

on it. Staff members began wearing black armbands around the building, and on Monday, November 7, 13 reporters and editors and a staff photographer had a stormy meeting with Smith.

"You can say we were assertive," says reporter Tracy Thompson. "He was sort of missing hunks of skin when he left. It was a very confrontational meeting."

Smith says that the meeting took place at his initiative. "I asked that we assemble the toughest questioners...who had been involved in getting the ad in. We really hashed it out."

"They came in wearing black armbands," Smith recalls. The on-the-record session, he feels, helped answer uncomfortable questions about Kovach's resignation. "The tape recorder was on," he says, "notepads were out. The transcript that emerged went a long way to showing folks that there was a lot more to the story."

A *Journal-Constitution* staffer provided *In These Times* with a copy of the transcript. It reveals an angry group of reporters and editors who feel they have been betrayed by short-sighted corporate managers—a rare inside look at how journalists view the conflicting demands of their profession.

Some of the toughest comments during the session came from Bill Dedman, a 27-year-old reporter who wrote the paper's series on racially discriminatory banking practices. "What confidence do we have," Dedman asked Smith, "that we won't step back into what we all know was the case before, which was not so much where stories get written and spiked, but people know which stories not to write. The bank stories—I didn't think of those first; Hal [Straus, currently science and medicine editor] thought of them three or four years ago, but he was told not to do them.... It's an atmosphere, a tone, a direction, and we fear much of that has been pissed away."

"It hasn't," responded Smith. "I promise you, it hasn't.... My hope and expectation is that we're going to continue to encourage strong, aggressive reporting."

Wheelchair journalism: Smith tried to explain to the assembled staff members the issues that had led to a breakdown of "mutual trust" between himself and Kovach. He talked about budget fights, the Washington bureau and his commitment to what he described as "marginal readers."

"One of the issues that concerns me," he said, "not just about our paper, but about our industry...you

look at the national measures of readership, and newspapers are losing ground in terms of their ability to match up with household growth and with people growth.... There's someday out there when folks will say, 'Hey, newspapers are not necessary.'"

Smith hotly denied that he was trying to imitate *USA Today*. As he describes it, the effort to reach non-readers sounds sort of like a literacy crusade. But when staff members

Will aggressive reporting be replaced by McPaper-clone happy news?

pushed him for specifics about the kind of stories he wanted to see that he wasn't seeing under Kovach, he came up with an example that sounds perfectly fit for the Nation's McPaper.

"I thought this morning, the story of the fellow in the wheelchair who made it to the top of the IBM Tower," he said, referring to a front-page human interest story, "that was a hell of a good story. But we were not

consistently enough alert to that story that touches all of us, at least intrigues us sufficiently to talk about."

"What you're saying," replied Tracy Thompson, "sounds like a conflict between those who believe it's our job to tell people what they need to know and those who think it's our job to tell people what they want to read."

"I don't see the conflict," said Smith. "There's a great...Louis Armstrong quote: 'I play four for the audience and one for myself.'"

Smith did not succeed in winning over his own skeptical audience. "I'm sorry this happened," he said as the hour-long session came to a close. "Not half as sorry as we are," shot back features writer Jim Auchmuty. Dedman offered Smith a black armband, but Smith declined to wear it.

Principles and paychecks: When he spoke with *In These Times* some six weeks after Kovach had resigned, Smith was convinced that the morale crisis caused by the incident had passed. He remains optimistic about the future of the *Journal-Constitution*, but some reporters are not so sure. "Newspapers can decline actively or passively," said Dedman in December. "Nobody expects anything active. We expect

to be on hold for about six months." Shortly afterward Dedman left to take a job with the *Washington Post*.

One indication of the future direction of the paper will be how many staffers follow Dedman out the door. So far, Jay Smith points out proudly, only a few people out of a news staff of 400 have left.

The situation is not as rosy as it looks, says the anonymous senior staffer quoted above, who would like to hold on to his job for at least the immediate future.

"We've been defeated and we know it," he says. "Jay said, 'Anybody who doesn't like this policy or doesn't like what happened can start to look for work elsewhere.' There are a lot of people who just sort of decided to circulate their resumes."

Once people find other jobs, he says, there will be more resignations. More people would have left already, he says, but they are stuck to their present paychecks.

"Most of us aren't independently wealthy," he says. "The people who hold our mortgages don't necessarily understand our principles." ■

Roger Kerson is a Chicago-based freelance writer. He is also a research and organizing consultant for the National Training and Information Center, which serves low-income community groups.

IN THE ARTS

High Fidelity and the wild Cuban mix

The Uncompromising Revolution
Directed by Saul Landau

By David Pedersen

THE UNCOMPROMISING REVOLUTION uses low-key drama, created by its editing style, to treat large and small themes, intermittently, to show the people, the landscape, the rhythms and texture of Cuba after three decades of revolution. Just as Castro's revolution ended the chance for Americans to escape to Cuba for gambling, abortion, sex, rum and cigars, Saul Landau's new film dispels the notion of a similar mindless escape to the movies. Rather than quick-fix Hollywood entertainment or stone-cold network-style documentary, Landau creates a tapestry of words and thought-provoking images.

Landau, a senior fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, has for 30 years been a studious watcher of Cuba and U.S. foreign policy. Weaving together archival footage, occasional flashbacks from his 1968 film, *Fidel*, recent interviews with Castro and a conglomeration of on-the-street and on-location interviews with a variety of Cubans, Landau at-

tempts to capture filmically what political scientists have tried in vain to do empirically: to understand Cuba's revolution.

From colony to nation: In contrast to Landau's *Fidel*, *Uncompromising Revolution* shatters the romantic illusions of revolution with a cinematic bath of cold reality. The film indicates that the revolution has been about the challenge of developing from a colony to a nation, of using reason to overcome supersti-

FILM

tion, a battle led by Castro. Cuban culture is almost 500 years old. In the film a woman who is 102 recalls the days of the Spaniards and the arrival of the Americans after the bombing of the *Maine* in 1898.

From the wrinkled face of the woman, remembering details of a war 91 years ago, the film dissolves into black-and-white images of Marines charging up San Juan Hill, occupying the island, gambling, having fun at Cuban expense. The footage shows why the revolution took the form it did, why Cubans remember and Americans have no memory.

The film dissolves from the past to the present, building montages of

a cross section of the island, touching on diverse aspects of Cuban life, from cowboys and engineers to doctors and nuclear-power workers. *Uncompromising Revolution* moves beyond TV documentary styles through the unexpected, as when Landau interjects his narration with ironic humor.

In a lens factory near Havana, Castro chats with the workers and puts his arm on the shoulders of a technician. As Castro's entourage, including Landau and his film crew, moves through the factory, the camera swings around to show the man with the shoulder that Castro touched. He is grinning in rapture. Landau narrates, in his typically soft and mirthful way, that this man has just had a "mild ecstatic experience." Then the camera is back on Castro, leading the way out of the factory—with his arm around Landau.

Almost every sequence that is established as "truth" finds itself challenged by subsequent sequences. This style leaves the feeling that the film provides few "hard facts." Yet the conflicting images fight their way to a synthesis.

The film contains layers, one of

Landau has for 30 years been a studious watcher of Cuba and U.S. foreign policy.

which is a dialogue conducted by Landau, as narrator, with the rest of the characters in the film. Some may find *The Uncompromising Revolution* frustrating, since the film offers no easy answers. Indeed, the film form implicitly challenges traditional methods of examining Cuba and revolution. The Cuban revolution, like all political life, is not seen by Landau as a series of questions or a collection of facts.

Landau demands and expects some mental work from his audience. The film covers much ground in a short time. We are given a history lesson on Cuba's involvement in Angola. We are introduced to "Santeria," the popular religion of Cuba, steeped with voodoo-like healing rituals. We see idle construction workers dozing on their brooms, explaining how "rectification" is needed, how people must work harder. "He is sweeping," one worker indicates as his partner lazily pushes dirt from one pile to another.

Who's directing? Castro, true to his role in Cuba, becomes the film's dominating voice. We see him in his jeep leading the film crew all over Cuba. Landau interjects, "There is no doubt about who is directing the revolution—or this film." A flashback shows Castro in 1968 listening to a woman complain and then telling an assistant to write down what she said. This wryly dovetails to 1988 and an almost identical situation.

The Uncompromising Revolution presents Cuba as a mélange of sights, sounds and colors that does not eas-

ily fit into Castro's disciplined model. We see a glorious amorphous mass striving for noble goals yet oozing sensuality. Castro exhorts the crowd at a rally to "be like Che" and then enumerates the virtues of the communist saint of Cuba. The film compares the faces of just plain folk to the words of their leader, who almost pleads with his people to shape up, to make a reality of his dream, to construct an egalitarian communist society.

Landau's penchant for political imagery comes from decades of activism and controversial filmmaking. From his earliest movies Landau has been a maverick. In a public television film, *Losing Just the Same* (with Richard Moore) in 1966 he inserted dream sequences into a film on life in the Oakland, Calif., ghetto, when such "manufactured" sequences were taboo for documentaries. In a 1971 feature film, *Que Hacer*, he alternated between documentary and fiction to develop a dialogue not only over the meaning of Salvador Allende's election in Chile, but also about how movies shape politics in the current age. In *Brazil: Report on Torture* (made with Haskell Wexler) camera beeps distract the viewers from otherwise excruciatingly painful recreations of torture scenes, forcing the viewers into the consciousness that they are watching a film about torture, not experiencing vicariously real torture. ■

David Pedersen works for the Institute for Policy Studies and writes about film.

Germany

Continued from page 11

However, Libya, unlike Iraq, expressed willingness to support a universal chemical weapons ban and allow international inspection, so long as it was "not discriminatory."

Last December 22 a delegation of U.S. experts came to Bonn with their satellite photos of Rabta, but with "no concrete proof" of German participation. Two questions were entangled: the nature of the Rabta production and German involvement. At this stage evidence for both was circumstantial. The American evidence that Pharma 150 was a chemical weapons plant was in the way it was built. When Bonn officials asked whether the U.S. experts would testify before German courts, they promised to answer in mid-January. Then in the new year U.S. officials leaked the story to Stephen Engelberg and Michael Gordon of *The New York Times*.

The Kohl government dug in its heels, angry at being publicly attacked while it was still conducting its investigation. Then evidence came out that Imhausen was indeed involved. On January 19 Genscher's foreign ministry complained of the "considerable disruption of foreign relations through illegal exports for a Libyan chemical weapons plant." Bonn gave in.

All doubts vanished. "According to the present judgment of the federal government, the Rabta installation is not only suitable to, but deliberately set up for the manufacture of chemical weapons," the Schäuble report concluded.

Lone dissenter: Only Alfred Mechtersheimer, a retired Bundeswehr officer, noted peace researcher and Green member of parliament, startled the Bundestag by complaining that the Schäuble report failed to present the evidence that had caused the government to change its opinion. "The report is

already erroneous in its title," Mechtersheimer said, "because it isn't about 'possible participation of German firms in Libyan chemical weapons production,' but about participation of German firms in possible Libyan chemical weapons production."

Mechtersheimer said a correctly drawn up report, after an inconclusive visit to Rabta, would have reached three conclusions: 1. Proof exists of pharmaceutical production in Rabta. 2. Proof of a chemical weapons factory does not exist. 3. Proof that there is no chemical weapons production in Rabta doesn't exist either.

Mechtersheimer called the "fixation on Libya" a distraction from chemical weapons ban negotiations in Geneva, where every effort should be made "to see to it that the U.S. doesn't act like an alcoholic who forbids others from drinking." The U.S. emphasis on non-proliferation is dangerous because "it will have the same effect as nuclear non-pro-

liferation, building up central arsenals while not even succeeding in stopping proliferation," Mechtersheimer said. Alone in the left opposition, he stressed support for Genscher's efforts for a universal chemical weapons ban as "the only chance to stop poisoning the world."

Scarcely anyone else would dare follow Mechtersheimer out on the limb of suggesting that the U.S. might be wrong about Libyan chemical weapons manufacture. The situation is a little like Pascal's wager: the only way to lose is by defending Libya just before the U.S. comes up with proof that the chemical weapons plant exists. It's better to believe it.

Social Democrat Norbert Gansel even called on the Bonn government to demand that Libya give back whatever it got from German companies, "so that the U.S. cannot have grounds for military intervention."

The Schäuble report concluded that the Bonn government considered it "a foreign policy priority, in cooperation with partners and friends, to prevent Libya from taking up chemical weapons production."

The report also noted that "the governments of the U.S. and Israel appeared satisfied" with Bonn's measures to tighten export control. The president of the Jewish World Congress, Edgar Bronfman, also expressed satisfaction to Genscher, the report added.

Finally, the Schäuble report drew a political conclusion whose significance goes far beyond Libya or the chemical industry: "Preventing the spread of sensitive technology from the industrial countries to the Third World for military purposes will be one of the major international concerns of the next years and decades." □

Let's End the Isolation of the Secular Left from the Religious Left

Few on the secular Left understand the social dimensions of the Gospel, and the way the Catholic bishops, in their recent pastoral letters, placed economic democracy on the national agenda and nuclear disarmament on the nation's conscience. Few have paid much attention to the progressive social witness of Protestants. Few know what Christian activists are doing in Latin America, South Africa, South Korea, and in the ghettos and barrios of our land. Few realize that the papacy has called for workers' ownership and self-management and that its economic views have acutely irritated apologists for big business. Few have considered the role of believers in the opposition to nuclear weapons and U.S. belligerence in Central America, and in the pro-democratic dissident movements in the East bloc.

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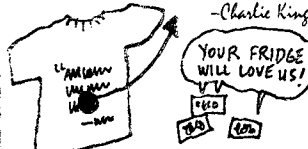
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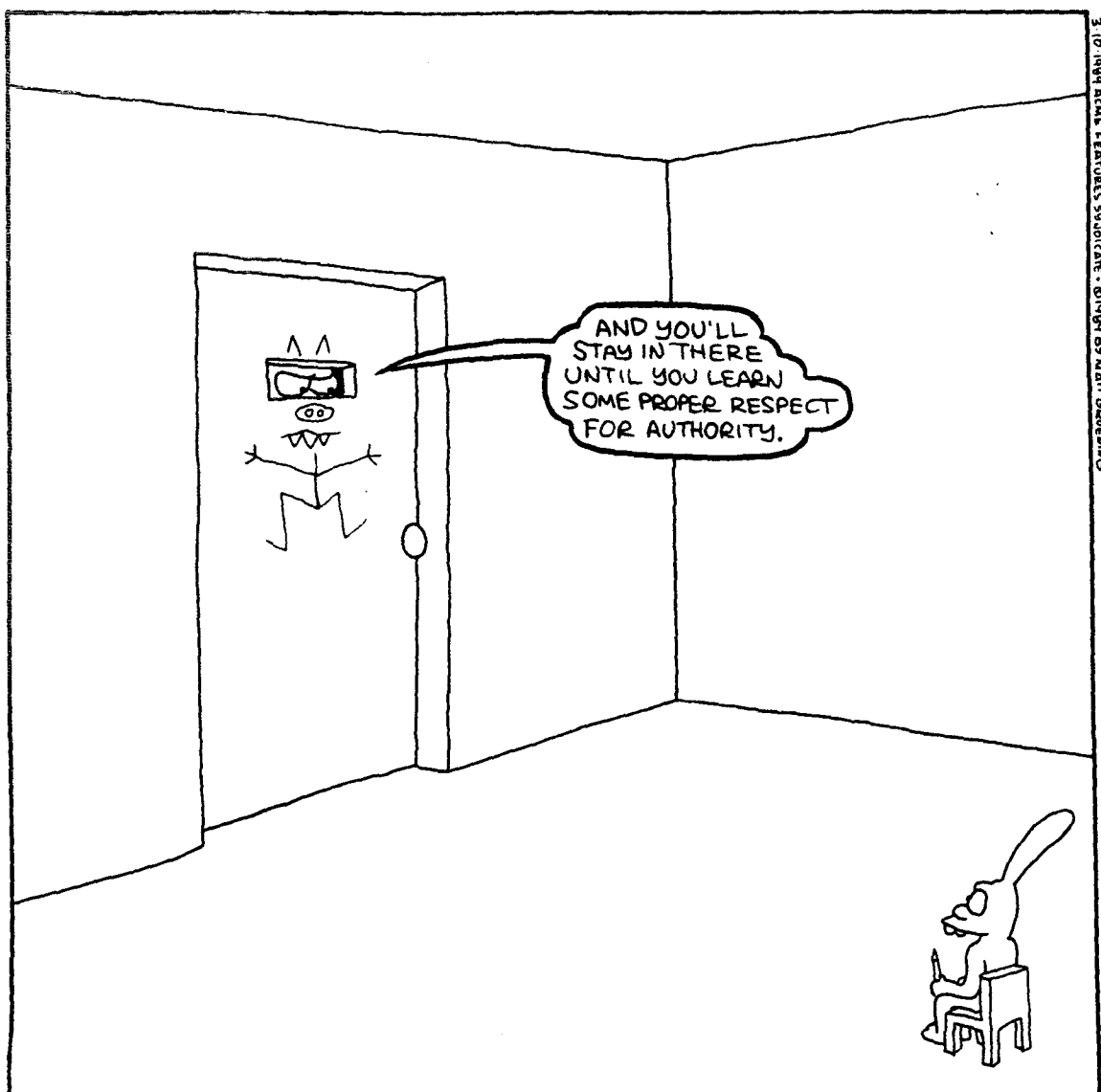
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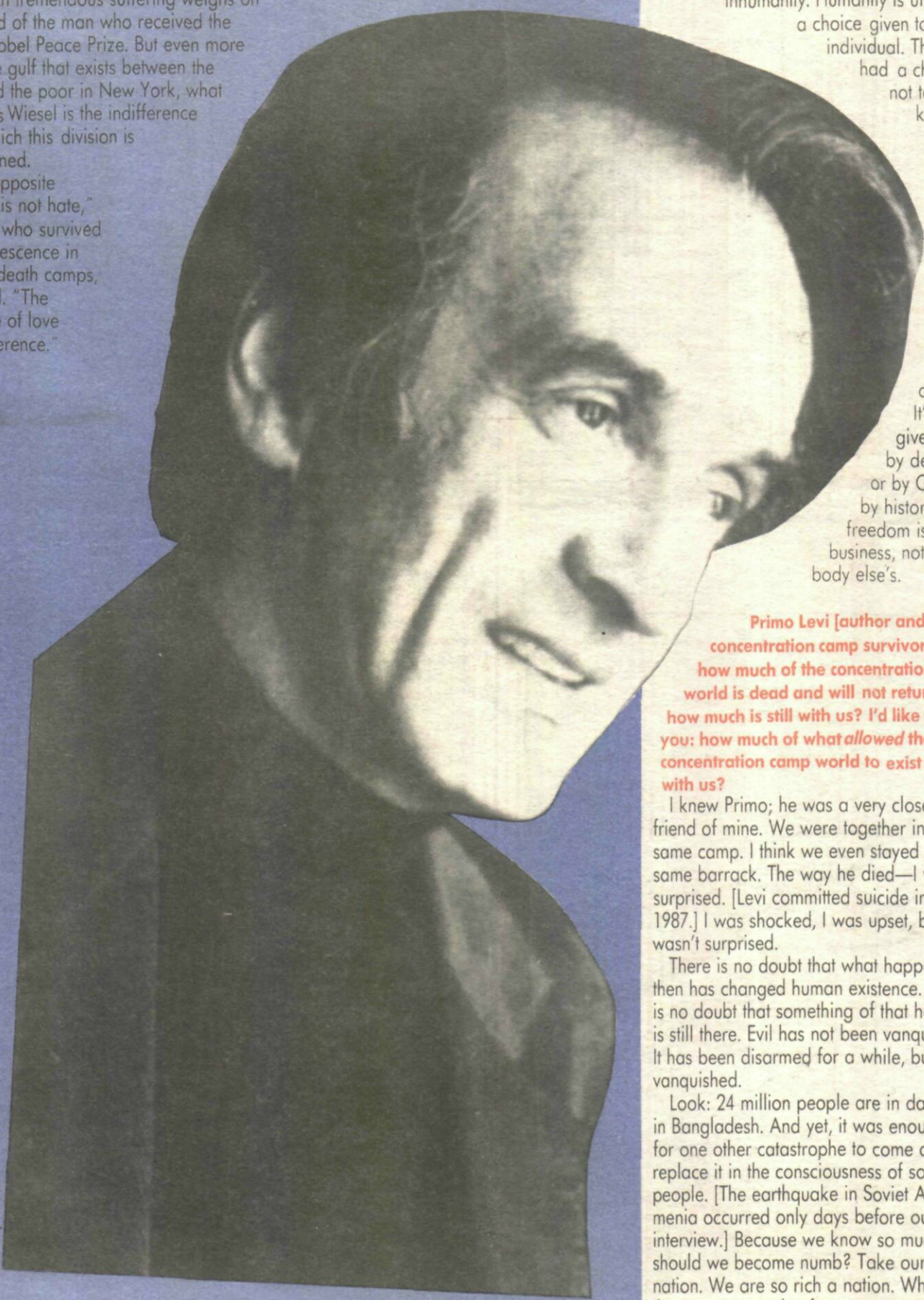
The Manhattan apartment building in which Elie Wiesel lives is surrounded by legions of the homeless—just like any other fashionable high-rise in America's most powerful city. An estimated 75,000 homeless individuals live here. They lie in cardboard boxes placed over heating grates. They sleep in rags on the cold, beautiful marble stairs in Grand Central Station. They beg change from well-dressed passersby—a lucky few of whom carry in their pockets \$80 tickets to a popular Broadway musical about a poor man imprisoned for stealing a loaf of bread. The first cold snap of the year struck just before our interview, and two people froze to death on the sidewalks of New York.

The juxtaposition of so much wealth and such tremendous suffering weighs on the mind of the man who received the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize. But even more than the gulf that exists between the rich and the poor in New York, what horrifies Wiesel is the indifference with which this division is maintained.

"The opposite of love is not hate," Wiesel, who survived an adolescence in Hitler's death camps, has said. "The opposite of love is indifference."

The Elie Wiesel Difference

By Osha Davidson



©Jerry Bauer

Osha Davidson: In what essential way is today's world different because of the Holocaust?

Elie Wiesel: We have learned certain things. We have learned to interfere in other people's business. After all, human rights activities are interference in the domestic activities of other nations. Until the Holocaust, nobody would accept that kind of interference.

Second, we learned that the impossible is possible. Which means that, if we are not careful, slaughter on a universal scale could become the norm—not the exception. We have learned to be suspicious: suspicious of promises. We have learned to take threats seriously. We have learned that the nuclear menace, the nuclear shadow, is real.

I think we have also learned the limits of humanity—as well as the limits of inhumanity. Humanity is ultimately a choice given to every individual. The killer had a choice not to be a killer.

Even in the camps we had a choice. That's an important choice. It's not given to us by destiny or by God or by history. Our freedom is our business, not some body else's.

Primo Levi [author and concentration camp survivor] asked: how much of the concentration camp world is dead and will not return and how much is still with us? I'd like to ask you: how much of what allowed the concentration camp world to exist is still with us?

I knew Primo; he was a very close friend of mine. We were together in the same camp. I think we even stayed in the same barrack. The way he died—I wasn't surprised. [Levi committed suicide in 1987.] I was shocked, I was upset, but I wasn't surprised.

There is no doubt that what happened then has changed human existence. There is no doubt that something of that hatred is still there. Evil has not been vanquished. It has been disarmed for a while, but not vanquished.

Look: 24 million people are in danger in Bangladesh. And yet, it was enough for one other catastrophe to come and replace it in the consciousness of so many people. [The earthquake in Soviet Armenia occurred only days before our interview.] Because we know so much, should we become numb? Take our own nation. We are so rich a nation. What we throw out every day from restaurants could feed a continent! Why not take 100 military aircraft loaded with food and send them to Africa, to Sudan, to Ethiopia and now to Bangladesh. Send architects and teachers and help a people that

needs help to survive.

If this indifference continues, we shall all be its victims. That is the fallout of the tragedy that befell my people.

Do you see that indifference growing in America over the past decade?

I wouldn't want to blame any particular group. Take President [Franklin D.] Roosevelt; he was known for his humanism, for his quest for democracy. But Roosevelt was indifferent to the Jewish plight during the war. After all the newspapers wrote about *Kristallnacht* [the night in 1938 on which the Nazis ordered the destruction of 300 Jewish synagogues and smashed the windows of stores owned by Jews throughout Germany and Austria]—it was not even six months after *Kristallnacht*—the ship *The St. Louis* came here with 1,200 Jewish men, women and children aboard. They were in Florida in American waters, and they were sent back. Roosevelt, the humanist, sent back 1,200 people knowing that they were going back to Nazism, to persecution, if not to death. And when he did so, what was the reaction of the country? Was there an outcry? No. So it's not the first time we are indifferent.

But isn't it more acceptable to be indifferent today? Look at poverty, homelessness. There was a time when indifference was recognized as complicity. That idea seems to have been lost.

Well, we are trying to bring it back. I am, at least. There is something basically wrong with us. After all, we were indifferent to the Indians. Not at first; first we killed them. But since then we are indifferent to their memory. We should remember day after day what we had done to the Indians.

As for the poor today—it's a disgrace. To have homeless people, hungry people—we have millions of people who live below the poverty level in this country. It is beyond me. I don't understand it. Maybe we need someone to wake us all up.... It is an urgent task, an immediate task. But we turn away. I think we are losing our own humanity.

You've said that there are more people not free than free in this country. Who are you including in the category of "not free"—the poor, and those imprisoned by their own consciousness?

Absolutely. I believe that if a person cannot feed his or her children, then his or her human rights are being violated. Economic freedom is just as important as political freedom.

And in Latin America—I don't understand all these discussions. Why not take 500,000 people into our country? We can afford to. We have so much. Why is it a big deal to open our doors and say, "Look, you need security; we shall provide you with security. You need happiness; we shall try to give you happiness." It would raise the moral standard of our nation to unprecedented heights. Why isn't it being done? I wish I knew the answer. ■

Osha Davidson writes regularly for *In These Times*.