

# IN SHORT

## Third World shopping spree

According to a recent report in London's *Daily Telegraph*, Third World countries have been so impressed by the on-target performance of U.S. weapons in the Israel-Lebanon war that they are looking into upgrading their predominately Soviet-made armaments with U.S. ones. Word has it that Peru and Algeria have expressed interest. And Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi on her recent visit to the U.S. reportedly raised the possibility with the Reagan administration and also approached the Bowen McLaughlin York Co. about buying \$900 million worth of ammunition. Even Iraq—apparently disenchanted with the performance of its T-72 Soviet-made tanks—has drawn up a shopping list for the Pentagon.

It looks like the Soviets were on the mark when they said that "Lebanon is being made to serve as a proving ground" for U.S. weaponry. Yet they stopped short of commenting on what may soon prove to be one of the most ingenious marketing campaigns in recent memory.

## What black middle class?

Having already alienated the vast majority of the black population, the Reagan administration appears on the verge of striking another blow—the elimination of the black middle class.

According to a recent study conducted by the National Urban League, "The extremely conservative political climate and the record-breaking recession" seriously threaten "the survival of an emerging, still fragile, black middle class." James D. McGhee, research director of the League, noted that in the public sector—"traditionally the employer of last resort to the black middle class"—minorities have lost their jobs at a 50 percent greater rate than whites. Out-of-work black middle-class families have few places to go but back to the ghetto, while at the same time, those already living in poverty are being denied entry into "the traditional avenues of access to middle-income status," he said. Could it be that when President Reagan talks about rescuing the nuclear family and preserving American values, he's referring to white families only?

## Trickle-down union recruiting

At the same time administration economic policies are whittling away at the black middle class, they are fueling the fire for organizing efforts by the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America (IUMSWA). According to Charles Campbell, president of IUMSWA Region 5, "Membership average in operations in right-to-work states is now over 90 percent. We've signed up 150 new members in local 5-114 in Silsbee, Texas, we have 100 more members now in local 5-293 in Vicksburg, Miss.," and in Virginia and Maryland, membership is approaching the 100 percent mark. "It's awful hard to find a non-member around there and the same is true in parts of the Carolinas. They've finally found out that the union is the only thing between them and the unemployment line."

## The road to nowhere

Searching for the American Dream where the sun shines brightly, where money and rewards trickle down from the White House in the sky like early morning dew, Antonio and Kay Garza left their Ohio home for San Antonio, Texas, only to find their dream shattered in a deserted wasteland.

"We came to San Antonio to work, not to die," wrote Garza in a suicide note. "But Reagan economics has nothing trickling down to us. I have gone as far as I can go with our lives. My wife, Kay, and I are hardworking people that have been reduced to beggars almost."

Police found the couple dead in their car with a suicide note, bankruptcy papers, a rifle and an empty wallet, according to the *New York Times*.

## Hair today, lunch tomorrow

"Hair is a renewable natural resource that all too often goes to waste. As a protein, hair is rich in valuable amino acids. Additionally, hair is regularly discarded and as such is very inexpensive." So wrote Michael F. Jacobson, executive director of the Center for Science in the Public Interest, in a recent letter to Agriculture Secretary John Block. In it, he suggested tongue-in-cheek that since the department now permits ground bone to go into meat, it should also consider allowing a nutritious ingredient like hair into hot dogs and bologna. "The Department of Agriculture (USDA) could increase the nutritional value of foods...expand the food supply, alleviate hunger and reduce food prices."

Realizing that American eaters are a squeamish lot and may balk at a label that says "Frankfurters—contains hair," Jacobson went on to suggest that this potential problem could be solved by a label that said explicitly, "Product contains clean hair." Buyers beware: Rumor has it that the USDA doesn't have a sense of humor these days.

—Nina Berman

## "Bad Citizen Award" goes to Chicago bank



The Reclaim Chicago coalition targetted Continental Bank.

CHICAGO—For the second time this summer, Continental Illinois National Bank & Trust Co., one of this city's largest banks, received a public slap in the face.

The first hit came in July following disclosures that Continental had lost \$61 million in the second quarter primarily due to more than \$1 billion in loans made by Continental to energy speculating firms through Oklahoma's Penn Square Bank. Unfortunately for Continental, federal regulators shut down Penn Square on July 5.

The latest insult came on August 12 when Reclaim Chicago, a coalition of more than 40 community, tenants rights and labor groups, held a press conference to present Continental with Chicago's "Bad Citizen Award" for the bank's \$1.3 billion in non-performing loans and for Continental's overall non-performance on jobs, energy and housing in Chicago. Instead of investing in the city to rebuild decaying neighborhoods and create needed jobs, Continental "went on a binge in the Sun Belt," charged Gail Cincotta, president of National Public Action, one of the dominant organizations in the Reclaim coalition.

And Tom McLaughlin, another member of Reclaim Chicago, said that Continental Bank, which touts slogans like "Because we live here" and "We'll find a way," does not in fact have the interest of Chicagoans at heart. The bank has chosen to use its capital and power to speculate on risky ventures rather than investing in the rebuilding of our neighborhoods.

During 1981 Continental provided only 22.7 percent of its housing loans to the city of Chicago, with the rest going to the suburbs and beyond. And even though Continental increased its overall lending by 39 percent from 1979 to 1981, the bank decreased its home lending in Chicago from \$158 million in 1979 to only \$10.5 million in 1981.

Describing the aims of the two-year-old coalition, Vera Benedek of Reclaim Chicago said, "We work to define the issues in the city. We want people to recognize that the corporations are the problem and as an organizing force we will put the corporations on notice that they will have to deal with us."

The Coalition is now gearing up for Reclaim America week to be held September 6-14. Following rallies in several smaller cities

across the country, the first joint Reclaim America Action will commence in Chicago on September 10. From there it is to Cleveland, Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and finally to New York's Wall Street for a giant demonstration on September 14.

—Nina Berman



## Tinkering with apartheid

JOHANNESBURG—In travels around South Africa, the visitor soon gathers the impression of a highly militarized society.

Close to 200,000 men are under arms at any given time, of whom about half are stationed in Namibia. And even though in the early '70s the South African military reversed its previous policy and started to train blacks, upward of 90 percent of the army is still white.

Prime Minister P.W. Botha now faces some worrying arithmetic. Close to one-fifth of the one million white men between 18 and 45 years old who occupy most of the skilled and managerial positions in the economy are in the army at any particular moment. Even if Botha settles in

Namibia, the continuing insurgency in South Africa, with its prospect of permanent mobilization—a weakened economy and a sapping of white morale—requires him to add blacks to the army in greater numbers.

This manpower consideration, stated explicitly by Botha on several occasions, is arguably the single most important factor behind his new constitutional proposals, which he announced with great fanfare in early August. The proposals amount to an effort to win support from 2.5 million blacks of mixed descent—the so-called "colored" people—and 800,000 Indian South Africans, without jeopardizing the paramount position of the 4.5 million whites.

The proposed system is ludicrously complex. The existing all-white Assembly will add two new separate chambers for the newly enfranchised racial groups. This unwieldy tripartite body would then select a president's council of 20 whites, 10 "coloreds" and five Indians. It would also convert itself into an electoral college once every five

years, in a ratio of 50 whites, 25 "coloreds" and 13 Indians, to select the state president.

At least in appearance, South African politics will certainly change. A few "colored" and Indian ministers will be found to serve in the cabinet, for instance, from where they will presumably supervise whites.

It is still far too early to tell how many "colored" and Indian people will be won over to the new initiative. Both communities, which once saw themselves to some extent as distinct from, or superior to, the black majority, have been moving steadily leftward in recent years, saying that they will have no part in arrangements that exclude blacks. "Colored" people discredited a previous "representative council," which was supposed to manage their affairs, forcing the regime to close it down two years ago. Late last year, the overwhelming majority of Indians



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boycotted the first elections to a similar body intended for them.

Botha's proposals do not mention the 20 million blacks at all. They—even the people who live permanently in urban areas—are supposed to continue to exercise their political rights in whichever of the 10 impoverished rural Bantustans they are assigned to. That policy, long repudiated by even conservative Western governments, has received an unexpected and surprising boost in recent months with the disclosure that Swaziland, an internationally recognized country that borders South Africa to the east, is prepared to collaborate with the regime.

In question are two ridiculously tiny, overcrowded strips of territory along the Swazi border. One is the so-called "homeland" for all ethnic Swazis who live in South Africa, while the other, a narrow corridor to the Indian Ocean, is part of the Bantustan set aside for Zulu-speaking blacks.

Pretoria is ready to cede the areas to Swaziland. Part of the deal is that 750,000 ethnic Swazis, two-thirds of whom do not live in the territories in question, will be forced to become citizens of Swaziland. This massive denationalization, which has occurred already in the first four Bantustans to be pushed to "independence," will be another step toward the regime's stated goal of stripping all blacks of South African citizenship—denying them any claim to political rights.

Reports leaked from Washington have hinted that the Reagan administration's nominee as the next ambassador to Swaziland has already endorsed the prospective land deal.

—James North

## In Detroit, a steamroller

**DETROIT** Democratic Socialist Zolton Ferency, the relentless maverick of Michigan politics, rode his fifth gubernatorial bid long, hard and straight into the face of a steamroller August 10. Placing fourth in a field of seven, his campaign captured 86,000 ballots statewide on an uncompromising platform calling for the creation of a state bank, public ownership of major utilities, a massive economic development program, reproductive rights and anti-Reaganism.

The victor of the Michigan Democratic primary was James Blanchard, a virtually unknown four-term Congressman from north suburban Detroit, who benefitted from a horn-again black/labor machine manufactured with a UAW label. Blanchard's victory and Ferency's defeat raise serious questions about the relationship between the DSA and the UAW, particularly in the field of electoral politics.

According to Rep. John Conyers (D-Mich.), "Zolton Ferency was clearly the logical, rational candidate to be endorsed by the labor movement. Instead, Sam Fishman (director of the UAW's Michigan Community Action Program) found his neighbor and friend Jim Blanchard." The campaign was then built from scratch, featuring well-timed and orchestrated endorsements from

the UAW, AFSCME, AFL and Michigan Education Association along with cash contributions from Ford, General Motors, Consumers Power, Detroit Edison, Bendix and Rockwell. TV ads included testimonials from such luminaries as Chrysler board chairman Lee Iacocca and an officer of Standard Federal Savings and Loan (which has brought state consumers record high interest rates).

The contest was a sharp contrast to Ferency's 1978 campaign, when neither the UAW nor Detroit's Mayor Coleman Young made any official endorsement and Ferency ended up capturing second place with 150,000 votes.

This time around, he also suffered a split in his traditional constituency. One candidate, state Senator David Plawecki, won some of the white ethnic and rank-and-file votes. Another candidate, state Senator Ed Pierce from Ann Arbor, carried that city's liberal block along with some black votes as well.

Conyers, who actively supported Ferency four years ago but whose district came "close to all but giving the stamp of approval to Blanchard," despite Blanchard's consistent opposition to Black Congressional Cau-

*Socialist gubernatorial candidate Zolton Ferency*



cus initiatives, said, "It wasn't what Blanchard did or didn't do, it's what Ferency didn't do—he didn't go into the black community. Ferency, who is probably the most astute political person in the state, assumed that I was going to split the black leadership, break up our fragile network of black leaders, without even a phone call."

But the most curious and perhaps most explosive development in the Ferency primary was the refusal of the large Detroit DSA local to endorse their own member's candidacy. Ferency told *In These Times*, "DSA either sensed or was told that Ferency was an anathema to the UAW." The organization's national publication *Democratic Left* did not mention Ferency's campaign in issues preceding the primary. "It was not that we made a conscious decision not to cover it...we just don't cover that many campaigns," said Maxine Phillips, managing editor of the publication.

—Ron Williams



Joe Hold

## Briefing: The squat goes on

For years squatting has been a way of life for tens of thousands in London, Amsterdam and West Berlin. But now in places like St. Louis, Dallas and even Tulsa, Okla., squatters, many of them organized by Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) are slowly making their mark in the fight for affordable housing. (See *In These Times*, July 28).

St. Louis: The squatting movement has focused on the black neighborhood of the otherwise integrated Central West End area. According to ACORN staff director Adam Blumenthal, the city wants to develop the area for "suburbanites and young professionals, as is the trend across the country." But ACORN believes that "the neighborhood should be preserved for the people who live there."

At issue are 1000 city-owned abandoned houses priced at roughly \$5,000 for individuals and \$80 to \$90 when bought in blocks by private developers. To stop block takeovers and re-gentrification of the area, ACORN began squatting people last fall. Blumenthal claims that after ACORN moved in one family the city vandalized their house, making it impossible for them to live there. While other squatters were also harassed, two managed to strike a bargain with the Land Revitalization Authority (LRA), a state agency controlling the property, whereby the squatters would purchase the house for \$3,000 on a \$65-a-month lease.

He said ACORN considered this short of what it wanted: a concrete homestead program that would allow people to acquire houses if they promised to fix them up.

According to Blumenthal, in late April the mayor assured ACORN that a homesteading program would be put in motion. But two weeks later—in a move that stunned ACORN officials—the city arrested 23-year-old Lawrence Brady, a janitor who had been working on a squat for months. Originally, the city wanted to charge him with burglary until ACORN pointed out that Brady hadn't taken anything

out of the house but was in fact putting in things—such as plumbing. Brady was then charged with suspicion of criminal trespassing.

Brady's arrest caused such a public stir—including a sit-in at the mayor's office—that the city eventually dropped the charge. To further ease the pressure, the LRA decided to turn over 12 abandoned HUD houses it had previously refused to release.

While the Brady incident succeeded in providing some individuals with homes, ACORN leaders and two squatters were slapped with a \$610,000 suit by the LRA for punitive damages. The suit also calls for a permanent injunction that would prevent ACORN from "interfering in the normal conduct" of the agency's business. Blumenthal said that the injunction "would prevent us from criticizing basically anything it [the LRA] did. The injunction is very dangerous."

He added, "The fact that they're suing us hasn't changed our battle plans at all."

Dallas: The squatting movement here has turned into a battle with the Reagan administration's Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). According to Terry Andrews of ACORN, "HUD has always been bad, but it's a lot worse now."

In 1973, HUD set up the Section 810 homesteading program, whereby the city could acquire HUD-owned buildings valued under \$15,000 and then turn them over to people willing to homestead. From 1973 to 1978, 370 houses were allocated for homesteading. That number quickly decreased and in September 1981 the program fell apart completely. The Dallas housing crunch, combined with high inflation, pushed the value of HUD houses way above the \$15,000 limit. Despite ACORN requests for HUD to renegotiate the original \$15,000 figure, the department decided to let the homesteading program die.

In June, ACORN squatted Thelma Jones in a HUD building. She was soon forced out of the building and arrested on the charge of suspicion of criminal trespassing. During the arrest,

her property was thrown out into the street and she is now suing HUD for damages.

The Jones incident and the larger question of HUD's failure to maintain the Section 810 homesteading program were discussed with the secretary of HUD at the ACORN demonstration in Washington, D.C. As a result, HUD agreed to hold a meeting on July 28 with ACORN in Dallas to review the homesteading program and to negotiate a reassessment of the \$15,000 limit. According to Andrews, nothing was accomplished at the July 28 meeting. "Basically, Dick Eudaly [the HUD regional director] told us that HUD is not interested in providing abandoned houses for homesteading. They're interested in making money. And the only way they would turn over those houses is if they find that they can't sell them quick enough. So far that hasn't happened." Andrews added, "The meeting lasted two-and-a-half minutes."

But on the local level, ACORN did score a victory when Dallas decided to establish a non-profit housing corporation, Common Ground, to purchase privately owned abandoned houses. ACORN will sit on the board of directors.

While Common Ground has already received \$565,000, it is not yet clear whether the corporation can act as a viable source for people who need housing. According to Andrews, the city has only selected nine houses for the program.

When squatters in Tulsa tried "to work within the system," said Jeff Murray of ACORN, "the mayor sold us down the river." Ignoring the recommendations of a city appointed citizens action group on housing, the mayor sold 40 abandoned houses to private developers. ACORN, along with the residents of the community, wanted the homes turned over to squatters.

As it stands now, the buildings are boarded up and the developer has 45 days to fix them. ACORN will wait for that deadline to pass before deciding their future plans. But according to Murray, the alliance forged between the squatters—many of them Cuban—and the community's black residents before the homes were sold, is just as strong if not stronger now. Residents have said that they will continue to support ACORN's efforts and that they will not tolerate another slumlord.

—Nina Berman