



## IV381 - September 2006

### A Tale of Two Cities

26 September 2006, by **Kathy Lowe**



In Ciudad Juarez, according to human rights organizations, over 400 women have met violent deaths since 1993. Hardly a week goes by without another body being discovered dumped in the desert or on waste ground behind the town. The murdered women are nearly all young and poor - students, domestics, or factory workers from the local foreign-owned assembly plants known as maquiladoras. Most have been raped and tortured to death.

The picture is almost identical in Guatemala City. Guatemala's femicide has claimed the lives of nearly 2,200 women and girls since 2001. In the lawless capital women live in constant fear of being snatched from the streets by gangs or forced off buses at gunpoint into empty lots.

A dawn police patrol regularly recovers from alleyways and rubbish dumps bodies often unrecognizable due to torture and sexual mutilation. In the killers' methods there are strong echoes of ferocious attacks on women used by US-backed government troops and death squads in Guatemala's long civil war that ended in 1996. Most of the perpetrators of those wartime crimes are still at large.

In both Guatemala City and Ciudad Juarez the dead women's families and advocacy groups have themselves been threatened as they have tried to seek justice. Says Amnesty International: "Turning to the police is often not a safe option as so many officers have themselves been implicated in corruption and violent crimes."

The Juarez outrages have provoked national and international protests, a stream of human rights reports, condemnation by the UN Human Rights Commission and delegations to the Mexican President. Actors Jane Fonda and Sally Field are among the celebrities who have made solidarity visits. Hollywood, it seems, even plans a film starring Jennifer Lopez as a reporter investigating the murders.

NGOs and human rights activists have helped distraught relatives of the slain Guatemalan women to publicise their cases. The mother of Maria Isabel Véliz, murdered in 2001 at the age of 15, brought her case to the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) in January 2005. And in March this year the Organization of American States heard testimonies from a number of families.

The Guatemalan government set up a National Commission on Femicide with senior officials and politicians. In Mexico too the chamber of deputies created a Special Commission on

Femicide and the attorney general established a prosecutor's office for violent crimes against women.

Yet there have been few arrests and even fewer convictions. The women go on dying.

The Mexican and Guatemalan governments blame gang violence, drug-trafficking and corruption. These problems of lawlessness affect everyone, they argue, not just women.

But while acknowledging that the number of men killed is much higher than women in Guatemala, the UN Special Rapporteur Yakin Erturk concluded after a 2004 investigation there that the female cases "have a different dimension". This, she said, was due to the way in which women are being killed. "They are raped, mutilated, and this has a terrible impact on women and society in general."

Some Mexican women's groups argue that the sight of young single women migrants from the poor south of the country working in Juarez factories and living independently may have made them a particular target in a profoundly misogynist society.

Women's lives come cheap suggests Yanette Bautista, Amnesty International's investigator of violence against women. Last year, at a presentation of Amnesty's

investigation of the killings of women in Guatemala, she argued: “The atmosphere of tolerance by the (Guatemalan) state and societal indifference toward all forms of violence against women contribute to the feminicide’.

Clearly in these neo-liberal

metropolitan wastelands with their social disintegration and, in the case of Guatemala, a recent history of war, there are few brakes on the most ferocious expressions of machismo. By contrast in Venezuela, Bolivia, and parts of Brazil, where the left has not been defeated and class solidarity is strong, women are helping to lead

inspiring struggles. Violence against them may not have been eliminated but where they are respected and valued as equals by men and able to organize themselves to articulate their demands, they are in a much stronger position to pursue their liberation.

*See more details [here](#) and [here](#)*

## Pasta, politics and parties

**24 September 2006, by Penelope Duggan, Thomas Eisler**



The presence of the comrades from Mindanao in the Philippines brought home to the participants the reality of a constant struggle against military occupation by the Philippines government, backed by the US. “We were saddened, yet inspired, after speaking with the Filipino comrades, who shared their experiences of state repression, armed resistance movements and comrades being brutally murdered by Maoist guerrillas,” wrote James Nesbitt in Scottish Socialist Voice in his account of the camp.

The participation of 12 Scottish youth was also a big step forward in relations with the Scottish Socialist Youth even though they are facing a crisis in the SSP. The Greeks were also much more numerous than in any previous camps due to the geographic proximity as well as a growth in youth membership in the OKDE-Spartakos. They found the experience very positive and will put mobilising for the camp as a high priority on their agenda for next year. The Portuguese delegation was back after having giving priority to the Left Bloc youth camp in the last couple of years.

### Under the shadow of war

The question of war became a more

central theme than predicted in the planning because the camp took place while Israel was in the midst of its attack on Lebanon. The camp was a chance to enhance the understanding of the Middle East and discuss how to improve solidarity work with the peoples of Lebanon and Palestine. A “permanent workshop” to exchange experiences and coordinate the activities throughout the week was added to the programme. The planned central forum on international resistance to imperialism and war was strengthened by the participation of a young Palestinian comrade as well as a young woman from the Spanish State arriving directly from solidarity work in Gaza.



“A new generation for a new Europe - building the anti-capitalist left”  
The experiences of building radical anti-capitalist parties in Europe was another central point on the agenda of the camp. The exchange of experiences between the comrades involved in such projects were a central theme both of forums and workshops and of the bilateral inter-delegation meetings where comrades could discuss face to face their experiences, successes and failures whether they had already a relative long experience such as in the Left Bloc of Portugal, the Red Green Alliance in Denmark, the Scottish

Socialist party or within the party of Communist Refoundation (PRC) in Italy or newer experiences such as the WASG-Linkspartei in Germany or Respect in Britain.

### Crucial moment for anti-capitalists in Italy

The camp was an important occasion for the young people of the FI and the left current Sinistra Critica inside Rifondazione. Several of the dissident Rifondazione parliamentarians had a chance to explain the situation. The Rifondazione majority had decided to be in favour of the Italian troops in Afghanistan in contradiction with its earlier position. They wanted to influence the military presence to make it less harmful. “But how do you make war and kill people in a less harmful way”, asked Franco Turigliatto, one of the dissident senators. The two senators from the Fourth International section could have the decisive vote in toppling the government and bringing back Berlusconi because it was made a vote of confidence. In the end the dissident senators voted in favour of a motion that prolonged the Italian troops in Afghanistan. But they also presented an ultimatum backed by 16 senators which made it clear that at the next time in six months they will not save the Prodi government if it insists on maintaining the troops in Afghanistan.

### From the movements to the camp

The camp was full of enthusiasm and there was a rich exchange in experiences due to the recent movements in various countries. In several countries the students have mobilised against austerity and commodification of education. The withdrawal of the CPE (first job contracts) in France after a broad mobilisation was an inspiration for others. "After the mobilisation against the CPE an enormous student movement started in Greece. ... The students, to state that they were going to win, said they would "talk French" to the government. We discussed the lessons we had learnt from our different mobilisations, knowing that in Greece they won the postponement of their reform." (Rouge-France)

### Revolution in the 21st century

Another constant thread was the need for a new generation of political activists to look at the world as it is today and build the political instruments necessary for the fight to change it without forgetting to learn from past experiences. The camp is an important moment forming that new generation to take forward the revolutionary struggle in the 21st century.

### "Learned a lot, had fun"

The Fourth International seems to have worked to recognise the crucial nature of class issues such as LGBT liberation, internationalism, women's liberation and Marxist ecology. In particular, they make no bones about their commitment to feminism, something which would undoubtedly be contentious in the SSP.

Our delegation came home satisfied, having learned a lot, had fun and made important new contacts.

The FI is not the only show in town on the international far-left, but SSY were glad to have been involved and grateful to the organisers and delegations for their friendliness, hospitality and solidarity. I would strongly recommend young members attend next year and to learn more about the FI, their history and their current perspectives.

(Scottish Socialist Voice)

### "A mini dream world"

The experiences of the camp have had a profound effect on those that went. Tamir Nasrallah from London says "The camp was like a mini dream world, it was a platform for the young to express themselves politically and allowed us to break the barriers of the capitalist system and question things in a highly critical way."

Run by the youth, the camp is able to instil knowledge and confidence in a

socialist structure. "The Fourth International youth camp samples a utopian society and creates a microcosm of a socialist civilization where the class war is won, gender is indifferent and equality is absolute" comments Jamie Smith (Sheffield, South Bank University).

(Socialist Resistance, England and Wales)

### The red thread...

It was interesting to meet historical fighters like the French philosopher Daniel Bensaid sitting down with a group from a younger generation exchanging impressions, taking the temperature of the new rebellious youth, and, undoubtedly, remembering his own and never renounced fights as a "sixty-eighter". Because not all the rebel students from that era have been integrated into the system as the mass media would like us to believe in an irreversible logic that one is radical left at 20 but inevitably rightwing at 40 (...) The educational and the informal conversations in the camp are a necessary transmission of militant experience, they tie the knot firmly in the red thread that links the different generations.

(Espacio Alternativo, Spanish state)

[See more photos](#)

# International Viewpoint needs a new look

21 September 2006, by **Duncan Chapel**

Last year IV promised readers that, with the right financial support, we could double the readership to 250,000 visits a year by the start of next year. We have hit that target early. 700 visitors now come to the site each day. Even this is a reduction from the 1,000 a day our system was counting before we found a way to ignore visits by machines to the site. The rising readership is largely driven

by the readers' demand for analysis of the conflicts and struggles like those in the Middle East. Over the summer we have had a double-sized publishing volume, placing our translators and web team under some pressure. More translations, of course, also raise our costs.



**print version for each issue  
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Hitting that readership target forced us to bring forward plans to upgrade the site. Over the last month the software that powers the site has undergone a major upgrade, which

has allowed us to optimise the design. The new system makes the design and writing of articles more efficient. It has improved performance slightly, and has allowed us to ignore some automated requests from machines.

However, the upgrade solves only some problems, and it produces new tasks for us, including training up our volunteers in the complexities of the new system. Over the last 3 months, readership of the site has risen 38%. Since the same resources are serving many more people, the extra demand means the site becomes slow: 63% of web sites are faster.

All of this would be enough reason for us to ask for more donations.

However, we are also asking for readers to support us in producing two new publications on the Middle

East. We need help to produce a magazine-format collection of the articles we have recently published about the Middle East for activists around the world to use in their campaigning work. We have also decided to produce our first book: International Viewpoint has started to prepare a collection of the most important Marxist writing about the Middle East over the last decades, including documents to reflect the views of the Fourth International, Matzpen (the defunct Israeli socialist organisation) and of Arab socialists.

Each year, International Viewpoint needs £5,000 in donations. So far, we have received just £1,330. If we can raise £2,000 by the end of September, then we can complete the site upgrade and produce magazine-format special issue that our activists

need so much. If we can raise the remaining £1,670 by December, then we can go ahead with the production of this amazing collection of Marxist writing on the Middle East.

If you can donate £100 or more, then we will give you a copy of this impressive new book as a token of our thanks.

## Make your gift today

To donate online, click on the 'Make a Donation' button on the left hand side of the [internationalviewpoint.org](http://internationalviewpoint.org) website.

By post, send cheques payable to International Viewpoint, PO Box 112, Manchester M12 5DW, Britain.

## For an alternative in Brazil

21 September 2006, by **Left Front**

**We launch this appeal from Quilombo dos Palmares, inspired by the strength of the struggle of Zumbi [1], so as to build the Left Front and proclaim the candidacy of Heloísa Helena for the Presidency of the Republic. [2]**

Just as the resistance of the slaves and a strong abolitionist movement were necessary to put an end to slavery in the past, today, in order to suppress modern slavery and create a just and sovereign country, workers, peasants, the middle classes, intellectuals, artists, Brazilian youth and poor people should also arise and mobilise.

The Brazilian people cannot condemn themselves to choose between Lula and Alckmin, two candidates who defend the same neoliberal programme and the same political practice of corruption which undermine the National Congress and the government. The candidacy of Heloísa Helena is a real alternative for the Brazilian people faced with

these candidates supported by the bankers.



The Left Front wants to liberate the country from the clutches of finance capital and imperialism. Inside this front, workers, the unemployed, the millions of men and women who are in the informal economy, living with difficulty from their labour, workers' political and social organisation, independent activists, all have their place. As well as all the Brazilians revolted by corruption and submission in the face of big finance capital and the bankers.

We will struggle together in the streets and in the mass organisations to win the electoral support of the workers against the two blocs of the dominant class, PT and PSDB-PFL [3].

## THE PT AND THE PSDB GOVERN FOR 20,000 FAMILIES

The electoral battle is part of the struggle of the people. In the elections, we will show that the bankers and the big bosses, represented by the politicians and the conservative parties, are in power and do not represent an alternative for Brazil. We will present a new alternative faced with the governmental bloc of the PT and the bourgeois "opposition" of the PSDB-PFL.

These groups only oppose each other to occupy more political space, to see who will occupy the governmental machine, but they are agreed on the essentials; on the neoliberal economy and for the defence of institutions



marked by corruption. It is only a struggle to see who will benefit from the privileges of power.

The PSDB and PFL have already shown with FHC [4] that it is the bankers who govern really, that they daily make use of the corruption in the government. But the right is not only in the PSDB-PFL, it is also in the Lula government. The banks have obtained more profits with the PT government than at the time of FHC. It is not then by chance that they offered 7.9 million réis to the PT and 4.3 millions to the PSDB during the 2004 elections.

Lula will pay the bankers nearly 520 billion réis of interest on the public debt. But 70% of this mountain of money will go into the accounts of Brazil's 20,000 richest families. During this time, the government spent 5.5 billion réis per year for the Family Purse, a programme of social assistance used above all as an instrument of electoral clientelism.

To fight the concentration of wealth, defend the people and change Brazil, the Left Front presents a series of proposals, makes an appeal to struggle and requests your vote.

## **TO CONQUER REAL SOVEREIGNTY AND NATIONAL INDEPENDANCE BY BREAKING WITH IMPERIALISM AND FINANCE CAPITAL**

The economic policy of the government is oriented around the goal of satisfying the international markets, with low interest rates, free circulation of speculative capital and the repatriation of profits of foreign companies which make Brazil an exporter of capital to rich countries.

The foreign debt continues to bleed the national resources white. Nearly 40% of the national budget is consumed by the payment of interest on the public debt, leaving less than 5% for investment.

We support the demand of Jubilee South against the debt; suspend the payment of the foreign debt and carry out an audit. In relation to the internal debt, we support an audit conforming to what is laid down in the Constitution of 1988 as well as the analysis of its structure so as to identify the speculators and the big companies to whom we propose to no longer pay anything.

Foreign multinationals make use of strategic economic sectors from which they repatriate the profits to their countries of origin. These sectors - like oil, telecommunications, energy, steel - should be placed under the control of the Brazilian people.

The proposal of a new alternative economic and social project demands structural changes that Brazilian capitalism has never realised and which, in the framework of neoliberal globalisation, are more inaccessible than ever for it because they cannot be obtained without a rupture with imperialist domination.

The elimination of financial tyranny, speculation and the debt burden, the control of capital, the recuperation of the capacity of intervention and state regulation, the extension of public services as well as the redistribution of wealth, the creation of jobs, agrarian and urban reform, the preservation of the environment, are so many indispensable measures to finish with the poverty known by the majority of the Brazilian population and to satisfy the historic demands of the workers and of the people.

With 520 billion réis of debts that Lula has paid to the bankers during his term of office, it would have been possible to effect a great national change and resolve very serious social problems. We can build for example 16 million popular houses (which is the size of the housing deficit in the country) at a unit cost of 12,000 réis and thus offer jobs to the masses of unemployed in the country through

the effort of construction.

This sum would allow also to finance a real agrarian reform plan which would allow the 4.5 million landless families to settle at a cost of 17,000 réis each. We could also double the national education and health budget. All these initiatives, which are qualitative so as to resolve the social problems of the country, would cost 394.5 billion réis, or very much less than the absurd quantity of money that Lula has offered to the bankers.

## **FOR NEW GENUINELY DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS WHICH REPRESENT A NEW POWER UNDER THE DIRECT CONTROL OF THE WORKERS AND OF THE PEOPLE**

The Lula government is at the centre of a political crisis which, as none before, has shown to public opinion the real face of the regime of false democracy of economic power and of corruption. Scandals have brutally revealed the decomposition of its institutions. From the Presidency and the Executive to the judiciary via the National Congress and the political parties, the main institutions of the Republic are henceforth assimilated without appeal as instruments of the dominant classes in the service of corruption and the exploitation of the people.

Lula and Alckmin are representatives of this corruption which reigns in the country. It is not true that the public thinks that in some way "everyone is like that", because the majority of people do not. The corruption of the politicians and elites is the

characteristic of the capitalist system.

The presentation of a proposal of radical democratisation of the regime and of political action should be done, always and systematically, by articulating the denunciation of the decadent democracy of money and of corruption with its opposite; the real democracy of the participation of the workers and of the people. The necessity of radically democratising the regime, by changing its class content, should be repeated forcefully as being a first condition for the application of an emergency programme capable of bringing the country out of crisis and resolving the problems of the majority of the people.

We want the voters to be able to revoke the mandates of those who have been elected and who do not fulfil their promises. We demand the imprisonment and the confiscation of the goods of the corrupt and the corruptors. We desire a radical transformation of popular representation and its mandates, through an exclusive public financing of the electoral campaigns, the democratisation of schedules for electoral propaganda in the media, the revocability of mandates and of the suppression of the barrier clause [5] which renders difficult the representation of parties and candidates without economic power.

These measures should radically attack corruption, decreeing also the end of privileged forums, of banking and fiscal secrecy, by establishing the wage of parliamentarians and those who govern through a referendum and with as basis of departure the minimum wage.

With the project of conquering real popular sovereignty in Brazil, the Left Front announces that, in the government of comrade Heloísa Helena, the Brazilian people will be called, through an intense day of mobilisations, to decide and to give the last word on: relations with imperialism (IMF, FTAA and so on); the foreign and internal debt and the necessity of a real national independence; agrarian and urban reform and a new statute on land ownership; the amount of the minimum wage and budget priorities;

the criteria of preservation of the environment and so on.

## **A NEW ABOLITION IS NECESSARY TO PUT AN END TO THE MODERN SLAVERY**

An immense sector of the Brazilian people still lives in a situation of semi-slavery. To begin with the slavery of poorly paid waged labour and dismantled social rights.

Twenty two million Brazilians live with a minimum wage which is one of the lowest in the world. Data from the IBGE show that 46.7% of families suffer from hunger, a rate which reaches nearly 70% in the Northeast. During this time, the 5,000 richest families in the country (0.01% of the total families) concentrate a wealth equivalent to 46% of all the wealth generated every year in the country (GDP).

If Lula or Alckmin are elected, the situation will only get still worse. Lula is already committed to leading a labour reform which will represent a terrible blow for the historic conquests of the workers. The so-called "Super Simples" project, in discussion currently in the National Congress and which affects the rights of the workers in small and medium enterprises is an anticipation of this reform.

## **A RADICAL POLICY SO AS TO CONFRONT SUPEREXPLOITATION IN BRAZIL, SOURCE OF UNEMPLOYMENT**

## **AND OF THE INCREASING INSECURITY OF WORK**

GUIDELINES OF THE LEFT FRONT'S PROGRAMME:

We want a plan of public works so as to reduce unemployment, at the same time as the reduction of working time, without loss of wages. We want to double the minimum wage immediately. For a profound agrarian reform under the control of the workers of the countryside. We demand the abrogation of neoliberal reforms, starting with the reform of social welfare. No to reform of the labour market and of trade union rights by the government and the IMF. No to the reform of privatisation of the university. We desire the immediate abrogation of the privatisations of public enterprises, starting with that of Vale do Rio Doce. Cancellation of the partial privatisation of Petrobras. For Brazil's immediate withdrawal from the negotiations concerning the FTAA (Free Trade Area of the Americas).

In defence of the working woman, we demand the creation of crèches for children from 0 to 6 years. We fight against all forms of racial or sexual discrimination.

Moreover, we recommend severe taxation of the big fortunes and profits of the banks and big companies. The public control by workers and consumers of the production of essential goods is a necessity so that the redistribution of wealth is a reality and to put an end to the enormous inequalities which are the shame of our country.

From Quilombo de los Palmares, we call on the workers to revolt, once again, against slavery. The dignity of workers commences by their right to a job and a decent wage. Audacity, creativity and novelty are necessary. And the novelty is the Left Front.

# Narrow victory for the Swedish right

20 September 2006, by **Anders Svensson**

One reason for the big success for the Conservative party is the Social-democrats themselves. For 12 years they have been in government and during this time they have been privatising, cost-cutting and generally have pursued a neo-liberal agenda, though carefully and slow. The unemployment rate in Sweden during these years has grown to be among the highest in Europe, much higher than in the other Nordic countries. Throughout the election campaign the Social-democrats denied this and put forward claims that everything in the country was all right. This gave the Conservative party and their alliance an opportunity to act as the more credible alternative for creating more jobs. The deprivation of resources to the public domain including hospitals etc by the Social-democrats together with the Greens and the Left-party created a paved road for the Conservative alliance to follow. Thus the neo-liberal policies of the Social-democratic government made it possible for the Conservative alliance to win the election with an even worse neo-liberal agenda.

In some local elections the Social-democrats has made a better result than in the national elections. This is especially noteworthy when it comes to the second city of Sweden, Gothenburg (Göteborg) where the Social-democrats got 7% more votes locally than nationally. The local Social-democrats in Gothenburg has been criticizing the social-democratic government for some years and in the election campaign they criticised the focus on "everything is alright" and wanted the campaign to focus on how to create more jobs and take better care of immigrants and refugees. Due to this the local Social-democrats, with

their popular local leader Göran Johansson, stayed in power in Gothenburg city.

The Left-party is another reason for the loss of power of the Social-democrats. Unable to create a left alternative to social-democracy and nearly always supporting the social-democratic government, even when it comes to privatisations they have been no alternative for the Swedish working class. Parts of the working class instead have supported the racist Sweden-democrats in this election.

Just as worrisome as the conservative victory is the success in the local elections for the Swedish far-right, the racist party Sweden-democrats. Due to the fact that the social-democrats have been unable to create more jobs and to do anything at all about the unemployment, the Sweden-democrats have been able to use racism as a way to success. It's easy to blame the high unemployment rates on the immigrants and refugees. They did not make it to the national parliament this time, but if nothing happens inside the left and segmented extreme left in Sweden the racist Sweden-democrats will probably make it to the national parliament next time. In the local elections however, they have won seats in many local councils. Especially they got very high results in South Sweden, in areas close to Denmark. In the national election in South Sweden they got around 10%, compared to only 3% nationally. In local elections in the same area they got up to more than 20%.

The third party that supported the social-democratic government was the Greens. Although they have never gained a strong support in the working class and are not seen as an

alternative in these groups.

The second biggest party outside the parliament is the new party, Feminist Initiative, a feminist party led by an old chairman of the left-party, Gudrun Schyman. They got 1% in the national elections. Mainly votes from traditional left-wing voters despite the fact they claim to stand outside the left-right scale and also despite the fact they have no class oriented agenda at all. Their election result is definitely a disappointment for them. Just as the result for the main victor of the last European parliament elections in Sweden, Junilistan, is also a big disappointment for his EU-critic and bourgeoisie party. They got only 0,5% in the national election compared to 14% in the last election to the European parliament.

There have been a strong right wing turn in the Swedish elections. The Conservative party seem to have won a lot of votes in the middle-class from the Social-democrats but also some working class votes. They now have stronger support in the working class than the Left-party. We have also seen a significant number of working-class votes going to the extreme right, especially in local elections.

The extreme left did not have good election results and probably gained nothing taken together. The two small stalinist groups lost 6 seats together whereas the two parties with trotskyst orientation gained 6 seats. The CWI-section (Rättvisepartiet Socialisterna) thus has most local councillors (totally 8, 3 new seats) of all Swedish extreme left groups. Socialist Party (Socialistiska Partiet), the Fourth International section probably gained 3 seats and now has 4 local council seats in 4 different cities.

Compared to the number of local seats (more than 200) for the extreme-right this is really nothing.

With the victory for the right-wing bourgeoisie parties the Swedish working-class probably will experience a harsh four-year period with big cuts in public spending, for example in the payment to the unemployed. There will also be more privatised schools. Most of the possibly profitable hospitals will be privatised as well as most of the state-owned corporations. The legislation to protect a worker from getting sacked will be weakened, especially for young people. The Conservative alliance will introduce legislation that will force women away from the job market and legislation that will make life more difficult for refugees. The bourgeoisie right wing government will also lower the property tax in such a way it will

primarily benefit the very rich. The company taxation, already one of the lowest in Europ  , will be even lower and the same goes for the tax on big fortunes. All this will probably lead to higher prices, lower wages and increased segregation.

## Swedish election results, national elections

<b>Conservative Alliance (Alliansen)</b>		<b>178 seats</b>
<i>Conservative Party (Moderata Samlingspartiet)</i>	26.2%	97 seats
<i>Liberal Party (Folkpartiet liberalerna)</i>	7.5%	28 seats

<i>Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna)</i>	6.6%	24 seats
<i>Center Party (Centerpartiet)</i>	7.9%	29 seats
<b>Left Bloc</b>		<b>171 seats</b>
<i>Green Party (Milj��partiet)</i>	5.2%	19 seats
<i>Social Democratic Workers Party (Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet)</i>	35.0%	130 seats
<i>Left Party (V��nsterpartiet)</i>	5.8%	22 seats
<i>Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna)</i>	2.9%	
<i>Feminist Initiative (Feministiskt Initiativ)</i>	0.7%	
<i>Pirate Party (Piratpartiet) (a party formed around anti-copyright groups)</i>	0.6%	
<i>June List (Junilistan)</i>	0.5%	

# Alain Krivine and Algeria

17 September 2006, by **Alain Krivine**

When I returned to France, if I hadn't totally broken with the Party, I was at least scandalized by its attitude. From that point on I took the decision to aid the FLN and to talk about it with those around me, considering that it was absolutely necessary to "do something." But I didn't know how to make contact.



### French troops confront rioters, Algiers 1960

And it was here that family relations intervened: I had brothers who had been aiding the FLN for a long time. They weren't Stalinists and they had hidden their activities from me since I was a [little] "Stalinist leader." But seeing how unhappy I was to not be able to do anything for Algeria they intervened, telling me that perhaps we could help the Algerians.

So they put me in contact with the group Jeune R  sistance (Young Resistance), through which I began my support activities. Within the framework of the Communist Youth (JC) I had begun to carry on a fight for the Algerians, notably demanding that Mme Audin [6] be invited to a meeting of the JC. They answered me: "You're nuts. We're not going to invite her to a meeting."

Just to finish off these stories, which show pretty clearly the mind set of the party, the JC had distributed a tract that invited people, on the occasion of a student congress, to a dance "For peace in Algeria." The words: "We'll dance and we'll..." were added to it. I was a delegate to the National Congress. Still na  ve I went up to the tribune to declare that we didn't seem to be aware of the situation, that there were people who were dying there and that I thought it disgusting that we would allow these kinds of festivities

on the subject of Algeria. Everyone started to chant: "Virgin, Virgin..."

So I found myself in a network that was led by Trotskyists. My brothers were Trotskyists and of course they hadn't told me this, since as a good Stalinist I hated the Trotskyists. The first question I asked one of them was: "I agree to join into your Jeune R  sistance network, but only on condition that there not be any Trots there!" He asked me why I said this and I answered: "Because they're cops, and I know that in this kind of thing there are Trotskyists." He assured me that there weren't any and asked me what I had against Trotsky. "Nothing! All I know is that he was a cop and a fascist!"

So I worked with Jeune R  sistance, which above all worked at stopping the trains of draftees. Then I went into the Union des   tudiants communistes (UEC), where I was a member of the



leadership, while clandestinely being a member of Jeune Résistance. During demonstrations we tried to start up chants for independence and to wave FLN flags, while the rest shouted "Peace in Algeria!" There was also activity within the army; this is what most interested me. So there was the stoppage of trains of soldiers who were leaving. Signals were sabotaged. In this way we stopped dozens of trains, and this made a lot of noise.

During most of the war the Party had as its slogan "Peace in Algeria," and its instructions were not to have relations with the Algerians, which would have been too dangerous for the Party. When the hierarchy found members supporting the FLN they were expelled. A comrade from Billancourt who aided the FLN, who we called "Benoit," was immediately chased out of the Party (in fact, he was a clandestine Trotskyist).

The Party was also equally opposed to desertion and insubordination. It explained that a young Communist should go into the army, but following Lenin's schema, in order to introduce revolutionary ideas there. Nevertheless, the PCF didn't organize the draftees at all, and none of the young Communists who went had any instructions. Unfortunately, many of them became racists, since there was no counterweight to the ideological pressures of military life.

So the PCF opposed all initiatives. It was completely against the stopping of trains, the sabotage against "our comrade railroad workers." The movement had considerably developed, since we were as many as 900 in Jeune Résistance, which is a lot for a clandestine organization (in a way it was the beginning of the extreme Left). Young Communists refused to be insubordinate for fear of going to prison... There were some sons of members of the Central Committee who carried out courageous actions, but it was too late. The leadership of the PC had its few martyrs in order to later say to the Algerians and public opinion "Our Party, too, had its martyrs."

So in the last two years of the war about 20 young Communist soldiers refused to be sent to Algeria. But

when you look at their names it was often the sons of leaders, like the son of Léandre Letocard, or of members of the Central Committee who did refuse to go to Algeria and were sent to prison. But this was at the end. In 1956 Alban Liechti was the first to refuse to go to Algeria, but the Party didn't support him: he was absolutely alone [7].

My two brothers were directly involved in the support networks, in liaison with the Federation de France of the FLN. They handled the transporting of money. From time to time I gave them some help. For the most part I took care of transports in Paris: when cars full of cops closed off certain neighborhoods you had to put people at the intersections to be sure there weren't any checkpoints set up. Our friends sent us signals permitting cars transporting FLN militants to cross Paris without hindrance. I did this many times.

And then we took "initiatives" concerning prisons. Notably, I participated in an attempt to liberate some women. This was at Fresnes. A group of comrades had flown over the prison with a small plane, which was prohibited, and had taken some pictures. By the way, they were sick as dogs in the plane, which had had to perform aerial acrobatics. We kept track of the changing of the guard among the police and the CRS around the prison in order to learn their itinerary, how many they were, and when the guard was changed.

We were right up against the walls. Little hills permitted us to hide. We were a few couples who relieved each other, each couple remaining there four and a half hours.

We transmitted the information to people who had pseudonyms, and whose identity I don't know. They were at "a higher level." It was pretty well organized. The networks were a good school. Some participated for "humanist" reasons, because they were scandalized by the torture of Algerians. This is both good and normal. But for others these networks were a good political school. They became true internationalists. They acquired a form of political practice, which is always useful.

Afterwards, in political organizations, we realized that a good part of the nucleus of the future extreme Left had its origins in the aid to the Algerian revolution. It was a matter of "practical" internationalism, and not one of discourse. It could concretely be seen how a revolution inspires sympathy, politicizes young people, and makes militants of them. This was truly a school of practical labor.



**Alain Krivine (second right) with Rudi Dutschke (third right) with the JCR contingent, Berlin Vietnam demo, February 1968**

The attitude of the leadership and the Communist students in relation to the war in Algeria was to be one of the reasons for the opposition that was born and exploded among them. Algeria, along with Hungary, are the two elements of the crisis; the betrayal of the Algerian people by the PCF and the support given by the latter during the Soviet invasion of Hungary, which was also considered a betrayal - of the Hungarian people.

The "clandestine" militants in solidarity with Algeria, who were members of the UEC, were to play a very important role in the birth of a "Left Opposition" to Stalinism. This opposition was to be born beginning in 1960-61 and would end with the expulsion of all of them in 1965. The transition was nevertheless to take five years. Before the war in Algeria ended, the OAS affair was to be a supplementary element in nourishing, feeding and radicalizing a portion of the Young Communists, including in "practical labour."

All of these elements were to contribute to our radicalization, but in contradictory ways. So when it came to the army, in principle I was attached to the Leninist tradition, i.e., that it was necessary to go into the army and fight there by denouncing colonialism. I admired those few soldiers who went over to the other side, lock, stock and barrel. For me, as I was beginning to de-Stalinize myself, the hero was officer cadet Maillot. What he did was like the "mutineers of

the Black Sea" with André Marty [8]: "We are in solidarity with the revolution on the other side. We join them with our arms, we're joining the other side." The enemy was French colonialism. Maillot and Iveton [9] were truly heroes: the act of solidarity was capital.

Knowing that the PCF was doing nothing, in the army we completely supported insubordination and desertion. This allowed the carrying out of political provocation, a political gesture to shake up the French. It was better than doing nothing. Since those who left for Algeria couldn't be educated, many became racists.

You know what a colonial war is: "our buddies are being killed", the young soldiers are completely caught up in the machine. It was better that they not leave at all. Though Leninists on the army question, we were thus in support of insubordination: it was the most effective way to lead people to obtain consciousness and to participate, in however slight a way, in a small sabotage of the French military apparatus.

Torture, too, was an important element in our choice. There were newspapers that specialized in the distribution of forbidden works (like *La Question* by Henri Alleg). This was the case with *Temoignages et documents*, which denounced all the dirty work of the French in Algeria. I worked a lot for this last publication.

The denunciation of torture played a large role. For example, when the general secretary of the Algiers Prefecture in 1957, Paul Teitgen, said: "Torture is our way of governing," he didn't go much further, but this was already more than mere "humanism." We managed thus to be "forced to respond," as we say today, on the very nature of the combat that the French carried out in Algeria. This had an important political meaning.

After this, the OAS was also an important cause of political turmoil, because there it was a matter of fascism. For a whole period Algeria was very far away for people, so people didn't really give a damn, and anyway it had to do with the "Arabs." The mass of the population began to

get interested in Algeria when tens of thousands of their sons had been there and then told about their war when they got back. Besides this, there were thousands who didn't come back, or were wounded; the French population then began to ask questions.

At the beginning of the war, aside from intellectuals, the Left slept. But with the OAS, that is, with fascism, the people of the Left began to wake up, there were anti-fascist reactions. It became a "French phenomenon," with the skinheads, the strong-arm men of the right...people began to be afraid. Then there were the attacks, Delphine Renard... As for me, my flat was firebombed by the fascists.

The third "interesting" experience: at the time when the OAS was carrying out these attacks, we felt that among young people there was something bigger than just the war in Algeria itself that was happening, and the Front universitaire antifasciste (University Anti-fascist Front- FUA) was created. We managed to create a true mass combat organization that brought together thousands of students in Paris and the provinces. The PCF was against us and we, Communists, were at the head of the FUA.

In opposition to the Stalinists, we managed to demonstrate that it was possible to have a unitary, non-sectarian combative reaction, since it was the organization that had decided to chase the fascists from the Latin Quarter. Every day there were hundreds of students who, at the call of the FUA, gathered in the Latin Quarter with flying squads. As soon as there was a distribution of fascist leaflets we went out and broke it up. We know that people like Duprat, [10] who was pro OAS and has since died, were never able to penetrate the Institut de Géographie... Recently there was still an inscription on the walls of that Institute: "Duprat will not enter." We really cleaned up the Latin Quarter, not in an ultra-Left way, but with the mass of students who'd been mobilized. There were Christians, PSU (United Socialist Party, a left centrist group - ed) members, the unorganized and us, the Communist "opposition."

The Party leadership called me in, along with some others, to tell us to stop, that we were behaving like "ultra-Leftists." This was to be a good experience, for we were quickly given a kind of "democratic cushion" to protect us: 150 intellectuals, with Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir at the head of the group, signed a text that was more or less the same as that of the FUA. This was the creation of the FACUIRA [Front d'action et de coordination des universitaires et intellectuels pour un rassemblement antiraciste]. So we now had this anti-OAS structure guided by intellectuals, and the organization of high school and college students, the FUA.



### **With Daniel Bensaid (left) and Oliver Besancenot in 2002.**

This was a very rich experience. We had our own spy service: it was in this way that we acquired credibility. We were able to arrest those who bombed *Le Figaro*, a kind of operation that the cops never handled. We nabbed them and interrogated them (without beating them) for a whole night in an apartment until they confessed.

We found on them a list of 50 officers and dozens of keys. Afterwards we didn't know what to do with these people. We turned them over to the cops, with the maps of the *Figaro* that they had. The cops were furious that it was "Leftists" who gave them these bombers. Three of these OAS members were placed in an internment camp.

The next day the *Figaro*, very much put out, had to talk about this. This was really an event. But the newspaper still said that it was "perhaps" a question of the bombers of the *Figaro*. The OAS people did about two or three years in an internment camp (there were very few of these camps for fascists, but many for Algerians.)

The OAS alienated a good part of public opinion, especially after the attack aimed at the apartment of André Malraux, which cost little Delphine Renard her eye. This was a turning

point in the war in Algeria. People said: "It's a total mess here. If there's a danger of attacks on the streets, well, let's put an end to this..."

And then there was the [Paris demonstration of October 17, 1961](#), when hundreds of Algerians were killed their bodies thrown into the Seine. Public reaction was miserable; what happened had never before been seen. But there was so much racism among the public that everyone contented themselves with finding the repression shameful. Information about it came out little by little.

Today we know what happened, but at the time not much was known; we were constantly lied to. For many people it was only a that "there was an enormous demo of filthy Arabs that the cops attacked." The public reacted to this benign version of the facts, and racism had free rein here. It wasn't French people who were attacked and, by definition, the Algerians were frightening. We like the neighborhood Arab grocer, the one who's open all night, but when they're together on the street they're scary. So there was, on the one hand, fear of that mass of Algerians and a little regret because there was talk that there had been a lot of deaths. This explains the paralysis of opinion.

I saw the horrible scene on the Grands Boulevards. I was warned of it, and it was absolutely horrible: it's a memory I'll never forget. What's more, it was raining, which gave it an even more gloomy aspect. There were no cars on the Grands Boulevards, traffic was blocked. It was 11:00 at night and the massacre had already taken place.

The Boulevard was flooded, gloomy,

black; no cars, not a sound: total silence. And the mounds of Algerians - and there's no other words for it - every 50 meters before the doorways. You didn't know who was dead. There was blood. They didn't move, they didn't cry out, they didn't say anything. Mounds of Algerians in the darkness, and companies of CRS, clubs in hand, who weren't hitting anyone anymore, who walked back and forth.

The worst was in front of the offices of L'Humanité, on the boulevard Poissonnière, its iron shutter down and in front of it a mass of Algerians, wounded or dead, who were bleeding and were there, in front of the closed shutter: an image like this one is unforgettable.

There's finally today a rehabilitation of the truth, but we had to wait for it almost till the end of the century. All kinds of committees have tried to do something. In many interviews it was asked of Communists if it's true that the curtain of L'Humanité had remained closed before of the demonstrators. They answered that this was the case, but that they couldn't do otherwise, that they had to ensure the security of the newspaper, etc. Always the same arguments, it's terrible.

All of this represents the beginning of the break between the world of labour and the PCF, the beginning of the latter's decline. From a certain point of view, the formation of the "cadres" of 1968 and the "new extreme Left" with the Trotskyists, the Maoists and some of the ecologists - everything that goes beyond the traditional parties, in short, a good part of the

militants today in their fifties, were politicized, radicalized, revolutionized and de-Stalinized by their support for the Algerian Revolution.

In 1962 the independence of Algeria was a great joy; we had worked for years to this end. There were no manifestations of joy in France. It was difficult...But it was extraordinary for all the solidarity militants. You could look yourself in the mirror after having contributed if not a stone, at least a grain to that Algerian independence. The combat was victorious and we were absolutely happy.

Afterwards there were debates: what is this going to lead to? Some were more confident than others, more optimistic. But we said to ourselves: "At least this is it. The country is independent, the cause for which people were massacred. Torture has stopped. Whatever the regime, the primary objective has been achieved, the Algerians have their own home."

In conclusion, I'd like to say that you have to try to understand that an entire generation maintains particularly close ties with the Algerian people since that time. If I go to Tunisia, to Morocco or Albania it's not the same as when I go to Algeria. There's something there that remains. This is why we're very demanding if something's not right in Algeria. "They don't deserve this," we think.

*Source: Jacques Charby, Les Porteurs d'Espoir. La Découverte, Paris, 2004; Translated: for marxists.org by Mitch Abidor. Alain Krivine's new book **Ca te passera avec l'Âge** (You'll Grow Out of It) is published at the beginning of October by Flammarion.*

## The Limits of Might

13 September 2006, by **Michel Warschawski**

It is not yet what a majority of Israelis, and more and more senior politicians are demanding - a national independent inquiry commission,

having juridical power, like after the 1973 war or the massacres of Sabra and Shatilla, in 1982. Last week, 60,000 civilians, led by reserve

soldiers and officers who have fought in Lebanon, made this demand loud and clear, and one can expect that such a commission may still be



established.



## Peace demonstrators clash with police in Tel Aviv

If one had still doubts about the pathetic failure of the Israeli military offensive in Lebanon, the decision of the Prime Minister put the things straight: 33 days of colossal use of military force didn't bring any substantial result, except massive destruction and horrible massacres. Haaretz editorial is unambiguous on the failure of the Israeli offensive: **"There is no room for mistake: despite the attempts of the Prime Minister and the IDF generals to count the IDF achievements, towards its coming end, the war is perceived in the area and in the world, but also in the eyes of the Israeli public, as a painful defeat, with negative far reaching implications..."** [11]

Political as well as military initiatives are usually evaluated according to their initial objectives. A first problem we are confronted with, is the lack of clearly defined objectives, or, more precisely, the fact that the stated objectives of the war have changed many times. First, the declared aim was to release the Israeli prisoners of war captured by Hezbollah. Then, few days after the beginning of the Israeli offensive, PM Olmert announced that the objective was to eradicate Hezbollah, not less! The method suggested by the Israeli High command was characteristic of the narrow-mind of military senior personnel and their inability to learn anything from history, including their own one: massive terror operations against Lebanon, in order to "teach the Lebanese government and people" what is the price of letting Hezbollah act from Lebanese territory. The result of indiscriminating destructions and killings in Lebanon (including Beirut airport, more than hundred bridges, power stations etc) was to create a massive pro-Hezbollah sentiment among the Lebanese people, including large sectors of the Christian population.

Confronted with the growing

sympathy towards Hizbollah and his sensational ability to hit the heart of Israel with hundreds of rockets, the declared objective was reduced to "destroy the ability of Hizbollah to send rockets on the Israeli territory." Two weeks after the colossal air strikes on Hizbollah, the number of rockets hitting Israel, and provoking serious damages to all the northern part of the country is even bigger than before! Another failure. Finally - for today - the objective has once again been enlarged: to restore the Israeli capacity of dissuasion and its image as a local military super-power.

This objective too has not been achieved, on the contrary. As Zwy Barel, Haaretz expert for the Arab world explains: **"Why would someone in Lebanon be dissuaded, when he is witnessing its houses destroyed, the children of its neighbors and their parents killed by hundreds, and having almost no chance to start school-year on time? He is now convinced that the war is not anymore against Hizbollah only, but against Lebanon, against himself, whether he is Christian, Druze or Shiite."** [12] In his article, Barel suggests to the Israeli leaders to try to learn something from the Palestinian experience: **"Whoever doesn't understand the formula can ask himself... why after more than 150 killed in the last three weeks, they are still trying one Qassam, one more rocket. Why the logic of the IDF, which calculates its strength by the quantity of steel at its disposal, why this logic doesn't work on them..."**

The fact that the Israeli army has not been able to achieve even one objective, and that after a month Hizbollah is still able to strike hundreds of rockets on Israel is perceived in Israel as a national tragedy. **"Does someone think we have won?" asks Yoel Marcus, "who believe that the promises of Ehud Olmert at the beginning of the war to eradicate Hezbollah and to finish with the threat of rockets on Israel, was fulfilled?"** [13]

But the conclusion drawn by the military high command, most of the Israeli leadership and many Israeli

commentators was still to increase the offensive, to mobilize more reserve units, to try to invade and occupy parts of Lebanon. The same Yoel Marcus, signor commentator in Haaretz, concluded his article on the total failure of the Israeli offensive with the following appeal: **"It is now clear that the fight is not on Lebanon. We are not confronted with a local organization, but the arm linked and acting on behalf Iran and Syria., Al Qaeda and the followers of the path which started with the Twin Towers. Israel is not only defending Kiryat Shmoneh, Hedera and may be Tel Aviv; it became, against its own will, a partner in the war against Islam fundamentalism, what Bush names "the axis of evil", in this part of the world... The conclusion must be to take a big breath and to initiate a fight with all the might we have at our disposal, in the air and in the ground, until we are able to neutralize Hezbollah, as a military militia on our borders. We must reach a cease-fire when we are the winning side, to show them that even the small Satan has teeth..."** [14]

Finally, after more destructions and killings - according to international organizations, more than 80% of the bombs were thrown in the last week of combat - and many more casualties in the Israeli army, Olmert has been obliged to accept the UN Security Council resolution calling not for a cease-fire, but for a "stop to hostilities". The Israeli army is still active in Lebanon, but it is definitely an army which has suffered a defeat.

Often, during demonstrations in the Palestinian occupied territories, and witnessing the massive use of force and the brutality of the Israeli soldiers against civilians, we use to tell them: "Big heroes! Your war is against unarmed women and children, and you dare calling it "confrontation or even "a battle"! The kind of wars you are strong at is wars against helpless civilians! But when you will be confronted with real fighters, you will not know how to fight, and you will either die or run away like rabbits!" And indeed Israeli soldiers are experiencing a war with well trained



and well motivated fighters, and proving to be completely un-efficient. The number of casualties is huge, compared to the relatively small quantity of Hizbollah fighters, and one should ask what it may be if Israel dare to attack Syria, not only from the air, where definitely Israel has tremendous superiority.

The Israeli experience is obviously reminding the US experience in Iraq: a powerful army, but too powerful, too self-confident, too arrogant and too spoiled to be able to fight with the efficiency that the huge means at its disposal may have led to expect they

will demonstrate.

The Israeli political as well as military establishment is, right now divided; between those who want an immediate revenge, in order to show to the world, and to the US neo-conservative leadership, that it has still its capacity of deterrence, and can play the role allocated to the IDF in the global non-ending preemptive war, and those who believe that Israel needs first to re-organize its armed forces, in order to be able to win. The demand for a reaches and a new opportunity to how what the guys are "really able to do" is very strong; the

demands to put order in the Israeli mess, is strong too.

In the next few months, we will know which of these currents will win, depending among other, on the conclusions of the various fact-finding and inquiry commissions. But in both cases, there will be a second round, if only because it is part of the neo-conservative strategy of global non-ending preemptive war for the re-colonization of the world and the establishment of a "Great Middle East" under full US hegemony.

And we too shall prepared for this next round.

## The revival of a political tradition

7 September 2006, by **John Lister**



When George Bush latched on to the illness of Fidel Castro, and the temporary handing of power in Cuba to Castro's brother Raul, as a pretext to urge regime change, on the island, he revived memories of a long and inglorious history of US intervention in the affairs of Latin American countries.

In no instance during more than a century of involvement has the USA sided with popular, democratic forces against a military dictatorship: instead, time and again, the US has dispatched troops or pulled strings to repress any movement that might unseat vicious, corrupt, but pro-US, regimes.

In the case of Cuba, the history of US intervention goes back to the end of the 9th century. In 1895 the US made a bid to buy the island. Three years later, after defeating Spain in war, the US took over Puerto Rico, Guam and the Philippines. And American troops occupied Cuba for three years. In that time they took the opportunity to alter the constitution with the 1901 Platt amendment, giving the US perpetual

rights to intervene in Cuban affairs, and limiting its independent action.

Only when Cubans elected a president to the liking of Washington was the US military presence scaled down in 1902, but US Marines were back for three years from 1906 to suppress riots. The country was run by a succession of brutal and dictatorial regimes, culminating in a coup in 1934 led by former sergeant Fulgencio Batista, whose blend of authoritarianism, violence and brazen corruption established him as the military strongman and dominant figure in Cuban politics for 25 years.

Batista was shrewd enough to recognise the potential benefits to him of legalising the (Stalinist) Communist Party in 1938 (then embroiled in the collaborationist politics of building Popular Fronts with so-called democratic bourgeois formations) and trade unions in 1939, and was rewarded by CP endorsement of his election campaign in 1940.

In 1942 two leading Stalinists took office as ministers in Batista's government. But the other key prop to Batista's rule was the USA, and especially the financial groups which grabbed the chance for rich pickings

from Cuban investment, and the US Mafia, which stepped up its operations on the island with the arrival of top mobsters including the Mafia's banker, Meyer Lansky, who lived in Cuba from 1937 to 1940, establishing a growing empire of casinos and hotels. When Batista handed over the presidency in 1944 to the corrupt leaders of the Autentico party, the Mafia was already well established in the top circles of power.

By 1948 the Presidential palace openly took a share of the huge profits from selling cocaine, skimming the National Lottery and milking the country's Customs revenues. While US banks and corporations had largely sewn up the profits from monopoly control of Cuba's sugar and extractive industries, transport, telephones, energy and infrastructure, the Mafia had by the early 1950s achieved a dominant role in tourism, casinos, nightclubs, prostitution, drug traffic, gambling, trade in precious stones, smuggling, money-laundering, import and export businesses, finance and banking, and had extensive influence in the Autentico party and with Batista and his circle of supporters.

The US government, and especially the CIA had worked closely with the

Mafia during the War, and many links remained in place afterwards. Even the high profile expulsion of mob boss "Lucky" Luciano from Cuba in 1947 as a result of US pressure was in fact a means to divert attention from the booming Mafia business, involving top US-based mobsters, which had been set up before his arrival and continued to flourish on the island after his enforced departure.

For the US government, which had already sidelined the embarrassing revelations of the 1950 Kefauver report into mob activities in the USA, the Mafia's Cuban empire was seen, if anything, as an additional lever of control over the political regime. However the blatant corruption of Autentico presidents led in 1952 to the real danger than the opposition Ortodoxo party (whose radicalising membership included Fidel Castro) could win the elections: twelve weeks before polling day, Batista staged a bloodless preemptive coup which had been widely predicted in advance, and with evident acquiescence from Washington.

It is worth recalling that this was a period at the height of the Cold War, with war still raging in Korea, and heightened US fears of popular movements which later brought CIA-backed military coups against radical nationalist leaderships in Iran (1953) and then Guatemala (1954). The Batista dictatorship deepened its alliance with the Mafia, while escalating its repression of popular movements. It sealed off any normal avenue of opposition.

The paralysis of bourgeois politics triggered Castro's now famous attack on the Moncada barracks in Santiago on July 26 1953, backed by about 150 supporters, including two women. The raid itself was abortive and some of the rebels were killed: others were put on trial and jailed, but not before Castro, defending himself, had put forward the accusing statement-cum-manifesto "History will absolve me", which called for action to break up the holdings of the big landowners, nationalisation of electricity and telephone companies, and a variety of democratic and other reforms.

Released from jail early under an

amnesty in 1955, Castro went into exile in Mexico. He secured support and funding from a variety of oppositional and disgruntled forces, including sidelined former Autentico President Prio Socorras, whose donation purchased the Granma, the boat in which Castro's Rebel Army, with its ramshackle policies, sailed on November 24 1956 to fight a 3-year guerrilla war based in the Cuban countryside.

The eventual success of what at times seemed a tenuous battle by small numbers of rebels against an apparently large and ruthless army rested both on the popular support for any genuine opposition to Batista, and on the disintegration of the dictatorial regime itself, which by the middle of 1958 had lost the confidence and support of the USA.

When Batista and his cronies ran for the planes and fled the country on New Year's Eve, Castro's forces were welcomed into Havana by a massive general strike. Revolutionary Cuba has since been a beacon for many revolutionaries of various political traditions: but for over 20 years from the late 1960s to the early 1990s its economic and military dependence upon the Soviet Union resulted in a visible avoidance by many of its supporters of any explicit discussion of the politics of Stalinism, and some highly questionable policy statements by Fidel Castro, such as backing the invasion of Czechoslovakia, endorsing the grisly Ethiopian dictatorship, and opposing the trade union movement in Poland.

However the same period also saw Cuba break ranks from the Kremlin's policy, to mount the decisive military intervention in support of the Angolan liberation struggle, which in turn helped weaken and overturn apartheid in South Africa. After the heavy-handed repression and incarceration of the small body of Cuban Trotskyists in the immediate aftermath of the 1959 revolution, we have waited over 40 years for a specifically Cuban critique of the politics of Stalinism.

The emergence of such writings at this time, in a new volume by Celia Hart offers tremendous basis for optimism that as Castro's physical strength ebbs

away there is a core of committed and critical Marxists within the Cuban CP willing to fight in defense of the gains that have been made and against a CIA orchestrated democratisation, by a vicious Miami-based expatriate restorationist mafia.

Celia first discovered the writings of Trotsky while studying in East Germany in the 1980s and the essays and articles in this volume show her increasing awareness of the corrosive effects of Stalin's theory that it was possible to build "socialism in a single country" and the Stalinist rejection of Trotsky's interpretation of the concept of "permanent revolution" (i.e. uninterrupted and international) first put forward by Karl Marx in the 1850s.

Celia argues that the core revolutionary concepts in Trotsky's approach were close to those of early Cuban revolutionary Julio Antonio Mella, and also embraced by Che in his quest to internationalise the revolution. She also poses the question which we might have expected more Trotskyists to have posed over the many years in which they uncritically endorsed a Cuban regime which excluded their current from political debate: why was it forbidden for so many years to put Leon Trotsky in relation to the Cuban Revolution? (p21).

Celia insists that she has not managed to find out - but the answer is not too difficult to uncover. Castro's July 26 Movement, which had fought and defeated Batista in the teeth of opposition from the Stalinists of the Popular Socialist Party., was strong enough to oust the old regime, but was not based in the working class and did not have enough links or expertise in the trade unions to secure stable control over the whole economy.

And Castro's new regime, immediately under pressure from the USA, felt that it needed international economic and military support. For its part the relatively new Soviet bureaucracy under Khrushchev was looking to strengthen its hand against the USA: deals were done in which the July 26 Movement merged with the Stalinist party, with the Castro brothers in

overall control, but considerable political influence handed to the Stalinists.

In exchange the USSR extended military and economic support to Cuba. Moscow was prepared to allow Castro a degree of leeway in nationalising the Cuban economy, and for some years ignored Cuban efforts to export its model of revolutionary change by endorsing guerrilla struggles and left currents in Latin American countries.



But the new Kremlin regime under Brezhnev took a harder line. and from the late 1960s until the collapse of the USSR in the early 1990s Castro's Cuba was required to operate within

the boundaries of Soviet foreign policy. The fact that Celia can now write freely about Trotsky and Trotskyism, and discuss many of the historical crimes of Stalinism appears to reflect a much more relaxed attitude from the Cuban CP leadership which is now freed from the shackles of Moscow control. However there are still constraints and it is not accurate to claim that the Cuban leadership was Trotskyists in practice.

Che may have been the one to free the imprisoned Cuban Trotskyists on his return from Africa, and may well have read Permanent Revolution and had Trotsky's History of the Russian Revolution in his knapsack in Bolivia (p25), but his guerrilla exploits in Latin America, however heroically inspired, never set out to lead a process of permanent revolution in which the working class would take

the lead. But as a treasure trove of ideas and neglected facts past and present, and a reminder of the historic legacy that helped give us the Cuban Revolution, Celia Hart's writings are very important. We also need to see how these ideas can be further developed in the context of the Cuban political situation in the closing years of Fidel's rule.

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## Against resolution 1701, against the sending of NATO troops

7 September 2006, by **Gilbert Achcar**

It would, moreover, require an extraordinary dose of naivety to believe for a single instant in the attachment of the permanent members of the SC to the sovereignty of any state other than their own. Resolution 1559 - and the fact that it was adopted in 2004, and not before, amply demonstrates it - fits in an obvious fashion into the US action against Iran in the course of their occupation of Iraq, targeting both of Teheran's allies: the Syrian regime and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Resolution 1701 of August 11, 2006 is every bit as flagrant in this respect. It was adopted after several weeks of stonewalling of the SC by Washington to allow Israel time to pursue its aggression. Its iniquity is blatant inasmuch as it fails to condemn Israel's criminal aggression, mentioning only "Hezbollah's attack

on Israel" and the "hostilities in Lebanon and in Israel" (sic).



It shows a flagrant hypocrisy in demanding that Israel "cease its offensive military operations" without even demanding the immediate lifting of the blockade it is imposing on Lebanon - as if a blockade was not an eminently offensive military operation.

The iniquity is just as flagrant when the new UNIFIL - which, remarkably, is deployed only on the territory of the occupied country - is supposed to ensure that its zone of deployment is not used for "hostile activities of any kind". Resolution 1701 does not say a word on the protection of Lebanese territory against the repeated

aggression by Israel, occupying power in Lebanon for 18 years (without speaking of the portion of territory occupied since 1967).

To get an idea of the very biased character of the vision of UNIFIL upheld by the European states that will provide its backbone, read the interview given to the newspaper Le Monde (August 31, 2006) by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, head of the UN's peacekeeping operations. It requires no commentary.

"Could you be brought to use force against Hezbollah?

We could be brought to do it with respect to any element that would hinder our freedom of movement or would represent a threat to the population or to peace. [...]

"What would UNIFIL do in the case of

a raid by the Israeli army on the Lebanon?

"Unhappily, since the cessation of hostilities, there have been more Israeli violations than violations by Lebanese armed elements. [...]

Could it be brought to use force against Israel in this case?

I think that Israel wants international law to be upheld, and given that responsibility and sovereignty hand in hand in Lebanon, would assume its responsibilities in respecting international law."

Resolution 1701 is filled with deliberately ambiguous formulations that raise the prospect of a combat mission coming under Chapter VII of the Charter, which Washington and Paris invoked directly in their draft resolution distributed on August 5 and rejected by Hezbollah and the Lebanese government. Before these objections, Washington and Paris abandoned the idea of a new international force in Lebanon, contenting themselves with the UNIFIL force already in position.

Nonetheless, the mandate of this latter has been profoundly altered, not only in the sense indicated above, but also as to its zone of activity, with UNIFIL II authorised to deploy along

the Lebanese-Syrian border and control Lebanon's aerial and maritime access.

In sum, the spirit of this resolution is to treat Lebanon as if it was the aggressor! In this sense it represents an attempt to continue the Israeli war in the Lebanon in another fashion, which could imply war operations in the short or medium term. That is why it should be vigorously denounced and rejected by anybody who upholds the spirit of the UN Charter.

That does not mean rejecting the presence of UNIFIL along the Lebanese-Israeli frontier. UNIFIL has been in place since 1978 and is accepted by all the Lebanese political forces. In spite of its obvious ineffectiveness as to the protection of Lebanon against Israeli encroachments on its sovereignty, and its inaction in the face of the invasion of Lebanon by Israel in 1982 and its occupation of south Lebanon for 18 years, it is a precious witness to these violations of sovereignty.

What is important is 1) to reject the profound and dangerous change in the UNIFIL mandate represented by resolution 1701, and 2) to oppose the use of UNIFIL II and the UN cover in order to continue the war for the

common objectives of Israel, Washington and Paris in Lebanon. What is developing is the rehearsal of a practice symptomatic of the new era: the use of the UN as fig leaf for military operations led by Washington with NATO and other allies, as is the case in Afghanistan since December 2001.

In good logic, an intervention force should be made up of troops from neutral countries. Yet Washington and Paris are in no way neutral in the Lebanese conflict. No force allied to the US will be considered as neutral in a conflict between one of Washington's principal allies and another state. That is why all those who desire peace in the Middle East and are concerned by the US projects in this part of the world should energetically oppose the sending to and presence in Lebanon of troops from NATO member countries.

A protest movement in this sense has begun in the countries in question, from Germany to Turkey, via France, Italy and Spain. The task is all the more necessary in that Israel gives itself the "right of the strongest" to reject the participation in UNIFIL of troops from certain Muslim countries, on the pretext that they are not neutral in the Israeli-Arab conflict.

## Jumping Through Hoops

1 September 2006, by **Dianne Feeley**



### Pro-choice activists on the march

Yet in 2006 opponents of reproductive rights have continued to move on several different fronts:

- In March the South Dakota legislature passed a law, subsequently signed by Governor Mike Rounds, banning abortions in the state. In defiance of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, this law includes no

provision to protect the health of a pregnant woman. Before the intervention of activists who opposed the ban the law was scheduled to take effect July 1.

- This summer the Jackson Women's Health Organization, Mississippi's lone remaining abortion clinic, has faced two waves of anti-abortion protests.

- By a lopsided 65 to 34 vote, the Senate recently passed a bill to make it a federal crime for any adult to take a pregnant minor across state lines for

an abortion without her parents' consent. The House of Representatives passed an even stricter version last year so if the two houses can agree on a compromise bill, President Bush would gladly sign it into law.

- On August 1 the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) announced its plans to make the morning-after pill known as Plan B available over the counter for women 18 and older. This is the first time the FDA ever proposed a separate age status for a non-prescription drug. Plan B, which contains concentrated amounts of the



hormone progesterin, is the most common form of emergency contraception. Available in some European countries for more than 20 years, Plan B can prevent a pregnancy within 72 hours of intercourse, but is most effective within the first 24. As an over-the-counter drug with an age restriction, chances are that it will only be available where pharmacists are present.

In each case supporters of reproductive freedom have organized to oppose these actions.

- In the case of South Dakota, 38,000 people signed a petition to prevent the anti-abortion law from taking effect and demanded that the issue be placed on the ballot for a vote this November. Oglala Sioux Tribal President Cecelia Fire Thunder announced at the time "I will personally establish a Planned Parenthood clinic on my own land, which is within the boundaries of the Pine Ridge Reservation where the state of South Dakota has absolutely no jurisdiction." [15]

- The Jackson clinic has gathered a network of supporters to defend the right of women to seek abortions.

- Letters to the editor in hundreds of newspapers across the country have debated the issue of criminalizing adults who aid pregnant minors, with the vast majority pointing to the reality that most teenagers do tell at least their mothers. The handful of those who don't have good reason not to tell-they may have seen what their parents did to an older sister and want to shield themselves from abuse.

- Both medical professionals and networks of reproductive rights supporters have opposed the FDA's age restriction on Plan B.

Years ago the right wing decided the best way to attack sex education was to demand that such programs teach abstinence as the only effective birth control method. They insist condoms lead to venereal disease while abortion raises one's risk of breast cancer and infertility. Despite the lack of any evidence for such claims, several states have legislated these sex "education" programs. For many

young women, especially in conservative states like Mississippi, there are few alternative sources for birth control information.

Although U.S. educational policy is decentralized, the priority set by federal funds has a big impact on local school boards. Washington currently earmarks approximately \$80 million to promote abstinence-only education and states provide another \$38 million in matching funds. Fifty-one percent of sex education programs require abstinence to be portrayed as the preferred option for adolescents, although information about contraception is permitted, and 35%, including half of all the districts in the South, require an abstinence-only program.

Not only are these programs out of step with the effective evidence about how to teach sex education, but they are out of step with reality.

### **Restrictions on Abortion**

Since the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision legalizing abortion, the right wing has sought to prevent hospitals from performing the procedure, restricted clinics with a range of regulations and harassed medical personnel both at the clinics and at their homes. On the federal level, the government excludes abortion from medical coverage for women in the military, denies the procedure to most women receiving public assistance and, both at home and abroad, has defunded family planning programs that provide abortion services.

Given that abortions are not available in over 90% of all the counties throughout the United States (and never have been), women in rural areas are forced to travel several hours to a clinic. While 35% of women between 15-45 obtain an abortion at some point in their reproductive life, one third live in the counties where there are no clinics. Lack of access means a woman is unable to obtain the abortion as early as she would like in her pregnancy cycle. It can even mean a more expensive, second-semester abortion, raising the possibilities of medical complications.

In 1992 the Supreme Court placed significant restrictions on abortion rights. In *Planned Parenthood of Southeast Pennsylvania v. Casey* the court ruled that states had the right to pass laws that don't recreate an "undue burden." Both supporters of women's rights and their opponents saw the case as a setback-the right wing was hoping for overturning legal abortion while most supporters of women's reproductive freedom realized the battle over which restrictions would be considered "undue" had just begun.

Within the last year approximately 500 anti-abortion bills were introduced in state legislatures and a couple dozen were signed into law. More have been introduced this year. All this harassing legislation has an impact on clinics; there are now approximately 10% fewer clinics than a decade ago.

Today 32 states and the District of Columbia prohibit the use of state funds except when federal funds are available; 46 allow individual health care providers to refuse to participate in an abortion and 43 allow institutions to refuse to perform abortions. Twenty-two states require parental consent for a teenager seeking an abortion. Only two require the signature of both parents; most provide for an additional mechanism whereby the teenager can seek a bypass. Eleven states require parental notification; seven others have passed legislation but it is permanently enjoined. (95,000 women 18 or younger had an abortion in 2000.)

Twenty-eight states mandate a woman must be given "counseling" before an abortion that includes: the supposed link between abortion and breast cancer (3 states), the ability of a fetus to feel pain (4 states), long-term mental health consequences for a woman (3 states) or the availability of services and funding should the woman decide to carry the pregnancy to term (26 states). Twenty-four require a one-day waiting period. This is a particular problem for women traveling any distance-recent statistics indicate that 25% of the women obtaining abortions travel more than 50 miles; 8% travel more than 100 miles.

## Clinic Blockades

These institutional strategies accompany the right wing's in-your-face actions at clinics. Twenty years ago they were able to mobilize week-long protests of several thousand; supporters of women's rights organized counter pickets. The radical right didn't just picket. They attempted to "save" women from abortions, stalked medical personnel, traced the license plates of any cars going to the clinic, and put out wanted posters. In the end Congress was forced to enact legislation protecting the clinics, but not before the murders of doctors performing abortions-Drs. George Tiller (Wichita, KS), Barnett Slepian (Buffalo, NY) and David Gunn (Pensacola, FL), and Gunn's escort, John Britton.

This summer both Operation Save America (descendent of Operation Rescue) and Oh Saratoga picketed the Jackson Women's Health Organization, which stayed open throughout. The protesters, ranging from 25-100, brought their signature blown-up fetus photos. Operation Save America protesters also targeted the neighborhood of the clinic's gynecologist, Dr. Joseph Booker. They went door to door, telling his neighbors that Booker was "a baby killer." Throughout the protests Dr. Booker, a 62-year old African American, had a police escort. But like other abortion providers, he took it all in stride.

A number of feminist organizations,

most notably NOW and the Feminist Majority, organized to support the Jackson clinic, holding rallies in defense of women's reproductive healthcare and fundraisers for the extra expenses the clinic faced.

## Restricting the Emergency Pill

Like abortion, the right wing has made emergency contraception a battleground. The right opposes it because it represents a "slippery slope." Some even claim it works the same way an abortion does and therefore is "taking a life."

In December 2003 the FDA's advisory panel voted 28-0 that Plan B was "safe for use in a nonprescription setting," voting 23 to 4 in favor of granting it over-the-counter status. But following the 2003 vote, Dr. W. David Hager, a Christian conservative and Bush appointee to the panel, stated his fear that if Plan B were freely available, it would increase sexual promiscuity among teenagers.

In May 2004 the FDA denied the drug manufacturer's application, citing some of Hager's reasoning. Two months later the manufacturer reapplied for permission to sell it to women ages 16 and up. When, in August 2005, the FDA announced it would delay making a decision, Dr. Susan F. Wood, director of the Office of Women's Health at the FDA, resigned in protest.

In response to this foot dragging, the Morning-After Pill Conspiracy, a

grassroots coalition of feminist groups, has been engaged in civil disobedience. Over 4,000 women have signed a pledge to distribute the pills to those who need them, period. Annie Tummino, lead plaintiff in a suit filed against the FDA stated, "If you're old enough to get pregnant, you're old enough to decide that you don't want to be pregnant."

According to a 2006 study by the Guttmacher Institute, there are 6.4 million pregnancies a year in the United States, 3.1 million of which are unintended and 1.3 million that end in abortion. In the seven years since the last such study, the overall unintended-pregnancy rate (about half of all pregnancies) has remained unchanged-but women below the poverty level were four times as likely to have an unplanned pregnancy and five times as likely to have an unplanned birth. The ultra right, however, has a one-size-fits-all solution: poor women who aren't married should be encouraged to get married!

While most of the right-wing's rhetoric against women's bodies has revolved around restricting access to abortion and attacking lesbians and others regarded by the right as sexually deviant, their agenda is much larger. They seek to reestablish the "traditional family" as they imagine it so that "values" and "stability" will cover over the social and economic problems that confront Americans today. That ideology just isn't in synch with reality.

# Liberation, Then What?

1 September 2006, by **Jeffery R Webber**

*Figures in round brackets refer to book page numbers. Endnotes are in square brackets*

The first wave - often referred to as the "IMF riots" - took off in the late 1970s with its characteristic "strikes, marches, demonstrations and riots."

The protests, write Seddon and Zeilig, "usually involved a variety of social groups and categories and did not always take place under a working class or trade union banner or with working class leadership - if this term is used in its narrow sense."



- The broad base of popular forces involved not only challenged the immediate austerity measures being introduced as part of more general

neoliberal structural adjustment policies, "but also the legitimacy of the reforms themselves and even, sometimes, the governments that introduced them. They also frequently identified the international financial institutions and agencies that led this concerted effort to further enmesh 'the developing world' and the ordinary people who live there, into the uneven process of capitalist globalization in the interests of major transnational corporations and the states that gain most from their operations."

- A second wave, from the late 1980s and into the 1990s, was characterized by greater political coherence and objective. In these new protests, "The charge that national governments had broken the implicit social contract to safeguard not only the material welfare of the people, but also their political rights, led to growing demands for democracy and political change."

- Finally, a third wave, yet to have clearly emerged but breaking onto the horizon in the present day, is one with which Seddon and Zeilig urge activists to engage while drawing lessons from the past 40 years of struggle: "(T)he future success of social protest as the basis for far-reaching progressive social, economic, and political change will depend on serious re-engagement by activists and political movements in Africa in both analysis and action at the grass roots. This will encompass both the practical and strategic needs of ordinary people and exploration with them/by them of new forms of active engagement in the determination of their own futures, as well as with the debates and discussions of the 'anti-capitalist movement' in its other manifestations [across the globe]. South Africa has demonstrated some of the ways that this dual engagement is possible." [16]

### **The Revolutionary Prospect**

In *The Next Liberation Struggle*, John S. Saul makes such a re-engagement in ways that are provocative and stimulating, while also careful and analytical. In the best tradition of scholarly activism Saul seeks to draw historical lessons from past decades of liberation struggle to inform and

foment a stronger third wave, or as he thinks of it, "the next liberation struggle."

"My central intellectual preoccupation," writes Saul, "remains now, as it was in the 1960s, the revolutionary prospect in Africa. Indeed, it continues to take as a starting point that a 'revolution' - both in post-apartheid Southern Africa and in the rest of Africa - is both necessary and possible on that continent." (7)

Saul has been studying and engaging with revolutionary activity in Africa since the mid-1960s. He spent seven years teaching university in Tanzania, as well as shorter stints teaching in post-liberation Mozambique and post-apartheid South Africa. While back in Canada Saul was an important member of the Toronto Committee for Southern Africa, as well as an editor and frequent contributor to the committee's journal, *Southern Africa Report*.

During forty years of such engagement Saul has published a large number of books, including classics such as *Essays on the Political Economy of Africa* (1973), co-edited with Giovanni Arrighi, and *The State and Revolution in Eastern Africa* (1979). Mid-career books include *The Crisis in South Africa* (1981), co-authored with Stephen Gelb, and *A Difficult Road: The Transition to Socialism in Mozambique* (1985).

Two of his most recent works are *Recolonization and Resistance: Southern Africa in the 1990s* (1994); and *Development after Globalization: Theory and Practice for the Embattled South in a New Imperial Age* (2005).

Growing out of this deep body of work, *The Next Liberation Struggle* is a collection of essays written over the last decade which seeks to understand the Thirty Years War for Southern African liberation, 1960-90, in an effort to contribute to a fuller, more meaningful liberation of Africa today.

That Thirty Years War, fought on many fronts and in different forms from country to country, was a war against colonial occupation and white minority rule. While much of the book

is devoted to exposing the limits of the victories which dismantled the twin prisons of colonial occupation and white minority rule, Saul is nonetheless too careful an observer to miss the indelible significance of those earlier popular efforts:

No amount of concern as to the deeply compromised nature of the outcome of the war for Southern African liberation should blind us to just what was achieved, both within the region and by Africa as a whole, in realizing the basic precondition - that is, the removal of white minority rule - of any meaningful freedom there. (5)

At the same time, to see clearly the way forward for popular struggle today, we need to return again to the parameters of that compromised outcome, and understand how black majority rule has not meant an end to capitalist exploitation and marginalization, nor to imperialist impositions on Africa within the world order. On this, it is useful to quote from Saul at some length:

In the end, then, the positive implications of the removal of white minority rule have been muted for most people in the region: extreme socio-economic inequality, desperate poverty, and disease (AIDS most notably) remain the lot of the vast majority of the population. Unfortunately, too, the broader goals that emerged in the course of the liberation struggles - defined around the proposed empowerment and projected transformation of the impoverished state of the mass of the population of the region - have proven extremely difficult to realize.... In now writing of the Thirty Years War for Southern African liberation I hope that a greater consciousness of the shared war will help to remind Southern Africans of its heroic dimensions and help rekindle some sense of their joint accomplishment - and that this will provide a positive point of reference from which they can work to once again fire the flames of joint resistance in the new millennium. (6)

That next wave of resistance, envisioned by Saul as the necessary and possible "next liberation struggle," consists of "a struggle against the savage terms of Africa's



present incorporation into the global economy and of the wounding domestic social and political patterns accompanying it..." (6).

Well aware of the tremendous obstacles - both global and local - to socialist transformation in Africa, Saul nevertheless maintains a "strong sense that a new stage of revolutionary activity is slowly but surely being born in post-apartheid South Africa itself as elsewhere on the continent..." (11)

### **Why African Socialism Failed**

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, "Continental Considerations," first deals with Sub-Saharan Africa's position within the global capitalist system, in a chapter co-authored with Colin Leys [17] This part of the book also sketches some of the contours of "African socialism" as it played itself out in the Tanzania of Julius Nyerere's Tanzania African National Congress (TANU) in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and in Mozambique under the Frelimo movement, led first by Eduardo Mondlane and then by Samora Machel. Frelimo first commanded state power in 1975.

In a very different way, African Socialism is examined through the lens of South Africa's liberation struggle. In the latter case, the analysis is more of "what the situation seemed to promise." As Saul notes, "If there was ever a dog that did not bark in the night for latter-day Sherlocks to reflect upon, it is the absence of a socialist vocation on the part of both the South African liberation movement leadership and, perhaps more importantly, that country's apparently well-developed and assertive working class once apartheid had been defeated." (41)

The chapter on African Socialism is essentially geared towards learning how and why it failed in its various manifestations in order to better forge a new future for socialism on the continent. Toward the same end, the last chapter of Part I juxtaposes really existing "liberal democracy" to Saul's preferred "popular democracy" in the context of Sub-Saharan African politics.

Part II, "Southern Africa: A Range of Variation," presents chapters on the causes and consequences of war and peace in Mozambique, and official "forgotten history" in contemporary Namibia, a situation in which the SWAPO (South West Africa Peoples Organization) government is pitted against the Breaking the Wall of Silence Movement (BWS).

BWS is seeking to force investigations into allegations of human rights abuses by SWAPO leadership against innocent cadres while the movement was in exile, in particular at the SWAPO-run detention centre at Lubango, Angola during the 1980s.

This chapter is also co-authored by Colin Leys. Another, co-written with Richard Saunders, presents a Gramscian analysis of Mugabe's Zimbabwe and popular struggles emerging against that regime. [18] Finally, an entire chapter is devoted to Julius Nyerere's problematic socialism in Tanzania.

Part III, "South Africa: Debating the Transition," is devoted exclusively to an analysis of different stages of South Africa's transition from apartheid to post-apartheid neoliberal democracy. The essays, originally written between 1994 and 2004, grow increasingly cutting in their criticisms of the post-apartheid African National Congress (ANC) government, in correspondence with the ANC's deepening capitulation to the dictates of capital, both global and local.

### **The Hard Questions**

Among the many positive things I could say about this excellent book, I think the most important is the simplest: Saul confronts the biggest and most difficult questions facing socialists within the African context, and he takes his answers seriously.

The Next Liberation Struggle represents an attempt to be realistic without being passive or cynical, to be a revolutionary socialist perspective while avoiding the mere rhetorical flourishes of ultra-leftism, and to be cognizant of the dramatic obstacles in the way of socialism in Africa while always seeking to highlight the popular forces from below whose

growth might help shift the balance of forces in ways more favourable to the realization of socialism.

While recognizing the difficulties for a socialist alternative, Saul convincingly demonstrates the irrationality of seeing in capitalism a future for meaningful and just development. He shows how the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) continue to follow a dogmatic market liberalism which they promote in Africa through aid conditionality; how these institutions have failed to respond in meaningful ways to demands for debt relief; and how the United States and other imperialist states - including his own, Canada - continue to make independent African initiatives vulnerable through a whole host of interventionist mechanisms.

From the perspective of capital, there is "optimism, even excitement," in the "oil, natural gas, and minerals industries" because Africa's resources remain "substantially untapped, with many existing discoveries yet to be developed and many new ones still to be made." (19-20) As Saul and Leys argue, however, "Africa's development, and the dynamics of global capitalism, are no longer congruent, if they ever were."

An economic profile of Africa drawn from this [global capitalist] perspective would pay relatively little attention to countries or states, except as regards the physical security of fixed investments and the availability of communications and transport facilities. Instead it would highlight a group of large transnational corporations, especially mining companies, and a pattern of mineral deposits, coded according to their estimated size and value and the costs of exploiting them (costs that technical advances are constantly reducing) - and a few associated African stock exchanges worth gambling on. (20, 21).

Democracy is another theme that runs throughout The Next Liberation Struggle. On the one hand, Saul provides a searing critique of liberal democracy, and the essential impotence of normative claims about "democracy" in Africa so long as the continent and its people are both



exploited and marginalized within global capitalism.

At the same time, Saul sees the lack of democratic practice and theory historically in the African socialist experiments as one of the roots of their failures. Among the failures of African socialist practices with regard to democracy, Saul underlines "the intellectual arrogance of newly ascendant elites; the cumulative precedents of nationalist movement practices elsewhere in the continent...; the inherited hierarchies deemed necessary to movements and liberation forces previously engaged in intense struggles, sometimes armed, against colonial masters; and the 'progressive' vanguardist discourses learned from overseas parties in the 'successful' Marxist-Leninist tradition."

For Saul, the cases of Tanzania, Mozambique, and South Africa illustrate "the pattern of smothering (however often 'with the best of intentions') the kinds of mass political activism that could have helped sustain the democratic and socialist charge repeated over and over again." (52).

### After the Cold War

Conscious of the imperialist dynamics of the global order, Saul charts the effects on national liberation movements of Cold War power-plays in Africa, and the obstacles and opportunities for the next liberation struggle in the post-Cold War international scene.

On the one hand, there are surely "long-term benefits of the passing of

the Soviet bloc and the discrediting of its bankrupt legacy (both in theory and in practice) to the freeing up of space for the renewal of radicalism in Africa. Yet "the present world-wide context - of neo-liberal market mania and monolithic capitalist globalization - is at least as hostile (if in novel ways) to progressive aspirations in Africa as was the old Cold War world." [19]

While the international left lends its attention to the Middle East, with the ongoing occupation and to Latin America, with the proliferation of inspiring struggles against capitalism, I urge us to stay informed (or become informed) of struggles in Africa. For those of us based in North America, such knowledge will draw our attention to new areas to which we must add our anti-imperialist energies. Saul's latest book is an important tool for advancing this struggle.

## The Labor Aristocracy Myth

1 September 2006, by **Charlie Post**

The reality of the last century seems to challenge these basic Marxist ideas. Despite occasional mass militancy and even proto-revolutionary struggles, the majority of the working class in the developed capitalist countries have remained tied to reformist politics - a politics premised on the possibility of improving the condition of workers without the overthrow of capitalism.

While living and working conditions for workers in the "global North" have deteriorated sharply since the late 1960s, the result has not been, for the most part, the growth of revolutionary consciousness. Instead we have seen reactionary ideas - racism, sexism, homophobia, nativism, militarism - strengthened in a significant sector of workers in the advanced capitalist countries. Since the late 1970s, nearly one-third of U.S. voters in union households have voted for right-wing Republicans. [20]



### Well paid Boeing workers listen respectfully to Democrat Senator Barbara Boxer

This paradox poses a crucial challenge for revolutionary Marxists. However, we need to avoid "mythological" explanations, imagined explanations for real phenomena, whether to interpret natural events or to explain the nature of society. Unfortunately, one of the most influential explanations within the left for working class reformism and conservatism - the theory of the "labor aristocracy" - is such a myth.

### Theory of the "Labor Aristocracy"

Frederick Engels first introduced the notion of the "labor aristocracy" in a number of letters to Marx stretching from the late 1850s through the late

1880s. [21] Engels was grappling with the growing conservatism of the organized sectors of the British working class. He argued that those British workers who had been able to establish unions and secure stable employment - skilled workers in the iron, steel and machine making industries and most workers in the cotton textile mills - constituted a privileged and "bourgeoisified" layer of the working class, a "labor aristocracy."

British capital's dominance of the world economy - its industrial and financial "monopoly" - allowed key employers to provide a minority of workers with relatively higher wages and employment security. Engels saw the resulting relative privilege, especially when compared with the mass of poorly paid workers in unstable jobs, as the material basis of the growing conservatism of the British labor movement.

The contemporary theory of the labor

aristocracy is rooted in the work of V.I. Lenin on imperialism and the rise of "monopoly capitalism." Lenin was shocked when the leaders of the European socialist parties supported "their" capitalist governments in the First World War. The victory of what he called "opportunism" (his term for reformism) confounded Lenin, who had dismissed the development of "revisionism" (Edward Bernstein's challenge to classical Marxism in 1899) as the ideology of socially isolated, middle-class intellectuals. Lenin believed the "orthodox Marxist" leadership of the socialist parties and unions had long ago vanquished the revisionist challenge.

Lenin had therefore expected that the European socialist leaders would fulfill their pledge, ratified at numerous congresses of the Socialist International, to oppose their ruling classes' war drive with strikes and social disruption. By 1915, Lenin had begun to develop his explanation for the victory of opportunism in the socialist and labor movements. In his article "The Collapse of the Second International," Lenin argued:

"The period of imperialism is the period in which the distribution of the world among the 'great' and privileged nations, by whom all other nations are oppressed, is completed. Scraps of the booty enjoyed by the privileged as a result of this oppression undoubtedly fall to the lot of certain sections of the petty-bourgeoisie and the aristocracy and bureaucracy of the working class." [22]



### Boeing workers on strike

This segment "represents an infinitesimal minority of the proletariat and the working masses" whose "adherence... with the bourgeoisie against the mass of the proletariat" was the social basis of reformism.

Lenin located the economic foundation of the labor aristocracy in the "super-profits" generated through imperialist investment in what we would today call the "third world" or "global

South." According to his 1920 preface to *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*:

"Obviously, out of such enormous super profits (since they are obtained over and above the profits which capitalists squeeze out of the workers of their 'own' country) it is possible to bribe their labor leaders and an upper stratum of the labor aristocracy. And the capitalists of the 'advanced' countries do bribe them: they bribe them in a thousand different ways, direct and indirect, overt and covert."

"This stratum of bourgeoisified workers or 'labor aristocracy,' who have become completely petty-bourgeois in their mode of life, in the amount of their earnings, and in their point of view, serve as the main support of the Second International [the reformist socialists - CP] and, in our day, the principal social (not military) support of the bourgeoisie. They are the real agents of the bourgeoisie in the labor movement, the labor lieutenants of the capitalist class, the real carriers of reformism and chauvinism." [23]

The theory of the labor aristocracy remains an important explanation of working-class reformism and conservatism for important segments of the far left in the industrialized countries. While the mainstream Communist Parties generally distanced themselves from the notion of the labor aristocracy as they moved toward reformist politics in the late 1930s, [24] certain left-wing opponents of the Communist Parties continue to defend the theory.

Thus, in the "New Communist Movement" of the 1970s and 1980s, various currents defended the notion that a layer of U.S. workers shared in the "super profits" of imperialism and monopoly capitalism. Max Elbaum (the author of the influential *Revolution in the Air* [25] and Robert Seltzer, then leaders of the prominent "new communist" group Line of March, published a three part explication and defense of the theory of the labor aristocracy in the early 1980s. [26]

More recently, Jonathan Strauss of the Australian Democratic Socialist Party (DSP), one of the larger revolutionary

organizations in the English-speaking world whose origins lie in Trotskyism, has published a series of articles in the DSP sponsored journal *Links* [27] that elaborates upon Elbaum and Seltzer's defense of the theory of the labor aristocracy.

Important groups of activists, in particular those working with low-wage workers, are also drawn to the theory of the labor aristocracy. Four members of the People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER), a workers' center organizing mostly "low-wage/no-wage" workers of color in the San Francisco area, argued that:

"Another feature of imperialism that distinguishes it from earlier eras of capitalism is the imperialist powers' creation of a 'labor aristocracy.' The dominant position of the imperialist nations allows these nations to extract super-profits. The ruling elite of imperialist nations use some of the super-profits to make significant economic and political concessions to certain sectors of that nation's working class. Through higher wages, greater access to consumer goods and services and expanded social wage such as public education and cultural institutions, the imperialist elite are able to essentially bribe those sections of the working class...

"For a contemporary example of this, all we have to do is look at the 2004 presidential elections. Statistics show that working class whites in the United States voted overwhelmingly for George W. Bush in an election that could be read as a referendum of the empire's war on the Iraqi people. An analysis that solely focuses on class would suggest that working class whites had and have an interest in opposing a war that, if nothing else, is costing them billions in dollars. But clearly that ain't what happened. Working class whites voted overwhelmingly in support of the war on the Iraqi people. The majority of working class whites, despite their own exploitation, tie their own interests to white supremacy and the dominance of "America" in the world." [28]

Most current versions of the labor aristocracy thesis recognize some of

the grave empirical problems (see below) with Lenin's claims that higher wages for a significant minority of workers in the imperialist countries comes from the super profits earned from the exploitation of lower paid workers in Africa, Asia and Latin America. [29] Instead, they tend to emphasize how the emergence of "monopoly capitalism" allows large corporations that dominate key branches of industry to earn super profits, which they share with their workers in the form of secure employment, higher wages and benefits.

Contemporary defenders of the labor aristocracy thesis argue that prior to the rise of large corporations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, capitalism was in its "competitive" stage. Under competitive capitalism most branches of industry saw a large number of relatively small firms competing with one another through price cutting.

If any particular firm or industry began to experience higher than average profits because of the introduction of new machinery, it was relatively easy for its competitors to either adopt the new technology or shift investment from industries with lower profits to industries with higher profits. Through this process of competition within and between branches of production, new technology was rapidly diffused and capital easily moved between different sectors of the economy, resulting in uniform technical conditions within an industry and equal profit rates within and between industries.

According to Elbaum and Seltzer, Marx's analysis of the equalization of the rate of profit [30] applied to the "competitive" phase of capitalism:

"In the era of competitive capitalism, profits above the average rate, i.e. surplus profits, were generally spasmodic and temporary. They were usually derived as a result of technological advances that enabled a capitalist to reduce costs below the industry average, or entrepreneurial skills that opened new markets. However, an abnormally high rate of profit by an individual firm, or in a particular branch of industry, was

soon undermined by an inflow of capital seeking the higher rate of profit or by the relatively rapid adoption of cost-cutting innovations by competitors." [31]

The rise of large scale corporations in the 20th century create "institutional or structural restrictions of this process" which "result in monopoly super profits." [32] "Monopoly" or "oligopoly" - where a small number of firms dominate a given industry - replaced competition. Specifically, the enormous cost of new capital's entering these industries (auto, steel, etc.) - the barriers to entry — allow these firms to limit competition and sustain above average profits in several ways.

These barriers to entry prevent the rapid diffusion of new methods of production across industries, creating what Ernest Mandel called "technological rents" or super-profits [33] for these monopoly corporations. These barriers also prevent capital from moving from low profitability to high profitability industries, blocking the equalization of profit rates. Finally, barriers to entry and restricted competition allow corporations to raise prices above their prices of production, securing super profits for the largest firms in the economy. [34]

In this view competition does not disappear under monopoly capitalism, but tends to operate primarily in those sectors of the economy where large numbers of relatively small firms continue to predominate. Cut-throat competition and the rapid depression of above average profits to the average rate persist in the "competitive" sectors (garment, electronics, etc.) of the economy. There the small scale of investment necessary to start a competitive firm lowers barriers to entry and allows a large number of small firms to survive.

The result is a "dual economy," with two distinct profit rates:

"In the monopoly stage of capitalism, the tendency to form an average rate of profit still exists, since monopoly doesn't obliterate competition in the system as a whole. But it is modified by monopoly power. Therefore, the

surplus value of society is distributed both according to size of capital through inter-industry competition (which yields equal profit on equal capital as in competitive capitalism); and according to the level of monopolization (which yields monopoly super profits). Monopolies receive both the average profit and monopoly super profit. Consequently, there arise the phenomena of a relatively permanent hierarchy of profit rates ranging from the highest in the strategic industries with large-scale production and the strongest monopolies, to the lowest in weaker industries with small-scale production, intense competition and market instability." [35]

According to Strauss, Elbaum and Seltzer, monopoly super profits become the primary source of the "bribe" for the contemporary labor aristocracy. The monopoly industries' higher than average profit rates allow these firms to provide higher than average wages and benefits and secure employment to their workers. By contrast, competitive industries earn average (or below average) profit rates and doom workers in these industries to below average wages and benefits and insecure employment.

From this perspective, effective unions are only possible in the monopoly sector of the economy, where the absence of competition creates super profits and allows corporations to "bribe" workers with higher wages and more secure employment. Given the realities of racism and national oppression, "white" workers tend to be overrepresented in the higher paid sectors of the economy, while workers of color tend to be overrepresented in the lower paid sectors of the economy.

The labor aristocracy, as today's theorists see it, is no longer made up primarily of skilled machinists and other industrial workers, as was the case in the early 20th century. Today, the more highly paid workers in the unionized monopoly and public sector constitute a labor aristocracy whose higher wages derive from the super-exploitation of workers in the competitive sectors of the advanced capitalist economies. [36]

Despite its intellectual pedigree and

longevity, the labor aristocracy thesis is not a theoretically rigorous or factually realistic explanation of working-class reformism or conservatism. This essay undertakes an examination of the theoretical and empirical economic claims of the labor aristocracy thesis.

We will first evaluate the claim that super profits pumped out of workers in the global South underwrite a “bribe” in the form of higher wages for a minority of the working class in the global North. The essay then evaluates the claim that limits on competition flowing from industrial concentration in key sectors of the economy produces differential profits rates and wages. We will conclude our critique of the theory of the labor aristocracy with an analysis of the actual history of radical and revolutionary working-class activism in the 20th century.

Finally, I will present an alternative explanation of the persistence of working class reformism and conservatism - one rooted in the necessarily episodic character of working-class self-organization and activity, the emergence of an officialdom (bureaucracy) in the unions and pro-working class political parties, and the inability of reformist politics to effectively win or defend working-class gains under capitalism. [37]

### **Investment, Wages and Profits**

Imperialist investment, particularly in the global South, represents a tiny portion of global capitalist investment. [38] Foreign direct investment makes up only 5% of total world investment - that is to say, 95% of total capitalist investment takes place within the boundaries of each industrialized country.

Of that five percent of total global investment that is foreign direct investment, nearly three-quarters flow from one industrialized country - one part of the global North - to another. Thus only 1.25% of total world investment flows from the global North to the global South. It is not surprising that the global South accounts for only 20% of global manufacturing output, mostly in labor-

intensive industries such as clothing, shoes, auto parts and simple electronics.

Data for profits earned by U.S. companies overseas do not distinguish between investments in the global North and global South. For purposes of approximation, we will assume that the 25% of U.S. foreign direct investment in labor-intensive manufacturing in Africa, Asia and Latin America produces profits above those earned on the 75% of U.S. foreign direct investment in more capital-intensive production in western Europe, Canada and Japan. It is unlikely, however, that more than half of the profits earned abroad by US companies are earned in the global South.

Thus, assigning 50% of foreign profits of U.S. companies to their investments in the global South probably biases the data in favor of claims that these profits constitute a significant source of total U.S. wages. Yet even accepting such a biased estimate, the data for the period 1948-2003 supports Ernest Mandel’s assertion that U.S. profits from investment in the global South “constitute a negligible sum compared to the total wage bill of the American working class.” [39]



### **Nike factory, Ho Chi Minh City**

Prior to 1995 total profits earned by U.S. companies abroad exceeded 4% of total U.S. wages only once, in 1979. Foreign profits as a percentage of total U.S. wages rose above 5% only in 1997, 2000 and 2002, and rose slightly over 6% in 2003. If we hold to our estimate that half of total foreign profits are earned from investment in the global South, only 1-2% of total U.S. wages for most of the nearly 50 years prior to 1995 - and only 2-3% of total U.S. wages in the 1990s - could have come from profits earned in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Such proportions are hardly sufficient to explain the 37% wage differentials between secretaries in advertising agencies and “labor aristocracy”

machinists working on oil pipelines, or the 64% wage differentials between janitors in restaurants and bars and automobile workers. [40]

Does this analysis mean that imperialism - rooted in the export of capital (and capitalist class relations) across the globe - has no impact on profits and wages in the global North? No - but the impact is quite different from what the labor aristocracy thesis predicts.

In *Capital*, Volume III, [41] Marx recognized that foreign investment was one of a number of “countervailing” tendencies to the decline of the rate of profit. Put simply, the export of capital from the global North to the global South, especially when invested in production processes that are more labor intensive than those found in the advanced capitalist countries, tends to raise the mass and rate of profit in the North. There is indeed some evidence that foreign profits - from investments in both the global North and global South - constitute an important counter tendency to declining profits in the United States.

Profits earned abroad by U.S. companies as a percentage of total U.S. profits (Table I and Graph I) have risen fairly steadily since 1948, rising from a low of 5.19% in 1950 to a high of 30.56% in 2000. [42] The proportion of U.S. profits earned abroad jumped sharply after the onset of the long-wave of stagnation in 1966, jumping from 6.43% in 1966 to 18.36% in 1986.

Even more indicative is the relationship between annual percentage changes in domestic and foreign U.S. profits (Table II). In a number of years (1967-1970, 1972-1974, 1978-1980, 1986-1990, 1994-1995, 1997-2001, 2003), the annual percentage change for foreign profits was higher than the annual percentage change for domestic profits. In some of these years (1967, 1969-1970, 1974, 1979-1980, 1989, 1998, 2000-2001), total profits earned in the U.S. declined while total profits earned abroad increased.

Higher profits result in more investment across the board in the



industrialized countries. More investment eventually brings a growing demand for labor (within limits set by investment in newer, more capital intensive technology), falling unemployment and rising wages for all workers in the industrialized capitalist countries.

Put simply, this means that imperialist investment in the global South benefits all workers in the global North - both highly paid and poorly paid workers. Higher profits and increased investment mean not only more employment and rising wages for "aristocratic" steel, automobile, machine-making, trucking and construction workers, but also for lowly paid clerical, janitorial, garment and food processing workers. As Ernest Mandel put it, "the real 'labor aristocracy' is no longer constituted inside the proletariat of an imperialist country but rather by the proletariat of the imperialist countries as a whole." [43] That "real 'labor aristocracy'" includes poorly paid immigrant janitors and garment workers, African-American and Latino poultry workers, as well as the multi-racial workforce in auto and trucking. [44]

Clearly, these "benefits" accruing to the entire working class of the industrialized countries from imperialist investment are neither automatic nor evenly distributed. Rising profits and increased investment do not necessarily lead to higher wages for workers in the absence of effective working-class organization and struggle.

During the post-World War II long wave of expansion, the industrial unions that had arisen during the mass strike wave of 1934-37 were able to secure rising real wages both for their own members and the bulk of the unorganized working classes. However, since 1973, the labor movement in the United States and the rest of the industrial countries has been in retreat.

Real wages for U.S. workers, both union and nonunion, have fallen to about 11% below their 1973 level, despite strong growth beginning in the late 1980s. [45] Higher than average profits have accrued, first and

foremost, to capital, allowing increased investment; and to the professional-managerial middle class in the form of higher salaries.

Nor are the "benefits" of increased profitability and growth due to imperialist investment distributed equally to all portions of the working class. As we will see below, the racial-national and gender structuring of the labor market result in women and workers of color being concentrated in the labor-intensive and low-wage sectors of the economy.

Whatever benefits all workers in the global North reap from imperialist investment in the global South are clearly outweighed by the deleterious effects of the expansion of capitalist production on a world scale. This is especially clear today, in the era of neoliberal "globalization."

Although industry is clearly not "footloose and fancy free" as some theorists of globalization claim - moving from one country to another in search for the cheapest labor [46] - the removal of various legal and judicial obstacles to the free movement of capital has sharpened competition among workers internationally, to the detriment of workers in both the global North and South.

The mere threat of moving production "off-shore," even if the vast majority of industrial investment remains within the advanced capitalist societies, is often sufficient to force cuts in wages and benefits, the dismantling of work rules and the creation of multi-tiered workforces in the United States and other industrialized countries. Neoliberalism's deepening of the process of primitive accumulation of capital - the forcible expropriation of peasants from the land in Africa, Asia and Latin America - has created a growing global reserve army of labor competing for dwindling numbers of fulltime, secure and relatively well paid jobs across the world.

Put simply, the sharpening competition among workers internationally more than offsets the "benefits" of imperialism for workers in the global North. [47]

## **Monopoly, Super-Profits and Wage Differentials**

The claim that monopoly super-profits, resulting from industrial concentration and the limitation of competition in key sectors of the economy, produce higher than average wages - and a labor aristocracy of unionized workers - is also open to empirical challenge. During the long boom of the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, certain branches of production did seem to enjoy stable higher than average profits and wages flowing from the rise of oligopolies.

However, as that boom turned into the long stagnation beginning in the late 1960s, these industries began to face persistently lower than average profits and sharpened competition both at home and abroad.

By 1980, the impact on wages and working conditions are apparent. According to Howard Botwinick:

"(T)he 'eternal' core ['monopoly' industries - CP] was beginning to show more and more evidence of peripheral ['competitive' industries - CP] behavior. Industries like steel and auto were experiencing serious profitability crunches and were becoming more and more interested in lowering the wages and working conditions of their primary work force. In addition to relocating to low-wage areas, core firms were successfully extracting serious concessions in wages and working conditions from their work forces. Even more distressing, a 'secondary' labor market was developing within the factory gates of these core firms as two-tiered wage packages were increasingly introduced on a wide scale." [48]

As early as the mid-1970s, statistical studies of the relationship between industrial concentration and profit and wage differentials began to challenge the central factual claims of the monopoly capitalism thesis.

In his 1984 study, Willi Semmler [49] reviewed the existing literature on industrial concentration and profit rate differentials and carried out his own statistical analysis for the United States and West German economies since the second world war. He found, first, that while there was evidence of

a correlation between industrial concentration (monopoly) and profit rate differentials before 1970, he also found that marked profit rate differentials existed between and within concentrated industries in this period.

In other words, profit rate differentials had multiple causes before 1970. Semmler also found that when profit rate differentials were examined through the 1970s and early 1980s, the correlation between industrial concentration and higher than average profit rates all but disappeared. Instead, "differentials of profit rates are significantly related to the productivity, capital/output ratios, and unit wage costs of each industry." [50]

Howard Botwinick's 1993 study of wage and profit differentials reviewed the literature published since Semmler's work was completed, and found similar patterns. [51] Industrial concentration, again, could not explain profit and wage rate differentials. In fact, not only were factors like labor productivity, capital-intensity of production, and the like more important in accounting for profit and wage differentials; but many of the highly concentrated industries that had experienced higher than average profits prior to 1970 were experiencing lower than average profits in the 1970s and 1980s.

More recent studies have confirmed the absence of a strong correlation between industrial concentration and higher than average profits and wages. Instead, profit and wage differentials were rooted in differences in labor-productivity and capital-intensity of production. [52]

The empirical problems with the monopoly super profits argument - so central to contemporary theories of the labor aristocracy - are rooted in the very notions of "monopoly" and "oligopoly." [53] The notion that the existence of a small number of large firms in an industry limits competition, allowing higher than average profits and wages, is derived from neo-classical (non-Marxian) economics' vision of "perfect competition."

For neoclassical economists, perfect

competition - which allows instantaneous mobility of capital between branches of production, uniform technology, equal profit rates and wages - exists only when a large number of small firms exist in a market. Any deviation from this is "oligopoly" - a form of "imperfect competition" that creates obstacles to capital mobility, different techniques, and higher than average profits and wages.

The notions of perfect competition and oligopoly/monopoly are both conceptually and empirically flawed. Perfect competition is an ideological construction - an idealization of capitalist competition that makes the existing economic order appear efficient and just.

Real capitalist competition - from the birth of capitalism in English agriculture in the 16th century, through the industrial revolution of the 18th and 19th century to the emergence of the transnational corporations in the 20th century - has never corresponded to the dream world of "perfect competition." Capitalist competition is fought through what Marx called the "heavy artillery of fixed capital" - constant technological innovation, taking the form of the increasing mechanization of production.

Older investments in fixed capital, even if they no longer allow a particular firm to reduce unit costs and raise its profit margins and rates, cannot be abandoned immediately in favor of new and more efficient machinery. According to Botwinick:

"Given the presence of fixed capital investment, however, new techniques cannot be immediately adopted by all firms in the industry. Because fixed capital generally requires prolonged turnover periods, new techniques will be adopted primarily by those capitals that are in the best position to do so. Thus, although new capitals will enter the industry with 'state of the art' equipment and other existing capitals will gradually begin to replenish and expand their productive facilities with the latest techniques, older, less efficient capitals will also tend to live on for many years. This is particularly true within prolonged periods of rapid

growth... Rather than creating identical firms, competition therefore creates a continual redifferentiation of the conditions of production." [54]

Put simply, competition - not its absence - explains the diversity of technical conditions of production and the resulting differentiations of profit and wage rates within and between industries throughout the history of capitalism. The higher wages that workers in unionized capital-intensive industries enjoy are not gained at the expense of lower paid workers, either at home or abroad. Instead, the lower unit costs of these industries make it possible for these capitals to pay higher than average wages. As we have seen over the last thirty years, however, only effective worker organization can secure and defend these higher than average wages.

Racial and gender inequalities can be best understood in relationship to the profit and wage differentials created through capitalist accumulation and competition. As race, nationality and gender structure the "employment queue" in capitalist societies, women and workers of color are over-represented in different segments of the "active" and "reserve" armies of labor.

Different industries, with diverse technical conditions of production, profit rates and wages, thus recruit workers from these racially and gender defined sectors of the working class. In general, women and workers of color tend to be over represented in labor-intensive, low-wage sectors; while white and male workers tend to be over represented in the more capital-intensive, higher-wage sectors.

Thus race, nationality and gender do generate a stratified working class as workers are distributed into branches of production that competition and accumulation - rather than monopoly or imperialist super profits - continually differentiate in terms of technique, profitability and wages.

## PART 2

### The "Labor Aristocracy" and Working-Class Struggles onsciousness in Flux

WHATEVER THE THEORETICAL and empirical problems with the economics of the labor aristocracy thesis, its defenders still claim that well paid workers have generally been more reformist and conservative in their politics than lower paid workers. They point to the example of mostly white New York City construction workers ("hardhats") attacking antiwar demonstrators in the Spring of 1970; and contrast them with the militancy and progressive politics of some of the recent "Justice for Janitors" campaigns.

A more systematic examination of the history of workers' struggles in the global North in the past century, however, does not bear out the claim that well paid workers are generally reformist or conservative, while poorly paid workers are more revolutionary or radical.

The most important counter-example is the Russian working class in the early 20th century. The backbone of Lenin's Bolsheviks (something he was most definitely aware of) were the best paid industrial workers in the Russian cities - skilled machinists in the largest factories. Lower paid workers, such as the predominantly female textile workers, were generally either unorganized or apolitical (until the beginnings of the revolution) or supported the reformist Mensheviks. [55]

In fact the mass base of the left, antiwar wing of the pre-First World War socialist parties and of the postwar revolutionary Communist parties were relatively well paid workers in the large metalworking industries. These workers led militant struggles against speedup and deskilling that became political struggles against conscription and the war.

German Communism became a mass movement when tens of thousands of well paid metal workers left the Independent Socialists and joined the Communists in 1921. The French and Italian Communists also became mass parties through the recruitment of thousands of machinists who led the mass strikes of the postwar period. These highly paid workers were also overrepresented in the smaller

Communist parties of the United States and Britain. [56]

Well paid, although generally deskilled, workers in large scale industry continued to play a leading role in mass upsurges throughout the 20th century. During the CIO upsurge during the 1930s, relatively well paid workers in the U.S. auto, steel, rubber and other mass production industries, often with skilled industrial workers in the lead, spearheaded the creation of industrial unions that united skilled and unskilled, highly paid and poorly paid. Well paid and skilled workers were, again, over represented in radical and revolutionary organizations in the United States during the 1930s. [57]

Well paid workers were also in the vanguard of proto-revolutionary mass struggles in France (1968), Italy (1968-69), Britain (1967-75), and Portugal (1974-75). Relatively "aristocratic" workers in trucking, auto, telecommunications, public education and the postal service were at the center of the unofficial, wildcat strikes that shook U.S. industry between 1965 and 1975.

In France in 1995, well paid workers in telecommunications, public transport, postal, health care and education led the public sector strikes that mounted the first successful workers' struggles against neoliberalism. In the Fall of 2004, auto workers, some of the best paid in Germany, stood up to layoffs, defying their own union leaders in an unofficial strike.

In the U.S. working class during the past decade, relatively poorly paid workers (janitors, hotel workers, and grocery clerks) have engaged in strike actions much more frequently than relatively well paid workers. However, better paid workers - from UPS workers in 1997 to New York City transit workers in 2005 — have not been absent from militant workplace struggles.

Nor is this pattern of militancy and radicalism among relatively well paid workers limited to the global North. In Chile between 1970 and 1973, and Argentina between 1971 and 1974, copper miners and metal workers

engaged in industrial struggles and took the lead in mass mobilizations against the military and the right. In Brazil, it was the well paid metal workers in the "ABC" suburbs of San Paulo who led mass strikes in the 1970s that created the CUT (United Workers Confederation) and eventually the PT (Workers Party) in the early 1980s.

Similarly, it was the highest paid Black workers in South Africa - in mining, auto, steel - whose struggles in the 1970s created the radical and militant FOSATU trade union confederation. FOSATU and its successor COSATU were able to build on workplace organization and power in the political struggle against apartheid in the 1980s and 1990s.

It is not surprising that relatively well paid workers have been at the center of the most militant and radical workers' struggles of the last century. These workers tend to be concentrated in large, capital intensive workplaces that are often central to the capitalist economy. These workers have considerable social power when they act collectively. Strikes in these industries have a much greater impact on the economy than workers in smaller, less capital intensive workplaces (garment, office cleaning, etc.) Workers in capital intensive industries are also often the first targets of capitalist restructuring in periods of falling profits and sharpened competition.

### **Explaining Working-Class Reformism [58]**

How do we explain the fact that most workers, most of the time, do not act on their potential power? Why do workers embrace reformist politics - support for bureaucratic unionism (reliance on the grievance procedure, routine collective bargaining) and Democratic party electoral politics - or worse, reactionary politics in the forms of racism, sexism, homophobia, nativism, militarism?

The key to understanding working-class reformism (and conservatism) is the necessarily episodic nature of working-class struggle and organization. The necessary condition for the development of class



consciousness is the self-activity and self-organization of the workers themselves. The experience of mass, collective and successful struggles against capital and its state in the workplace and the community is what opens layers of workers to radical and revolutionary political ideas. [59]

The working class cannot be, as a whole, permanently active in the class struggle. The entire working class cannot consistently engage in strikes, demonstrations and other forms of political activity because this class is separated from effective possession of the means of production, and its members compelled to sell their labor power to capital in order to survive. They have to go to work!

Put simply, most workers, most of the time are engaged in the individual struggle to sell their capacity to work and secure the reproduction of themselves and their families - not the collective struggle against the employers and the state. The "actually existing" working class can only engage in mass struggles as a class in extraordinary, revolutionary or pre-revolutionary situations. Because of the structural position of wage labor under capitalism, these must be of short duration. Most often, different segments of the working class become active in the struggle against capital at different times.

In the wake of successful mass struggles, only a minority of the workers remain consistently active. Most of this workers' vanguard - those who "even during a lull in the struggle...do[es] not abandon the front lines of the class struggle but continues the war, so to speak, â€˜by other means'" [60] - attempts to preserve and transmit the traditions of mass struggle in the workplace or the community. However, a sector within this active minority, together with intellectuals who have access to cultural skills from which the bulk of the working class is excluded, must take on responsibility for administering the unions or political parties created by periodic upsurges of mass activity.

This layer of fulltime officials - the bureaucracy of the labor movement - is the social foundation for

"unconditional" reformist practice and ideology in the labor movement. Those workers who become officials of the unions and political parties begin to experience conditions of life very different from those who remain in the workplace.

The new officials find themselves freed from the daily humiliations of the capitalist labor process. They are no longer subject to either deskilled and alienated labor or the petty despotism of supervisors. Able to set their own hours, plan and direct their own activities, and devote the bulk of their waking hours to "fighting for the workers," the officials seek to consolidate these privileges.

As the unions gain a place in capitalist society, the union officials strengthen their role as negotiators of the workers' subordination to capital in the labor-process. In defense of their social position, the labor bureaucracy excludes rank and file activists in the unions and parties from any real decision-making power. [61]

The consolidation of the labor bureaucracy as a social layer, distinct from the rest of the working class under capitalism, gives rise to its distinctive political practice and world-view. The preservation of the apparatus of the mass union or party, as an end itself, becomes the main objective of the labor bureaucracy. The labor bureaucrats seek to contain working-class militancy within boundaries that do not threaten the continued existence of the institutions which are the basis of the officials' unique life-style.

Thus what Ernest Mandel called the "dialectic of partial conquests," the possibility that new struggles may be defeated and the mass organizations of the working class weakened, buttress the labor bureaucracy's reliance on electoral campaigns and parliamentary pressure tactics (lobbying) to win political reforms, and on strictly regimented collective bargaining to increase wages and improve working conditions.

The labor bureaucracy's stake in stable bargaining relationships with the employers and their credibility in the eyes of the capitalists as

negotiators further reinforce their conservative ideology and practice. From the bureaucracy's point of view, any attempt to promote the militant self-activity and organization among workers must be quashed. At this point, the bureaucracy's organizational fetishism (giving priority to the survival of the apparatus over new advances in the struggle) produces a world-view that demands the workers' unquestioning obedience to leaders who claim they know "what is best for the workers."

While the unconditional ideological commitment to reformism grows organically from the privileged social position of the labor officialdom, how do we explain the conditional reformism of most workers? Why do most workers, most of the time accept reformism? Put bluntly, why is this conditional reformism the normal state of working class consciousness under capitalism?

In "normal times" - of working class quiescence and passivity - the majority of workers come to accept the "rules of the game" of capitalist competition and profitability. They seek a "fair share" of the products of capitalist accumulation, but do not feel capable of challenging capitalist power in the workplace, the streets or society. For most workers during "normal times," mass, militant struggle seems unrealistic; they tend to embrace the labor officialdom's substitution of liberal and reformist electoral politics, institutionalized collective bargaining and grievance handling.

However, the continued hold of reformism over the majority of workers requires that labor officials "deliver the goods" in the form of improved wages, hours and working conditions. As Bob Brenner points out:

"(G)iven even a minimum of working-class organization, reformism tends to be widely attractive in periods of prosperity precisely because in such periods the threat of limited working-class resistance - symbolized by the resolution to strike or a victory at the polls - actually can yield concessions from capital. Since filling orders and expanding production are their top priorities in the boom, capitalists will tend to find it in their interests to



maintain and increase production, even if this means concessions to the workers, if the alternative is to endure a strike or other forms of social dislocation." [62]

When capitalism enters one of its unavoidable periods of crisis and restructuring - like the one that began in the late 1960s through most of the capitalist world - the paradox of reformism becomes manifest. In a world of declining profits and sharpened competition, capitalists throughout the world went on the offensive at the workplace and at the level of the capitalist state. The restructuring of the capitalist production along the lines of lean production, and the neoliberal deregulation of capital and labor markets, [63] required all-out war against workers and their organizations across the capitalist world.

At this point, reformism becomes ineffective. Workers can and have made gains against their employers in the past fifteen years - the success of the UPS strike and the "Justice for Janitors" campaigns in various cities cannot be ignored. However, these victories often required substantive rank-and-file organization and mobilization - including independent organizations, like Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU).

In fact, the reformist officialdom of the unions and social-democratic parties embraced *realpolitik* - adapting to the new "reality" of declining living and working conditions. As Mandel pointed out:

"(T)he underlying assumption of present-day social-democratic gradualism is precisely this: let the capitalists produce the goods, so that governments can redistribute them in a just way. But what if capitalist production demands more unequal, more unjust distribution of the 'fruits of growth'? What if there is no economic growth at all as a result of capitalist crisis? The gradualists can then only repeat mechanically: there is no alternative; there is no way out." [64]

Eschewing militancy and direct action by workers and other oppressed

people, the labor bureaucracy and reformist politicians in the West have no choice but to make concessions to the employers' offensive and to administer capitalist state austerity. The spectacle of reformist bureaucrats shunning the struggle for reforms has been repeated across the capitalist world in the last three decades, with tragic results.

Again and again, the reformist bureaucrats have surrendered to the requirements of capitalist profitability. The Italian Communist party embraced austerity in the 1970s. The U.S. AFL-CIO officials have accepted concession bargaining since 1979, usually without even the pretense of struggle. Social-democratic regimes across Europe (Mitterand and Jospin in France, Blair in Britain, Schroeder in Germany) embraced neoliberal realism - cutting social services, privatizing public enterprises, and deregulating capital and labor markets.

Nor has the reformist retreat been limited to the imperialist countries. In the early 1990s, the ANC-COSATU-led government in post-apartheid South Africa has embraced what some have called the "sado-monetarism" of the IMF and World Bank. The debacle of the Lula regime in Brazil - attacking workers' rights, opening the agricultural economy to transnational investment and systematically retreating from its promise of popular reform - fits the pattern all too well. Today, even the most moderate forms of social-democratic gradualism have become utopian, as the labor bureaucracy across the world has been unable to defend the workers' past gains much less win significant new reforms in an era of crisis and restructuring.

### **Why Working-Class Conservatism? [65]**

The inability of reformism to "deliver the goods" for most working people also helps us make sense of the appeal of right-wing politics - racist, sexist, homophobic, nativist and militarist - for a segment of workers. The objective, structural position of workers under capitalism provides the basis for collective, class radicalism and individualist, sectoralist and

reactionary politics.

Bob Brenner and Johanna Brenner point out, "workers are not only collective producers with a common interest in taking collective control over social production. They are also individual sellers of labor power in conflict with each other over jobs, promotions, etc." As Kim Moody put it, capitalism "pushes together and pulls apart" the working class. As competing sellers of labor power, workers are open to the appeal of politics that pit them against other workers - especially workers in a weaker social position:

It appears possible for the stronger sections of the working class to defend their positions by organizing on the basis of already existing ties against weaker, less-organized sections. They can take advantage of their positions as Americans over and against foreigners, as whites over and against blacks, as men over and against women, as employed over and against unemployed, etc. In so doing, working people may act initially only out of what they perceive to be their most immediate self-interest. But over time they inevitably feel the pressure to make sense of these actions and they adopt ideas which can make their actions reasonable and coherent. These ideas are, of course, the ideas of the right. [66]

Bruce Nelson's recent study of steelworkers details how relatively white workers in the steel industry struggled to defend their privileged access to better paying and relatively more skilled work after the establishment of industrial unionism. The rise of the CIO opened the possibility of classwide organization that began to reduce the racial/national segmentation of the working class.

As the CIO offensive ground to passed its peak by the late 1930s, and the industrial unions became bureaucratized during the second world war, white workers increasingly moved to defend their privileged access to employment (and with it housing, education for their children, etc.) against workers of color. In the steel industries, white workers militantly defended departmental

seniority in promotion and layoffs against demands of Black and Latino workers for plant wide seniority and affirmative action in promotions in the 1960s and 1970s. [67]

As Marxists, we understand that such strategies are counter-productive in the medium to long term. Divisions among workers and reliance on different segments of the capitalist class only undermine the ability of workers to defend or improve their conditions of life under capitalism. [68] However, when reformism proves incapable of realistically defending workers' interests - as it has since the early 1970s - workers embrace individualist and sectoralist perspectives as the only realistic strategy.

This is particularly the case in the absence of a substantial and influential militant minority in the working class that can organize collective resistance to capital independently of, and often in opposition to the reformist labor officials. [69]

### Conclusion

Kim Moody has pointed out that everyday working class "common sense" is not "some consistent capitalist ideology" but instead:

a clashing collection of old ideas handed down, others learned through daily experience, and still others generated by the capitalist media, education system, religion, etc. It is not simply the popular idea of a nation tranquilized by TV and weekends in the mall. "Common sense" is both deeper and more contradictory because it also embodies experiences that go against the grain of capitalist ideology. [70]

Only through the experience of

collective, class activity against the employers, starting at but not limited to the workplace, can workers begin to think of themselves as a class with interests in common with other workers and opposed to the capitalists. Workers who experience their collective, class power on the job are much more open to class - and anti-racist, anti-sexist, anti-militarist, anti-nativist - ways of thinking.

As Marx pointed out, it is through the workplace and union struggles that the working class "becomes fit to rule" - develops the organization and consciousness capable of confronting capital. Such organization will require a struggle not only against "backward ideas" among workers, but against the officialdom of the unions and other popular mass organizations that are committed to reformist strategies, no matter how blatantly ineffective.

Workers' self-organization and self-activity in the workplace struggles is the starting point for creating the material and ideological conditions for an effective challenge to working class reformism and conservatism. Clearly, militant workplace struggle is not a sufficient condition for the development of radical and revolutionary consciousness among workers. Struggles in working-class communities around housing, social welfare, transport and other issues; and political struggles against racism and war are crucial elements in the political self-transformation of the working class.

Successful workplace struggles, however, are the necessary condition for the development of class consciousness. Without the experience of such struggles, workers will continue to passively accept reformist politics or, worse, embrace reactionary politics.

This does not mean that workers of

color, women and other oppressed groups in the working class should "wait" to fight until white and male workers are ready to act. White and male workers, because of the temporary but real advantages they gain in the labor market - preferential access to better jobs - are not likely to initiate struggles against racism, sexism or homophobia in the workplace or anywhere else. Self-organization and self-activity of racially oppressed groups are crucial to the development of anti-racist struggles and anti-racist consciousness.

However, a mass working-class audience for anti-racist, anti-sexist and anti-militarist ideas will most likely be created in the context of mass, class struggles against capital. Today, the main audience for the idea that workers need to stand up to right-wing ideas and practices are the small layer of rank and file activists who are trying to promote solidarity, militancy and democracy in the labor movement.

Only if these activists, with the help of socialists in the labor movement, can succeed in building effective collective fight back will these ideas - the politics of class radicalism - achieve mass resonance.

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## Elections and Regime Crisis

1 September 2006, by **Against the Current**

The November election will highlight, as usual, two sets of questions - the sound-and-fury ones that generate most of the campaign rhetoric and media speculation; and the crucial issues that will be generally be ignored, except for the one that simply can't be skipped over: the war and American defeat in Iraq. Meanwhile, the new Middle East war - Israel's assault on Lebanon - has proven what the Democrats are: as rabid a war party, as cynical and careless (especially with other nations' lives) as anything the Republicans have to offer.



### **Iraq war: 'bleeding the Bush regime to death'**

The superficial mudslinging debates will feature such topics as whether the Democrats are "soft on terror" or the Republicans "incompetent" in failing to find bin Laden or letting North Korea go nuclear; which is the party of "irresponsible spending" on social programs or tax cuts; who's best at "securing the border;" which politicians promote "traditional values" and who's most corrupt (between which there is, admittedly, a strong positive correlation), and various other rubbish.

The issues to be debated poorly-or-not-at-all involve the explosive health care crisis, the immediate prospect of a catastrophic wider war with Iran; the hemorrhaging of decent-paying jobs in the U.S. economy; catastrophic climate change, which proceeds apace as our rulers wage endless war for the oil-fuelled empire; electoral rigging and the stripping away of voting rights; the step-by-step replacement of democratic rights by presidentialist decree with the assent of Congress and the courts - in short, most of the questions that shape real people's lives.

There's no doubt that mainstream national politics in America is polarized, bitterly divided and incredibly vicious. At the same time, it's almost devoid of substance, except for a few issues like preserving the badly shredded fabric of abortion rights, where the Democrats remain

under pressure from the women's movement. Underlying the general triviality of the official debate is a dual reality: the collapse of public confidence in the Bush regime, accompanied by the extreme decay of the Democratic Party as a meaningful opposition party, i.e. a force that can seriously confront the political drive toward the far right (to the degree it even wants to do so).

Some historical perspective: The last time a Republican presidency was so discredited by a failed war, revelations of criminal conspiracy and global economic uncertainty was the crisis of the Richard Nixon regime in 1973-4 at the height of the Watergate scandal. The difference between then and now lies above all in the relative strength of social movements - antiwar, civil rights and above all labor - in that period, compared to the present level of struggle, above all the incipient collapse of the U.S. labor movement after three decades of a corporate and government offensive against working class people in America. (The latter experience is summarized in Steve Early's essay in this issue on the past quarter-century of strike activity.)

The Democrats retain an enormous electoral apparatus, but their social base is highly segmented. Organized labor, such as it is, remains predominantly in the Democratic fold although this support is somewhat eroded; African-American voters are overwhelmingly Democratic, which is why rightwing voter fraud and intimidation is directed principally against them; Republican inroads into the Latino vote are likely to be blunted by the sheer viciousness of the right wing's anti-immigrant crusade. But much of the Democrats' base is now in the white suburban "socially liberal, fiscally conservative" sector, whose loyalties are fickle and diluted.

Before 1968, to be sure, the Democrats' hegemony in Congress still rested on the most rotten of foundations, the racist Dixiecrat South. By the time of Nixon's fall, however, that segment was moving into the Republican column where it has now become firmly planted. Despite this, Nixon's failures in war, domestic crimes and the onset of economic crisis appeared to be

propelling the Democratic Party to the stature of a hegemonic national party - an opportunity that came in with the 1974 midterm election and quickly passed after 1976 with the debacles of the Jimmy Carter administration. Above all, as a loyal party of American capitalism, the Democrats fully participated in the restructuring that attacked the working class and set in motion the destruction of the movement that was the party's main base.



### **Hillary Clinton with Joseph Lieberman (far right)**

The Democratic Party establishment today is fractured over the Iraq war - with John Kerry ("I opposed the war before I voted for it, before I voted against it") having finally gotten around to opposing it, after a fashion, while Senators Hillary Clinton and Joseph Lieberman continue to be so committed to this failed imperial venture that they are being challenged from the party's base, which hates the war, and in Lieberman's case actually dumped by Democratic primary voters. In any case, unlike their voters, the Democrats do not want to stop the Iraq war - cynically, they want the Bush administration to absorb the blame for "bungling" it and for the ongoing carnage; and the congressional Democrats' foaming-at-the-mouth performance during the destruction of Lebanon shows they hope to share the "credit" for lining up support for war with Syria and Iran.

If the Democrats aren't opposing the war, what then are they arguing about? An important New York Times article by Robin Toner gives some of the answers ("Optimistic, Democrats Debate the Party's Vision. Seeking Big Goals and a Clear Alternative to Conservatism," May 9, 2006: A1, A18). The party's "analysts, both liberals and moderates, are convinced that the Democrats face a moment of historic opportunity...But some of these analysts argue that the party needs something more than a pastiche of policy proposals. It needs a broader vision, a narrative, they say, to return to power and govern effectively - what some describe as an unapologetic

appeal to the ‘common good,’ to big goals like expanding affordable health coverage and to occasional sacrifice for the sake of the nation as a whole.”

A variety of ideas are out there. Thomas Friedman, the Times’ designated apostle of globalization, proposes financing economic renovation and reviving national purpose by taxing gasoline up to \$4 a gallon. Others suggest a return to muscular Cold War liberalism, represented by The New Republic, where Democrats would promote tough foreign and military (but multilateralist) policies while reviving social programs at home. On the right, The Third Way and its ideological cousin the Democratic Leadership Council promote a centrist “middle class” perspective in place of fighting for “special interests” like labor and people of color. On the liberal wing of the spectrum stands Michael Tomasky of [The American Prospect](#), whose views are summarized by Robin Toner:

Mr. Tomasky argues that the Democratic Party needs to stand for more than diversity and rights; it needs to return to its New Deal, New Frontier and Great Society roots and run as the party of the common good - the philosophy, he says, that brought the nation Social Security, the Marshall Plan, the Peace Corps and civil rights legislation. After years of what he calls “rapacious social Darwinism” under Mr. Bush, Mr. Tomasky argues that the country is ready for the idea that “we’re all in

this together - postindustrial America, the globalized world and especially the post-9/11 world in which free peoples have to unite to fight new threats - together.”

Tomasky’s liberal enthusiasm evades at least two fundamental questions. First: What is meant by the “new threats” that “free peoples” have to fight “together”? Is it the “threat” of Iran? Of immigrants? Something else from outside? Or is the main threat from inside: the assault on democracy, civil liberties and workers’ rights mounted by the Bush regime, the right wing and corporate America, the USA PATRIOT Act and domestic spying, to say nothing of Guantanamo, Abu Ghraib and secret renditions, on which most Democrats have nothing to say? Second: What about the war? Just because it may conveniently bleed the Bush administration to death doesn’t mean the question will go away for the Democrats. It’s not just that American voters will want to know, not only in 2006 but also 2008, what the Democrats actually think about these issues. The fact that the Democratic Party will not demand ending the war means that any promises it makes to fix a broken society are lies, which cannot be kept. A party that doesn’t oppose the current war, and the next one, has no claim to represent the antiwar movement - or to lead the country. The fact that the Democrats intend to inherit power as the Bush regime falls apart from its own imperial arrogance and incompetence doesn’t mean they can or will clean up

the mess it leaves behind.

Our purpose here, in any case, is not to advise or salvage a pseudo-opposition party that has essentially given up on reform, ceded the ideological initiative to the Republican right wing, and pretty much allowed the Bush gang to get away with anything. For our part, we’re looking for an escape from the quicksand of a rotten two-party system. At a time when organized labor is at its weakest since the 1920s, we look to the promise represented by the explosive new immigrant workers’ rights movement. The magnificent self-organization of this past spring’s immigrant rights mobilizations shows that the situation is rather precarious for both parties.

First and foremost, it’s social movements like this that represent a hopeful future - and second, initiatives that can give them an organized political expression. That’s the potential represented by Green party campaigns, some of which we cover in this issue, in states like California, Wisconsin and elsewhere. We need the kind of party these campaigns point toward - a party that will be genuinely independent of corporate power, with no commitment to America-as-world-ruler, loyal to the real needs of real people instead of the elites and the military machine.

It’s no longer about a lesser evil. It’s about the politics we need for human survival.

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