

More Letters

A citizen's obligation

Editor:

Thank you no end for Frances Moore Lappe and Joseph Collins' insightful and (hopefully) awakening article concerning Congressional control over the American tax dollar (*ITT*, March 2). Perhaps the findings of the Washington-based Center for International Policy (from which the statistics in the article were taken) will create enough backlash to awaken our sleeping giants in the House and Senate.

As for us private citizens, it seems now more than an obligation to question where our taxes go. If we don't oversee the process, we will continue unwittingly to support repressive regimes in countries such as South Korea and Chile. Carter obviously has no intention of applying the principles of zero-based budgeting (specifically, program justification and dollar totals) to the secretive World Bank and International Monetary Bank. As the authors point out, these institutions have more control over the destination of American foreign aid than anyone.

—Bruce Colven
Eugene, Ore.

The people yes.

Editor:

Just finished the feature on Barbara Koppel (*ITT*, Feb. 2) and was delighted to see her given such deserved attention and praise. Hurray for a dynamite woman who can put across the clearest message in the most powerful way!

But I am surprised and upset at a socialist paper's article leaving out even a mention of all the other people who worked long and hard with no pay—not just that Koppel "got friends to go and she couldn't pay them much more than expenses." She was only able to get a crew because there is a network of movement people who will give their time, money and personal life-time for what they believe is important.

To only say, "Not all have her ability as an organizer and a fund-raiser." is like saying that only Jim Weinstein could start *IN THESE TIMES*, when you all were part of larger networks and came together behind the paper.

Give the synthesizers their just credit—Yes—but also keep alive the people and their movement's victories.

We really like the paper.

Len Stanley
Chapel Hill, N.C.

A muddled expression of an important issue

Editor:

Alan Wolfe's informative article about the Two Pauls (*ITT*, Feb. 23) has a bizarre and, in my judgment, erroneous conclusion. After correctly observing that the Two Pauls (Paul Nitze and Paul Warnke) represent a possible split in America's ruling class—with one segment representing a continuation of the Cold War, more military spending, geopolitical nationalism, etc., and the other representing an extension of detente, de-emphasis of anticommunism and military spending, etc.—Wolfe concluded that Paul Warnke, who represents detente, constitutes "a greater threat to the long-run desires of ordinary people for some control over the conditions that affect their lives."

Nevertheless, Wolfe goes on, we should not oppose Warnke, "for the policies he advocates are welcome," even though "bringing peace with the Sov-

Eurocommunism: Opportunism or the best hope for the left?

The recent articles on the Communist/Socialist Common Program in France by Bernard Moss (*ITT*, Jan 26-Feb. 16) and the Italian CP's support for Czech dissidents by Diana Johnstone (*ITT*, Feb. 16) presented information and analysis that could not be found in the commercial press except in grossly distorted form. Yet there was something disturbing about them.

Moss's account of the Communists' role in the events of May-June 1968 has a slightly Orwellian flavor. Those events appear to have been genuinely spontaneous. The implicit organizing principle of the movement was anti-authoritarian. Whether the events, with a different sort of Communist participation, would have led to a socialist France, we can never know. But to see the Communists as anything other than the train's brakemen, no matter what their reasons, seems a distortion.

The tone of Johnstone's account of Berlinguer's closing speech at the cultural conference is always laudatory—e.g., she uses the phrase "bold and comprehensive appeal" and is never critical. Yet the PCI's program for a "transition to socialism" is one that every Italian Communist I have spoken with says will be "very long." If this is true, to portray one's appeal to the Italian working-class for economic austerity as "an opportunity to jettison the consumer society" is just an ideological masking of concessions to Italian and international "capitalist requirements."

Both Moss and Johnstone often, though not always, speak with the voices of the parties whose actions and words might be more usefully criticized.

People drift into an uncritical posture toward the Eurocommunists, I think, because of the underdeveloped state of the American left. We have no mass socialist/communist movement here. In writing about those movements in Europe we try to make their popularity understandable to Americans, who, we assume, are predisposed toward anti-communism. Such an approach risks occasional degeneration into an uncritical posture. Fully to serve the American left, though, criticism of Eurocommunism is necessary.

IN THESE TIMES could do a service to the American left by running a fifth article on the French situation that explores some of the problems with the Communist/Socialist strategy. The article might explore whether

- winning the 1978 parliamentary elections will lead to control of the State apparatus (including the army and police);
- what sorts of strains we might expect in the left alliance under the internal and external pressure that is likely to mount after 1978;
- is a ruling coalition of parties containing one whose self-organizing principle is "centralism" compatible with a society whose self-organizing principle is anti-authoritarian;
- finally, will the "peaceful road to socialism" lead to socialism, or remain peaceful?

This article would require a voice close to the French extra-parliamentary left of Gorz and Sartre and some history of that left.

The apparently still continuing rebellion of Italian students affords *IN THESE TIMES* the opportunity to run some analysis of the Italian situation from a perspective to the left of the PCI's. In the

ties [involves waging] war on ordinary Americans." This is a muddled expression of a separate issue that finally comes in the last sentence: Warnke is apparently thinking about the long run in which "ultimately struggles are about productive relationships, not strategic balances, and for that reason alone it would be well worth seeing him confirmed."

Struggles about productive relations are not long run or short run; they are con-

tinuous. The cold war involved preoccupations that distorted the composition of our national output and quality of life and negatively affected labor's leadership. All these are directly or indirectly related to the relations of production. It is difficult for moderate to left labor leaders, given the absence of a socialist political movement and the prevalence of strong anticommunist union bosses, to argue against the business system and



one of their (the PCI's) spokesmen off the stage at Rome University as the emergence of the "new Italian fascism." Such opportunism by the PCI is a shade beneath the epithets hurled by the PCF (and reiterated uncritically by Moss) at the students in May-June 1968.

—Leland Neuberger
Berkeley, Calif.

Diana Johnstone replies:

Leland Neuberger hits the nail on the head when he says the we write about European Communists in a particularly friendly way when addressing Americans to avoid feeding the prevailing anticommunism. Having made this point, he should know better than to go on to assume, as he seems to do, that my views coincide with those of the PCI. It seems to me a bit much to conclude on the basis of a single article—whose main theme, incidentally, was the external blockage of political evolution in Czechoslovakia and Italy and not PCI strategy—that I "too often speak with the voice of the PCI." Is it unacceptable to report a PCI speech without including a harangue against the "revisionists"?

Feeling no particular vocation to be the new Lenin, I do not feel obliged to present a revolutionary strategy in every news article I write.

Of course the PCI's effort to turn economic austerity into an opportunity to jettison the consumer society is an ideological masking of the concessions to capitalist requirements. Whether it is "just" that, or whether it can be given some real concrete content, remains to be seen. Personally, I am not wildly optimistic, but there are many good reasons for not dismissing such efforts out of hand.

Whatever my own analysis (which is not fixed but in a constant state of development), I do not share the view of some American new left anti-Communists according to which all that is preventing socialist revolution in Italy (or France) is the revisionist policy of the country's Communist Party. In reality, the most obvious, decisive obstacle to socialism in Western Europe is U.S. imperialism, and it seems out of place for an American left with no visible power or strategy to halt U.S. repression of an eventual socialist revolution in Western Europe to carp at European leftists for reluctance to turn their countries into Quang Tri.

Lacking any mass movement, some American Marxists look at the big French or Italian working class movements and wonder why, with all those troops, they don't storm the fortress. It may be better

"serving the American left," as Neuberger puts it, to try to point out why they don't. Whether or not one agrees with them, it is useful to understand the positions of the French and Italian Communist Parties for the simple reason that they exist. The "French extra-parliamentary left of Gorz and Sartre" that Neuberger wants to hear from unfortunately does not. Of course Gorz and Sartre, as isolated voices without any mass following or political responsibilities are congenial to equally isolated American leftists; their independence allows them to make the same sort of valid criticisms of parties and leaders that we can and do make ourselves. But neither they nor anyone else now has a clear strategy for making socialist revolution in the West.

This, I think, is a point that needs to be stressed: of course the Communist Parties are not about to make a socialist revolution, but neither is anyone else, because frankly, nobody knows *how* at this point. Sectarian buck-passing constantly obscures this truth. In both France and Italy, the far left is in a state of crisis because of inability to develop a plausible revolutionary strategy. This is not because they are stupid or traitorous but because the problems to be faced are really enormous.

Among such problems confronting the Italian left are (1) the mobility of capital away from militant labor movements and (2) the fragility of a high standard of living owing much to pillage and exploitation of Third World countries. In view of these factors, a number of leaders of the Italian new left have been ahead of Berlinguer in warning against the dead end of purely economic demands and in calling for "cultural revolution." Coming to grips with unpleasant reality is not only "opportunism" but also the only source of really useful ideas.

Bernard H. Moss replies:

1. In regard to the strike of May-June 1968, Leland Neuberger says that it was "genuinely spontaneous" and "anti-authoritarian." While I doubt that any movement is ever genuinely spontaneous—all have some organizing elements, even if they are anti-authoritarian—I agree that the events had an anti-authoritarian character in some sectors. But this does not necessarily mean that it was anti-capitalist or socialist. President Carter, too, is anti-authoritarian. The student movement in France, Italy, and the U.S. has always contained elements that were either anti-socialist or that served the interests of the existing capitalist order.

2. Regarding the Eurocommunists, while I obviously believe they have found the best approach to socialism in Western Europe, I am not "uncritical." In future articles I hope to explore some of the questions raised by Neuberger. I would suggest, however, that the extra-parliamentary left, which is hopelessly divided in Italy and practically nonexistent in France, is not the place to find answers.

3. I find Neuberger's concern about achieving "a society whose self-organizing principle is anti-authoritarian" to be utopian. All socialist societies today and for a long time to come, I think, will have to contain a mix of autonomy and authority, of direct participation and representative centralization. The point the Eurocommunists wish to make is that this authority must be based on the democratic consent of the people.

related policies that are aimed at preserving our national security against a commonly accepted Russian "menace." By removing this preoccupation in the form of preserving and extending detente and pushing hard for disarmament, class tensions and struggles may well get articulated in different and, hopefully, more constructive ways.

—Raymond S. Franklin
Queens College of CUNY

Staughton Lynd

Labor and the Law: Grieving: five steps to failure

A retired Chicago steelworker has written a wonderful book. Charles Spencer's *Blue Collar: an internal examination of the workplace* is available from Lakeside Charter Books, P.O. Box 7651, Chicago, Ill. 60680, for \$4.95.

Spencer's message is that the grievance-arbitration procedure, the heart of the typical collective bargaining agreement, is "five steps to failure." He does *not* condemn trade unions as inherently repressive. He does *not* argue that collective bargaining necessarily functions to limit workers' power on the shop floor. His thesis is more sophisticated and precise: that collective bargaining in the U.S. today is an unequal relationship, the effect of which is to remove problems from the workplace and to put their resolution in the hands of decision-makers who are not accountable to the rank-and-file worker.

This thesis challenges the central myth of modern American labor law. According to the myth, propagated particularly by justice William O. Douglas, American workers have voluntarily given up the right to strike in exchange for binding arbitration. In the words of several Douglas-authored Supreme Court opinions, binding arbitration is the "quid pro quo" for the sake of which workers gladly surrendered the right to strike for the duration of a contract.

This is nonsense. Historically, workers have chosen binding arbitration only when the right to strike was not available. Such was the case with all employees during World War II, and so it is with public employees now. The average worker, given a free choice between the right to strike without binding arbitration, or binding arbitration without the right to strike, would choose the strike power. The average worker perceives arbitration not as a friend, but as an enemy.

This is powerfully documented by Spen-

cer in relating 25 years' experience in the mill.

More than 500 grievances are filed each year in the Republic Steel plant in South Chicago where Spencer worked. In Step One the grievant confronts his or her own foreman and the grievance is usually denied. It then goes to Step Two, where the superintendent, who told the foreman what to do in the first place, once more denies the grievance in (Spencer estimates) nine cases out of ten.

"In Step Three, the grievance becomes more depersonalized. The aggrieved worker and the boss have been eased out of it. It has become a matter between the company's industrial relations officers and the chairman of the union's grievance committee." Spencer characterizes the Third Step as follows:

Industrial relations people come to Step Three with attache cases filled with past arbitration decisions, grievance settlements that bear the union's signature, copies of local agreements agreed to by the union, and a dossier on the aggrieved worker, all lined up to sustain the company's position. What new weapon does the union representative have to beat down the company's massive defenses? Nothing that wasn't previously demonstrated in Steps One and Two. The facts in the grievance don't change. The language of the contract doesn't change. History is on the side of the company....

The decision whether to appeal from Step Three to Step Four is made not by the grievant, nor even by any member of the grievant's local union, but by a staff man appointed by the international union. The staff man's decision is final. Usually he decides not to appeal, "often for strategic reasons unexplained either to the worker or to the local union." If the staff man does appeal, another six months or a year go by

before Step Four proceedings.

At Step Four, the company's industrial relations superintendent, together with a corporation attorney, negotiate with the union staff man. There are no new facts. The only thing new is "that the people making the decision are now one more step removed from the workplace."

Spencer describes one grievance "settled" at Step Four. The grievant was nicknamed Ziggy.

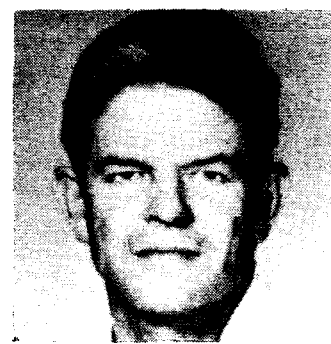
Ziggy wasn't at the hearing. Neither was his grievanceman. Nobody who actually worked in the plant was present at the fourth step hearing....

A half-dozen grievances were on the agenda that day. Ziggy's was the final one to be considered. The others had been speeded through, agreed by both sides to have "no merit." The company observed sarcastically that appealing so many chickenhit grievances to fourth step was the reason they were so far behind in settling grievances. The international staffman was inclined to agree. The staffman turned to his witness and asked, "What do you know about this (Ziggy's) grievance?"...

The chairman of the grievance committee responding to the staffman's question shook his head and answered that there was "nothing to it." He apologized for allowing the grievance to be put on the fourth step agenda.

Thus ended Ziggy's year-long fight for an apprenticeship he thought belonged to him. The company industrial relations superintendent reached into his briefcase and brought out a well-worn rubber stamp, pressed it to the ink pad, and slammed it hard onto the back of the grievance form. He signed it and then handed it to the staffman for his signature. It read, "Withdrawn by mutual consent of the union and the company."

After Step Four there is still the possibility of Step Five: arbitration. At Republic



Steel in South Chicago, fewer than 20 of the more than 500 grievances filed each year are heard by an arbitrator. Nationally, according to Spencer, it is estimated that only 2-3 percent of the grievances filed annually are ever arbitrated. In many workplaces, no grievance has ever been arbitrated because a small local union cannot afford the expense. (Although the international union decides whether a grievance should be arbitrated, the local union pays for it.)

One final fact: about two-thirds of the time the arbitrator decides for the company. Multiply 3 percent by 1/3 and you get the conclusion that a worker in American industry who files a grievance has 1 chance in 100 of a favorable decision in arbitration.

Spencer concludes: "Unless a powerful democratic movement among rank-and-file workers develops, collective bargaining will continue to head in the direction of tighter and tighter controls in the hands of the top union leadership, with greater and greater restrictions on the rights of members to decide on their labor agreements or to call a strike in their workplace, more ambiguities and complexities to frustrate any challenge to management in the plants, greater intervention by the State on the side of employers, with more frequent use of court injunctions against unions to enforce industrial peace."

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Edward Greer

Are our cities being sacrificed? Some may be scheduled for destruction

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Given the current inability of American capitalism to solve people's pressing daily problems, it is not surprising that demands that the populace reduce its "unreasonably" high expectations and accept a permanently diminished standard of living are increasingly heard on all sides. One of the latest and most horrifying examples of this trend among the ruling class' intellectual pace-setters is the notion of urban triage, which has appeared in the current issue of *The Public Interest*.

The Public Interest is the key domestic policy organ of right-wing social democrats centered around Nathan Glazer, Irving Kristol, Daniel Bell, and Sen. Daniel P. Moynihan. Since ideas put forward by this group are often translated into policy by the ruling class, they bear close watching, whether or not their ideas are intellectually sound.

A few years ago Moynihan's friend and collaborator at Harvard University, Edward Banfield, advocated a policy of "benign neglect" for the cities. Liberal academics quickly and overwhelmingly pointed out that this policy was both racist and unworkable. But as Nixon's key domestic policy advisor Banfield's program in substance expressed in his book *The Unheavenly City*, was adopted just the same. The results of the past several years of allowing free market forces free reign in the cities has not been the improvement of housing, urban infra-structures, and real income which Banfield and Moynihan prognosticated. On the contrary, massive urban dis-

investment—of which "redlining" has been only the tip of the iceberg—has been the order of the day. Our central cities are substantially deteriorated in their conditions compared to a decade ago.

The publication as the lead article in *The Public Interest* of a piece, "On the Death of Cities," is a warning siren of the proposed next stage of establishment urban policy. It is the stage of the direct destruction of the central cities.

►Urban triage.

The article centers on the concept of "urban triage." The political problem for its proponents is how effectively to carry out this policy while disguising it as much as possible. If only, the article says, "long-term, objective calculations—made by policy analysts—of marginal rates of return on investments in different neighborhoods" were the order of the day. Unfortunately, the author goes on, obstreperous urban dwellers tend to interfere by political protest and this results in the preferred mode of decision-making being "replaced by short-term political calculations by elected officials showing visible compassion."

As a poem by Bertold Brecht ironically suggested, it is a pity that the government, having lost confidence in the people, cannot abolish them by decree! It is well to recall that the editors of *The Public Interest* are the very selfsame cold war intellectuals who concocted the notion that public involvement in civic life should be strictly limited. To Daniel Bell, Seymour M. Lipset, and Robert Dahl unleashing the mass-

es in the political arena was a prescription for social disaster.

In this stance the leading corporate ideologists in the U.S. abandon their own political heritage. The revolutionary idea of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's that the people are sovereign only when they directly participate in and control the policy is now forewarned. In its place *The Public Interest* crowd, speaking on behalf of the real masters of American society, demand a political system administered from the top down with ever-declining popular participation.

►Banker power.

Direct banker control over New York City finances is a current example of how this trend is put into operation. And we can anticipate many more initiatives of this sort as new domestic crises develop.

The diminution of democratic control over political life is necessary from the perspective of the ruling class because they understand that the working people of this country are simply not going to voluntarily surrender all the economic and social gains they have won over the past century of struggle. As I pointed out in my last column, the strategy of the ruling class, therefore, is to concentrate its offensive against the poorest and least well organized and most discriminated sectors of the working class—central city inhabitants and racial minorities. "Urban triage" is quite simple. The policy analysts choose entire cities (not merely neighborhoods) for complete destruction. No effort is made to maintain or in-

duce any capital expenditures in them, and social services are progressively reduced until all that is left is minimal police occupation to prevent disorders. The city is allowed literally to die as a functioning entity.

The justification for this policy is that as on the battlefield during combat when there are inadequate medical resources to go around, the most severely wounded are sacrificed to save the rest. And in the inhuman monstrosity of war, such behavior is perhaps the kindest possible.

But to analogize the entire American society to a battlefield is insane. For of course there is enough, nay more than enough, to provide a decent urban environment for all our people. It is only the irrationality of the capitalist mode of production that prevents human energies from being applied to the task.

Throughout the socialist world, whatever their internal problems and weaknesses, the conditions of urban life undergo constant amelioration. Unlike Newark, Budapest and Peking are far better places to live than they were a decade ago; and doubtless they will be even better a decade hence.

But for our country—the one with the most advanced technology in human history—another fate is in store. Our central cities are now being marked for obliteration. Their slogan is: "Two, three, many Newarks." What is our reply?

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