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Rosemary Ruether on Liberation Theology • Walter Russell Mead on World Debt • Mark Blecher on Developments in China
Jan Rosenberg on Social Policy

EDITORIAL

The Bipartisan Consensus to Tread Water

Is there domestic policy after ethics? Is there domestic policy at all?

Let's give Congressional Democrats the benefit of the doubt and assume that this is not how they had originally envisioned 1989. Surely, back in the winter, someone must have had an agenda. Surely, they could not have realized 1989 would be spent electing new leaders, accepting their resignations, electing leaders again. Surely, no remotely rational person would apply for a job knowing that its foremost duties would be fending off Lee Atwater and Newt Gingrich.

Not that there isn't a legitimate ethics agenda, far broader than the ones commonly trotted out. Public financing of campaigns is not the ultimate panacea -- it will not alleviate hunger and homelessness and other forms of social depravity we casually inflict on several million people -- but it can broaden the range of policies under discussion. A Congress in which the vast majority of members have accepted Savings and Loan PAC contributions and honoraria is not likely to insist on the strictest S&L accountability or consumer protection in the restructuring of the industry.

Tony Coelho has left Capitol Hill, but Coelhoism lives on. Under Coelhoism, the Democrats have assured their control of Congress through PAC money; they survive at the expense only of their politics. As the *Washington Post's* Tom Edsall has documented, Congressional Democrats in aggregate receive roughly identical amounts of money from right and corporate PACs as they do from left wing and labor PACs. They have fundraised themselves into paralysis.

For the Democrats, then, there is a critically important ethics agenda which goes to the heart of the Party's ability to advocate for its own constituents. But there are other agendas too, submerged beneath the spring's Atwatery murk. On minimum wage, the Democrats have been commendably forthcoming, and they are beginning to move forward on child care, but these are the exceptions. On family,

labor, environmental, and trade policies, the agenda has yet to emerge.

That George Bush came to the White House with no policy agenda is by now abundantly apparent, and was in fact predictable from his campaign: Willie Horton wasn't merely a way to smear Dukakis; he also gave George something to talk about. At the risk of taxing one's long term memory, the Democrats entered 1988 actually talking program. They should have entered 1989 with an even surer sense of what that program could be. 1988 demonstrated substantial receptivity to a comprehensive national health insurance program and to heightened spending on education. Polling has demonstrated time and again a growing concern over the rising economic inequality of American society, giving the Democrats some room not merely for remedial programs but for genuine progressive tax reform. There is abundant mass if not elite support for a trade policy which favors the preservation and creation of decent-paying American jobs rather than the preservation of those multinational corporations American only in name, which is the Bush administration's emerging industrial policy.

As spring turns to summer, though, the Administration (still substantially understaffed in many departments) proposes little, and the Congress disposes of even less; this is the bourgeois approximation of the state-witners-away. Alas, the one branch of government with a clear agenda is the most reactionary, the Supreme Court, only now truly Ronald Reagan's, which sees its mission as rolling back the civil rights revolution to 1963 or 1866 or whatever epoch assures white male supremacy. If Congress can't quite yet be prodded to address questions of greater economic equity, perhaps the Court will inspire the Hill to re-enact the last century of civil rights.

—by HAROLD MEYERSON

save the date * save the date
Youth Section Conference
August 17-20
Findlay, OH

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ARTICLES

- China: The Dynamics of Reform and Capitalist Myths
by Marc Blecher..... 3
- The Hall of Mirrors: World Debt and its Implications for Development
by Walter Russell Mead.....5
- Theology of Liberation in a Global Perspective
by Rosemary Radford Ruether..11
- Niilo Koponen: DSAer, Alaska Legislator, and Socialist Agitator
by Harry Fleischman.....13
- Social Policy: Conflicts and Solutions
by Jan Rosenberg.....15

DEPARTMENTS

- Editorial*.....1
- DSAAction*.....7
- On The Left*.....8
- Classifieds*.....12
- Review*.....15

China: Dynamics of Reform and Capitalist Myths

by Mark Blecher

In April and May, millions of people took to the streets throughout China demanding reform, only to be met with tanks, bullets, and fixed bayonets. These stunning events raise profound questions about Chinese socialism and socialist reform: Can market forces be introduced without damage to the living standards of broad sectors of the population? Can democratization occur at all and if so can it take place without violent setbacks? We now can and must grasp more deeply than ever before the dynamics of state socialist reform, and in doing so we must dispel several illusions that have blurred the left's vision and have been central to the bolstering of anti-communism and anti-socialism in the post-Vietnam era.

The first and most important myth is that socialist "reform" -- a word with a decidedly positive loading -- is not only necessary but also downright functional, evolutionary, unproblematic, and benign. Markets, increased labor discipline, more inequality, and insertion into the world economy would produce a China that is "modern": a buzzword for economic satiation, social and cultural comprehensibility, and political stability. Deng Xiaoping, who led and symbolized the reform, was coopted by the center and right: he was dubbed a "pragmatist," lauded for his supposed openness to capitalism, and lionized as a hero. *Time* made him "Man of the Year" not once but twice, demonstrating once again the glee that dominant powers reserve for rebels who have seen the light.

But the truer light projected by real history shines brighter, exposing the mythical quality of these visions. A decade of socialist reform in China has proven even more destabilizing than the decade of left Maoism for which it was a supposed panacea. The dialectics of state socialist reform are beginning to come into focus, and it is time to rethink the simplistic embrace of the market and "market socialism."

In China, economic reform has been a deeply contradictory process. For example, markets cannot function as



Andrew Lichtenstein/Impact Visuals

Students outside the United Nations on a hunger strike in support of protests in China.

"rational allocators" (in the capitalist sense of rationality) without competitive prices. Centralized state socialism, by contrast, used the price structure as a way of achieving political goals, such as providing inexpensive food and housing for urban dwellers (while extracting surplus from the countryside) and giving primacy to heavy industry and the bureaucracies that administer it. Reforming this structure of prices has caused rampant inflation in consumer and producer markets, angering workers, factory managers, and economic bureaucrats, all of whom are well positioned to wreak economic and political havoc in response. When, after years of delay, the Chinese leadership finally came close to implementing a serious price reform last summer, General Secretary Zhao Ziyang reportedly asked his colleagues for the authority to declare martial law to enforce it. Frightened, they turned him down, and the price reform was placed on the back burner yet again. The incident spread profound doubts about the prospects for economic reform among the populace and it deepened the leadership split.

A second contradiction of reform has expressed itself in the cries of "corruption" sounded in recent demonstrations. In a China undergoing socialist reform,

corruption means far more than bribery, nepotism, or embezzlement. It refers to a structural consequence of reform. In a society in which the legacy of the pre-reform era continues to be a powerful state, and which still lacks a class of independent capitalists, it should come as no surprise that the new commercial and entrepreneurial opportunities opened up by the reforms have primarily benefited state officials. The familiar model of a stodgy bureaucracy blocking reform may have been true for a short time in China, but personnel changes and the passing of the years quickly reversed the situation.

The official Chinese press has for some time now been obstreperously critical of government officials who have turned their bureaus into businesses, appropriating state power for private gain. Moreover, the state faces deep contradictions in dealing with the problem. These enterprises are so numerous and important to production and employment that they cannot be closed down without risking economic collapse. And the state officials -- with their command of information, expertise, and political power -- are so indispensable to these enterprises that reorganizing their management is not a simple proposition.

There are many other deep conun-

dra in the Chinese reformist project. The decollectivization of agriculture has severely reduced the capacity of the state to control population growth. The decentralization of management has caused a central government financial crisis. (This in turn has been a proximate cause of the student demonstrations by cutting deeply into educational budgets and intellectuals' salaries.) Industrial reform which increased shop floor discipline, while undercutting job security, frightened and intimidated workers and, as we have seen in recent days, dissolved what little remained of their acceptance of state authority. The decline of central control of investment has led to irrational growth -- for example, the proliferation of rural steel factories which cannot operate due to shortages of iron ore -- and neglect of essential sectors such as transport, energy, and research.

For these and many other reasons, the romance with market socialism that marked the first decade of reform, even among many on the left, needs to be replaced by a probing analysis of its structure and dynamics. If reforming socialist economies are not to come to the same grief as their overly centralized predecessors, they will need to find new ways of recombining plan and market. Those who have given up on an active state role in the economy because of the irrationalities of Stalinist and neo-Stalinist planning, need to reclaim the baby they have thrown out with the bath water.

At the same time, the polemical harvest that procapitalist ideologues have reaped from China's embrace of the market is now discredited by history, and the left must unrelentingly get that message across. For if we do not, the new mystification -- being promulgated by the likes of Zbigniew Brzezinski -- that China's crisis demonstrates its insufficient grasp of capitalism, may well take hold in a society that has been carefully prepared to accept such nonsense.

A second myth debunked by recent events in China is that the Cultural Revolution was dreamed up entirely by the charismatic Chairman, who duped masses of gullible youth into following him. This denies the Chinese people who participated in the Cultural Revolution their role as historical actors, with all the grandeur and, in this case, culpability that carries. To be sure, the Cultural Revolution did tremendous damage both to China and to the search for a humane socialism there. But how and why it did so has been thoroughly misunderstood. In fact, Western scholarship has proven what most Chinese have always known: that the Cul-

DSA Statement on the Repression in China June 7, 1989

The Democratic Socialists of America condemns the wanton and ruthless slaughter of thousands of peaceful protesters -- students and workers -- that began on Sunday, June 4 in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China. These courageous men and women moved the entire world over the course of the last six weeks with their heroic calls for human rights, democracy, and freedom of speech. In the end, the regime led by Deng Xiaoping and Li Peng decided to meet peaceful nonviolent protest with tanks and armored cars, shattering the hopes of Chinese in China and abroad with the staccato of automatic weapons fire and the ginty points of bayonets.

Furthermore, students -- like those in Hungary in 1956 and in Mexico City in 1968, in Kwangju, South Korea in 1981, and at our own Kent State and Jackson State Universities in 1970 -- have stood up to be counted and led the fight for democracy, only to be cut down by the forces of a repressive status quo.

As democratic socialists, DSA believes that the right of citizens to peacefully assemble, petition their government, disseminate ideas through the print and electronic media, and have a direct voice in determining their own destiny is at the heart of any system that claims to be democratic. DSA has consistently supported efforts by Chinese students and workers to speak their minds, form organizations and periodicals independent of the state, and criticize their government. It is this democratic movement that the current repression has sought to contain.

While we support actions taken so far by the Bush administration to halt \$600 million in military sales, suspend military exchanges, and in a limited way extend visas for some Chinese students, we believe that other measures should receive more serious consideration. The Administration should immediately extend for one year all visas of the 73,000 Chinese students and 250,000 other temporary Chinese resi-

dents in the United States. The Administration, which continues to maintain unjust and counterproductive economic sanctions against Cuba and Nicaragua, hesitates to make similar moves against a regime responsible for the brutal murder and injury inflicted on thousands of unarmed Chinese.

We recognize the gains realized by the opening of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1972, ending twenty-three years of isolation. We value the educational and cultural exchanges that have taken place since that time, openings in part responsible for a freer exchange of ideas and increased understanding.

Nevertheless, DSA believes that our government must respond in no uncertain terms to the regime in Beijing, dropping any double standard and holding the regime responsible for the massacres that have occurred while expressing wholehearted solidarity with the Chinese students and workers. We understand that the free market model itself, promoted by the Deng Xiaoping government and hailed by Western investors, has stimulated dissatisfaction with government corruption and resulting inequalities and that that, in part, has prompted a call for genuine political democracy. If supporting the students and workers in their democratic demands means sacrificing some Western economic gain and influence that might be hurt by sanctions, we in DSA have no problem in deciding which is more important in the present crisis.

As the United States affiliate of the Socialist International, we pledge to join with our allies in the student movement, the trade unions, the progressive wing of the Democratic party, and our friends in the Chinese community to express our solidarity for the struggle for democracy and social justice in China. We pledge all possible aid and assistance in defending human and democratic rights in China and in pressuring for a consistently principled position by our government.

tural Revolution involved a good deal of popular spontaneity and that it expressed, albeit often in a perverse way, the deep concerns and real interests of a great many Chinese. The urgings of the Cultural Revolution's left leadership to op-

pose those it dubbed "Party persons in authority taking the capitalist road" had genuine appeal in a population disgusted with political elitism, corruption, and systematic discrimination. These issues have

Continued on page 14.

The Hall of Mirrors:

World Debt and its Implications for Development

by *Walter Russell Mead*

In the North, the third world debt has become somewhat boring: always threatening, but never delivering, financial apocalypse. In the South, its effects are felt more dramatically. Riots in Caracas, hyperinflation in Argentina, civil war in Peru, and political upheavals in Mexico. Already a decade old, the third world debt crisis has transformed Latin America.

Even so, the debt crisis has never lived up to its billing. Despite the warnings, chaos never quite breaks out in the South, and the banks never go broke in the North. Threats of a debtors' cartel never materialize; no country has broken with the international economic system over the debt. Somehow, the negotiations limp along.

After ten years, it is time to realize that the debt crisis is over. Crisis is a misnomer for what has become a condition. The debt crisis has been absorbed into the general problem of development and the structural weaknesses of the world economy.

Many see this transformation as proof that the approaches of the United States government, the international financial agencies, and the creditor banks are working. The international banks have boosted their loan loss reserves, and the crisis management teams of the international financial institutions have, so far, managed to reschedule, recapitalize, or otherwise resolve every installment of debt as it comes due. (Argentina, now more than a year overdue on its interest payments, is currently the most delinquent of the major debtors, but those close to debt negotiations believe that this problem, too, will ultimately be resolved.) With the adoption of the Brady Plan, official optimism reached new heights.

This optimism is misplaced. The Brady Plan was unveiled when the blood of rioters protesting the policies of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) had scarcely dried on the streets of Caracas and when the other industrialized countries were growing increasingly restive with Washington's reluctance to address this issue. It is an admission that the previous approach, the Baker Plan, had run out of

steam. While the Brady Plan offers some concrete proposals that will help some debtor countries make modest but real reductions in both their service payments and in the total amount of their outstanding debt, Washington has yet to confront the issues that make the debt problem so dangerous nor has it begun to acknowledge the actual costs of neglect.

Trade and Debt Contradictions

One troublesome issue is the contradiction between our trade and debt policies. United States trade policy embodied in the current trade law and supported by a bipartisan coalition in Congress and the White House calls for aggressive measures to reduce our trade deficits with the rest of the world and, if possible, move from a trade deficit of \$120 billion to a trade surplus of \$50 billion.

But United States debt policy continues to call for debtor countries to step up their exports to earn the foreign exchange necessary to service their debts. With one hand, we are trying to hold back the Koreans and the Taiwans; with the other, we are trying to turn the Mexicos and Brazils into East Asian style Newly Industrialized Countries (NICs).

The last time anybody tried such an unbalanced trade policy was in the twenties. Then it was the Allies of the First World War who had a contradictory policy toward Germany's war debts. Germany was to settle its debts in gold and on time, and was expected to earn a trade surplus to accomplish this, but the victorious allies were not prepared to sacrifice their domestic industries to competition from Germany.

In some respects, American policy today is less sophisticated and less generous than it was in the twenties. The Dawes Plan of 1924, the Baker Plan of the twenties, linked Germany's debt service obligations to a fixed percentage of its export earnings -- something that so far we have been unwilling to concede to the debtors. It also included a generous loan to help Germany restructure its economy and, while the Baker Plan was unable to generate substantial new loans for debtor countries, the Dawes Plan led to a wave of private lending to Germany.

In 1929 the Young Plan went even farther. It put an end to Allied interference in the German economy, reduced Germany's reparations obligation, and spread the payments over fifty-nine years.



Peruvian youth at one of the shantytowns on the outskirts of Lima.

Lock Wintz/Impact Visuals

Yet even this plan, which seemed extremely generous to the Americans, was deeply resented in Germany and gave Adolf Hitler a badly needed political issue. With the coming of the Depression, the Young Plan was simply irrelevant. A conference in Lausanne, Switzerland cancelled 95 percent of Germany's debts and further sweetened the deal by providing that Germany would no longer make payments to the Allies, but to a European conservation fund. Too little, too late. The Lausanne Plan, which would almost certainly have satisfied Germany in 1924 or even 1929, was scornfully rejected by Hitler in 1933.

Unfortunately, as in the twenties, the international financial system has been allowed to degenerate into a collection agency. This is not what the founders of the IMF and the World Bank intended. American statesmen agreed after World War Two that the politics of debt had poisoned international relations in the twenties for no good reason. "Forgive us our debts as we forgive those who are indebted to us," was the prayer on the lips of the statesmen at Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, where the modern financial system was established.

The spirit of that prayer -- particularly important when the United States has become the world's largest debtor -- seems conspicuously absent from the current climate in Washington, and resentment of the world system is growing in the Third World. We have become accustomed to thinking of this resentment as an emotion of the left, but something new is growing around the world: a nationalist-based opposition to the economic order. In Ko-

rea, Argentina, Chile, and the Islamic world, today's nationalist protestors seem less and less interested in the ideas of Lenin; but that is no reason for bankers to sleep at night. Hitler, Tojo, and Mussolini swept to power on the basis of right wing dissatisfaction with the international order, and, in the end, their opposition to the Comintern (the Third International) did very little for international business.

Inadequate Response

Washington's approach to the debt problem has been woefully inadequate. Progress is measured in inches, the journey in miles. It is tempting for Washington to avoid bold moves on debt. Bold moves make waves and waves rock boats. But, just as inaction in the face of the thrift crisis proved to be the worst of all options, the approaches of Young, Dawes, Baker, and Brady magnify the risks and costs of an explosive situation.

An alternative approach to debt must begin with the realization that the debt problem is part of a broader issue of development. Developing countries need to import capital to build new industries and the infrastructures to support them. In the nineteenth century the United States was a debtor nation, constantly knocking at the door of foreign capitalist markets. Europe and Japan faced a similar situation after the Second World War; they needed capital to rebuild their shattered economies.

Having learned from the Versailles disaster, American statesmen in the forties bent all their efforts to provide adequate capital for Europe. The Lend Lease

Act of 1941 ensured that the Allies came out of the war without unpayable debts to the United States; the IMF, the World Bank (originally a bank for reconstruction), and the Marshall Plan were all shaped by the need to inject development capital into Europe without throttling its recovery with repayment obligations.

The approach that worked so well in the First World was never extended to the Third. No long term agencies were set up and equipped with the resources to play a similar role outside of Europe and Japan. No peace time Third World equivalents of Lend-lease and the Marshall Plan were developed, and a chronic shortage of resources forced the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund into a role that is precisely the opposite of that which was intended for them in the forties.

Debt Resolution

The road to a resolution of the debt crisis lies in a return to the principles of Bretton Woods, and their application to conditions in the developing world. These ideas are not new and, although they are unfashionable in the Thatcherite climate of contemporary economic discussion, they are neither untested nor radical. They will not involve disastrous write downs for commercial banks, nor huge bail outs by hard pressed taxpayers in developing countries. They will, however, reduce the need for developing countries to roll up huge trade surpluses and allow them to import more American goods. They will reduce the uncertainty that haunts global financial markets and contribute to lower interest rates and more rapid economic growth in both the First and the Third Worlds.

What Keynes wrote of the German debts in 1919 still makes sense today: "We shall never be able to move again, unless we can free our limbs from these paper shackles. A general bonfire is so great a necessity that unless we make of it an orderly and good tempered affair in which no serious injustice is done to anyone, it will, when it comes at last, grow into a conflagration that may destroy much else as well."

The world ignored Keynes in 1919. It took his advice in 1944. What will it do this time? The answer to that question will shape the political and economic climate of the nineties more than any other factor.

Walter Russell Mead is a senior Fellow of the World Policy Institute and the author of Mortal Splendor: The American Empire in Transition. His most recent treatment of international economics appears in the Summer, 1989 issue of World Policy Journal.

Peter Kelly/Impact Visuals



A recently closed gas station in Southern Mexico.

DSACTION

RESOURCES

* The Spring 1989 issue of *Religious Socialism* features articles on "In the Holy Land" by Judy Deutsch, "Islamic Fundamentalism: A Third World Challenger" by Donna Schlagheck, "A Diffusion of Identity" by Jack Spooner, and many others. A subscription to *Religious Socialism*, published by DSA's Religious Commission, is available for \$5.00 per year. Send your check to Religious Socialism, P.O. Box 80 Camp Hill, PA 17001-0080.

* The Winter 1989 issue of *Our Struggle/Nuestra Lucha*, newsletter of the Latino, AfroAmerican and Antiracism Commissions of DSA, features articles on "Rainbow Socialism," "The Latino Vote in 1988," among many others. Subscriptions to the newsletter are included with membership in any of the three Commissions. Send \$10.00 to DSA, Box 162394, Sacramento, CA 95816.

* "Both Sides Take to the Streets" is the title of the Spring issue of *Not Far Enough*, the newsletter of DSA's Feminist Commission. It highlights reproductive rights and has articles on the April 9 March For Women's Lives/Women's Equality and "Operation Rescue." A subscription to *Not Far Enough* is included in your membership to the Commission. To join the Commission send \$10.00 to DSA, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

* The Next America Foundation has completed production of the Commemorative Journal from In Celebration of Michael Harrington, and all pre-ordered copies have been mailed. According to Frank Llewellyn, who coordinated production of the Journal, all post offices should deliver the Journal no later than July 4.

The eighty page journal contains articles highlighting different aspects of Michael Harrington's work, a report on the tribute to Michael Harrington held last June, over forty photographs, international greetings, and ads from the organizations that Michael has worked with over the course of his life. The articles were edited by Irving Howe.

Copies of the Commemorative Journal are available for purchase at a cost of \$35.00 (includes postage). New York residents add \$2.89 sales tax. Orders or inquiries should be addressed to Next Amer-

ica Foundation, 15 Dutch St. Suite 500B, New York, N.Y. 10038.

* *The Question of Socialism*, a new pamphlet produced in conjunction with *Dissent* magazine, features essays by Michael Harrington on "Toward a New Socialism: Beyond the Limits of the Present" and Alec Nove on "Feasible Socialism: Some Social-Political Assumptions." To order send \$2.00 to: DSA, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038.

* *Strengthening the Progressive Income Tax: The Responsible Answer to America's Budget Problem*, a booklet produced by the Economic Policy Institute, is available for \$4. Send checks to: EPI to 1730 Rhode Island Avenue, NW, Suite 812, Washington, DC 20036.

* *Sharing the Pie: A Disturbing Picture of the U.S. Economy in the 1980s*, a new book written and illustrated by DSAer Steve Brouwer, is available for \$5.75. Mail checks to: Big Picture Books, P.O. Box 909, Carlisle, PA 17013

REPORTS

* Michael Harrington, DSA co-chair, has been heroically battling cancer of the esophagus since having been diagnosed in October, 1987. For the last year he has been speaking, writing, and attending meetings at a rate that far outpaced even the most healthy among us. Early June, however, Michael was admitted to the hospital for laser surgery to stunt the growth of the cancer. While he was in the hospital there were serious complications. He is hoping to be released by the end of June. Cards for Michael can be sent to the DSA office and we will forward them to him. Michael is wished a fast recovery by thousands of comrades throughout the country and across the world.

* In July, Youth Organizer Elissa McBride will finish her two-year term and a new organizer will come on board. Elissa's energy, commitment, and inspiration will be missed at the national office and by the dozens of chapters Elissa visited during her two years as organizer. We wish her well in whatever challenges she takes on next.

The Youth Section will be in equally capable hands, however, with Dinah Leventhal, a 1988 graduate of Harvard

University, who will be carrying the DSA Youth Section banner for the next two years. Dinah's impressive range of organizing experience as a chapter activist, in addition to her experience as chair of the Youth Section this past year, will make her a terrific organizer. We welcome her aboard.

* Get with the program -- the DSA pledge program, that is. Join with other DSAers who have pledged monthly or quarterly contributions of \$5.00 to \$200.00 to help build the socialist movement. Contact Gary Lucek at DSA for more information.

UPCOMING

* The 1989 Summer Youth Conference will run from August 17-20, Thursday evening through Sunday afternoon, at Findlay College, Findlay, Ohio. The program will include discussions of campus organizing, skills training sessions, and setting priorities for the coming academic year. Panels and workshops will cover such topics as economic justice, Central America, reproductive rights, labor and the economy, and more. Past speakers at Youth Section conferences include Michael Harrington, Manning Marable, Barbara Ehrenreich, Irving Howe, and Frances Fox Piven. Direct inquiries about the conference to: DSA, 15 Dutch Street, Suite 500, New York, NY 10038. Join activists from more than forty campuses as we chart a course for the year ahead!

* The 1989 DSA National Convention will take place November 10-12 in Baltimore, Maryland. There will be panels on the changing nature of politics internationally, the U.S. domestic situation, and DSA's agenda for the nineties. Workshops on the labor movement, reproductive rights, Central America, the environment, and religion and socialism, plus resolution sessions will also be included. To find out more about the Convention, contact the national office at (212) 962-0390.

* Dozens of groups, including DSA, have already endorsed the October 7 Housing Now! March on Washington. The demands of the March include: end homelessness; fund the creation of affordable housing; and restore funds for federal housing programs. If you are interested in mobilizing for the March, contact the DSA office.

ON THE LEFT



by HARRY FLEISCHMAN

California

An interim DSA state committee was set up at the recent DSA state leadership conference. Duane Campbell of Sacramento and Virginia Franco of San Diego were elected co-chairs and Leo Whitaker of Los Angeles was elected secretary by the thirty-six delegates. The new state committee plans to sponsor DSA speaking tours during the next year and urged DSA locals to focus on health care issues. They planned a luncheon for delegates to the Democratic State Central Committee next February in Los Angeles as well as making the DSA state conference an annual event....Valley DSA heard John Palomo on mobilizing against AIDS. Chair Anne Zerrien-Lee called the meeting a memorial to DSA activist Robert Savage, who was struck down by AIDS in February at the age of thirty. Valley DSA will hold its annual July 4th party....Los Angeles DSA and the Socialist Community School held a meeting in May on "The Crisis of World Communism" with Ben Dobbs speaking on the Soviet Union and Tony Garavente on China. The Socialist School started three classes in June to study socialist feminism, Alex Nove's *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*, and Perestroika and the Crisis of Communism....Peninsula/Stanford DSA heard professor Helen Longino of Mills College speak on "A Socialist-Feminist Perspective on Science" in May. Farm workers at the Webb Ranch voted to join the United Stanford Workers and DSA is supporting rallies and petitions urging Stanford University, which leases the land to the Webb family, to help improve barbaric conditions at the Ranch....San Francisco DSA has started a health care study group....East Bay DSA is planning a conference on the collapse of the cold war for the fall or next spring....Santa Cruz DSA heard

Michael Brown of Santa Cruz's Rainbow Coalition speak on "Can America Achieve a Real Two-Party System?"

Connecticut

Edwin Vargas, Jr., DSA vice-chair and past president of the Hartford, Connecticut Federation of Teachers, has been elected president of the National Congress of Puerto Rican Rights.

Illinois

Chicago DSA joined the Illinois Pro-Choice Alliance, which successfully countered the so called "Operation Rescue" Mothers' Day invasion of Chicago and organized a rally of 600 people in support of choice. The biggest hand at the Chicago DSA's annual Norman Thomas-Eugene V. Debs dinner went to the table of Eastern Airline strikers. Awards went to William Winpisinger, retiring president of the International Association of Machinists, and Milt and Sue Cohen. Chicago DSA joined with the Illinois Labor Network Against Apartheid for a Soweto DSA 1989 Walkathon, followed by a Soweto Day rally.

Iowa

Co-chair Michael Harrington promoted the American Solidarity Movement to more than 200 in Iowa City May 6. He was the keynote speaker at a labor history forum sponsored by the Iowa City Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, and DSA. DSAers are active in the grape boycott and in tenant organizing. Iowa City DSA Co-chair Kim Jones was on a half-hour interview program over radio station KBKB in Fort Madison, a station with a three-state audience.

Kentucky

Julie Burns, a field organizer for Kentuckians for the Commonwealth, discussed the recent upsurge of Klan activity in Kentucky and the left's response to it at the Central Kentucky DSA May meeting in Lexington....University of Kentucky DSA and the Pro-Choice Alliance co-sponsored a pro-choice benefit concert May 20.

Massachusetts

The Boston Debs-Thomas awards dinner will honor Kristine Rondeau of the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers. Hundreds of unionists and friends of DSA are expected to attend.

Montana

DSAers are organizing a statewide DSA local in Montana. The first issue of the Montana Rose, the local's newsletter, was recently published, and a meeting with DSA Co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich took place on June 17. Three cheers to Marshall Mayer for his efforts in getting the new local off the ground.

New Jersey

Central New Jersey DSA held a meeting in June to elect new officers and to plan for fall activities. Sherri Levine, DSA educational director, updated DSAers on what is going on with other locals and at the national office. The study group has meetings planned throughout the summer and fall, with the September meeting scheduled to be on Sweden.

New York

Albany DSA's Democratic Left Forum series heard Heidi Siegfried of the Hunger Action Network speak in April on "Poverty and Hunger in New York State" and John Funicello of American Federation of State County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) on May Day on "The Eastern Strike and the Future of the American Labor Movement." Albany DSAers are participating in mobilizing people for the October 7 Housing Now! march....Ithaca DSA met in May to discuss affordable housing plans and to discuss the upcoming elections for Mayor, Common Council, and County Board of Representatives....Over 250 people attended the 10th anniversary luncheon of the Long Island Progressive Coalition, founded by DSA, the Machinist Union, and many other groups. William Winpisinger and Mike Harrington spoke at its initial rally in 1979. It is now chaired by DSAer David Sprintzen....Nassau DSA

held its annual Memorial Day picnic at Co-chair Barbara Ehrenreich's home....New York City DSA held its annual convention June 3, at which time officers were elected....DSAer Jose La Luz was recently named as national education director of the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU).

Ohio

Cleveland DSA held a retreat June 24 to evaluate their recent efforts and to map out projects for the year to come.

Pennsylvania

Professor Art Shostack, author of *The Air Controllers Controversy* and DSAer Paul Baichich, chair of the Machinists strike committee at Washington National Airport, spoke at the Philadelphia DSA May 7 forum on "The Eastern Strike and the Future of American Labor." Mike Harrington's whirlwind visit to Philadelphia in February led to new DSA chapters at Temple University and the University of Pennsylvania. Both chapters plan to form a city-wide Youth Section study group this summer. A successful new members meeting was held, at which over thirty new DSA members attended....Reading-Berks DSA will hold its 6th annual socialist picnic in July with live music performed by Tom Juravich and a presentation by DSA Organizational Director Patrick Lacefield. Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward's *Why Americans Don't Vote?* will be the topic of their newly revived study group....Pittsburgh DSA's 2nd Annual International Women's Day party gave awards to seven local women who made significant achievements in their respective fields.

Washington DC

The DC/MD/NoVA DSA local held its annual meeting in June. The meeting opened with an inspiring panel on "Generations of Socialism," which was followed by a presentation by Sherri Levine, DSA's education director. After the meeting, socializing took place at a nearby park. Strike support for the Eastern workers continues to be a priority, as does involvement with the newly formed Coalition for Choice.

Labor Solidarity Lives on in DSA

Labor Solidarity has been a constant thread in activities organized by DSA groups and activists throughout the spring. These activities come as DSA gears up for an American Solidarity Movement project -- the mobilization of the progressive, non-labor community in support of the labor movement.

In New York, a benefit showing of John Sayles' film *Matewan* raised thousands of dollars for the International Machinist strikers. The event was organized by New York DSA, which regularly organizes members and friends to walk the picket lines at LaGuardia, Kennedy, and Newark airports. In Cleveland, DSAers joined 2,000 others in supporting the Machinists at a rally at Hopkins Airport. The Cleveland AFL-CIO officially recognized four DSA youth activists for their work "above and beyond the call of duty" in supporting the strikers. In Washington, DC, DSAers have held fundraisers for the Eastern strikers and the Pittston Coal Company strikers. In Los Angeles, the fight goes on in support of the cemetery workers of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, who have voted to be represented by the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union. DSA Co-Chair Michael Harrington was greeted by a rousing chorus of *Solidarity Forever* at a May labor rally of over 200 people in Iowa City, sponsored by that community's Federation of Labor and Iowa City DSA.

On international issues, DSA's two-week, nine-city spring tour with South African Mineworkers Union leader Nomonde Ngubo highlighted the struggle against apartheid in South Africa and the Shell boycott here at home. DSA has also endorsed and is actively organizing for the July 21-23 "International Sister Union Conference for Peace and Solidarity" in El Salvador, which will bring together sister unions from across the world to express solidarity with the Salvadoran labor movement.

American Solidarity Movement activities for the fall will include the release of a Labor Day declaration of affirmation for the necessity of a strong American union movement signed by prominent non-labor intellectuals and political figures, as well as a series of op-eds in several major newspapers. Three campus-labor institutes will be held this fall as a pilot project to promote pro-union attitudes among students. Look for information in the Labor Day issue of *Democratic Left*. ●

Socialist Scholars: 6 Years Strong

by John Mason

The Seventh Annual Socialist Scholars Conference was held March 31 through April 2. Bogdan Denitch, professor of sociology at the City University of New York Graduate Center and a member of the Democratic Socialists of America National Executive Committee, chaired the conference, which was sponsored by the CUNY Ph.D. Sociology program. The conference was co-sponsored by the Institute for Democratic Socialism, The Democracy Project East/West, *Dissent*, *The Nation*, *Monthly Review*, *New Left Review*, and two dozen other periodicals, associations, and independent publishers, and was organized in large part by the DSA CUNY Branch.

The theme of this year's conference was "Two Centuries of Revolution: 1789-1989" in honor of the bi-centennial of the French Revolution. Some of the featured DSA speakers included co-chairs Michael Harrington and Barbara Ehrenreich, Frances Fox Piven, Irving Howe, Stanley Aronowitz, David Garrow, Michael Waltzer, Cornel West, Joseph Schwartz, Joanne Barkan, and Guy Molyneux. Panels featuring DSA speakers were diverse, including "Gorbachev: The Future of Glasnost," "The Democrats: Is the Party Over," "Europe and 1992," "Building the Student Movement," "Expanding the Electorate," and "Progressive Strategies: 1989-92."

While most conference participants are from the continental United States, the conference brings a number of scholars and activists from Eastern and Western Europe, Africa, and Latin America, opening a window for Americans on the outside world, and allowing our foreign guests to see a side of American politics which lost much of its visibility during the conservative eighties.

A successful DSA reception was held over lunch. Hundreds of people attended, and greetings were presented by Michael Harrington, Barbara Ehrenreich, and Cornel West.

The Socialist Scholars Conference has enjoyed the support of the City University of New York for the past six years. This year's Conference included 140 workshops and panels. It was attended by 3,000 people, making it one of the largest academic conferences on the East Coast. ●

John Mason, a member of CUNY DSA, helped organize the Scholars Conference.

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Theology of Liberation in Global Perspective

by Rosemary Radford Reuther

In the early 1970's, when the first English translations of the liberation theology being written in Latin America began to appear, U.S. society was in the throes of many social conflicts. American racism had been challenged by the black civil rights movement. Other racial and ethnic minorities were speaking out. Women were challenging the patterns of patriarchy in both the churches and society. American foreign policy, touted as an instrument to promote "democracy" and "progress," was being exposed as neocolonialist, and the United States was on the brink of an ignominious retreat in Vietnam.

Times have changed. In the last sixteen years, particularly under the presidency of Ronald Reagan, there has been a concerted effort to reestablish the hegemony of unself-critical Americanism that was being challenged in the sixties. This has included efforts to delegitimize liberation theology. The Reagan administration began to recognize the power of liberation theology, both its challenge to American power in Latin America and also its capacity to draw conscientious North American Christians into solidarity with Latin American liberation movements. It sought to vilify liberation theology as a front for Marxism, and to label the Sandinista government as persecutors of the "true" Christians of Nicaragua, i.e. the followers of Cardinal Obando Y Bravo.

Reactionary Attack

This reactionary counterattack on liberation theology in North America was reinforced by a parallel attack from the Vatican. Investigations of leading liberation theologians, such as Leonardo Boff and Gustavo Gutierrez, the year-long silencing of Boff by the Vatican, the document prepared by Cardinal Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation of the Faith, which condemned liberation theology as a heretical politicization of Christianity -- all these actions have created a chilling atmosphere for the future development of this theological reflection.

Despite this mobilization of negative

reaction against liberation theology, liberation theologians have pressed ahead with their critical work. A multivolume study of the major theological themes and issues of liberation theology is being produced and published by Editoria Vozes in Brazil under the editorial leadership of Leonardo Boff.

Yet the repressive atmosphere has taken its toll. Much of the recent writings of liberation theologians has focused on vindicating the classical theological and Biblical orthodoxy of liberation theology. There has been less attention to revolutionary praxis and the political and economic transformation liberation theology envisions. This is unfortunate.

In the context of the Sandinista revolution, it is particularly vital for liberation theology to sort out its relation to revolutionary governments. How do liberation theology and communities retain their constructive critical dynamic after a successful revolution? But, in the midst of reactionary attacks in the church and the U.S. funding of the contra war against the grassroots work of the Sandinistas, liberation theologians feel reluctant to engage in such critique.

Despite setbacks in Latin America,

liberation theology continues to expand on new fronts. One of these is its global application in Asia, Africa, and even in the Middle East. The second front is that of the theoretical work of feminist theology, which continues to grow in North America and Western Europe and is also beginning to be echoed in a global multi-contextualization in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. Feminist theory and theology are also having an impact in other religions, such as Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism.

Global Ramifications

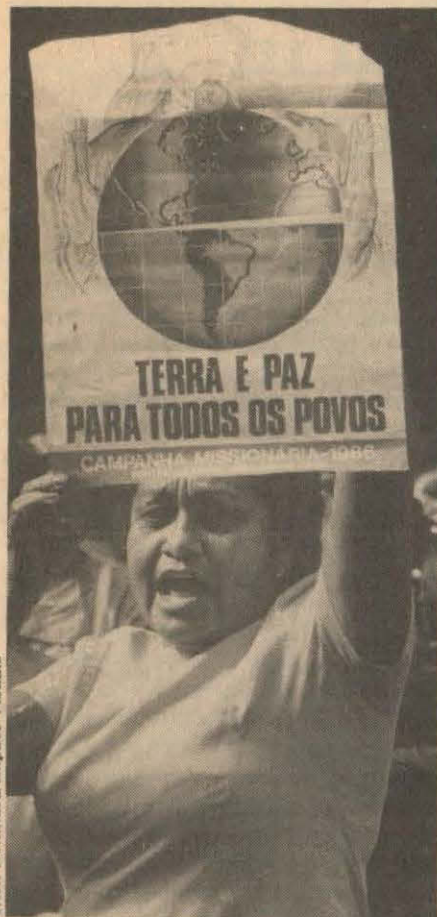
A glance through any recent catalogs of major publishers of Third World theology will reveal the reach of new theologies. Africa, particularly South Africa, abounds with new black and African theologies inspired by the twin movements of liberation and indigenization of Christian theology. Minjung theology in Korea has been a major new movement of liberation theology, adapting it both to a primarily Protestant theological context and to Korean popular culture. In India and Sri Lanka dialogue with the other indigenous religions becomes a concern that was not on the agenda of Latin American theologians.

Even the Middle East conflict has found



A Brazilian priest and dispossessed confronting the military police.

Rick Reinhard/Impact Visuals



Church sponsored urban land protest in Brasil.

its echoes in liberation theology in Naim Ateek's new book, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*. This work by a Palestinian Arab Christian is complimented by the development of a Jewish liberation theology by American Jewish theologian Marc Ellis that seeks to respond to the dual crises of Jewish empowerment in America and in Israel and the Palestinian uprising.

Influence of Feminism

Feminist theology continues to expand in North America and to be paralleled by academic and popular feminist work in Western Europe. Most Western European countries now have their national networks for the discussion of feminist theology, and a European organization to coordinate such work was founded three years ago. In 1988 and 1989 North American and German feminists collaborated in producing a two volume resource book on feminist exegesis of Scripture, *Feministisch Gelesen*.

The question of feminist theology and anti-semitism has been a particularly agonizing aspect of debate in Germany. Ac-

cused by American Jewish feminist, such as Suzanne Heschel, of anti-semitism, German feminists have sought to sort out the fine lines between a feminist critique of Biblical patriarchy and a scapegoating of Judaism as the "cause" of patriarchy.

Feminist theology has also expanded rapidly in Latin America, Asia, and Africa. In the January 1983 meeting of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) in Geneva, women delegates challenged the leadership to promote a global development of a feminist dimension of liberation theology. EATWOT responded by sponsoring feminist theological reflection on the national, regional, and global levels in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. One result of this remarkable series of consultations of women was the volume *With Passion and Compassion: Third World Women Doing Theology*.

Liberation theology at the end of the 1980s has met its enemies but it has also expanded and won new friends. ●

Rosemary Radford Ruether, a DSA vice chair, teaches theology at Garret Theological Seminary.

For information on DSA's Religion and Socialism Commission, write to P.O. Box 80, Camp Hill, PA 17001.

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Niilo Koponen:

DSAer, Alaska Legislator, and Socialist Agitator

by Harry Fleischman

I first met Niilo Koponen in the 1940s, when he was a member of the Yipsels (Young People's Socialist League) and I was national secretary of the Socialist party. Only later did I learn of his childhood socialist background.

The New York ethnic Finnish community in which Niilo Koponen, now a four term legislator in Alaska, grew up, was one where workers lived in co-operative apartment buildings, shopped in co-op stores, and danced and produced plays in worker-owned cultural halls. The Finnish Socialist Federation, a strong component of the Socialist party during World War I, developed an institutional mutual support network, but unlike other immigrant groups, did not tend to cluster in one neighborhood. Their co-op houses were scattered (Niilo's was in a predominantly Jewish working-class neighborhood in the Mt. Eden section of the West Bronx), while the cultural heart of the community was in the Finnish Workers Hall in Harlem. His mother and aunt were actresses in the Finnish theater there, while his electrician father was in charge of the lighting. Back in the Bronx, Niilo recalls street corner orators and Workman's Circle branches with scarlet banners on May Day.

"But despite the socialist milieu in which I grew up," says Niilo, "I was never aware of party labels. I remember the press and newsreel reports of strikes, the wars in China and Ethiopia, the Spanish Civil War, and the seemingly inexorable rise of fascism. I can remember my father having no steady job for a decade and myself polishing silverware while my mother worked as a domestic. But these experiences and attitudes did not find expression until I went to the High School of Music and Art."

There Niilo found challenging teachers who encouraged students to think for themselves. One was August Gold, a socialist activist who today is a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). When the principle barred the student discussion group for inviting such "controversial" speakers as Norman Thomas, the group got permission to meet in the Episcopal orphan asylum across the street from

the high school. After a year's independent existence, the high school group voted to affiliate in 1944 with the YPSL.

"When I told my parents that I had joined the YPSL," said Niilo, "I was astonished to learn that the Finnish Federation had been part of the Socialist party until the split in 1936-37, and that the OTC, the Finnish club to which my parents belonged, was organized around alumni of YPSL Circle 5, Manhattan." (One of the other Yipsels in the West Bronx circle at that time was Seymour Martin Lipset.)

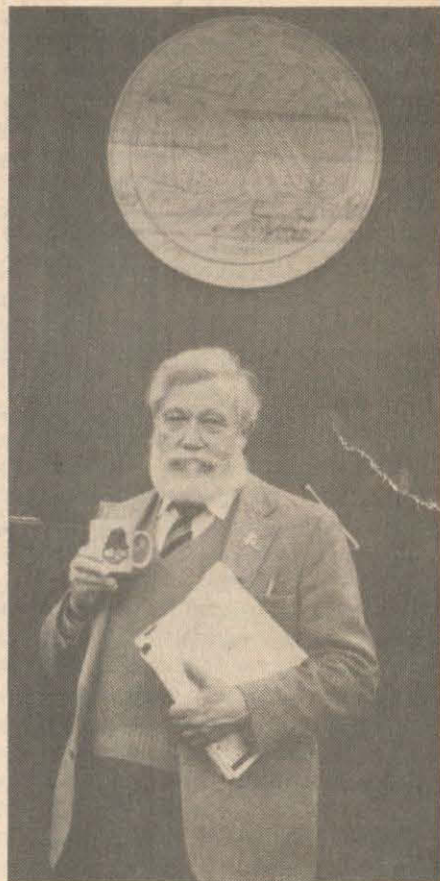
After graduating from high school, Niilo went to work in the Harlem warehouse of the Eastern Cooperative Wholesale, another socialist stronghold, while attending Cooper Union at night, all the time carrying on socialist political work. This included participating in anti-war and anti-weapons protests and in the anti-racist work of CORE (then a committee of the Fellowship of Reconciliation), where he first got to know Jim Farmer, organizer then of the Student League for Industrial Democracy.

In 1948, Niilo went to Finland to assist with refugee resettlement at a Quaker work camp in Finnish Karelia. While there, he met socialist youth leaders from Finland, Sweden, and Denmark and was also impressed with the dedication of the British Labour youth to their country's reconstruction.

When he returned home, he attended Central State College at Wilberforce, Ohio, becoming the first white graduate of that previously all-black institution.

The Cold War, McCarthyism, and local police "Red Squads" poisoned the political atmosphere in those days. In 1950, when Niilo was state organizer for the Socialist party in Pennsylvania, he was stopped by Philadelphia police for having a socialist bumper sticker on his car. And when "subversive literature," announcing a rally in Allentown to be addressed by Norman Thomas, was found in the car trunk, Niilo was hauled off to jail.

One YPSEL project in those years was "labor teams" in Flint, Michigan and Reading, Pennsylvania. Drawing on the Quakers' Interns in Industry and work camp experiences, groups of young socialists set up co-op housing units, found jobs in local industry, and carried on political



Niilo Koponen at the end of the Legislative session.

work in the local communities and unions. "Unfortunately," says Niilo, "our help was not enough to re-elect George Stumpf, the Socialist mayor of Reading."

Niilo knew Ernest Morgan since the 1946 YPSL Summer School, which was held at their home in Yellow Springs, Ohio. When he first went to Ohio after returning from Finland, he lived with them and was active in the Ohio Socialist party. Both there and in Pennsylvania he found groups of socialists and Quakers who had developed forms of "intentional communities" and other cooperative activities. That intensified his lifelong belief that socialism, as a movement, had to use three principal organizational tools -- political (electoral) action, industrial (union) action, and economic (cooperative) action, and to develop a distinct cooperative culture. Failing that, he insists, "we could only attack the problems of capitalism --

racism, war, injustice -- one by one. Successes were possible, but hard to consolidate."

By 1951, Niilo determined to move to Alaska, where he felt he could play a more effective individual role. Niilo's fiancée, Joan Dabney Forbes, agreed with the decision to homestead and in December they were married, receiving as wedding gifts items suitable for homesteading.

One last organizing project for the Socialist party remained: they toured the New England Mid-Atlantic states signing on "electors" to represent the party's presidential candidate on the 1952 ballot. Then off to Alaska in their truck, staying with socialist comrades, cooperators, and unions en route. In Canada, they stopped at Cooperative Commonwealth Federation (CCF) headquarters. (Saskatchewan had the first Socialist government in North America.)

They settled in Fairbanks, staying first with Antioch College alumni, and then in a cabin in the gold fields in a valley inhabited largely by elderly Finnish miners whose world view was informed by the *Industrialist*, a Finnish language International Workers of the World (IWW) paper.

Niilo went to work for a mining company as an electrician's helper, becoming active in the Fairbanks Mine Workers Union (IBEW Local 1550) and being elected vice-president and chief grievance man. While he was unable to revive a local Socialist party, he ran for the Territorial legislature in 1956 as Independent Labor, and in 1959 for Territorial Auditor on the Alaska party ticket.

In 1962 he went back to the East Coast for study at Harvard's Graduate School of Education and renewed acquaintance with Mike Harrington, who was on a speaking tour for his book *The Other America*. He took part in the March on Washington opposing the Vietnam War, developed school integration plans (Metco in Boston and Project Concern in Hartford, Connecticut), and was active in the Boston Socialist party.

Most of the decade of the 70s, Niilo spent on grass roots organizing efforts and lobbying for progressive causes. He helped organize Head Start and child care programs, food banks, interracial community groups, volunteer fire and emergency medical services, the crisis line telephone network, community garden and energy efficiency movements, and was active in the environmental movement.

During that period the Socialist party split and, by mail, Niilo became an early member of the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC.) Although he

had remained a dues-paying Socialist party member, he found little in the Socialist party press under the leadership that became Social Democrats USA that was "in any way relevant to the condition of people in Alaska." He recruited a few comrades from his community work to DSOC and so DSOC/Alaska was born. In visits to his parents in Oregon, he came to know both DSOC and New American Movement (NAM) members in that state and became an advocate for unity between the two groups. He and his wife have five children, all born and reared in Alaska.

Niilo ran as a Democrat for the state Legislature in 1980, and, despite the Reagan landslide, was declared elected on election eve by 200 votes. However, absentee ballots tipped the election to another Democrat. Two years later, after redistricting, Niilo ran against a Libertarian incumbent and was elected by a good margin. Since then, he has been reelected three times by increasing margins.

In 1975 Niilo attended the New Democratic Party (NDP) convention in Toronto along with a dozen other DSOC'ers and SP members, (my wife, Natalie and I were among them), and Niilo spent most of his time with the Yukon delegation, getting to know Tony Penikett, who is now in his second term as the leader of the democratic socialist government of the Yukon.

In his legislative work in Alaska, Niilo has found the inter-parliamentary visits with the Yukon and Northwest Territories legislatures particularly useful, affording opportunities to renew acquaintance with Tony Penikott and other NDP members. The Yukon and Alaska have a number of joint projects in tourism, transportation, fisheries, and education. Niilo has pushed a resolution "creating a nuclear-free zone in the arctic, sub-arctic, and the world," penalties for serious safety violations in the workplace, protecting patients by strengthening the Medical Board's peer review process, creating an Alaska Seismic Hazard Center, and a host of other issues.

Although electoral activity is very absorbing, there is still time for DSA and related activities. May Day and other opportunities for social events "keep us in contact with each other." Niilo looks forward to the development of a network of DSAers in state, local, and national electoral and political office so that they can benefit from their combined experiences and be more effective in their work for democracy and social justice. ●

Harry Fleischman, a member of DSA, wrote Norman Thomas: A Biography.

China

Continued from page 4.

resurfaced in recent weeks on the same streets and public squares where they were articulated two decades ago. The Cultural Revolution does not demonstrate that left politics in China were a sham without popular support or resonance, or a mere outburst of cult politics. It does promise to show us how a truly popular left politics can go awry. The left as well as the Chinese people need to look into this dark space and shine light on it.

This is important not merely as a matter of historical interest. The Cultural Revolution involved attempts to raise, theorize, and struggle with fundamental questions about the nature of state socialism: its class basis, economic system (including questions about ownership, distribution, and exploitation), politics (the nature and roles of the state, bureaucracy, the party, enterprise management, and worker participation), and culture (ideology and consciousness). Thoughtful, penetrating debate and measured, principled practice concerning these matters became impossible in the polemical and polarized politics of the day. Because of that failure, these essential issues of socialism have been ignored in the post-Maoist decade.

In the recent political movement in China (as well as other state socialist countries), there are glimmers of a less manichean approach to the transformation and transcendence of "actual socialism." Despite the Western media's equation of socialist reform with capitalism, it is very significant that the programs of Solidarity, of radical Soviet reformers, and of the Beijing students have not demanded capitalism. This is not just dissimulation: the Beijing students sang "The Internationale" repeatedly and without cynicism. Of course, so long as Deng Xiaoping and his cronies hold the reins of power (which for them are attached to little except the forces of coercion), the conditions for progress toward a more balanced and feasible socialism will be dim. But they cannot hang on for even a few hours after Deng's death, if they last that long. When China's civil society takes to the streets again, China's quest for socialism can begin anew. At that time, perhaps its Maoist and Dengist extremes can be evaluated, their positive elements retained and recombined, and new, more constructive ground can be broken. ●

Mark Blecher, a DSA member and professor of government at Oberlin College, wrote Micropolitics in Contemporary China.

REVIEWS

Social Policy: Conflicts and Solutions

By Jan Rosenberg

THE LIMITS OF SOCIAL POLICY by Nathan Glazer. Harvard University Press, 1988. 215 pages.

WITHIN OUR REACH: BREAKING THE CYCLE OF DISADVANTAGE by Lisbeth B. Schorr with Daniel Schorr. Doubleday, 1988. 398 pages.

In anticipation of the end of the Republican lock on the presidency last year, policy analysts published a round of new books. Two of the best were Lisbeth Schorr's *Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage* and Nathan Glazer's *The Limits of Social Policy*. Longstanding players with different positions on the policy field, both Schorr and Glazer meticulously reviewed numerous and often largely unknown policy experiments of the last two decades only to come to sharply different conclusions.

Schorr's book, written with her husband, the respected television newsman Daniel Schorr, has a simple, consistently argued thesis that can be summed up as follows: American social policies aimed at the severely disadvantaged can be and have been far more successful than is frequently recognized. If we just look hard and learn the lessons of the hundreds or probably thousands of successful programs around the country that have truly transformed the lives of poor children and their families, we will see that the "rotten outcomes" ensnaring so many poor children are avoidable. Drug and alcohol addiction, teen pregnancy, low birth weights, school drop out, child abuse, and extreme aggression have all been turned around in exemplary programs typically founded and led by extraordinary individuals.

Schorr tells the story, in her words, "of how our society can raise the chances that millions of ordinary children, growing up in circumstances that make them vulnerable, will develop into healthy and productive adults." In its simplest form, this means providing the full range of health services that allow poor children, like the rest of us, to literally see and hear what's going on around them. Various examples and anecdotes pile up to make the point, familiar to advocates for children and the poor since the sixties, that inadequate nutrition and health care are among the most preventable precursors of school failure and delinquency. Lead poisoning, iron deficiency, vision and hearing problems, and learning disabilities can be diagnosed, treated, and often prevented with continuous, preventative, and comprehensive care.

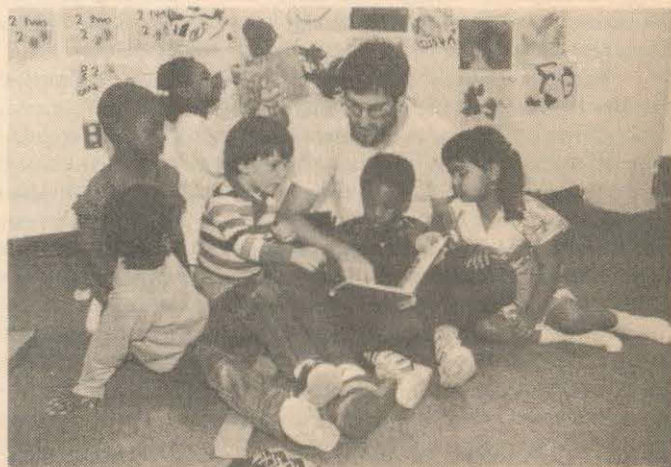
The book drives home the effects of these problems through heartbreaking accounts of emblematic children whose problems went undiagnosed and untreated. Kenny, a nine year old from Canton, Mississippi, was already "known" to be a total failure. His mother took him out of school rather than subject him to more insults from teachers and fellow students who thought he was too dumb to learn anything. It took five years for someone to discover his serious but correctable vision problem and get him the glasses

he needed. This child and the hundreds of thousands he represents suffered such deep and unnecessary humiliation that normal social and school development was no longer possible.

The subplot of this hefty volume is that high risk families need high intensity services -- well-funded, comprehensive services provided by concerned, caring professionals who know when to respect, and when to ignore, the boundaries erected by professional and bureaucratic norms. The social worker who put in an eighteen hour day helping an overwhelmed mother with long neglected housework is a case highlighted by Schorr. The programs Schorr defines as successful also involve people in defining and eventually taking charge of their own needs. Head Start receives high marks in part because it effectively involves the parents of poor children in running the program.

But Schorr's conclusions are too simplistic to be useful. The principles, I suspect, are the easiest part: deal with the family in its entirety; provide a wide array of integrated services; be there when people need you, not just 9-5, Monday through Friday; actively involve people in defining and meeting their own needs; and while doing all of this, do not create dependency. The real life superheroes that almost invariably run these programs are what can't be "replicated" from a central planning office. In nearly every program we visit we meet founders and directors who are so extraordinary, so dedicated to the work they're doing, and so in touch with their clients and the cultural milieu they come from, that they are able to overcome obstacles that would topple the rest of us. The paradox is simple but serious: the search for "first principles" that can be replicated turns up, over and over again, extraordinary people who actually make these programs work.

If Lisbeth Schorr's focus is on how to repair the "children of the shadows," Nathan Glazer's is on how to build on "what works," both literally and figuratively. For Glazer the fundamental problem of modern society is the breakdown of such traditional institutions as families, neighborhoods, ethnic and religious groups, and voluntary associations that are needed to preserve shared values as they buffer, anchor, and constrain individuals. His paradoxical corollary is that our well-meaning attempts to shore



Child care center in Boston.

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up these crumbling institutions with substitute policies and programs (particularly welfare, Glazer's quintessential social policy) only serve to further weaken them and intensify our social problems. Glazer sums up this simple, familiar theme with a surprisingly nimble, evocative passage:

"The work of the modern state is increasingly a work for social ends: for better housing, health, education, treatment of the handicapped: for the overcoming of poverty and distress. Yet the modern state reminds one, in the description of its critics, of a friendly but clumsy giant who, in his efforts to help, tramples delicate and sensitive growths."

Glazer scrutinizes the logic and informing values of welfare and leading welfare reform proposals to answer his basic question about social policy: "How do we prevent further erosion of the traditional constraints that still play the largest role in maintaining a civil society"? Any compelling answer, Glazer argues provocatively, must be rooted in the non-rational firmament of universal beliefs and values, what he calls "superstitions."

There are several broadly shared contemporary American values that he comes back to again and again: parental responsibility for childrearing, a commitment to work, and equal opportunity. Existing universal programs, like public education and social security, make sense because they reflect these universal values. Welfare, on the other hand, continues to be a thorn in so many sides, in part, because it undermines and contradicts these values.

Glazer's most important policy proposals concern restructuring work, not welfare. He recognizes the inequality of work that pays so little it doesn't allow people to support themselves and their children. Low-wage work should be upgraded by attaching health insurance or medicaid, vacation, and pensions universally to jobs. Reforms like these would reinforce, not undermine, the incentive to work and would also enhance parents' sense of responsibility and ability to care for their children. Glazer's emphasis is on strengthening families and other mediating insti-

tutions for all of "us" rather than on creating separate, "targeted" programs for "them." Social equality requires that the equation be balanced.

This unlikely but necessary beginning draws on critiques of excess rationalism and individualism in support of liberty and opposition to statism. And nowhere is this more important and more difficult than in America, which is marked by a unique combination of federalism, ethnic, race, and religious diversity, individualism, and free-market ideology.

The many programs and policies central to Lisbeth Schorr's considerations escape Nathan Glazer's interest and attention. Programs for parenting and pregnant teens, drop out prevention programs, even education and work training programs, can at best only represent partial, after-the-fact attempts to patch society back together. And they may even erode the social institutions they are supposed to shore up. Nathan Glazer's real interest is in strengthening families and other mediating institutions that constitute the fine structure of any decent society.

For partisan political reasons, Lisbeth Schorr and Nathan Glazer are placed in opposing camps. In the real world of American social problems and policies, however, their arguments should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Schorr's approach, while tempting in a time of budget deficits, is likely to further marginalize the very poor and vulnerable and deepen the growing gulf between "them" and "us." While no one would dispute the desperate need for the programs she describes, social policy should tilt toward common, widely shared and values. Upgrading low-wage work through such programs as the Earned Income Tax Credit, exemplify this approach. Ultimately, social policy for the 90s will have to draw on both streams of interpretation. ●

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