

Letters

Down with the double standard

Editor:

Much of the left wing press is disturbing because it is libertarian at home but supports authoritarian regimes abroad. Whatever humanism is or is meant to be, it ought not by any definition be ideological solidarity with oppressors because they share the same politics and the victims do not.

On the contrary, humanism is at its best when concern is shown for political enemies as human beings. Anything else is pure fakery.

I find it amusing that the right wing sends me letters accusing me of pro-communism because of my pro-labor opinions, and the left wing letters accuse me of pro-fascism because of my libertarian view as it concerns communist regimes (but not as it concerns fascist regimes such as the Chilean junta), almost as if any concern for human rights in said regimes is a betrayal of the cause. It never dawns on such leftists that the uncritical support of left wing dictatorships is the more real betrayal.

Until the American left applies a universal standard to basic civil liberties (including the right to strike) it will be talking and writing to itself.

The conservatism that the left often accuses American workers of harboring might have more to do with the left romance with totalitarianism than with the exotic co-optation theories of Herbert Marcuse. In my view this is not conservatism at all, but an understandable fear of the left and its totalitarian tendencies and, more positively, a valid progressive concern particularly for trade union rights.

I spent over 20 years as a manual laborer in mostly low-wage jobs (the best money I ever made was in a pipe shop for about a year) and I met two or three socialists. Since joining the literati I have met dozens of socialists, mainly white collar and middle or upper-middle class. Something is wrong in that sociological portrait. That something is the elitist views and life style of the Socialist.

As it stands now, socialist rhetoric acts as a steam valve for disenchanted intellectuals, frustrated workers and a gratis think tank for capitalism.

If this letter is construed as a yahoo right wing blast at socialism then I am wasting my time.

Your bread and butter labor stuff is damn good.

—Mike Lavelle
Chicago

Editor's note: Mike Lavelle writes the Blue Collar Views column for the Chicago Tribune.

Pseudo-intellectual six-foot children

Editor:

As expected, President Carter has granted pardons to Vietnam era draft resisters.

It seems that many years of affluent, soft living have changed many Ameri-

cans into flabby, bleeding-heart, forgive-and-forget slobs.

Today far too many pampered, cocky, immature youth decide for themselves in which way they will or will not participate. In any future war, thousands of these vociferous, undisciplined, pseudo-intellectual six-foot children will have a precedent to ensure future forgiveness, so they will once more scamper like rats to various sanctuaries to escape the draft or the discipline of military life.

It bodes ill for any nation whose leaders simper about possible amnesty and pardon for war deserters and evaders, particularly when faced with truculent, sanguinary, malevolent Communist enemies whose goal is the eventual defeat of the free world nations!

R. Blagden
East Hampton, Ct.

Self-serving bullshit

Editor:

Bonne Nesbitt's article on heart disease (*ITT*, Feb. 9) contained a bit of my profession's self-serving bullshit that ought to be pointed out.

Dr. Charles Vil is quoted as saying that "once you get the medical treatment there's a pretty good chance you'll survive [a heart attack]." What he implies is that the medical care is responsible for the good chance to survive—It isn't. It is the time lapse. If you survive the first few moments *with or without medical care*, your survival chances are good.

You gotta watch us.

—Pat Clement, M.D.
New Haven, Ct.

John L. Lewis would have enjoyed the show

Editor:

You reported (*ITT*, Feb. 23) that neither I nor Genora Dollinger were invited to the joint GM-UAW celebration of the first 40 years of unionization at GM.

I was invited by both the joint committee and by the union. But I didn't attend, and sent the following mailgram instead:

Irving Bluestone
Director
General Motors Dept. - UAW

Thanks for the invitation to reception jointly sponsored by UAW and General Motors to commemorate the 40th anniversary of first GM-UAW agreement. Regret I'm no longer strong enough to brave a Michigan winter.

Special honor is due the thousands of rank and filers who risked their all in the freezing cold of 1937 to stand up — and also to sit down — for the simple right to organize. In those days none of us could have imagined the warm spirit of mutuality suffusing tonight's St. Regis banquet. If only Wyndham Mortimer, the UAW's first elected vice president, and John L. Lewis, founder of the CIO, were alive to enjoy this celebration. Such an event was surely far from their minds when they signed for the union on that historic dotted line.

In the course of the 40 years and a great many struggles our union has spread far beyond the original 17 GM plants, and the organizing still continues — for which the workers in the Monroe,

La., guide lamp plant have cause to be grateful to Irving Bluestone, the GM department and all the UAW staff.

Perhaps our GM host, Mr. Morris, doesn't know that 40 years ago corporation spokesmen said that if the union won it would "wreck" General Motors. But last year the corporation is reported to have made a billion dollars in profit. It would seem to me that a considerable slice of that profit should be shared not just with highly paid executives, but also with the workers who made it possible and clearly haven't wrecked the ship.

—Bob Travis
San Pedro, Calif.

Atlas shrugs

Editor:

Your reporting on housing and the community action movement is less than I expected.

An example is the report on the Arlington Heights Supreme Court case, which held that suburban zoning laws that had the effect of excluding blacks did not contravene the Constitution unless it could be proved that their intent was to discriminate. The article singles out the Supreme Court and restrictive zoning as the main culprits for segregated housing. This leaves the impression that all we have to do is change the Supreme Court and start suing again.

While triumph in the courts may break down zoning restrictions and allow a few upwardly mobile blacks to escape the ghetto, it will do little to provide decent housing for the majority of blacks.

Suburban integration will occur only after we reduce inequality of income, get rid of the mortgage finance system, and socialize the housing industry. Effecting these changes depends upon the strength of a mass-based popular movement committed to these goals.

Advocates of integrated housing (besides the well-meaning anti-discrimination groups) come from the more enlightened sectors of the capitalist class who view dispersing low income minorities into the suburbs as a desirable way to close the gap between jobs and employment growth in the suburbs and the unemployed in the cities. With high energy costs, opening up the suburbs for housing where jobs exist makes sense.

But which suburbs? The older white ethnic or the already integrated suburbs that are least politically resistant? We will have the busing explosion all over again with whites battling blacks, heading off joint action by workers and poor people against monopoly capital.

The danger in your report is that American radicals and reformers, especially with the growth of free legal services and public interest lawyers, are enamored of litigation as a tool for change. Yet, litigation per se has had little or nothing to do with bringing about social change for the poor and minorities.

John Atlas
Shelterforce
31 Chestnut St.
East Orange, N.J. 07018

Russia was not doomed

Editor:

In your editorial (*ITT*, Feb. 9) you comment on "Repression in Russia and Eastern Europe" and claim to explain

"why the Soviets and the Eastern European governments are the way they are" by reference to their histories. I would suggest that until you get your facts straight, you are not competent to increase your readers' understanding of the problem of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

You state "The semi-feudal czarist regime that the Bolsheviks overthrew was the most repressive and bureaucratic of all of Europe." My quibble is not with your characterization of the government of Nicholas II, but rather with your belief that the Bolsheviks had no role in the planning of these uprisings. The Bolsheviks eventually succeeded the Provisional Government in November 1917—a Provisional Government which had failed to solve Russia's problems, but which had certainly installed the trappings of Western democracy.

You further state that Russia lacked democratic experience or tradition. Russia had a revolutionary movement in the 19th century that had a democratic society as its goal. Although the avowedly authoritarian Bolsheviks eventually triumphed, the Mensheviks, the Populists as represented by Herzen, Lavrov, and Mikhailovsky, and the anarchists who followed Kropotkin were all in the Western democratic tradition. There were also constitutional groups that were at least as popular as the Bolsheviks before the November 1917 revolution. Russia was not doomed to an authoritarian government. With increased education and broader horizons, the democratic tradition may be revived. It is doubtful whether President Carter's policies will be helpful in achieving this aim. There should be no policy, though, which is based on the misinformation and misconceptions contained in your editorial.

—Stuart R. Grover
Wittenberg University
Springfield, Ohio

Quality analysis

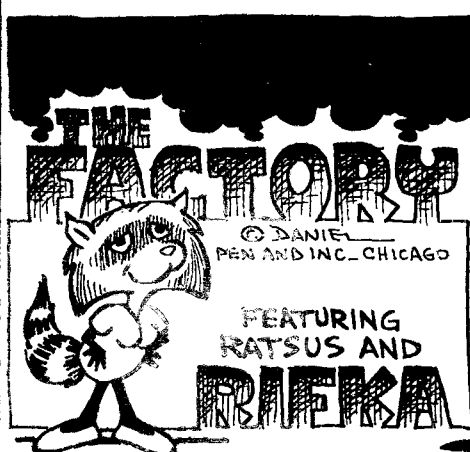
Editor:

Just received my first issue of *IN THESE TIMES* (Jan. 9) and am impressed enough to do the unusual and write a note of congratulations. I subscribe to a great number of political journals, pamphlets and magazines and, sadly enough, seldom read them thoroughly or consistently. This is partly a problem of not having enough hours in the day, but too often with the style of the publication. I sat down to look at *IN THESE TIMES* after dinner and after a quick perusal of our local paper and found myself reading virtually every article.

As an ex-American now living in Canada I find it a little difficult getting quality analysis of current political trends. From 'left' publications I get almost total condemnation of any political developments in established politics which too often reads like sour grapes. How refreshing to read that Carter has a Secretary of Agriculture that has some good points. The piece on Klein was fascinating and so much more than *Newsweek* could ever offer. Likewise the article on China, while not a 'new' perspective, was right on. Most attractive is the size of the articles.

All the best for the future.

—Steve Doquid
Langley, B.C.
Canada



Simon Rosenblum

An open letter to the PLO: It's time to recognize Israel is here to stay

Over the years I have written and spoken in support of your rights. I have identified with left-wing Zionists who worked from the '20s through the '40s to establish Arab-Jewish cooperation within a bi-national framework. Bi-nationalists argued that the manner of Zionist settlement in Palestine was to a significant extent predicated upon the destruction of your society. Unfortunately, this did indeed happen. While we may disagree over whether Zionism can properly be labelled as "racist" or whether it is simply a product of imperialism, we can agree that mainstream Zionism was an enemy to your people.

But history can only be transcended, not reversed. Israel was created through a process of colonization, but it is now a legitimate nation. If peace has any chance in the Middle East, the Israeli people must be granted the unconditional right of self-determination. Palestine must be divided so that each party will have a fair share. The return to 1967 borders by Israel and the creation of a Palestinian state on the West Bank of the Jordan River and the Gaza Strip, accompanied by repatriation or compensation of Palestinian refugees by Israel is the most favorable realistic outcome. Palestinians, you are faced with an opportunity to establish your own state and give up the futile fight against impossible odds. If the current initiative for peace is not seized the seeds of a new war will quickly take root.

►Signs of change.

Recently there have been signs of a pragmatic and moderate PLO approach toward Israel—not an outright repudiation of the goal to create a secular and democratic Palestine, but indirect indications that the PLO will accept an independent entity on the West Bank and Gaza and recognize the existence of Israel. In December a PLO leader met in Paris with the chairman of the Israeli Council for Israeli-Palestinian Peace, Matti Peled, who announced on Israeli television on Jan. 1 that he and an undisclosed PLO leader signed a document "accepting the Israel

Council's principles as the basis for continuing meetings with us and possible future negotiations with the government." One of the Israeli Council's principles is "that the only path to peace is through co-existence between two sovereign states, each with its distinct national identity." The unnamed PLO leader, described by Peled as being "in charge of coordinating the peace efforts of the PLO," has been assumed to be Issam Sartawi. Sartawi recently said in New York that the Middle East has reached "an historical turning point that should be seized." Without question current relations between the PLO and the Israeli peace camp constitute a hopeful milestone and support Henry Kissinger's belief that "objective conditions for progress in the Middle East are better now than they have been perhaps at any time since the creation of the state of Israel."

Yet the Israeli government continues to ignore the moderate trends of the PLO and adamantly refuses to consider a West Bank-Gaza Palestinian state. Israeli doves have demonstrated that "there is somebody to talk to" but without a fundamental change in the Palestinian covenant the Israeli people will not regard current PLO moderation as being any more than a tactical move. This suspicion was only reinforced by the PLO denial of the Sartawi/Israeli Council document.

A recent opinion poll shows that nearly half of Israel's citizens favor peace talks, after the PLO recognizes the Israeli state. In December the PLO Central Council accepted a "half-a-loaf" settlement—a separate Palestinian state. The PLO has always vowed that it would accept nothing less than the elimination of the state of Israel, but has changed its position over the last two years. However, it has not yet formally abandoned the objective of a secular democratic Palestine.

►The final solution.

A West Bank-Gaza State must be a final solution, not only a step toward some ultimate PLO goal. Such a state must not be

seen as a base from which to continue the armed struggle for Israel's liquidation. This understanding seems implicit in much of the PLO's recent actions, but that is insufficient to counter the Israeli government's charges that a West Bank-Gaza Palestinian state would be an aggressive neighbor possessing Soviet-supplied weapons within the city of Jerusalem and 15 miles from Tel Aviv.

There is great doubt whether a Palestinian state in need of massive aid for its development and rehabilitation of refugees—aid that will come primarily from the anti-Soviet rich oil states—will either desire or be able to risk a pro-Soviet orientation. Furthermore, rather than being a secure base the proposed state would make it easier for Israel to hit back at any attacks against it. De-militarization of such a state is essentially a bogus issue. But a just and lasting peace must, in the words of Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338, include the "termination of all claims or states of belligerency" and acknowledgement of the right of every state in the area "to live in peace within secure and recognized boundaries free from threats or acts of force."

This brings us back to the Palestinian National Charter, or covenant, which commits the PLO to the liberation of all Palestine. According to Sartawi, the PLO presently refuses to acknowledge Israel's right to exist because "recognition comes at the end of the process of negotiating peace, not before it starts. We cannot give up our best bargaining card at the start."

And, in fact, recognition of Israel is the PLO's major bargaining card, but it cannot be played as a trump card, although as a lead it could strengthen peace-oriented groups in Israel.

It would be a big mistake to exaggerate the limited number of Israeli doves. Rabin narrowly defeated hawkish Defense Minister Peres in his effort to win the leadership of the Labor party, and his maneuverability is limited because of differences in the party. Even more ominous, Labor may be thrown out of office in the May

elections and replaced by an even more intransigent right.

If Rabin is to be re-elected and the peace parties are to gain leverage, the PLO must renounce the covenant when the Palestine National Council convenes its March meeting. The PLO would be making a great error if they postpone the council meeting until late in the spring because the results of the Israeli election can be affected by renunciation of the PLO charter.

The PLO leadership presently seems to be counting on the Arab states' promises to the Palestinians. Such an approach has been disastrous for Palestinians in the past, and Sadat's recent suggestions of links between the PLO and Jordan should be seen as a squeeze on the PLO to accept less than a separate and independent Palestinian state. Unless the PLO adopts a specific program advocating a West Bank-Gaza state and recognizing the legitimacy of the State of Israel, the Arab governments will bargain away Palestinian interests and the U.S. will not be pressured to recognize a separate Palestinian state. Ironically Israel, by not permitting West Bank delegates (pro-recognition moderates) to attend the council meeting, is effectively blocking the initiatives within the PLO to recognize the Zionist state.

One crucial point must be understood. The issues of peace and war, recognition or non-recognition of Israeli and Palestinian rights, cannot be objects of tactical games. They must be spelled out clearly and unequivocally. A settlement cannot be imposed on Israel. The Israeli people must accept it, even if they do not enthusiastically greet it. Only the immediate revision of the Palestinian covenant will allow the current seeds of peace to bear fruit. Remember: the roots of war are already planted.

Simon Rosenblum is a Canadian whose writings have appeared in Israel, Lebanon, France and the U.S.

Dan Marshall

Was Sadlowski out of joint with the times?

The election campaign of Ed Sadlowski for president of the United Steel Workers (USW) attracted unprecedented attention from the national media and vitriolic attacks from other union officials. Based on Sadlowski's militant rhetoric and tough-talking style, the press painted him as a ghost from the past, as someone who would return the labor movement to the industrial warfare of the 1930s.

Much of Sadlowski's appeal to rank-and-file steelworkers—and to the left/liberal "outsiders" who worked in his campaign and supported him financially—was based on this let's-go-out-and-fight-the-bosses image and on his commitment to greater union democracy. But Sadlowski's emphasis on the strike weapon, and his call for unionists to adopt a purely adversary relationship to management, may have been his undoing.

It's all but impossible for labor to return to the fighting days of the 1930s. With massive government intervention in the economy and the flowering of multinational corporations, strikes are not as capable of raising workers' real wages as they once were.

In the case of steel, the threat every three years of a nationwide strike meant stockpiling, layoffs, and the loss of jobs due to automation and cheap foreign imports of steel. In less capital-intensive industries, strikes provide a convenient excuse for companies to pick up and run away to the non-union South or abroad.

For public employees, strikes have often generated tremendous public hostility that local governments and the courts have been able to exploit successfully in anti-union measures. Last year's San Francisco craft workers strike was an example.

For this reason, labor unions have been seeking alternatives to the simple exercise of their "economic muscle." Jerry Wurf of AFSCME, for example, has proposed compulsory arbitration for some public employees. Progressive trade union leaders like William Winpisinger of the Machinists union have turned to organizations like the Institute of Collective Bargaining, which actively promotes labor/management cooperation, and to an emphasis on redistributing income in the U.S. away from capital.

In the USW, I.W. Abel turned to the Experimental Negotiating Agreement to deal with a dire situation. The major problem with the ENA was that it was negotiated behind closed doors without an opportunity for the membership to participate or to vote on the final proposal.

The best explanation I've heard for Sadlowski's defeat is that many union members perceived him as "strike-happy." There was apparently a large turnout of older workers who feared that Sadlowski's opposition to the ENA meant that he would return union members to the days of strike threats, stockpiling and layoffs. Sadlowski's image and rhetoric increased this fear.

Sadlowski also lost heavily in Canada, where Landrum-Griffin protections do not apply. McBride triumphed there because he was running with Lynn Williams, a Canadian social democrat and a founding member of the New Democratic Party.

Sadlowski's campaign was in many ways positive. It indicated an enormous amount of rank-and-file dissatisfaction with union policies. It will act as a constant pressure on McBride's future policies. Steelworkers Fight Back is clearly committed to strengthening the rank-and-file movement in the union and Sadlowski's campaign provided it with contacts throughout the country.

Nor is Sadlowski's defeat a disaster. But he lost in part because he advocated an approach that is essentially a throw-back to a different period in the growth of American capitalism.

The left needs to formulate a more sophisticated, broader conception of trade union tactics and strategy, one that comprehends the multi-faceted nature of the class struggle today. That conflict is not just between labor and management in a given plant or company, but is equally centered in the political arena where the ruling class directs the entire social structure and where many decisions are made that affect the economy, capital's options and the living conditions of the working class as a whole.

In 1977 the bosses are not just sitting in corporate boardrooms plotting ingen-

ious ways to buy off labor aristocrats. They are organized in the Business Roundtable, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Chamber of Commerce, the Trilateral Commission and other well-heeled groups that attempt to shape government policy to their profit priorities. As political institutions, labor unions are in the forefront, trying to counteract that power.

Meanwhile, what the left often denounces as simple class collaboration may be a complex trade-off where unions relinquish something to gain greater job security for their own members or more political power. The ENA has stabilized the steel industry to the extent that negotiators can realistically discuss union demands for lifetime job security. While the specific provisions of this arrangement are not yet defined, it could signal a significant breakthrough on what issues are negotiated in contract talks and in limiting management prerogatives to cut the workforce at its discretion.

In general, socialists should be very cautious not to romanticize strikes as the most pure form of the class struggle, but to examine all the ways the ruling class maintains societal hegemony and how labor unions and other working-class institutions can effectively fight the domination. ■