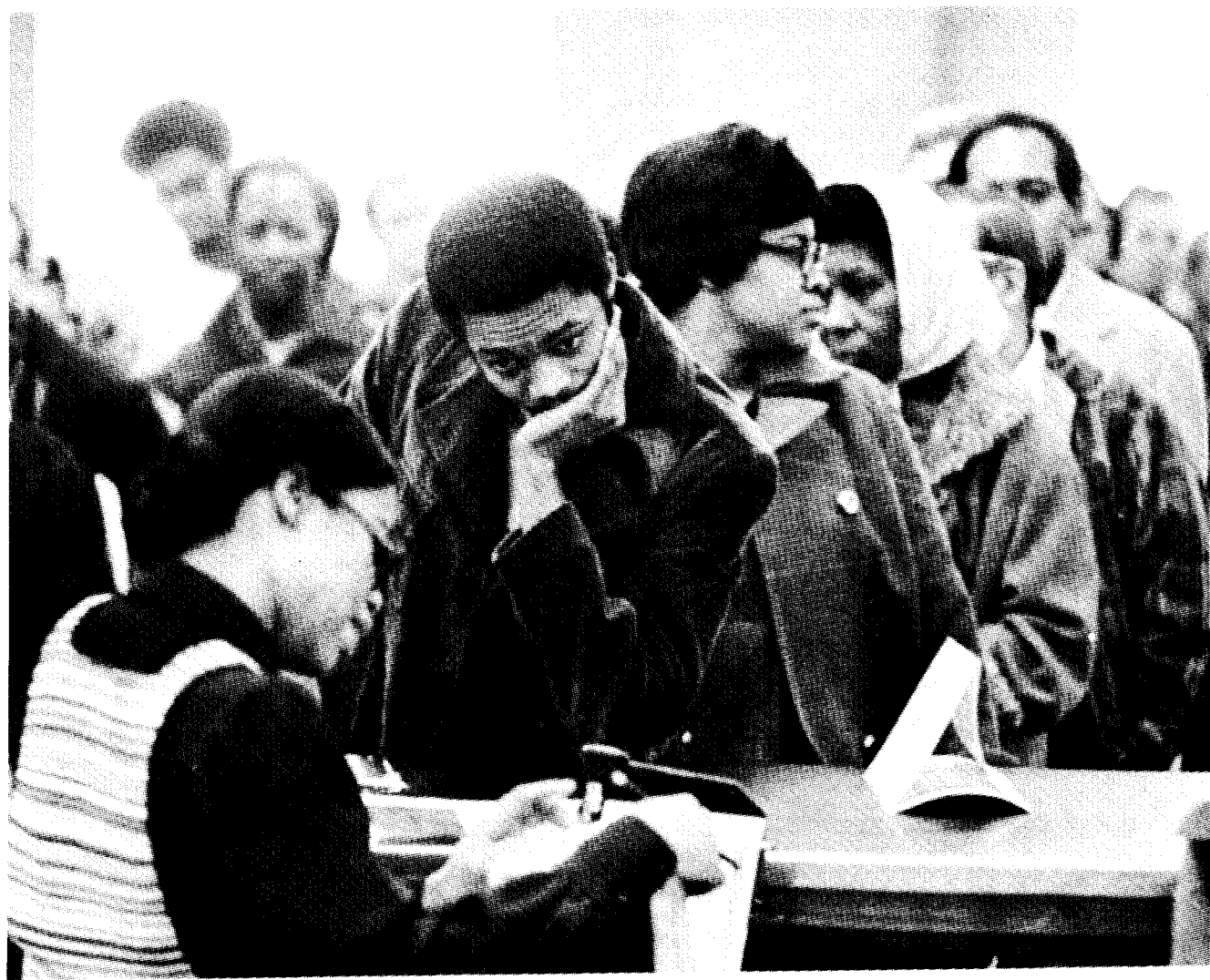
In 1920, many of the participants in the Ukrainian pogrom, along with most of the leadership of the Directorate, found refuge in western Europe. They were welcomed as refugees from Bolshevism. In response, the Federation of Ukrainian Jews in London issued a booklet on the pogrom which declared, "the principal murderers and the guilty ones are at the present moment in full liberty and go entirely unpunished, since most, if not all of them, have gone to countries within the sphere of influence of the League of Nations. We demand that an exemplary punishment should be visited upon them."<sup>6</sup> No action was taken against any of these men by any European government. It is the shame of the western democracies that they continue to be the historical refuge for the destroyers of eastern European Jewry.

## FOOTNOTES

1. Interview with the author, September 15, 1978. This is not her real name.
2. "Rozbudova Natsiyi," Prague, 1929. Quoted in *Lest We Forget* by Michael Hanusiak, New York, 1975. p. 4.
3. Quoted in *Into That Darkness* by Gitta Sereny. New York: McGraw Hill, 1974. P. 155.
4. Interview with the author, September 25, 1978.
5. Verdict of Judge Roettger in *U.S. v. Feodor Fedorenko*, p. 28.
6. *The Ukraine Terror and the Jewish Peril*, published by the Federation of Ukrainian Jews, London, 1921. P. 6.

---

MATTHEW RINALDI is a member of Teamsters for a Democratic Union and a frequent contributor to Radical America.



# HOT CHILD IN THE CITY

## Urban Crisis, Urban Renaissance & Urban Struggle

Philip Mattera

Suddenly, the urban crisis in the United States has supposedly been transformed into an urban renaissance. In recent months the press, government officials, businessmen, and academic experts have come forth with a wave of articles and pronouncements claiming that the nightmare is over, that the declining cities of the Northeast, especially New York, have come to life again with a burst of economic activity. One newspaper columnist has felt confident enough to declare, "The inner cities of America are poised for a stunning comeback, a turnabout in their fortunes that could be one of the most significant developments in our national history."<sup>1</sup> A major magazine article entitled "The Urban Crisis Leaves Town" has stated that, "Instead of being 'black, brown, and broke,' cities are attracting affluent people from all over the world, and in some fortunate cases at least, finding themselves with more revenues than they know how to spend."<sup>2</sup> In the case of New York City, a city that has been depicted as on the brink of bankruptcy since 1975, a leading business publication has detected "a new mood of stability and optimism that hasn't been seen in years."<sup>3</sup>

Yet within all the hoopla about redevelopment there have been some clear cautionary statements. One government economist has warned that the present improvement "is not a real recovery. Another recession could set the cities back farther than they were in the last one."<sup>4</sup> Near the end of a glittering forty-page special advertising section in *Business Week* magazine promoting the economic revival of New York, a corporate executive who played a major role in the implementation of fiscal austerity in the city speaks of the need to "continue the hard measures as long as necessary."<sup>5</sup> Felix Rohatyn, an investment banker

---

who was another key figure in the same process of introducing retrenchment, has stated darkly that, "New York is still in for a state of siege from a budgetary point of view."<sup>6</sup>

At the same time, liberal groups such as the National Urban League point to poverty and unemployment statistics to suggest that nothing much has changed in the ghettos. City finances are being squeezed by cutbacks in federal aid and by the rapidly growing right-wing movement to cut public spending at the local as well as the national level.

Moreover, there is a great deal of unevenness in the redevelopment that is taking place — unevenness among cities, parts of cities, and groups of the population within the cities, as well as between the public and the private sectors. Kansas City is said to be thriving, while Cleveland is advancing quickly along the "road to ruin" blazed by New York. In reborn New York itself, Manhattan is said to be experiencing a boom, while the other boroughs generally continue to stagnate. And in all areas of the renaissance, it is the so-called "new urban elite" of "affluent, young professionals" who are prospering, while working-class people are being pushed out of the newly desirable center cities and in many cases are forced to adopt a life of urban nomadism.

The process of urban revival is thus not without its ambiguities and contradictions. In general, it is still unclear exactly who or what is being reborn and why others are continuing to die. The task now is to sort out the phenomena in order to analyze the relationship between redevelopment and continued austerity in the current stage of the crisis. We can see that capital is seeking to resolve the crisis of the cities on its own terms, through new forms of urban accumulation along with further urban containment. At the same time, the working class of the cities has been developing resolutions on its own account. These two processes

and their relationship to one another need to be examined closely. The aim here is to contribute to this investigation, largely through an examination of the changing situation in New York, which continues to be in the vanguard of urban developments.

It is sometimes only in the darkness that the truth of a situation comes to light. In the months following the transformation of financial and political power in New York by the combined action of the federal and state governments, the large banks, and the municipal union bureaucracy — a process that included a staggering series of budget cutbacks and attacks on public workers — there was surprisingly little mass resistance by the people of the city. True, there were a few abortive wildcat strikes of city workers, some official walkouts that resulted in little or no gains, a series of ineffective demonstrations protesting the cutbacks, and some short-lived self-reduction actions against increases in the transit fare. In general, though, it appeared that the Emergency Financial Control Board and the rest of the new financial junta had a free hand in bringing the city back to "living within its means." Regarding the causes of the crisis as well as the response to it, there was general agreement among liberals and leftists that, as one radical analyst put it, "Not only did the poor people and public workers who are being blamed for the crisis not play an active role in creating it, they hardly understand it. They understand only its tragedies."<sup>7</sup>

On the evening of July 13, 1977 the image of a defeated and paralyzed population was suddenly shattered. After a power blackout plunged the city into darkness, tens of thousands of people immediately poured into the streets and began an explosion of looting. Police were rendered virtually helpless as hundreds of shops in ghetto areas across the city were stripped clean of merchandise ranging



---

from food and drugs to television sets, jewelry, and even automobiles and guns. The degree of organization of this uprising was extraordinary: chains attached to stolen trucks were used to tear off the iron gates from shop windows; snipers inhibited the movement of police, whose position was reported by young children acting as scouts; makeshift warehouses were set up for the larger loot; and people confidently paused from their pillaging to tell nervous reporters, "You take your chance when you get your chance. We're poor and this is our way of getting rich."<sup>8</sup> The momentum of the activity was such that it continued in broad daylight the next day, and by the time Black Christmas was over, initial estimates of the cost of looting and damage ran as high as \$1 billion, which was, coincidentally, roughly the amount by which the city budget had been cut in the previous three years.<sup>9</sup>

The "proper citizens" of the city were stunned and quite frightened by this explosion of rage and unabashed appropriation of wealth. They seemed to have forgotten that only a few months earlier a report by the federal Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism had warned: "The present tranquility is deceptive. It is urged that it not be taken as a sign that disorder in the United States is a thing of the past. Many of the traditional indicators for disorder are clearly present and need but little stimulus to activate them."

Truly prophetic words, but in the case of New York in particular, the "indicators for disorder" went far beyond the traditional ones. Both the context and characteristics of Black Christmas were quite different from those of the urban uprisings of the 1960's across the country (including New York in 1964 and 1968). The 1977 phenomenon was not a case of a marginalized population protesting its exclusion from economic development, but rather was a moment in which the "quiet resistance"

to the monetary terrorism inflicted on the city was intensified and extended to a mass level. Black Christmas was not a ghetto riot at all, since the ghetto in traditional terms had been substantially transformed and in some sense had ceased to exist. In spatial terms, the poor were no longer segregated in clearly defined parts of the city. The authors of the only serious study of Black Christmas have concluded, "The widespread looting suggests that the popular notion of the ghetto as a geographically delineated area is no longer useful in marking where the poor minorities live."<sup>11</sup> But more crucial is the fact that the era of black and Latin upheaval of the 1960's and early 1970's, especially the welfare rights movement, seriously undermined the structural role of the ghetto as a reserve of passive and malleable cheap labor.<sup>12</sup>

What made the blackout looting most revealing in this regard was the absence of political (in the narrow sense of the word) content. There was none of the radical antagonism that characterized the riots of the 1960's; in fact, this time around, black-owned businesses were hit along with white ones. As the Curvin and Porter study put it, "The looters saw only the value of the merchandise and cared little for the color of its owner."<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the struggle represented by the looting did not have state policy as its object. The uprising was not concerned with modifying or increasing federal programs, or winning a larger social wage from the government. The reason was that the black and Latin communities, recognizing that the state was no longer willing to spend more money in attempts to cool off things in the inner cities, made their target readily accessible goods, there for the taking once the shop windows were smashed and the police overwhelmed. If the strategy of the federal government and the city's financial junta was to impoverish the public sector and allow private

business to prosper, then when it came time for people to "take care of business," it was private business that was taken care of.

The emphasis on appropriation in the 1977 uprising suggested the extent to which the black and Latin communities had, in fact, been fighting fiscal austerity. In addition to recognizing the ambiguous nature of many of these functions of the state which were being cut back — many public "services" are essentially forms of social control — and thus not bothering to protest too much, people began to turn away from the state in the search for the means of survival. To some extent this meant an increase in outright criminal activities. There was also a sharp rise in those semi-criminal activities that have come to be known as the "underground economy."<sup>14</sup> More and more people responded to official austerity by arranging to work "off the books" in a variety of occupations. Besides evading taxes through hustling, people began to look for new ways to collect welfare, unemployment insurance, disability payments, or Social Security at the same time. The underground economy thus involves both another aspect of the turning away from the state for the means of survival as well as a turning back to the state on new terms, namely the use of fraud rather than political pressure in seeking a larger social wage. The efforts to force the state to pay out more than the planners had ever intended grew more successful, and the newspapers became filled with complaints about "welfare cheats" and phoney unemployment insurance claims. There was a working class precedent for this in the 1960s, when married couples deliberately separated ("fiscal abandonment") so that the women would be eligible for welfare. But the "milking of the state" had by 1977 taken on a myriad of new forms and had come to be practiced by wider and wider sections of the class. It was this overall criminalization of the struggle (or simply its going

underground), along with the quiet looting of government programs, which meant that the mass response to austerity would take the form of Black Christmas rather than marching on City Hall.

## PUBLIC WORKERS

Black Christmas also exhibited new behavior on the part of public workers, specifically the police. At the time of the blackout the cops were involved in a dispute with the city administration concerning wages and working conditions (the police were not exempted from the austerity), so only 5000 of the 15,000 officers off duty when the lights went out responded to Mayor Beame's call for immediate mobilization. Even those cops who were on the job often seemed unenthusiastic about putting down the uprising; although more than 3,000 people were arrested, not a single looter was shot by the police. In fact, this was not the first incident of the period in which the esprit de corps of the police was weakened. The previous September, during an earlier stage of the police labor dispute, off-duty cops — in the course of one of their many disruptive demonstrations at the time — encouraged youths who were gate-crashing at the Mohammed Ali-Ken Norton boxing match at Yankee Stadium.

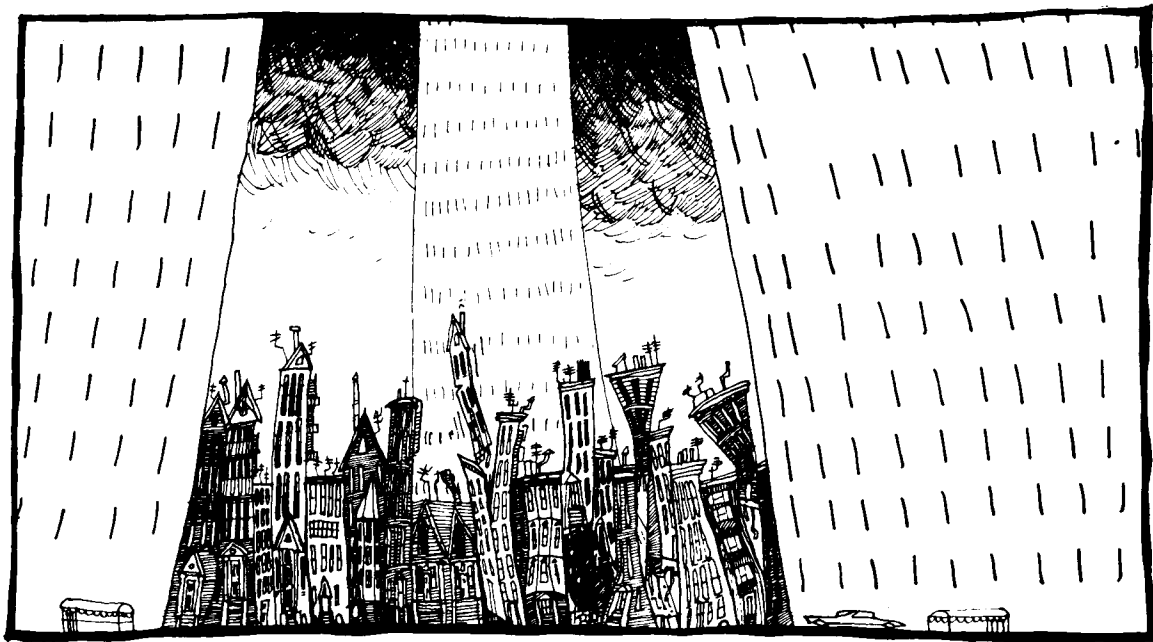
The struggles of public workers in New York had for a long time a unique relationship to the struggles of the poor.<sup>15</sup> The riots of 1964 and the ghetto rent strike movement of the same period helped generate an era of city worker militancy that was marked by the welfare workers' strike of 1965, the transit strike of 1966, the teachers' strike of 1968, and the firefighters' and police wildcats of 1968 and 1971. The struggles of the poor and those of public workers — despite the fact that they were often directly opposed to one another — resulted in stunning gains for both groups. The dynamic was such that the divisions in the urban

working class were turned around and used against capital, with the result that city workers could no longer be relied upon to control the poor, who themselves could no longer be counted on to function as a reserve labor supply to undermine the power of workers in the private sector.

The cops, whose behavior vis-a-vis the city administration during the 1960's was as militant as that of other public workers in New York, were consequently targeted along with other groups in the course of the layoffs implemented beginning in December 1974. Hence the police played a central role in the largest mass action taken against austerity prior to Black Christmas: in July 1975, after Mayor Beame carried out thousands of scheduled dismissals, the city's 10,000 sanitation workers staged a wild-cat strike; hundreds of laid-off cops blockaded the Brooklyn Bridge and fought with on-duty cops; hundreds of firefighters called in "sick;"

and traffic controllers staged job actions during the rush hours. This overwhelming display of militancy turned out to be short-lived, however, as the police and firefighters decided not to strike, and the sanitation workers ended their three-day walkout with an agreement that amounted to the first in what would be a long series of city worker defeats. Nearly 3,000 laid-off sanitation workers were rehired, but on the condition that their wages be paid with \$1.6 million in union funds. This unusual settlement marked the beginning of the state role of the municipal union bureaucracy, its active participation in the implementation of austerity.

Following the imposition of a three-year wage freeze in the summer of 1975, the teachers' union settled a nine-day strike with a contract that included no basic wage increase and only a small cost of living adjustment — and even this was rejected by the new Emergency Financial Control Board, which had



Working Papers

*Arndelt*

given itself veto power over city labor contracts. In April 1976, the transit workers union averted a strike at the last moment with a contract agreement that again contained no basic wage increase, again had a meager cost of living adjustment, and again was later vetoed by the Control Board and replaced unilaterally with another set of terms. But by this time the strategy of the financial junta had advanced: instead of absolutely opposing any increase in compensation, they were willing to tolerate small cost of living adjustments so long as they were financed by demonstrable increases in worker productivity. The strategy was to establish strict control of total wages and thus avoid any repetition of the "leapfrogging" dynamics of the 1960's, as well as bring about substantial changes in work rules. Given the meaninglessness of the concept of productivity as applied to most municipal jobs, the aim of the junta was not so much increasing "output" as it was increasing control over the public work force. This same deal was readily accepted by the leaders of the unions of 200,000 other city workers when they signed new contracts in June. These leaders also agreed to \$24 million in further reductions of benefits and promised to participate in a newly formed labor-management committee on productivity. Even the labor editor of the usually reactionary New York *Daily News* wrote that he was surprised at the extent to which the unions had "joined the mayor's management team."<sup>16</sup>

This integration of the union leadership into the state was defended as essential for the process of "saving the city from bankruptcy." Victor Gotbaum, head of the largest municipal union, declared his enthusiasm for his new role when he stated in 1976, "We must set up an efficiency-productivity system in this city that is the envy of the rest of the nation."<sup>17</sup> The unions were also brought into the state through the leadership's agreement to invest nearly \$4

billion (out of \$11 billion in total assets) of pension funds in the very city notes and bonds that the large banks had dumped in 1974, precipitating the budget crisis. Rank and file workers were thereby seriously inhibited in any attempt to resist the collusion of the union leaders, since the financial junta could respond by declaring bankruptcy and thus jeopardize the retirement money.

## PUBLIC/PRIVATE RESPONSE

The new composition of state power over the city has not been limited to the new role of the unions. There has also been a dramatic and decisive transformation of the involvement of the private sector as well as the state and federal governments in city affairs.

In the early stages of the implementation of austerity in 1975 it was the open intervention of the business community that was most remarkable. In June, Mayor Beame and Governor Carey bowed to business pressure and agreed to the creation of the Municipal Assistance Corporation, whose key members turned out to be investment banker Felix Rohatyn and William Ellinghaus, president of New York Telephone Company. MAC was ostensibly designed to help the city borrow money after it had been shut out of the capital markets, but Rohatyn and company wasted no time in pushing through the wage freeze as well as a large increase in the transit fare and a large decrease in funding for the City University. By the end of the summer, the new junta decided it needed an even more powerful body to carry out its plans for disciplining the city. The result came in September, with the creation of the Emergency Financial Control Board, whose main figures were again Rohatyn and Ellinghaus. Further corporate intervention was carried out through the creation of a Management Advisory Board headed by the president of Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and the appointment

of business executives to the posts of deputy mayor, budget director, and operations chief. One leading member of the financial establishment could hardly disguise his glee at these developments, telling a corporate gathering that, "Business is being presented with an opportunity of a lifetime."<sup>18</sup> The aim of this intervention, however, was not a permanent corporate takeover of the city administration. The business executives were willing to come out of their usual behind-the-scenes role for the sake of introducing "rational business techniques" in the areas of accounting and productivity.

At the same time, the state government was steadily eroding the autonomy of the city. Governor Carey, along with Rohatyn, exercised decisive influence over the policies of the Control Board and thereby brought about greater state control over city finances, including the takeover of city income tax collection and the effective assumption of power over the City University.

Yet the most significant, though most overlooked, development has been the role of federal intervention in promoting austerity in New York. In 1975, the Control Board abandoned the plan of formal bankruptcy and instead won agreement from the Ford administration for a \$2.3 billion direct-loan program — an arrangement which put the federal Treasury Secretary in a position to dictate fiscal terms to the city, since he was empowered to cease the short-term loan installments at any time if he felt there were not "a reasonable prospect of repayment." As negotiations on new contracts with city workers were beginning in 1976, Treasury Secretary William Simon and Senate Banking Committee Chairman William Proxmire repeatedly warned that the loan program would be terminated if the wage freeze were broken in the settlements. Simon put it bluntly: "I have to have a

complete assurance that wages are not going to be increased, or I'm not going to advance the money."<sup>19</sup>

It was thus that the federal government was ultimately responsible for the imposition of the productivity principle in the 1976 contracts. The situation did not change when the Carter Administration took office in 1977. The new treasury secretary, Michael Blumenthal, soon remarked in the manner of his predecessor: "In our view a lot has been done by the city — cutting the budget, stripping away expenditures, freezing wages — and all that is very, very good. But there have to be renewed efforts."<sup>20</sup> As the 1978 contract deadline for city workers approached, Blumenthal, along with Proxmire, warned the city to keep wage increases to a minimum. In June of that year the majority of municipal unions accepted new contracts that included wage increases of only 5 percent over two years, and the following month a \$1.6 billion federal loan-guarantee scheme, created to replace the expiring short-term loan program, included a provision for closer federal monitoring of the productivity of city workers.

#### DECREASE IN THE SOCIAL WAGE

It is still not clear to what extent this unprecedented interference in city finances and labor relations by the private sector and the state and federal governments has succeeded. Black Christmas showed that the transformation of state power and the introduction of austerity could not be accomplished totally without social upheaval. But the question is whether the "expectations" of public workers and the poor population of the city have indeed been rolled back. In the case of city workers there has clearly been a worsening of pay, benefits, and working conditions. Yet there are signs that the financial junta's aim of imposing discipline based on productivity has not been

realized. Absenteeism is reported to be on the rise, and officials admitted recently that productivity has not risen significantly in the past three years.

The success of the austerity strategy in dealing with the poor population of the city is even more difficult to gauge. For one thing, whereas the assault on public workers was primarily carried out by the financial junta of the city and state, the task of dealing with the poor has necessarily fallen more directly to the federal government by means of its general welfare and urban policies.

In the course of the campaign against welfare "fraud" and "ineligibility," federal officials have concentrated on New York, using the city as their main laboratory. The two main assaults have been the use of computer crosschecks to find people who may be receiving welfare and other income at the same time, and the drive to force women off the welfare rolls by hunting for "runaway husbands" and making them assume financial responsibility for their families — whether the woman wants it or not. Yet neither the federal government nor local officials have dared to cut benefit levels, and Carter's plan for welfare "reform," which includes strict work requirements, has remained stalled in Congress for two years as legislators worry whether that or any scheme could succeed in restoring the incentive to work at waged jobs.

Although Carter's welfare proposal is largely repressive, his proposed general urban plan, announced in March 1978, was given a more benevolent facade. Yet a closer look at the plan, which amounts to the federal strategy for the redevelopment of the poor, reveals a blend of continued austerity, containment, and a repressive form of ghetto self-management. It is significant that the proposal calls for little new funding, and most of the resources that will be committed will go to business through

tax credits and loan guarantees by a National Development Bank. There would also be \$1 billion spent nationally on labor-intensive public works projects, which would include the hiring of the "hard-core unemployed" at sub-standard wages. But the most important elements of this New Partnership are the direct financing of local neighborhood self-help groups and the creation of an urban volunteer corps of local professionals. The aim is to help create the state in the neighborhood through the fostering of a local governing elite made up of small-businessmen and community leaders, who would use "honesty" and "self-help" ideologies against the current organization of power in the inner cities. Through the generous funding stipulated for crime control in the Carter plan, this new elite would work to uproot the underground economy in the name of legitimate development.

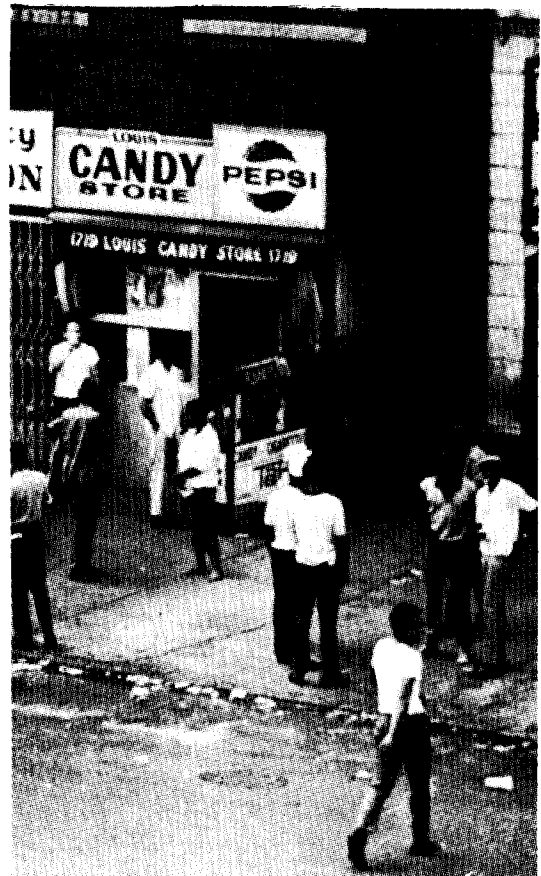
All of this amounts to a sort of Carter urban "socialism," based on repressive self-reliance and mutual surveillance. Having recognized that any sort of large-scale accumulation of capital is now impossible in the inner city, the federal government is promoting smaller, marginal enterprises as well as cooperative endeavors. This may be an attempt to reappropriate the terrain of the underground economy, turning it from a means of resisting austerity into an opportunity for capital to achieve high levels of exploitation in peripheral operations.

While the overall Carter plan remains blocked in Congress along with the welfare scheme (largely for the same reasons), elements of the strategy are already being put into effect in New York. After Carter's theatrical visit to the South Bronx in October 1977, the city government drew up a five-year development plan for the area. Following the thrust of the federal initiative, the city proposal included, aside from an industrial park, job training, and housing rehabilitation, a \$12 million intensive

anti-crime effort for the sake of "community and industrial security." The role of mutual surveillance and repression is clearly stated in the anti-crime document: "By active participation between police and community, persons who are chronically disruptive and menace neighborhood security will no longer be anonymous but will be identified as problem individuals. Once such persons have been identified, community and law enforcement pressures will be directed at preventive correcting and eliminating disruptive behavior."<sup>21</sup>

Repressive self-management is also at the heart of a number of programs already initiated in New York by the financial junta. One scheme involves making community groups in the ghetto the landlords of buildings seized by the city. Leaders of these groups are thus responsible for collecting rents and maintaining security in the buildings. In another program, self-reliance in the face of austerity is being encouraged through a project to help inner city residents plant vegetable gardens in vacant lots.<sup>22</sup>

Overall, the success of capital's strategy for New York — and by extension, for all of urban America — remains uncertain. Yet there can no longer be much doubt as to what the strategy is all about. For the poor the austerity/redevelopment process means the elimination of more and more aspects of the social wage and their replacement with marginal enterprises under the control of the private sector and local elites. For public workers it means the forced restoration of "professionalism" and the rationalization of the city administration along business lines. The overall aim is not to dismantle the public sector entirely, but rather to control and redirect urban public expenditures and government functions in a way that contributes to the emerging new form of capital accumulation in the cities, particularly New York.



*Street in South Bronx. Photo by Klaus Lehnartz.*

## GENTRIFICATION AND THE URBAN RENAISSANCE

What exactly is this new form of accumulation? On the one hand, as we have described, it involves the containment of the poor in labor-intensive, marginal enterprises whose aim is related more to social control than to viable business operation. At the same time, there has been another redevelopment process, one which has been played up in the press as the urban renaissance. The exact nature of this so-called renaissance is still hard to determine, but it seems to involve a new demographic structure

---

of the cities and further development of the technical and service functions of urban areas.

The new population arrangement is being carried out by means of changes in housing patterns. The "white, middle-class flight to the suburbs" is being replaced with a process that has come to be known as gentrification — the movement of whites back into the "declining areas" of the cities. While this process has been widely hailed as a key aspect of the process of urban revitalization, thousands of working class families have been forced out of their homes by the sudden boom in real estate prices in formerly run-down areas. The boldest of the recent articles on redevelopment has come right out and argued that the only hope for the inner cities is for the rich to reoccupy them: "Urban experts and politicians are beginning to understand that only the middle and upper classes — not the poor — can rebuild cities."<sup>23</sup>

The gentrification movement represents a major setback to the urban housing struggles of the past fifteen years, but there is another side to the process. The phenomenon is not simply a matter of the "new urban elite," moving back into the cosmopolitan center cities, having grown bored with the suburbs. The transformation of neighborhoods is also a function of the transformation of the family. The dissolution of working class communities is not only a result of greedy real estate speculators invading from the outside, but also a result of the internal upheaval in the working class family. The new living arrangements brought about by the pressures of the women's and gay movements — including the rapidly growing number of people living alone — have themselves brought about basic alterations in housing patterns and demographic structure. At the same time, the breakdown of the ghetto as an isolated zone has led to more mobility within cities, putting further pressures on older communities. In general, much of what is depicted

as part of the reappropriation of the city by the rich may actually be signs of the defeat of the containment strategies included in federal urban policy.

## WORKING CLASS RESPONSE

Once again we are confronted with uncertainty, both in terms of capitalist strategy and working class struggle. On the side of capital, there has been a failure to devise a coherent, permanent plan for the cities. Carter's urban and welfare proposals remain tied up in Congress, and there is a lot of confusion surrounding the calls for major cuts in public spending. The planners seem to fear that neither of the usual social control methods — using austerity to keep people hustling for survival, or using spending to try to coopt struggle — can work any longer. Rohatyn has warned that, "The same prescription that has been used in New York is the right one for the country as a whole." Yet the future of that "prescription" is very much in doubt, and the financial junta in New York seems to go from one makeshift strategy to another.

There have also been confusion and problems in the organized working class response to the crisis and repressive redevelopment. Some of the major efforts at resistance have fallen into the trap of self-management of austerity, the main example of this being the struggle at Co-op City in New York's borough of The Bronx. Co-Op City is a giant housing project (the largest in the U.S.) that was built with tax subsidies and that came to be managed in effect by the state government. The 60,000 residents of the project carried out an extremely effective thirteen-month rent strike in 1975 and 1976 in response to state attempts to raise rents 100 percent over several years. The strike was settled by an agreement in which the tenants would manage the project themselves and



---

decide if rent increases were "necessary." Not surprisingly, a year later the tenant managers accepted the "inevitable" and not only raised the rents, but also reduced services.<sup>24</sup>

Yet the fact is that the Co-Op City strike represented the most powerful organized struggle against the "money shortage" strategy of the financial junta. The problem came after the strike was seemingly won and the tenants looked for a way to implement their victory. Their attempt to use a grass-roots form of self-management obviously had nothing in common with the repressive forms of self-management contained in Carter's urban policy. But the very fact that the tenants ended up imposing on themselves exactly what they had been fighting against in the strike illustrates the difficulty of achieving a genuine form of self-management until austerity has been defeated. Still, people are trying to make that leap from self-management of poverty to autonomy. This is what is happening on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, where the East 11th Street Movement and others have taken over abandoned buildings and renovated them for people in the area. It is also what was being done in the South Bronx at Lincoln Detox, a people's health center that was established by the Young Lords in 1970. Yet it is still unclear to what extent these efforts have indeed gone beyond self-management of poverty. The ambiguity is also suggested by the different responses by the financial junta to these initiatives: the seizure and renovation of abandoned buildings was legitimized through the invention of the notion of "sweat equity," while Lincoln Detox was forcibly closed down by an army of cops in November 1978.

As this political stalemate has continued, the working class of the cities has grown more restless and some sectors have become explosive. Black Christmas in New York in 1977 has

turned out not to be an isolated event. The following winter, in February 1978, looting broke out during severe snowstorms in Boston, Providence, and other cities of the Northeast, with some looters using stolen snowmobiles to move about. Later, in May, members of the Chicano community in Houston rioted and looted during protests against police brutality. Then in August, as police and firefighters in Memphis were out on a wildcat strike a short power failure touched off a wave of looting in that city. Most recently, in February 1979, heavy snowstorms in the eastern U.S. were followed by widespread looting in Baltimore and Washington, as well as, significantly, in some of the newly "proletarianized" suburbs of those cities. One cop in Baltimore described the situation as looking "like World War III," while the Wild West nature of the situation was heightened by the city's police chief, who traveled around town inspecting police operations on horseback, wearing a cowboy hat (no doubt on the lookout for metropolitan Indians).

It is undeniable that nearly every case of looting has depended on some accidental situation, such as a power failure or snowstorm. Such moments, when working class people exploit "acts of God", are indeed formidable but they are necessarily rare and short-lived. At the same time, the appropriation of wealth involved in the looting has represented the strongest challenge to the austerity campaign of business and government. What we are left with, then, are two forms of struggle that each provide only one of two necessary elements. Grass-roots self-management allows some measure of independence from capitalist institutions but by itself is unable to overcome austerity. Looting creates some immediate satisfaction of material needs but obviously is a momentary phenomenon with no viable form of organization. The problem is to find an approach which combines the two and thus can

solve both the material and the organizational requirements. At the moment this task seems insurmountable, but the situation is changing every day.

In 1976 the publisher of the elite journal *New York Affairs* candidly wrote that, "Whether or

not the promises of social and economic entitlements of the 1960s can be rolled back to a lower order of magnitude is what is being tested in New York."<sup>25</sup> Three years later, in New York and other cities, the final results of that test have yet to be determined.

#### FOOTNOTES

1. Neal R. Peirce, quoted in Franz Schurmann and Sandy Close, "The Emergence of Global City U.S.A.," *The Progressive*, January, 1979.
2. T.D. Allman, "The Urban Crisis Leaves Town — And Moves to the Suburbs," *Harper's*, December, 1978.
3. Harold Seneker, "New York, New York," *Forbes*, 26 June 1978.
4. Deborah Norelli of the Joint Economic Committee, quoted in *Business Week*, 22 January 1979.
5. William Ellinghaus, *Business Week*, 9 October 1978.
6. *New York Times*, 6 January 1979.
7. John Mollenkopf, "The Crisis of the Public Sector in America's Cities," in Roger Alcaly and David Mermelstein, eds., *The Fiscal Crisis of American Cities*, Vintage Books, 1977.
8. *Time*, 25 July 1977.
9. Estimates cited in the *New York Times*, 16 July 1977.
10. National Advisory Committee on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, *Report of the Task Force on Disorders and Terrorism*, 1976.
11. Robert Curvin and Bruce Porter, *Blackout Looting!* Gardner Press, 1979, p. 112.
12. For more on this era of struggle, see: Michael Lipsky, *Protest in City Politics*, Rand McNally, 1970; Larry Jackson and William Johnson, "Protest By the Poor: The Welfare Rights Movement in New York City," RAND Corporation study R-791-NYC, August 1973; Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor*, Vintage Books, 1972, and *Poor People's Movements*, Pantheon Books, 1977; and Donna Demac and Philip Mattera, "Developing and Underdeveloping New York: The Fiscal Crisis and the Imposition of Austerity," *Zerowork* 2, 1977.

13. Curvin and Porter, p. 50.
14. For more on the underground economy, see: Louis Ferman et al., "Analysis of the Irregular Economy: Cash Flow in the Informal Sector," Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, March 1978; *Fortune*, 9 October 1978; and *Wall Street Journal*, 30 November 1978.
15. The following pages are taken largely from Demac and Mattera, *op. cit.*
16. *New York Daily News*, 2 July 1976.
17. *Ibid.*, 4 February 1976.
18. *New York Times*, 22 November 1977.
19. *Ibid.*, 21 June 1976.
20. *Ibid.*, 11 March 1977.
21. *New York Times*, 10 April 1978.
22. On the building management schemes see *Wall Street Journal*, 29 September 1977, and *New York Times*, 13 April 1978; on the farming scheme, see *New York Times*, 26 April 1977.
23. Blake Fleetwood, "The New Elite and An Urban Renaissance," *New York Times Magazine*, 14 January 1979.
24. For more on the Co-Op City struggle, see: *New York Post*, 31 January 1976; *The Guardian* (New York), 4 February 1976; *Liberation*, Spring 1976; *Rolling Stone*, 6 October 1977; and *Network* (magazine of People's Housing Network), December 1977.
25. L.D. Solomon, *New York Times*, 21 February 1976.

---

*PHILIP MATTERA was an editor of ZERO-WORK magazine and has written frequently on urban problems.*

---

"...the most impressive journal of intellectual opinion to have appeared on the scene in years."

William Styron

**Subscribe Now!**

# *Marxist Perspectives*

## **Forthcoming Articles:**

*Christopher Hill*

*Carlos Fuentes*

*Owen Lattimore*

*Ann J. Lane*

*Ernest Mandel*

*Carl Marzani*

*Bertell Ollman*

*Joann Magdoff*

*Herbert Aptheker*

*Gertrud Lenzer*

*M. Jane Slaughter*

*James Livingston*

*Sidney Mintz*

*Jacob Neusner*

*Michel Melot*

*Lucia Chiavola Birnbaum*

*A. G. Quintero-Rivera*

*Susan Fox*

*Ann Lauterbach*

*Samuel Zelnick*

**Religion & Revolution**

**Styron's Sophie**

**Mongolian Collectivization**

**Linda Gordon's Marxism-Feminism**

**Eurocommunism**

**Berlinguer & The Bishop Of Ivrea: An Exchange of Letters**

**Review Of Works On Marxist Theory Of History**

**The Mass & The Mid-day Meal**

**Review Of Genovese On Slave Revolts**

**Auguste Comte & The Future**

**Feminism & Socialism**

**Romeo And Juliet**

**Food, Time, & Sugar**

**Jewish Law & Women**

**Camille Pissarro, Anarchistic Artist**

**Sicilian American Women**

**On Puerto Rico**

**Poetry**

**Poetry**

**Melville's Bartleby The Scrivener**

If you have a one-year subscription to MP and have received your fourth issue, it will be your last unless you renew now.

Send prepaid orders to

**The Clionar Corporation/MP**

**420 West End Avenue**

**New York, NY 10024**

*Published Quarterly*  
*Subscription Rates (in U.S.\$)*



	1 year	2 years	3 years
Individual	\$18.	\$33.	\$46.
Institutions	\$30.	\$55.	\$76.

Outside USA add \$3. per year for surface mail; add \$12. per year for air mail.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip/Country \_\_\_\_\_



# **“WITH BABIES AND BANNERS”**

## **A Review**

Susan Reverby

“With Babies and Banners: Story of the Women’s Emergency Brigade” is an award-winning political documentary made by the Women’s Labor History Film Project. It blends past and present and historical fact and cinemagraphic imagination, appealing to our intellect and our emotions. The film sets the record straight on the critical importance of women in a key 1930s strike in the male bastion of auto production. More broadly, it explores the politicizing of these women by looking at the links between home and work life and at the difficulties of women’s work. What follows is a review of the film, a brief summary of the process of its creation, and a discussion of some of its political implications and appeal.

The victory of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the 1937 Flint sit-down strike was the crucial battle which launched that union and gave impetus to other major CIO organizing drives. This film details the formation of the Women’s Emergency Brigade, a para-military group of several hundred women formed out of the Women’s Auxiliary in the heat of the Flint battle. Made up of working women, some of whom were the wives, daughters, and lovers of the strikers, the Brigade spread to other cities during UAW struggles. These women, identified by their red berets and armbands (and often by blackjacks hidden up their sleeves), organized mass pickets, guarded the Flint factory gates, and fought the police. Their courage and physical presence was essential to the union’s ultimate victory at Flint.

It is clear almost from its opening sequences that this film is not a “period piece.” It has

an appeal beyond that of historical concern or curiosity. This is accomplished in part by framing the story with events surrounding the fortieth anniversary of the Flint strike: in the beginning the reunion of the Brigade, and at the end, a spontaneous floor demonstration to secure their spokeswoman a place at the podium at the union's celebration.

As the film opens we accompany several other ex-brigade women into the home of Brigade member Deliah Parrish within the shadows of a huge Chevy plant in Flint. We see the industrial plant outside the windows, the only view from the kitchen sink. We join these seemingly ordinary middle-aged working-class women on the sofas, surrounded by family pictures and artificial flowers. We share in their reminiscing over a fading scrapbook of clippings about the strike. From here on the film weaves back and forth between old documentary footage and new, blending the time periods by means of the juxtaposition of the frames and the link provided by the Brigade women's stories and comments. There is no narrator. The story, both in 1937 and in 1977, belongs to these women. In one marvelously edited sequence, for example, we move almost imperceptibly from a black-and-white shot of cars moving down Flint's main street in 1937 to the same view, now in color, in 1977.

Our sense of actually being there is created by the drama of the footage — mass picket lines, women breaking the plant windows to let tear gas escape, and huge artillery being readied by the troops — as well as by the mundaneness and good humor of some shots — men exercising, dancing, and reading in the plant, of their wives hanging out the laundry at home. Further, the remarkable soundtrack allows us to hear the gun shots, the commands from the union sound truck, the breaking of windows, the deadening noise of the assembly lines, and the screams of the participants. The footage and the sound

thus combined capture the despair, the fear, and the exhilaration inherent in this Depression struggle.

Unlike many of the early Movement documentaries made for the already committed, this film is not a "talking leaflet." The filmmakers intended the film to be for non-Movement people, something with which working-class women and men could identify. They have avoided rhetoric or a complex code which only the initiated could comprehend. But the film is not simple, either: there is no avoidance of a discussion of the divisions between the male unionists and the women, or between the women and their families and neighbors. Although the filmmakers decided not to emphasize the sectarian divisions which wracked the UAW for much of its history, they mention the importance of the Socialist and Communist parties to the strike. Their primary concern, however, was to show the process by which "ordinary" women, locked up in their homes with the wash and the kids, become militant activists. "We wanted women to be able to see the film and think 'I could do it,' " filmmaker Lyn Goldfarb explained. Many who have shown the film to working-class audiences report that it does appeal to its intended constituency, male and female, and that the film's main lessons are remembered.

Because of the film's perspective and audience, at least a third of the footage and dialogue is not of the strike, but of women's work, inside and outside the home. As we see women working in different kinds of factories, the Brigade women discuss a number of issues: the problem of getting and keeping a job during the Depression, the lack of safety in the shops, the speed-ups, the low pay, and the sexual harassment and abuse. When the footage shifts to men on the assembly line, we hear the women discuss the impact on their lives of an exhausted husband, too tired and angry for

---

more than an evening in the beer gardens with his buddies, too estranged from his wife's life to explain the union drive. The film never loses a feminist perspective; the story evolves out of its impact on women's lives.

These sequences are the film's strength as well as its weakness. The discussions and scenes of actual working and living conditions enable the audience to understand the motivations of the strikers and the difficulties faced by the women organizing the Brigade. But each frame and line of dialogue must carry an enormous weight; the film is very 'thick,' with pages of thought behind everything the audience sees and hears. The film often needs to show and to say more in order to explain these complex issues. The filmmakers might have chosen to cover fewer issues in greater depth.

The audience trying to follow the union's complex strategy during the course of the strike encounters a similar problem. It is very difficult, in a first viewing of the film to figure out exactly what is happening. It is here that the price of the filmmakers' decision not to have a narrator is exacted. A few more guideposts, either verbally or visually, would have helped. Anyone using the film for organizing or teaching purposes, therefore, might want to screen it beforehand and prepare to expand on many of the issues. A study guide and popular pamphlet being prepared by the filmmakers will be useful here.

The success and complexity of the film grow out of its own history. "With Babies and Banners" was originally going to be a small part of a longer film project on women workers since 1930, tentatively titled entitled "Overworked and Underpaid." The project was begun in 1974 by Lyn Goldfarb, a historian who was working on the issue of women workers during World War II, and Lorraine Gray, a filmmaker who had just completed work on "The Emerging Woman," another

feminist film project. Neither woman had a PhD, an institutional base, or long years of experience. Thus the process of gaining legitimation and funds for the film was painstaking, discouraging, and long. The film's credits give a hint of this: there are innumerable thank yous and over eighteen different funding sources listed, suggesting numerous small grants and years of proposal writing.

The research job involved in doing the film was formidable. Although the secondary literature on the UAW and the CIO is quite extensive, the information on the role of the Brigade is sparse. Only the accounts of labor journalist Mary Heaton Vorse gave any hint of the women's real importance.<sup>1</sup> The UAW archives, papers of the leadership and of Vorse in the Wayne State University Labor Archives, as well as a Senate investigation and numerous union records and clippings provided the general background. From there on Lyn Goldfarb became a historical detective — tracing women's names from the backs of old photos, talking to retirees in union halls, asking old Lefties in Detroit about their contacts, and tracking people down through old city directories and telephone books. Genora Johnson Dollinger, the leader of the Flint Brigade, had already been interviewed in California by Patricia Yeghissian, a University of Michigan student. Dollinger and other women in the film helped the filmmakers find still other women.

As in most oral history projects, the filmmakers and their subjects developed intimacy and respect for one another. The filmmakers were acutely conscious that the film had to represent the truth as they and their subjects best understood it. It also had to be something these women could live with in their own communities. Thus, segments of the film were discussed with the Brigade women and frequently corroborated by other evidence.

The challenge of this project, the filmmakers

---

explained, was to find the balance between giving information and creating emotional impact on the audience. "We had to think in concepts rather than details," Lyn Goldfarb remarked. "There was always a tension between what was historically accurate and what was visually best. We felt obligated to set the record straight, but we also wanted to be appealing."

Finding the 1930s footage for the film was another difficult task, much of it done by Anne Bohlen. "There were no categories for women in the film indexes," she explained. "We had to know the history, know what we were looking for and often had to go through every card." Since the newsreels usually focused on the sensational, it was difficult to find either pictures of women or of everyday images. The out-takes of films, saved but never used, as well as a cache of old films found in a closet in a union hall, provided much of the footage. Films in the National Archives and commercial film houses in New York helped fill in the rest. The footage is therefore quite rare and remarkable, reflecting the nearly four-year search it took to compile it. As is so often the case with work by and about women, it was hard to do, but persistence paid off.

"With Babies and Banners" raises a number of important political questions of contemporary and historical concern, only a few of which it answers. Above all, the film is an exploration of a form of working-class women's feminism and militancy at a particular time. The Emergency Brigade is one of the most vivid examples in American history of how class and feminist politics often are melded together. These women define their struggle in terms of the needs of their family and the broader working-class community. At the same time, they recognize that what happens to their men deeply affects their daily existence materially and emotionally. Their politics grew out of the

reality of working-class life in Flint, but was shaped by the crisis which gripped the community during the strike.

The Brigade women struggled against stereotypical notions of women's place, but also manipulated these constraints. The film raises the question, as does much recent women's and social history, of how oppressed groups take narrow role prescriptions and available cultural forms and completely turn them on their heads to serve class-conscious actions. It is clear, for example, that the Brigade women understood far better than the male union leadership that to assign able-bodied women only to the kitchens and nurseries would ultimately mean defeat for the entire struggle. They also saw the necessity of reaching women left in their homes who might become influential in an employer-inspired back-to-work movement. The women's militancy and action transcended the normal boundaries set both by convention and by their male relatives. Like other working-class women in union battles (notably in mining communities), they skillfully manipulated the ideological expectations of the police and national guard about women. To protect the male strikers they imposed themselves between the troops and the men, thwarting much police violence and gaining enough time for reinforcements to arrive for their side.

We need to know more about under what conditions and at what points women can be militant and still gain a modicum of protection from sexism. We have many other instances of similar militancy which afforded women little protection from police clubs — the Great Shirtwaist Strike of 1909-10, or many contemporary welfare and civil-rights struggles, for example.

We also need to know if Flint was unusual and what other factors and conditions affect how working-class women's politics and actions are formed. For example, Mary Blewett,



writing on women's role in the New England shoe strike of 1860, suggests that both the form of the labor process (household vs. factory production) and the women workers' familial and residential status (single, living outside the family vs. wives and daughters living in a family unit) led to different positions on this crucial strike.<sup>2</sup> Her arguments suggest the need for a more sophisticated understanding of how consciousness and actions develop in situations like Flint.

Further, the film begins to give us a sense of the enormous struggle necessary to overcome sexism and the extent to which militancy, no matter how courageous or crucial to a victory, cannot alone bring about permanent change. Toward the end of the film, Genora Johnson Dollinger summed up what happened to the women after the strike:

*Following the strike, the Emergency Brigades were effectively dispersed; there was none of the usual thing of financing, or encouraging on the part of the men. What happened, in effect, if you can imagine this, from the International on down, everybody in it said, "Thank you ladies. You have done a wonderful job, we appreciate it very much; but now the laundry is piled up, the dishes are piled up, and the kids need attention."*

The expectation that women would return to "normal" in Flint presaged what was to happen to other women workers in the post World War II years. Unfortunately, Dollinger's comments do not give us much sense of what the women themselves did in response, or how much they accepted the view that their role existed only because of the "emergency." Sherna Gluck, in



a recent review of the film, suggested that the reasons for the discontinuation of the Brigades also lay in the women's failure to develop any long-term strategy on their roles or to encourage a second line of leadership.<sup>3</sup> We do not know how much sectarian divisions with the UAW or the Brigades affected the dissolution. Although the film raises the question of how women are to work within unions, it does not attempt to give us much of a handle on the question of long-term strategies for women's organizing or possible models for women's work within the unions. The failure of the Coalition of Labor Union Women in our time, and of left women within it, is a painful reminder of why we need more on this subject.

The UAW reaction to the film further exemplifies the difficulties for women and for the rank and file within the unions. The filmmakers themselves are not anti-union. They successfully solicited a small grant from the UAW when they were originally doing the broader working women's film. Although the film takes a critical stance toward the union's sexism in the 1930s, the criticism is put in historical context and is made by the Brigade women, not by an "outside" narrator. The footage of the floor demonstration which was necessary to gain Dollinger a place at the podium at the 1977 celebration is obviously unflattering to the union, although the filming of it was pure chance. The film is clearly refracting the events through the eyes of the rank and file; for a film on the UAW the visual and verbal absence of Reuther brothers is unusual. Nor does the film take sides on the sectarian political issues.

Despite the care which the filmmakers have taken around the union issues, once the film was released it took the UAW education department almost a year to buy a print, which they did only after screenings of other prints had taken place in their locals, and after

numerous requests. No UAW publication has yet mentioned or reviewed the film. The silence of the union officialdom and of their women's department, in contrast to the interest shown in the film by locals and some staffers, speaks loudly to the contemporary relevance of the issues raised by the film.

In the end what I carried away from the film was a deep respect for the Brigade women's enormous courage, integrity, and solidarity, and a renewed commitment to political struggles. Yet I had more of feeling for them as examples of working-class women than as distinct individuals. This is perhaps what was intended. "We weren't individuals any longer; we were part of an organization," Babe Gelles says in the film. The ultimate beauty and importance of "With Babies and Banners" lies in the way in which it helps us to understand what she means.



---

## FOOTNOTES

I would like to thank the RA editors and Nancy Jervis for their comments on an earlier draft. The cooperation of the filmmakers is also gratefully acknowledged. The film is available from: New Day Films, P.O. Box 315, Franklin Lakes, New Jersey 07417, (201) 891-8240.

1. Vorse has written about the strike in several places. The most easily available is her *Labor's New Millions* (New York: 1938). The standard history of the strike is Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down: The GM Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor: 1969). There is also information on the strike and the UAW in Wyndham Mortimer, *Organize! My Life as a Union Man* (Boston: 1971) and Len DeCaux, *Labor Radical* (Boston: 1970). New work more concerned with the role of women has been done by Patricia Yeghessian, "The Emergence of the Red Berets," *Papers in Women's Studies*, University of Michigan, v. 1, #4, June 1975, pp. 30-56. Ruth Meyero-witz, in the History Department at Columbia University, is doing a dissertation on women in the UAW. After I saw the film twice, I read the chapter on Flint from her thesis. Even though she drew a good deal of her material from the interviews of the film subjects, she is able to answer many of the questions left hanging in the film about strategy, the background to the strike, and the politicizing process.

2. Mary Blewett, "Class Interest and Sex Role: Conflict Over the Family Wage in the New England Shoe Strike of 1860," Unpublished paper, Department of History, University of Lowell, Lowell, Massachusetts, 1979.

3. The review appeared in *Union W.A.G.E.*, January-February 1979. Sherpa Gluck has also done an extensive oral history of Genora Johnson Dollinger which will soon be available through Microfilming Corporation of America as part of the University of Michigan-Wayne State University Project, "The 20th Century Trade Union Woman: Vehicle for Social Change." The latter can be contacted at Museums Annex, c/o Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48104.



---

*SUSAN REVERBY is in the American Studies Program at Boston University, was the coeditor with Rosalyn Baxandall and Linda Gordon of America's Working Women, A Documentary History, and most recently completed "From Aide to Organizer: The Oral History of Lillian Roberts" in Women of America: A History, edited by Carol Berkin and Mary Beth Norton.*

---

---

# LETTER

Dear Radical America:

Bernadette Powell, a 27 year old black woman, was sentenced on June 29th to a 15 year to life prison term by Judge Bruce Dean in Ithaca, New York. Powell had been convicted of murder in connection with the death of her ex-husband, Herman Smith. At the trial the defense attempted to establish that Bernadette had acted in self defense; that the physical abuse she had suffered at the hands of her husband during their 6 year marriage was such that she had every reason to fear for her life on the night Smith forced her to accompany him in his car, threatening her with death if she refused. The defense contends that later that same night in an attempt to get a gun away from Smith, he was accidentally shot. An all white jury of 9 men and 3 women rejected the contention of self defense and convicted Bernadette Powell of murder.

Approximately 40 supporters of Bernadette Powell witnessed the sentencing. These supporters heard Bernadette's attorney ask the judge to grant a hearing to determine whether the verdict should be set aside. Alterman argued that expert testimony could be brought into such a hearing which would prove that there was no good faith basis for the District Attorney Joseph Joch's assertion that Bernadette had enjoyed the beatings inflicted on her by Herman Smith. Alterman also argued that Joch's personal life had interfered with his ability to fairly discharge his official function to the extent that Joch should have removed himself from the case. Only a few weeks before the Bernadette Powell trial began, Joch was a defendant in divorce proceedings in which his former wife alleged that she was subjected to frequent beatings during the years of their marriage. She was granted a divorce on grounds of cruel and inhuman treatment.

If Bernadette wins an appeal, she will have the opportunity to be heard by a jury unprejudiced by the prosecutor's insinuations that she, "like most women who are battered," was a perverted masochistic individual who enjoyed the beatings inflicted on her by Herman Smith. She will have an opportunity to be tried by a District Attorney whose ability to prosecute in an ethical manner would not be impeded by a personal history of wife-beating. She will have access to expert testimony on battering that will help a jury hear her case fairly and fully.

Despite the contentions of the D.A., we know that women do *not* enjoy being beaten. As most of us are aware, marriage is a difficult relationship. Often during bad times the alternative of raising a child alone as a working, single parent can seem overwhelming. Any woman has the right *not* to be labeled as a pathological person for having attempted to spend time trying to see if a very difficult marriage could become better. It is hard for any of us to give up that hope.

The Bernadette Powell Defense Committee is presently trying to raise \$10,000 which will be needed for legal fees in the coming months. We need help badly.

We are asking and your readers to consider this request seriously. Many of us have answered appeals about oppressed people all over the world. Now we are concerned about the legal and human rights of someone who has been a member of our own local community, a person whose painful history of abuse might be similar to that of someone we know or love.

Please send contributions to:

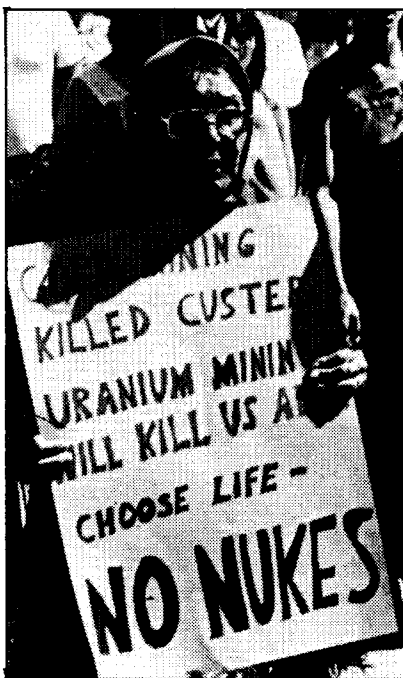
Bernadette Powell Defense Committee  
P.O. Box 164, Ithaca, New York 14850

---

## CORRECTION

We would like to apologize to *Jump Cut* for failing to give them credit for the *New Dogma* "advertisement" which appeared in the last issue of *Radical America*.

---



# TAKE THE OFFENSIVE!

Get the best weekly news and analysis of people's movements at home and abroad . . . at cut-rate prices!

Special offer expires 12/31/79

- ☐ \$13/yr. (\$4 off regular sub price; \$12 off newsstand)
- ☐ \$7/6 mos. (\$3 off regular sub price; \$5 off newsstand)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

**Guardian** independent  
radical  
newsweekly

33 West 17th Street New York, N.Y. 10011

## Midnight Notes 1 Strange Victories:

### The Anti-Nuclear Movement in the U.S. and Europe

"As long as the movement does not attack the price policies of the energy companies...it cannot be understood by people who are struggling for daily survival."

\$1.50/copy from:  
Midnight Notes  
12 Parkton Rd.  
Jamaica Plain, MA  
02130

**Aegis**

Magazine  
on Ending  
Violence Against Women

Published bi-monthly by the **Feminist Alliance Against Rape** and the **National Communication Network for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.**

**Subscription Rates - one year (6 issues)**

Individual	
Inside North America	\$8.75
Outside North America	\$10.00

Institution	
Inside North America	\$20.00
Outside North America	\$25.00

Make checks or money orders payable to the Feminist Alliance Against Rape.

**P.O. Box 21033**  
**Washington, D.C. 20009**

---

SUBSCRIBE NOW TO

# **RADICAL AMERICA**

**RADICAL AMERICA** is an independent Marxist journal, featuring the history and developments in the working class, the role of women and Third World people, with reports on shop-floor and community organizing, the history and politics of radicalism and feminism, and debates on current socialist theory and popular culture.

---

Cut out this box and mail it to: *Radical America*  
P.O. Box B., North Cambridge, MA 02140

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ \$30.00 sustaining subscriber
- ☐ \$10.00 (1 year — 6 issues)
- ☐ \$7.00 if unemployed
- ☐ \$18.00 (2 years)
- ☐ Add \$2.00 per year for all foreign subscriptions

Make all checks payable to *Radical America*

---

# FROM MONTHLY REVIEW PRESS

SPECIAL OFFER TO READERS OF  
**RADICAL AMERICA**

## **A GREAT SOCIALIST NOVEL**

### **"The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists**

is a classic of modern British literature, that ought to rank with the work of Thomas Hardy, D. H. Lawrence, and James Joyce, and yet it is largely unknown because of its political unorthodoxy. A proletarian, socialist novel, it has been ignored by the cultural establishment in the United States and England, but at the same time has not been welcomed in left-wing circles.

*The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* takes a hard, unsentimental look at the proletariat; no revolution is described in these pages, nor is there a strike or even a trade union. What's more, the bulk of the workers portrayed here express 'blind, stupid, enthusiastic admiration ... for those who exploited and robbed them.' They 'supported and defended the system that robbed them and have resisted and ridiculed every proposal to alter it.'

Tressell's bitterness and anger are mixed with compassion, sympathy, and a sharp sense of humor...." — **JONAH RASKIN**

"This is an exhilarating book, a rare combination of wonderful reading and a political work in the truest sense of the term."

— **RADICAL AMERICA**



**Regular \$7.50/Special \$5.95 (paperback)**

**MAKE ALL CHECKS PAYABLE TO RADICAL AMERICA  
ADD 50¢ POSTAGE AND HANDLING FOR EACH BOOK**

Please send the following titles:

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

SEND TO: **Radical America:** Alternative Education Project Inc., 324 Somerville, MA 02143



