INTRODUCTION

Images of Germany: the national elections find Andropov and Bush rushing in to cheer on their sides as if the election were a superpower contest. The outcome finds the pro-American and conservative Christian Democrats in power and the radical Green Party in parliament, signalling a substantial shift in political alignments and beneath it a deepening polarization in German society. The image of the Greens with their countercultural flair — disobedient, disrupting the “normal” proceedings of government — captures our imagination, reminds us that a genuine political alternative can also win.

Until very recently in the US we had caught only glimpses of postwar German society and its discontents. The unabashed material prosperity of “Modell Deutschland,” the German economic miracle, has dominated the media presentation, while the growing urban culture of resistance — squatters, feminists, ecologists, and anti-nuclear activists — has barely been visible. For those who follow German cinema, Fassbinder and von Trotta provide images which expose the underside of the German “miracle”: state violence and political “terrorism,” the wretched lives of the immigrant workers, sexuality entangled with violence, the conflict of generations, and always the problems of historical memory. Images of the present yield readily to those of the past: the Germany of Hitler youth, triumph of the will, the
final solution. For many, the appearance of a German political "alternative" immediately raises questions about how the present has broken with the past. Struggle over the meaning of the past is an inescapable part of the German political present. The way in which they understand this is key to the significance of the alternative social movements. We draw on our experience in West Germany last fall to elaborate our images of the German scene. There we discovered that it is the Alternatives who expose and confront the German past as a political problem.

We arrive in Berlin. Friends take us to a neighborhood street fair. The streets are lined with booths displaying literature from the anti-nuclear movement, feminists, gays and lesbians, tenants, squatters, immigrant rights — and the Alternative Liste, the Green Party in Berlin. Other booths sell Turkish art and artifacts, yarn, second-hand clothes, illegal books (reprinted in cheaper format). Turkish theater, mime, punk rock provide entertainment. All this takes place three blocks from the Wall. City limits — barriers of barbed wire and concrete, guards poised with guns in sentry towers, signs in German and Turkish warning of mined canals — bleak, haunting. "I love the Wall," says punk signer Annette Humpe, "there's the possibility to get shot from both sides." But then, for twenty-five marks, (ten dollars) and a few hours search and questioning, a West Berliner can cross through one of the "checkpoints" — guardians of the permitted passage from West to East, East to West.

The buildings in the neighborhood are covered with graffitti — Anti-Reagan, antistate, antimilitarist slogans and the recurrent squatters' symbol (120 apartment buildings in Berlin are occupied by squatters). An alternative culture has grown up within the squatted houses — cafes, bars, movie houses, newsletters — which takes political form in the movement of the "Sponties" to defend and expand such free space. But the alternative "scene" encompasses a still broader range of activities and experience — ranging from the kinds of services the women's movement has developed here and elsewhere to bookstores, a Lesbian Archive, a radical daily newspaper with a national circulation of over 50,000, discotheques (a favorite is called Linientreu, "correct line"), art, crafts, and so forth. Entering as an American, one experiences a flashback to the '60s — and a broad and politicized counterculture.

The fair can serve as a metaphor for the Green Party's relationship to the array of social movements which dominate the political landscape of Berlin and other West German cities. The Greens' booth is one among many booths at the fair. The social movements are the base of the "Alternative Liste" of candidates who run for Berlin Senate, yet are autonomous.

These movements come together within the Alternative Liste which makes decisions — cumbersomely, committedly, miraculously — on a consensus basis. After much debate, for example, the AL agreed to endorse an illegal demonstration on the day of Reagan's visit to Berlin. The 5,000 demonstrators were met by police, tear gas, and an effort to enclose them in barbed wire fencing. A riot erupted. In reaction, many members of the AL, as well as autonomous women's groups, called for an evaluation of that decision — which the militant Sponties had strongly advocated. An outdoor meeting of 3,000 people and several hours of discussion resulted.

The alternative "scene" expresses a critique of "Modell Deutschland," the postwar German "economic miracle." The images of the alternatives — wearing second-hand clothing, drawing on the Turkish culture, playing with

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# INTRODUCTION

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gender — begin to reveal the culture they oppose. It is in the clean, orderly, hard-working, obedient, and sober German that they instinctively find a feared continuity with the past. For the alternatives, most of whom are under forty, seek to expose the German memory gap. German youth cannot travel outside of Germany without being reminded of Nazi devastation wrought against other Europeans. Yet, until recently, official German history ended in 1933 and began again in 1948. The Alternatives assert that there can be no renewal of cultural traditions until Germans confront their suppressed past. When the Frankfurt Opera House, a building which has stood as an empty wreck since World War II, was rededicated recently, the event was proclaimed by the city elites as a recovery of German tradition. It was left to the Alternative scene of Frankfurt to remind the city that “back in the ’30s, half of the Frankfurt orchestra and opera company quietly disappeared: Jews sent to the concentration camps.”

A Lesbian History Archive in Berlin seeks to recover the extensive lesbian subculture of Weimar — Berlin itself had thirty women’s bars in 1933 — as well as piece together the fate of lesbians under fascism. A spate of recent books has emerged which turn against the silence of the older generation to ask, as in the title of one of them, “Daddy, Why Were You in the Hitler Youth?” It is ironic that the Reagan administration meanwhile, worried about “growing anti-American tendencies among younger Europeans,” has designed a strategy to refresh the memories of a younger generation who “have forgotten World War II.” A generation of German youth which sees its own political future tied to uprooting the legacy of fascism and war deposited deep in German character and culture will confront such efforts to open the “memory gap” with demands of its own.

It is difficult not to romanticize the alternative scene from the standpoint of the US in the ’80s where cultural politics belong to the Right. However, the scene is open to criticism, perhaps especially feminist criticism. Mixed political contexts often remain male-dominated. Around the issue of nuclear weapons, even within the Alternative Liste, this is particularly striking. For many women the meaning of “defense,” “security,” “freedom” becomes obscured in debates over more abstract political positions regarding the newest weapons. Taking up issues of defense and security, safety and freedom — for women — involves addressing the connections between militarism and “normal” everyday violence against women. As one woman said, “Our goal can’t be patriarchy without the missiles.” Within the squatters’ movement, as well, men and women have divided on questions of defense. Women have found themselves in tension not only with the repressive tactics of the police, but also with the violent and confrontational tactics of the male squatters.

Many women have chosen to work autonomously in a feminist antiwar movement, distinct from the women’s peace movement, to create space for their own participation and activism and to keep their embattled experience of daily life at the forefront of their concerns.

Of course there was a politicized counterculture in the U.S. in the ’60s. The ensuing divergence of politics and counterculture raises questions about the future of the German situation. Some paths are not open. Politics without the culture critique, which took form in the US in the ’70s as a discovery of Marxism-Leninism and the virtues of organization and discipline, has already been discarded. Marxist-Leninist, and especially Maoist, sects, similar to those in the US, emerged in the early seventies, but have by now largely dissolved. Some former activists
have found their way directly into the Alternative Liste; the majority have embraced the cultural politics of the alternative scene.

Repression — which in this country contributed to the countercultural retreat from politics and into “personal” solutions outside but not against society — stands ever in the wings. But several features of the German political context militate against, or at least complicate, this scenario. Not the least, of course, is the achievement of the Greens. In addition, unlike the drift to the countryside of the American counterculture, the alternative scene is largely an urban phenomenon. In a nuclear weapons conscious era, the countryside — especially the highly militarized German countryside — offers no escape. This recognition has, indeed, provided part of the political dynamic of the ecology movement.

The example of the struggle over “Startbahn West,” a runway the West German state and the Frankfurt Airport Authority are trying to construct, highlights this point. The expansion would clear an estimated 3 million trees to fulfill military purposes: the runway would allow for the arrival of Cruise and Pershing missiles and expand the ability of NATO to increase its strike capacity through fast transport of more than a million men and a million tons of equipment. The adjoining Rhine-Main airbase, the largest US military airbase outside the US, has recently been set up to serve as a refuelling point for the Rapid Deployment Force on its way to the Middle East. Here, as in other struggles, the politics of ecology encompasses a challenge to the militarization of the environment.

Finally, the perhaps peculiarly American notion of living within, but transcending, the existing society — through “self-help” or other personal changes — seems absent from the German counterculture. Perhaps it is the weight of German history that defies personal solutions. In any case, the youth especially set their goal as a counter society, not a liberated self. An alternative future is seen to depend upon the dismantling of existing institutions, from the family to the state. Even as the Greens enter parliament, they have refused to abide by its rules. They have made clear that their commitment to democracy would require their making public such “state secrets” as the chosen sites for the installation of Pershing II and Cruise missiles.

In this issue Carl Boggs examines the emergence of the Greens in their economic, social, and political context. He situates their dilemmas within the economic crisis now confronting West Germany, which, unlike here, develops in the face of growing social movements. Boggs presents the strategic decisions that confront the Greens as a party supported on two legs — its “playing leg” in parliament, its “standing leg” in the new social movements. John Ely focuses on the “standing leg” of the Greens outside parliament. He elaborates their alternative values and internal workings, as well as the distorted images the media has projected.

The strength of the “German Alternative” lies in its boldness and the extent of its power base, in the depth of its critique and the spread of the institutions which embody it. Yet it is precisely these features that may unleash the state terror against it. Watching the German scene as it unfolds may provide a glimpse into our own most hopeful — or most frightening — future.

Marla Erlien and Margaret Cerullo, For the editors

DIE GRÜNEN

IN DEN BUNDESTAG!
THE GREENS, ANTI-MILITARISM AND THE GLOBAL CRISIS

Carl Boggs

If the one-sided Christian Democratic (CDU) victory in the recent West German elections gave Pentagon and NATO military planners added encouragement to pursue their Strange-lovian nuclear "option," the simultaneous entry of the radical Green Party into the national parliament (Bundestag) left many Germans and Western Europeans with a different message — namely, that the rejuvenated peace movement is strong enough to gain institutional representation in one of the most important advanced capitalist countries. In surpassing the thorny 5-percent barrier which has destroyed the hopes of alternative parties in the past, the Greens (Die Grunen) have in less than five years grown from a tiny band of peace and environmental activists into a popular organization with nearly two million supporters (5.6 percent of the vote), 30,000 members, and 27 Bundestag deputies. They have achieved this without vast corporate resources, institutional support, or even the TV exposure available to the major parties — and against the sometimes hysterical opposition of the bourgeois media.

Of course nobody has fantasized that this initial electoral success might be a prelude to an imminent conquest of power, or to the "Green Revolution" that many West Germans like to discuss. But it did give the popular movements which underpin the Greens a new structural presence and ideological credibility. The Greens, it must be emphasized, want to
build not simply an electoral machine that can 
siphon off votes from the rival parties but also a 
radical movement — one which already had begun 
to establish its presence in a variety of forms: the 
peace and environmental struggles, community 
and neighborhood movements, feminism, and the 
youth-based alternative culture.

Whatever the inherent dilemmas of electoral 
politics, the refreshing appearance of the Greens 
within the Bonn legislative orbit shows that a 
party committed to fundamental change and root-
ed in dynamic social movements can, given the 
proper congruence of issues and hard, intelligent 
mobilizing, become a popular force almost over-
night. This is a rarity even in the postwar history 
of the advanced countries. Not only were the 
Greens able to inject their political agenda into 
West German political discourse and thereby force 
at least a semblance of real debate over moment-
tous issues; they were also able to translate sub-
versive ideas into a language intelligible to large 
(and diverse) sectors of the population. Electoral 
support was drawn from professionals, young 
workers, students and intellectuals, feminists, and 
the unemployed, from older conservationists as 
well as younger quasi-anarchist “Sponties,” from 
Marxists as well as peace activists, from religious 
leaders as well as urban new leftists.¹ And the 
Green ideological synthesis reflects this diversity 
in its fusion of disparate traditions: ecological 
radicalism, Marxism, new leftist, feminism, and 
antimilitarism. This kind of synthesis necessarily 
defies simple conventional formulas identified 
with any single “model.” For this reason, and be-
cause they are an expression of many “post-indus-
trial” themes, the Greens might well suggest the 
contours of radical politics in the advanced capital-
ist societies for the coming years. Surely the aston-
ishing fact that they received 28 percent support 
from first-time voters justifies some optimism on 
this point.

For the moment, however, the Greens now 
occupy a position from which they can pursue a 
dual strategy — party and movement, electoral 
politics and grassroots mobilization, legislative 
reform and direct-action protest — far more vigor-
ously than if their representation were still con-
ﬁned to the state parliaments.² As a marginal (but 
surely loud) opposition in Bonn, they can con-
front the CDU’s militarist and austerity policies 
more effectively while also initiating extraparlia-
mentary activity in tandem with the popular 
movements. Because the Greens are still struggling 
to create a distinct identity, and since they are 
uncompromising on the issue of nuclear weapons, 
this freedom to “walk on two legs” is indispens-
able. They can resist pressures toward institutional 
absorption and, with the Social Democrats now 
crippled and in disarray, they can work with Social 
Democratic Party (SPD) elements to build a strong 
local presence, especially around disarmament 
issues.

Within the Bundestag itself, the Green delegates 
plan to offer programmatic alternatives to the 
stale formulas of the CDU and SPD, with the hope 
that the debates will provide an educational forum 
in which new ideas and fresh information will be 
aired. The Greens, moreover, will almost certainly 
bring a less reverent and more confrontational 
style to parliamentary proceedings: they will have 
every chance, as the old party elites have warned, 
to be “disruptive” and even “subversive.”

What explains this sudden rise of a Green poli-
tics in West Germany — a country which, like the 
US and Japan, had been an exemplary model of 
postwar capitalist growth? Are the Greens merely 
a transient phenomenon likely to drop out of sight 
once the critical issues are defused, or is their 
politics the expression of broad historical tenden-
cies and forces which are just now beginning to 
mature? Here three developments must be taken 
into account: the appearance of a mass-based 
peace movement opposed to US efforts to preserve 
a declining hegemony over Western Europe; the
global crisis of capitalism, which in West Germany has brought to a halt the famed "Modell Deutschland" with its promise of endless prosperity for all; and the sclerosis of a rigid and bureaucratic party system that, while presenting the surface trappings of a stable bourgeois democracy, has lost its capacity to manage the overriding issues of the 1980s—militarism, economic crisis, the erosion of democratic institutions.

The Green insurgency is an outgrowth of the collapse of the German new left in the early 1970s. More than a decade of Social Democratic prosperity served to isolate the Left, breeding withdrawal and cynical alienation. This milieu was ideal for the vanguardist posturing of tiny Marxist-Leninist sects and for the terrorism of the Baader-Meinhof "urban guerrillas." By the end of the 1970s, however, a third tendency with roots in new left radicalism began to surface: the colorful "alternative" scene in the major cities (West Berlin, Hamburg, Frankfurt), environmental and anti-nuclear protests, the women’s movement, the squatters rebellion, and, finally, probably the largest and most militant peace movement in Europe. It was this third response—what many radicals have labeled "new social movements"—that inspired and nurtured the Greens.

The Greens’ origins actually go back to 1972, when a small group of activists, most of them former SPD members unhappy with the party’s growing conservatism but with no illusions about either Marxist-Leninist vanguardism or terrorism, founded an association to elect representatives to the European parliament. But it was not until 1979 that the Greens finally constituted themselves as a domestic party ready to compete in West German elections. At this point an interesting dialectic unfolded. Whereas the new grassroots movements seemed content with a replay of 1960s-style militancy, especially in their hostility to large organizations and electoral politics, the Greens were motivated by a desire to translate radical goals into strategic language and action. This meant building a national organization prepared to move onto the institutional terrain, but without sacrificing the vitality of local struggles. In this sense the Greens embody neither a flight from politics (as their opponents never tire of repeating) nor a simple return to traditional bourgeois politics, but a new synthesis of party and new movements which suggests a redefinition of politics.

The Popular Revolt Against Militarism

The famous NATO commitment of December 1979 to "modernize" its nuclear arsenal in Western Europe by deploying at the end of this year 464 ground-launched cruise missiles and 108 Pershing-II intermediate-range missiles effectively launched the new peace movement. According to the NATO plan, the US would base 160 missiles in Britain, 108 in West Germany, 48 each in Holland and Belgium, and 112 in Sicily. This new escalation in the arms race would only be aborted if US and Soviet negotiators were to reach agreement in Geneva—a prospect that few Europeans have taken seriously, given that the US does not hide its obsession with maintaining nuclear supremacy over the Soviet Union. The Europeans are convinced, moreover, that the Americans have been governed by far less restraint than the Soviets. President Reagan’s March 8, 1983 speech, in which he rejected the notion of "simple-minded appeasement" of the Soviets who in their "totalitarian darkness" constitute the "focus of evil in the modern world," only reinforced long-standing European anxieties.3

Little doubt remains that only massive popular resistance throughout Europe will prevent NATO from deploying the missile. As for West Germany, the Helmut Kohl government—revitalized by its stunning electoral coup—fully supports the missile program which it argues is needed to counter the Soviet SS-20s already in place. For Kohl, any West German decision to detach the country from
Rüstung schafft Arbeitsplätze

"Arms Readiness Creates Jobs," Arbeiterfotografie, Köln

US interests would inevitably "subject Germany to Soviet hegemony." And none of the other European governments, whatever their ideological makeup or their fears of domestic upheaval, have firmly opposed the NATO decision; they all prefer to go along with the myth of "zero option," which would dismantle the bulk of Soviet missiles while leaving the existing NATO arsenal intact.

From the standpoint of the peace movement, a resurgent militarism centered on the European continent raises issues that go far beyond projected missile deployments or the absurd debates over who has nuclear superiority. There is first of all the fact that the arms race has devoured immense technological, economic, and human resources desperately needed for socially useful investment. The never-ending struggle for "deterrence" supplies a handy pretext for dismantling the welfare state, which conservatives have placed on the agenda in the US, Britain, and West Germany. Each new cycle in the spiraling arms race heightens the contradiction between wasteful military production and social progress, between nuclear "modernization" and economic stability, so that the linkage between corporate interests, militarism, and economic crisis has become more and more transparent. Secondly, nuclear politics has become a useful (if extremely risky) mechanism for extending US domination over Western Europe at a time when its worldwide hegemony is being seriously challenged, whether in Japan, the Middle East, or Central America. And the European ruling classes are happy to gather beneath the American nuclear umbrella as a means (however illusory) of preserving their own hegemony.

Thirdly, the new-cold-war atmosphere which accompanies the latest wave of militarism is profoundly antidemocratic, as E. P. Thompson has noted.4 Not only are decisions involving "national security" made without the prior knowledge and participation of the citizenry, but the nuclear dimension pushes capitalism even further along the path of centralized bureaucratic power insofar as it demands secrecy, control, and an enlarged role for expertise. The culture of militarism is no longer restricted to isolated bases and missile launching sites. As Thompson argues, the vast nuclear weapons structure requires an institutional and ideological support system "which researches it, 'chooses' it, produces it, polices it, and maintains it in being."5

For these reasons the new peace movement has a transformative potential more far-reaching than the protests against missile deployment, nuclear reactors, and arms spending. In rejecting the whole militarist infrastructure, it necessarily confronts issues of class and power; by opposing the general
militarization of society, it cannot sidestep the economic crisis or the massive obstacles to democratic participation. Because of its populist character – its ability to bring millions of people into the streets of Amsterdam, Bonn, and Rome, to mobilize people from different strata and outlooks – the profoundly radical implications of antimilitarism (and not merely anti-nuclear politics) have often been ignored. In a few short years this movement has disturbed the old political alignments and, at least in West Germany, has inspired a renewal of left politics. Rudolf Bahro, recently elected to the Greens’ executive committee, may be exaggerating only slightly when he writes that “the peace movement is now at the head of an entire social constellation that is rehearsing the emergence of a new epoch.”

For the Greens, then, the mobilization around “peace” objectives has been from the start a grassroots movement tied to a vision of societal transformation, even if the precise content of that vision and the methods for achieving it remain a matter of uncertainty and debate within the party. If the arms race poses questions of life and death, of survival itself, the solution could not be found in an alarmist moralism or an interest-group politics which hopes to force the power structure away from its irrational, self-destructive course. Therefore the Greens understand the problem as something much deeper: the opposition to militarism in the West is simultaneously opposition to the bourgeois state itself – not merely to specific policies of that state. Out of that opposition, the Greens understand, a fundamentally new social order can be generated.

At the same time, the Greens have insisted upon a concrete point of departure, an immediate unifying focus. The NATO nuclear decision of 1979 has provided such a focus. The imminent stationing of these new missiles, which in a period of heightened international tension would transform Europe into the main potential “theatre” of nuclear conflict, has done more to galvanize the Greens than anything else. Casual references by US leaders to the possibility of waging a “limited” or “tactical” nuclear war, plans for development of the neutron bomb, and Reagan’s increasingly bellicose anticommunism have only stirred this passion further. The missiles have thus evoked a sense of urgency – not to mention some apocalyptic nightmares – propelling millions of people to action. In West Germany the Greens consciously situated themselves in the midst of this turbulence, and their popular support has spread more rapidly than anyone had imagined in 1979. The Greens are the only party to challenge every myth of the new cold war; and they are the only party ready to launch militant demonstrations, including blockades of the nuclear sites, to keep the missiles out.

In her public letter to SPD chairman Willy Brandt, Petra Kelly, one of the founders of the Greens, reaffirmed that getting the missiles out of West Germany (and Europe as a whole) was only the first step in a much longer process. It was not enough to dwell upon negative sentiments. Through massive civil disobedience, as well as relentless political education and debate, the struggle for a rational society based upon non-violence would have to continue – missiles or no missiles. “What we are talking about,” she wrote, “is a decisive movement of the people against the experts and bureaucrats, of optimists against pessimists and cynics, of the grassroots against the repressive state, of dreamers against crude manipulators.” Reflecting the Greens’ official position, Kelly characterized the superpower game of nuclear one-upmanship as a ridiculous but macabre charade and urged commitment to the forgotten “peace” statute (Friedensgebot) of the West German constitution. To this end the Greens have called for a bloc-free Europe coinciding with a “nuclear-free zone stretching from Portugal to Poland,” the cessation of all exports of arms and
nuclear reactors, the dismantling of domestic reactors, and the ultimate overturning of the entire military apparatus. What this portends, according to the Greens’ Rainer Trampert, is nothing short of a “peaceful civil war.”

Since faith in elite initiative is out of the question, the Greens insist that reversal of the arms race must begin with local movements, through a series of unilateral steps. Unilateralism is not only thinkable but probably unavoidable given NATO’s long record of combativeness — its outmoded anti-communism and ruthlessly dishonest manipulation of the “Soviet peril,” its unwillingness to renounce first use of nuclear weapons, its eager embrace of militarist ideology. While the Greens are hardly naive about the dangers of Soviet militarism, they have concluded that the main threat for Western Europe emanates from NATO, which formulates policies based upon “rhetorical abstraction, distortions, and lies.” Indeed, the “peace manifesto” drawn up at the Greens’ January 1983 congress in Sindelfingen (near Stuttgart) suggests that the Reagan administration is anxious to “arm the Soviet Union to the death” for the purpose of exacerbating the internal contradictions of Soviet society. In any case, the Greens — convinced that the cycle of armaments is virtually out of control — are willing to take risks. Their implicit assumption (hope?) is that, once the dynamic of arms production and deployment is unraveled in the West, Soviet leaders will be hard put to resist a similar logic of antimilitarism within their own sphere.

Global Crisis and “Social Conversion”

The vision of a bloc-free Europe as an initial phase in the struggle for a demilitarized world, as outlined by the Greens, encompasses a Europe that would look much different from the Europe of today. Since nuclear weaponry (like other types of weaponry) has no autonomous logic but is the product of a specific class system, the peace movement will ultimately have to overturn that system if it is to achieve its aims. In the West this means it will have to confront the realities of capitalism and imperialism. This is not a matter of tactics or methods, but a matter of whether the goals can in fact be realized in practice. Initially, this means coming to grips with the global economic crisis which is doubly connected to militarism: the arms race both contributes to the crisis and serves as a ploy to mask it or at least deflect attention away from it. The Greens, who during their infancy have been divided over how to strategically link the issues of peace and the economy, nonetheless agree that they should be integrated within a single framework of analysis and struggle.

In the case of West Germany, the global crisis has meant the end of the Wirtschaftswunder — a prolonged economic miracle during which the population had come to expect affluence and nearly full employment as virtually a natural legacy. Throughout the 1960s and 1970s the West German economy was in the vanguard of capitalist dynamism and stability; sustained industrial growth, a favorable balance of trade, and technological advantage underpinned this dynamism and made the mark one of the world’s strongest currencies. By the early 1980s, however, the system entered a downward spin: unemployment rose to 10.4 percent (two and one-half million workers), fiscal crisis gripped the major cities, social services began to stagnate, and the environment could no longer endure continuous ravage. Moreover, the Keynesian synthesis which had worked so well during the years of prosperity — state intervention for the purpose of staving off cyclical decline — was itself in crisis, with the phase of Social-Democratic expansion giving way to a harsh period of austerity, labor discipline, and cuts in social spending typical of the capitalist world as a whole. But the rapidity of economic decline resulted in greater disruption in West Germany than elsewhere. First, the seemingly durable compact between the
more fundamental was the lack of a clear theoretical outlook from which to move toward post-Keynesian initiatives. Finally, at Sindelfingen the party arrived at a series of tentative proposals in a thirty-nine-page program which merges the views of the “ecological” and “Marxist” wings on a broad range of economic issues. The proposals were stated in the form of intermediate demands calling for strong measures to roll back the power of large corporations and banks, a gradual shift away from private ownership toward a socialized and decentralized economy, a broadening of workers’ control, vast increases in “ecologically sound” forms of social investment, and reduction of the workweek (to thirty-five hours) as one method to combat unemployment.11 For the longer term, the Greens pointed to a society reordered on the basis of “new forms of production,” new social priorities, ecological equilibrium, and grassroots self-management. But the underlying theme which runs through the Greens’ program — and the major source of their uniqueness — is their commitment to “social conversion.”

The importance of social conversion in the Greens’ outlook is that it establishes a dialectic between militarism and the economy.12 To speak of total ecological reconstruction refers to a distant visionary goal that can only be reached by progressively cutting away at the military sector and redirecting those resources into socially useful (and ecologically viable) production — by shifting from weapons to housing, education, health care, transportation, the environment. In West Germany, where more than 3 percent of GNP is consumed by the military, such a transition could redirect nearly $100 billion in just a few years. Yet even this quantitative shift would only be symptomatic of deeper structural changes toward a new system of production based upon ecological equilibrium. The point is that for the Greens the struggle against militarism takes on a material as well as moral dimension.
Social conversion therefore connotes more than a simple transfer of resources from one sector to another — more than another Keynesian scheme for getting capitalism on the road to recovery. It signifies an all-out attack on the corporate power structure which in the pursuit of growth and profit is ruining the earth and threatening to destroy it completely. The radical departure of the Greens from social democracy could not be more obvious. Their goal is to avoid the old statist pattern of nationalization, jettison the technocratic system of “co-determination” in favor of full workers’ control, reverse the obsession with production for its own sake, and put an end to Europe’s exploitative relations with Third World countries. As Bahro puts it, this type of transformation suggests the need for a complete break with the industrial system as we know it.\textsuperscript{13}

There is ample disagreement within the Greens over how far, and in what ways, to extend such a radical ecological vision. Marxists like Thomas Ebermann, for example, remain attached to a more traditional workerism; they are suspicious of any outlook that would subordinate class struggle to other priorities. Still, a strong consensus has evolved around the notion that the economy and ecology are more indivisible than ever, and that even from the standpoint of immediate reforms drastic measures have to be taken before the violent impact of capitalist industrialization becomes irreversible. Thus air and water pollution must be brought under control, radiation must be curbed, blighted urban areas must be restored, more livable human space must be created, occupational health and safety standards must be improved, and health care must be democratized. The Greens estimate damages to the West German environment to run at about $25-30 billion annually\textsuperscript{14} — damages so vast as to defy the kind of technological restructuring or cosmetic touching-up favored by the CDU and SPD. The political means for carrying out these reforms — not to mention the more ambitious long-term objectives — will require imaginative solutions and probably novel organizational forms. Unfortunately, the Greens to date have offered little beyond vague generalizations as to how the new “ecological society” might come into being.

“Modell Deutschland”:
The Greens and Social Democracy

The European peace movement cannot be understood apart from the social conflicts which have grown out of the economic crisis. While the NATO plans to station new missiles on the continent have catalyzed this movement, its real political strength (and radical potential) derives not from a single set of demands or a general moral appeal but from its organic relationship to emergent popular struggles. Insofar as the Greens in West Germany are the most mature expression of these new struggles, their logic clashes in many ways with the logic of conventional politics.

The West German two-and-one-half-party system (the CDU, SPD, and Free Democrats) has evolved into an increasingly bureaucratic apparatus that functions to repress democratic initiatives from below and to narrow public discourse. Based upon a form of “pluralistic integration,” the system was from the outset cut off from all manifestations of popular insurgency.\textsuperscript{15} It is a network held together by a corporatist bloc of parties, business interests, and unions converging within an authoritarian state — the legacy of the SPD’s ambitious Modell Deutschland which sought to guarantee an extended period of material prosperity linked to social peace and political stability. From 1969 to 1982, the SPD administered a welfare-state capitalism which seemed immune to the destabilizing forces at work in other advanced countries. Its ingredients were technological rationalization, a labor-management contract involving some degree of “worker participation,” state regulation of the economy, repression of the
political Left associated with the rise of the infamous *Sicherheitstaat* (security-state) — and of course a limited move toward detente, or *Ostpolitik*. Its premises were state control, endless industrial expansion, and, in the area of international politics, complete subservience to US foreign policy.

This “German model” is of course hardly specific to West Germany — nor does it have anything remotely in common with socialism, a goal which in any case the SPD abandoned long ago. As Samir Amin suggests, European social democracy (including Eurocommunism) in fact represents a drive to enhance the competitive position of various national or regional economies within the international capitalist division of labor.\(^\text{16}\) It is clear that the SPD (whether under Helmut Schmidt or Hans-Jochen Vogel or some other leader) has exhausted its oppositional role in West German society. In the language of one observer, it has never really built a “culture of opposition” — only a type of “state consciousness” tied to winning positions of institutional power.\(^\text{17}\) While still a party of limited social reform within the boundaries of Keynesian welfare-statism, with roots in the German labor tradition, it is a righteous protector of the status quo. Some activists within the left wing of the SPD, and within the Young Socialists, remain hopeful that the party can be forced leftward by events or by the incursions of new popular movements. Perhaps, but the internal bureaucratization of the party, along with its lengthy record of conservatism while in power, suggests that such hopes are probably illusory.\(^\text{18}\)

The German model was ultimately bound to generate its own discontents and marginals who were not willing to go along with the imperatives of the administered society. Indeed, by the late 1970s the corrosive effects of the economic crisis, new-cold-war militarism, and institutional stagnation were apparent. The SPD, enmeshed in the state system and wedded to the old technocratic solutions, wound up trapped in its own *Sicherheitstaat*; the party was saddled with the legacy of unemployment, deteriorating urban housing, repressive laws, and of course the NATO nuclear decision. In this context the drastic erosion of SPD electoral support on March 6 should have come as no surprise. The Greens took advantage of the impasse to occupy an expanding space to the left of the SPD.

The Greens, like many of the new popular movements of which they are an expression, have so far pursued a course rather distinct from that of the Social Democrats. First, while hoping to advance on the terrain of electoral politics, the Greens do not define power as simple control of the central state apparatus but view it as a broader network of social and political relations to be
transformed throughout the whole of society. Further, in contrast to the SPD, the Greens have a populist distrust of powerful elites and large-scale organization, and they are hostile to the bureaucratic methods especially typical of the West German party-system; their definition of democracy, based upon themes of local self-management, is a grassroots model which transcends conventional pluralism. Thirdly, in Petra Kelly’s words, radical change must proceed from the vitality of a “subversive counterculture” with its own community centers, printing presses, publications, stores, cooperatives, and self-help institutions. Finally, in their ideal of an equal relationship between industrialized and Third World countries, their emphasis on “peace” issues, and their view of nationalism as a source of militarism, the Greens have affirmed (however tentatively) a logic of radical internationalism. All of this naturally gives rise to an alternative political style — one more directly confrontational, open, and nonconformist, yet more sensitive to the ethos of nonviolence which permeates Green ideology.

Within the Greens one finds a certain impatience with references to sacred theoretical texts of the past — a tendency sometimes regarded as “anti-theoretical” by Marxists. Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg, Gramsci, Mao — these writers are generally read and respected, but they are rarely seen as having the final word on any contemporary problem. “Theory” in the Greens’ usage does not refer to a fixed body of ideas but to a living, ecumenical, ever-changing conceptual framework; quite clearly the idea of single vanguard leadership or single agency of change is incompatible with such an approach. As Daniel Cohn-Bendit, now a Green activist in Frankfurt, suggests, “Traditional theories and ideologies stand little chance of success here since no one can postulate the avant-garde role of the working class as simply and as naively as in the past.” If there are limits to such eclecticism, the Greens argue that it is really the only viable modus operandi for a politics that has been characterized as a “gathering of movements.”

Of course the Greens represent much more than a clearinghouse for the new movements. While a coherent “Green ideology” in the customary sense does not really exist, their analyses, insights, and programs in fact verge upon the kind of post-Marxist radicalism appropriate to the coming phase of struggles — an uneasy blend of Marxism, ecological radicalism, feminism, new leftism, and expressions of the “alternative culture.” Whether this type of “new politics” can be solidified, or at least translated into a viable political strategy, remains to be seen. Whether it can expand over time without being absorbed into the corporatist West German party system also remains to be seen. On this point the Greens’ initial success in passing the 5-percent barrier demonstrates very little — but they are probably the only hope.

Some Dilemmas and Obstacles

A specific congruence of events and issues has allowed the Greens to establish a genuine oppositional presence in West Germany. Their entry into national parliament has only legitimated in some small measure the radical demands of previously developed social movements. If recent Green electoral successes provide cause for optimism, it is necessary to take into account the problems which lie ahead, since the capacity of the Green leadership to handle such problems will set limits to further successes.

No doubt the most perplexing short-range dilemma will be how to respond if US-NATO efforts to politically defuse the peace issue — for example, by arriving at an arms limitation agreement with the Soviet Union — are somehow fruitful. Since the NATO nuclear decision was a catalyst for Europe-wide mobilizations, removing this issue from popular attention could easily undercut the popular movements; and it would probably erode the sources of Green support. One
Morgen?

Je mehr wir uns für den Krieg rüsten – um so weiter entfernen wir uns vom Frieden.

Jetzt abrüsten!

Die Grünen

"Tomorrow? The more we prepare for war, the more we distance ourselves from peace" Greens poster
possible scenario is a shift in NATO strategic emphasis from nuclear to conventional weapons. Given the explosive upheavals that would almost certainly accompany future moves to deploy US missiles, planners have already discussed transition to a conventional “deterrence” force relying upon a sophisticated computer-based weaponry that is far in advance of what the Warsaw Pact countries can hope to possess for some time. One such system, called “Airland Battle 2000,” would deploy “smart weapons” using electronic guidance systems more accurate than, and nearly as devastating as, many tactical nuclear weapons. The NATO commander, General Bernard Rogers, has indicated that NATO could dispense with at least 6,000 short-range nuclear missiles if this plan goes into effect.23 The question which presents itself is: Since the peace movement has so overwhelmingly stressed the danger of nuclear holocaust, where does the deadly threat of conventional militarism enter into the picture? Even if the nuclear question is not diminished in the popular consciousness, the peace movement — and the Greens — will be left vulnerable so long as a comprehensive antimilitarist strategy is lacking.

The Greens will continue to receive criticism, especially from older Germans, that a program based upon unilateralism is naive in its failure to deal with the Soviet role in the arms race and with the Soviet “totalitarian” threat. Regardless of the validity of such opinions, they reflect fears that are widely held in the West, and the Greens have yet to sufficiently produce their own analysis and response. So far the Greens have proceeded, very tentatively, from certain basic assumptions: that militarism can never be abolished strictly on the level of elite negotiations; that a “defenseless” West will not actually have to worry about Soviet military conquest (or at least that any attempt at conquest could be resisted by means of a broad-based “social defense” network); that internal opposition to Soviet and Eastern European re-

30th Anniversary of Liberation from Hitler-Fascism and War, From Plakate Gegen Den Krieg}
their current fragile phase of identity-formation. In national politics, the reality of a strong CDU government permits the Greens to defer this decision. But at the local level there will be strong forces pushing toward alliance (especially where a majority in state legislatures is possible), and there will be risks either way — of absorption in the case of alliance, of isolation and sectarian decline where autonomy is maintained. As the Greens improve their electoral position, this dilemma will almost certainly sharpen.

The Greens have yet to establish close relations with the main West German trade union confederation (the DGB) — a source of much discomfort within the party. Until their January congress the Greens, preoccupied largely with peace and environmental issues, did not address the traditional economic interests of workers and even sidestepped programmatic discussions of unemployment. The SPD, in its well-known Scharting Report, criticized the Greens for “anti-labor” sentiments and for sometimes sounding like neo-conservatives in their attack on the welfare state. And in fact three Green city councillors in Bremen, who were later expelled, even voted with the CDU on issues of social spending. The Greens, without retreating from their primary commitment to the popular movements, recently set out to correct this problem; for example, they cooperated with DGB leaders in working out a preliminary program for social conversion. Still, the earlier charges were grounded in a good deal of truth, and the Greens will surely have to live with an anti-working-class image as they seek to expand their base.

Finally there is of course the familiar problem of political absorption — a fear which the Greens discuss often, since “autonomy” is valued highly in the party discourse. In fact integration is not very likely under present conditions: the party is small, and the issues which have propelled it into the West German public sphere are more urgent than ever. But rapid electoral growth could create pressures toward assimilation into the party system which even a determined leadership might not be able to resist. Recognizing this, some of the Greens’ leaders have privately joked that the party will be in trouble once it receives more than 7 percent of the vote. In a more serious vein, they have begun to devise a strategy of “local majorities” which, if successful, would counter any integrative tendencies at work in the Bundestag.

For the present, however, the gulf between the Greens and the dominant party structure is too vast for absorption to be a pressing issue. Because they constitute a threat — even if not a classical insurrectionary one — to the West German power structure, the Greens have been subjected to ideological assaults which the SPD has not encountered since before World War I. They have been repudiated as “enemies of parliamentary democracy,” “enemies of economic progress,” and even romantic nationalists. They have also been scorned as hopeless “utopians,” to which Petra Kelly replies: “The goal of a decentralized, democratic, and non-violent society is often viewed as utopian, impossible. But the opposition to slavery was once seen as utopian too.”

Footnotes

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1. The Greens have often been characterized in the media as a formation which appeals to the “anti-growth,” romantic, and conservationist sentiments of the rural population. In the March 6 election, however, Green appeals were centered mainly in the large cities, where the party won eight percent of the vote.

2. Prior to 1983 the Greens had overcome the 5-percent barrier in seven of the eleven German states, winning a combined forty-eight seats (including nine in Hamburg and eight in Hesse). Compared to similar initial efforts
elsewhere, these results are impressive. The Greens’ first failure was in the 1982 Bavarian election, when they narrowly missed with 46 percent of the vote. More recently they fell short in traditionally conservative Schleswig-Holstein as well, winning only 3.4 percent in March 1983.


5. Ibid., pp. 20-21.


7. It is generally agreed that the CDU electoral victory did not constitute a clear go-ahead for missile deployment. Recent polls had shown that far more than a majority (up to 70 percent) oppose the NATO decision. This apparent contradiction can no doubt be attributed to a greater salience of issues related to the economic crisis during the campaign.


9. This scenario is discussed by Trampert in an interview in Die Zeit, March 4, 1983.

10. The basic Green perspective on world politics is contained in Die Grunen: Das Bundesprogramm (1982), pp. 18-19.


12. Petra Kelly stresses this critical point in her letter to Willy Brandt, Frankfurter Rundschau, November 16, 1982.


14. The figure cited by Trampert in his Die Zeit interview is 50-70 billion marks annually.


18. Very few if any of the Greens’ leaders believe that the SPD is capable of a fundamentally leftward shift. Roland Vogt, one of the Greens’ founders, insisted during an interview that I conducted with him in December 1982 that SPD overtures to the Greens were not genuine but were motivated by a fear of losing voters to the Green challenge on the left.


20. These points are conveniently overlooked by critics of the Greens and the West German peace movement who somehow see only a resurgent nationalism (and romanticism) associated, presumably, with the prospect of a united Germany emerging out of convergent struggles in both the East and West.

21. After the March 6 election Green parliamentary deputies were put to the test immediately by a Bundestag regulation, or “dress code,” which stipulates that members must wear a suit and tie. After considerable debate, the Greens agreed to a token concession: only one of their twenty-seven deputies would appear in the sanctioned attire, and that deputy would be a woman!


24. There is some evidence of a split between leaders and constituents on this question. For example, on the Giessen (Hesse) city council, where four Greens are representatives, the vast majority of Green supporters indicated that they favored closer cooperation with the SPD while the councillors were far more reluctant on this question. Frankfurter Rundschau, October 24, 1982.


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THE GREENS:

Ecology and the Promise of Radical Democracy

John Ely

The Green movement in West Germany is blooming. Having only really begun in 1977, "the Greens" (die Grunen in German) are newly arisen. In this short time, though, they have already formed a movement which is cohesive and interconnected. It is a movement which offers the potentiality of creative social change in a world which seems otherwise to be heading over the edge. They are an exciting beacon indeed.

Yet if one has been reading the mainstream press in this country, the excitement and hopeful potential of the Green movement is not readily apparent. Rather one gets vague reports of rioting and bashed heads, political turbulence and instability, discomforting anti-Americanism and infectious Dutch pacifism, and, worst of all, there are distinct, foreboding undertones of "back to nature" as "blood and soil" national-socialism. It is important to look closely at the Greens, because their reality is far different from the picture one gets in the press.

The Green movement represents above all the struggle for a new kind of democracy — a struggle which has begun to challenge the hierarchical and repressive forms which permeate every aspect of bourgeois industrial society. It is a movement that seeks to radically transform social and political life in the direction of an egalitarian, ecologically balanced system
that would in the long run deepen the objectives of both peace and socialism. As the British writers Richard Oldfield and David Taylor suggest, the Greens have more than any other contemporary movement "firmly established the links between feminism, ecology, non-violence, and direct democracy."\(^1\)

**The "Rainbow of Opposition"**

It is generally recognized that the Greens are opposed to nuclear power plants — a commitment which was the starting point of their movement — and that they are also firmly against the deployment of nuclear weapons. What is much less understood about their politics, however, is that they are against centralized power, or domination, in all forms: the power of "civilization" over nature, the power of men over women, the power of managers over workers, the general power of bureaucratic, corporate structures over the community and the individual. They are against all polluters of nature, whether it is done by the techno-bureaucratic Communist states or by corporate capitalism. In place of such hierarchical forms and practices, the Greens advocate self-empowerment, direct democracy, decentralized decision making: the basis of an ecological society that would demarketize social relations and give everyone a direct voice in the creation and management of life.

Composed largely of people concerned with the environment, feminism, and peace issues, the Greens constitute what many of them call a "rainbow of opposition." The rainbow includes radical squatters from West Berlin, recent immigrants from Turkey and younger second-generation Turks, peace activists, punk rockers, the elderly, single mothers and lesbian feminists, intellectuals disenchanted with the Social Democrats, environmentalists, pacifist Christians, and even some anarchists in the tradition of Peter Kropotkin and Gustav Landauer. "A rag tag assortment of obstructionists, extremists, and idealists," The Washington Post called them.\(^2\) But the Greens' ideological and social diversity reflects the historic connections that the Greens have been trying to establish — connections between centralized technology and centralized political power, between the bureaucratization of the state and the nuclear family, between institutionalized warfare and violence to women, between Marxism-Leninism and the oppression of gays and lesbians.

What seems to unite all of these groups and tendencies more than anything else is the struggle for a new kind of politics, a new kind of democracy. In this sense the vast majority of Greens reject the corrupt and authoritarian politics characteristic of the West German party system; they reject interest-group, corporatist politics-as-usual. Nor do they envisage a substitute "radical" party which would simply conquer the existing institutions of state power, fearing that this would simply reproduce the old centralist and bureaucratic traditions. For the Greens, this solution would produce either rigid Jacobin forms of state control or degenerate into tiny, irrelevant ideological sects typical of the early 1970s.

**Toward a Practicing Democracy**

The Greens reject the facile equation of democracy with parliamentary government or the party system. Authentic democracy for them exists when active participation of all citizens becomes so commonplace and generalized that it makes no difference who manages any one office because everyone can ultimately take their turn. Furthermore, a real *practicing* democracy is not viewed as a fixed "state" to be "preserved" once it is "achieved," but rather as a goal that is strived for within the framework of ongoing grassroots struggles. Thus a "strong" democracy — that is, a system which could maintain the cohesion, balance, and yearning for ever more developed democracy, which could prevent authoritarian, militaristic leaders from destroying the will of the people — is
created by constant participation which breeds a politically active and committed citizenry.

Insofar as this is democracy, then the Greens, and the new popular movements of which they are a part, do constitute a historically important departure. For they are posing the question of nothing less than radical democracy. As George Katsiaficas tells us, they have “generated a loose form of tactical organization within which many people participate in democratically formulating programs, making decisions and debating differences.”

“Open general assemblies,” he says, “have been the final decision-making bodies” for many of the diverse elements which make up the Greens, as well as the “alternative list” and squatters of West Berlin, the Zurich radicals, the Christiania communards, and the alternative and squatter culture in Amsterdam. These assemblies try consciously to nurture political consciousness and maximize participation. They consistently involve hundreds, and sometimes even thousands of people; yet decisions are reached in such groups by consensus as much as possible. To anyone who has ever worked by consensus in large numbers, this is a stupendous achievement; yet it has become a matter for consistent, everyday practice in Europe.

The “limitations” of participatory democracy do not appear to be restricting the effectiveness
of the Greens — or the peace movement in general — any more than weighing 140 pounds rather than 350 restricts an individual. One of the key principles of ecology is a sense of proportion, size, and place: here the Greens are seeking to work in sizes appropriate to democracy. Smaller coordinating and task groups, systems of recall, and networking are used to connect these assemblies so that the entire larger system is organized along decentralized, democratic, "bottom-up" lines. National and international actions have been coordinated involving immense numbers of participants — the Bonn anti-nuclear mobilization of October 1981 numbered well over a half-million people — but the calls for these demonstrations have been put out by locally organized, short-term action committees.

Of course, the Greens have not rejected parliamentary politics altogether, as their continued involvement in local and national elections demonstrates. What is interesting, however, is their utilization of parliamentary action in a new and innovative manner, seeking at every opportunity to gain new institutional power only to funnel it back into the grassroots. At each stage, the Greens are seeking to bring representative forms closer to the community — to the local legislative bodies, to the new popular movements. To ensure this kind of close contact, the Green activists who have been elected to the state parliaments and to the Bundestag will only serve two years out of the four for which they were elected; the remaining two years will be served by alternate delegates. The chairpersons of the Green federal coordinating committee are likewise only serving two years.

Short terms and rotation are only two of several structural changes the Greens are making to bring decision making back to the sphere of popular democracy. For example, they have elected their delegates to the state legislatures on the basis of imperative mandate. This means that the delegates must carry out the policy already determined by Green activists in general assemblies, referenda, and other expressions of direct democracy. Resources are shared too: thus the Hessian state representatives are to receive only $720 of their $2,000 monthly stipend, with the remainder going into an "ecology fund" used to finance Green projects such as experimental farms, appropriate technology, renewable energy sources, and studies on the environment.

This constant process of reforming at the grass roots, of rechanneling energy, resources, and decision-making power back to the local level, the community sphere, and the popular movements
is vital to understanding Green electoral practice. Electoral politics is therefore never seen as an end in itself but rather as a single component in a much broader set of activities. The Green approach, as one member put it, has a “playing leg” in parliament and a “standing leg” outside of it. The steady base of the movement is outside the parliamentary sphere: electoral politics is used as a place to make waves.

Employing this approach, the Greens can more effectively reach out to new constituencies and gain a certain measure of legitimacy. This legitimacy, however, is not taken as it exists and re-legitimated as a new “power over” with “radical” leadership. It is rather exposed as inauthentic, and used to empower the grassroots, to transform constituencies into re-politicized and active citizens. Tony Catterall, writing in the New Statesman, characterizes this situation as follows:

When the Greens got the balance of power in Hamburg after the elections in June [1981], the pundits speculated on how long it would be before they became integrated into the political system. But for the Greens it is the other way around. “We want to integrate the established parliamentarians,” said [their federal spokesperson Lukas] Beckmann: to break the pattern that their hide-bound, party-line thinking has forced them into. 5

The Greens are rather suspicious of state structures, the party system, and representative government. As one member of the West Berlin alternative list put it, “Our major interest is not in passing new laws or generally in expanding government activity. On the contrary, emancipation from the state, citizens’ initiatives, and self-rule take precedence for us.”

This innovative approach to “mass” electoral politics also denotes a growing consciousness of the personality types which are cultivated by the size and shape of political forms. The Greens are profoundly critical of an instrumentalist politics where “leaders,” “experts,” and “technicians” manage objectified “resources,” whether these are “human resources” or “natural resources.” In the new language of the Greens, as John Vinocur observes, “everything that is bad is technisch, rechnerisch, or buchhalterisch – technical, mathematical, or bookkeeperish.” 6 The concept of “mass” politics, and the definition of people as statistically predictable, manageable entities, as depersonalized scientific masses, is strongly rejected. As Herbert Rottgen points out, the age-old leftist usage of the term “masses” is being consciously jettisoned, giving way to a greater emphasis on individuality and personal diversity. 7 Even the New York Times has noted that the new Green parliament members “do not much resemble the average politician.” For example, in referring to Doltr Rauch, a Hessian state representative, the Times described her as “a soft-spoken 32-year-old schoolteacher and mother of two” who “seems more at ease in a heavy sweater and coveralls on her farm . . . than on the political stump.” 8

One telling aspect of the Green movement is that there have been no major “leaders” who have “risen to the top.” Despite the American media focus on two of the major spokespersons, Lukas Beckmann and Petra Kelly, I was told by one West German peace activist visiting the US that there are “no Lech Walesa types” in the Green movement. Doltr Rauch, from all reports, seems rather characteristic of Green activists. The Greens who stood for the Hamburg city-state elections, for example, included teachers, students, a social worker, a dockworker, a newspaper editor, and two school children! As the visiting peace activist said, the Greens are very suspicious of politicians and leaders, whether they are bureaucratic or charismatic, parliamentary delegates or “radical” celebrities. The notable phrase about the “standing leg” and the “playing leg,” he noted, was made up by “just somebody” who was interviewed outside the Hessian parliament during the elections. Most of the Green delegates are just “ordinary folks” – not professional politicians or corporate
figures — who want to maintain a relatively low profile.

Party and Movement

If the Greens have been able to develop such a radically innovative approach to democratic politics, the crucial question is whether or not such a process can become more generalized, or whether it is likely to become marginalized. How great an influence the Greens can exercise over the long run remains to be seen. There is no doubt, however, that they constitute a force to be seriously reckoned with. The Greens are far stronger than their electoral presence alone would suggest, since they are primarily organized outside of parliament. Their much stronger presence in local and extra-parliamentary forums — their “standing leg” — is a reflection of the instability of West German electoral politics. Willy Brandt, who is no doubt reassessing his earlier statement that the Greens are “political trash,” is trying to bring the Greens, whom he regards as the SPD’s “lost children,” back into the fold by tilting the party slightly leftward. Yet the SPD leaders might find this a dangerous game to play, since it could easily backfire. A suggestive lesson comes from Hamburg, where 8/15 proposal by local Green organizers to declare the city a “nuclear-free zone” split the SPD organization down the middle.9
It is important to remember that the Greens originated as an extraparliamentary movement, evolving “outside the system” — through antinuclear power protests very similar to (though much larger than) those in the US at Seabrook and Diablo Canyon. Such protests have grown out of creative acts of coordinated civil disobedience. The construction of the “Free Republic of Wenland” (a name taken from the region’s traditional title) in Gorlaben from May to June 1982 was a perfect example. More than five thousand activists occupied a newly selected drill site for the disposing of radioactive wastes, and in just two weeks literally built the small town of “Wenland” over the site. Local farmers, most of whom opposed the nuclear dump yard, provided food, additional timber, and other materials for building the “republic.” It ultimately consisted of several alternative energy displays, a huge tower, a bicycle repair shop, large dining areas, child-play centers, a women’s center, and more. During the four weeks of occupation, imaginative illegal underground radio programs were broadcast, passports were issued bearing the name of the “republic,” and newspapers were published and distributed throughout the region.\(^\text{10}\) As in the early actions at Seabrook, the Wenlanders remained committed to nonviolent forms of struggle.

Wenland represented a small episode in comparison with other antinuclear protests in West Germany — for example, those at Brockdorh and Whyl — which mobilized tens of thousands of activists in massive confrontations with the police. The protesters at Brockdorh bridged the wide moats and cut down hundreds of yards of double fence covered with barbed wire to break onto the sites, while police helicopters bombed them with tear gas and water in the freezing early-spring conditions.

The more recent protests against the Frankfurt airport expansion have extended and refined these tactics. Hoger Boerner, the SPD premier of Hesse, became public enemy number one for the Greens when he ordered the destruction of a thousand acres of forest to make room for the new airport runways. Opposition to this NATO-inspired project was mounted in the second half of 1981 and has built since, involving many thousands of activists. In June 1981, a group was formed to collect 120,000 signatures required for a referendum to block the airport expansion. A few months later, activists built a Huttendorf (hut village) in part of the woods that authorities were preparing to cut down, just as they did at Gorlaben. In this case legal tactics were supplemented by creative, nonviolent forms of direct action, including acts of sabotage like hammering nails into the trees to break the blades of the power saws.

In response, the Airport Corporation sent in the police to destroy the village with clubs, gas, and bulldozers. Resistance on the spot was minimal, but the efficient alarm system of local citizens’ initiatives brought swift results. In the words of “Konrad S” from Berlin:

Students spontaneously left school, elderly villagers were alerted by church bells, hundreds and perhaps thousands of workers came from the giant Opel factory to join the “chaotics” in the woods. The police, assailed with branches, rocks, and shotgun projectiles, reacted brutally. A Protestant minister described the battle as one of the “worst scenes in my life, with blood and screams like during the war.” In the following days, the battleground shifted to Frankfurt itself, where the train station was blocked, store windows were smashed and phone booths were blown up. The police continued to bash heads, sometimes pursuing opponents into residential buildings and courtyards, only to be pelted from the windows with bottles and flower pots.\(^\text{11}\)

What was remarkable about these protests, aside from their scope, was the diversity of the participants. Konrad S. observed that “reporters were stunned to see otherwise law-abiding citizens hurling stones at the police.” Against the Social Democratic order and its technocratic vision of the Modell Deutschland — the “model Germany” — the ecological utopianism of the Greens was
(the French Socialists) or is simply allowing the US to do the job (as the SPD in West Germany is doing). Rudolf Bahro has captured this wretched form of “socialism” magnificently by calling the German SPD the party of “moderate exterminism.”

Dispelling the Distorted View of the Mainstream Press

Under the present conditions, repeated SPD attacks against the Greens for their “disrespect for democracy” or “nationalism” are nothing short of ludicrous. Because the Greens do pose such a vocal alternative to the established powers, it is hardly surprising that smear campaigns would be initiated both in West Germany and the US. As in the case of Reagan’s pitiful attempt to smear the Freeze movement in the US, these campaigns only reveal the strength of the radical challenge. The American response is typified by John Vinocur’s *New York Times Magazine* article, entitled “Germany’s Season of Discontent,” which describes the Greens as possessing “a little xenophobia, a little romanticism, a little feeling of victimization, and rich slices of moralizing and pessimism.” The new “ungovernability,” the “clouds of instability” have, according to Vinocur, “deep roots in the dark corners of German romanticism.” For Fritz Stern, the Greens are “fanatic opponents of nuclear energy” reveling in “tumultuous irresponsibility” whose rise marks “the return of cultural despair and the reemergence in politics of the German soul” — a soul that “was full of understandable apprehension” and “deserved to be taken seriously.” It was the *Sturm und Drang* (“Storm and Stress”) of the pre-Hitler youth all over again. For Holger Boerner, the Greens are “declaring war” and for the *Economist* they are “on the march.” The *Economist* further concludes that the Greens are intensely nationalist because they don’t seem to like American missiles very much.

Such remarks have been validated by no actual examples, not to mention serious discussion: they simply constitute a blatant smear campaign based upon guilt by coincidence on the part of some of the leading corporate publications. It is quite difficult to imagine a greater disparity than that between the radical democracy of the Greens and the hierarchical, elitist organization of the Nazis or even of the Christian Democrats and SPD. It is further quite clear that the only forces of organized media manipulation and militarist violence that can even begin to compare with the Nazi phenomenon are coming from the West German government itself (whether the CDU or the SPD is in power).

The police forces which destroyed the non-violent Gorlaben encampment were 8,000 strong and comprised the largest deployment of police strength in Germany since the days of Hitler. According to one observer, the police “violently
united with the humanism of the Evangelist Church. Protesters identified as “upstanding citizens” joined forces with “masked freaks in sneakers,” according to the daily reports.

An already substantial West German antinuclear mobilization grew more dramatically in response to President Reagan’s escalation of the new cold war. The protest in Bonn in October 1981 was the biggest of the postwar period. In September, amid a series of guerrilla attacks on US military personnel and bases, nearly 80,000 people demonstrated against Alexander Haig’s visit to West Berlin. More than 7,000 police were needed to guard Haig, and in the resulting turmoil hundreds were arrested and at least 150 police were injured. In March 1982 there were rallies in every major West Ger-

man city, including many which had seen no political activity since the 1960s. Thousands marched in Hamburg, Bremen, Stuttgart, and elsewhere. The city of Freiberg experienced the biggest mobilization (some 21,000) in its history. In West Berlin, 15,000 people surged into the downtown Kufuerstendamm area, trashing chic stores and heaving jewelry and fur coats into the gutters.12

In June 1982 more than a half-million people gathered in Bonn to protest Reagan’s visit, and when he arrived in West Berlin on June 11 he was greeted by more than 100,000 protesters. In a city which has many collective feminist squatters and “witch houses,” several thousand feminists were out in black with their faces painted, playing drums, cymbals, and castanets as they wound a procession through the city. Most recently, the Easter weekend demonstrations of 1983 drew an estimated half-million marchers protesting the planned deployment of new US missiles.

Demonstrations like these have constituted the “standing leg” of Green activity; they comprise the basis of a large extraparliamentary movement that reaches into other areas of Western Europe (for example, Britain and Holland). The radical West Berlin daily, Die Tageszeitung (with a circulation of more than 50,000), estimated that participation in March 1982 easily exceeded the high points of the late 1960s.13 Taking all factors into account, the popular movements in West Germany today are the largest in northern Europe since the collapse of the Spartacist League in 1919. This collapse marked the gradual shift toward a reformist Social Democracy which ultimately lost its Marxist roots and made a durable pact with corporate capitalism. European social democracy, which conceded to narrow nationalist sentiment in World War I, has managed to retain its bureaucratic and militarist heritage up to the present, whether it is pursuing an independent path toward nuclear oblivion by building its own nuclear force.
(the French Socialists) or is simply allowing the US to do the job (as the SPD in West Germany is doing). Rudolf Bahro has captured this wretched form of "socialism" magnificently by calling the German SPD the party of "moderate exterminism."14

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*Karin Kramer-Verlag, Squatters, From Wandmalereien, Berlin*

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The police forces which destroyed the non-violent Gorlabin encampment were 8,000 strong and comprised the largest deployment of police strength in Germany since the days of Hitler. According to one observer, the police "violently
attacked the sitting Wenlanders, as well as numerous reporters and photographers, and outraged thousands of people around the country.” At the larger demonstrations in Brockdorf, more than 20,000 police and soldiers were mobilized “to protect the construction site; the demonstration was declared illegal before it began; and it was rumored that U.S. troops at nearby bases were given ‘shoot to kill’ orders in case any demonstrators decided to attack U.S. nuclear weapons.”

Similar confrontations occurred during Reagan’s visit to West Germany — one which the New York Times aptly called a “gilded vacuum.” Reagan’s isolation, the Times pointed out, “created an eerie atmosphere surrounding the pomp and ceremony of his travels.” He stayed out of the public eye, communicated almost entirely by means of television, and stopped mainly at fortified settings where photographers but no reporters were permitted. Here indeed are the “wolf lairs” and police security of Germany’s past. This fascist manipulation of Reagan’s visit was most apparent when he visited West Berlin. There, near the elegant Charlottenburg Castle, he spoke to a crowd of 20,000 invited guests who were all waving the same symbol of nationalism — the American flag. The square where Reagan spoke was sealed off by trucks and ringed by police and rolls of barbed wire; outside, meanwhile, more than 100,000 people staged every conceivable type of protest — from silent marches to pitched battles with the police — despite the fact that all demonstrations had been declared illegal before Reagan’s arrival. Said one member of the alternative list: “While Reagan was singing the praises of the G.I.s, the Nollendorfplatz was being turned into a mass detention camp.” One cannot help but note the striking parallels with Poland, where exactly the same tactics were used to separate the loyalists of Jaruzelski’s military regime from the protesting citizens, workers, and youth of Poland.

There have been none of these violent, manipulative trappings among the Greens. They don’t carry flags, they don’t march, and there is virtually no leadership mentality. They don’t fetishize economic or technological “progress.” They exhibit, moreover, a cultural diversity and a clear abhorrence of the mass uniformity that Hannah Arendt argued was the crucial element of Nazi totalitarianism.

The Greens are also strongly internationalist, and their anti-Americanism must certainly not be confused with nationalist tendencies. As Daniel Cohn-Bendit observes, “I won’t deny that there exists among the ecologists . . . some bizarre components, but they have nothing to do with a return to German nationalism. This is simply not true. The forces of nationalism are all in favor of the double resolution of NATO and for rearmament.” Rudolf Bahro likewise argues that the main impulse toward authoritarianism comes from the right wing of the CDU rather than from the Greens or the peace movement. Indeed, as Bahro suggests, “there is no better long-run anti-fascist guarantee in this country than a well-founded alliance, intellectual and emotional, of socialists and ecologists in a growing Green movement.”

Green politics have consistently supported this contention. One sign of internationalism has been the Green sponsorship of several conferences attended by groups and delegations from around Western Europe. Perhaps even more significant has been the high degree of solidarity expressed at the various demonstrations, attended by activists from many countries. The Greens’ show of support for Third World struggles has also been militant — as reflected, for example, in the thousands who have turned out for the many rallies protesting US intervention in El Salvador.

At the same time, while the West German peace movement has been criticized for not rallying behind Polish Solidarity, the Greens — along with the Socialist Bureau, the Sponties, and large sections of the squatters’ movement — were direct
and open in their support and in their rejection of the Polish bureaucratic regime. Since the Greens are the only real political party whose platform coincides with the demands of the peace movement, they have refused to adopt a partisan outlook in favor of either East or West. As Petra Kelly has written:

To regret events in Poland and to demand more armament is plain hypocrisy. To help Poland means to create conditions that make both NATO and the Warsaw Pact equally superfluous as well as all the other troops in the lands of Eastern and Western Europe. Their rejection of nuclear weapons is only the first, but precisely for this reason indispensable step, on the long road toward this goal. 21

The Ecological Alternative

The Greens have developed a theoretical critique rooted in the problems of bureaucratic centralization and the generalized “increase in the forces of production” that undercut not only the basic premises of capitalism but also certain precepts of Marxist theory. As Bahro observes, “Without overcoming the ecology crisis, which puts into question the very existence of human civilization on this earth, the mere possibility of a socialist goal — the general emancipation of human beings, men and women, becomes an illusion.” Hence the whole drift of the Greens, suggests Bahro, is away from a Marxian concept of “emancipation in economics” and toward an “emancipation from economics.” 22 Just as a number of small Marxist sects have dissolved to join the Greens, so too the Marxist emphasis on quantifiable economics is resisted. Likewise, Marxism’s separation of the subjective laborer “man” from nonhuman, “objective” nature is dissolving into Green ecology. A while back in the Baden-Württemberg state legislature, for example, one of the Green members stood up and said he was the parliamentary representative of all of Germany’s toads, since they had to be protected from use in radioactive experiments. 23

Metaphors for biological growth and flowering have become central. “Movement” is not meant in the mindless Newtonian sense, the “cause and effect” of billiard balls; rather, it is the Aristotelian sense of animate development. As the conservative Swiss journalist Hugo Buher reports:

This crowd, then, considers the Russian-October-type revolution a failure, and does not count on the “long march through the institutions.” Rather than thinking up great Marxist-rational revolutionary strategies, they now endeavor — taking up the fashionable rhizome metaphor — to “build networks, dig multiple canals, to create an environment, occupy nooks and crannies, to assail the State, to crumble it...” Such concern gets condensed into vivid images and slogans like that one that says: Let’s make the State into cucumber salad. 24

The rhizome metaphor is part of a new reawakenedness on the part of the Greens that the living realm of nature and the human realm of production and communication have been perceived as separate — objects and subjects. This is particularly apparent in the realm of economics, whether bourgeois or Marxist. For the Greens, economic “growth” is a gross distortion of the word growth; as industrial civilization has “advanced,” the biosphere has become more simplified and less characterized by new biological development than previously. This does not simply mean that industrial “growth” and economics fail to account for the added social costs of environmental damage. The Green impetus is to reconnect in humanity the profound relationship between itself and other forms of life, not only in their productive aspects but also in political and linguistic terms. In this sense ecology is not simply a response to capitalism, but inevitably confronts the larger “crisis of civilization” in general.

While such an approach seems utopian, it is not really “utopian” if what is meant by the term is “abstract” or “unrealistic”; on the contrary, the Greens put forth a project that is manifestly concrete insofar as it represents a dynamic concept of
reality. It recognizes the unity of means and ends to the extent that there is an organic linkage between utopian goals and the practical concerns of today and tomorrow. In order to achieve an ecological society, one begins by transforming one’s life along ecological lines in the present — just as the way to achieve democracy is through the constant practice of democracy. To the complaints that they are “impractical” or “unrealistic,” the Greens respond that there can be no separation of means and ends: technical problems are practical, moral problems, and vice-versa. Hence an ecological world is not only a “goal”; it is also a way. If Green “theory” becomes a discursive utopian vision and a critique of the humanity/nature dualism, then Green practice becomes a culture of utopia rooted in a new mode of living.

If the Green process of change can be likened to the process of living growth itself, then there is a great deal of potential in the Green alternative. For a tree cannot grow into a nuclear power plant; the practice of democracy cannot lead to an undemocratic way of life; and the everyday communism of the Greens — expressed in their alternative “economy” — cannot cultivate a grasping bourgeois egoism. Just as in life itself, as long as the Green movement maintains its integrity, its diversity, and its commitment to radical democracy, it can only grow.

Footnotes

13. Ibid.
20. Bahro, Socialism and Survival, p. 36.
23. Vinocur, “Germany’s Season of Discontent.”

JOHN ELY is a student in Middletown, Connecticut. His most recent political affiliations have been with the Clamshell Alliance and with the New England Anarchist Conference (NEAC).
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Wir lernen schnell! Von Euch!
LETTER FROM
EAST GERMAN WOMEN:

Voices for Peace in the GDR

The document we reprint below is from East Germany (officially, the German Democratic Republic, or GDR), a country not often associated with autonomous women’s initiatives. This letter, written to the head of state, Erich Honecker, signed by 150 women, is not unique as a protest against an expanded militarism within the GDR. In fact the East German state confronts a growing unofficial peace movement and perhaps now an unofficial women’s movement.

The cause of peace is official policy in the GDR, but the official “peace committees,” mouthpieces for state policy, direct their attacks only against NATO weapons, not against the weapons and militarism of the Warsaw Pact states. The unofficial peace movement is searching for an alternative peace to the one propagated by the state, which demands expanded arsenals. The opposition’s response to official party peace rallies has been to organize discussions which raise more fundamental questions: who is to blame for the arms race? Is there any moral justification for nuclear weapons? Is pacifism an answer? The opposition’s concern goes beyond the presence of nuclear weapons to the militarization of daily life. Two thousand East Germans have signed “The Berlin Appeal” which calls for a nuclear-free zone in Europe, and there has been opposition to the introduction of military education into high school curricula.
In both struggles Protestant clergy played a central role. The church's peculiar position in East German society, independent of Communist Party control yet circumscribed by it, provides a space from which some opposition/dissent can be posed. Many nonreligious youth have appeared at church services, less for the "word of God," more for dialogue and activity against militarism. The emblem of the unofficial peace movement, the religious "swords into ploughshares" symbol, also ironically the Soviet logo at the UN, has been banned. Yet defiance of that ban is widespread and creative. The Protestant churches used the emblem to headline their call for a Peace Week in November. Many people had sewn or embroidered it onto their clothes or displayed such decals on their schoolbags or purses. Police have been directed to arrest or forcibly remove the symbol from the clothing of those wearing it, while schools have threatened students with either removing it or being sent home. In response, the students have begun to wear blank patches! The church's long-standing antagonism to militarist values has, in the context of the accelerating arms race, taken political form in a growing protest which neither the cautious church hierarchy nor the state can completely contain.

Into this explosive mix came the government's new Military Service Law with a clause providing for the conscription of women in times of national emergency. The women's letter of protest, a direct response to this clause, indirectly raises issues that are significant for the peace movements in both East and West. Perhaps most significantly, this document represents one of the first instances of autonomous women's organizing against the state in a society in which women's "emancipation" is official policy.

The letter is interesting for both its content and the responses it has elicited. Foremost, the women are opposed to the arms race and to the incursion of the military into daily life. Yet the state's extension of conscription to women has forced a confrontation with the meaning of gender in a society that declares formal equality between men and women. The process of drafting this letter found the women involved for the first time in a women-only group, creating a space in which they discussed their own self-image and their perceptions of their role in East German society. While they drew on traditional notions of womanhood to express their opposition to military authority, the women were stunned by the derisive reactions to their protest. Many of the women have been called in by their bosses, sometimes in the presence of a state official, to discuss their activity. They have been accused of using coercion to obtain signatures. While most have been asked to withdraw their signatures, none have complied.
The women reported their reactions to visitors from European Nuclear Disarmament this past winter. "At first we were relieved because it could have been worse. But when we thought about it, we began to get angry because we were not even taken seriously. Our action was trivialized. It was even intimated that we must be under someone else's influence because women could not write such an articulate letter. One woman's husband was called in and told to keep his wife under control." The allegations of "outside influence" continue, with the authorities now attributing the women's action to the influence of "weird ideas" from the West. Even as the official line has hardened, people are not afraid to continue their activities. As in the US during the Vietnam war, it has been in the context of conscription that East German women have been moved to rethink their status in the culture — holding up the possibility that they, too, in their anger may begin talking about "women's liberation." This would then give life to the distinction between liberation and the official terms of "emancipation" which have assured women jobs and day care but deny political content to the psychological and cultural dimensions of women's lives.

Since writing their letter, many of the women have resolved to continue meeting as women to discuss personal/political issues. They have discovered that they "have really enjoyed meeting as women and finding a common approach. It has meant that men are not dominating the conversations." The women have expressed their solidarity with women in the West involved in disarmament movements and in particular with the women of Greenham Common. It is interesting in this regard to note that while the Soviet and Eastern bloc press has given extensive and favorable coverage to the Western peace movements, it has been notably disgruntled about autonomous women's peace initiatives, even when they have galvanized huge demonstrations such as the one at Greenham Common in December.3

Noting the failure of the state to guarantee a public discussion on the new conscription law, the women also challenge the state on another account: democracy. Here they emphasize the critique made by Soviet Professor Arbatow, who exposes the ways in which people are denied access to information on the issues of weapons, war, and peace. The women's call for a public dialogue claims the right of the citizenry to decide what policies guarantee peace.

The women's action has caught on. Similar letters are now being signed and circulated in other parts of East Germany. The women make it clear that they are not "dissidents," the kind projected in the Western media as anticommunist and pro-Western. "I was born here, this is my country," explained one woman to the British visitors. "My friends and family are here. I don't want to leave. I don't want to live in your system. I just want the right to criticize this one." Radical America believes that activities such as these occurring in the East, through which people find common ground against their governments, signal a new kind of internationalism, which we hope to continue to report on.

Margaret Cerullo and Marla Erlien


MARGARET CERULLO and MARLA ERLIEN are editors of Radical America. They visited West Germany, the Netherlands, and Britain in the fall of 1982 and are currently involved in the women's and peace movements.
Dear Head of the Council of State

We would like to communicate to you something of our concerns with regard to conscription for women in the new law on Military Service passed on 25 March, 1982. We are women with and without children, Catholics, Protestants, and nondenominational. Some of us have lived through a war, others have been spared that dreadful experience, but one thing unites all of us. We do not feel apathetic and do not wish to give our assent through silence to a law which imposes completely new obligations on women, obligations which can not be reconciled with the way we see ourselves.

We women wish to break the circle of violence and to withdraw from all forms of violence as a mode of conflict resolution.

We women do not regard military service for women as an expression of our equality, but as standing in contradiction to our existence as women. We regard our equality as consisting not in standing together with those men who take up arms, but in solidarity with those men who have, like us, recognised that the abstract term "enemy" in practice means destroying human beings, and this we reject.

We women regard willingness to stand by for military service as a threatening gesture which is an obstacle to the aspiration for moral and military disarmament and which results in the voice of common sense becoming submerged in military discipline.

We feel that as women we have a particular mission to preserve life and to give our support to the old, the infirm, and the weak. Working for peace and against war must be located in the social and educational spheres, if we are not to fail the future generations.

We women resist the idea that we should one day be expected to stand in the ranks of the NVA (National People's Army) and to defend a country which would be uninhabitable, even after a conventional war, which in Europe would in any case probably culminate in a nuclear catastrophe.

We women believe that humanity is today teetering on the edge of an abyss and that the accumulation of more weapons can only lead to an insane catastrophe. Perhaps this terrible end can be avoided, if all the questions which arise from this fact are publicly discussed. According to article 65, paragraph 3 of the Constitution of the GDR, draft laws of a fundamental nature are supposed to be aired in public before being passed, so that the results of this public discussion can be taken into account in the final wording of the law. In our opinion, this law is of such a fundamental variety because of its content and not least, because it directly affects half of the population of the GDR.

We women declare that we are not prepared to be conscripted for military service and we demand the legally guaranteed right to object to being drafted. The right to conscientious objection is necessary because our freedom of conscience has been restricted as a direct consequence of this law being passed, with its imposition on women of the obligation to do general military service.
Since it has not been possible to conduct public discussions of this law, some of us have requested such discussions by means of petitions. Others of us had hoped to be able to participate in the resulting dialogues. Unfortunately, these hopes have been dashed, since no one was prepared to begin a dialogue with us about the questions which concern us so urgently.

We were encouraged to raise our questions with you once again by the speech delivered by Professor Arbatow, member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences during the recent peace congress of different world religions held in Moscow. We request that those responsible for the new law governing military service be prepared to engage in public dialogue. You are undoubtedly acquainted with Arbatow’s speech, but we would nevertheless like to quote a few sentences from it.

Professor Arbatow relates among other things to the moral and psychological supports of the arms race and refers to the myth that the stockpiling of weapons and military forces would contribute to security.

All these myths promote the arms race. Nowadays they attempt to veil them by means of complicated concepts and riddles by using terminology which is incomprehensible to the lay person. I do not exclude the possibility that this is done deliberately in order to distance themselves from the “uninitiated,” from the “man in the street.” They even say sometimes that this hypothetical person should not be allowed access to information on nuclear weapons or matters of war and peace because he/she would only confuse and undermine everything. But this is in my opinion precisely the greatest, most dangerous, and most detrimental myth of all. . . . This problem ought to be solved through the active participation of all those who are committed to the service of people, not weapons.

We could not have found a better argument for the necessity of our petition.

We ask that you facilitate a public dialogue.
PICTURES OF THE HOMELAND:
The Legacy of Howard Fast

Alan Wald

For nearly fifty years Howard Fast has produced novels that have entertained millions of people while also introducing them to radical politics. Many of today's liberal and socialist activists grew up in households that had copies of Citizen Tom Paine and Freedom Road on the bookshelf. A new generation is encountering Fast's books in the high schools, where several of them are standard reading. Now sixty-eight years old, Fast recently completed a series of four best-selling novels: The Immigrants (1977), which also became a two-part television film, Second Generation (1978), The Establishment (1979), and The Legacy (1981). Dramatized in these works are racism, class prejudice, war profiteering, labor struggles in the Great Depression, the Spanish Civil War, the McCarthyite witchhunt, and the rise of the new radicalism in the 1960s.

Such a career might be cause for celebration among those who would like to see fiction with a radical perspective reach a broader audience. What is discomforting is that none of Fast's books has earned a reputation as a truly distinguished work of art. One can recall some stirring episodes and vivid portraits, but, when compared to outstanding political novels such as Dostoyevski's The Possessed, Silone's Bread and Wine, and Gordimer's Burger's Daughter, much of his writing appears two-dimensional and lacking in subtlety. The
sometimes crude political messages embedded in many of Fast's novels may elicit discomfort as well. While the notion of a direct correlation between political line and literary quality has long been discredited among serious Marxists, Fast's career suggests to me the importance of recognizing that an author's relation to particular kinds of ideology may in certain instances enhance or narrow the scope and complexity of artistic vision.

Fast's literary career began to take shape mainly while he was a supporter of the liberal-Communist Popular Front in the latter half of the 1930s; he joined the Party during World War II, when the Popular Front was once more in full swing. The cultural orientation of the Popular Front was distinct from the proletarian literary line that prevailed during Communism's "Third Period" before 1935; it celebrated "little people" instead of workers and waved the flag of idealized patriotism instead of socialist internationalism. In technique, radicalism's traditional ties with the avant garde were definitively broken during the Popular Front. What we now call Modernism (typified by Eliot and Joyce) was condemned as antipeople and protofascist, and replaced by Hollywood and Broadway. At one time, endorsement lists for Communist-initiated cultural activities were headed by John Dos Passos and Edmund Wilson; in the Popular Front days they were replaced by Rex Stout, Donald Ogden Stewart, Dashiell Hammett, and eventually Howard Fast, whom Leslie Fiedler characterized as the Communist movement's "most faithful middlebrow servant in the arts."

However, the young Fast made an individual contribution to this development. While he tended to choose famous subjects and historical events as the topics for his novels, he frequently focused on lesser-known episodes, taking an unusual angle of presentation or even telling the story from the reverse of the conventional point of view. He also refused to idealize many of his historical portraits—frankly depicting George Washington as troubled, Tom Paine as a drunk and a braggart, and John Peter Altgeld as having ascended to power through corrupt means. Furthermore, the books frequently had a clear thesis that had more to do with his own political philosophy than with the fashions of the moment. Most often Fast wanted to make some point about the universal nature of the struggle for freedom. As a literary technician, he was frequently praised for his narrative skill and flair for characterization—important qualities in any writer.

Nevertheless, from the start of his career there were some commentators who noted an affinity between Fast's technique and the conventions of mass culture. For example, Conceived in Liberty (1939) was said to be "like all other great war stories that people have been reading for twenty years; only the setting is different." In the 1940s several critics noted that Fast gave his short stories happy endings that were a "concession" to the magazines where they first appeared. In the following decades his work was observed to have the "flavor of a movie spectacular," with much of the dialogue "escaped from the women's magazines or daytime television." The novelist Harvey Swados argued that "Mr. Fast's conception of history is really not that much different from that of Cecil B. De Mille."

To these negative observations we can add that there are facets of his career that have elicited the charge of opportunism. While in the Party his books were sold widely in Soviet-bloc countries where he was vastly overpraised, which may have been a factor in the longevity of his membership. In fact, the USSR, where he was regarded as a world-class novelist, awarded him the Stalin Peace Prize in 1954. Immediately following his sensational break with and public excoriation of the Party in The Naked God: The Writer and the Communist Party, he dashed off to Hollywood to become a scenarist for Universal, Paramount, Pennabaker, and Hitchcock studios. Finally, even though
historical novels have been the center of his work, he gives an appearance of having swamped his major efforts in a deluge of stories for children and adolescents, simple history books with photographs and drawings, science fiction stories, mysteries, Zen stories, and a score of books that he himself calls "entertainments."

Yet the view of Fast as an opportunist money-writer hardly explains why he produced explicitly Communist books such as *Silas Timberman, The Story of Lola Gregg,* and *The Passion of Sacco and Vanzetti,* published by his own press and paid for by his own resources, during the height of the Cold War when no commercial publisher would touch him. In 1950 the House Committee on Un-American Activities ordered him to provide the names of all those who had contributed to the support of a hospital for Spanish Republicans in Toulouse, France, with which he had been associated during the Spanish Civil War. When he refused, he was thrown in jail for three months, during which he wrote most of the novel *Spartacus.* Blacklisted upon his release, he initiated his own Blue Herron Press and turned the novel into the only self-published best seller in recent history.

The point is that during the Cold War, Fast was not writing on fashionable topics but produced according to the social and political convictions that were both the inspiration for and objective of his creative drive. Had American mass culture in subsequent decades become dominated by right-wing sentiments, he might have drifted into obscurity. Instead, the shift in our culture to the more democratic, antiracist, and antiwar moods of the 1960s and 1970s made possible his return to the best-seller charts on a more regular basis. Even the series of books about "wise, brave and gallant women" he has issued under the pseudonym "E.V. Cunningham" — such as *Phyllis, Alice, Shirley, Lydia, Penelope, Helen, Sally, Samantha, Cynthia,* and *Millie* — and his detective novels about a Nisei cop, Massao Masuto, working out of the Beverly Hills Police Department, contain social criticism that would be unacceptable in a less liberal cultural environment. So the reason for Fast's new success is not simply that he accommodated his art; American culture changed as well.

The manner in which Fast dramatizes his political ideas in fiction is clearly demonstrated in the plot of his newest series of best sellers that traces the rise to fortune and power of the fictional character Daniel Lavette. Lavette is the son of Franco-Italian immigrants who settle in San Francisco in the late nineteenth century. Orphaned by the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, he uses his fishing boat to create a financial empire during World War I. His personal life is torn between his wife, a Nob Hill socialite, and his mistress, the librarian daughter of his Chinese bookkeeper. The mistress finally becomes his second wife at the end of the first volume, *The Immigrants,* allowing Fast to sustain throughout the rest of the novels a contrast between Lavette's two sets of relatives — the snobbish and bigoted WASPs and the decent and hard-working Chinese.

Although Lavette loses his fortune at the start of the Great Depression, he returns in the second volume, *Second Generation,* to his millionaire status through another windfall of war profits, made this time during World War II. However, May Ling, his second wife, is killed by stray bullets while visiting Hawaii during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Lavette then remarries his WASP wife and the focus thereafter shifts to their daughter, Barbara, a novelist and journalist.

Barbara never subscribes to any radical ideology, but she breaks from her mother's elitist bigotry and her father's cynicism about social reform by aiding longshoremen in the period just before and during the 1934 San Francisco General Strike. Harry Bridges appears in the novel as a minor character. Then she moves to Paris, where she falls in love with a French journalist who dies of wounds incurred in the Spanish Civil War. At the end of
Second Generation she marries Bernie Cohen, a Jew who resembles her father in every way except that Cohen's passions are abetting Zionism and killing Nazis instead of aggrandizing wealth.

At the start of the third volume, *The Establishment*, Cohen becomes a gun-runner in Palestine at the time of Israel's formation and is killed in combat with Arab troops. Meanwhile, Barbara is framed before HUAC and eventually serves a prison sentence for refusing to divulge the names of people who gave donations to the Toulouse hospital where her French lover died.

The final volume, *The Legacy*, takes us into the 1960s where, after a brief marriage to a Los Angeles publisher rendered sexually impotent by his inability to break free of his conservative family, Barbara overcomes a writer's block by researching a historical novel about the wife of an American president. She watches her son, Sammy, and his cousins and friends, become active in the new political movements against racism and the Vietnam war. Barbara herself becomes a feminist and the founder of Mothers for Peace.

The Lavette novels have a number of features that render them hard to take very seriously. Their structure — the large cast of characters with interconnected lives and the large number of short scenes — is reminiscent of a television soap opera; indeed, one reviewer referred to *The Immigrants* as "soap history." While the didactic quality of the books is nothing new in Fast, the lessons here seem unusually trite and aimed at an audience that watches soaps. In the concluding volume, Barbara learns the social lesson that "there was no happiness in the legacy of the rich," and the personal lesson that the abused notion of love must be replaced by "trust," which is the knowledge that someone will "be there when you need him."

However, it would be simplistic to conclude that Fast has merely tried to dope out what a mass audience is willing to buy and then churned out the requisite product. Fast is trying to reach a large number of people with his values, and there is nothing reprehensible in that. But the very way he conceives of his medium restricts the possibilities of his craft. From the time of the Popular Front to the present, Fast has retained a notion that in order to reach a large audience one's novels must resemble a Hollywood spectacular, and that the typical reader has the sensibilities of a rather unreflective movie fan; this most recent effort
amounts to sugarcoating his messages in a big, splashy, sentimental story. We like to think that authentic artists simply write their best in the hope that readers will eventually respond to such an effort on its own terms. Of course, the truth is that most artists probably have to struggle somewhat before making a few necessary compromises with publishers and the expected audience; but Fast gives the impression that such struggles are far in his past, and that his medium now controls him as much as he controls it.

The result is not only that his art can hardly be assessed outside of the terms one would use in treating mass media, but also that his unique contribution — the left-liberal doctrine with which he infuses his books — is not just simplified but fatally trivialized. He consistently refuses to complicate any matter that he thinks might confuse the reader or distract from the action. For example, Fast is eager to extract just one simple meaning from the witchhunt years: that the McCarthyites framed people as Communist dupes in order to manufacture headlines. And so he fails to address the civil rights of those who were real “subversives” in the eyes of the witchhunters. Thereby he makes it possible for readers to conclude that it is only the excesses and abuses of the HUAC hearings that should be condemned, rather than the entire process. Since Fast’s nonfiction writings show that it was the process itself he abhorred, his attempt to write down to the imagined level of his readers has betrayed his own values.

Further, the social and political essences of the antiwar and women’s movements of the 1960s are embarrassingly trivialized when Barbara becomes a pacifist and feminist leader. Her naive view, as revealed in a major political speech at a women’s rally, is that war would cease if women played a more prominent role in society — because women are mothers and wouldn’t allow their children to be killed. Barbara’s political opposition never transcends this pseudo-analysis. She thinks that the Vietnam war has nothing to do with the right of colonial peoples to self-determination. Similarly, in her capacity as a feminist leader she denies that feminism involves a basic critique of the family as a social institution in class society. The problem here is not that Barbara’s ideas are politically “incorrect”; it is that Fast’s attempt to simplify them for consumption by a mass audience renders them banal to the point of falsifying the historical movements which she leads.

The result, ironically, is that Fast, who has been influenced by Marxism and no doubt seeks to disclose the “real” meaning of history in his novels,
writes books that bear a striking resemblance to the kind of literature that the Marxist critic Georg Lukacs stigmatized as "naturalist," as a means of distinguishing it from authentic "realist" literature. By naturalist, Lukacs meant a work that, regardless of the subjective intentions of the author, only captures the superficial features of reality, as in a photograph or mirror, missing the true complexities of humanity in its dynamic interaction with class and social institutions. Lukacs was not opposed to experimental techniques, difficulty, or ambiguity, as long as artistic goals didn't obfuscate the depiction of social truth in all its complexity.

As an example of naturalist simplicity, Lukacs pointed to Zola, a socialist who produced his books according to a theory of scientific determinism; as a realist counterpart, he cited Balzac, a reactionary monarchist whose artistic grasp of character and social reality brought truths to the pages of his books that his own philosophy would deny. If the character of Barbara Lavette, who was born in the same year as Fast (1914) and who shares so many of his experiences, was intended to reveal the political dimensions of his life with more candor and subtlety than can be found in his nonfiction writing, the results are disappointingly "naturalist." The multi-layered human drama of being a member of a corrupt Communist Party in a corrupt capitalist society is simply evaded by depicting Barbara as an innocent non-Party member victimized by unscrupulous right-wing politicians. The social truth of the McCarthy era is only superficially captured.

Part of the explanation for Fast's inability to develop more fully as a "realist" in Lukacs's sense may be that, despite several phases in his political and philosophical evolution, he has never outgrown a constricting style of thought and some erroneous assumptions about the functions of art that he acquired from the ideology in which he was immersed during his formative period. Even today, with his Communist Party membership twenty-five years behind him, this latest quartet of books, especially The Legacy, still exudes the Popular Front sensibility of the late 1930s and World War II years. It does so first of all in its promulgation of a simple "progressive" program of peace and liberal reform that will appeal to "the masses," but also in its promotion of relationships among good people of all classes and races and in its absence of precise ideas and emotional candor. It is intriguing that Fast has changed so little, and also that the public is so responsive. That this
orientation, first championed by the Left five decades ago, could be reborn in a national best-selling series of novels in the 1970s and 1980s, impressively testifies to the real power of Popular Front ideology; it also seems to confirm Harold Rosenberg’s observation that “collapsed ideologies are not blown away by the winds. On the contrary, they spread throughout our society and take the form of popular culture.”

This shrewd observation, about the ideological origins of ostensibly unsystematized popular thought, was part of a polemic against the “middlebrow” — a type of writer with which Fast is sometimes identified. The middlebrow is usually depicted as one who is posing as a mediator between the complexities of high culture and a mass audience intellectually unprepared for those complexities — although in truth the middlebrow is operating on the principle that culture is a commodity to be sold for profit. The argument that Fast is a middlebrow in spite of his radical politics is largely based on the interpretation of Popular Front culture itself as a middlebrow phenomenon.

It is true that after World War II the Popular Front collapsed and Party chairman Earl Browder was expelled. But Fast never felt very comfortable with the subsequent shift in cultural policy from celebrating an idealized American democratic tradition to excoriating the defects of the same tradition. In fact, when he eventually broke with the Party he was in sympathy with John Gates and other “neo-Browderites” who sought in large measure to return the Party’s politics to the old Popular Front days. In 1957, shortly after Fast made public his resignation, Irving Howe predicted that, since middlebrow values are “pervasive to our time . . . the middlebrow in Fast may yet survive the old Stalinist, bringing him success of a kind parallel to that which he has enjoyed during the past two decades.”

This astute prediction, striking as it is, stems from the rather simple notion that the middlebrow writer fabricates his or her books to respond to whatever standard is set by public demand — which is the only standard that interests one who sees all literary subjects as commodities to be exchanged for money. But this formulation and its assumptions do not embody an adequate appreciation of the nature of the creative process (How easy is it for a writer to consciously and successfully write beneath his or her genuine talents?) and of the legitimate desire of some artists to exploit conventional forms and themes in order to influence a wider milieu. Furthermore, Howe’s prediction does not anticipate that the ideas promoted by the Popular Front of the 1930s and 1940s might percolate down into popular culture at a future time, as they apparently have.

The point is that the dismissal of Fast by Howe and other critics as merely a middlebrow — that is,
as one who pretends to respect the standards of serious art but who actually waters them down, vulgarizing them for profit — is too constricting and unfair to be the last word about his achievement, even though it does disclose some important features of his technique. His early works in particular display strengths of craft and creativity that, under other circumstances, might have enabled him to develop into a novelist of greater distinction. In the 1940s he made a unique mark on our literary history that ought not to be undervalued. Furthermore, there is nothing in money-making activities, extreme productivity, or widespread popularity that inherently discredits Fast as an artist. Edgar Allen Poe was an unabashed money-writer, Balzac was incredibly prolific, and The Education of Henry Adams was a leading best seller in 1919.

Of course, no one has yet suggested that Fast is an author of the same importance as Poe, Balzac, or Adams. In his case one can legitimately question whether something has been sacrificed because of his emphasis on quantity and by his total devotion to the exploitation of almost every opportunity that arises in the commercial arena. No doubt Fast received a good deal of monetary and psychological benefit from his US and Soviet fame, but it also seems likely that he paid a heavy price for his machine-like production of books and screenplays. In a 1945 critical essay Granville Hicks showed distress that Fast was writing so fervently that he was unable to reflect sufficiently to recognize that some qualities of his work were declining after the high point of Conceived in Liberty, The Last Frontier, and The Unvanquished. He warned Fast that “the creative imagination refuses to be hurried” and pointed out ways in which Fast’s haste was already bringing about carelessness and lack of attentiveness. The problem has only grown worse since then.

Exacerbating this weakness is the shallow eclecticism and lack of clarity reflected in his political thought. He shares this trait with other writers, many of them artistically successful, but it is a special handicap in an author like Fast who puts so much emphasis on the rather simple lessons he programs into his books. Hicks’s 1945 essay correctly noted that Fast’s “naiveté on the intellectual level” rendered him especially inept in treating ideas, pointing out that Fast “only half understands” his revolutionary formulas. Since the 1940s, his formulas have become less reactionary, but he still proceeds at times as if he were sketching in scenes somewhat mechanically on the basis of a simplistic broad thesis. A truly first-rate political novelist ought to give the sense that an active imagination is operating throughout his or her works, which is not incompatible with the transmission of a precise political vision.

In the United States at present, we don’t have to look back to classical novelists such as Balzac to demonstrate the kinds of qualities that seem absent from so much of Fast’s work and that Lukacs honorifically calls realism. The books of writers such as Maxine Hong Kingston, Toni Morrison, and Leslie Silko aim to recreate historical consciousness through the perception of history as a concrete totality and complex process — not, like Fast, by simply depicting the immediacy of historical experience from one person’s liberal or radical perspective. While Fast’s admirable concern with racial oppression led him to oversimplification and abstraction (his black characters in Freedom Road, for example, have been criticized as being virtuous beyond believability), Kingston, Morrison, and Silko dramatize in Asian-American, Afro-American, and Native American Indian settings what Raymond Williams has described as the dialectic between the domination of cultural hegemony and the resistance of residual and emergent cultures. Their protagonists are neither idealized nor artificially “balanced”; they are fully human in Lukacs’s realistic sense of being typical yet individualized. Furthermore, these three
authors have achieved some degree of popularity through their integration of "difficult" ideas — the kind usually identified with "serious" art or high culture — with quite accessible narrative and vivid characterization. This suggests that the old theory of a schism among mass culture, middlebrow culture, and high culture is no longer so relevant today. It may even raise the question of whether it ever was a sound and comprehensive approach to understanding cultural phenomena, rather than a mechanism for legitimatizing the elitism generated by the prejudices of a society divided by class, gender, and race.

Based on what we know about Fast, it would be an overreaction to conclude that politically committed writers should turn their backs on the possibility of reaching a mass audience for fear that their ideas will become trivialized. Such a strategy would run the risk of returning to a form of elitism like high modernism that no longer has the revolutionary impact on our culture that it had in the 1920s and 1930s. Furthermore, one might question whether it is useful to judge Fast's books according to the same standard one would use in discussing a novel by Balzac, Silko, or Morrison, especially when their artistic strategies and objectives seem so markedly different. Isn't there room in our society for a frankly popular kind of writing — a genre of lightweight page turners that provides entertainment and escape along with mild doses of history and politics? If so, shouldn't we be grateful simply for the existence of a writer like Fast who brings relatively enlightened values to a mass-market audience that might otherwise be reading Harold Robbins and Rosemary Rogers?

There are significant problems with this line of argument, but I think it is the most effective way we have at present of responding to the elitism of a single standard for evaluating diverse cultural phenomena. Where I feel it may not do justice to Fast is in regard to the ambiguous promise of his early work. If he had been formed in a different period of American culture or been subject to different influences after achieving his initial success in the 1940s, he might have made a contribution to our literature that commanded more respect even if it had resulted in fewer sales. Simply put, the ideology of the Popular Front inculcated Fast with the notion that radical politics could be transmitted to a large audience in the garb of liberal sentiments and idealized patriotism, all aimed at a reader imagined to represent the "common man." That Fast achieved considerable success in this genre constitutes an important chapter in radical cultural history; that he was unable to develop as an artist or even to sustain the quality of his work is testimony to the inadequacies of this approach.

As it stands now, the legacy of Howard Fast is an ambiguous one. But so are the legacies of many of his predecessors in the history of American literary radicalism, such as Jack London and John Dos Passos. The dilemma of the radical artist's relationship to mass culture in fiction, as well as in film, music, and the other arts, is not one that can be resolved through blueprints, formulas, or precise models. More effective might be an uninhibited and wide-ranging dialogue between young artists and politically active workers and intellectuals about the cultural problems of late capitalism. In isolation, artists seeking a mass audience may well revert to worn-out conventions that may subvert their radical intentions; in the ferment produced by the creative exchange of ideas, at least there is the hope of assimilating the best from the past and forging new pathways to the future.

EYEWITNESS IN GAZA

Ur Shlansky

The Gaza Strip, a sandy area of beach and citrus groves and refugee camps, punctuated to the north and to the south on the Mediterranean coast by the Biblical towns of Gaza and Khan Yunis, lies just above what is now Israel's border with Egypt. It is the least reported of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 – one rarely if ever hears its name in the US news. This is perhaps because it is the poorest of the territories, barren of the valuable land and water resources that make the West Bank the area of hottest contest between Israel and the Palestinians.

In an unpublished manuscript on the political economy of the Strip and the West Bank (London, 1982), British journalist and Middle East expert Sarah Graham-Browne notes: “In Gaza, the artificial economy created after 1948 had a very small productive base. The most important element was the development in the 1950s and 1960s of plantation agriculture, growing citrus fruit mostly for export. Since the early 1970s irrigated vegetable and soft fruit production has also been established. Otherwise the Gaza Strip [has been] little more than a large pool of unemployed labor with a very few small industries and crafts and a very large service sector proportionate to total economic activity.”

After 1948 Gaza passed from British to Egyptian control and then, in 1967, to Israeli. In the early seventies it was Gaza, not the West Bank, that most fiercely resisted Israeli
military rule. Palestinian nationalism — born officially in 1964 with the founding of the Palestine Liberation Organization — was hottest here, especially in the wretched camps maintained by the United Nations Works and Relief Agency (UNWRA) to house the thousands of refugees who streamed here from what once had been coastal and central Palestine. The resistance — which identified strongly with the PLO — was spontaneous. It took a street-guerilla form against members of the Israeli military. In this it was quite unlike the highly organized and sophisticated political resistance network built up in the West Bank.

As Ur Shlansky notes in the article we reprint below, it was Ariel Sharon, head of the Gaza military occupation in the early seventies, who crushed the resistance. Hundreds of homes in the camps were simply bulldozed into the ground, while many residents were killed and hundreds were jailed. As Shlansky notes, Sharon thus ended “a situation in which ‘The Israeli Defense Forces [the Israeli army, better known as the IDF] ruled by day [and] the PLO by night.’”

But Gazan resentments continued festering over the next decade under a myriad of occupation burdens. For instance, Palestinian citrus farms are limited in their water supply. Meters are placed on the pipes by the military authorities: when the meter indicates the stipulated limit, the farmers are forbidden to use any more water. (Israeli settlements in Gaza, as in the West Bank, have no such restrictions.) Palestinians are permitted to export their produce — but only to the Arab countries. Moreover, even this limited access is periodically banned in those towns and districts that incur Israeli displeasure. For strikes and other forms of resistance there are the usual collective punishments legal under a variety of laws. The most important of these laws, the “Emergency Security Regulations,” were inherited by Israel in 1948 from Britain, which had used them against the Zionist underground. (The regulations permit house demolitions, town curfews, mass jailings, and the like as punishment for offenses by individuals.) A special nightly collective security measure levied on the Gazans is a sort of beach curfew. No Palestinians are permitted on the beach after dusk, and every evening and night military jeeps cruise up and down the beach dragging barbed wire that leaves on the sand fine grooves against which the footprints of any trespasser are instantly detectable.
A symbolic as well as a physical blow was dealt Gaza last spring with the division of Rafah — Gaza's southernmost town at the Sinai border. When the Sinai reverted to Egypt, barbed wire was unfurled across the town. Thus, in hours, part of Rafah became Egyptian while the other remained Israeli. Friends and family were torn apart in yet one more episode in the area's long history of foreign domination. On Israel's side of the new border some 150 houses were bulldozed into the ground (allegedly for security reasons). The families were then reduced to living in tents — as their 1948 forebears had done on the morning of the first Arab-Israeli war.

Last spring, 1982, Gaza erupted again after its decade-long slumber. The rebellions were triggered by the demonstrations in the better-known territory to its north, where thousands of people turned out repeatedly in the streets after Israel dismissed from office Mayors Bassam Shaka of Nablus and Karim Khalef of Ramallah, both permanently maimed two years earlier by assassination attempts in which their booby-trapped cars exploded around them. As in the West Bank, Gaza's demonstrations were bloodily quelled by the IDF with the usual mass jailings and town and camp curfews. Late last summer, during Israel's invasion of Lebanon, Gaza town's mayor Rashed a-Shawa, considered the most moderate of all the Palestinian mayors elected in 1976, was also dismissed from office.

Ur Shlansky is a native-born Israeli in his early twenties. Below, we reprint large parts of an article he wrote last spring about the Gaza insurgency for the English-language Palestinian weekly, Al Fajr, published in East Jerusalem. Shlansky was active in the summer of 1982 in the Committee Against the War in Lebanon, which stood openly for negotiations between Israel and the PLO and for the creation of a Palestinian state in Gaza and the West Bank. He is part of the youngest generation of a long, rapidly dwindling minority tradition of Jews who, in Palestine and later in Israel, have stood for full economic and political equality between Arabs and Jews.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 21

The Gaza Strip begins some twenty minutes' drive south of the town of Ashkelon, at a roadblock. A roadblock is a rolled barbed-wire fence, or a strip of metal with protruding nails stretched across a road. The roadblock at the entrance to the Strip has a large tent beside it, with some four or five soldiers — border guards and reservists — who supervise the entry and exit of vehicles and people traveling on this road. A roadblock, as every Israeli Jew and every Palestinian knows, has one purpose — to distinguish, to discriminate, ultimately to set apart Palestinians and non-Palestinians. The roadblock is directed at Palestinians; it is there to scrutinize them, to exercise power over them.

Cars owned by Palestinians can be distinguished right away by their license plates, which are blue or gray in contrast with the yellow Israeli ones. Each Palestinian’s plate bears a Hebrew letter denoting the locality of the vehicle: “R” for Ramallah, “N” for Nablus, “G” for Gaza, and so forth. A Palestinian driver is, secondly, distinguishable by name: an Arab name on an identification card sets its bearer apart as the sought-for object of scrutiny. Thirdly, the identification card distinguishes between nationalities: Jew, Moslem, Christian or, in the more familiar binary fashion: Jew and Non-Jew. In Israel there are officially no Israelis, only Jews and Non-Jews. A Palestinian is also identified by appearance: poverty, sweat and dirt, rotting teeth and matted hair, clothes in a third-world-like assortment of colors. These features signify the Oriental manual laborer after a day's work — the Turk in Berlin, the Algerian in Lyon, the Palestinian in occupied Palestine.

Several kilometers further on past the roadblock, which my friend and I, being Jews, were
allowed to pass unhindered, the driver is given the choice between following the road straight and driving into or through Gaza town or bypassing it, using the alternative route which circumnavigates the town and joins the straight road south of Gaza.

Road planning in Israel aims at bypassing predominantly Palestinian-inhabited regions. When driving from Haifa to Tiberias, for example, one would never know one was driving through an area which is predominantly Palestinian (the Galilee). Arab villages appear on the mountainside, rarely alongside the main road, as quaint reminders of the Galilee’s rustic appearance. Road signs hardly ever offer directions to Arab localities. The same principle guides road construction in the territories occupied in 1967. A cursory glance at projected settlement maps in the West Bank reveals the intention. A Jew living in Gush Segev settlement bloc in Samaria will soon be able to drive to Jerusalem or Tel Aviv without passing through the West Bank, bypassing Nablus and Ramallah and not meeting a single Palestinian. At the same time, Palestinians wishing to go from Hebron to Bethlehem will have to go right through Jewish towns such as Efrat. They will be forced to see occupation. The settlement network and road grid in the occupied territories are designed so that Palestine becomes invisible and the Palestinians objects for inspection and scrutiny.

The Gaza Strip, the center of Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation in the years 1967-1972, was “pacified” by Ariel Sharon, then commander of the Gaza Strip. In an intensive counterinsurgency operation during which tens were killed and hundreds jailed, Sharon brought to an end a situation in which “The Israeli Defense Force ruled by day – the PLO by night,” as Gazans have described it. Although active popular resistance was suppressed, resentment of Israeli rule has remained as powerful as ever. The recent moves by Israel in its attempt to enforce the “Autonomy” plan by instituting a regime of collaborators propped up by Israeli guns and capital was the match which ignited the fire of resistance. That in turn was met with a frightening avalanche of repressive measures.

THURSDAY, APRIL 22

Nine days had elapsed since curfew was imposed on Jabalia. For the ninth day, forty thousand people have been shut up in their homes, allowed out for two hours in every twenty-four to obtain supplies. The hitch is that no supplies were allowed into the camp and the local shops were emptied during the first few days of the curfew.

Jabalia is the largest Palestinian refugee camp. The UN relief agency estimates its inhabitants at forty to forty-five thousand. It is the only refugee camp with an Israeli military compound in the middle: a white edifice left by the British, surrounded by several rows of barbed-wire fences. Sandbags in heaps on the roofs and on the window sills, four tanks parked outside, several jeeps and machine-gun barrels protruding from between the sandbags. An Israeli flag flies atop a tall pole on the roof: the symbol of the liberated Jewish people in its homeland. As a child I lived in Jerusalem and on Saturdays I would go with my father to the border fence which ran between West and East Jerusalem before 1967. My father is not a militarist and at home I was never taught to regard Arabs as enemies. But I so well recall the sight of the Jordanian Legionary border guards, the barrels of their rifles protruding from between the piles of sandbags on the roofs and window sills of houses along the border fence. I knew they were my enemies. I read their hostility in that sight of sandbags and weapons. Uniforms and guns and sandbags speak a language which every child understands.

We tried to enter Jabalia but were not permitted into the camp. We tried the three entrances to the camp but finally had to settle for a view, from the outside, of a roadblock encounter: barbed wire and soldiers with a smattering of vulgar colonial
Arabic arguing with various people who were trying to enter. Because the curfew was imposed on the basis of an order issued by a local commander, very suddenly, many Jabalians who were not in the camp at the time were not permitted to return home. These same people, found outside the camp through customary identity checks, were liable for a heavy fine for breaking curfew. Consequently many Jabalians, workers or students, who were outside Jabalia when curfew was imposed were left with two choices: to remain in hiding at the home of friends or relatives outside the camp or to try somehow to get back into the camp.

Curfew, in a sense, is the opposite of a roadblock. While the latter sets the Palestinians apart and trains the spotlight of power upon them, curfew diverts the spotlight onto the holder of power himself. The only people on the street are the soldiers, patrolling, ascertaining that order is maintained, that people do not leave their houses. Power here displays itself, shows its muscles, and makes the Palestinians into a passive audience, the spectators.

At about four p.m., curfew was lifted for two hours. People streamed into the streets. Children, having been shut up in their homes all day, used this opportunity to run and play. Although curfew was lifted, closure was maintained. No one was allowed into Jabalia, no one permitted to leave it. As food supplies were running low or in some cases exhausted altogether, many women used the opportunity of “recess” to sneak out of the camp,
through the thickets of sabra cacti, and make their way to the nearest grocery store. We saw them walking fast, almost running, with the grocery bags on their heads, trying to keep off the main paths where occasional military patrols could spot them.

Solidarity. My own feeling, when I was growing up in post-'67 Israel, was one of suspicion in the face of the Israeli youth movements every adolescent here encounters, and in the face of the Zionist myths about pioneering. I came to feel these part of the history of the persecution of the Jews -- a history, however, that had been transformed into a quasi-official ideology. By contrast, I thought, as I stood outside the roadblock at the entrance to the camp in Gaza, it is not a history of past persecution but the daily facts of occupation that bind Palestinians together.

FRIDAY, APRIL 23

We spent the day in Rafah, which several days later would become the border town separating Palestine from Egypt. Rafah is much smaller than Gaza and the refugee camp is linked to the town in such a way that it is hard to distinguish the two. We followed an Israeli armored vehicle in its slow provocative glide down the main street. The four soldiers on it were heavily armed and their heads were covered with helmets. The machine gun hoisted on the vehicle was pointing to the sidewalk. The armored jeep came to a gradual halt outside the mosque, just when the worshippers were coming out. I tried to imagine how the worshippers must feel, coming out of the mosque into the firing range of a deadly weapon. Later on that day we learned that a week earlier, the soldiers didn’t wait for the people to come out of the mosque but shot directly into it. We were shown the bullet holes in the walls. Some friends took us for a tour of “Canada” camp. This camp was constructed by the Israelis several years ago after they bulldozed entire sections of Rafah in order to widen the streets and facilitate counterinsurgency operations. Rafah camp residents were permitted to move into the shacks newly constructed in an area previously held by Canadian units of the United Nations troops between 1956 and 1967. Some five hundred families of Rafah refugees currently live in this camp.

The problem for the “Canadians” on April 23 was that their camp was actually inside the territory which in two days’ time was to be returned to Egypt. The residents were not notified, as late as April 23, what their status would be as of April 25. In other words, they had no guarantee that they would be able to continue work or school in Rafah (Palestine). Neither were they
sure that the Egyptian government would accept them. It was a feeling of helplessness that our informants gave vent to.

The border fence, already constructed and prepared for the final ceremony of withdrawal, placed Canada camp on the Egyptian side. In a few places this total lack of concern for the inhabitants could be seen in its absurdity: Four families whose houses happened to obstruct the sleek barbed-wire border fence were ordered by the Israelis to block with cement their doors and windows facing Israel and build doors facing Egypt. In an architectural sleight of hand, Palestinian dwellers of, say, 15 Jaffa Road overnight became residents of 23 Alexandria Boulevard.

The border fence itself, shiny taut barbed wire, mockingly bisected somebody’s fruit orchard. During the April 25 withdrawal celebrations at the newly built border terminal just outside Rafah, the Egyptians shot fireworks into the air. Two out of the four rockets fired actually burst in brilliant colors; the other two ineptly dropped into the orchard, setting apricot trees on fire. Nobody seemed to care. The journalists on both sides were busy admiring and filming the incandescent rockets of light against the grayish sky; they completely overlooked the finer meaning of the Israeli-Egyptian “peace” agreement, which was symbolically acted out on the ground.

SATURDAY, APRIL 24

Persons wounded by Israeli soldiers must pay their own hospital fees. This we learned on a visit to Gaza’s Sh’afa Hospital. In addition, they are subject to heavy fines because having been shot or beaten by soldiers is, in the logic of the occupation, a sure sign that one was breaking a law. As a result, many cases of injury are not reported for fear of further entanglement with the authorities.

In the hospital one learns the many meanings of the term “wounded.” Alongside the twenty or so unarmed civilians killed by Israelis during the last few months, there are tens and possibly hundreds of wounded — adults and children maimed, disabled for life. Many are blinded, many have mutilated faces, many will never be able to bear children, to breathe independently, or to digest their food. We tend to measure the extent of brutality by body counts, not maimings.

Curfew was finally lifted in Jabalia and we drove into the camp we had hitherto seen only from the outside. Jabalia camp — Trenchtown, Palestine. We find row upon row of shacks, mud-huts, tin-huts, block-huts. We find television antennas and masses of children playing in the wide open spaces where homes were destroyed in the early seventies, during Sharon’s “pacification of Gaza,” to make room for the tanks.

SUNDAY, APRIL 25

The day of withdrawal. The actual ceremony was to take place at noon at the main border terminal on the outskirts of Rafah. Only the Egyptians celebrated the final stage of withdrawal. In Israel it was viewed as a national tragedy. Most of the journalists and the television crews had been congregating at the terminal since early morning. In Rafah town there were few reporters. Salah A-Din street, named after the liberator of Palestine
from the crusaders, was to be blocked in the middle with barbed wire. The fence stretched out from both sides of the street. At noon, the two fences were to be connected for the final separation of Rafah-Sinai from Rafah-Palestine.

A group of soldiers was stationed near the fence to supervise the final division of the town, the disconnecting of the electricity and telephone lines, the drilling of holes in the tarmac street in order to attach the barbed wire. The local inhabitants filtered into the street. Women stood in groups and talked, the shopkeepers curiously watched the crews at work, and the children gathered in a growing multitude. No school was held that day because fearing that the children might be left on the wrong side of the border fence after noon, parents did not want to send their children to school.

The scene could roughly be described as a continuous contest between the children who were moving closer to the border fence and the soldiers who were unsuccessfully pushing them back. A sort of ebb and flow of children and soldiers. The soldiers seemed very tense. They pushed the children not so much because the children were actually disturbing the work on the fence but because their presence was deemed threatening by the soldiers. It seemed that the kids obviously realized this and used every opportunity to taunt the soldiers, to argue with them. They appeared thoroughly entertained by the soldiers’ manifest nervousness. I mingled in the crowd and moved back away from the soldiers and the border fence. Then I saw the crowd of people running in my direction followed by the soldiers who were firing. Instinctively I realized that I must run with the children, escape the soldiers, take cover from the bullets. I ran into a half-closed shop where a number of young workers had taken cover. They let me in, grinning. I put a hand on my chest to signal fear, and they smiled.

A problem I faced in this as in other encounters with Palestinians in the Strip was one of disguise: I could not speak Hebrew because then I would have been identified as an Israeli and the people would have been suspicious of me. Neither could I speak Arabic, for then my non-Arabic Israeli accent would have betrayed me as an Israeli. Willy-nilly I found myself speaking English. But then, young Palestinians do not in general understand English well, and I had to settle for expressing myself in a bad English to which I found it hard to accommodate myself. All this was compounded by the fact that the young people speak a fluent, idiomatically rich colloquial Hebrew which they have acquired as laborers in Tel Aviv or in other Israeli towns which attract cheap Palestinian labor. In encounters with foreigners who do not speak Arabic, the young people habitually turn to Hebrew, which for them is the first foreign language. And so I found myself in countless situations in which I was speaking intentionally poor English and was answered back in fluent Hebrew which I had to pretend I didn’t understand.

I recalled the experience of an Israeli friend who participated last November in a demonstration in Ramallah against the repression of Arabs on the West Bank. The demonstrators were assaulted by border guards who lobbed tear gas canisters at them. Many Israelis have expressed the judgment that that demonstration constituted a watershed in the history of the Jewish opposition to the occupation, for it signalled the end to the privileged status of Jewish protestors. I don’t know whether that judgment is valid or not, but it is certainly true that many demonstrators were deeply shaken by that experience. My friend stood among the demonstrators when the tear gas canisters were fired and she could not, for some reason, move herself to run. She had to be led away by local Ramallah youths who watched the entire confrontation from a distance. These youths led her away from the troubled area and gave her a lift in a car to the main Jerusalem-Ramallah
road. They instructed her to put a red Kafieh on her head as a disguise so that the soldiers would not notice her. She arrived in Jerusalem safely but deeply shaken. As a patriotic Israeli she underwent a shattering experience: having to escape the Israeli army disguised as a Palestinian, displaying the symbol of the Fedayoun in order to avoid harassment by the soldiers.

I thought of her as I stood in the shop looking out at the occupation in action. The soldiers were running up and down shooting in the air and lobbing tear gas canisters into the alleys. The kids used every opportunity to run out of the houses, hurling stones, the moment the soldiers moved on. Two vehicles bearing Israeli license plates were demolished in a minute.

The young workers in the shop said to me in broken English, “See what they are doing to us. We shall kill El Yahud!” I heard similar statements in the preceding days and almost as a rule the soldiers were spoken of as “El Yahud,” or “The Jew- ish.” I venture to say that “Yahud” does not mean “Jews” with the European connotation of that term. “El Yahud” means for the Palestinians the soldiers, the Israelis, the conquerors, or, in a general sense, the foreigners. It does not carry with it the anti-Semitic connotations that are attached to it in English. An American friend who recently visited the Galilee told me that although he persistently presented himself as an “American Jew,” just as persistently he was presented around by the villagers as “an American, not a Jew.” This
was due to the fact that the political views he expressed were pro-Palestinian and anti-Zionist.

The Zionists have made immense political capital out of these seemingly anti-Semitic slogans which are rampant in anti-Israeli rhetoric and propaganda. But I think that the Palestinians, or at least the young Palestinians who have only known the Israelis as occupiers and oppressors, are merely using the name that the Israelis use to call themselves, “the Jews.” In the media, in official publications, and in unofficial routine discourse, the Israeli inhabitants of Palestine are referred to by the Israelis as “the Jews.” To accuse the Palestinians of anti-Semitism on the basis of the way they speak and write is firstly to misunderstand their language and secondly to commit an act of slander. It is to impose upon them a uniquely European prejudice and doctrine, a product of European society and culture. When Palestinians speak of “the Jews,” they mean the enemy.

When we returned to Gaza later on that afternoon we heard that Rafah had been placed under curfew.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 27

We visited Jabalia camp again and spoke to two families whose homes had been demolished. The only remains of what used to be the home of two ten-member families were the floor tiles and a wall or two. Both homes were demolished in the middle of the night, on short notice, because the sons were suspected of terrorism.

Demolitions are carried out in Israel on the basis of suspicion, not of conviction. In theory at least, you could be held as suspect, witness your parents’ home being demolished, and then be fully acquitted in court.

The families are not allowed to build on the ruins of the demolished home for a number of years. Consequently they must live on the floor tiles with no roof. At most they may build a makeshift tent in which to sleep during the winter.

Speaking to numerous people in the camp, I was impressed with a sense of optimism shared by the younger generation of Palestinians. I think that in this they differ from the older generation. I was struck by the extent to which the younger Palestinians (under 30) demonstrated a subtle understanding of Israeli society, politics, and culture, deriving from their daily experience as laborers in Israel. Speaking Hebrew, experiencing Israel first-hand, they see Israel not as an all-powerful monolith but as what it is: a society cracked and riddled with deep conflict. In this sense, labor in Israel is exercising a profound influence on the minds of the Palestinians and placing in their hands a view of reality which is potentially revolutionary. These children of refugees were saying something like this: “The Israelis depend on our oppression but we exist despite it! That is the source of our strength and of their weakness.”

UR SHLANSKY is a native-born Israeli in his early twenties. This article is an edited version of an article that originally appeared in the English-language Palestinian weekly Al Fajr.
"THE YOUNG LADIES ARE UPSET":

Organizing in the Publishing World

Phyllis Deutsch

From April to November of 1981, I was one of several employees who tried to unionize our Manhattan publishing company. I was an assistant history editor at that time, and had been at the press for three years, long enough to witness a serious decline in morale due to bad management of both finances and personnel. Since change from above was unlikely, we sought to make change from below. We organized “underground” for a few months, and “came out” in June with a petition to the president of the company and a letter to our coworkers that outlined key issues and goals.

We organized throughout the summer and fall, predominantly at one-on-one lunches or small informal gatherings with coworkers. We also wrote a half-dozen memos which answered recurring questions about unions (mainly about dues and strikes) and held a few parties. Management countered with a barrage of antiunion literature, a series of “captive audience” meetings, and their own one-on-one lunches. Top management unleashed middle-managers on workers wherever possible, and this proved a very effective form of intimidation. Despite the unfailing support of District 65, UAW, and our own very best efforts, we lost the union election, 40-37. “Ouch” is right, but the point here is that we could have been creamed, and weren’t. As young women organizing a press* run by middle-aged men, we were in

*The campaign took place at Oxford University Press. Women were 80 percent of the bargaining unit; the most active organizers were women; while there were a number of men in the bargaining unit, the union drive was always associated with the female employees.
double jeopardy: we were not only engaged in a labor/management war, but in a full-scale battle of the sexes. Union people assert that campaigns work best when organizers and workers share common backgrounds, but rest assured that the presence of men in the corporate structure quickly erases female common ground.

The paternalistic ardor of the men in charge of our company was the sexist backdrop to our campaign. As benevolent fathers intent on preserving the “family feel” of our publishing house, they dispensed favors: we dressed as we pleased, came and went as we liked, and received cakes on our birthdays. Such gestures cost management little and cost workers a lot. Dad mixed with the kids at Christmas parties, but, as top boss, never consulted us on business matters, and never, ever revealed company policies or problems. We were not told the financial status of the press, but received memos urging judicious use of postage meters and xerox machines. We were not told about alterations in our benefits plan, but were asked (very politely) to get sick less often.

Our state of ignorance was not blissful. There were no consistent policies governing wage increases, promotions, job reviews, arbitration rights. “Let’s keep things informal,” urged the personnel director; “things get so legal when they’re written down.” “Don’t worry, we’ll take care of it,” our bosses said, and never did. In fact, management’s reluctance to clarify anything preserved their control: by keeping everyone guessing, they ruled with an iron hand. Despite the rhetoric of protection, the men in power protected themselves alone. As unprotected women on the lowest rungs of the corporate ladder, we were tense and confused, uncertain of our rights and claims. We did what we could to let off steam: we came in late, had personal work slowdowns, screwed up on the job, threw temper tantrums in the hallways. Childish behavior, but that’s all that was allowed in our publishing house.

Of course, tantrums didn’t always do the trick, and many of us devised other methods for survival. Some women jumped feet first into the existing system, observing, as did one pragmatic employee, “If you can’t beat ’em, join ’em.” Many young women carefully dressed corporate, behaved well, and stayed late at company parties in order to go out drinking with the boys. One woman got what she wanted by determinedly playing temptress; another told me she didn’t need a union because she controlled her boss by “sneaking behind his back.” Not all capitulation was this conscious, of course. Least conscious and most delusory were the company mothers, middle-aged and older women who had watched their male bosses pass by them in the company hierarchy. For these women, the illusion of “nurturing” was enough; as one woman proudly told me, “I’ve got my boss wrapped around my little finger. When I talk, he jumps!” Never mind that he made four times her salary, despite her seniority and fifteen years of “model mothering.”

Despite the variety of their roles, these women had a lot in common. All rejected the union because, like Horatio Alger, they believed they could make it on their own. They missed a central contradiction, though: women can’t “make it on their own” in a male-dominated system, for all “making it” involves some form of capitulation that precludes self-autonomy. These women adopted modes of “female” behavior acceptable to men. Men will always accept their mirror images, always love a flirt, always welcome mom. And the rewards for good acting exist: some of these women won seats at management’s rectangular table. Indeed, the above temptress was the only person to come out ahead in a reorganization of her department. She failed to understand the subsequent resentment of her coworkers, though. She hadn’t done anything wrong, she said; she hadn’t hurt anyone. “This is just how it is,” she added, “and there’s nothing anyone can do about it.”
Wanna bet? We didn’t win the election, but we came damn close. That three-vote margin attested to the strength and attractiveness of our union alternative. Our meetings, at the center of our campaign, were truly egalitarian. There were no leaders, not much handraising, and lots of jokes. We sat in imperfect circles, on the floor, on tables, passed around oranges, cookies, and soda, and scribbled notes. Alive with gossip, we conversed — and converted — as women do over cups of coffee or glasses of wine. We talked, we argued, and we always compromised. One woman, initially suspicious, told me she came around because she had never seen democracy work so well. “This,” she said, “is like a breath of fresh air.”

In our free-breathing environment, we began to overcome the divisiveness perpetrated by management’s hierarchical structures, their clogged proper channels, their injunctions to us to keep their secrets. (It was no accident that during our campaign, actual structural renovations were under way at the press. Management was in a frenzy of wallbuilding, partitioning, dividing, closing off. Privacy, they proclaimed, was what we all needed; privacy would “increase output.”) Swapping salaries and stories at our meetings, we discovered that the only consistent piece of information we received from the bosses was to never reveal anything we knew to anyone for any reason. Such sharing was “highly unprofessional,” they said. Ironically, our unprofessional sharing helped us make sense of our professions. Management’s divide-and-conquer tactics made it impossible to understand the publishing operation in its entirety; now, at our meetings, we traced connections between our jobs. As a holistic understanding of our company replaced the fragmentation perpetrated by the bosses, we faced our jobs with renewed confidence. This surety carried over into the organizing itself. It was evident we could make change; we were making change already! Among ourselves, we were invincible. One organizer said he viewed the union as a fresh green pasture, and the company as a sterile desert. It was absolutely clear to us which side provided the healthy soil needed for sustained growth.

Our optimism lasted for several months. While managements usually come down swift and hard on incipient unionizing, ours was strangely silent at first. We each had theories to explain this retreat (denial? overwork? abject terror?). I felt it was that the men in charge were incapable of taking young women seriously. The girls were just misbehaving, and dad left us alone, hoping we’d grow out of it. But the distressing phase didn’t pass. So we became young ladies who were “well-motivated and genuinely concerned about the real problems facing the company,” but young ladies who were clearly being “fed things” by the UAW. The “union plant” theory gained popularity. In-
Indeed, management insisted throughout the campaign that the UAW was writing our leaflets, even though we wrote them in the company canteen, in full view of everyone. We couldn’t be coming up with this stuff by ourselves; it was so, well, confrontational!

Condescension turned to outright rage by the end of the campaign. By then it was clear that the young ladies were not only upset, but were also purposeful and effective. Suddenly our motives were called into question. “They’re just a bunch of rich girls on their way to law school,” snarled one manager. “This is just a big power trip for them,” he added, not understanding the difference between a patriarchal power trip and an empowering journey. Shortly before the election, we received our final ordination: we became fearsome madwomen, unreasonable and unreasoning. We were told (often by “friendly” managers who “just wanted to help”) that we were taking matters too seriously, that we were too emotional, that we were becoming hysterical.

Such charges were never leveled at the male managers, despite the fevered tone of the anti-union memos we received once or twice a day. I did not recognize this double standard for several months, and when I did, it completely recast the union struggle for me. At one management-controlled antiunion meeting, I made what I considered a sensible remark about the benefits of unionization. I made the remark in a steady and “feminine” tone of voice, that is, in a conversational, nonconfrontational manner. The president of the company glared down at me from behind his podium and said, in a voice hard as nails, cold as ice, and edged with dislike: “Would you like to join me up here, Phyllis?” I suddenly realized that my view of myself as a good girl, a loving daughter who only wanted to help, existed in my mind alone, and that in fact I was, to all those men I was trying to please, a ball-busting broad. Their perception of me — of us — which was so far off the mark but so real to them, forced me to acknowledge a depressing truth: that what we were fighting was a credibility battle based on time-honored sexist perceptions of what constitutes correct behavior for men and women. The snide memos and intimidation tactics of the bosses were seen as aggressive and hard-hitting; but the more effective we were, the worse we became in the eyes of most managers and many workers. By simply challenging men in authority — and then by having the audacity to be good at it — we became bad girls, ungrateful and ignorant daughters challenging older and wiser fathers.

The mythological force of older and wiser fathers cannot be underestimated. The devastating power of the patriarchal symbolism was evident in the first of a series of management’s “captive audience” meetings. At these meetings, management herded all employees into a designated space and talked against unions for a designated period of time. Our space was the top floor of a nearby Episcopalian church. We climbed a rickety flight of stairs and sat in rows of hard wooden pews, well below the level of the pulpit. Our president stood behind the pulpit to deliver his missive. Behind him were several tapestries decorated with biblical proverbs stitched in felt letters. Below him, someone played an organ at a morning service; the strains drifted up through the cracked floorboards. Above him was God, who very clearly was not on our side.

Speaking up was an act of courage: Zeus’s thunderbolt was never nearer. But speak up we did, without our scripts, and getting braver as time went on. It didn’t matter much, though. The man behind the pulpit always seemed to steal the show. “Grace under pressure,” some said, nodding in approval; “charismatic,” others proclaimed. In fact, our president’s performance was unexceptional; his antiunion rhetoric consisted of scripted lectures on “family feel” or disconnected scare stories and lies about unions. After one meeting,
an editor asked me why the union didn’t have a leader who could match our president’s forensic skills. I said that our union wasn’t set up with a leader, and added that it wouldn’t matter if we had one. A young woman challenging this credentialled, good-looking middle-aged man would instantly be perceived as a pushy broad. The editor disagreed with me, and urged me to come up with a superwoman for our side. He was interested in fair play, he said; a fair fight was what he wanted to see. He didn’t realize there is no such thing as fair play when the deck is stacked.

Of course, we retain the wild card — the one revivifying spark in the dog-eared deck. Our election was so close because our female coffee-klatch union was a surprisingly effective counter to the system we challenged. We created an environment in which people could talk, argue, reconsider; in which everyone was listened to; in which democracy truly existed. We created a community where we could help and be helped, so that now, over a year later, we still track each other’s lives.

The spirit of our campaign was intrinsic to our success.* Applied wide scale, it could be a new beginning for American labor unions. As the failing economy erodes customary wage/benefits negotiating, unions must rewrite their own contracts with workers. This time, why not make the contract social as well as economic? Create cooperatives — food, legal, tenant — to give us a neighborhood, a sense of place. Rewrite workers’ leaflets and recast organizers’ rhetoric to emphasize the union’s role in developing community programs in education and health care. A new deal like this offers great rewards: we get a real-life democratic alternative to workplace hierarchies, and we achieve a real separation, in power and in spirit, from the capitalists. And we also have lots of fun. There is nothing more liberating than fun, and nothing more important to social transformation than individual liberation. If we really try, we can, in the words of Toni Cade Bambara, make the revolution “absolutely irresistible.”

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*Dollars & Träume

Heft 5/1982: SOZIALISMUS IN DEN USA
Über das Scheitern der sozialistischen Bewegung in den USA · New Deal: Konturen eines sozialen Aufbruchs · Linke Literaturbewegung in den dreißiger Jahren · US-Gewerkschaften unter Reagan · American Writers Congress 1981 · Reiseliteratur: Aufbruch in die Neue Welt (Teil 2) · Buchbesprechungen

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FOREIGN POLICY

A Tempest Over Terrorism

Terrorism seems to have supplanted human rights as Washington’s most emotional foreign-policy preoccupation. Hard facts on terrorism are scarcer than honest men in a KGB safehouse.

2:30
WILL THE REAL TERROR NETWORK PLEASE STAND UP?

Frank Brodhead

Early in the Reagan administration Secretary of State Alexander Haig announced that combatting “international terrorism” would replace human rights as a focus of US foreign policy. While the concept of “terrorism” was never strictly defined, Haig claimed that there was a pattern of terrorism which had its roots in the Soviet Union, and whose “conscious policy” was “training, funding and equipping” international terrorists. The apparently random acts of violence perpetrated by small organizations, claimed the Reagan administration, were in fact Soviet-directed instruments in the Cold War.

By focusing on terrorism, the Reagan administration hoped to accomplish two things at once: to further politicize popular fear about violence and street crime, linking these fears to support for domestic repression of left-wing political organizations; and, by focusing on violence attributed to left-wing organizations abroad, to delegitimize national liberation struggles while covering up massive support for what Ed Herman* calls “the real terror network.”

No sooner had the Reagan administration been installed than the US security bureaucracies began to manufacture information to support claims that the Soviets direct international

*The Real Terror Network by Edward Herman, South End Press, 1982; $7.50 paper.
terrorists. Anthony Quainton, now US ambassador to Nicaragua but then director of the State Department’s Office for Combatting Terrorism, announced that the method of measuring terrorist incidents would henceforth be revised to include “threats,” “hoaxes,” and “conspiracies.” New databases, said Quainton, would be used to show that “terrorist incidents” had been understated in the past. William Casey, Reagan’s friend and the new director of the CIA, ordered his agency to make a study of the Soviets’ role in international terrorism, and Claire Sterling’s book The Terror Network, which purported to support these charges, was given wide publicity by the media. The mass media was particularly sensitive to these claims, as they themselves were under attack by rightwing ideologues like Robert Moss and Arnault de Borchegrave, whose novel The Spike accused them of being a conduit for Soviet disinformation. And Jeremiah Denton, a right-wing Senator from Alabama, began his chairmanship of the newly revived Subcommittee on Internal Security and Terrorism by holding hearings to investigate charges about Soviet manipulation of the US press.

Thus at the beginning of the Reagan administration it appeared that a new era of witch hunts was beginning, this time organized not against “communists,” but around the more elusive concept of “terrorism.” Indeed, very dangerous changes have been made in the US repression apparatus and in the laws and regulations which guide their work. An Office for Combatting Terrorism has been created within the State Department, and the CIA’s division concerned with intelligence estimates has recently been taken over by a veteran of its operations division — the division in charge of covert operations. “Terrorism” has even become a concern of local police officials, and special SWAT teams have been created in many cities.

The initial push of the Reagan antiterrorism campaign has made relatively little domestic im-
pact, largely because it was based on so little real evidence. The information source for Haig’s basic charges of Soviet influence on a pattern of terrorism, for example, was soon revealed to be Maj. Gen. Jan Sejna, a henchman of Czechoslovakian party boss Antonin Novotny. Sejna defected to the US in 1968 when the “Prague Spring” reformers threw out the Stalinist old guard. Leslie Gelb, writing in the New York Times, pointed out that the CIA then sent Sejna to Western Europe in 1972 to share his information with intelligence agencies there. “What we are hearing is this 10-year-old testimony coming back to us through West European intelligence and some of our own CIA people,” one US intelligence official told Gelb. “There is no substantial new evidence.” The Reagan administration’s demand for proof of a Soviet link to terrorism began to produce a crisis in the intelligence services. William Webster, director of the FBI, told the NBC program “Meet the Press” on April 26, 1981 that “there is no real evidence of Soviet-sponsored terrorism within the United States.” Nor was the case for Soviet influence abroad easily proven. In March, 1981 a draft report by the CIA’s National Foreign Assessments Center concluded that there was insufficient evidence to substantiate the Reagan-Haig charges of Soviet influence. Enraged, CIA director William Casey rejected the report, essentially telling the authors to supply evidence supporting the conclusion that the administration wanted. Nor has Senator Denton’s investigation of terrorism elicited much of a popular response, or more than a yawn from the US media.

The Real Terror Network

If it is hard to detect much fire behind all the smoke about terrorism coming out of the Reagan administration, this does not mean that the concept has no function in US policy circles. The fluff about Soviet “disinformation” is in fact a screen to hide the extraordinary role of the US
government in supporting and initiating terrorism on a scale far surpassing even the wildest claims about the Soviet role. Exposing the dimensions of these lies, and the brutal campaign of terrorism conducted by all US administrations over the last two decades, is the achievement of Edward Herman’s very readable book *The Real Terror Network*. Herman, a professor of finance at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, is coauthor with Noam Chomsky of *The Political Economy of Human Rights* and has recently written *Corporate Control, Corporate Power*.

Herman’s study begins with the elementary point that while “terrorism” has historically had a broad meaning (Webster’s defines it as “a mode of governing or opposing government by intimidation”), the US government has tried to redefine the word to mean only direct violence against government forces, not violence committed by government forces. (Unless of course it is terrorism against Soviet-bloc countries, such as the assassination attempts that the CIA organized against Castro.) Even among these “retail terrorists,” as Herman calls them, the US government really opposes only left-wing “terrorism” consistently. It has usually turned a blind eye to terrorism when it serves US purposes, as with the Nicaraguan *somocistas* training with the terrorist Cuban organization Alpha 66 in Florida and California. In other cases it has armed and trained terrorists itself, as with the Cuban exile organizations trained by the CIA in the 1960s. To borrow a device Herman uses several times, imagine the US government’s reaction if the Soviet Union were to openly allow Puerto Rican nationalists to hold military exercises in the Soviet Union! Even after Kennedy’s “secret war” using the exile organizations against Cuba was over, the groups continued to be the single most dangerous terrorist organization in the United States. Between 1973 and 1979, Cuban exile organizations were responsible for eighty-two bombings, killing ninety-four persons.

While groups associated with the Left are only responsible for some, not all, of “retail terrorism,” this kind of terrorism itself is the cause of only a very small part of the real terror that this world suffers. While according to the CIA the total number of deaths at the hands of “retail terrorists” between 1968 and 1980 was 3,668, the total number of “disappearances” in Latin America alone during the same period was more than 90,000. As many Indians are killed in Guatemala each year by the state security apparatus as were killed by all the “retail terrorists” in the past decade.

*The Real Terror Network* goes on to examine the extent and function of terrorism in what Herman calls “National Security States” (NSS). These are “subfascist” states, which, like fascist ones,
govern through terror — but unlike them make no attempt to mobilize a mass following. Just the opposite: the function of state violence is to keep down popular participation, and to lower the social wage by smashing trade unions and popular organizations. Another characteristic of the NSS is the use of torture by the state. After a relative absence of several centuries, torture has returned. Only states use torture extensively as a means of intimidation, and it is performed almost exclusively by state security agents in countries within the US — not the Soviet — sphere of influence.

By Herman’s calculations there are fourteen National Security States in the Caribbean and Latin America, and twelve more in the US sphere of influence elsewhere. Between 1960 and 1980, the number of people imprisoned in Latin America exceeded one million. Right-wing death squads, generally based in the state security apparatus, terrorize most Latin American countries. “The thugs have a role to play,” says Herman. “They eliminate ‘subversives’ and intimidate and create anxiety in the rest of the population, all potential subversives.”

What role does the US play in this massive repression? In cases like the coups in Guatemala in 1954 and in Brazil in 1964, and the toppling of Allende in Chile in 1973, the US is deeply implicated in installing terrorist dictatorships. More generally, National Security States are the products of the counterrevolutionary strategy initiated by John F. Kennedy following the Cuban Revolution, which placed its bet on “modernizing” military officers that the US would train and influence. The US government has armed these dictators to the teeth, and has trained half a million military officers and policemen from eighty-five countries since 1950.

The US government claims that training by US military personnel makes foreign military officers more sensitive to “human rights” concerns. For example, in justifying the training of Salvadoran forces in the US, the Administration claimed that the training at Benning and Bragg will produce not only officers and soldiers well-schooled in military skills, but also men with a well defined sense of the need to maintain the support of the populace through respect for basic human rights and the promotion of a close working relationship with the people.²

But has US aid and military training turned out officers and gentlemen? Herman points out that there seem to be “significant positive relationships between US flows of aid and negative human rights developments (the rise of torture, death squads and the overturn of constitutional governments).” Most of the military leaders of the nine Latin American coups between 1962 and 1977 had been trained in the US. Similarly, most of the military battalions that massacred refugees in Chalatenango province, El Salvador, in early June 1982 had just been trained by US military advisers. Similar incidents, in which the US-trained “elite battalions” are reported to have killed civilians and refugees, have been documented many times since then.

Thus there are at least twenty-six states that are US clients and that practice torture on a routine, administrative basis; and as Americans we are responsible in large degree for people suffering in several dozen countries. But does the mass media pursue this angle? As in his earlier book The Political Economy of Human Rights, Herman shows that the US media turns a blind eye toward terror which is functional to US interests. In the 1970s, for example, The Readers Digest “had more articles on Castro’s Cuba than it did on all 26 US client states that were using torture on an administrative basis in the early and mid-1970s.” In general, the media does not treat terror in client fascist countries as “news.” When it is reported, it is stripped of its content. Massive terror of the Right is offset in the media by reports of retail terror by the Left, overwhelming a
government caught in the middle, and requiring US assistance to bring an end to violence. Thus the function of the media coverage of “terrorism” is to justify greater US support for the security apparatus of right-wing dictatorships, perpetuating state terrorism. Dependent on government sources for much of the “news,” the media is also influenced by pressure from sponsors and from the overlapping of personnel in the mass media, big business, and government. Its own ideological biases are also more supportive of the Right. Occasionally, as with the case of the “White Paper” on El Salvador, the media and the government cooperate in inventing news. But more frequently the typical practice of the media is to simply ignore or minimize the extent of terror by the national security apparatus in states established by or dependent on the US.

At this moment the US is engaged in an aggressive and dangerous foreign policy in the Middle East and Central America. The media and the Reagan administration have greatly magnified the “retail terror” of the Palestinians and the El Salvador guerrillas, while they are generally silent on the terror of the Israeli and Salvadoran states. The media has also acquiesced to the US government’s claim that Guatemalan dictator Rios Montt’s “scorched earth” campaign against that nation’s Indian population has ended terrorism in Guatemala, thus justifying the Reagan administration’s request to restore military aid to Guatemala on the grounds that the human rights situation is “improving.” Nor has the media come to terms with the fact that in supporting the Nicaraguan somocistas based in Honduras in their raids into Nicaragua, the US is directly responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Nicaraguan civilians. And they have not adequately digested the fact that the terrorist incident that was used as an excuse for the Israeli slaughters in Lebanon was known at that time to have been the work of an anti-PLO organization.

Ed Herman’s study of The Real Terror Network helps us to understand what’s going on here and prepares us for the next occasion in which the overwhelming force of a state is unleashed against people to bring an end to “terrorism.”

Footnotes


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MOVING???

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TEN YEARS AFTER:
Letter from Wounded Knee

Gail Sullivan

Ten years ago, Oglala Lakotah people and the American Indian Movement (AIM) took over the tiny village of Wounded Knee to dramatize the tyranny of their tribal government.

The Lakotah nation was called Sioux by the French and later the British colonists — a term which has stuck ever since. The Oglala people are one of several sub-nations, or tribes, of the Lakotah Nation which inhabited the Great Plains. In 1868, the Lakotah signed the Fort Laramie Treaty with the US, reserving for their exclusive use all of what is now western South Dakota and large parts of North Dakota, Nebraska, Wyoming and Montana. However, due to the discovery of gold, the construction of a continental railroad, and the general westward movement of the colonists, the US soon abrogated the treaty. The US government assigned each of the sub-nations like the Oglala to an Indian agency to receive the food and supplies guaranteed them under treaty, and to keep watch on the Indians. Thus the Oglala were assigned to the Pine Ridge Indian Agency.

Due to continual encroachment which whittled away at the treaty lands, the Lakota were soon left with only the lands immediately surrounding each tribe’s agency — hence the development of Pine Ridge as well as the other reservations in the Plains area. In 1890 Wounded Knee, a small village on Pine Ridge Reservation, was the scene of an unprovoked massacre of 300 Oglala children, women and men by the US cavalry. In 1973, the Oglala
Sioux Civil Rights Organization (OSCRO) formed to fight for basic civil rights under the tribal government of Dick Wilson. After many frustrations, including Wilson's presiding over and adjourning his own impeachment hearings, OSCRO called for AIM's assistance. It was after a series of jointly called community meetings that the decision was made to dramatize their oppression by symbolically occupying Wounded Knee.

I was inspired by the courage and determination of a small group of people facing off against the military might of the United States. After the seventy-one-day siege by US marshals and FBI agents using military hardware developed in Vietnam, as well as the BIA police and local goons, hundreds of people were indicted for their participation. The Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offense Committee (WKLD/OC, pronounced Wickledock) was founded shortly after the siege began to provide legal support. Over the course of four years it defended more than 300 people on charges stemming from their participation in Wounded Knee and other confrontations. On February 25-27, 1983, the people of Pine Ridge held a tenth anniversary commemoration, inviting all Wounded Knee veterans and members of WKLD/OC to join in celebration and remembrance.

My experience as a member of WKLD/OC was a transforming one. There were certainly many hardships: sharing a room with 8 or 10 people, working seventy or eighty hours a week on little sleep, eating US surplus food, facing the risk of being shot, confronting widespread alcoholism and drug abuse, coping with deaths of friends and comrades, feeling isolated in another people's culture, dealing, dealing, always dealing with our racism and with conflicts about race and culture. Yet there is nothing to match the experience in exhilaration and sense of purpose: Wounded Knee and its aftermath provided one of those rare experiences when the confrontation between power and oppression is absolutely clarified, the lines are drawn, and unity is forged from knowing which side you are on.

All the varied impressions and memories flooded back as I thought about returning. And it was with trepidation that I prepared to return to Pine Ridge: How many of my friends would still be alive? How many still politically active? How horrendous were the conditions on the reservation today? Could I stand to see that nothing had changed for the better? And how would it feel to "visit" as a political tourist?

Surprisingly — excitingly — many changes have occurred for the better. Of course the economic conditions have worsened. Pine Ridge was already one of the poorest Indian reservations on the continent; it and other Indian reservations have suffered cuts of 35 percent in their budgets under the Reagan administration. I was told that out of a population of 15,000 on the reservation, 750 people are employed, most by the Bureau of Indian Affairs itself. There is no industry on the reservation, no service sector, no economy to speak of: little housing and less food. In spite of this, people manage to survive.

And do more than survive. The commemoration activities began with the dedication of Radio KILI, a radio station on the reservation initiated by AIM members. The station, only the second on an Indian reservation in the Dakotas and far larger than the first, provides a historic change. In the past, communication on the reservation didn't exist — except through the Indian grapevine. There were no newspapers and no radio other than the police band which people listened to in order to see who was being harassed or arrested by BIA police. In a rural area where many people have no vehicle and most have no telephone, the radio station will provide an incredible communications system. Further, obviously, because it was begun by AIM, it will be a political tool, not only for
Pine Ridge but — as it expands its broadcast radius — for all of “Indian country” on the Plains. The station is exciting not only for its use in political education and exchange, but as a model of development. The station was heavily supported by a black radio chain, building an important link between black and Indian people. It is a passive solar building, providing an example of low technology, alternative resources to a community which desperately needs such self-help models. In the three days of the commemoration, Radio KILI’s phones were ringing off the hook with song requests, interviews with Wounded Knee veterans, and widespread discussion of issues. In addition to Radio KILI, local AIM members are now publishing a quarterly newspaper and are being trained to work a printing press recently donated to the reservation. Institutions such as these, which many of us take for granted, will have immeasurable impact on the quality of life on Pine Ridge.

In 1973, one of the major causal factors leading to the Wounded Knee occupation was the legitimized violence of the tribal government, Bureau of Indian Affairs police, and Wilson’s personal goon squad. Severt Young Bear, active during the Wounded Knee occupation, had provided WKLD/OC a house as a base on the reservation. He is now the head of the Law and Order Committee of the
tribal government. He talked with us about the demilitarization of Pine Ridge in the last several years. The police were formerly under the jurisdiction of the BIA rather than individual tribal governments — ostensibly because it decreased the chance of patronage. However, control over the police has just been returned to the Pine Ridge Tribal Council, and then further decentralized: every community has control over its own police, with a review board for each. As a result of these and other changes, the number of crimes has dropped dramatically. In 1978, there were 440 charges filed for the fourteen major felonies over which the federal government assumes jurisdiction. In 1982 there were 40. When Dick Wilson was replaced through tribal election, his plan for a $7.5 million jail in Pine Ridge was dropped in favor of community correctional facilities which have no bars and few locks. Training for police now focuses on conflict resolution, interpersonal skills, and easing tension, rather than on weapons use and target practice.

These changes are reflective of AIM’s strategy in the past several years: to establish strong ties within the various communities on the reservation, to move into existing social institutions which have significant impact on people’s daily lives, and to create new institutions which become political vehicles. In general AIM has been broadening its base of support. One effort has been the establishment of the Yellow Thunder Camp, a permanent encampment in the Black Hills, under a federal law which states that federal lands not in use can be utilized by Native Americans for educational and spiritual purposes. There is disagreement, however, about whether this is the best means toward the longer-term goal of regaining the Black Hills through treaty rights. Another aspect of AIM’s strategy is Russell Means’s current — and second — campaign for the tribal presidency, which will be decided in June.

While the move toward a broader base of sup-
port is clearly a positive development, it creates some conflicts as well. Ellen Moves Camp, a leader of OSCRO and active throughout the Wounded Knee occupation, told me that many of those who were Wilson’s goons are now AIM supporters and that she, as well as others, had a hard time letting go of past animosity. As she pointed out, for those who lost relatives and friends in the violence between Wilson’s goons and AIM and ASCRO members, it is hard to forget the antagonism.

Simultaneously with the changes on the reservation, many other political developments were noticeable during my visit. While several hundred people from the reservation and from around the country listened to speeches by Wounded Knee veterans, remembering the struggles of the early ’70s and remembering those who died then and since, members of Women of All Red Nations (WARN) were having a historic meeting in Rapid City. WARN organized a meeting of tribal government representatives to discuss the 1868 Treaty Claim. Since the Indian Claims Commission determined several years ago that the US had unlawfully broken the treaty and offered a settlement to the Lakotah of $17 million, the Lakotah response has been uncoordinated and conflicted. Some tribal presidents have said they would accept the monetary settlement, while others have waffled. AIM has consistently demanded a return of the land — in particular the Black Hills, sacred to the Lakotah but highly desirous to corporate interests because it is rich in such resources as uranium and coal. Not since the various Lakotah tribes were separated onto reservations have they spoken as one people in dealings with the US government. Through its organizing efforts on several of the reservations in North and South Dakota and Montana, WARN has succeeded in inspiring tribal government leaders to take a determined and far more radical stance than ever before: they are now demanding return of the land as well as guarantees of Indian land and water rights.
If WARN is successful in its effort, the unified tribal governments could prove a tremendous force in dealing with the US and the corporations which have decided to make the Black Hills a "national sacrifice area" to resource exploitation. In addition to their treaty work, Madonna Thunder Hawk, one of the founders of WARN and a Wounded Knee veteran, told me about their thus-far successful campaign to halt uranium mining in the Black Hills, and their current effort to prevent establishment of a nuclear waste dump there.

WARN is exciting not only because of its crucial work on issues fundamental to Indian survival — land, water, mineral resources and imprisonment — but also because it represents Indian feminism: a group of women activists sharing each other's lives and struggles, sharing childrearing and survival as they consciously raise women's leadership in an autonomous women's organization and in the Indian movement as a whole. They, like Black feminists, are at a crossroads in their work: between the feminist movement, most visibly white, and the Indian movement, most visibly male. Madonna said, of struggles within the Indian
movement for female leadership, “after all, we are feminists.” It was not a sentence I would have expected to hear ten years ago. The impact of these developments was perceptible not only in women’s increasingly visible leadership, but in men’s relationship to children. During the commemoration, I frequently noticed men carrying their babies and caring for their children; Madonna agreed that it was a significant change, as men began to drop some of the extreme limitations imposed on them by needing to prove their masculinity.

During the three days of celebration, reconstructions to old friends, powwows and feasts, I was tremendously moved by the gratitude and honors awarded to us as members of WKLD/OC. Perhaps because we were so aware of the obstacles to our fitting in, and the essentially negative cause for our presence — legal defense — we were never wholly aware of the importance attached to our work by AIM and the people of the reservation. The honors were in many ways a surprise — and they moved each of us deeply.

On Sunday, the tenth anniversary of the evening in which car caravans brought 300 Pine Ridge residents and AIM members to Wounded Knee, about 500 of us walked ten miles from the four compass directions to converge on the hillside at Wounded Knee made famous ten years ago. There, in front of the mass grave from 1890, and the newer graves of the veterans of the 1973 occupation, Leonard Crow Dog conducted a memorial service for those who have died in the past decade. While most of the three days had been joyous reunions with friends and comrades, this was a time of mourning those lost, sadly remembering loved friends and family whose images had floated through the days’ events. For me it was a reminder of all the sadness and loss which necessarily had been a part of my experience at WKLD/OC, and a coming to grips with those deaths that I had only learned about long distance. It was also a reaffirmation.

An eagle circling above the several hundred people on the hillside — an occurrence at every such Indian gathering in which I’ve participated — moved me to realize that the bond we all felt could not be broken by time or distance. As a friend wrote in a letter two weeks later, “We had thought that this would be some sort of final resolution to one part of our lives. Not so. It served as a recommitment of sorts to the people and the struggle.”

GAIL SULLIVAN was a member of WKLD/OC for two years and a member of the Native American Solidarity Committee for four years after that. She is an editor of Radical America.
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