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# DEMOCRATIC Left

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DSA Celebrates Ten Years  
Joseph Schwartz Reports Inside

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## EDITORIAL

# A COMMON FUTURE?

BY JACK CLARK

SERBS and Croats fighting in the streets provide us with the most graphic image of nationalist fervor, but the strength of nationalism is not confined to the former Yugoslavia.

A mythical United States of America once was isolated from such turmoil, oceans away from the conflicts of the Old World. In this century, isolationism has not meant insularity. As we hear Patrick Buchanan's cries of "American First," once again, it is well to recall that the original America Firsters were anything but isolated from the conflicts of the Old World. German, Italian and Irish Americans, suspicious of the Anglophile bias of the Eastern Establishment, formed much of the base of the America First movement. The leadership was an unstable mixture of genuine anti-war radicals, like Norman Thomas, and open Nazi sympathizers, like Charles Lindbergh. It seems safe to guess that Buchanan is not summoning the spirit of Norman Thomas in his America First appeals.

Unfortunately, Buchanan, despite -- or perhaps because of -- his unsavory blend of racism, anti-Semitism and bashing of the poor, is min-

ing a rich vein. A popular, sometimes even populist, sensibility argues that it's time to put our own needs first, to step back from the rest of the world.

American socialists would be foolish and insensitive to ignore the real grievances U.S. workers have about policies that have often traded their jobs for grand geopolitical designs. Still, we understand that America First is not an option in the world of the 1990s. For more than a century, socialists have known that our movement stood for internationalism or we failed. Repeatedly, we failed.

Perhaps socialism has a second chance. Socialist internationalism seems a faint and distant beacon, but three transnational campaigns offer some hope for our common future: the anti-apartheid movement; the Nestle boycott; and the worldwide labor campaign to free Guatemalan unionists from death squad terror. Nelson Mandela was freed in large part because of worldwide pressure brought to bear against the South African government. The Nestle company has signed protocols on the distribution of infant formula in the Third World because of an international boycott. Coca Cola restrained the murderous impulses of its Guatemalan franchise when the International Union of Food and Allied Workers Associations organized to halt the distribution of Coke.

In none of these cases is victory complete; Mandela still lives in a society riled by racism; the Guatemalan unionists do not enjoy freedom of

association, and Nestle continues to promote infant formula with deadly consequences.

Yet, all three represented an outpouring of organized outrage across national borders. Socialists were involved in all three campaigns, but none of them were formally led by socialist parties. Religious leaders, consumers, students and trade unionists came together and stayed together to promote greater human decency and solidarity.

On those values of human decency and solidarity rest socialism's second chance. Translating values into politics is often problematic, but American socialists can begin by opposing loudly and clearly the twice tainted slogan of America First. **DL**

Jack Clark is a member of DSA's National Political Committee.

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# Following the Money

## Where Does Your Advertising Dollar Go?

BY TODD GITLIN

**W**hy should it be news that advertisers exert pressure on journalists and their managers, or that the managers, and even the journalists, often enough succumb?

One might have thought these two propositions self-evident. We live in a business civilization, after all -- indeed at a particular moment when business prerogatives are riding high and opposing values scrambling to stay alive. The law in its majesty is inclined to protect the privileges of money. Predictably, the Supreme Court recently ruled that businesses can prevent unions from leaving handbills on cars parked in the company lot. So why should journalism be exempt from the successful pressures, actual and anticipated, of its proprietors? Suppliers of subsidies are far from omnipotent, but neither are they negligible in the practices of law firms, drug companies, medical practices, or, for that matter, universities. Then why should journalism, of all the professions, be different? If journalists didn't at times bend their interests toward those of their sponsors, they would be the only professionals that didn't bend because of the preferences of the people who pay their bills.

### *Public Suspicion*

And yet, accounts of such influence come as a surprise, even a shock, to many a reader. In recent years, much of the educated public has left behind its former suspicions that the press, which has achieved something of a sacred standing in American lore, is profaned by its system of support. Even as general public confidence in the media declines, we find it replaced less by a profound and complex suspicion of the press's choice of investigable subjects and more of a

swing toward simple-minded charges.

Instead of inquiring into the many limits on content imposed by commercial financing, one encounters, for example, a simplistic suspicion of NBC's news now that the company is owned by General Electric -- as if the framing of issues had changed flagrantly from the epoch of the prior owner, the Radio Corporation of America, with its own vast military contracts; as if, for that matter, NBC's news judgments were drastically different from CBS's or ABC's. Instead of concentrating on the manifold dependencies of the media on their advertisers, we hear a folk paranoia about subliminal advertising -- the letters "S-E-X" ostensibly hidden among ice cubes, as if the collective unconscious were literal-minded and the images in the ads needed the magic letters to promote the association of their products with sexual prowess.

From the First Amendment forward, American ideas about the press have been shaped by the colonial experience and the Enlightenment faith of the Revolutionary period. The presumption was that the enemy of free expression was the State. The Amendment figures as part of a charter for popular rights against government, after all. It lays its restraining hand on the state: "Congress shall make no law . . . ." The metaphorical foundation of the First Amendment is utterly clear. Here stands the font of information and truth: The Press. There stands the government. To do its democratic work, the public requires a free press -- requires, in turn, that the government stand back and let the press do its work. The image that comes to mind -- the image that came to mind at the time -- was John Peter Zenger, the lone, brave, sturdy printer up against the king's brute force. The First Amendment

says: Free John Peter Zenger to tell the truth!

On that foundation, journalists since the eighteenth century have laid claim to their right to proceed unencumbered. And on that same foundation, the public has granted them their rights to do so -- although, from time to time, large publics have advocated restricting those rights, as during the Gulf War, for example, when polls suggested that most Americans welcomed military censorship. Still, the normal state of opinion is that the press ought to regulate itself. Since the press whose freedom is apparently guaranteed is seen in the image of the heroic lone Zenger, freedom of the press is taken to belong to the proprietors of presses. The rights are taken to adhere to the producers, not the employees or consumers. Thus, the anomaly that in 1974, a Florida law guaranteeing a right of reply to critical articles was ruled unconstitutional.

### *Start Your Own Press*

Freedom in the United States, then, has been understood, traditionally and legally, to mean freedom from the State. It is, then, in the law as conventionally understood, not an inalienable right of journalists but a property right of employers. And if advertisers, the financiers of their employers, infringe upon journalists' rights -- why then, there is no recourse but to start your own press. "That," goes the industry's cynical wisdom, "is the price we pay for living in a free society." That is not only the law but, alas, the common sense of a disabused public. For the public also has its suspicions about pipers, payment, and tunes. With the other half of its understanding, the public has an uneasy knowledge that after John Peter Zenger came the Pulitzers, the Hearsts, and the bottom-line fanatics of Network, Broadcast News, and WKRP in Cincinnati. Popular imagination had little trouble imagining the cigar-chomping tycoon telling reporters what and what not to say. But the MBAs and the advertisers are out of sight.

As support for the press has, overall, declined in recent years, many critics have blasted away against ideological allegiances and blind-spots. The ideal of objectivity, much honored in the breach, paradoxically remains the standard by which journalism is judged -- as if an unbiased view were possible. But the ideal of objectivity still rules the roost. Obviously it gets a good press -- and not only for cynical reasons. However much honored in the breach, it has served many journalists as a wall against the most blatant and brutal demands of established power. It has insulated them, if not well enough, against

their time-honored enemy, The State. And yet too often there has been an undeserved and unthinking leap from the value assigned to the ideal of objectivity to the assumption that it is ordinarily achieved by what journalists do every day in their furtherance of what they deem professional duties. And this leaves out of the account the many unthinking premises of journalism -- for example, that news concerns the late-breaking scandal, as of a drug bust, not the incessantly scandalous condition, say, that of death by smoking.

In trying to understand why the media are frequently herdlike, shallow, and obsequious, there are good reasons to stalk larger, more difficult game rather than simply to -- in the immortal words of Hal Holbrook's *Deep Throat* in the movie *All the President's Men* -- "follow the money." First, the follow-the-money style of argument was exaggerated in earlier years, and in reaction, scholars have preferred more complicated models. Properly, they have emphasized the ways in which the system of finance through advertising limits the content of news and entertainment principally by skewing it toward the most prized demographics -- and thus a murder or rape on Park Avenue rates generally vastly more coverage than one in the Bronx. Next to this class skew -- a skew one would also find in state-financed news systems like the British -- it may seem petty to trace crucial news judgments to the interventions of particular advertisers. Follow-the-money seems vulgar. It is vulgar, but that doesn't make it wrong (or necessarily right). More important, it is intrinsically harder to demonstrate influence than the lack of influence, especially when the possible principals are so unwilling to give evidence.

### *The Smoking Gun*

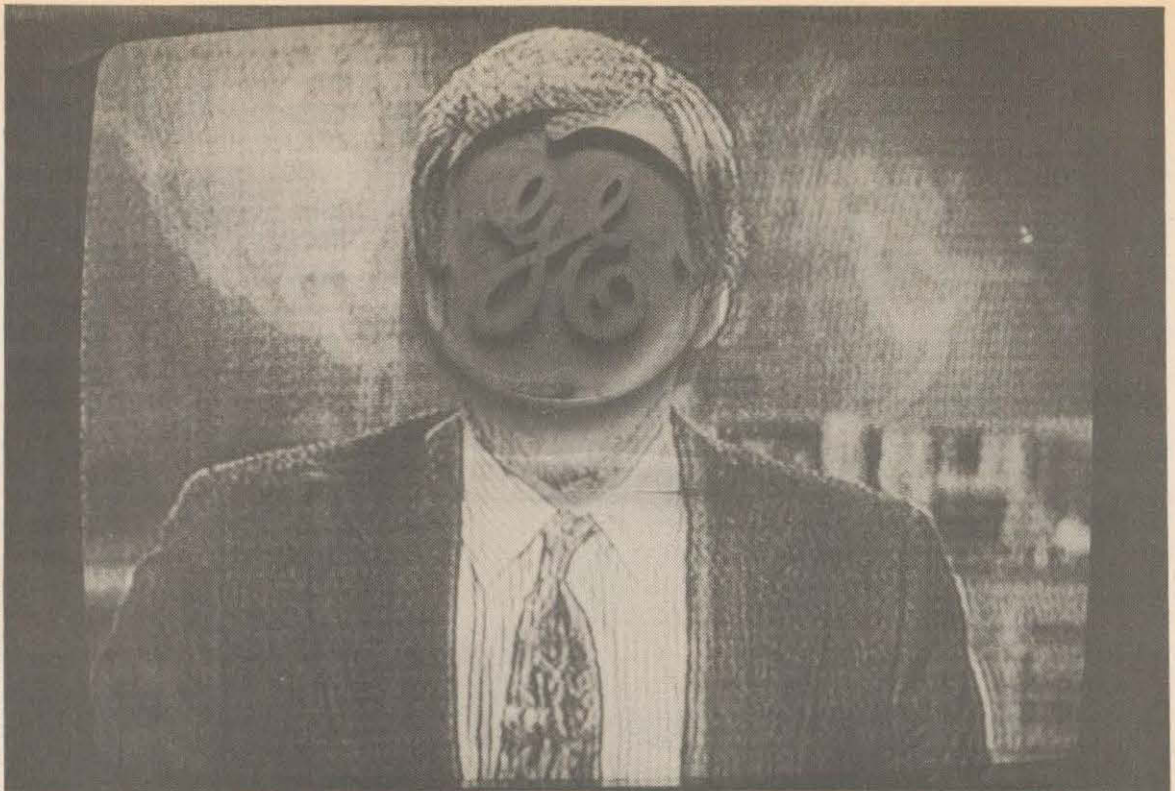
We do have testimony cited in a new report from the Center for the Study of Commercialism by Ron Collins: reporters are, perhaps increasingly, fearful of being caught stepping out of line. If these accounts were not enough, we have the story in the report of a *New England Journal of Medicine* article offering statistical evidence of a strong correlation between the amount of cigarette advertising in a magazine and the likelihood that it will carry an article on the dangers of smoking. Writes *New York Times* reporter, Deirdre Carmody: "Asked yesterday about the influence of cigarette advertisers, Helen Gurley Brown, editor of *Cosmopolitan*, replied: 'It's a subject I can't discuss. Absolutely no. Not one word.'"

Yes, much of the evidence is not surprisingly, "anecdotal." But anecdotal evidence ought

*This article was adapted from the foreword to a report recently issued by the Center for the Study of Commercialism, a non-profit public-interest group in Washington DC. The report, by Ronald Collins, is titled, "Dictating Content: How Advertising Pressure Can Corrupt a Free Press."*

Instead of inquiries into the many limits on content imposed by commercial financing, one encounters a simplistic suspicion of NBC's news now that the company is owned by General Electric.

Kathleen Foster/Impact Visuals



to be followed up, not dismissed. Many anecdotes clump into a pattern. They may not add up to the only pattern -- presumably we could also find cases of journals and journalists virtually free from advertising pressure -- but the pattern Collins's report discerns is bad enough. Smoke pouring out of the wings is a good reason to investigate backstage for a fire.

After all, the standard for journalistic freedom and responsibility ought not to be the vastly worse conditions under Communism or fascism. Are we really to rest satisfied that the American press is spunkier, toothier, less predictable, than *Pravda* used to be? We are entitled to indignation even if the direct attribution of pressure to a particular advertiser is scanty. We have gotten altogether too accustomed to the need for a "smoking gun" when trying to trace the chains of malfeasance. One can become so preoccupied with the search for smoking guns that one overlooks the evidence that corpses are piled on the ground.

There is plenty of room, and need, for more research. The subject of direct censorship is straightforward, but an equally important subject is that of advertiser enticement. We need, for example, a good account of the part in shaping content played by commercial sponsors on public television and radio. One prominent National Public Radio reporter has complained to me that the news agenda of that most impressive of broadcast services is being shaped, and limited, by

fund sources. None of NPR's funders, he points out, has been especially interested in underwriting coverage of hunger and infant mortality in the inner cities, for example.

Journalists may properly ask what system of finance would be preferable to the predominance of the big bucks. Instead of thinking the question answered merely by asking it, Americans should pay more attention to systems of public regulation where private media financing is severed from control (like Britain's Channel 4) or bolstered by State grants (as in Sweden's newspaper subsidy). Lingering skepticism about alternatives -- in part, the fruit of the Cold War and the market boosterism that has outlasted it -- should not be permitted to defeat the inquiry, and the action, before they start. Journalists who draw ethical lines and accordingly run risks deserve active public support. Whistle-blowers need protection. Even if much of journalism is still less constrained by advertisers than by patterns of deference and fatuous ideas about how to flatter an audience, the full flood of scrutiny needs to be turned on the high and mighty offenders. Eternal vigilance against all sponsors, public or "private," means just that -- eternal and vigilance. DL

*Todd Gitlin, professor of sociology at the University of California, Berkeley, is the author of The Whole World is Watching and Inside Prime Time, among other books, and he is a member of DSA.*

# Reading Between the Lies

## Deciphering Press Coverage of South Africa

BY DOROTHEE BENZ

*"Reality has nothing to do with it."--Gloria Steinem*

**H**ere's a quick quiz to help assess your knowledge of current events in South Africa.

1. True or false -- Most apartheid laws were lifted in 1991.

2. True or false -- More people were killed in South Africa in the two years since opposition organizations were unbanned than in the two years before they were unbanned.

The answers are (1) false and (2) true. If you got them wrong, chances are you've been reading the *New York Times*. If you're tempted to switch your subscription to any of the other major dailies, not to worry, you would have flunked anyway. And if you're relying on television for your information, you probably drew a blank on both questions.

Question 1. A June 21, 1991, *Times* article alleged that the South African Parliament was "scrapping the last legal pillar of apartheid." Yet despite the repeal of several laws last year, at least twenty-two racial laws and hundreds of by-laws and provincial ordinances remain on the books. These include the statute creating the segregated tricameral parliament, which excludes blacks, and the electoral law that denies the vote to the country's African majority. The repeal of the Population Registration Act in 1991, which was heralded by the *Times* and others, applies only to those born after January 1990. In addition, security legislation remains almost

entirely intact, and has been used to declare over fifty townships "unrest areas," local states of emergency, since the national state of emergency was lifted in 1990. Detentions without charge continue, as do political trials.

Question 2. More than 5,000 people have been killed by political violence in South Africa since February 1990 when the African National Congress (ANC) and other anti-apartheid groups were unbanned. That's 3,000 more deaths than were reported during the two years before legalization of the ANC. Burned offices, assassinated leaders, fear, and chaos have taken a devastating and immeasurable toll on democratic organizing. In fact, opposition groups have stated that they now feel that in many ways there was greater freedom of political activity in South Africa before February 1990 than there is today.

Reality notwithstanding, the U.S. press seems to have made up its mind that the deKlerk regime is bringing apartheid to a quick end. "South Africa Moves to Scrap Apartheid," declared a *Times* headline on February 2, 1991, when President deKlerk announced his intention to have several apartheid laws repealed. The theme since Mandela's release has been the 'new' South Africa; so much so, in fact, that the *Times* felt compelled to use the same headline several times last year. "South Africa: New Reality," it proclaimed on July 8 and again on December 23, 1991.

Of all the gaps and distortions in press coverage, the most misleading and harmful one has been the portrayal of violence. The violence is sponsored and orchestrated by the government, and is clearly aimed at destabilizing the country, terrorizing the population, and weakening the opposition. International indifference, fueled by the perpetuation of the myth of "black-on-black" violence, has allowed the situation to escalate and become endemic. Wholesale attacks, in which gunmen open fire in shops and township streets or slash and hack train commuters, complement targeted assassinations of activists and their families. The perpetrators include trained hit squads, large vigilante groups, white attackers and elements of the police (SAP) and security forces (SADF).

A large part of the violence involves the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) and its leader, Chief Mangosuthu Gatsha Buthelezi. Since 1987,

Buthelezi's campaign of terror, assault, and murder against the anti-apartheid movement has served as a substitute for legitimate political influence. The *Southern Africa Report* called it an effort "to bully his way to the centre of the negotiations table." For years, the U.S. press referred to Buthelezi as an anti-apartheid leader and characterized Inkatha as a "rival" of the ANC, and even as "a kindred anti-apartheid organization."

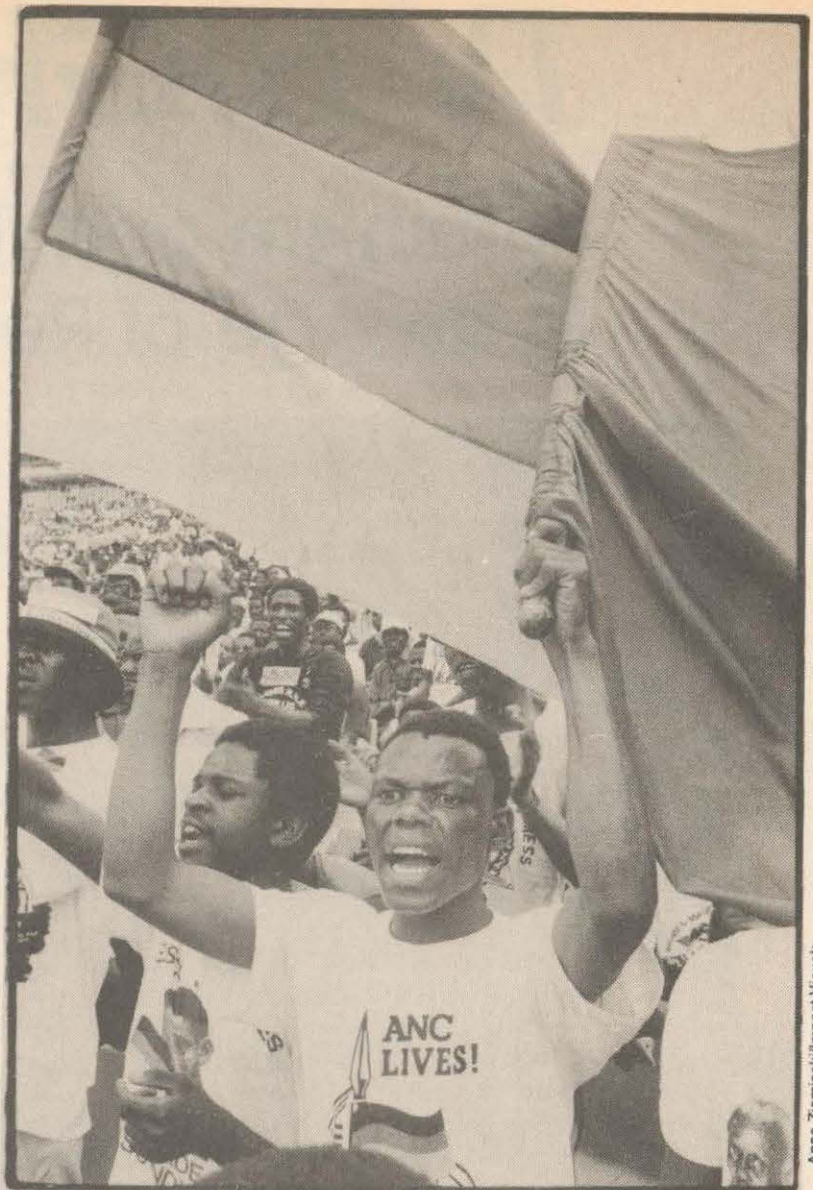
In fact, far from being an anti-apartheid leader, Buthelezi is -- literally -- an apartheid official. He has been the Chief Minister of the Kwazulu bantustan since 1970. As a bantustan leader, he receives 75 percent of his budget from the Pretoria government (about \$700 million a year). Moreover, his political fate is dependent on the preservation of the apartheid bantustan system. Apart from that, his record speaks for itself: years of disrupting anti-apartheid meetings and opposition to sanctions, local boycotts, and an elected constituent assembly.

The violence is most often described by the U.S. press as "ethnic" and "factional." The *Washington Post* described "bloody tribal battles" between Zulus and Xhosas. "Ethnic fighting threatens the country's fragile peace process," the *Los Angeles Times* remarked on August 16, 1990.

In reality, the conflict originated as a political struggle for power. In Natal, the historical base of Zulus, most of Inkatha's victims have been Zulus. In the townships, the Inkatha attacks happen to be aimed at mostly Xhosas because Xhosas are the country's second largest ethnic group. To describe this as a tribal conflict not only misses the point, but plays into the apartheid government's efforts to provoke and exacerbate divisions within the country. Just below the surface in some reports is an unmistakable appeal to the prejudice that Africans cannot rule themselves and will always be primitive tribal warriors.

In July 1991, it was revealed that the IFP and the Inkatha-affiliated labor organization, UWUSA, had been given substantial funding by the apartheid government, and that the SADF was involved in the train massacres. A *New York Newsday* editorial on July 25, 1991, said, "The news that South Africa's government made substantial payoffs to enemies of the African National Congress was a surprise." It added, "but maybe it shouldn't have been."

Indeed. Evidence of government sponsorship was available for two years before the "Inkathagate" scandal. Organizations like the Independent Board of Inquiry into Informal



Anna Zieminski/Impact Visuals

Political Repression (originally set up by the South African Council of Churches) and the South African Human Rights Commission, the country's most respected monitoring agency, have documented hundreds of eyewitness accounts confirming police and military support of Inkatha. On a trip to South Africa in February 1991, Mike Fleshman from the American Committee on Africa asked both organizations when the last time was that a U.S. press correspondent had contacted them. He was stunned to hear that they had never been contacted.

Incredibly, Buthelezi continues to be treated by the *Times* as a legitimate political leader in South Africa, and Inkatha is still referred to as an ANC rival and anti-apartheid organization. On August 3, 1991, just two weeks after the government slush fund was revealed, the *Times* de-

*continued on page 18*

**Opposition groups have said there was greater freedom of political activity in South Africa prior to the unbanning of the ANC.**

# TV HIGHLIGHTS

## Feminism and the Media in an Age of Reaction

BY ELAYNE RAPPING

**B**ack in the sixties, when we second-wave feminists began revving up our motors for the war against sexism, one of our most obvious targets was the media. In those innocent days, before "gender representation" replaced "images of women;" before media theory became an academic discipline; before women's studies became -- in the nightmares of the right -- a threat to western civilization; we had a fairly simplistic, but powerful idea. We believed that if we could just replace the almost exclusively "negative role models" of women in movies, television and advertising -- the airheads, bitches, hausfraus and sex kittens -- with "positive" alternatives, we would go a long way toward destabilizing the ideological foundations of sexism.

Naïve and starry-eyed as we were in those heady days, when songs about revolution made the Top Forty and no one had yet teased out the myriad ways in which the media might thwart and outsmart us, we were nonetheless onto something. The media do obviously, have enormous powers of persuasion. And, less obviously perhaps, they do, in significant ways, respond to public opinion and political pressure.

In fact, I would argue -- at the risk of appearing mildly deranged in these dark political days -- that one of the few truly heartening phenomena of the last decade or two has been the enormous effect of feminist thinking on the mass media, especially television. In fact, I believe if we look closely at what's really on television -- especially 'women's' television -- and analyze it historically, the whole backlash phenomenon may look a little less ominous.

There's no doubt that, in the legal and economic arenas, things look very bad indeed. Case by case, census figure by census figure, we are losing ground and hurting badly. Abortion rights are slipping away, feminization of poverty

is on the rise, sexual and domestic violence seem to be increasing, affirmative action and women's studies are under siege.

But that's just one side of things. The very term backlash implies that there is a battle going on, a pitched battle in which those on the right are exerting enormous energy and resources in an effort to dislodge an enemy which they take very seriously indeed. And that enemy is feminism which, in the last twenty years, has unquestionably and profoundly altered the way in which gender relations and values are understood and discussed in this country. And the proof of that is nowhere more dramatic than on television.

One reason it's so easy to trash television is that we have forgotten what things were like before the sixties. More and more of us, of course, aren't even old enough to remember. And, because of feminism, our expectations and demands have grown from zero to infinity. But I'm old enough to be vividly aware of why the old men at the top are in such a panic about the power of feminism. And, after twenty years of monitoring, writing and teaching about media, I believe they are right to be apoplectic. We are gaining on them.

Take the issue of sexual violence, to use just one very dramatic example. Every time *Gone With the Wind* runs on television, I'm shocked to recall how firmly, and how recently, the idea of forced sex as a romantic courting style was entrenched in popular consciousness. Remember when Rhett carried Scarlett upstairs kicking and screaming? Remember her contented purr the next morning? That was rape, girls. In fact, it was only about ten years ago that the hottest couple on daytime TV -- Luke and Laura of *General Hospital* -- acted out the same demented scenario with virtually no public outrage. In fact, even ten years ago, it would have been inconceivable for two movies like *The Accused* and *Thelma & Louise*



to be made and distributed in mainstream America. The political concept on which they were founded -- acquaintance rape -- simply was not understood back then. It is now though -- because of feminism.

And what is still mostly tokenism in film, (where serious themes of any kind have become rarities) is everyday stuff on TV today, especially daytime. In fact, I cannot imagine a current daytime soap opera even considering a "Luke and Laura" storyline. A mere few years of consciousness-raising through national media by feminists and television's representation of sexuality has been transformed. On at least two soap storylines I know of in the last two or three years -- *Santa Barbara* and *All My Children* -- date rape cases were presented from a decidedly feminist viewpoint. In both, the women had checkered pasts, the men were (realistically) acquitted and then -- amazingly -- they saw the error of their ways and confessed. One even began volunteering at a rape crisis center. And this was long before the Thomas hearings or the Kennedy trial.

I could go on endlessly with such examples, from soaps, TV movies, and prime time sitcoms and dramas. I could also remind everyone of June Cleaver endlessly tearing her lettuce into her Pyrex bowl, of Lucille Ball howling "Oooh, Ri-i-i-icky!" and collapsing in hysterics, of the Andersons steering "Princess" and "Kitten" away from football and chemistry and into pink organdy prom dresses, week after depressing

week. We put an end to all of that too. Ask Roseanne.

No, we haven't made a feminist revolution. Lesbians are rare on TV; poor and minority women and especially, women "of age," are marginal. But we are in the game and we have more chips than we started with. And make no mistake about it, these changes are political victories for which feminists can claim credit. Procter & Gamble, who pays the bills for so much television programming, has marketing researchers telling it every day that women -- who

*continued page 20*



Ten years ago movies like *Thelma & Louise* and *The Accused* would have been inconceivable.



# Constructing the Candidates

## *Have the Media Already Picked the Next President?*

BY JO-ANN MORT



**M**onths before any voting took place, legions of reporters and commentators were declaring the outcome. Mark Shields, syndicated *Washington Post* columnist and commentator for PBS's "MacNeil-Lehrer News Hour," said it best when he remarked that the voters merely interfered with the pundits' predictions once the voting actually began.

Shields -- and his partner in commentary on MacNeil-Lehrer, David Gergen -- provide among the most insightful news coverage on national TV. Yet, in many ways, this brighter-than-average media pair exemplify what's wrong with media coverage of the '92 campaign.

Mark Shields, a liberal Democrat, and David Gergen, former communications director for the Reagan White House and now an editor at *U.S. News & World Report*, are consummate Washington insiders. Gergen, though a Republican media strategist, showed an early weakness for Democratic candidate and Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton. He admitted on national TV that Bill and Hillary Clinton were old friends of his and thus joined the long list of reporters and media commentators who fall into the social circle of the enterprising couple. It is this insider reporting that

is insulating most of the coverage from average voters in the rest of the country.

Pauline Kael once noted that one of the reasons Woody Allen received such favorable reviews from movie critics is that critics saw Allen's characters as mirror-images of themselves. They identified with the upscale, neurotic, literate Manhattanites whom Allen brought to the screen and were therefore unable to distance themselves when critiquing Allen's films.

Similarly, the media feels comfortable with Bill and Hillary Clinton. Many of them share a generational similarity as baby-boomer children of the sixties. The Clinton campaign's advisers cast a wide net across the liberal-left political spectrum, enveloping many reporters. And, like the rest of the nation, the press is ready for a change, after covering more than a decade of Republican leadership.

### **Tabloid Wars**

Andy Kopkind, writing in *The Nation*, remarked that several national reporters were practically providing the "spin" for Clinton, even before the campaign did. These anxious reporters did no favor for Clinton, anointing him the frontrunner before one vote was cast. Then,

as swiftly as they built up Clinton, reporters tore him down, forcing him to run against his frontrunner status after allegations about his personal life showed up in a supermarket tabloid.

Ironically, the same press corps that had declared Clinton the frontrunner and whom the Clintons had befriended, pounced on the allegations of a paid-for character witness. ABC News' "Nightline" led the pack, reporting the allegations while pointing out that Gennifer Flowers had been paid in the triple digits by the *Star*. CNN ran the entire Flowers press conference. The alleged taped conversations between Flowers and Clinton were played on TV, even though the *Star's* lawyers wouldn't allow independent verification.

While newspapers like the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times* tried to downplay the scandal, the Clinton-Flowers allegations occurred in the midst of a fierce tabloid war in New York City, where *Newsday*, the *Daily News*, and the *New York Post* kept the story alive to sell papers. These allegations so weakened Clinton that when the *Wall Street Journal* broke the story about his draft record, he was perceived as a wounded candidate.

### *Falling By the Wayside*

While Bill Clinton was on "60 Minutes" and "Nightline" defending his character, the other Democratic candidates were being sidelined. Tom Harkin was deemed the candidate of "big labor" by the *New York Times* (the same newspaper who claimed that the loss of membership of "big" labor cost unions a labor beat at the paper). The headline, of course, insinuates that "big" labor was trying to shove its candidate down the voters' throats. Never mind that, in fact, organized labor's ranks were split between Harkin and Clinton. And, never mind, that the press' dismissal of Harkin as the end of the line for old time liberalism didn't adequately investigate whether the failure of the Harkin campaign was the message or the organization. Were Cuomo to have entered the race, for example, he would probably have been labeled an immediate "frontrunner" by the press, and would have run with strong labor backing and a "New Deal" message similar to Harkin's.

Immediately after the New Hampshire primary, the media trotted out their new front-runner -- Paul Tsongas. Never mind that fewer Democrats voted for him than live in any neighborhood in Brooklyn. Almost no African Americans. No Latinos. No urbanites. New Hampshire -- a conservative Republican state -- is about as unrepresentative a state as there could be for

the first Democratic primary.

And what about the Republicans? Just nights after Pat Buchanan stunned the nation with his showing in New Hampshire, reporters on at least two inside-the-beltway TV shows admitted that one reason the press hadn't gone after Buchanan for his extremist political viewpoints was because the press likes a fight and Buchanan was challenging George Bush to a duel. (An exception to this was *Washington Post* reporter, E.J. Dionne, who wrote a brutally frank analysis of Buchanan immediately following the New Hampshire primary.)

### *Reconsidering Character*

In 1988, a scandal-weary press corps ended that campaign wondering how presidential campaigns could be run without being embroiled in the private lives of political candidates. The press is attempting to come out from

*The narrowness of American politics is painfully visible.*

under campaigns based on photo opportunities and sound bites. To that end, the TV networks have pooled their resources and agreed on a number of broadcast debates where candidates can attempt to debate the issues. This is a positive response to an unseemly process. Yet, the media needs to reconsider the "character" issue. Is character about politicians' relationships to their spouses, or about a president, for example, who has changed his beliefs on everything from abortion to taxes?

The March issue of *Mirabella* magazine includes an excerpt from a new biography of Eleanor Roosevelt by historian Blanche Weisen Cooke, revealing the "arrangement" struck between FDR and his wife, including his womanizing and her long-term affair with a female reporter. God forbid, were FDR to run for president today!

The narrowness of American politics is painfully visible in this campaign. As Buchanan pushes Bush to the right and Tsongas runs as a Rockefeller Republican in the Democratic primary, the nation slips further and further away from a viable vision of the future. The voters are offered an ever-shrinking spectrum of political discourse. DL

*Jo-Ann Mort is a member of the DSA National Political Committee and the Dissent editorial board.*

# ON THE LEFT



by Harry Fleischman

## ALASKA

Juneau DSA held a February 19 meeting on the Canadian experience, recent U.S. government reports, and why only South Africa and the U.S. among industrialized countries do not have a national health care system. DSAer Niilo Koponen, a five-term State Representative, reports that efforts are under way to create an Alaska DSA Youth Section within the next month.

## CALIFORNIA

Trish Bailey of Pasadena has been hired as DSA Southern California organizer. She hails from New Jersey, where she did considerable grassroots organizing in SANE/Freeze and Women in Engineering Program Advocates Network.

Eloise Klein Healy, chair of Women's Studies at CSUN, discussed "The Current Moment in Homosexualities" at Valley DSA's February meeting.

Los Angeles DSA, on February 23, celebrated DSA'er Ben Dobbs' 80th birthday and his struggle for democratic socialism and a better life for all Americans.

San Diego DSA held a well-attended forum in February on "Political Correctness, Multiculturalism and the Left."

Cuauhtemoc Cardenas, president of Mexico's Partido de la Revolucion Democratica and 1988 presidential candidate, spoke to Sacramento DSA about organizing international opposition to free trade.

Sacramento DSA Latino Commission activists are organizing against proposed state budget cuts targeted at immigrants. DSA'er Jack Henning, executive secretary of the California Labor Federation, joined other DSA'ers in testifying before state hearings on single-payer state health care reform.

## DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

DC/MD/NoVA DSA has initiated a campaign to urge the DC City Council to pass a resolution in favor of establishing a national single-payer health care system. They are also working with Baltimore DSA to push a bill in Maryland's General Assembly to establish a single-payer health care system for the state. Tim Sears spoke on "Labor in the New Europe" at DSA's February meeting, reporting on his recent travels in the formerly communist East European states. DSA members joined striking hotel workers picketing at the Jefferson Hotel. A celebration of DSAer Victor Reuther's 80th birthday was held in February at the Cannon House Office Building.

## ILLINOIS

Chicago DSA held two successful new members' meetings. They have also put together a local DSA Health Care Task Force.

University of Chicago DSA sponsored a forum with Heather Booth and Jackie Grimshaw.

## INDIANA

Indiana DSA is currently working to establish DSA locals and youth section chapters in Lafayette, Indianapolis, South Bend and Bloomington. DSA'ers there are working on health care reform and labor solidarity. At the Indiana DSA movie series, they recently screened *Roger & Me*.

## KENTUCKY

Central Kentucky DSA'ers marched in the Martin Luther King parade and program January 20. Kathy Blee, University of Kentucky sociologist and author of *Women of the Klan: Racism and Gender in the 1920s*, spoke to CKDSA on "The Rise of the Radical Right." The local also held a screening of the video *Who Killed Martin Luther King?*

## MARYLAND

Baltimore DSA worked to get out the vote for Tom Harkin and is organizing for single-payer health care in Maryland and nationwide.

## MASSACHUSETTS

The *Yankee Radical*, newsletter of Boston DSA, reports that Boston DSA's pledge objective has already passed the 1991 objective, amassing more than \$3,350. The Boston DSA Religion and Socialism Commission's January forum featured Father Edward Boyle, executive secretary of the Labor Guild of the Boston Archdiocese, speaking on religion and organized labor. Boston DSA's February forum heard Carl Oglesby, journalist and activist, speak on "Who Killed President Kennedy?" Also included was a report by Judy Deutsch of last December's meeting of the International League for Religious Socialism's representative assembly.

## MINNESOTA

The *Fist & Rose*, newsletter of Twin Cities DSA, reviews *Which Side Are You On? Trying to Be For Labor When It's Flat on Its Back* by Thomas Geoghegan, and *Reflections of an Affirmative Action Baby* by Stephen Carter. The DSA local heard Charles Viebahn, chair of Up and Out of Poverty NOW.

## Youth Section Activists Meet in NYC

### MISSOURI

Every Saturday, St. Louis DSA organizes a tabling effort to gather signatures in support of the Russo bill (HR 1300) that would implement single-payer national health care.

### NEW JERSEY

Norman Eiger, Rutgers Professor of Labor Studies, spoke on "The Mondragon Cooperatives" at the February Central Jersey DSA at the Rutgers Labor Education Center. Central Jersey DSAers set up a study circle to discuss political and economic strategy, including the roles of the Progressive Unity Alliance and New Jersey Citizen Action, which is pushing national health care.

### NEW YORK

Ithaca DSA met February 9 for its annual retreat to decide on a plan of action for the coming year. Already on the agenda are: health care, taxes, elections and union support.

New York City DSA held its fifth new members' party with DSA Vice Chair Steve Max.

Hugh Cleland, of Suffolk County DSA, testified at a health care meeting sponsored by Congressman Tom Downey (D-NY).

### PENNSYLVANIA

Reading-Berks DSA members recently participated in several local demonstrations of worker solidarity, including picketing the Van Heusen factory outlet to protest the company's atrocities to workers in Guatemala.

Pittsburgh DSA held a forum February 15 on "National Health Reform -- Organizing for Change." Speakers included Dr. Anne Mast,

Over 100 activists from fifteen states converged on Columbia University in New York City, February 14-16, for the twelfth annual Youth Section Winter Conference. The weekend featured speakers, such as Barbara Ehrenreich, Dr. Victor Sidel, and Komozi Woodard; topics such as national health care and electoral politics; and workshops on issues such as anti-racist organizing, cultural activism, and talking about socialism.

The Youth Section held its first direct action organizing training session at this conference with Stacy Sheers. Choosing a target and "cutting" issues were explored. Chapter activists reevaluated campaigns they had worked on and gained new ideas for future activism.

The height of the weekend, however, came with the closing presentation by José Ramirez, secretary-general of the Inter-American Federation of Textile, Garment, Leather, and Shoe Workers. Ramirez, speaking only in Spanish and passionately translated by José LaLuz, Education Director for the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, urged young socialists to travel to the free trade zones of Central America; to see firsthand the squalid living conditions, poverty, and labor rights abuses there and to come back to the U.S. to inform our fellow citizens.

The weekend was not all work, however. On Saturday, the members of the Bates College chapter provided everyone with a "Revolutionary Free Lunch" of sandwiches and salad (the funding source of which cannot be disclosed). Saturday evening everyone relaxed at the West End Gate club. YS Coordinating Committee members Andrew Hammer and Jim Noone provided acoustic interludes between periods of frenzied dancing.

If you were unfortunate enough to have missed the Winter Conference, the Youth Section offers many opportunities to get together with comrades from across the country. On March 14, the Campus Labor Institute will be in Lafayette, Indiana; on April 5, DSA-YS will be marching in Washington, DC for reproductive freedom and will hold a reception afterward; May 16 is the Mayors' March to Save Our Cities in DC; and sometime in August is the Youth Section's annual Summer Conference, somewhere in the mid-west. See you there!

--Tom Ellett, DSA Youth Organizer

John Haer, Theresa Chalich and George Goldstein.

Philadelphia DSA recently organized a successful new members' meeting. The feminist committee has been organizing successful women's brunches.

### TEXAS

Austin DSA members, along with DSA National Director Michael Lighty, recently participated in a Jobs With Justice national meeting and a spirited action against a local cable company that is trying to bust its workers' union. They have also convened a study group.

### WASHINGTON

Seattle DSA sponsored a forum on "Politics and Organizing in the 1990s" with Juan Bocanegra, Larry Gossett, and Betty Patu. They held a general meeting in February to discuss "The 1992 Elections and Socialist Electoral Strategy." Speakers included Reiko Hayashi, Karen Hulbert and Steve Soifer. The local's movie night in February featured *The Russians Are Coming! The Russians Are Coming!* and *Red Nightmare*. Seattle DSA is helping to train organizers and speakers on health care reform and recently organized a workshop on respecting diversity.

# DSAAction

## Upcoming Events

◆ May 16, 1992 -- Mark your calendar for the Mayors' March on Washington to Save Our Cities. The purpose of the march is to call attention to the urban crisis and to demand more federal funding for cities. DSA and the DSA African American Commission are organizing for the march.

◆ See the New Europe -- from a socialist point-of-view! Join the Youth Section Summer '92 Tour of London, Brussels and Prague. Call Tom Ellett for further information, (212) 962-0390.

## Resources

◆ DSA's latest literature piece lays out a progressive platform for the 1992 elections and urges the Democrats to accept that platform. You can help distribute "Challenging the Democrats." Order bulk copies from DSA. See order form page 21.

◆ Wear a DSA T-shirt at the March for Women's Lives and the Mayors' March to Save Our Cities. Order yours by sending \$10 to DSA, sizes: large and X-large. The T-shirt will say: Democratic Socialists of America surrounding a handshake and rose. Union sewn and printed. See order form page 21.

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*Check the next issue of Democratic Left for more information.*

## Staff News

◆ DSA welcomes Barney Stein to staff as our new Office and Financial Manager. Barney is a former foundation administrator. When not at DSA he is an actor, musician, and volunteer at Gay Men's Health Crisis. Dominic Chan, our previous Financial Manager, is currently a graduate student at State University of New York--Stony Brook where he is president of the Graduate Student Association, an affiliate of the Communications Workers of America.

◆ National Director Michael Lighty is about to embark on a ten-city tour of DSA locals in the midwest and west coast. He will tour locals on the east coast in the fall. Be sure to catch Michael when he's in town!

## Ongoing

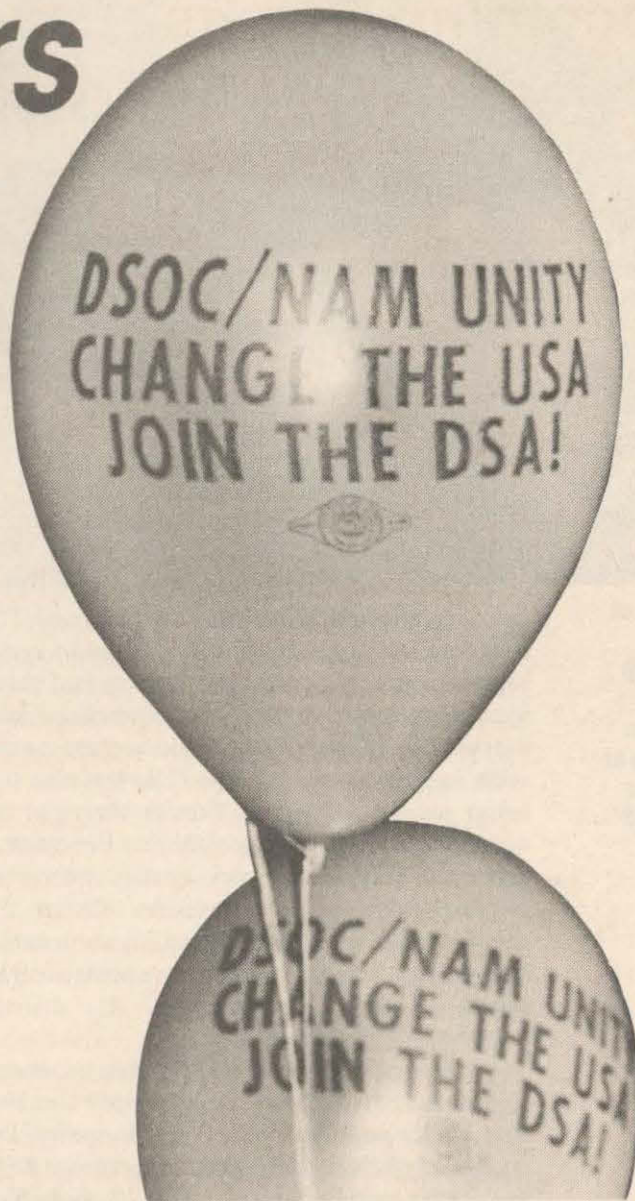
◆ A call to join DSA's Mission/Vision discussion! What is the vision of democratic socialism? What is the organizational mission of DSA? If you have thought about these questions we hope you will participate in DSA's ongoing organization-wide discussion about our vision and mission. Submit a paper to your local newsletter, join (or organize) your local Mission/Vision study group, organize a retreat to discuss mission and vision, or submit a paper to *Socialist Forum*, DSA's internal discussion bulletin. The deadline for SF submissions is April 15. Papers must be neatly typed, single-spaced, camera-ready, 2500 words or less. SF will not be able to publish all papers. We especially encourage people of color, women, gay men and lesbians, differently abled and working class people to submit papers.

# DSA Celebrates Ten Years

BY JOSEPH SCHWARTZ

Ten years ago this March delegates representing the Democratic Socialist Organizing Committee (DSOC) and the New American Movement (NAM) met to form the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). Though Ronald Reagan had been elected president just sixteen months before, an atmosphere of high expectations characterized the meeting. Gathering amidst the sharpest post-war recession in a shabby downtown hotel in devastated Detroit, delegates for once shared Mike Harrington's perpetual optimism that corporate irresponsibility would give rise to popular demands for democratic control over the economy. Reagan's chilling "evil empire" rhetoric and his attacks on the women's and civil rights movements temporarily served to coalesce a previously dispersed American left. DSA's first post-convention mobilization would bring a contingent of over 1,000 members to the million-strong June 12, 1982 disarmament march in New York City.

Not just in Detroit, but across the globe, a new ecumenical spirit of unity pervaded the left, centering upon a rejection of statist and authoritarian conceptions of socialism. Many delegates were veterans of the faction fights of the American old and new left; now they were participating in something unheard of in socialist organizational history -- a merger, rather than a split. In Europe, the French left had gained the presidency for the first time; numerous socialist parties had adopted workers' control as a programmatic focus and had developed relations with Eurocommunist parties who concurred that democracy must be central to the socialist project. In the Third World, revolutionary movements in Nicaragua, El Salvador, Zimbabwe and elsewhere searched for a third way between inegalitarian capitalist development and authoritarian communist modernization.



Little did delegates know that the militarist-Keynesian, indebted "economic recovery" begun in early 1983 would provide the material basis for a decade of dominance by the right. The inegalitarian benefits of that recovery could not alone secure a conservative presidential majority. That resulted from the right's sophisticated use of racial politics. They successfully displaced the economic anxieties of portions of the white working and middle-class into hostility towards "liberal" means-tested social welfare programs seen as disproportionately benefiting people of



Delegates at the 1982 DSOC/NAM Unity Convention participate in discussions that formed DSA.

color. As the liberal coalition decomposed, DSA continued to argue that in the face of increased international economic competition and resulting stagnation, only democratic industrial, labor market and trade policy could restore growth with equity. Not just in the U.S., but also (to a lesser extent) in Western Europe the right convinced a majority of the public that the causes of economic stagnation were strong unions and overexpanded public provision. Rather than greater public controls over capital, corporations had to be "freed" from government restraint while America reasserted its military "strength".

It was on this terrain of the most conservative decade in Western politics since the 1950s that DSA would be built. At its founding DSA consisted of close to 5,000 members from DSOC and 1,000 members from NAM (though NAM probably contributed close to a third of the new organization's grassroots activists). By 1983 DSA reached a plateau of 7,000 members, which it would not surpass till our recent rapid growth to 10,000 members. The 1980s were not easy on DSA, for as the broader left goes so goes American socialism. The organization -- as with the broader liberal-left -- was forced to devote its energies to fighting defensive battles -- against militarism, against attacks on reproductive and trade union rights, against intervention in Central America, against poverty and homelessness. Not until our work in the Rainbow Coalition and

the Jackson campaign in the late 1980s did a positive program of democratic reinvestment in the civilian economy and expansion of universal social programs gain a mass audience. Nor is it an accident that our current rapid growth comes amidst widespread recognition, even among parts of the establishment, that Reagan-Bush's devastation of the cities, infrastructure and public provision has severely weakened our economy.

But even at 6,000 strong at the merger, DSA represented the largest democratic socialist organization since the 1930s. Before the merger, both DSOC and NAM had made modest, but significant contributions to the trade union, community organizing and feminist movements, as well as to the left of the Democratic party. Though shaped by distinct cultural and historical experiences, most members of both organizations had come to the same operative political conclusions: an American socialist movement must be committed to democracy as an end-in-itself and work in coalition with non-socialist progressives.

DSOC, founded in 1973 when the anti-war wing split from the old Socialist Party, consciously strove to build a socialist presence within a liberal coalition. Its particular strengths lay with its small, but significant (and open) socialist networks among trade union and left Democratic Party activists. The organization helped, through its Democratic Agenda project, to coalesce liberal opposition to the Carter administration's drift to the right (which culminated in Ted Kennedy's near successful challenge to Carter in the 1980 primaries). And, in large part due to the indefatigable Mike Harrington's campus barnstorming, by the late 1970s DSOC had constructed the first national network of student leftists since the collapse of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).

NAM's historical origins were not in the old Left, but rather in SDS and the socialist-feminist women's unions of the late 60s and early 70s. New left veterans fleeing the sectarian excesses of late SDS and moving from campus to community politics, NAM focused on building chapters rooted in local struggles around affordable housing and utility rate reform. Explicitly a socialist-feminist organization, NAM played an important role in the reproductive rights movement and in helping the left reconceptualize the relationship between race, gender and class.

The founding leadership of both organizations on their own could not have constructed a merger. NAM's Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) veterans, nurtured by the "anti-anti-



communist" politics of the anti-Vietnam movement experienced DSOC's founding leadership's left-wing anti-communism (formed in the anti-Stalinist struggles of the 30s, 40s and 50s) as culturally alien. Conversely, many of DSOC's leadership could not understand the refusal of some NAM leaders to recognize opposition to authoritarian communism as a central moral obligation of democratic socialists. Not surprisingly, the two most sticky issues in the merger talks focused not on immediate political projects, but rather upon the organization's ideological positions on communism and the Middle East. Perhaps because of the energy devoted to hammering out clear statements on these issues, few members have since questioned the organization's principled opposition to authoritarian communism or its commitment to both the Jewish and Palestinian people's rights to secure states of their own.

Two infusions of newer members helped spur the merger process. DSOC's younger local activists, many of them students, some veterans of the new politics of the McCarthy and McGovern campaigns, found NAM's emphasis on grassroots activism attractive. Whereas in NAM, it was veteran ex-Communists, many of whom joined in the mid-70s after a split in the California Communist Party, who concurred with DSOC's emphasis on coalition work with non-socialists and valued its greater national organizational and ideological presence.

During the conservative 1980s, as most liberals retreated before the god of the "free market," DSA continued (and later the Rainbow Coalition) to advocate progressive taxation, cuts in wasteful "defense" spending, and expansion of universal social programs to redress the public squalor in healthcare, education, childcare, and housing. As the "l" word (liberalism) joined the "s" (socialism) word in being banned from mainstream political discourse, it was left to socialists to remind the public of the damage done by excessive capitalist greed. Not only does an unregulated market lead to irrational speculation (witness the S&L and real estate debacles), but unrestrained capitalism radically underfunds the public goods essential to an efficient, competitive economy. While it is in the interest of all firms to have well-trained and healthy workers, no one firm wishes to pay for such training and healthcare. That is, a society that underfunds collective, public goods out of a blind, ideological worship of the free market cannot compete with more efficient and more just societies that do fund such programs.

This imperative need for a vital socialist

presence in American politics revealed itself most clearly after the death of communism. As the mass media trumpeted the end of history and the triumph of capitalism, thousands responded to DSA's call that the collapse of communism (a critical gain for democracy) in no way justifies the blatant injustices of capitalism. While some on the left have retreated to a defensive "politics of identity," DSA argues that true diversity can only manifest itself in a democratic society committed to equal citizenship for all through the democratic public provision of basic human

## *It was something unheard of in socialist history -- a merger, rather than a split.*

needs. But universal social programs alone cannot guarantee equality -- we also need affirmative efforts to redress the legacy of racism, chattel slavery and the subordination of women.

Through our mission and vision discussion, we have begun to develop a more compelling vision of a feasible socialism which would utilize a regulated market to coordinate diverse forms of democratic ownership. But while markets can serve as useful servants to ascertain comparative costs of production, unrestrained markets rapidly become unjust and inefficient masters of society. Advancing a vision of a feasible socialism is far from irrelevant to our day-to-day work for humane reform. Our enemies on the right well know that at the heart of meaningful social reform is achieving democratic controls over capital. Hence, it is no accident that George Bush rebuffs modest proposals for unpaid parental leave as a socialist interference with corporate property rights. And, as he frequently reiterates, Canada's national health care system is socialist-inspired. Thus, DSA's mission is as relevant as ever -- to build a movement strong enough to place socialist values and program onto the mainstream American political agenda. Such a "revolutionary" achievement would render our politics as normal as those of every other industrial democracy in the world. Thus, maybe someday people will look to the United States as a model of an efficient and just society. Who, may we ask, does today? DL

*Joseph Schwartz is a professor of political theory at Temple University and is a member of the DSA National Political Committee.*

# South Africa

*continued from page 7*

scribed the ANC and the IFP like this: "Both organizations say they oppose apartheid, but Inkatha differs with the congress over the viability of sanctions and over the guerrilla struggle that the congress suspended a year ago." As for UWUSA, the alleged "rival federation" of COSATU and the beneficiary of most of the government funding, it was actually set up by the SADF in 1986 to disrupt COSATU organizing, a fact widely omitted by the U.S. press.

Evidence that elements of the SADF have been directly involved in creating a "third force" similar to the South African-backed RENAMO movement that has killed over 100,000 people in Mozambique began emerging in 1990. Since then, information detailing the security force role has snowballed. Nelson Mandela and others have called it simply "overwhelming." The SADF has armed and trained vigilantes who carry out the train massacres and other seemingly "random" attacks. Former security officers have stated not only that the SADF armed vigilantes, but also that they fashioned a campaign based on the South African destabilization effort carried out in Namibia (another sabotage effort revealed in the summer of 1991, to the tune of \$35 million).

This information is well documented and readily available, yet the press has persistently treated it as unfounded or irrelevant, and has relegated it to the bottom of news accounts. "African National Congress officials accused the police of siding with Inkatha, a charge the police denied," one typical *New York Times* article reported. Nothing further is mentioned in the entire article. "Official denials notwithstanding, suspicion grows of a police role," observed the *Times* on October 15, 1991 -- as if volumes of confirmed evidence were no more than a hunch in the mind of Nelson Mandela.

Despite the evidence, an image has emerged in newspaper accounts of the government as caught in the middle, with the police and military as a peace-keeping force. Without a hint of cynicism, the *Times* quoted Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok as saying "there can be no winners, only losers and untold misery when opposing parties fight each other." A year later, Vlok commented on the Inkatha slush fund by saying, "I am quite happy that taxpayers' money has not been wasted at all." Untold misery indeed.

At one point, the *Los Angeles Times* characterized the imposition of emergency police powers

as "an effort to end factional fighting among blacks." The *Washington Post* described South African troops occupying townships "to try to restore order," and reported that "police...fired volleys of tear gas, trying to stop blacks chanting war cries from slashing and stabbing at each other." It is incredible that anyone could put much faith in the South African police so soon after the many years of police terror and murder. Press accounts generally fail to note that the police still use live ammunition for crowd control.

More recently, the *Times* continues to frame the violence as the result of rivalry between blacks. "South African Black Groups Move Toward Accord," the August 16, 1991, headline read. In fact, the National Peace Accord was a multi-party agreement involving the government, the IFP, the ANC and many other groups. Among its main purposes was the establishment of commissions to probe the causes of the violence and codes of conduct for the security forces as well as other parties.

The most astounding development in South Africa coverage has been the emergence of what one might call the teflon police state. Press accounts have stuck to the theme of the "new" South Africa even while reporting the latest "allegation" of government sabotage of the opposition. A July 25, 1991, *Times* article reported that government funding for covert activities, such as the Inkatha slush fund, increased by 38 percent since deKlerk took office. Its analysis was that this rise "suggests" covert activities might have continued under his presidency, which it nonetheless described as "moving to share power with the black majority." In fact, funding and training of Inkatha has continued.

It should be obvious by now that what is going on is not "government efforts to dismantle apartheid," as press accounts routinely note. What the government has done is give in to some initial anti-apartheid demands (releasing Mandela, unbanning the ANC, beginning negotiations, repealing some legal statutes), all of which allow it to retain political and economic control while easing international pressure. It has worked to create an aura of reform while increasing destabilization efforts to make reform impossible.

Thanks in part to the U.S. press, Pretoria has been enormously successful with this strategy. **D**

*Dorothee Benz, a member of DSA's National Political Committee, is the Director of Communications of ILGWU Local 23-25 and a member of the New York Labor Committee Against Apartheid.*

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# Feminism

*continued from page 9*

still buy most of the the soap, cake mix and cleaning supplies -- have very different ideas about gender relations and sexism these days because of feminism. And money talks in corporate America.

There's another important factor in the political changes wrought by feminism in television programming which explains why so many critics have missed it. More and more women -- as a result of feminism -- are now in the professional workforce, especially in media. But, for obvious reasons, they are concentrated in less prestigious places -- TV rather than film, daytime rather than primetime. Since we on the left are often as guilty of unconscious sexism and class bias as anyone else in things cultural, we tend to focus almost exclusively on programs such as *Nightline* and *MacNeil-Lehrer* instead of the shows people really talk about, like *Oprah Winfrey* and *Sally Jesse Raphael*; on classy primetime drama like *LA Law* and *thirtysomething* rather than the endlessly popular and ubiquitous daytime soaps. But for women writers, producers, and actors, it is TV not film, and daytime not primetime, that offers the most opportunity to develop skills and reputations. And of all media forms it is daytime TV where risk taking is most likely to occur because, as everyone knows, it's a women's ghetto that policy makers don't watch or care about. Since it's considered trash and not taken seriously, it's allowed to get away with a lot more than Ted Koppel or Steven Bochco -- the guys Standards and Practices and Walter Goodman keep track of.

But if the pundits and policy makers are missing the boat, we should be paying attention. Once you get past your understandable distaste for the exhibitionism and sensationalism of daytime talk, you will hear things on Oprah and Sally that will, more than anything else in the media, prove how powerful feminism (and the other sixties-spawned mass movements to a lesser extent) has become in this country (even if it isn't necessarily called by that much maligned F-word.)

Where Ted Koppel will talk endlessly to other powerful white men about subjects deemed "serious" from angles deemed "legitimate," Oprah and Phil are likely to be chatting with regular people, many female, black, gay and poor, about issues which often as not have been raised by progressives, especially feminists. Date rape, gay parenting, sexual harassment --

these topics have long been familiar to daytime TV viewers. And, surprisingly enough, the folks who appear as guests and speak from the audience on talk shows are a lot more open-minded than George Bush would care to know.

When we consider all of this and then rethink the events of the last year -- the Thomas hearings, the Kennedy trial, the *Thelma & Louise* scare -- they take on different meaning. Of course the rich white men in the Senate wanted Anita Hill to seem crazy and shut up. Of course the legal system was rigged in favor of (more) rich white men like William Kennedy Smith. Of course the mainstream media was outraged to the point of talking censorship at the screams of support in movie theaters for a couple of working class women who decided, on the spot, that they no longer saw the point in acquiescing to male desire, in sexual matters or anything else, and were willing to get nasty if pushed on the point. What did we expect? The power structure is not going to quietly accept the changing attitudes and values of women. They have too much at stake to give up the male sexual privilege upon which gender inequality ultimately rests.

We can choose to feel despair about the results of these trials and hearings, the attacks on these movies. But that would be to miss the point. The public outcry from women when Anita Hill first spoke; the endless discussions of date rape and sexual harassment that these two events engendered -- all this was made possible by the work of feminists in the last twenty years in bringing these issues into consciousness in the first place, so they could be challenged and discussed. And it is television, more than we have so far realized, that has been the arena in which this fertile public discourse has been and continues to be carried on.

The lesson for activists, it seems to me, is to start thinking more seriously about media strategy. We may have been selling ourselves short by misreading the political climate. Political change is slow and it takes a long time, in particular, for changes in attitude to show up in actual events. But if we are losing badly in the political arena right now, I'm convinced we're doing very well indeed in the hearts and minds department, especially where gender issues and cultural values are concerned. DL

*Elayne Rapping teaches media studies at Adelphi University and writes frequently on the media and culture. Her book, The Movie of the Week, will be published by University of Minnesota Press in September. She is a member of DSA.*

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# Political Travels

## A Review of George Packer's The Half Man

BY TOM CANEL

**G**eorge Packer's second novel, *The Half Man*, is an extremely powerful example of a work of fiction that can enrich our political thinking. Packer, a DSA member, is a great storyteller. On a literary level his novel is an engrossing and entertaining thriller. Politically, it is a fascinating account of real world politics in the post-Cold War world.

The story centers on a young American journalist, Daniel Levin, working in the invented Southeast Asian country of Direv Saraun. We meet Levin as he prepares to travel to the secluded guerrilla headquarters of the revolutionary Army of Liberation (a movement with some similarities to the Peruvian Shining Path and the Filipino New People's Army). There he will

existential fascination with violence and attracted to it. Between the oppressive status quo and the Army of Liberation, there seems little room for a democratic socialist third way. By inciting feelings of both attraction and repulsion, Packer forces the reader to confront these powerful contradictions.

The ideology of this revolution is not grounded on any scientific socialism. Rather, it steeply itself in magical myth. The end of Cold War politics has, in Direv Saraun at least, been associated with a break from Enlightenment rationality.

### *Stalking the Forest*

This antagonism is played out in Packer's idea of the 'half man.' On the surface, this phrase refers to a local myth of a forest creature, Ngot, with only half a human body, who stalks the countryside and confronts people it meets, forcing them to fight. If Ngot wins, the unfortunate wanderer is destroyed. If Ngot loses, the wanderer is given wisdom. Among the local villagers, whites are called 'Ngot.' Fra Boboy uses this to turn Ngot into a symbol for the American enemy as a whole. Conflicts with Ngot become a symbol for political struggle in the modern period.

In the *Half Man*, racism ideologically and socially diminishes human beings, producing half men in a variety of ways. The relationship between Levin and Ding is wrought with such ideological and social diminishment. An awareness of social and racial inequality and the sense of inferiority produced makes Ding embittered. Levin, on the other hand, is continually making sure that he is not "ripped off" by Ding or any other Saraunese. His fear is not one of substantive material loss (the money involved is trivial

*We see how enticing  
revolutionary ideology can be.*

interview Fra Boboy, leader of the Army of Liberation. He employs a Saraunese photographer, Ding, for the journey. Ding comes from an affluent family that has lost its wealth.

As they journey to guerrilla headquarters, the relationship between Ding and Levin turns sour. Increasingly, mutual distrust and recrimination surfaces. Despite their tensions, Levin and Ding do reach Fra Boboy.

Through his description of the camp, Packer provides the reader with a strong feel of the atmosphere of a revolutionary leftist movement. By experiencing the reactions of Levin and Ding, we see how enticing revolutionary ideology can be. The reader is at the same time disturbed by its

for Levin) but of loss of face. He sees in the Saraunese a constant threat of humiliation.

Packer vividly portrays how the antagonism between Ding and Levin is rooted in inequality. Levin has money and status of whiteness. In an economically unjust and racist world, that makes his very presence a threat to people oppressed by those structures, just as the very presence of Ngot is a threat to the forest wanderer. (This is particularly true for Ding. His loss of social status has put his sense of identity in a permanent crisis.)

Normal human interaction becomes impossible under these conditions. Racism and inequality turn Levin and Ding into half men. And they threaten to do the same to all of us.

### *Cross-Cultural Exploration*

Levin ultimately provokes ambivalent feelings in the reader. While many will identify with him as a character, he is exploring a world he does not fully understand. As a result he makes mistakes and commits acts of betrayal with far greater implications than he imagined. This lack of understanding is recapitulated on the ideological level. In discussions with Saraunese, whether revolutionaries or members of the reactionary elite, Levin displays a pompous naïvete that worsens not only his interactions with others but the overall situation. Both left and right are disdainful of Levin's attempts at interpreting the dynamics of their country. The limitations of our own cross-cultural understanding are represented through the limitations of Levin.

At one point in the book, Levin attempts to transcend the situation by declaring the importance of personal integrity. We feel ambivalent about this declaration. On the one hand, we have seen how oppressive the half man status is. We cannot but share with Levin the desire to escape it. However, we are also aware of the social basis of human diminishment. The efficacy of personal declaration is brought into question. The broader social environment that structures the lives of Levin and Ding needs to be changed.

These themes portray the tension between liberal humanism and radical structural analysis. It is a tension that is particularly relevant for democratic socialists who look both to a structural critique of injustice and to the moral language of individual self-realization and integrity. Levin is caught on the liberal humanist pole, while his contact, Connie, seems caught on the other pole. She displays a capacity to close her eyes to brutality by hiding behind rhetoric about social structures. Each bias has its limitations.

## *Cutting Down the Woods*

"Ngot, as the professors would say, is the Jola's central mythic figure. Ngot is one reason they don't understand my walks. He is dangerous, hidden, tricky, violent. He has no pity in him because he comes from the forest where pity has no place. So there is no appeasing him. For Ngot there's nothing but struggle -- defeat, victory." The surrounding buzz of the forest absorbed Fra Boboy's words. Levin became aware of the absurdity of human speech -- so many cicada abdomens chirping. Here in the wet scratching woods it was just pitch and tone. Yet Fra Boboy kept talking -- and it seemed like hubris again, gross defiance. A man who could converse in the rain forest could blow up bridges, bring war to a large city, goad a nation into violent frenzy. If the woods said, You are nothing to us, then two human responses were possible: lie down and sleep under them, or take the chain saw to them. Defeat, victory. Fra Boboy was cutting down the woods.

-- from *The Half Man*

The emphasis on personal integrity can ignore the inescapable importance of social structures upon human development. The emphasis upon social structure can avoid the human implications of political developments. The need to synthesize the two perspectives can be articulated through social theory. Packer adopts a different approach: he leads us through experiences that make us feel the need for this synthesis.

### *No Viable Alternative*

Packer's novel will not please everyone on the left. He paints the Army of Liberation as an ultimately unattractive force. And he does not present an alternative to communist authoritarianism or capitalist inequality. There is no viable democratic socialist option in the Saraunese struggle.

While the account of the human damage done by injustice situates this work as a book of the left (Packer's account of working and living conditions in Direv Saraun constitute a profound indictment of global economic injustice), Packer does not present the reader with a glowing left to admire and support. Yet Packer's vivid narrative pushes the reader into fictional experiences that highlight real social and political problems and contradictions -- certainly a left objective.

The fiction of George Packer is an example of literary excellence informed by sophisticated politics. DL

*Tom Canel, a long-time DSA member is active in Boston DSA.*

# Janie Higgins Reports



## POLLUTION REDISTRIBUTION

An official at the World Bank suggested recently that redistribution of the industrialized nations' toxic waste would be world "welfare-enhancing." Lawrence Summers argues that people in countries where "under-5 mortality is 200 per thousand" are less likely to worry about a pollution "agent that causes a one-in-a-million change in the odds of prostate cancer." Yes, and they are less likely to picket polluting plants and boycott dangerous products.

His personal views of course do not affect the argument but he does offer this, "I've always thought that under-populated countries in Africa are vastly *under*-polluted."

Not only that, he says, but it would save us all money. You see, if the cost to workers of pollution is calculated in lost earnings (due to disease or death) then the workers who lose less in wages are better off. Third World workers, of course, would stand to lose less because they make so much less.

Ah, the wonders of logic.

## WHAT PUBLIC EMPLOYEES?

You'd think the AFL-CIO would have a little more respect for the public sector -- considering that so many of its members work there. But for American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), AFL-CIO, Executive Director William H. Doherty, it all depends on who you're talking to. At a recent Carnegie Council meeting of pro-privatization business execs, he told them, "I think we should clarify from the very beginning that American labor is not opposed to privatization;" or "We believe that privatization is good because it's the best form to promote democracy;" or better yet "We even protect privatized medicine so long as it's accessible to everybody and we can afford it." Unfortunately, for Doherty, that's impossible without a public system.

## END OF RECESSION CRASH

Will any serious recovery send the already bloated stock market through the roof? Don't count on it. Some analysts say that signs point to a recovery-based crash. Better economic times could prompt investors to take money out of stocks and put it into plants and equipment. And stock prices have already figured in the recovery -- forcing a sell-off once it actually happens.

**MARCH  
FOR  
WOMEN'S  
LIVES**

**DSA** CONTINGENT  
*April 5, 1992 ■ Washington DC*

*Join DSA Honorary Chair*

**Gloria Steinem**

*5:30 p.m., at our reception.*

**MARCH**

**10:00 a.m.**

Meet on Constitution Avenue NW at 16th Street, north side. It is at the south-central part of the ellipse, which is the large field separating the White House and the Washington Monument.

**RECEPTION**

**4:00 - 11:00 p.m.**

Kelly's Irish Times, basement. 14 F Street, NW. It's 1/2 block from Union Station (near the intersection of Massachusetts Avenue and North Capitol Street) and very close to the march finale. By metro, you can take the red line to Union Station.