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Livio Maitan 1923-2004

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Ciao Livio

Livio Maitan had been a leading member of Italian Communist Refoundation since it came into existence in the early 1990s, and a long-time leader of the revolutionary marxist current Bandiera Rossa.

Livio was born in Venice in April 1923. He graduated in Classics (lettere classiche) from the University of Padua.

He became politically active during the years of the Nazi occupation of Italy, and was subsequently a leading member of the Italian Socialist Youth. In 1947 he joined the Italian Trotskyist movement of which he remained a leading member all his life. In 1948 he was a member of the leadership of the Fronte Democrazia Popolare.

He was one of a small group of comrades who led the Fourth International during the difficult years of the 1950s and early 1960s. First elected in 1951, he remained a member of the International leadership, reelected at each congress, until his death. Opponents of the Fourth International talked about the "Mandel-Frank-Maitan" leadership of the FI, following the departure of Pablo.

His generation were the cadres who

carried the programme of revolutionary marxism through the difficult post-war years, and who were gradually able to link up with a broader layer of new young activists in the mid-late 1960s.

Livio was actively involved in the huge worker-student upsurge in Italy between 1969 and 1976, and universally seen as someone who had played a key role in training numerous leaders of the Italian revolutionary left, whether inside the Fourth International or outside.

In the 1970s he also lectured on the economy of underdevelopment in the School of Sociology at the University of Rome. He translated and introduced almost all the Italian editions of Trotsky's writings.

In 1989 the Italian Fourth Internationalists organised around the journal Bandiera Rossa joined Democrazia Proletaria, and with DP participated in 1991 in the foundation of the Partito dell Rifondazione Comunista (Party of Communist Refoundation, PRC). He was elected to the leadership of Rifondazione at each successive congress from 1991 until 2002.



La Strada Percosa

Until recently, despite age and illness,

he maintained his participation in all the leadership bodies of the FI. A football fanatic, he played weekly until into his 70s.

In a recent publication *La Strada Percosa - The Road Taken* Maitan argues strongly against the view that the defeats of socialism in the 20th Century were 'inevitable', and equally strongly for the view that the possibility of socialism remains open.

There is a long list of his publications in Italian. Translated works include his 1976 book on the Chinese Cultural Revolution and a long text on the history of the Italian Communist Party, published by the IIRE in English and French. He wrote also for the journals of the Italian Fourth Internationalists (Bandiera Rossa and subsequently ERRE), of Rifondazione (Liberazione) and of the Fourth International, Inprecor and International Viewpoint.

Livio Maitan died on the 16th September 2004 in Rome.

For a longer appreciation see "[Livio Maitan - a man of different times](#)".

International Viewpoint articles by Livio Maitan on this site:

[Remarks on Bertinotti](#) - December 2000

[China: Odyssey 2001](#) - February 2001

[The return of Berlusconi?](#) - April 2001

A new political framework - June 2001

PRC: the debate begins - June 2001

WSF - A triple triumph - April 2002

Refounding Rifondazione - May 2002

From the Resistance to the new movements - Fausto Bertinotti & Livio Maitan - March 2003

World Congress Opening Speech - May 2003

Defeat of the referendum - September 2003

Livio Maitan - a man of different times

16 October 2004, by **Lidia Cirillo**

To be an organic intellectual, it is not enough merely to have the requisite intellectual and cultural talents and the ability to understand and explain the world. One must also have an ethical attitude and *modus operandi*, and agree to play a role that is uncomfortable, and sometimes not unlike a kind of self-torment.

An organic intellectual agrees to bear the burden of pedagogy, and the curse of lucidity and inability to delude oneself that come with it. I believe that this is the simplest explanation why a man of Livio's intellectual qualities always remained on the margins. Livio always saw deluding himself and others as a betrayal of himself and his reasons for being involved in politics. Obviously, that did not mean forsaking hope, which is something else altogether and linked to entirely different needs and motives.

In 1956, it was not easy to be a communist and state in clear terms that the revolutionaries were on the opposite side to that imagined by a certain brand of common sense. Nowadays it is difficult to put ourselves in the place of those who lived in the political climate of the Hungarian revolution. It meant being crushed between those who, on the one hand, condemned the Soviet intervention while ignoring the fact that the insurgents were also and primarily communists, and those, on the other, who denounced the insurgents as conscious agents of reaction. Ultimately, these two widespread views of the events nurtured one another and merely became a way for those with conflicting values to read the same

factually incorrect narrative.

To be a revolutionary, to protest and condemn the world order at the end of the 1960s, and not show reverence to the "Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution" in China, was no small thing and cost Livio a great deal in terms of popularity and following. He had understood the originality and the value of the Maoist experience before others and had pointed out that in certain respects it was a fruit of the process of permanent revolution. But he obstinately refused to believe that the solutions to society's ills and bureaucratic hegemony lay in the Chinese events known as the Cultural Revolution. The masses had burst onto the political stage, but were to a great extent manipulated. They didn't have their own democratically elected bodies, and they were unable to choose between the two conflicting points of view because the minority's positions were only available through the majority's caricatural presentation of them. Thousands of people were killed, humiliated, and jailed, in rituals involving unbelievable violence. The fact that many former apologists of such rituals have become current partisans of "non-violence" says a lot about the current state of the workers' movement. The radical difference between the two positions does not amount to much; one finds the same reasons behind both - the same renunciation of an independent stance, or the same difficulty adopting such a stance and sticking firm to it.

In the 1980s he responded to the chatter about the "end of work" with great irony, and this sometimes made him look like a dinosaur. That is, after all, a careless and crude way to

describe a man of different times. He had a debate of an altogether different character with Sylos Labini, in which Livio explained the origin and features of different phenomena of proletarianisation under senile capitalism.

He did not fall prey to political and cultural fashions. He had and displayed a sincere contempt for impressionistic thought, tall tales, superficiality and lack of intellectual rigour. But his clearheadedness was not influenced by conservatism or misoneism (a hatred or fear of change and innovation) — even of good intellectual calibre. He was very close to heterodox revolutions such as those in Algeria and Cuba. He had pointed to the emergence of the new movements and recognised their value, without ifs, ands or buts. He even tried to understand feminism, when some women sought to explain it to him with rational arguments.

Livio waged a strenuous battle against sectarianism within the Trotskyist movement. This made him a preferred target for the fragmented microcosm on the sidelines of the huge bureaucratic apparatuses, before the latter also began to split apart. He was full of enthusiasm whenever he saw the first signs of an opportunity to overcome divisions, sectarianism and faction fights. He was enthusiastic - perhaps somewhat naively — about the birth of Rifondazione, the turn at the last congress and secretary Bertinotti's openings to the global justice movement and its fight for "another possible world".

Of course, Livio was by no means infallible, and never claimed to be.

Nor did he believe in the infallibility of Leon-Trotsky thought. He was always capable of bitter and self-critical irony about his history and our own. In recent years he sometimes became absorbed by whimsical polemics about the most minor points, but even here he was very rarely wrong.

For me and for many other people, including many who later chose paths rather different from his own, Livio was the man-who-explained, the lucid observer and the pedagogue. One image keeps coming to mind. I see him standing at the other end of the desk. Sometimes he is explaining how and why the ascending cycle of the capitalist economy had finished; others, how and why the entry of the masses onto the Chinese political

scene did not inherently guarantee socialist democracy; still other, how and why work was not disappearing, and that globally wage labour was actually growing. As a young woman and much later in life, I received memorable lessons in politics and history from Livio. I still can't decide if I should be grateful to him or not.

He also had a passion for practice, which is above all a way of thinking and discussing translated into action. He was long involved in trade-union activity, and among the first in the second half of the 1960s to discuss with Roman workers at the factory gates. He had wanted to share in Bolivian miners' struggles and was active in his local party circle as long

as age and health permitted.

For a few days now he had been convinced that his time was near. Others close to him, family and comrades, did not share in his conviction. When the news of his death was circulated, a mutual friend sent me a text message on her mobile phone: "He was right this time too".

Livio Maitan was a man of different times, but the necessary condition for a communist refoundation is that he also be a man of the future. For it will be very difficult to build a new workers' movement unless a new generation repeats — in other forms and ways — the experiences that made the older movement's birth possible.

The Case for an Alternative

16 October 2004, by **Solidarity**

THE STRATEGY OF "the lesser evil" hasn't worked, and less than ever will it work today. The loyalty of labor, racial minorities, women, LGBT people and other progressives - expressed in massive campaign contributions and large numbers of votes - comes at a very low cost for the "New Democrats", who know perfectly well that no matter how far to the right they move, the advocates of "the lesser evil" remain their captives.

Accordingly the Democratic leadership continues to move right - opening the way for an ever more right-wing Republicans. During this long era of political stagnation - essentially since the defeat of the Equal Rights Amendment and the mid-'70s effort for labor law reform - the institutional leaderships of the AFL-CIO and oppressed groups have sparked few if any important political initiatives.

The demand for reparations for African-American slavery is a partial exception, but it has been embraced only by the most progressive fringes of the leadership.

For the most part, efforts to defend past gains have foundered on multi-million dollar lobbying efforts, while "hold your nose and vote" campaigns have not brought in large numbers of new activists to reform struggles.

The most important force opening space for radical politics in the past decade, until the recent development of mass antiwar mobilizations, has been the global justice movement. The ability of this movement to mobilize hundreds of thousands in the struggle for "another world is possible" is rooted, to a large extent, in its political independence from both corporate capitalist parties.

Building mass, direct street actions against the WTO, World Bank, and other organs of the transnationals in Seattle, Washington and Montreal, the global justice movement created vital space for the 2000 Nader campaign.

For the first time in more than half a century, a candidate independent of the capitalist parties won significant support for a left populist platform, denouncing corporate dominance of

domestic and international politics, and defending the organizations and struggles of working and oppressed people.

Winning three percent of the popular vote, despite vicious attacks from the AFL-CIO leadership and other Democratic Party liberals, the Nader campaign proved that there was a potential audience for radical progressive politics in the United States.

Realizing Our Potential

Today, the antiwar movement that was able to mobilize hundreds of thousands in U.S. cities against Bush's invasion of Iraq has the potential of pushing politics significantly to the left. However, much of that potential could well be dissipated as the movement is again pulled into the Democratic Party "lesser evil" in the 2004 election.

LGBT or "Queer" activists, for a

generation, have used grassroots organizing to change the character of the country. Through teach-ins, creative direct action, and millions of conversations at work, school, family, and church, this movement has altered the political landscape. In most sectors of the country, outright bigotry and discrimination is much less tolerated and acceptance of Queer folks has never been more mainstream.

While repression and discrimination remain serious, the recent Supreme Court decision striking down sodomy laws illustrates our point: Movements can remodel the country and lay the groundwork for continued struggle - no matter who holds positions of official power.

If lesser-evil electoralism narrows the breadth and depth of organizing, what is the practical alternative in 2004? We believe that continuing to mobilize against the U.S. occupation of Iraq, forming alliances with the global justice movement, workers' struggling against the corporate offensive - and an independent global peace and justice presidential campaign - are the key elements of the alternative.

The Lessons of 2000

During the 2000 presidential race there were often heated exchanges between supporters of Nader's Green Party ticket and those who said that to vote for Nader was to "waste your vote".

The outcome of the 2000 elections is instructive. Gore won the election, in the old-fashioned sense of getting the most votes. He beat Bush by better than 600,000 votes - votes that were counted - and thereby hangs a tale (and a chad).

Due to the reactionary nature of the U.S. electoral system, it was necessary for Gore to win not the popular vote, which he had, but rather the Electoral College vote. Which he also would have, had the election not been flagrantly stolen in Florida.

Most of us are all too aware of the

drama of the refusal to count thousands of paper ballots, effectively disenfranchising tens of thousands of voters in Florida counties with heavy African American populations. This is not counting the huge numbers of Black voters who disappeared from the rolls, or were stopped at police roadblocks ordered on Election Day by Governor Jeb Bush.

Finally, despite all evidence that Gore had won a clear majority of the votes in Florida - as he had across the country - the US Supreme Court appointed George W. Bush as the President of the United States, ending three months of suspense and political instability.

Al Gore personally presided over that session of Congress as president of the Senate. Gore personally ruled out of order repeated attempts, mostly by Black members of the House of Representatives, to challenge the Florida electoral vote. Not a single member of the Senate - not one - was willing to join the members of the Black caucus in registering at least a symbolic protest against this fraud.

It wasn't the small minority that voted for Nader that "wasted" their vote. There is no bigger waste of your vote than to give it to someone who won't defend your right to have your vote counted.

As the Florida election fraud unfolded, Al Gore had a clear choice: he could either explain what was happening and call on working people, and especially the Black community, to demand an honest count, or he could go through the motions of limited recounts in Dade and a couple of other counties.

Gore chose to be loyal to the corporate ruling elite in the hope that they would reward him by saying all votes should be counted, and thus allowing him to occupy the office he had won. The alternative was to encourage mobilizations against the fraud. There is no evidence Gore ever considered this option.

Impact of Mass Mobilizations

In the climate of fear and intimidation the rulers whipped up in the wake of September 11, we were told the entire country was solidly united behind the Bush administration's "War on Terrorism".

But as soon as significant mobilizations against the projected Iraq war started, millions of people lost their fear because they realized the media was lying, they were not alone, and so protests took place all over the country.

In some places, demonstrations were bigger than any held during the movement against the war in Vietnam. People could see with their own eyes, and from the reactions of their friends, neighbors and coworkers, that the media claims of overwhelming support for Bush's projected war were lies.

Undercover attempts by Texas-based Republican radio monopoly Clear Channel Communications to manipulate people into supporting an invasion of Iraq by staging "Support our Troops" rallies in the name of individual DJ's fell flat on their face, despite extensive publicity from their own radio stations, Fox News, CNN and other corporate outlets.

What's more, the effort fueled a backlash. These corporate interests received a kick in the face when they tried to ram through the FCC rule changes to allow them to further extend their control of radio and television broadcasting.

There was a tremendous outpouring of opposition, provoked to a large degree by anger over the corporate media acting as the mouthpiece of the Bush Administration. Opposition was so great that both Republican-controlled houses of Congress and the Republican-controlled judiciary moved to placate the opposition by canceling the rules changes.

As these examples show, our real power lies in our own independent mobilization and organization. Activists in the labor and social movements looking to use the

electoral arena to promote our politics must never lose sight of this reality. The election campaigns we need are ones that seek to promote our real strength, which is outside the two-party-monopoly electoral arena.

Ralph Nader's Green campaign in 2000 shows that there is today in the United States a mass audience willing to consider breaking with the two parties of the rich to support a party that will challenge corporate rule.

The California Experience

The 2003 California gubernatorial campaign, where Green Latino candidate Peter Miguel Camejo got more than 5% of the vote, is further confirmation.

As a result of that showing, California news media were compelled to treat Camejo as a major candidate in the special 2003 recall elections, routinely including him in polls and debates and covering his campaign events, thus

helping him reach millions more.

Camejo's campaigns addressed the big issues in that state as well as national and international questions. He called for reversing the trend towards a regressive tax structure by proposing raising taxes on the richest Californians to close the budget deficit. He championed the cause of Latinos, Blacks and other "minorities" who make up the majority of the state, and especially of undocumented immigrants.

Camejo denounced the marijuana prohibition that is used to persecute young Blacks and Latinos under the rubric of a "war on drugs". He has demanded the United States get out of Iraq now, and used his campaign to promote antiwar protests. His California campaigns - like Nader's in 2000 - point to real alternative politics for Latinos, African-Americans and all working people. These campaigns break with the corporate two-party system and offer an electoral alternative.

The Green Party is growing precisely because it is a party that fights against

the corporate rule and in support of the labor, antiwar, global justice and other social movements. Its potential mass impact was shown by Matt Gonzalez's San Francisco mayoral campaign - which forced the Democrat into a hard-fought December 10 runoff, and took 47% of the vote despite being outspent ten to one.

The Greens have not asked activists to give up organizing mass, militant actions against the corporate rulers - as have every "progressive" Democrat since Eugene McCarthy in 1968. In 2000, Nader and the Greens campaigned as the candidate and party of the global justice movement - showing videos of the Seattle demonstrations against the WTO at all the "Super Rallies".

In 2004 we need an independent peace and justice presidential campaign that presents itself as the electoral voice of the antiwar, global justice and social movements. We in Solidarity will work together with other socialists, Greens, radicals and activists to help organize such a campaign.

The Green Party and the 2004 election

16 October 2004, by **Ann Menasche**

This was the significance of the vote of convention delegates in Milwaukee in which a slim majority - 408 out of 767 voting delegates - voted to nominate little-known Green Party leader David Cobb for President while denying the party's endorsement to the campaign of Ralph Nader and Peter Camejo. (Nader, who is running as an independent, was seeking the party's endorsement. He had earlier rejected being nominated as its candidate.)

This vote did not mean that a majority of registered Greens support Cobb rather than Nader, nor that the concessions to "lesser evil" politics incorporated in the Cobb campaign reflect the majority view of party members. Two crucial factors resulted

in Cobb winning the majority of delegates.

1. Convention rules, including an electoral college-type representation system, gave states with small membership disproportionate voting weight as compared to states like California and New York, which were overwhelmingly for Nader.

1. Nader failed to seek and

actively campaign for the Green Party nomination.

Clearly, Cobb supporters out-organized and out-mobilized those supporting the Nader-Camejo campaign, at times utilizing methods that conflict with Green Party principles of grassroots democracy.

The pressures on the Green Party in this presidential election year to water down its independent politics, and to support the Democratic nominee have been overwhelming. For most of the past century, the broad "left" - the labor movement, the women's movement, the Black movement, and all other movements for peace and

social justice including many of those who have identified as socialists - have been wedded to the Democratic party in what may be best described as an abusive "marriage".

The Democrats continuously betrayed the interests of the progressive movements but those movements refused to leave because of the threat of the "greater evil", the Republicans. The idea of building a party independent of the two-party system, representing working people and the oppressed, though seen as a good idea in the abstract, was put off to the indefinite future.

The fruits of this strategy should be apparent: Numerous attempts to "reform" the Democratic Party have led nowhere. To the contrary, our country continues to lack universal health care, and both parties have moved increasingly to the right, embracing policies of corporate globalization, increased social inequality, and perpetual war.

At the same time, the electoral system remains undemocratically rigged to deny a voice to anyone outside the two corporate parties. Basic reforms have yet to be achieved, including elimination of the electoral college, establishing a system of run-off voting (e.g. Instant Runoff Voting) to insure majority rule and ending any "spoiler" factor, and instituting proportional representation, open debates, and publicly financed elections.

The Green Promise

The Green Party has been the most promising effort in many decades to build independent political action that is antiwar, pro-labor, pro-environment and pro-social justice. Nader's high-profile 2000 campaign not only won 3% of the vote nationally (2.7 million votes) but was extremely effective in helping to grow the Green Party on a local level, recruiting many new activists into the party and giving impetus to local campaigns.

Approximately 300,000 Americans people now registered Green throughout the country. More than 200 Greens now hold political office,

five times what existed eight years ago. In a few places, such as San Francisco, the Green Party has become the "second" party.

After the 2000 election, the Democrats tried to nip this growing third party threat in the bud. They accused Nader of "spoiling", causing Bush's election. The accusation ignored the fact that more Democrats voted for Bush than for Nader, and that the Democrats refused to challenge the racist and corrupt voting system in Florida. The Democrats also exposed their own hypocrisy by failing, after the election, to fight for any steps to reform the electoral system.

The Retreat

However, the charge of "spoiling" not only found resonance with many progressives outside the Green Party but also some leaders of the Green Party itself, who started moving away from independent politics. Late last year, 17 party leaders began openly calling for defeating Bush in 2004, calling on the party to refrain from running a serious presidential campaign in all states. [1]

Faced with this opposition from some Greens to a Nader run, he decided not to seek the Green Party's nomination and instead to run as an independent. Unfortunately, Nader's decision not to accept the nomination or to show up at the convention alienated many potential Nader supporters among Green Party delegates who, out of a sense of party loyalty, decided to vote for Cobb. Cobb promised to "grow the Green Party" through his campaign.

Nader's nomination of Peter Camejo, a prominent California Green and former gubernatorial candidate, as his running mate was helpful but ultimately insufficient to win over enough of these delegates, although ironically, a Nader endorsement would have been much more effective in growing the Greens.

Since the convention, despite its Green Party ballot line in 29 states, the Cobb campaign has been almost invisible. At the same time, while facing an uphill battle to obtain ballot status in a sufficient number of states

to be able to mount a serious challenge to the corporate duopoly, the Nader-Camejo campaign has remains in the press.

Obstacles have included a Democratic Party campaign to smear Nader and to impose additional roadblocks to ballot access, which Nader has labeled "political skullduggery" as well as undemocratic election laws requiring that huge numbers of signatures be gathered in a very short period of time.

As of the early August date writing of this article, Nader has submitted enough signatures to get on the ballot in 17 states and expects to be the Reform Party standard bearer in seven more. But he failed to gather enough signatures to get on the California ballot. (The campaign submitted close to 100,000 signatures but over 153,000 signatures were required.) The campaign still hopes to be on the ballot in 40 states.

Despite these setbacks and the pressures from supporters of "ABB" - Nader is polling the same percentage in a three-way race as the votes he received in 2000. More importantly, while many Kerry supporters are supporting Kerry as the lesser evil to Bush, their politics are actually closer to Nader than to Kerry. Nader is the only candidate with a significant public face who is putting forth a clear antiwar and anti-corporate message in this election, a message that resonates with a large percentage of the population.

To his credit, Cobb has also spoken against the war in Iraq and is critical of both corporate parties. And unlike some others on the left, Cobb states he wants to build the Green Party in the here and now. Cobb, however, has shown himself willing to subordinate that goal to one of defeating Bush. While campaigning for the nomination, he proposed a "safe states" strategy that would avoid campaigning in so-called "battleground states" in order not to "help re-elect George Bush".

Cobb's nomination at the Green Party Convention has had the impact of preventing Nader from being on the ballot in many of those same

battleground states, a result that must have greatly pleased the Democrats. Tellingly Cobb's running mate, Pat LaMarche, was one of the 17 who signed the letter urging the Greens not to run a serious presidential campaign. Presently, Cobb/LaMarche are campaigning to "help remove Bush, Cheney and their ilk from office on November 2", thus encouraging Cobb supporters to vote for Kerry. By legitimating "lesser evil" politics in this fashion, Cobb may actually discourage potential Green Party recruits from leaving the Democrats

and joining the Greens.

A Green Future

In contrast, Green Party leader Matt Gonzalez, President of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors and a Nader supporter, explained, "The most egregious offenses of the Bush Presidency, the Patriot Act and the War in Iraq, carried overwhelming Democratic Support. Progressives justly feel abandoned - Republican or Republican Lite is a dismal choice to

make".

The political division in the Green Party, though a serious one, does not, as some commentators have suggested, mean the end of the Greens. Whatever happens in this November, Greens committed to independent political action and democratic functioning are in a good position to organize within the Green Party so that the party will be able to run future campaigns that challenge corporate rule without hedging or apology.

Democracy Is the Key

16 October 2004, by **Peter Camejo**

What is importance of Nader-Camejo campaign in 2004?

This campaign represents a very large point of view in America - against the invasion and occupation of Iraq and in opposition to the Patriot Act. But since there is no run-off, the electoral system doesn't allow people the freedom to vote for who they want, and they are in a two-party trap.

What gives the Nader campaign such importance is that an overwhelming number of people who will vote for Kerry do not agree with Kerry; in fact on many points they are closer to Nader. The Nader campaign shows the undemocratic nature of American society, the fact that we do not really have free elections in America, that in effect we have a system that guarantees a result but gives people the impression that they made the decision.

I understand that Nader did not get enough signatures in California to win ballot status. Why did that happen and how will that impact the campaign in California?

The Democratic Party is on a full offensive with great resources to prevent people in the United States who agree with Nader's pro-peace,

pro-working class platform, to be able to vote for Nader.

Part of those forces were able to manipulate the Green Party convention and a very peculiar thing happened - a candidate with only 12.2% of the vote in the primaries nationally ended up being the candidate. We are now beginning to discover that it was done by packing Green Party meetings with people who were pro-Kerry. [2]

In California, Greens voted 86 % in favor of candidates who back Nader, and only 11.8 % for David Cobb, but they will end up with Cobb on the state ballot as the Green Party candidate. Nader-Camejo may not even be on the ballot as independents. We may need to have a write-in campaign. However that won't stop the campaign.

How is it going in other states?

The national office of the Nader campaign still believes we are going to be on the ballot in 40 or so states, but it is difficult to predict because in each state in which we meet the requirements, the Democrats try to find some technicality to knock us off.

In the state of Oregon there was a meeting to get on the state ballot, which required 1,000 people in attendance. We had to turn away hundreds of people. Then when we asked people to sign the forms to put Nader on the ballot we discovered a group of 200 Democrats: They took off their outer shirts and underneath their shirts said "Kerry". [3]

This is the type of conscious, and I believe illegal, actions being taken by the Democrats. The other thing they do is to put out that we are being funded by Republicans - this is a total fabricated lie - they know very well that is not the case. But in fact, we are expecting 25 % of our vote to come from Republicans who are against Bush yet do not want to vote for Kerry. Our funding from registered Republicans is about five percent, most of whom are Arab Americans who are against the Patriot Act.

Why do you think Cobb won the nomination in the Green Party? What does this mean for the future of the Greens?

I think Cobb reflects the pressure from the Democratic Party within the Green Party. He wants to move the Green Party away from its independence from Democrats - basically his message is "Vote Green

unless Kerry needs your vote. In that case vote for Kerry."

He's backed by a whole group of Green leaders, starting with the list of 17 that declared that lesser evil voting is correct. Green leaders like John Rensenbrink (from Maine - ed.) Medea Benjamin (from Global Exchange, in San Francisco - ed.) are all for forming an alliance with the Democratic Party, turning the Greens into a domesticated focus group that runs local candidates and pressures the Democrats around certain issues.

This is a totally different vision than the Green Party originally had of creating a force for independent political action and bringing forward an alternative voice and alternative platform.

Cobb was able to pack the Convention with his people and take the nomination. A beautiful example is Maine - where Cobb lost almost two to one to Nader. Lorna Salzman (a long-time Green Party leader from New York state who ran in the primaries and withdrew at the convention in favor of Nader - ed.) and Nader got votes equal to twice the votes that Cobb got. But when the delegation showed up at the convention they voted 95 % for Cobb. The Cobb people brought their people - pretending they were for Nader or Salzman.

Are there any thoughts about long-term strategy to influence the Green Party to be more democratic and independent?

We are definitely trying to form an organized current in the Green Party

for democracy and for independence so that the membership can take control of the Green Party.

Will you be organizing a caucus around the Avocado Declaration?

No. The Avocado Declaration is a comprehensive view of what the two-party system is. People don't necessarily have to agree with that to agree to democracy inside the Green Party, and that it should be a party independent of the Democrats.

Those will be the two basic planks. There should be one person, one vote, and clear methods established upon which delegations are picked.

Also, we need to establish proportional representation in the leadership when there are political differences, to give each current representation based on their strength.

I was struck by the fact that there was no debate on the convention floor.

The convention was organized so that it would not allow the membership to hear the different points of view. They had one debate and even in that one there was to be no opening presentations if I had not protested.

The point is the whole conference was set up to prevent the membership and the delegates from hearing what the political differences were. Their whole policy was to try to prevent the membership from hearing the differences because they knew that that would completely work against them.

I think that many people who voted for David Cobb were unaware that he supports Kerry or that he was in support of the U.S. occupation in Iraq on both his website and in public statements he made on the radio.

Do you think it would have made any difference if Nader had come to the convention and was willing to accept the nomination?

I think looking back you can see things that should have been done. But what Nader noted was that a sector of the Green Party was moving away from being willing to challenge the Democrats and Republicans.

Do you think there is a danger that the Green Party might split?

The Greens are split - there is a cold split right now between the Cobb Democratic Party wing and the wing that favors independence and democracy. Will it turn into a hot split? It depends on what happens over the next couple of years.

There is a real danger of a split and that is why at the convention I proposed a unity statement which would have allowed the Cobb people to do what they want to do and the Nader people to do what they want to do through a dual endorsement.

Of course, the Cobb people rejected that because their real goal wasn't for him to run a campaign but to prevent Nader from being on the ballot in California and other key states. They were perfectly willing to split the Green Party if that was the price they needed to pay to stop Nader.

The Mystery of the 2004 Elections

16 October 2004, by Peter Camejo

But John Kerry and his running mate, John Edwards, gave President Bush 18 standing ovations in January, voted for the war, say the war was right, insist on continuing the occupation of Iraq

against its people's desires, wants to increase the number of troops and Nations occupying Iraq, voted for "unconditional support" to Bush for his conduct of the war, and backed Bush

by voting against the U.S. Constitution for the Patriot Act.

The only explanation for tens of millions voting against their heartfelt

opinions is the lack of free elections in America. There is no runoff election. Without runoffs people are trapped. They fear expressing their true opinions. If they vote for what they are for they are told they will only elect Bush. They must learn to vote against themselves, to accept the con game of a two-party system.

People are taught not to vote FOR what they believe but AGAINST an individual. An unpopular policy once identified with an individual can be continued by replacing the individual, keeping the policy with modifications. In replacing Bush, Kerry pledges to more effectively forward the same policy of imperial domination.

If runoff elections existed, tens of millions would vote against both Bush and Kerry and for peace. Once the myth of invulnerability of the two-party system is broken the dam against democracy and free elections will break. Already 25% of Americans are no longer registered Democratic or Republican; they seek alternatives.

The Democrats' fear of Ralph Nader is rooted in the programmatic conflict between their Party's stance and their supporters. This is the real story of the 2004 elections. This mystery is never written about in the media — it is America's dark secret.

Theft in Broad Daylight

The 2000 presidential election was stolen by some 60,000 people, primarily African Americans, having their right to vote illegally revoked in Florida. The film "Fahrenheit 911" opens showing one African American Congressperson after another asking for an investigation. But their cry for justice was quashed because not one Senator, not one Democrat, not Paul Wellstone, Barbara Boxer, Ted Kennedy, John Kerry or John Edwards would defend democracy, stand up for free elections.

Three and a half years later the Democratic Party has not lifted a finger to establish free elections in America. Not in a single State have they called for runoffs so Florida could

never happen again. They could not make it clearer: The Democratic Party prefers that Republicans win elections, even without majority support, rather than allow free elections where a third party or an independent candidate could attract tens of millions from their base.

Their answer is simple: Ralph Nader must not run, must not be an alternative. Why?

If free elections were held with a runoff system as in most civilized nations; if proportional representation existed whereby if a point of view receives 20% of the vote its supporters would receive 20% representation — then every vote would count, and the Democratic Party as we know it today would no longer exist.

The one hundred million who never vote would have a reason to vote. New parties would appear and a representative democracy would begin to blossom in America.

Why They Hate Nader

Ralph Nader has created a small hole in the dam. The danger is real. The Democrats are on an all-out effort to attack the Nader/Camejo campaign because if voters begin to vote for what they want the entire electoral system can begin to unravel. If twenty million citizens voted for Nader it would be the beginning of the end of the two-party system.

The Democrats would enter into a crisis, the ability of money to control people would begin to crack and the possibility of a democracy where citizens could vote for what they believe would be born. The Democrats are determined, not to beat Bush but to stop Nader, to protect the two party pro-corporate rule that America lives under.

That is what is behind all the charges of the minuscule funding by Republican citizens of Nader/Camejo. It is part of a relentless attack against free elections against the First Amendment of the Bill of Rights.

This is why the Democrats have organized a nation wide "hate Nader" campaign. They seek to obfuscate the issues. They seek to prevent the right of citizens to vote for Nader by preventing Nader even his right to be on the ballot. State by state thousands of citizens sign petitions to place Nader on the ballot; state by state the Democrats harass, seek technicalities to challenge the signatures, and try to prevent allowing the people a choice that is pro-peace.

The attack on Nader by the "San Francisco Chronicle" with a banner front-page article claiming Republicans are funding Nader is just one part of an ongoing campaign. In spite of the relentless attacks against Nader the polls continue to show ten million people behind Nader/Camejo.

Wealthy Democrats and Republicans both cross finance their campaigns. It is standard practice for corporations to donate to both. Republicans donate millions to the Democrats. The very corporations that Democrats supposedly oppose, Enron, Halliburton and Exxon, for example, all give funds to Kerry/Edwards. Kerry/Edwards have no plans to return a penny of their Republican or corporate backing.

What the Money Buys

These corporate lobbyist funds are not really contributions. They are investments or bribes with an expected return of access and policy, precisely like the Kerry/Edwards call for lower taxes on corporations. This kind of contribution dominates the financing of Bush and Kerry as well as most major party candidates for Congress and Senate.

Corporations once paid 33% of the taxes received by the federal government. Now they pay under eight percent, yet Kerry/Edwards are promising to lower their taxes further in spite of the half trillion federal deficit per year and the increasingly regressive taxes on working people.

Against this domination of money over people stand Ralph Nader and the Nader/Camejo campaign. The

Nader/Camejo campaign is seeking votes from all citizens, Democrats, Independents, Republicans, Greens and Libertarians. Just as we seek their votes we ask all of them to help fund our campaign that opposes the war in Iraq and the USA Patriot Act, and defends the health and well being of our working people.

We especially ask for donations for the right to be on the ballot and for free elections in the United States, elections that respect the will of the voters, that favor runoffs (instant run off voting) and proportional representation.

Most working people never give funds to any candidate. Those who do occasionally give to a candidate have

no anticipation of personal financial gain. It is that kind of donor that represents the overwhelming majority of contributions to Nader/Camejo. The bulk of our contributions are in amounts below 100 dollars per person.

The Nader/Camejo campaign does not accept funds from Exxon, Enron or Halliburton as Kerry/Edwards do. We do not accept funding from corporations!

We ask that Kerry/Edwards stop their hypocritical campaign about the minuscule funding we have received from citizens registered Republican. We ask they stop their campaign against the American voters seeking to deny them a choice at the ballot box

by allowing ballot access and an opportunity for voters who support Nader/Camejo to vote for them.

We, like all other candidates, do not, can not and will not give donors lie detectors to ascertain their objectives in funding our campaign. We have proposed a simple solution to the funding issue. Establish public funding of all campaigns to create fairness and end corruption. Kerry/Edwards and Bush/Cheney oppose public funding.

The choice is clear. Continue a corrupt electoral system that closes choices, forces citizens to vote against their conscience and allows money to control people — or open up the electoral system, defend civil liberties and establish free elections.

Mass movement against social “reform”

16 October 2004, by **Daniel Berger**



According to the minister of the economy, social reform would save 4.6 billion euros and any change to the measures decided on by the “grand coalition” (as we call the cartel of the SPD and CDU parties, sometimes with the FDP) would endanger the EU stability pact. No mention of the fact that the most recent tax cuts for the rich cost 4 billion euro -economies of this type are traditionally made at the expense of the working class.

According to the “Financial Times Deutschland” of August 16, 2004 employers will save 9-10 billion euros over two years (2005-6) through this social reform. Meanwhile, the government’s proposed labour market reforms will accelerate the lowering of wages across the board.

As all these measures come on top of 15 years of “transformation” in eastern Germany (with a permanent unemployment rate of 20%) anger has reached an explosive level. Every

Monday since August 2 the masses have been on the streets. At the end of August there were 120,000 to 140,000 demonstrators in eastern Germany and 5,000 in the west.

Two factors worry “cabinet and capital” - the anger of the demonstrators (reflected in the shouts, the slogans chanted, the banners raised) and the fact that neoliberal axioms are increasingly being questioned, at least by a significant minority of the population. The conviction that “TINA” (“there is no alternative”) which is supposed to make us immediately is for the first time being shaken at a mass level.

This is also reflected at the electoral level where the rate of abstention is climbing, the parties of the “grand coalition” are losing support and the reformist PDS party is gaining considerably in the polls. The results in the communal and regional elections (in some L  nder) this autumn confirm this tendency.

First reactions

The concessions made by the government in response to pressure are illuminating:

- The long term unemployed will not have to wait until the end of January 2005 to have benefits paid at the new level under the reform
- The savings of minors under the age of 14 will only be counted as wealth to be offset against unemployment benefit when they exceed 4,100 euros (the threshold was originally set at 750 euros).
- The introduction of a new kind of insurance - paid solely by employees - for dentures has been put off.

All in all, 1.2 billion euros less than envisaged will now be cut from government expenditure. Although the essence of the reforms has not been affected, the experience has shown that self-defence pays off.

The political forces in the movement

The fact that there is no revolutionary force which is at least partly credible at a mass level is a serious problem in several ways: Spontaneous expressions during the demonstrations are often mixed with naïve sentiments and resentments which sometimes take a xenophobic form. In eastern Germany in particular the radical left is extremely weak.

At the electoral level no credible radical left force is able to make an overall critique and sketch an alternative. So the votes go to the PDS, although this party is already quite discredited, or to the fascists (see below). The PDS participates in government in the LÄnder of Berlin and Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and - in line with the internal logic of parliamentary cretinism - applies neoliberal austerity policies. In Berlin in particular trades unionists have demonstrated several times in their thousands against the austerity policies of the SPD-PDS government. But for now the PDS is the only one of the known parties that has explicitly come out against Hartz IV.

There is another political formation that will benefit from this "climate of change", namely the WASG ("electoral alternative for social justice") which will constitute itself as a party in the coming months. [4] It is a formation that could be characterized as the "new old" social democracy. Some cadres from the trade union apparatus (in particular IG Metall) with other traditionally reformist forces (from the newspaper "Sozialismus" and some intellectuals) took the initiative some

months ago of calling for the formation of an "electoral alternative" (since they are disillusioned with the policies followed by Schröder).

The programmatic texts preparatory to the official foundation in winter 2004-2005 indicate the orientation: these forces wish to have - a traditional reformist social democracy, seeking to eradicate neoliberal deformations and reestablish a social "equilibrium" such as existed in their view under the Brandt government at the beginning of the 1970s.

The former head of the SPD, Oskar Lafontaine, is orientating towards this proto-party and wants to be expelled from the SPD. But the SPD - reluctant to create a martyr - has no intention (at least for the moment) of obliging him. The new formation, desirous of reconstituting a "true social democracy" (a reformist but not anti-capitalist party), could become a real competitor for the SPD and gain between 5% and 10% of the votes.

The forces of the far right will definitely also benefit from the current situation. Already, they participate in the demonstrations. In most cases the left has succeeded in throwing them out. But it remains a problem; at least as long as greater victories aren't achieved. If things drag and the movement stagnates, the far right could convince many that the solution is "work for Germans!" (i.e. "foreigners out")

The role of the unions

The trade union leaderships are very ill at ease. They have suffered defeat after defeat (the fight for the 35 hour week in Eastern Germany ended in

catastrophe in 2003, while in a number of workplaces the length of the working day has been increased, sometimes even without payment) and if they don't like the "social reforms", neither do they like mobilize against their traditional "partner", the SPD.

Now the movement against the Hartz law has proved it is possible to fight and win (at least partially). The passivity of the trade union leaderships (and their links to a neoliberal party) has accelerated the loss of members in recent days.

The debate on the introduction of a minimum wage is illuminating. The social movement supports this demand but the union leaderships are against: on the grounds that it will remove their function of negotiating collective agreements. In reality only 70% of people in western Germany and 55% in the east work on the basis of a wage contract negotiated with the unions. The government's attempt to force the long term unemployed to work for one euro an hour (over this amount, their pay is deducted from the 345 euros per month of social aid they receive) will lower the general level of wages.

As the head of the commission for social reform, Rürup, has put it, the introduction of a minimum wage will reverse any reform of the "labour market". He is right, and it is precisely for that reason that revolutionaries do not fight only for the abolition of Hartz IV and all the other laws and measures of Agenda 2010 but also for the introduction of a decent minimum wage. The slogan that unites us with a growing part of the social movement is: "Here are the terms of our agenda: 30-10; 30 hours a week without loss of pay and with proportional hiring as well as a minimum wage of 10 euros per hour".