

PERSPECTIVES

□ FOR A NEW AMERICA □

Does socialism fit in the market?

The following is a response to Leland Stauber's three-part series of Perspectives, "For a Socialism That Works" (ITT, May 3, 10 and 17). We invite others to contribute to the discussion. Stauber's articles are available upon request for \$1.50.

By John H. Brown

Leland Stauber's series of articles has proved provocative, but whether it really offers socialism is debatable. Few, if any, American socialists are enamored with the bureaucratic, centralist model of the Soviet Union and Communist bloc countries. A form of market socialism appears much more appealing and is certainly less abhorrent to American sensibilities. Nonetheless, Stauber's proposals are severely deficient in a number of respects.

•First, his proposal totally ignores the problem of alienation. The public controls exercised in his "market socialist" sector are so indirect that they are almost meaningless. No mechanism is described



for meaningful inputs by workers into the work process that shapes their lives. The workers remain alienated from the process and product of their labor.

As a production worker in a rubber factory for the past five years, I find the socialist analysis of alienation one of the most powerful and persuasive arguments for socialism. What is more, alienation is undoubtedly a major factor in such social problems as alcoholism and drug abuse. A "socialism" that does not address the problem of alienation will not gain my support.

•Second, a related problem is the absence of any discussion of the role of unions in Stauber's market socialism. If the socialized corporations are still profit-seeking and maximizing entities, though publicly owned, they will beyond all doubt resort to much time-tested profit maximizing techniques as speed-ups, cutting corners on accident prevention, and ignoring hazardous chemicals in the workplace. If the socialized corporations are publicly owned, will workers be denied the right to strike as public employees (and Soviet workers) are now? Unions as they exist now are guilty of numerous sins of omission and commission. Nonetheless, they are a voice for democratic control in the workplace. Can a socialist society do without them?

•Third, is the question of the actual nature of current oligopolistic corporations. Although conventional economic theory proclaims profit maximizing firms merely obey the "signals" of the market, there is significant evidence that oligopolistic firms more frequently originate and reinforce "signals" in the market through advertising. A market socialism that does not deal with such oligopolistic distortions will surely founder. Also, the choice of manufacturing technologies in oligopolistic industries is suspect. Capital intensive technologies may be chosen by such firms to maintain control over the pro-

cesses of production. Machines will not talk back or go on strike, people will.

•Fourth, Stauber's underlying assumption that profit maximization does indeed produce a social optimum is open to question. Academic economists can produce a logical proof of this assumption only by adopting severely restrictive assumptions. One of these, the absence of externalities, that there exist no costs or benefits that the producer does not receive, is certainly false. A firm that pollutes, produces unsafe products, or closes a large plant, thereby destroying a community, is thrusting the true costs of production on society at large, even if it is itself low cost and profit maximizing.

•Fifth, a less damaging critique of Stauber's approach is that he presents no plan for the transition from market capitalism to market socialism. In this area American socialists might do well to follow the example of the Swedish Social Democrats' Meidner plan (ITT, May 10), which is more satisfactory both in envisioning a practical transition from one system to the other and in maintaining democratic input and control of the market socialist economy.

Leland Stauber's arguments are not without their merits. I certainly would not criticize his descriptions of the other three sectors of his socialist economy. Small privately owned firms and cooperative enterprises would certainly have a place in a democratic socialist economy. Similarly, natural monopolies should be publicly owned. I offer these criticisms not to disparage his thoughtful efforts, but in hopes of initiating a fruitful discussion to produce a concrete image of democratic socialism that will be appealing to the vast majority of Americans. Let's hear it comrades!

John H. Brown is a rubber worker, union steward, graduate student in economics at the University of Akron and a member of DSOC.

A high level apostate from pluralist consensus

By Richard L. Sklar

POLITICS AND MARKETS: The World's Political-Economic Systems
By Charles E. Lindblom
Basic Books, New York, \$15.00

Some 25 years ago, Charles E. Lindblom, now Sterling Professor of Economics and Political Science at Yale University, collaborated with political scientist Robert A. Dahl to formulate the concept of "polyarchy." Here, at last, was a rough and realistic approximation to the virtually unattainable ideals of pluralist and liberal democracy. The very word, "polyarchy," is redolent with reassurance to reasonable people who yearn for freedom with security in a precarious world. Who would have thought that Lindblom would one day discover that polyarchy is, after all, a poor refuge for democrats?

The trouble with polyarchy, according to Lindblom, is that it does not apply to an entire field of political activity in capitalist industrial societies, namely the market system. Most theorists of modern liberal democracy scrupulously separate the "political" sphere of public authority from the "private" sphere of economic activity as an article of ideological faith. Lindblom is an exception. His theory politicizes the market; he refers to the business executive as a "public official in the market system."

As he says, we do rely upon businessmen to make and implement major decisions that are, in effect, public policies. Business decisions control the location of industry, the development of technologies, and the allocation of labor among productive activities. The business executives who perform these functions exact a high price in corporate autonomy and personal income.

Market system polyarchies, then, are controlled by two hierarchies, "reminiscent of the medieval dualism between church and state." Within the market system, big business is not subject to polyarchal control. Business leaders also compete within the arena of polyarchal politics, where they enjoy a "triple advan-

tage"—in funds, organization, and access to government.

Why do the citizens of market system polyarchies put up with a system of power that is so plainly undemocratic and unfair? Lindblom suggests three reasons: (1) People everywhere are inclined to support existing orders and defer to the opinions of established authorities. (2) Citizens of the liberal polyarchies truly value the liberties that they enjoy. (3) Political docility is produced by constant indoctrination in behalf of the dominant class and corporate order.

Readers of this newspaper may find merit in yet another explanation that Lindblom does not entertain. Many people associate the alternatives to market system polyarchy with authoritarian government. How many intelligent, self-respecting, democratically inclined people would choose to live in an authoritarian socialist country in preference to one that is liberal and capitalist? Perhaps a vision of socialist democracy, untainted by authoritarian ideas and relationships, would be attractive to the citizens of liberal states.

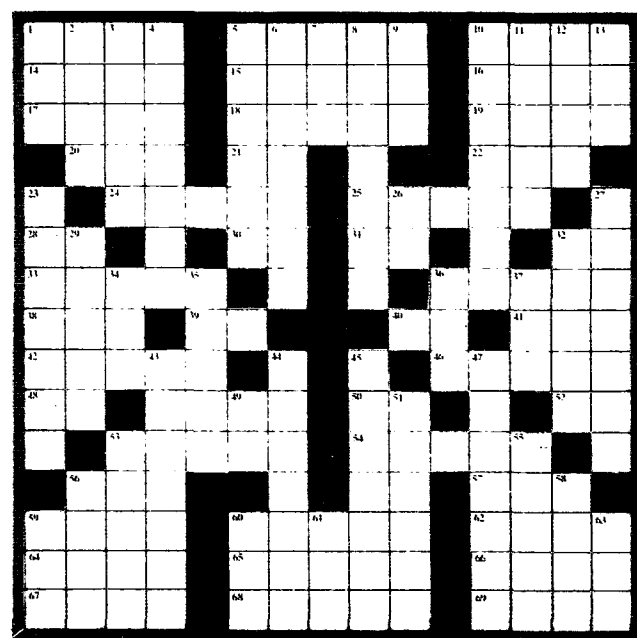
Lindblom's comparative analysis of authoritarian socialist (communist) theory and practice is perceptive. He portrays communism as a humanitarian and rationalist creed, predicated upon the notion that party leaders and other chosen elite elements *should* be trusted to hold "correct" opinions about controversial issues. He is intrigued by Yugoslavia's experiment with worker control of industry and "market socialism" as a "new course" of relevance to all societies. Yet he fears the spread of egalitarian ideas in the liberal polyarchies and warns that their distinctive institutions have been exposed to demagogic onslaughts by the decline of class indoctrination. At the same time, he is deeply disturbed by the rise of corporate power as a barrier, more formidable than class, to the progress of liberal democracy.

In brief, Lindblom is opposed to both corporatism and socialism. He searches desperately for an alternative, but without success.

Richard L. Sklar is Professor of Political Science at the University of California, Los Angeles.

An American Tragedy

CROSSWORD



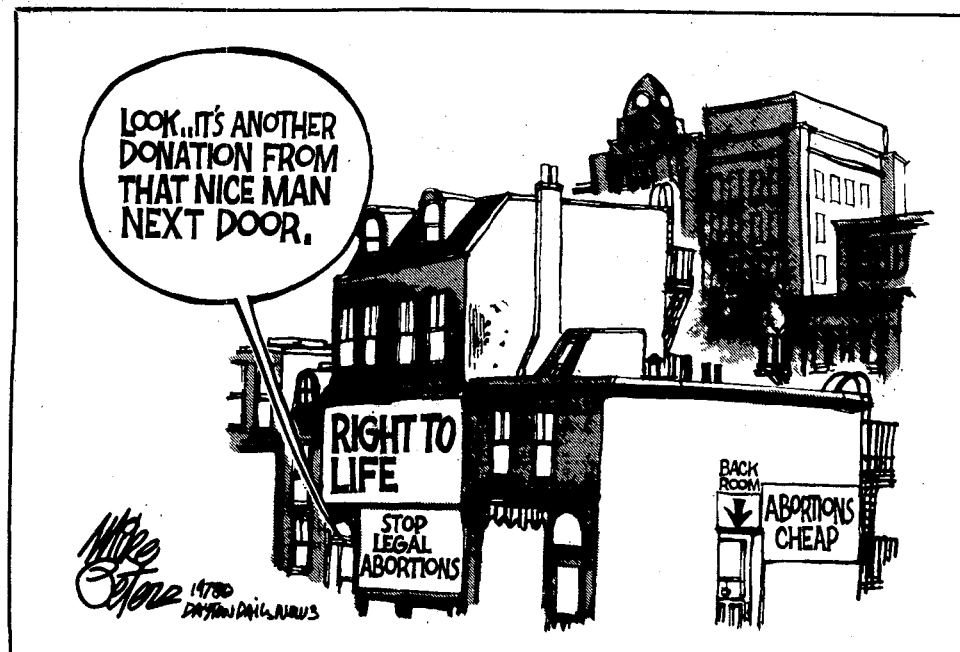
Across:

- 1 Fever
- 5 Shirt
- 10 Russian ruler
- 14 The first non-Marxist
- 15 Inhabited ice house
- 16 Mounties
- 17 Below a nose (two words)
- 18 ho!
- 19 Ballistic missile, intermediate range
- 20 Make bigger, abbr.
- 21 Greeting
- 22 After the crab
- 24 Rose-colored dye
- 25 room
- 28 Sun God
- 30 Province of southeastern Canada, abbr.
- 31 Sodium
- 32 Cerium
- 33 Opposite of tranquil
- 36 Business
- 38 With a "U," with an "n," with an
- 39 Carter country
- 40 it
- 41 Fit of melancholy
- 42 Croation
- 46 More than one lion

Down:

- 1 Medical organization
- 2 Strong wind
- 3 Contains urea
- 4 What bosses can't help doing
- 5 Inside
- 6 Our Will
- 7 Sick
- 8 Enough money
- 9 Plaything

- 10 of Desire
- 11 up your courage
- 12 Greek pulpit
- 13 Revolutionary frequency
- 23 Theodore
- 26 Smog city, abbr.
- 27 Finders
- 29 Unpleasant euphemism
- 32 His pursuit of success was his ruin
- 34 County in southwestern Scotland
- 35 trip
- 36 a plea
- 37 Titan's home
- 43 One of the last novels of 23 Down
- 44 Victim of 32 Down
- 45 Salt of potassium or sodium
- 47 Literary style of 32 Down
- 49 Bigger than Ford
- 51 Carrie
- 53 Trivial objection
- 55 Unpleasant
- 56 Buddhist priest
- 58 Ink spot
- 59 Talk (slang)
- 60 General Staff Corps, abbr.
- 61 first
- 63 Ephesians, abbr.



Right-to-Lifers

Continued from page 5.

so federal money could be used for abortions only under very limited conditions.

They will seek a similar amendment this year, and they are trying to amend a new pregnancy disability measure to exclude from coverage women who choose to have abortions.

Right-to-life groups at the state level have convinced many legislatures and government administrators to restrict the use of state funds for Medicaid abortions.

In June 1977 the Supreme Court confirmed that states were not obligated to spend public funds on abortions. Although it did not modify its 1973 position that abortion was a private matter between a woman and her doctor and thus protected by the constitutional right to privacy, the ruling shocked many advocates. They see in the new court decision and in the actions taken by Congress and state legislatures an ominous swing back to the era when most abortions were performed illegally.

They admit they were caught off-guard by the breadth and intensity of the anti-abortion campaign. "Most of our people became complacent after the 1973 deci-

sion," says Karen Mulhauser of the National Abortion Rights Action League (NARAL).

Mulhauser believes the anti-abortion forces have been so successful because their campaign has been aided and financed by the hierarchy of the Catholic church, giving it networks in almost every community in the country.

Judie Brown of National Right to Life denies that her group receives any money from the church. "If we were getting church contributions, our members wouldn't have to spend so much time raising money through bake sales and garage sales," she says.

However, Michael Taylor of the Pro-Life Offices of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops acknowledged that the church helped to establish the National Right to Life Committee in 1973, but then quickly withdrew after it was set up.

Abortion advocates still maintain that much of the money that supports state right-to-life groups is raised in close conjunction with the church and that state groups contribute to the national committee.

Since the 1977 Supreme Court ruling

that states need not pay for Medicaid abortions, pro-choice groups have noted a renewed interest in their cause. In New York recently a well-organized abortion rights lobby was able to turn back anti-abortion legislation despite a strong right-to-life effort. At the same time anti-abortion measures have been defeated in Virginia and Maryland.

More is sure to be heard—both pro and con—on the abortion issue during the fall election campaigns, especially in California and Colorado where statewide anti-abortion initiatives are expected to be on the ballot.

(© 1978 Pacific News Service)

Art Goldberg is a Bay Area free-lance writer.

Dominican Republic

Continued from page 9.

As this issue of IN THESE TIMES went to press, Yost had still not met with Balaguer. On the other hand, the U.S. embassy in Santo Domingo has been in constant touch with the PRD leadership and "other civilian and military elements of the Dominican People trying to produce an agreement," according to an embassy spokesperson.

The U.S. government still has considerable leverage on forces in the Dominican political picture who may be tempted to block the PRD electoral victory. At May 23 hearings of the House International Relations committee, subcommittee on International Organization, chaired by Rep. Donald M. Fraser, witnesses pointed out that the Dominican armed forces receives a significant amount of U.S. aid (the second largest recipient in Latin America), "aid that could be suspended until a satisfactory electoral sol-

ution could be reached." According to a source close to the committee, another possibility raised in the hearings was the recall of the U.S. ambassador.

Whatever the outcome of the immediate crisis—and numerous options are still open—the actions of the U.S. government will be watched closely. The still unanswered question is whether or not Carter will be able to bring the federal bureaucracy to heel behind his stated support for a democratic transition to PRD rule. In order to do this, he must take on still powerful sectors in the Pentagon, CIA, State department and elsewhere who have made clear their willingness to opt for the imposition of military regimes throughout Latin America as the solution to the deeply rooted social and economic problems of those countries.

Alan Howard is a labor journalist in New York City. His articles on Latin America have appeared in the New York Times Magazine, The Nation and other publications. Special thanks to the Dominican Republic Task Force, P.O. Box 641, Cathedral Station, New York 10025 for help in preparing this article.

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LIFE IN THE U.S.

PROFILE

Bessie Sayet remains a survivor

By Larry Bush

YOU KNOW, HISTORY IS NOT made as fast as we make coffee," said my grandmother. "It takes years and years and years. They say that a Jewish man came to God and said, 'God, to you a hundred years is one minute, and a million dollars is one penny. So please, God, give me a penny.'

"And God said, 'Wait a minute.'"

"So," I replied after laughing, "should we have some coffee while we wait?"

"Why not? I finished the last cup over an hour ago."

Of course, she was on her feet and shuffling towards the kitchen before I—with my stomach full of her soup 'n' *knaidlach*—could even think to rise. Whew, I thought, for someone who can joke about the plodding ways of history, she's sure in a rush!

It's worth following Bessie Sayet around, to the kitchen or to the barricades, however breathless she leaves you, if you want to learn about making history (or about making "European coffee": 3:1 parts coffee to chickory, with hot milk).

She might even serve you a piece of her birthday cake, which shone with 85 plus one-to-grow-on candles May 25th. Watch those flames closely: they contain the light and shadows, the ashes and embers of nearly a century of class conflict.

You might first see images of the old country, Czarist Russia, and a place so cold that the flames flicker at the memory: Siberia. She was exiled there in 1906, as were many Russian revolutionaries. But there was a difference: Bessie was only 12 years old. (Her older brothers were activists, and when the police raided their house, uncovering their printing press and illegal literature, *she* was held responsible and arrested in their absence.)

"The snow was taller than me in Siberia," she'll tell you. "They used to make tunnels to go through. The food was very rotten, and there were no beds, just a blanket on the dirty floor where you lay. But for me, it wasn't too bad. I had only to sleep in the barracks. During the day I went to a parochial school, and I got myself a priest's daughter for a friend, so I was doing o.k."

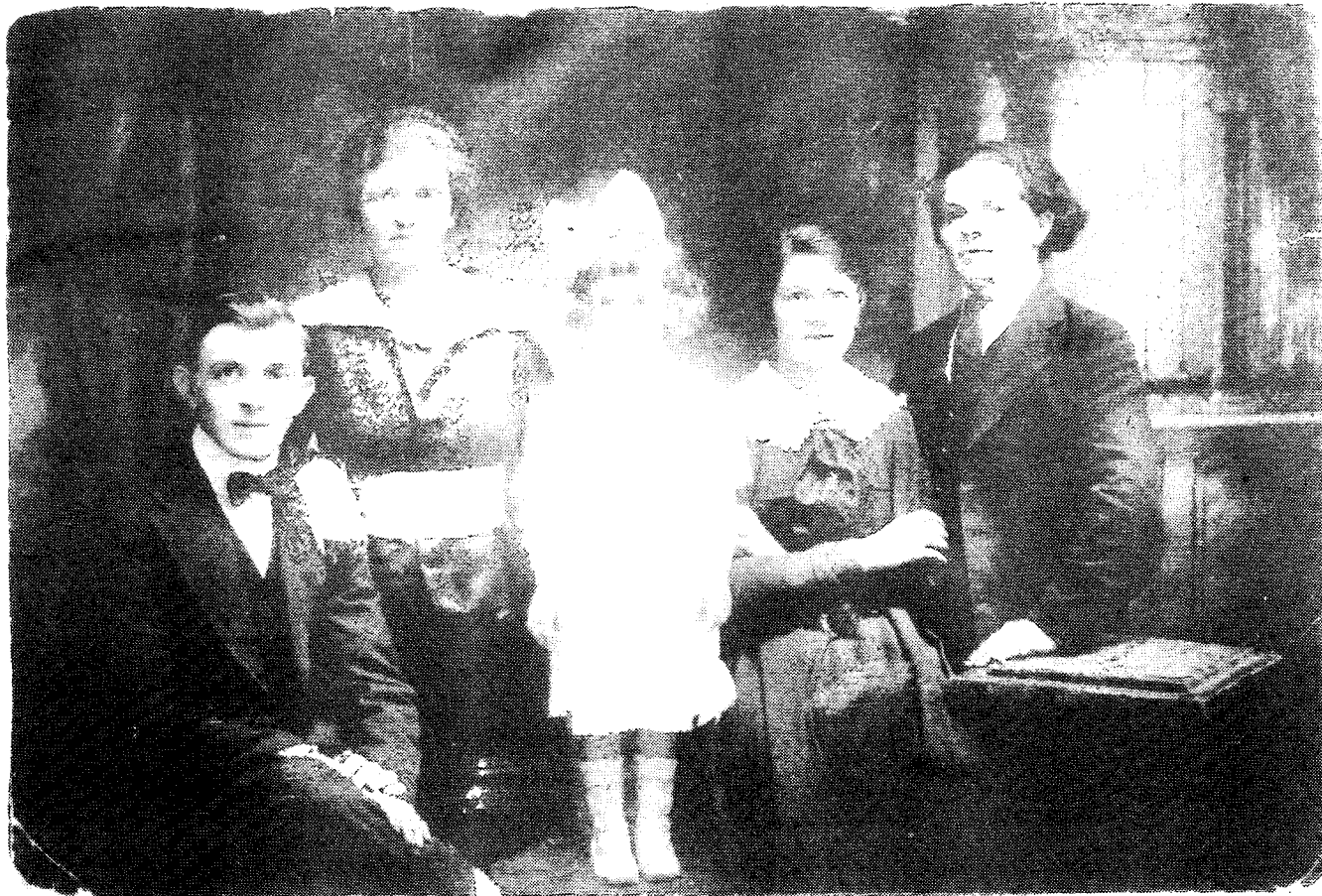
"The biggest revolutionaries, I met them in Siberia. For instance, Breshka Beshkovskaia—she was called 'the grandmother of the Russian revolution.' She was from one of the oldest families of the cheese, the nobility—and in and out of prison! Then one fellow there, Alexander—I never knew his second name—we sneaked him out in a barrel of sauerkraut. We were so far from civilization, but not from the movement!

"I learned so much from these people that I became proud of myself that I was in Siberia, although I hadn't done anything to deserve it. But I was proud to be with men and women who were really ready to give their lives so that you and I should be able to live."

Always with incorrigibles.

It seems that Bessie always hung around with such incorrigibles, long after she had escaped from Siberia (with help from the priest's daughter) and come to America.

Look again into the candle flames. You might see the I.W.W. "Rebel Girl," Elizabeth Gurley Flynn ("My next door neighbor in the Bronx. We met at Patterson, New Jersey, during the silk ribbon strike (1912) and became very close."); or the Jewish sweatshop poet, Morris Rosenfeld ("We started organizing a union. And we lost. So he says, 'Well, do you still want to fight, so let's start a new one!' And this is



Bessie Sayet has lived a long and eventful life. Photo near logo shows Bessie at 84, photo above, at 22. She's the young woman in the glasses next to the fiery looking man.

Bessie Sayet has always hung out with incorrigibles, whether in exile in Siberia or organizing tenants today.

the way I feel to this very minute."); or even Leon Trotsky, with whom she traveled, along with many others, on a boat back to Russia in 1917 to fight against Kerensky's provisional government. ("Trotsky was a very handsome man, and a brilliant man, but an egotist. When he talked to us, he didn't get up—he sat while you had to stand around like dummies and listen. And you couldn't ask questions that he didn't like.")

And who's this man in the toothache bandage?

"I was a nurse in the Red Army, and once I got sent with two soldiers to the train station. We were supposed to meet someone. It was a little bit of a guy with a shawl, like for a toothache, wrapped around his head. So we get into the sled, and as we drive, one soldier, a peasant, he says, 'Who is this Lenin? I would give my right arm to see him.' And this fellow with the shawl says, 'Your country needs your right arm.' Then we drive up into the mountains, where the poorest people lived in caves, and we went in there, and suddenly they all rush towards him hollering, 'Lenin! Comrade Lenin!' I nearly dropped dead!

"He was very sick, and I took care of him for three days until the regular nurse came. Then he signed my card to the Russian Communist party—that was like the Pope should give it to a Catholic!

"I would like to talk to Lenin *now* for a few days. I know more now than I did then."

And how. Bessie survived Depression poverty—as the single mother of two children following the death of her second husband. She endured the McCarthy period—during which the FBI hounded her from one nursing job to another, nearly depriving her of a livelihood. She suffered from high blood pressure, phlebitis, headaches, a cracked rib, a black out—all within the past five years.

After all of this Bessie Sayet has a whole lot to say. Even more, she has a whole lot to do. During the same five years of ill

health, she has organized a tenant organization in the gigantic New York apartment development, Rochdale Village, where she lives; fought for and won a city-funded lunch program for more than 150 old people in her community; collected scores of petitions and dollars for important causes. And she has given health care, friendship and impetus to many poor and lonely aging men and women, showing them not only leadership and an example to follow, but actual and tireless attention and devotion.

"I tell you," she has said more than once, "if I could have made as much trouble when I was young as I do now, we could have a revolution already!"

Images.

But today we're taking it easy. Today we'll stay home and celebrate. We have our cake and we're going to eat it, and give blessings to 85 plus one-to-grow-on candles, with all the images they contain.

The light: "I must have been born that way, with that feeling that I was with the downtrodden, the people that suffer. And I'm against those that punish us because they want more money. Sooner or later you have to start thinking about it. It's so easy for you to become a revolutionary if you think."

The shadows: "I don't know. We've tried so many times. You think you've got them on your side, and then another McCarthy comes out, another devil comes out. I'll give you a f'rinstance. The Nazi Bund. I'll never forget them as long as I live. When they had their first meeting in Madison Square Garden, I put my kids to sleep and I went. When I got there I saw black—they were all the Nazis, with the swastikas and uniforms, going around with nightsticks just looking for who they can beat up. And then they start speaking, so we start yelling. So they start beating. Me, as little as I am, and another woman, we picked up a chair and hit a Nazi right over his head. He fell over the balcony railing..."

The ashes: "When you build something there's destruction in it. You have to tear down an old house to build a new one. It's painful when you tear it down, but you have to do it, so you do it."

"But sometimes I sit at home, by myself, and I think, how did I go through with it all? I saw so many young people, friends of mine—even my first husband, Yasha, he was killed in the revolution—they talk to you and then they're laying dead. And you can't do nothing. You step over them and go help those that are still alive."

And the embers: "You have to be realistic if you want to get old. You have to know that to a certain age you'll come and then you'll start decaying whether you like it or not. And if you look straight at it, you know that this is the way of life and this is the way it's gonna be—you can't make a revolution against old age. Then you accept it. And then you're not old, you're young, because your time is now. I'm not afraid."

"But it's for the young generation to make the change in the United States now. We were the beginners. We came here. We lived in slavery and tried to free ourselves. We made unions. We fought against fascism, against racism and discrimination. We had revolutions, quietly, and we did a lot. Now it's up to the young people to take over."

So start out by taking a deep breath, because she can't possibly blow out these 86 candles by herself! But leave it for her to make the wish:

"For freedom. For peace. For democracy. For a good living for everybody. That everybody has a right to live and a right to privacy and a right to his own life. That's all. Isn't that what you want?"

Happy birthday, Bessie.

(©1978 by Larry Bush)

Larry Bush is the editorial associate for *Jewish Currents* magazine in New York. He is presently working on an historical novel based on his grandmother's life.