

## ELECTIONS

## Two activist campaigns in Los Angeles



**By Dave Lindorff**  
LOS ANGELES—May 31 could be the beginning of a new era for alternative politics in this capitol of "law and order."

On that day, voters may send community activist Ruth Yannatta to the state Assembly in a special election on the Westside, and install socialist Peace and Freedom party member Jim Stanbury in the Los Angeles City Council in a runoff election against council president John Gibson.

While the nearness to victory of these two candidates has surprised left-leaning voters and frightened the establishment forces, both candidates have been developing bases for their separate campaigns for several years as community organizers.

Yannatta, a supporter of the Campaign for Economic Democracy (CED), which grew out of Tom Hayden's campaign last year for the Democratic Senate nomination, has spent several years leading consumer fights against corporate food policy—a role that won her an appointment by Gov. Edmund Brown Jr. as assistant director of the state Consumer Affairs Department in charge of the Southern California office. She helped launch the 1973 nationwide meat boycott, has fought utility rate increases, helped place "public members" on state agricultural marketing boards and promoted the causes of tenants, seniors and the United Farm Workers.

When 44th Assembly District representative Alan Sieroty left his seat to become a state senator it was only natural that Yannatta would try to replace him. She entered early and hard, and by the time the establishment forces had settled more or less on Mel Levine, a former aid to ex-Senator John Tunney, she had become, in most people's minds, the front runner.

Taking a lesson from Hayden's campaign last year, she and her supporters in this largely liberal middle-class district (which voted for Hayden) have conducted a high-visibility campaign. They expect to spend \$75,000 on the race—a re-

spectable amount for this kind of office—and to make heavy use of door-to-door canvassing by volunteers, many of whom are coming from CED and other groups.

#### Stanbury helped by explosion.

Stanbury, a young political science professor at Harbor College in the South Bay harbor area of Los Angeles, is taking a different approach. A veteran of the civil rights and anti-war movements, he has had his eye on Gibson's city council seat for over a year.

Stanbury's chance came suddenly—one could say explosively. He was a leading spokesman in a lagging community battle to block development of a dangerous liquified natural gas terminal in the populated Los Angeles Harbor. At a city council vote to go ahead with plans for the terminal last Dec. 16 Gibson referred to Stanbury and other opponents of the plan as "sissies." He said that "the question is not safety, it is the economy," and voted for the project.

The next day the tanker *Sansinena*, unloading crude oil in the harbor, blew up and took Gibson's hopes for an easy reelection along with it. Stanbury suddenly became more than a "fringe" candidate.

While Gibson did a quick about-face and voted to shelve the LNG issue until after the April 5 election, he had hurt himself, particularly among wealthy liberals whose homes ring the harbor.

Stanbury attributes his surprise showing in that first election to the *Sansinena*. In a field of five he took 22 percent of the vote, and together with a group of minor candidates forced Gibson, who got only 48 percent, into a runoff against himself.

It was a shock for the 74-year-old City Hall veteran. (A shock for his colleagues too, who voted unanimously to send him a letter wishing him victory). In an embarrassing moment they voted to delay the decision on the LNG terminal even longer, past the runoff election.

Hopelessly outfunded, thanks in part

to donations to Gibson by Pacific Gas & Electric, the company seeking the LNG terminal, Stanbury has resorted to an unusual strategy. He's working for a low voter turnout.

"We're hoping it will be small," he told *IN THESE TIMES* candidly, "because a large turnout would mean a big machine vote for Gibson. What we are trying to do is just hit every single person who voted in the primary. If we can get all those people who voted for us before, pick up most of those who voted for the other candidates in the primary and skim off some of Gibson's votes, we could win."

To help things a little he and about 100 volunteers are also canvassing scientifically selected precincts where they know they have strong support—in working-class neighborhoods and the wealthy belt near the harbor. He's a definite underdog but his strategy could work, say some observers.

#### Yannatta's populist campaign.

The Yannatta campaign has taken a populist approach, focusing on the major concerns of the electorate.

Yannatta believes she has a stronger base than Hayden had in his campaign or than Stanbury currently has. "I've been working a long time with a lot of people who are generally apolitical," she says. "I even have some businesspeople supporting me. That's partly why I don't like to get involved in a lot of philosophical discussion."

While this relatively broad base has helped her become a front runner and has won her some support from liberal elected officials like state Senator David Roberti, it has caused her to soft-pedal the more radical side of her program.

Like Hayden, she has endorsed the term "economic democracy." But pressed to define it, she replies, "I'm talking about the relationship between the market and the consumer—about the role of corporations, and how they influence decisions. About the needs for more public representation on regulatory bodies..."

Like Hayden also, the word "socialism" eludes her, as do concepts like workers' control over their factories, or even, it seems, state-owned utilities. "I refuse to get into anything more philosophical," she explains. "I don't feel comfortable doing it myself."

#### Socialism and libertarianism.

Stanbury, too, on the stump, has occasionally shied away from the term, but his book/platform, *The California 200 Campaign*, is dedicated to Norman Thomas.

Gibson canvassers are reportedly passing the word to homeowners that Stanbury is a communist. While Gibson has thus far avoided putting that in print, his campaign brochures paint the Peace and Freedom party in the most radical light, and the word "socialist" peppers Gibson literature about Stanbury.

"I don't know what effect that's going to have," Stanbury says. "I suspect it

will hurt in the wealthier areas."

His public explanation of his philosophy is that he supports "the best of socialism and the best of libertarianism." That is probably a rough approximation of the Peace and Freedom party position.

"Where socialism is right on," Stanbury says, "is in the realization that all of the earth's resources and the means of production are the common property of all of us. Just as we could not let someone corner the market on the air we breathe, we can't let them do it with water, fuel, food or anything else."

He adds, "Where socialism has been off and really wrong is in its view that bureaucratic institutions are the way to effect that democratic control over the means of production. True socialism should mean less government, and an emphasis on personal liberties and loving nonviolence."

This combining of two often antagonistic philosophies, socialism and libertarianism, has made Stanbury something of an enigma to Gibson, the voters and observers on the left.

While he pretty much claims the socialist label, he opposes certain positions which are typically backed by the left, including members of his own party, such as busing to achieve desegregation (a hot issue these days in Los Angeles), closed shop laws that require all workers in a union shop to join, and higher taxes for business.

His open shop position has cost him any chance of an AFL-CIO endorsement, though he is an officer in his American Federation of Teachers (AFT) local. On the mandatory busing issue, he says, "I feel you can get equal education opportunity and integration without forcing it and dividing the community." His tax stand is simple. "You can tax the wealth of the owners all you like, but taxes on their businesses are simply passed on to the consumer."

"I think a lot of people are perplexed by some of my positions," he says with a laugh, "I really don't know whether that means I'll get more support or lose it all."

The major difference between the two L.A.-area progressive candidates, of course, is their party affiliation. Yannatta is a registered Democrat. She endorses the argument that the Democratic party, for better or worse, is the party of working people and as such is the place organizing must begin.

Stanbury disagrees. He feels he would not have won hands down with a Democratic label, but says he prefers not to have it. "It's time to break out of the old alignments," he says. "I'm convinced that reform candidates who run as Democrats lose much of their independence after they are elected. As a reform Democrat you have no real moorings, and it's too easy to drift into anything. To accomplish anything reformers have got to burn their bridges. Even if it's harder, if I do get elected, I'll have my political independence."



Ruth Yannatta has been an active supporter of the Campaign for Economic Democracy.

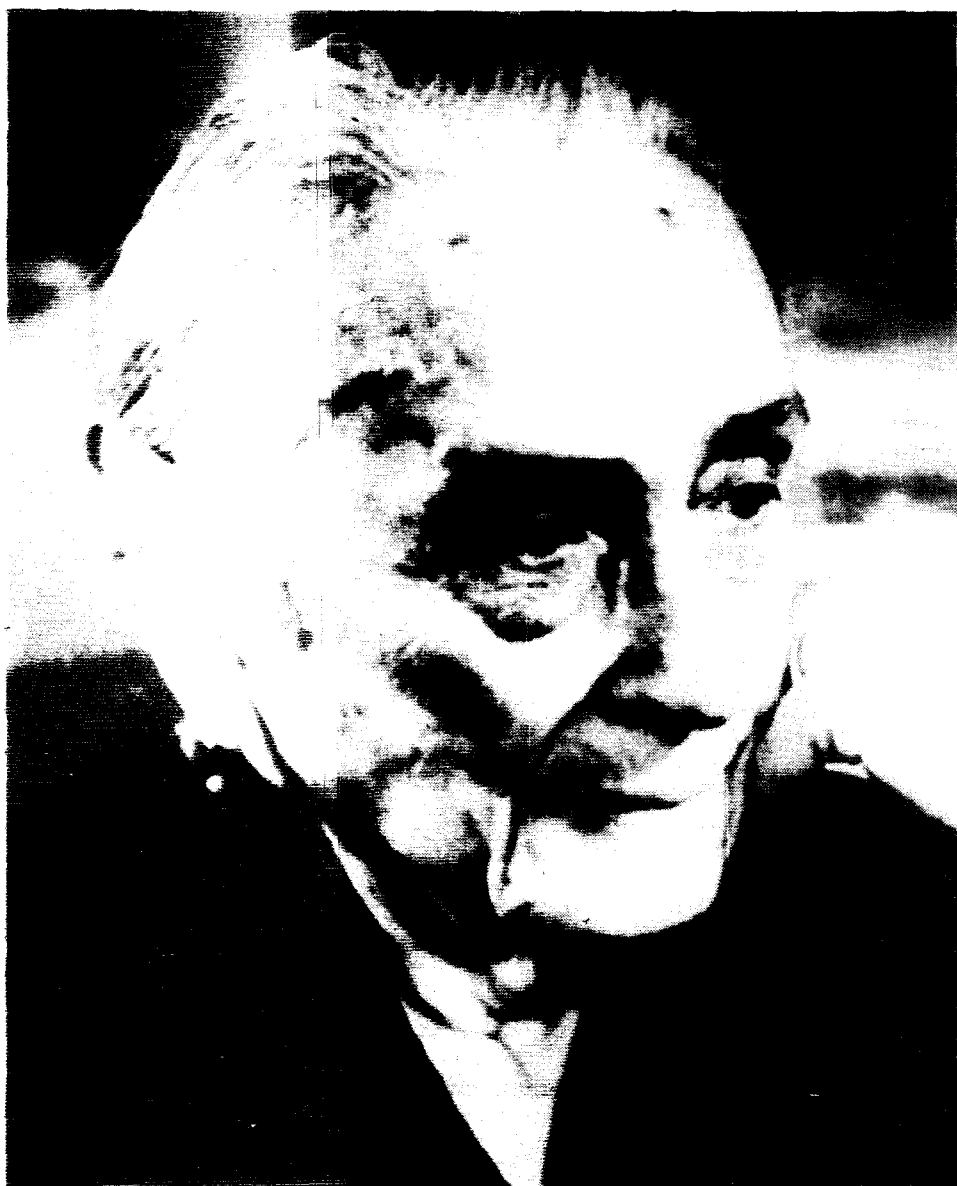
Michael Dobu



# IN THE WORLD

## SPAIN

# From the foxhole to the polls



Dolores Ibarruri, *La Pasionaria*, returned to Spain early this month after nearly 40 years of exile in Moscow. Now 82 and President of the Spanish Communist party, she earned her nom de guerre for her impassioned speeches during the Civil War.

By E. Guerrero Rojo

The pace of diplomacy between the U.S. and Spain has quickened lately: first, Prime Minister Adolfo Suarez in Washington, and then Secretary of State Cyrus Vance and Vice President Walter Mondale in Madrid. All parties are working hard to create the aura of a new era. On his recent visit to Washington Suarez must have been pleased by President Jimmy Carter's glowing comment that "the move toward freedom and democracy [in your country] has been brilliant and much better than we had hoped."

The April legalization of the Spanish Communist party fits neatly into the "democratization" of Spain's political life. It expressed the Suarez regime's confidence that the "break" from Francoism would occur peacefully, with the left's consent.

But legalization was also an extremely important victory for the Communist party. Proscribed from political life for nearly 40 years, forced underground since the end of the Civil War, and having traveled the difficult paths of exile, the party had nevertheless created a wide following. Needing as many forces as possible to legitimize the movement toward reform during this crucial transition period, the Suarez government could not ignore the party's strength.

Especially among workers and their families in the labor unions and neighborhood organizations, but also among urban professionals and students, the party's role is widely acknowledged. Last year the party surfaced and openly began a massive distribution of membership cards throughout the country. In July 1976 the party set a target of 300,000 members by this coming summer. It has now well over

100,000 and expects to bolster its membership through the election campaign.

### Shift from guerilla war.

With well over a million members during the Civil War, the party saw its rank and file decimated after the military defeat of the Republic. After 1939 the party settled in for a long guerilla war to reestablish the Republic. But by the late '40s it had become apparent that this strategy had failed.

The guerillas had not significantly expanded their following. Under Franco's leadership the fascist state had won long-sought recognition from the other capitalist powers. Spain was finally admitted to the UN. And massive American economic and military aid was begun in exchange for American airbases on Spanish soil.

The party shifted its emphasis in the '50s to creating a coalition around the idea of "national reconciliation"—healing the wounds of the Civil War, and "letting bygones be bygones." It called for a total amnesty and attempted to rally all anti-fascist and democratic forces, including Catholics, Christian Democrats and, later, Monarchists. While creating "workers' commissions" to serve as the germ of an independent non-sectarian labor movement, the party also worked within the vertical fascist trade union structure.

In the mid-'60s this strategy was further developed with the publication of Secretary General Santiago Carrillo's "New Perspectives." Carrillo argued that the party should identify the struggle for democracy with the struggle for socialism.

The party now sees the reconquest of democracy as its main priority and, while

not ruling out other alternatives, envisages a democratic road to socialism through the electoral process. According to this perspective, socialism will come through the gradual passage of capitalist property to social property.

The last plenum of the party's central committee, held in Rome last July, also called for a more open and mass organization that would allow greater internal democracy. The party recognized three kinds of members—"militants," "activists," and "adherents." While being sympathetic, adherents need not agree 100 percent with the party's program nor devote full time to the party's activities.

### The right still feared.

With the June 15 parliamentary elections in sight, the party has oriented its strategy to appealing to the broad non-Communist, non-Socialist electorate and to defusing the threat of the traditional right. The party recognizes that many high-ranking military leaders and technocrats from the Franco era opposed its legalization, and fears a revival of the right that could lead Spain back to the reactionary policies of the previous period.

During the campaign a high-ranking party official, Manuel Azcarate, warned militants against "direza conceptual" (conceptual hardness). The mobilization of neighborhood organizations and citizens' commissions has been largely de-emphasized. Fearful of the tensions that might be aroused, the party cancelled the celebration of its legalization and advised against victory demonstrations when *La Pasionaria*, Dolores Ibarruri, returned from Moscow last week. The party has even given cautious support to some of Suarez's policies, arguing that the best that can be hoped for at this time is the emergence of a "center-left" majority in the coming elections.

The party leadership's guarded support for Suarez's reforms has already caused some deep concern within the party's "left" that the Executive Committee was moving the organization too fast toward the political center. This is a thorny problem that the party leadership must fully take into account if it is not to alienate the largely young, active and left-oriented party base, which has viewed with apprehension the French party's abandonment of the doctrine of the "dictatorship of the proletariat," and what they see as the Italian Communist party's "over-emphasis" on Eurocommunism.

To date the Spanish party has not pronounced itself openly on the question of the "dictatorship of the proletariat" although it is clearly leaning in the direction of the French Communist party. In a report presented to the Rome plenum, Carrillo said "Our essential goal is to arrive at a society without exploited or exploiters, and in which the hegemonic force is not the monopolistic oligarchy, but becomes instead the alliance of the forces of work and of culture, with the working class as its fundamental cornerstone."

In addition, the party has been in the international forefront of efforts to steer clear of the policies of the Communist party of the Soviet Union. To some party members this represents an abandonment of "proletarian internationalism." But to others, it is necessary if the party is to assert an independent status and improve its image as a force of democracy among Spanish independent voters.

### Election chances limited.

The party is already running a vigorous electoral campaign even though it knows that its chances are extremely limited. It is generally conceded that the Communist vote in the parliamentary elections will

probably not exceed 8 to 10 percent while it may go as low as 5. To make the very best possible use of its votes, the party must rely on its traditional areas of strength to elect some "sure" representatives: Madrid, Asturias, Seville and Catalonia. For example, both *La Pasionaria* and Carrillo are expected to head a party slate in Asturias, a Communist stronghold.

Anything above 10 percent would have to be considered a major victory for the long prohibited party, particularly in view of the many liabilities and obstacles against it: an overwhelmingly unsympathetic if not outright hostile press, a governmental monopoly over the national radio and TV network, limited funds for campaigning, a public opinion conditioned by four decades of fascism that is deeply distrustful of Communist electoral participation, and Suarez's great personal popularity.

The neo-Francoite Popular Alliance, under Fraga Iribarne's leadership, has consistently opposed the party's legalization. Lately it has been bolstered by Carlos Arias Navarro, the former prime minister and a longtime Francoite stalwart.

To complicate matters further for the Spanish Communists, the possibility of abstentions on its "left" remains great if all political parties are not legalized by election time, and the government does not grant a full and unconditional amnesty to all political prisoners. Several Marxist parties that consider themselves to the left of the party are still banned. In the Basque provinces there is also a very real threat of abstentions if all existing parties in Euskadi are not legalized shortly. Since there will be no common lists of left parties, Communist party members emphasize that an abstention on their "left" or from nationalists might hurt the party's chances.

In addition, the movements for national autonomy view that party as "centralist" in spite of its oft-stated support for a federal republic with autonomous regions.

There will undoubtedly also be problems between the party and its socialist partners, led by Felipe Gonzalez's Socialist Workers party. The Socialist Workers party, which recently purged its Marxist left, is very similar in origin and political orientation to the Portuguese Socialist party. Like the Portuguese party, it was revived recently with substantial German and Swedish Social Democratic support.

Until now both parties have spearheaded the left coalition known as the Democratic Coordination, and both have participated prominently in the Negotiating Commission of the left in its deliberations with the government. It may well be, however, that the Socialists will now part ways temporarily with the Communists and be able to syphon off votes from their allies. Some progressive sectors of the left might well be tempted to vote Socialist out of moderation or expedience—not wanting to "waste" a vote on a party whose overall chances are slight.

Finally, there remains the intangible though extremely significant question of the Catholic church's attitude. Even though Christians have been openly courted by the Communist party and some have contributed heavily to the left opposition's efforts, the Church, as a body, has managed to stay clear of politics and has observed a rather consistent neutrality. Yet many Catholics, out of reflex and conviction, remain suspicious of the Communists and might vote against them even if not instructed to do so by the hierarchy.

*E. Guerrero Rojo is a pen name for a specialist on Spanish affairs.*