

# ONLY INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS MINE FOREIGN HARBORS!



## Persian Gulf fratricide

On September 20 the Reagan administration proudly announced the seizure of an Iranian ship, which was allegedly laying mines in the international waters of the Persian Gulf. This U.S. military action was accompanied by outraged administration denunciations of Iran for its wanton disregard of civilized behavior and its lack of respect for the rights of all nations to enjoy freedom of the seas. And, indeed, laying mines and blowing up non-belligerent ships engaged in peaceful commerce is not only reprehensible, but violates international law.

But wait. Isn't this the same administration that only a few short months ago was condemned by the International Court of Justice for laying mines in international waters off Nicaragua and for blowing up a non-belligerent ship engaged in peaceful commerce with that nation? What are we to make of this?

## So what else is new?

"If Judge Bork isn't in the mainstream, neither am I."  
—former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Warren E. Burger

## Facts and meaning of the contragate scandal

In a thoughtful article on the contragate scandal in the *New York Review of Books*, Theodore Draper explores James Madison's idea that "there are more instances of the abridgment of freedom of the people by gradual silent encroachment of those in power than by violent and sudden usurpation." As Draper points out, this very old idea has had dramatic relevance all too frequently since the end of World War II. First there was McCarthyism. Then Nixon and Watergate. And now the Iran-contra revelations.

But McCarthy was an outsider, who, though successful for a time in bullying the executive branch, never had access to its resources. His was a public demagoguery, as quickly brought down—when it had served its purpose—as it had shot up. And Nixon's Watergate, though "bad enough," was relatively easy to contain because it involved no issue that could be "camouflaged as a blow in defense of the republic." Contragate, on the other hand, involved the secret powers of the executive branch in pursuit of an agenda at odds with the policy of Congress and the wishes of the American people. The Reagan conspiracy, Draper writes, embodied a "toxic formula for putting the American body politic at maximum risk."

And Draper goes on to prove his assertion. Pointing out that by the time the Boland Amendment of 1984 was passed, "the Reagan administration had committed itself to the care and feeding of the Nicaraguan contras at all costs." He concludes that where there was a will to evade the amendment, there was always a way. "With enough ingenuity and bad faith, almost any law can be evaded or made meaningless," he writes, "especially by government officials who dedicate themselves to getting around the plain intent of the law."

That, of course, was exactly what Reagan intended. And it is what he succeeded in doing—with regard both to contra aid and to Iranian arms sales. These were policy decisions, made at the highest level. And they were carried out by subordinates who understood the president's intent, whether or not they received specific orders for all of their illegal acts. That is why Draper forcefully criticizes the Tower Commission report. Calling it a "crass cop-out," he says that by giving the impression that Reagan's "management style," rather than his policy decisions, was the source of the trouble, the report "seriously underplayed the culpability of the president and exaggerated the responsibility of his advisers."

All of this, in our opinion, is true. The Reagan administration misused its power in violation of its constitutional limits—not because of the irresponsible acts of rogue elephants in its midst, but because of ideological intransigence at the top.

Yet it is vital to remember that this abuse of executive power did not come out of the blue. It is the result of a long process that has shifted power from Congress to the presidency in this century, and of imperial policies inherently at odds with democratic government. Since World War I, when the U.S. emerged as a leading imperial power, more and more legislative prerogatives have been surrendered to the president—starting with the establishment of the Bureau of the Budget in 1921. After World War II, when the U.S. assumed the role of protector of the world imperial system, the president was given increased power in the conduct of foreign affairs by the creation of both the CIA and the National Security Council.

The Reagan scandal was not an aberration of policy. What Reagan tried to do in Nicaragua was entirely consistent with the policies of all administrations since Eisenhower. During the Eisenhower years, the CIA overthrew the democratically elected government of Guatemala on the excuse that it represented a Communist threat to our security, and the administration decided to oppose Vietnam's attempt to escape from French colonial domination. The difference is that in the early '50s, the U.S. was still an empire on the rise, whereas it is now an empire on the decline. Policies that were once almost universally applauded are now beginning to inspire second thoughts. Powers mindlessly surrendered to the president when "bipartisanship" was the watchword for the American Century are now appropriately being recaptured by Congress, so that our policies can be publicly debated. We are at the beginning of a hopeful process.

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"...with liberty and justice for all"

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# LETTERS

## Collared

THE DEMOGRAPHIC GROUP DAVID MOBERG'S ARTICLE, "Who are the 'new collars'?" (*ITT*, Sept. 9) discusses is not such a new phenomenon or bloc as it may, at first glance, seem. The emergence of this sort of group was identified early on by, among others, David Bazelon in his 1972 book *Power in America: the Politics of the New Class* and, more pertinently, by Michael Harrington in his 1967 book *Socialism* as "a new working-class stratum...middle class in its education and income, but often subjected to a production discipline like that of the workers."

In the introduction to my 1977 anthology, *On The Job: Fiction about Work by Contemporary American Writers*, I wrote: "The post Second World War period of reconstruction and the resultant 'baby-boom' led to a romance with the youth culture which flourished in the '60s and is now rapidly fading.... This country has rekindled its affair with the Worker—not coincidentally just as great numbers of the baby-boom era have finally entered the civilian work force. This transformation (from student to worker) has, in part, forced the current reexamination, for it has helped produce a new light-blue-collar class which is searching for fresh definitions of work."

The term "light-blue-collar class" fits the situation and is more to the point than the colorless label "new-collar workers" coined by Ralph Whitehead.

William O'Rourke  
Notre Dame, Ind.

## Can't be

YOUR GOOD LEFT-WING PAPER IS MARRED BY your retention of Alex Amerisov—a vicious anti-Soviet emigré who is a master distortionist of news of USSR—as a writer for the paper.

About one more ridiculous outburst from him such as this one about the "unemployment" in the USSR (*ITT*, Sept. 9) and I will cancel my subscription. Surely you know his purpose for this lie is to make it appear that capitalism isn't the cause of unemployment!

I also want to point out that it is illegal to advocate racial hatred in USSR, and so the existence of an "anti-Semitic" organization such as he claims exists is not possible.

L.C. Hayes  
Butte, Mont.

## Enough anarchists

THE RAGING CRITICISM OF JUDGE ROBERT BORK in your publication and others sounds like something out of "Jabberwocky." As well as I can understand, the arguments go something like this:

1. Bork is rigidly inflexible, and he changes his mind too much.
2. Bork won't protect the rights of people—he only protects the Constitution.
3. He is a hide-bound traditionalist, but he's likely to overturn previous Supreme Court decisions willy-nilly.
4. He imposes his own values on his decisions, but he sticks too closely to the "original intent" of the Constitution.

Bork is the first person to ever point out to me that the "right to privacy" is not mentioned in the Constitution. A lot of judicial arguments have used this as a basis. Where

is the outrage over how we have been hoodwinked by self-serving social engineers who would place personal values over the laws of our country?

If women's equality is threatened, we should hustle around and get the ERA into the Constitution where it belongs. Then Bork would defend it. The rush to ratify the ERA was called off because of sheer laziness on the part of its supporters. They were swayed by the argument that women's social progress had already made such gains the ERA was unnecessary. Bork reminds us that it may be necessary after all. What do we do—shoot the messenger?

The unpleasant reality is that Judge Bork has made more than 400 decisions while serving on the Federal Appeals Court, and not one has been overturned by higher authority. One has to be very careful of criticizing someone like that, because he is so smart that his critics end up looking second best. The only cautious criticism I would level at him, taking aim very carefully, is that because of his intelligence he is able to persuade people he is right when he may not be. If he later changes his mind, he has equally good reasons for his new judgment. In this respect he seems something of a loose cannon intellectually, but this is not a criticism of him on ideological grounds.

Critics of Bork should take heart: I'd be surprised if he even wants the job on the Supreme Court after going through all this artillery fire. He does not seem to be the type of man who will suffer fools gladly. If we succeed in hounding him off the job, we may lose some valuable insight into the workings of a constitutional democracy. But if the anarchists would rather have a puppet on the Supreme Court that they could manipulate to their hearts' content, that's O.K. with me, too. Politics for me is just a spectator sport.

Carol Bachelder  
Boise, Idaho

**Typesetter's reply:** Looks like the sport is being played so far away from your vantage point that you need binoculars.

## Soviet unemployment

SINCE OTHER NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES ARE already providing us with a clear picture of every drawback and obstacle which may conceivably afflict the current Soviet efforts at economic reform, it would be nice to be able to look to *In These Times* for an account showing why there is excitement as well as skepticism within the Soviet Union about the attempts at "economic restructuring." Whether or not the reforms are successful, inadequate, or incomplete, they are

clearly worth taking seriously.

As to the figures on projected unemployment which Amerisov cites (*ITT*, Sept. 9) from the journal *Sovetskaya kultura*, it may be worth noting that the article in which they appeared emphasized the importance of recognizing (1) that job reductions would result from hoped-for increases in efficiency and productivity, and (2) that this problem needed to be addressed. This article evoked so much concern among the journal's readers that the author, the economist V. Kostakov, was invited to clarify his position. In the February 1986 issue, Kostakov put forward the argument that, as the number of industrial jobs decreased, social and cultural services should become the new growth sector of the economy, with jobs created by expanding the number of pre-schools, mandating smaller class size with more teachers, and a step-by-step extension of maternity leave to a term of three years. (In this connection, it is relevant that the current Five-Year Plan extends the length of work-leave for women with children under the age of one year to a term of 18 months.) For Kostakov, some of the key problems relate to the male segment of the population. In his words:

"For the overwhelming majority, the inclination to drink is a kind of compensation for the undeveloped state of their cultural needs, for the monotonous dull way in which they spend their days off and evenings, and with their not knowing what to do with themselves, with their time and with their money. Two million workers in culture and the arts is an extremely small number for such an enormous country as ours! The comprehensive program for the development of goods and services envisages a substantial expansion in the system of cultural services."

For the Soviets, the question of job reduction appears to be a far more controversial issue both in practice and in principle than Amerisov suggests. At least so far, it does not seem to be the case that either unemployment or economic insecurity are a central aim of the reforms which are being attempted.

Esther Kingston-Mann  
Boston, Mass.

## A call to bisexuals

THE NATIONAL MARCH ON WASHINGTON FOR Lesbian and Gay Rights October 11 is going to be the most impressive display of lesbian and gay pride and solidarity ever seen in this country. Can bisexuals afford to sit back and watch this event unfold on national TV? Not a chance. In August, the National Steering Committee of the March

on Washington approved a proposal for a National Bisexual Contingent, submitted by the East Coast Bisexual Network (ECBN). Now, bisexual men and women nationwide have to get out there and march as bisexuals.

These are dangerous times for bi's. Nearly every day we are treated to some nasty, biphobic media coverage of bisexuals and AIDS. Bi's are as victimized by the anti-choice/anti-sex agenda of the Reagan administration as are lesbians and gays. We confront the same hostilities, the same discriminations. The pending Bork Supreme Court appointment further threatens bisexuals' civil liberties.

Gay liberation is our liberation, so we have to work for gay causes at every opportunity. The list of demands drawn up by the March organizers express many of our concerns. However, bisexual and gay issues aren't identical. We can't let gays represent us in D.C. We have to go there ourselves, as bisexuals, to speak openly and vociferously as a separate and vital contingent.

Why travel to D.C. and melt into a gay affinity group or organization when you aren't gay or lesbian? Once we begin publicly to claim our bisexual identities we will no longer go unacknowledged or left out. The very fact that the March isn't called "The Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual March on Washington" is symptomatic of the fact that we haven't been visible enough, as bi's, within the gay community.

Marching on Washington as bisexuals gives us our first chance to affirm our bisexual pride nationally. A pre-March gathering for the Bisexual Contingent is taking place early Sunday morning. Please get in touch with us if you'd like to march with the Contingent. Call (617) BIS-MOVE, or write March, c/o Boston Bisexual Network, P.O. Box 639, Cambridge, MA 02140. Or look for us on the rallying site; we'll be wearing red and carrying the National Bisexual Network banner.

Witness the birth of a national bisexual movement in Washington on October 11! Whatever the size of the bi contingent, it will be a proud contingent.

Lucy Friedland, Liz Nania  
National Co-ordinators for the Bisexual Contingent for the March on Washington

**Editor's note:** Please try to keep letters under 250 words in length. Otherwise we may have to make drastic cuts, which may change what you want to say. Also, if possible, please type and double-space letter—or at least write clearly and with wide margins.

## SYLVIA



## by Nicole Hollander