

Photographs by Meg Gerkin

Left: The neon sign on the Moscow electric plant reads: "Communism means Soviet power and electrification of the whole country." Top: A typical display of affection between father and child, more common in the USSR than in the U.S. Bottom: Two women in Moscow's farmer's market.



Solzhenitsyn as well as the totalitarian-Orwellian monstrosity projected by the academic social scientists and journalists of another era.

Getting into the textures of Soviet life, Kaiser and Smith were able to deflate many of the clichés yielded by purely theoretical or official ways of understanding the USSR. Smith confesses what must have been for him an amazing discovery: "the longer I stayed in Moscow, the less impressed by how Communist the country was and the more I thought how Russian it was."

This is too simple a fall-back position for a full understanding. The "Russianness" of Russia—says the sometimes lazy-benevolent, the sometimes nasty-oppressive bureaucratic ways one always encounters there—is rooted in particular social relations, a culture, and a history—themselves demanding explanation. Still, Smith's observation represents a breakthrough of sorts. If I might put words in his mouth, he is one step away from saying socialism/communism ought not be judged on the basis of its Soviet elaboration.

For Americans, that is a healthier frame of mind in which to think about Russia and about socialism. It opens the climate to new options for approaching the grave disorders in American life and for introducing socialist options of our own. The Russians, as this survey points up, have no particular patent on socialism (nor do their critics). They have sifted socialist ideas through their own national culture.

The institutions they created necessarily reflected their own historical background. The problems they addressed were clustered around the target of a planned, rapid mobilization of economic resources from low prior levels. Other societies will

approach socialism with different national temperaments and institutions, and will address different problems. In the U.S., for example, the appeal for socialism cannot be grounded in the call to economic development, as in the Soviet experience.

No abstract socialism.

We ought, therefore, be prepared to think of *socialisms* and not some abstract socialism. A common denominator is an end to privately controlled production for private profit. That is the basic theme; it's when the theme is developed that the problems begin. For socialism is not simply a mode of production, but a mode of life—cooperative, humane, non-intimidating.

Accordingly, is the USSR socialist? To be flip about it: Yes, but I wouldn't want to live there. To be more serious: Yes, but with flaws so acute as to strain the definition.

Is it heading in an acceptable direction? Here, an extended discussion of present internal as well as international dynamics is important. Clearly, the USSR is at a turning point, where the regime has to start thinking about new ways to address new problems—mass consumption, urbanization, the rise and consolidation of a mammoth new working class, the persistent demand for widening civil liberties.

The resulting frictions are too complex to gauge. Amidst the complexity another novel element: the growth of movements for democratic socialism in the West, looping their ideas back on the original home of the socialist revolution.

Next week: The Soviets in world affairs.

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IN THESE TIMES

Editorial

Abortion: what about life after birth?

Life after birth is no less precious than life before birth. Slow death or deformed life through malnutrition, disease, cultural and educational deprivation is as much an abortion as the premature termination of pregnancy.

Since a 1973 Supreme Court decision, neither the federal nor any state government may constitutionally forbid abortion in the early months of pregnancy.

Last year Congress passed the Labor-HEW department appropriations bill with the Hyde amendment (for Henry J. Hyde, R-IL) forbidding the expenditure of federal funds to pay for abortions except where the mother's life is in danger. That provision has never been enforced because a federal district court found it unconstitutional in view of the 1973 Supreme Court decision.

But on June 20, the Supreme Court, dividing 6-3, while sustaining a woman's right to be free from unreasonable government interference with her decision to terminate pregnancy, ruled that there is no right to state medicaid funds for an abortion.

The Court also ruled that a municipal hospital may lawfully be directed to refuse to perform nontherapeutic abortions.

By implication, the Court's decision means that the federal government may also constitutionally forbid the use of its funds to pay for elective abortions. And on June 23 the Court agreed to consider argument for vacating the stay on the 1976 Hyde amendment.

Now, Congress is moving toward restoring severe restrictions on federal payments for abortions. The House on June 17 passed a revised Hyde amendment, forbidding payments except where the mother's life is in danger, or where the pregnancy is the result of rape or incest, or where disease or complications may result in a deformed fetus. The Senate Appropriations committee has added the further exemption of permitting abortion where a physician certifies it as "medically necessary."

If the legislation should pass, it would mean that even in those states where legislatures authorized medicaid payments for elective abortions, federal funds could not be so used.

President Carter and his HEW secretary Joseph A. Califano Jr. are supporting the House measure. And the Supreme Court's decisions in the state cases have weakened doubts about its unconstitutionality.

Anatole France once remarked with irony that the law in its infinite majesty allows the rich and the poor equally to sleep under the bridge at night. In the same vein, but without the irony, Justice Lewis F. Powell speaking for the Court's majority, advises the "indigent woman who desires an abortion" that she "continues as before to be dependent on private sources for the service she desires." There is no "constitutional right to an abortion," says the upright judge, but only the equal right to pay for one. A new twist in the War on (those in) Poverty.

The Court's decision does have the virtue of dramatizing the impossibility of achieving equality before the law or the equal protection of the law in the face of a class-divided society. It reminds us that in

the struggle for sexual and racial equality there is no escaping the class question.

Justice Powell for the majority acknowledged that allocating scarce welfare needs involves "the most basic economic needs of impoverished human beings"; but the equal protection principle could not bring the law to meet those needs.

The withholding of public funds for abortions, as dissenting Justice Thurgood Marshall stated, will "brutally coerce poor women to bear children whom society will scorn for every day of their lives. ... There is little chance for the children to grow up in a decent environment. ... I am appalled at the ethical bankruptcy of those who preach a 'right to life' that means, under present social policies, a bare existence in utter misery for so many poor women and their children." Dissenting Justice Harry A. Blackmun summed it up concisely: "And so the cancer of poverty will continue to grow."

There can be no real equality before the law in a society that routinely perpetuates poverty for millions and then makes a "right" contingent upon ability to pay.

Such a "right" then becomes a privilege for the well-off, and coercion, abetted by the state, against the poor. Poor women will be forced either into giving birth, or into seeking unsafe and illegal abortions, or as is occurring with increasing frequency, into sterilization—the ultimate extinguisher of the right to life and a form of genocide against the poor, hitting non-whites with disproportionate force.

Neither abortion nor birth control is the answer to poverty. When it is offered as a panacea, it is an evasion of the quest to end it—and often an attitude of class and racial aggression.

Among those opposing abortion are many who do so out of genuine religious or moral concern for the sanctity of life. Socialists share their concern and respect their pro-life convictions. Socialists should desire serious dialog with sincere "right-to-life" advocates. Here we offer three points in pursuit of such dialog.

• Right-wing and conservative politicians with no genuine concern for the moral or religious issues are busily engaged in exploiting "right-to-life" sentiment. Their purpose is to sustain policies that perpetuate conditions of inequality, poverty and ignorance—the very conditions that make abortion seem the only viable or decent alternative.

• Short of abrogating the principle of separation of church and state, it is impermissible to impose a religious conviction by state action on people who do not share that conviction. In this case, the Catholic church is attempting to enlist state power to impose upon its own members strictures it can no longer impose upon them by the church's religious or moral authority. In the process it is imposing them on all others, however indirectly and incompletely. Indeed, the church is far from sat-



isfied with the present state of the law. It is advocating a constitutional convention to ratify an anti-abortion amendment. So far, nine state legislatures have voted for such a convention.

• There is another equally important consideration. Life after birth is no less precious than life before birth. Slow death or deformed life through malnutrition, disease, cultural and educational deprivation, is as much an abortion of life as is the premature termination of a pregnancy. People may more readily choose to have children in a society that values children, that supports parents—wed or unwed—in bringing children into the world and nurturing them, and that eliminates the economic insecurity, psychological distress, and cultural deprivation that blight the prospect of childbirth with fear and panic.

Along with points such as these, we uphold, and ask "right-to-life" advocates to consider the inalienable right of women to self-determination in their participation in the procreation of human life—a right that is indispensable to the achievement of sexual equality. The Supreme Court's decision and laws of similar intent, either on the books or pending, deprive women

of that right by force of economic circumstance.

The abortion issue goes to the heart of the great questions of our times. It is a woman's question, a race-related question, a class question. And it is all of these together. The condition of real racial and sexual equality is the achievement of social and economic quality by putting an end to class differences and to the poverty, exploitation, and deprivation they perpetuate.

Respect for life before birth can only be secured by respect for life, and the dignity of every person, after birth.

The abortion issue reminds us that the fulfillment of equality before the law and equal protection of the law can come only with the reconstruction of society along the lines of social and economic equality. Until then, Justice Blackmun's dissenting vision of the Constitution "as a force that would serve justice to all evenhandedly" remains an empty hope. In an equalitarian society people may exercise their liberty—including in the realm of human procreation—as free moral agents rather than as the objects of circumstantial or legal coercion. ■

A tentative victory

In our editorial "Jimmy Carter Is Watching You" (ITT, June 29), we observed that President Carter has been moving towards presidential centralization of police and intelligence operations. We noted in particular, and opposed, the Justice department's May 19 directive to the FBI to proceed with a computer project that would centralize all state and local police messages about wanted and missing persons and stolen property. Last year the Ford administration was obliged to reject this project under criticism that it posed a serious threat to civil liberties and individual privacy.

Carter's attempt to revive the project brought similar criticism from members of Congress and from public opinion concerned with civil liberties. In the face of this criticism, the Justice department on June 28 temporarily revoked authorization for the project, pending a new study

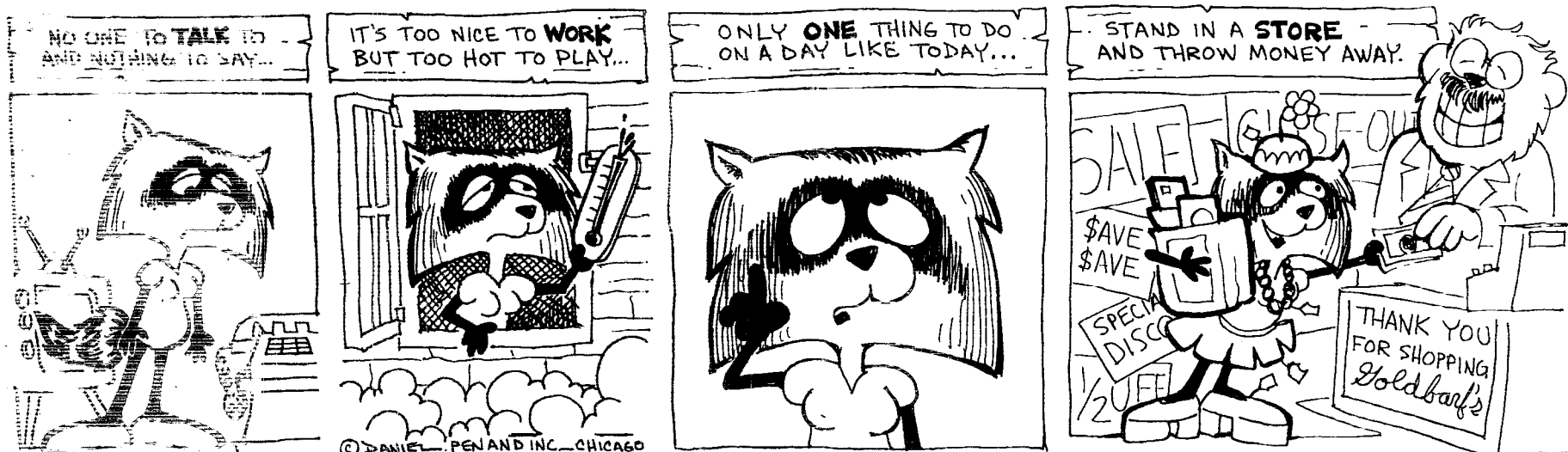
by the department and consultation with congressional opponents.

The administration's move is a strategic retreat, not a surrender. It is still necessary to keep pressure on Congress to prohibit any such FBI computer project, thereby preempting administration plans to revive the scheme later. It is equally essential to press Congress to pass Rep. Herman Badillo's bill (HR-6051), the Federal Intelligence Agencies Control Act, which would forbid political spying on Americans by federal police and intelligence agencies.

The administration's temporary retreat should not lull us into complacency. Redoubled vigilance is still the order of the day.

Write Rep. Herman Badillo, House Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20515, or to your own representative.

THE FACTORY WITH RIFKA



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Letters

A beacon light

Editor:

Trying not to write and express my gratitude was an impossible task. I find your fascinating publication utterly irresistible. It's the kind of probing, analytical journalism that turns me on. And, done in a spirited, unapologetic, fresh approach.

Really, you are a beacon to light up some of the dark areas politicians thrive in. I savor that intense spotlight that makes some rats scurry! I won't mention their names—they're common knowledge thanks to you! Keep up the good work. And thanks for just being.

—Art Fry
San Francisco

A human rights fest

Editor:

Myra Pahlavi, the wife of the infamous Shah of Iran has been invited to the U.S. to receive an "honorary" degree and to participate in the yearly conference of the Institute for Humanistic Studies in Aspen, Colo. She will be received by New York Mayor Beame's wife and given a "humanitarian" award by *Arguing and Conscience*. This invitation is a prelude to President Carter's invitation of the dictator Shah that will soon follow. This invitation to the wife of the Shah and to the butcher of the Iranian people should remove any illusions about Carter's commitment to human rights.

The struggle of the Iranian people for freedom and independence is just and all the talk of the Carter administration about "human rights" cannot hide the hypocrisy of Carter's propaganda and his real support for the dictatorship of the Shah's regime.

The Iranian Students Association in the U.S. asks the American people to join in solidarity with the Iranian people and condemn the trip of Farah Pahlavi to the U.S. We ask all freedom-loving people to join in our activities which will be waged in order to expose the real nature of Farah Pahlavi's trip and protest her visit.

—Leila Khalili
Iranian Students Association
Chicago

Remarkably interesting

Editor:

Your paper is first rate, well written, remarkably interesting week after week. Your socialist line is refreshingly free from self-serving sectarianism.

—Roger Montgomery
Berkeley, Calif.

Filling the void

Editor:

Enclosed is a check for \$15. I happened across your paper recently, and it seems to fill a void I've said existed for years—a reasonable socialist newspaper that doesn't alienate the working class.

—Marc Lowenthal
Columbia, Mo.

The Cruex of the matter

Editor:

Sweaty jock saps we can do without. I am referring to Mark Naison's sports column (*ITT*, July 6). Mark "hubba hubba" Naison's attack on Mushberger-Barry is scurrilous and vindictive. He works himself into a foamy Gillette lather over network racism and uses this as a pretext for a back-handed slap at my two favorite sportscasters. Cheap, Naison, Cheap.

But my real quarrel is elsewhere. Naison says he plans to attend an "interesting" anti-apartheid tennis demonstration and warns us that "Tony Trabert, who attacked anti-apartheid demonstrators with a tennis racket during a Davis Cup match against South Africa, is my personal target." Target for what? What are you gonna do Naison, stuff a tennis ball down his throat?

Yeah, I bet you're tough, real tough. What with biceps flexing and chest thumping, it's getting mighty sweaty in here. Take some advice. Get some CRUEX, kid. Maybe that'll soothe the itch to display your macho for the rest of us.

—Robert Schaeffer
Binghamton, N.Y.

Our error

Editor:

Re: "Women athletes narrowing the gap" (*ITT*, June 22). Dr. Leroy Walker is track coach at North Carolina Central University, a predominantly black institution of the state university system, not at the University of North Carolina.

In this state to say "University of North Carolina" implies UNC-Chapel Hill, the predominant, or I should say, dominating branch of the system. By virtue of an extravagant budget and biased sports media coverage (there's even a "Tarheel Sports Network") UNC-CH has managed to obscure the fine sports programs of other state colleges and universities, including the excellent track program headed by Walker at NCCU.

—Larry Bostian
Durham, N.C.

In defense of Trotskyism

Editor:

I've seen some positive comments in *ITT* about Communist parties, Social Democratic organizations and others. But whenever you mention Trotskyists, it's all bad news. One example was Judy MacLean's "trot"-baiting description of the role Socialist Workers party women

played at the NOW convention (*ITT*, May 3). (Readers seeking an objective report should read Joanne Steele's coverage in the May 14 issue of *Majority Report*.) The ideas of the SWP NOW members—for militant actions focusing on the rights of working-class women and women of oppressed minorities—are more relevant than ever with the growing attacks on women's rights since the NOW convention.

More recently (*ITT*, June 22), Dorothy Healey, the former-CP member of the New American Movement, is quoted as saying: "Equally tragic is the Trotskyist position, always for socialism except where it exists." This quip originated in the 1930s, when Leon Trotsky's criticisms of Stalinism in the USSR were portrayed by the Communist party as "attacks on socialism." Trotsky—who had been a leader of the Russian Revolution—supported all socialist gains in the USSR, and he broke with any would-be followers who refused to defend that country whenever it was threatened by imperialism. But he insisted that the Soviet bureaucratic dictatorship was not a "socialist gain" and should be overthrown by the Russian people. Trotskyist calls for socialist democracy in the USSR, China and other workers' states today are hardly a rejection of "socialism where it exists."

—Paul Le Blanc
Albany, N.Y.

And now, Eastern Montana

Editor:

Enclosed please find my check. I'll be moving from Missoula to Miles City in a couple weeks and want to keep up with what's going on. There are lots of people here in Missoula who share my political beliefs and concerns, but few in eastern Montana that I'm aware of. So I hope *IN THESE TIMES* will help keep me informed and give me support.

—Marie A. Root
Miles City, Mont.

Conservative, but...

Editor:

I have now received *IN THESE TIMES* for two weeks. On each occasion I have been sent double copies.

Kindly nudge your computer and send me only one issue.

Although I am a staunch conservative your paper does have appeal to me. Wishing you continued success.

—A. Richard Kern
Lexington, Ky.

Refreshing

Editor:

I recently purchased an issue of your paper at the Common Market cooperative here in Denver. What a refreshing change from the dogmatic and slogan filled leftist papers I've seen before! I will be waiting for further issues at the co-op.

—Howard Hornstadt
Denver, Colo.

Bravo!

Editor:

Bravo! to the exceptional cultural coverage in *IN THESE TIMES*. As a friend said the other day: this country needs a renaissance like it needs a revolution. *IN THESE TIMES* is contributing to both.

—George A. Dunn
Horissant, Mo.

Bella Bella

Editor:

Matthew Edel's article on New York City (*ITT*, June 22) was a cogent analysis of the NYC budget crisis. There can be little doubt about the hegemony of corporate interests in the determination of fiscal management and priorities. Clearly human needs are being sacrificed at the altar of Mayor Beame's program of "fiscal responsibility." It should be clear to all that when education, day care, police and fire protection, health care, etc. budgets are slashed the poor and working class bear the brunt.

But I must take issue with the statement that none of Beame's opponents in the Democratic primary campaign are articulating a critique of Beame's collusion with the wealthy and corporate interests. "Little can change under his successor," concludes Edel. I must assume that this means progressives and democratic socialists should turn their attentions elsewhere. I disagree. Former Rep. Bella Abzug is articulating a vision of a rejuvenated New York that could provide decent housing, health care, mass transit, and employment by investment of the city's money in areas such as the South Bronx or parts of Brooklyn to preserve and develop neighborhoods currently redlined and with no access to private monies. The point is to invest in the people of New York rather than in huge publicly subsidized apartments for the wealthy or a new multi-million dollar convention center such as Beame is now proposing.

The electoral process (and Bella Abzug's campaign in particular in my opinion) can serve as one way to restore the policy-making function of this city to the people and their elected representatives, rather than mandating the Emergency Financial Control Board, the banks, Beame and the regular Democratic machine to make social decisions from corporate anti-social priorities. Yes, it will be a long struggle against these entrenched interests but to claim that it makes no difference who sits as Mayor of New York seems incredibly purist and runs counter to my own perceptions and, I suspect, to those of most New Yorkers.

—Patrick Lucefield
New York

Editor's note: Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letters—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.