Forward

JOURNAL OF SOCIALIST THOUGHT

Volume 7, Number 2
Summer
1987

Forward

Contents

From the Editors . . .

The last issue of *Forward* featured a round-table interview with leaders from one of the most important labor struggles in the country, the strike by 1,100 workers of Watsonville Canning in Watsonville, California. The workers, mainly Chicana and Mexicana women, told us of their battle and how it had affected their lives in vivid and personal terms. Then in March, after 18 long months on the line, the workers won a great victory when the new owners of Watsonville Canning (the previous owner sold the plant after going millions of dollars into debt) offered a new contract that promised to rehire all strikers and retract much of the reduction in wages and benefits. The Watsonville workers overwhelmingly accepted the contract and ended the battle. The scabs have been fired, and the workers are re-

turning to their jobs in order of seniority.

In this age of Reaganomics and "takeaways" from workers, the Watsonville victory is an inspiration for others throughout the country. *Forward* is proud to have helped spread the news of the Watsonville story, and we salute the victorious workers of Watsonville.

In this issue, we have some additional comments about the strike. Gloria Betancourt, president of the rank and file-elected Strikers' Committee, presents observations about the strike, its lessons, and what the experience meant to her.

Forward's first two articles respond to the intense interest in United States-Japan economic competition. "Myths about Japan's labor-management system" exposes stereotypes about labor relations in Japan and shows that workers in the U.S. and Japan share many common experiences. The second article by Peter Shapiro, "First 'Star Wars' — Now 'Trade Wars,'" argues that the campaign for import controls does not help working people and sidetracks the critical struggle for jobs and economic security.

A third article also has special interest to the labor movement. Eddie deJesús presents a history of Puerto Rican workers in New York City. Our *Perspectives* article is by Merle Hansen, the president of the North American Farm Alliance, who explains why many farmers are supporting Jesse Jackson for president.

Our cultural section features Amiri Baraka's account of Nina Simone's return to the cultural scene. The revolutionary playwright and author describes his personal association with Ms. Simone and the trials and tribulations of her career. Book reviews and original poetry also add to our issue.

Planned for future issues of *Forward* are

articles on the different experiences of socialist construction, the definition of classes and class structure of the United States, and more on the social and political conditions of the "Sunbelt" region of the country. Subscribe to *Forward* so you won't miss these features.

As always, we solicit your comments, suggestions and criticisms. We would also like to see new essays and articles on any topic of interest to the progressive movement.

Anne Adams
Carl Davidson
Michael Lee

Editors' Note

Forward solicits essays on politics, cultural critiques, book reviews, original poetry, short stories, expressions of opinion, and other articles of interest to the socialist movement. Manuscripts should be double-spaced, including footnotes of sources if needed, and submitted in duplicate. Feature-length essays generally should number no more than 25 pages. All manuscripts will be read. Unused manuscripts will be returned if a self-addressed, stamped envelope is included. Please submit material to *Forward*, P.O. Box 29293, Oakland, California 94604.

Myths about Japan's labor-management system

And what workers in the U.S. and Japan have in common

Hideo Watanabe

In recent years, the Japanese labor-management system has drawn great interest on the part of U.S. corporate managers. In some industries, Japanese-inspired experiments in "team management" and quality-control circles involving close cooperation between workers and managers have even been implemented. In general, many businessmen in the United States seem to admire the way Japanese companies deal with their workers. The systematic cooperation between labor and management, enterprise-based unions which uphold company interests, workers who welcome automation and technical innovations, and a high level of labor productivity and discipline are usually cited as the outstanding features of this system.

The high praise coming from U.S. corporate leaders about the Japanese system of labor management should immediately raise suspicions about both the reality of their claims and their intentions in making them. It is important to note, however, that with the intensify-

Nissan autoworkers in Zama, Japan, eating lunch under the assembly line.

Hideo Watanabe is a researcher from Japan.

ing economic rivalry between the U.S. and Japan, major U.S. corporations *are* very serious about studying Japanese business techniques. Many economists believe that U.S. industry cannot compete effectively against "Japan, Inc." unless some basic reforms are instituted, not the least of which are fundamental changes in the organization of the U.S. work force. The workers' movement in this country, therefore, can expect not only continued demands for concessions but also pressure for "labor-management reform" under nationalistic appeals and propaganda about Japan's labor system.

High praise from U.S. corporate leaders about the Japanese labor management system should raise suspicion about the reality of their claims.

Reforms that will make U.S. industry more competitive, it is argued, will also benefit labor. Moreover, proponents argue, the Japanese system represents the wave of the future, in which labor-management cooperation is not only possible, but absolutely necessary. Some go so far as to claim the Japanese system represents a new historical stage in the development of socio-economic organization that is neither capitalist nor socialist. These methods allegedly will become the world-wide norm by the 21st century.

What is the significance of this "learn from Japan" campaign? Is the Japanese system the wave of the future? Is it possible that labor-management cooperation, rather than struggle, can lead to real mutual benefit? What attitude should the labor movement in the United States take towards attempts by management to implement Japanese-inspired reform?

This article will attempt to discuss some of these questions through a look at some history of the Japanese working class, the origins of the Japanese labor-management system, and the implications of this system for the labor movements of both Japan and the United States.

The cultural tradition of cooperation and paternalism in Japan

Japanese businessmen and many American sociologists attribute both the origins and success of the Japanese labor-management system to some longstanding cultural traits and traditions characteristic of the Japanese people. The high value placed on cooperation, subordination of the individual to the group, respect for authority, and the family-oriented paternalism

associated with all Japanese institutions, ranging from recreational clubs to big business, are usually cited as factors that gave rise to this system. Some economists believe that such cultural characteristics, also shared by other peoples in East Asia with a Confucian heritage, are responsible for the high growth rates exhibited by Hong Kong, Singapore, Taiwan and South Korea. Cooperation, as opposed to conflict, is the alleged basis for the Japanese system, sometimes described as a "corporate welfare" system.

Confucian ideology and values derived from Japan's feudal past do have deep roots in Japanese society and retain considerable influence today. To argue that these ideas and values have determined the nature of relations between labor and management in Japan, however, is contrary to the facts. More seriously, this kind of cultural argument tends to create a wide gap between Japanese working people and workers in other countries, reinforces old racial prejudices about subservient "Orientals" and "cheap" Asian labor, and creates new stereotypes which describe the Japanese as "workaholics living in rabbit hutches." Such views distort reality and fuel national chauvinism — which, ironically, go hand in hand with the "learn from Japan" campaign — and prevent workers in the U.S. from seeing that they have common class interests with Japanese workers.

Women workers at Japan's Ashio copper mine in the 19th century.

The Japanese working class, like the working class of every other country in the world, was shaped and tempered in fierce struggle and owes whatever gains it has won in the past century to that struggle. Far from being subservient, class collaborationist, or prone to paternalistic control, Japanese workers built their movement against tremendous odds. The Confucian cultural heritage, which placed workers, and particularly women workers, at the bottom of a social hierarchy modeled after the patriarchal family, has been, in fact, one of the obstacles they have had to fight.

Early Japanese industrial workers were often treated as subhumans and social outcasts. As the owner-manager of the Takashima Coal Mine wrote in 1880, "These miners are not people to be looked at in the same light

as ordinary mankind, as they are animals like beasts and birds which know today but not tomorrow. . . . " [1]

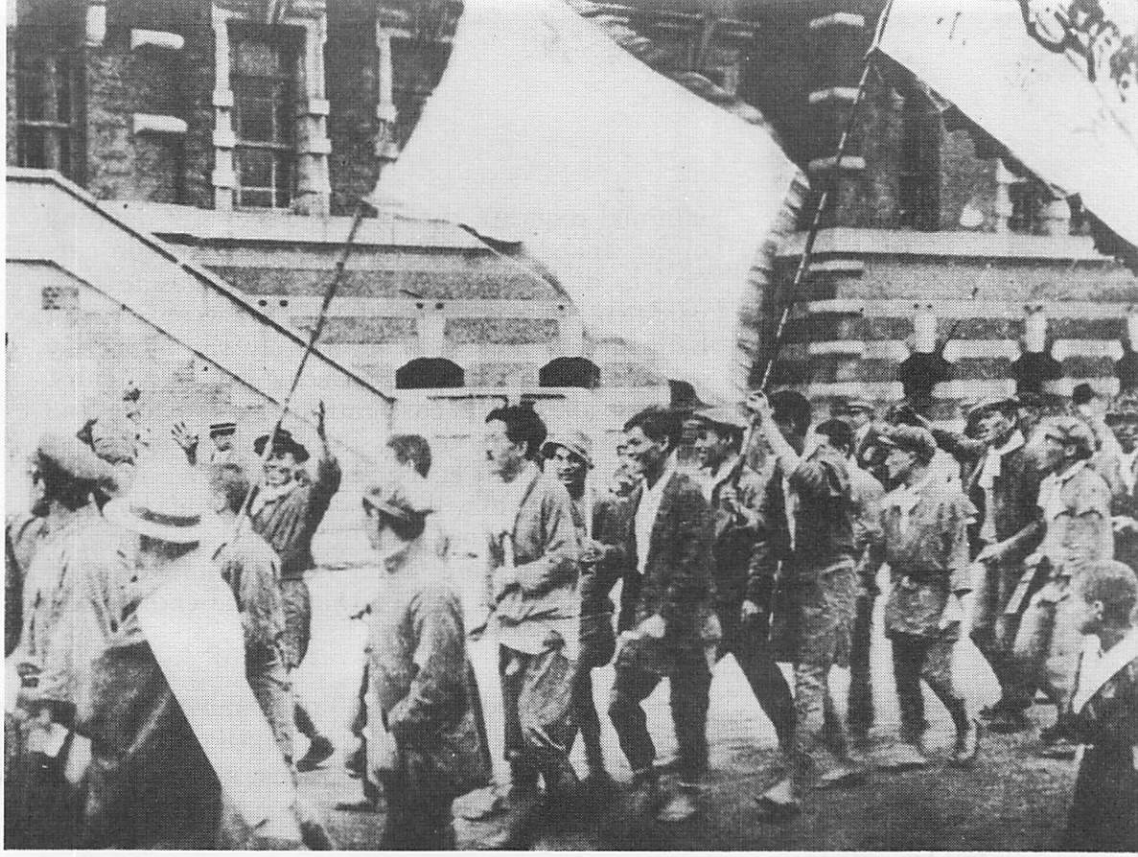
This kind of treatment left an indelible stamp on the consciousness of the Japanese working class. The struggle for basic human dignity became an overriding theme in their struggles, as can be seen in the words of a young woman who addressed 1,000 of her co-workers in the bitter Yamaichi silk spinners' strike of 1927:

> We are not slaves! We are proud laborers who carry Japan's industries on our shoulders. We must be paid wages in accordance with our contracts. We are not pigs. We must be given food fit for human consumption. Unless our minimal demands are met, we will not retreat even if it means death. [2]

Japanese longshoreman being arrested during 1932 demonstration.

This same theme was repeated throughout Japan in numerous strikes and labor disputes before the war and continued to be an underlying concern for the labor movement after World War II as well. [3]

Much of the cultural heritage that supposedly shapes Japanese labor-management relations is also a contrived heritage, deliberately resurrected and cultivated by Japan's ruling elite during the modern era. The Shinto perception of the Japanese nation as one big family under the benevolent rule of the emperor, a concept that bears a close and disturbing resemblance to "Japan, Inc." today, was fabricated from ancient records in the late 19th century to justify government absolutism. Japanese businessmen during the 1890s wrote endlessly about the "beautiful traditions" of Japan in which boss and employee, calling one another father and child respectively, shared the bonds of harmonious kinship. Appealing to cultural nationalism, they argued that these traditions would be destroyed by such Western evils as labor legislation and trade unionism. "Neotraditionalism" of this type was used not only by the Japanese bourgeoisie, but by ruling elites throughout the world. Mussolini, for example, evoked the glories



Demonstration led by Yūaiki labor organization opposing the government's chosen delegate to the First International Labor Conference, 1919.

of ancient Rome as part of the fascist tradition.

This kind of contrived neotraditionalism presented serious obstacles to the struggling labor movement. We can only imagine the kind of turmoil that the young women strikers of Yamaichi must have felt when they decided to confront the force of cultural, social and legal authority in Japan. That women, who were the most oppressed victims of the "beautiful traditions" of Japan, often rose to the forefront of strikes and labor disputes clearly contradicts the notion that modern Japanese labor practices are the product of an old heritage of cooperation and benevolence. The final declaration of the strikers is a poignant indictment of the hypocrisy of Japanese business paternalism:

> We realize more than ever that, in order to improve the miserable conditions in the factory and create a situation in which we can live like decent human beings, we have nothing to depend on but our own efforts. Were our requests so extreme as to necessitate our persecution with all the power available (to the owners)? Did the

The Japanese working class has a militant, progressive history.

minimal requests that we, who reel silk day and night, asked for make it necessary for the capitalists and the government authorities to beat us down the way they did? . . . We weep at what happened because we feel acutely the hypocrisy of our society. The Japanese spirit of chivalry, which calls for the castigation of the strong and assistance to the weak, is now dead in Okaya (city). We will not succumb to the forces of power and money. We will continue to fight without despair and without rest until the human rights of the workers are won. We will not give up hope, because we believe that in the end we will prevail. [4]

Modern Japanese labor practices are not the product of a heritage of cooperation and benevolence.

As for celebrated Japanese "paternalism," the words of a worker at the Kanegafuchi Textile Company, one of the largest prewar textile firms and considered a model company in 1930, require no elaboration:

> . . .What is paternalism? Does it mean paying the workers' funeral expenses? Does it mean treating the workers to frequent movies? Does it mean providing us with cheap company housing? Does it mean imposing strenuous work on the female workers? Does it mean turning them into tubercular victims and sending them, only reluctantly, to the sanitarium? When the female workers, who have worked for many years to the point of endangering their lives, are released from their jobs, they are given a pittance as severance pay, but when the president of the company retires, he is given a retirement payment of three million yen. Ah! Three million yen! When there is a surplus of manpower, the lower-level factory workers who have to survive from hand to mouth each day are fired, while the higher-ups who loaf around with their hands behind their backs are kept on at the plants, doing nothing. Is this what is called paternalism? [5]

The myth of the subservient Japanese worker and the paternalistic Japanese bourgeoisie thus collapses before the words of the workers themselves, spoken and written more than 50 years ago. Japanese working people have a long and proud history of class struggle.

The state and the Japanese working class movement

The courage of the Japanese workers is all the more remarkable when we consider the political environment in which their movement was forged. From the beginning of their movement, Japanese workers faced a violently repressive government. Before World War II, Japanese workers never had the advantages of organizing in a bourgeois democracy as in the United States or Western Europe. The history of their political struggle warrants some consideration.

The first trade union was established by Tokyo rickshaw men in 1883 who linked their economic demands to the political struggle for democracy. Unionization saw a big increase during the late 1890s. In response, the Diet (the Japanese parliament) in 1900 banned trade unions and prohibited the publication of translations of such "subversive" Western writings as those of Marx and Engels. Growing labor unrest, reaching a peak in 1907, led to stepped-up repression. In 1910 a "High Treason Trial," in which 24 socialists and labor leaders

Japanese workers never had the advantages of organizing in a bourgeois democracy as in the U.S.

Arrest of participants in a protest meeting against the Peace Preservation Law, 1925. The law suppressed labor and left-wing organizations and civil liberties.

were sentenced to death under trumped-up charges of plotting to assassinate the emperor, was conducted as a warning to all would-be organizers.

The movement, nonetheless, grew. The Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 gave the working class struggle a new direction and source of inspiration: working people could become masters of society themselves. Five years later, in 1922, the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) was formally organized. The JCP played an important part in the growth of the labor movement throughout the 1920s and was the most consistent voice against Japanese aggression in China. A "roundup" in 1933 of leaders who had previously escaped police nets, however, effectively silenced the party. Many members survived underground; others went into exile in China. They later resurfaced after the war to lead the great upsurge of the democratic and working class movements of the late 1940s.

A demonstration by Osaka steel factory workers, 1921.

National labor federations first made an appearance during the early 1920s, the two most important of which were the moderate, social democratic-leaning Sodomei and the communist-led Hyogikai. The Japanese government fostered divisions between these groups by selective repression. The most severe and persistent measures were taken against the communist-led sector of the movement, which strengthened the moderate Sodomei. Prewar membership in unions never rose higher than eight percent of the industrial work force, but in view of the political conditions of the times, this figure was impressive. In some strategic industries, such as machine-building, the unionized proportion of workers was as high as 50 percent.

In absolute terms, however, the prewar labor movement was not politically strong. With the drift towards fascism during the late 1920s, the moderate sectors of the labor movement caved in to the pressure of the right, raising only economic demands and displaying their nationalistic credentials. The JCP, the left-wing unions, and a handful of sincere and dedicated democrats protested Japan's invasion of China in 1931. In Japan of the late 1920s and early 1930s, condemn-

ing aggression on the Asian continent was even more unpopular than protesting U.S. activities during the Iranian hostage crisis, the invasion of Grenada, or the U.S. attack against Libya. Many liberals rationalized or looked the other way. The Japanese militarists brutally squashed domestic opposition to the war-makers during the war years.

The latent strength and political consciousness of the Japanese proletariat manifested itself in full bloom during the early years of post-surrender Japan. Released from more than half a century of authoritarian rule with the defeat of the fascists, the Japanese people expressed their desire for democracy with unprecedented vitality. Within a single year, the trade union movement grew tenfold, from its prewar peak of less than 500,000 members to more than five million in 1946.

Moreover, the labor movement began engaging in extensive political activities, demanding major political and social reforms. The militant, communist-led Sanbetsu Congress, with 1.5 million members, played a particularly active role in calling for a new system of guaranteed wages and job security in response to the near-starvation conditions confronting a large sector of the Japanese people. War had destroyed much of the productive capacity of the country, and the bourgeoisie was slow and reluctant to rebuild without guarantees of adequate returns on their investments.

In the early postwar years, the Japanese trade union movement grew tenfold and began engaging in extensive political activities.

As a response to these conditions, Japanese workers began taking things into their own hands by seizing control of factories and running them on their own. The first large-scale takeover occurred at the *Yomiuri Newspaper*, which is still one of Japan's leading papers today. The initial reason for the seizure was to oust the publisher, who had been a supporter of right-wing policies and a member of the fascist Imperial Rule Assistance Association during the war. Workers succeeded in maintaining control for quite some time, and the publisher was imprisoned. Hundreds of other takeovers occurred in 1946 and 1947, organized by the newly revived unions. In January 1947, for example, workers at the Japan Steel Tube Company's Tsurumi factory took over the plant after management rejected their demands for union recognition, higher wages, and no layoffs without union agreement. This takeover

tactic became known as "production control."[6]

The militant and radical activities of the new labor movement, particularly the "production control" tactic and the growing political influence wielded by communists, alarmed U.S. occupation authorities under Gen. Douglas MacArthur. The occupation command, known as SCAP (Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers), had initiated reforms in Japan in the hope of remolding the defeated country in a Western democratic image. Communists then surfaced in the factories, in schools, universities, and even in government service, and workers were taking control of production. Coupled with the victory of the Chinese communists on the mainland, the events led SCAP to reverse its "democratization" policies and, in 1950, launch a full-scale "Red Purge." Communist-led unions were infiltrated and disrupted, and a national general strike called by the Sanbetsu Congress was outlawed. Even more seriously, SCAP began systematically rehabilitating reactionary individuals and institutions that had dominated Japan before and during the war.

U.S. General Douglas MacArthur and Japanese Emperor Hirohito.

Severe restrictions were imposed on political activity. One government official remarked that in 1948 it was more difficult to hold a public meeting than under the fascists. Even house-to-house electoral canvassing was banned.[7] In 1949 the arch-conservative Shigeru Yoshida, the SCAP-backed candidate, became premier and launched a vigorously anti-union campaign. Yoshida, in spite of efforts by SCAP and the Japanese right to clean up his record, was a well-known former expansionist.

The rehabilitation of prewar leaders, parties and corporations was thoroughgoing. The renamed Liberal and Democratic parties which began to dominate Japanese politics through the support of SCAP were the direct descendants of the parties that had presided over the mounting aggression against China during the 1920s. These two parties merged in the 1950s to become the Liberal-Democratic Party, which continues to hold power in the so-called "one-party democracy" of today. The prewar monopolies, known as *zaibatsu*, had been broken up by SCAP, but were now reconstituted. Companies

Japanese unionists battle police in 1958 "spring struggle" over wages.

like Nissan, one of the most notorious of the war profiteers which had grown during the war through the exploitation of Chinese workers and natural resources in Manchuria (Nissan was actually named "Manchuria Industrial Corporation" during the war), also made a comeback.

SCAP policies, along with the renewed strength of the Japanese right, effectively put an end to the working class upsurge. The purges destroyed Sanbetsu, and hundreds of thousands of worker-activists were fired. SCAP, together with Premier Yoshida and the Employers' Federation (Nikkeiren), encouraged the formation of a new union federation known as Sohyo. As Sohyo's president himself admitted in a letter to top U.S. labor bureaucrat George Meany of the AFL-CIO, "The history of the founding of Sohyo is closely connected with the fight against the domination of Japanese trade unions by the Communist Party." [8]

The militant and radical activities of the Japanese labor movement alarmed U.S. occupation authorities.

Japanese labor after U.S. occupation

The Red Purge and the destruction of Sanbetsu, though, did not signal a complete collapse of the labor

movement. Communist-led unions remained active in the factories as well as national politics, often working within Sohyo. Sohyo itself built a strong base among the highly organized public sector workers — who, unlike their counterparts in the private sector, worked in industries dominated by a single employer, the state. Public employees' unions like Kokuro, which organized the Japanese National Railways, developed a tradition of militant economic struggle while taking an active and progressive political stance. Since public employees are barred by law from striking in Japan, Kokuro's economic demands frequently led it into direct defiance of government authority.

Concessions to the minority of unionized workers in Japan were at the expense of the large majority of unorganized lower stratum workers.

Sohyo's leaders were politically tied to the Japanese Socialist Party (JSP). Despite its anti-communist roots, the organization would emerge as a leading force in Japan's anti-imperialist, anti-militarist movement. In 1959, when right-wing Premier Nobusuke Kishi agreed to continued U.S. occupation of Okinawa and other major concessions to the U.S. military, thousands of Sohyo members joined radical students in taking to the streets. They succeeded in forcing Kishi's resignation. Later, during the Viet Nam War, Kokuro led strikes which blocked railroad shipments of U.S. military supplies and hardware to the Saigon regime.

But the labor movement in private industry was nowhere near as strong, militant, or politically progressive. The Red Purge brought the postwar organizing drives to an abrupt halt before they had had a chance to establish unions on an industry-wide basis, as existed in the public sector. Instead, there were separate unions for each employer, sometimes bound together in loose and ineffectual federations.

Purged of their left-wing leadership, these unions generally fell into the hands of careerist officials who, bargaining with a single company rather than an entire industry, were particularly inclined to collaborate with management. They tended to see company profits as the key to economic gains for workers. Many of them, not sharing the liberal politics of Sohyo, split off in 1964 to form Domei, a more conservative federation based mainly in textiles, garment, chemicals, auto and steel. In 1985 Domei had 2.2 million members. Sohyo had 4.5 million, 60 percent of them in the public sector.

As the character of the organized labor movement changed, so did the stance of the employers. During the postwar strike wave, the employers' association, Nikkeiren, had served as a general headquarters for the employers' anti-union offensive. In the 1950s, however, the *zaibatsu* increasingly promoted an ideology of labor-management cooperation. Japan is of necessity an export-oriented economy; lacking the national resources to be self-sufficient, it relies on international trade to sustain itself. The *zaibatsu* saw "labor peace" as essential to their efforts to capture a big share of the world market, and sought to enlist the active support of union leadership.

Workers solder TV components at giant Matsushita factory near Osaka.

What resulted was a more extreme version of the "deal" that was struck between monopoly capitalists and top union officials in the United States during this same period. The demands of workers in the monopolized industries for job security and a higher standard of living were met. In return, management got compliant union leaders, a stable work force and steadily rising productivity. The concessions to the minority of unionized, monopoly-sector workers were accomplished at the expense of the large majority of unorganized lower strata workers. Providing the necessary foundation for the whole arrangement in Japan was an economic boom which began in 1960 and saw a 10 to 15 percent annual increase in economic growth over the next 13 years.

The *zaibatsu* sought to bind workers to the company with guarantees of lifetime employment and a wage system based entirely on seniority. Once on the company payroll, a worker was encouraged to stay there for the rest of his or her working life. Any improvement in his or her living standards would be the result of the company's system of promotions and regular pay increases, rather than one's own ability to use one's skills and experience to find better employment elsewhere. In fact, Japanese corporations are very reluctant to hire workers over 30, so older workers who try to change jobs run a serious risk.

Economists refer to this system of regular promo-

tions within a framework of long-term employment by a single employer as an "internal labor market." It was actually pioneered by large corporations in the United States, where companies like U.S. Steel and General Electric, anxious to cut costs by reducing worker turnover, developed elaborate "job ladders" for their workers during the 1920s. Their method has been widely emulated by large corporations throughout the capitalist world. But Japanese employers took it one step farther by giving their employees an outright promise that they would never be laid off. This feature of the Japanese labor relations system is often cited as the secret of worker-management cooperation which supposedly prevails in Japanese factories.

In truth, the demand for labor in Japan, as in all capitalist countries, is subject to sharp fluctuations. In slow times, Japanese employers avoid laying off their career employees by dismissing their temporary workers and by contracting out much work to small, low-wage, non-union companies whose workers, like the "temporaries," enjoy no job security whatsoever. It is estimated that from 16 to 25 percent, at most, of all Japanese workers are protected by lifetime employment.[9]

Japanese shoemaker.
Photo: Akira Imai

The existence of a "second-string" group of industries, where poor conditions, low wages and high turnover among firms are the rule, is essential to the functioning of Japanese capitalism. These subcontractors currently employ about 50 percent of Japan's industrial work force. They are forced to accept whatever terms are offered by the *zaibatsu*, and this often means the intensification of exploitation of their workers. Subcontracting allows the big companies to pass many of the costs and risks of their operations on to second-string firms; some of the most widely admired aspects of Japanese production methodology are nothing more than an application of this age-old business strategy.

The so-called "just-in-time" production and delivery system is a case in point. U.S. manufacturers often remark with envy on the ability of Japanese companies to maintain very low inventories while meeting orders

promptly through the careful timing of production schedules. Low inventories tie up less capital. Actually, part of the reason why the "just-in-time" system works is because the subcontractors are forced to stockpile inventories of parts and subassemblies from which the big companies can draw at will. It is significant that the "just-in-time" system is being adopted in this country by corporations like General Motors, which use the subcontracting process to avoid the terms of their union contracts as well as shift the burdens of inventory stockpiling onto smaller companies.

Temporary workers in Japan have traditionally been impoverished farmers who migrated to the industrial centers to earn extra money during the months that precede the harvest. But today, according to government figures, 80 to 90 percent of the temporary workers in Japan are women, the majority of them over the age of 35. Women make up half the factory work force and 30 percent of the work force overall. As temporary workers they are not protected by union contracts or government labor regulations. As women, their status in the labor market is in large degree dictated by

"Second string" industries with poor conditions, low wages and high turnover are essential to the functioning of Japanese capitalism.

Workers assembling cameras on the line at Canon.

women's oppression, which is arguably more severe than anywhere else in the industrialized world. With little or no access to child care facilities, working mothers find their range of options on the labor market reduced to the lowest-paying temporary jobs. Their situation scarcely improves when the children are grown: "The system of basing the wages of permanent employees on seniority within the company rather than experience or skills means that a 35-year-old woman who starts work for a new employer may have to accept the same wage as an 18-year-old high school graduate." [10]

The ruthless exploitation of these lower strata workers has given large employers the resources necessary to provide a measure of job security and higher income for workers in the "internal labor market." But the "internal labor market" system extracts a stiff price from its own workers as well. A feature of the system is constant forced overtime, imposed by management for the same reason they hire large numbers of "temporaries": to avoid taking on more lifetime workers when the demand for labor is up. This overtime is imposed over a standard workweek of 48 hours — even today, when the national unemployment rate has reached new highs. A requisite of the lifetime employment system is getting the most possible work out of the fewest possible number of "lifetime employees."

A recent union poll showed that a large majority of workers in Japan do not feel their interests are advanced through worker participation in management.

Another problem is the continual undermining of the integrity of the union. Lifetime employment, the seniority-based wage and company-wide, rather than industry-wide, unions all serve to weaken worker mobility and create a situation where a worker takes on real risks if he defies the company. Union officials, as is frequently the case where unions have little independent power, tend to view their positions as avenues of individual advancement, often through promotion into management. The hallmark of Japan's "labor-management cooperation" system is the incorporation of many union officials into management's decision-making process.

Much has been written in the United States about how the "team system" and "quality circles" in Japanese factories give workers on the shop floor a direct voice in the production process. Satoshi Kamata, a Japanese journalist who spent six months on the line at Toyota

as a temporary worker, paints a very different picture:

> During lunch break the team chief tells us that the line will run an extra hour in order to increase output. . . . Workers on both shifts are ordered to work together during that hour. We object loudly. Management did it once before. . . . We were forced to crowd together while we worked at top speed. It was really dangerous, and the electric tools hanging overhead sometimes hit us on the head.
>
> "They're putting production before safety," someone says.
>
> "That's suicide!"
>
> "Not suicide," says one, laughing. "Murder!"
>
> "Damn! how can two shifts fit on one line?"
>
> "If that impactor hits your head, you're going to see stars."
>
> The team chief keeps silent through it all, but as soon as we start to work, he walks up and down the line holding a notice written on a piece of cardboard: "The line will run for one hour with two shifts working together in order to produce 760 units." The noise in the workshop is so loud no one can hear him. . . .
>
> In order to "increase safety," it has been decided that for the next three months we must hold a ten-minute Safety First meeting every day before the line starts. . . . The "meeting" consists of chanting in chorus the safety slogan that the team chief reads to us. . . . We are embarrassed. Some say, "We aren't schoolboys." But somehow we all end up chanting the slogan in unison . . . until he reaches the part that states, "Let's work with plenty of time and energy in reserve." He skips this part, saying, "That's impossible, since we're always pressed for time . . . aren't we?" [11]

Not surprisingly, a recent union poll showed that a large majority of rank and file workers in Japan do not feel their interests are significantly advanced through worker participation in management. [12]

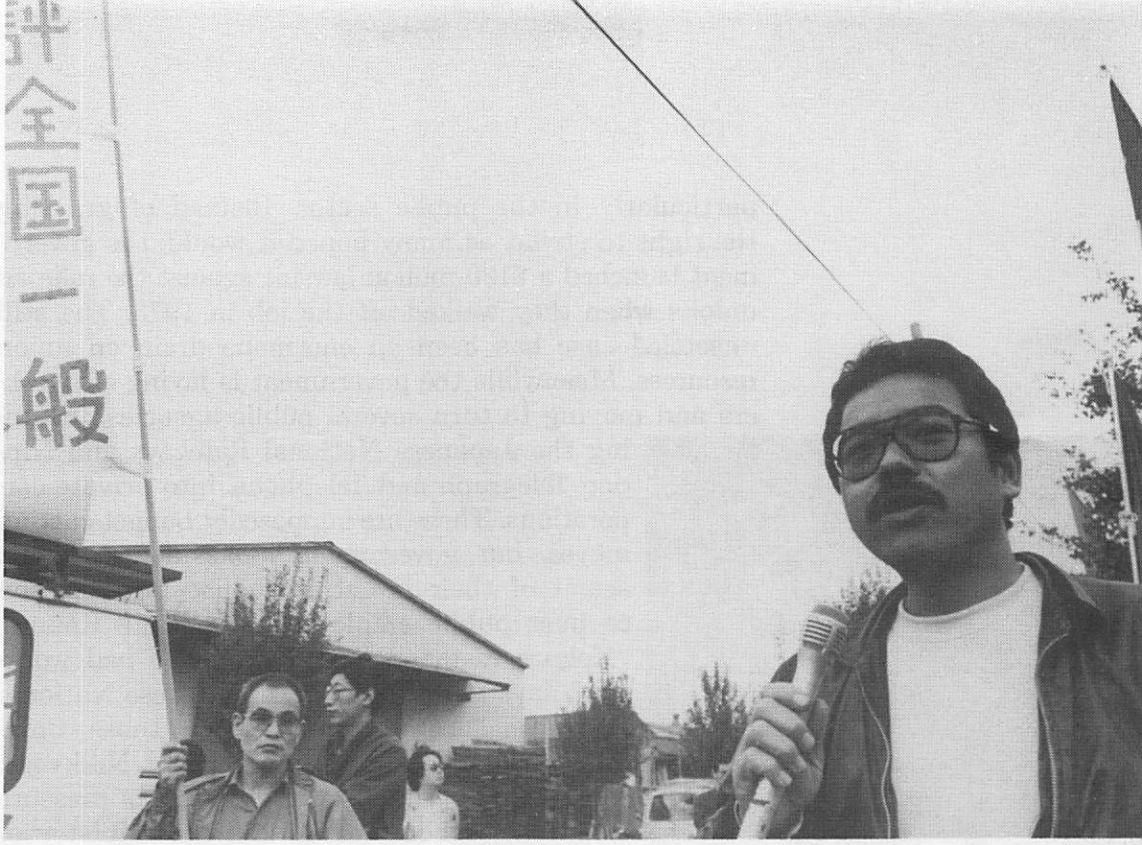
Perhaps the most serious contradiction in the postwar Japanese labor-management system is that it presupposes an expanding economy, something which is now

threatened by changing worldwide economic conditions. The system was the product of a particular set of historical circumstances where a devastated postwar economy recovered rapidly and continued a high rate of growth. Given such development, Japanese capitalists were willing to foot the bill for social demands of guaranteed employment and seniority wage increases. Today, as competition in international markets intensifies, and as Western countries begin erecting stronger trade barriers, Japan's great "engine of growth" has begun losing steam.

A shortage of quality housing is a major problem for Japanese workers.

A turning point was the early 1970s, when the oil crisis sent prices soaring 20 percent and brought economic growth to a standstill. Between 1972 and 1981, 600,000 manufacturing jobs were lost in Japan. An aging population — 40 percent of Japan's work force is now over 45 — has put further burdens on the lifetime employment system. In 1976, as a cost-cutting measure, Kanebo, one of Japan's largest textile producers, stopped granting seniority pay increases to workers over 45. Other companies followed suit, and today the strict seniority-based wage has been abandoned for a majority of workers in companies of over 1,000 employees. Companies are putting increasing pressure on their older workers to retire early, even though few other jobs are available to older workers and they do not qualify for social security until they are 60. (The government, to reduce the cost of the social security system, is meanwhile pressing to raise the eligibility age to 65.) Finally, subcontracting and the use of temporary workers are on the rise, even as the rate of bankruptcy among subcontractors and other small employers reaches record levels.

The crisis is fueled by the trade and currency wars now raging between Japan and the United States. The drastic devaluation of the dollar relative to the Japanese yen over the past few years has caused Japan's domestic production costs to rise by 40 percent since September 1985. Japanese corporations are responding to the economic crisis as their U.S. counterparts have done, by moving production overseas. By 1991, 450,000 Japanese



Nissan workers struggling against a lockout by management. Photo: Akira Imai

manufacturing jobs are expected to have "run away" to other countries. The projected domestic unemployment rate for that year is 4.2 percent, nearly three times what it was in 1980.

As favorable economic conditions have become a thing of the past, so has the pretense of capitalist accommodation of organized labor. Since 1974, a high-water mark for Japanese labor militancy, employers and government have met workers' demands with increased repression.

Japanese corporations are also "running away."

Nearly 12 million workers were involved in a series of nationwide strikes that year which paralyzed the nation's railroads, grounded its airlines, closed schools, stopped mail delivery and shut down many factories. The strikes were prompted by runaway inflation which had cut deeply into workers' living standards without reducing capitalist profits. They succeeded in winning wage increases that averaged 30 percent, increased welfare payments for the poor, and a government promise to consider granting public employees the right to strike.

Since then, organized labor has been under attack,

particularly in the public sector. Instead of granting the right to strike, as many hoped it would, the government launched a $120 million lawsuit against the railroad unions when they walked off the job in 1975. The still unsettled case has been an enormous drain on union resources. Meanwhile the government is laying off workers and moving to turn several public agencies, including the Japanese National Railways and Nippon Telegraph and Telephone, into private corporations. These are supposedly budget-cutting moves, but government spokesmen make no secret of their intention to use privatization to bust public employee unions like Kokuro. "Kokuro members just tend to be bad workers," says an official of the Japanese National Railways. "An agreement with those Communists and leftists is unlikely."[13] Nikkyoso, the teachers' union, is under similar pressure from local school boards and the Ministry of Education.

Workers in the Kokuro union protest plans to turn Japanese National Railways into a private corporation.

There is no question that Japanese unions have been gravely weakened by these attacks, just as their U.S. counterparts have been weakened by similar attacks. They have answered with calls for a shorter workweek, higher wages and increased domestic consumption to lessen Japan's dependency on overseas markets. Clearly, to suggest that class cooperation has replaced class struggle in Japan is nonsense. It was not true during the heyday of the "lifetime employment" system and it is certainly not true today.

Implications of the Japanese experience for the U.S. working class

It is ironic that the Japanese labor-management system is being promoted by U.S capitalists precisely when it is being abandoned in Japan. On one level this reflects the distorted version of the "Japanese system" being promoted in this country. In Japan, implementation of quality circles, the "team system" and union participation in management were part of a package which included lifetime job security and steadily increasing wages for a minority of workers. Where they have been implemented in the United States, they have

Protesting plant closures and attacks on unions. Photo: Akira Imai

invariably gone hand in hand with wage concessions and drastic reductions in the work force. In neither country do they represent a concession to labor. In Japan, they were part of the price management extracted for granting workers' economic demands; in the United States they reflect management's ability to dictate terms to workers at a time when mass layoffs and plant shutdowns have decimated union strength. In both countries their overall impact has been to weaken the unions as an independent vehicle for advancing workers' interests.

More significantly, in neither country has labor-management cooperation been able to withstand the relentless pressure to increase production and profits which characterizes all enterprises in a capitalist economy.

The experience of General Motors workers in Fremont, California, is instructive. In 1982 GM closed its Fremont plant, which at its peak production employed 7,000 workers. Three years later, in what was hailed as a major victory by top leaders of the United Auto Workers, the plant was reopened as a GM-Toyota joint

venture. The UAW was given bargaining rights for the 2,000-odd workers who were hired on at the new plant, most of whom had worked there before it closed. The union contract in the plant was consciously patterned after the Japanese labor-management system. In place of standard UAW contract provisions spelling out detailed work rules and allowing workers to bid for job assignments on a seniority basis, workers were assigned to production teams which management could shift around the plant at will. In place of the standard UAW grievance process, the teams were encouraged to work out problems themselves through group discussion.

Inside the New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc., plant in Fremont, California, a joint venture between General Motors and Toyota.

At first the workers in the plant were delighted to have their jobs back and hopeful about the reorganization of production. Many who had been stuck on the worst jobs under the old management system welcomed the opportunity to try other job assignments and vary their routine. They were hopeful, too, that management would pay more attention to their problems and suggestions than in the past.

They soon learned that the "team system" gave them no control over what jobs they would do — and while some workers benefited from flexible job assignments, the majority did not. They found, in the words of one worker, that the union's presence on the shop floor had become merely "window dressing" and that discussions within the work team were a poor substitute for being able to file a grievance or otherwise confront management. If there was a condition that needed changing, the worker said, "The team has to come up with a solution. But since there's basically nothing we can do, we end up fighting among ourselves."

These words carry echoes of Satoshi Kamata's description of a typical team meeting at Toyota's main plant in Japan:

> Once again, the topic of the meeting is "Safety." Sugimoto, who's about 22, says, "We can't stand up straight after ten hours on our legs. It's natural there are accidents when we

> try to do that work when we're exhausted." ... someone hoots at the team leader, "Write down what he said just now, will you?" But generally there's an air of resignation. Workers feel that nothing they say will reach the top.[14]

Most recent reports from the Fremont plant suggest that as the speed of the production line has increased (its output per worker is now 50 percent higher than most U.S. plants), worker dissatisfaction with the team system has increased along with it. The more output is demanded of workers, the less control they feel over what is happening to them on the job.[15] This same point is made repeatedly by Kamata: the speedup he describes shapes every other aspect of life on the production line at Toyota. In the absence of a union which has the power and will to challenge the situation, workers count for nothing in management's eyes.

Workers found the union's presence on the shop floor had become merely "window dressing." Discussions in the work team were a poor substitute for being able to file a grievance.

There is a more general lesson to be drawn from the experience of the Japanese labor movement. U.S. union leaders, seeking to explain the competitive advantage enjoyed by Japanese capitalists and justify import controls, sometimes refer to Japanese unions as "company unions," or as the products of a backward, paternalist cultural tradition. The latter characterization, as we have seen, is racist as well as distorted. But the former is equally misleading, for it obscures the essential similarities in the development of unions under monopoly capitalism in this country and in Japan.

To be sure, each country has its own cultural traditions and its own particular historical conditions which determine the shape of the working class movement. We cannot ignore the role of the United States in shaping Japanese labor history: if the overwhelming power of U.S. imperialism had not been brought to bear against the labor and democratic movements in Japan in the late 1940s and early 1950s, Japan would be a very different country today.

But once we have looked at the postwar development of the Japanese labor movement objectively, we cannot help but be struck by what it has in common with U.S. trade unionism during the same period. In both countries, the onset of the Cold War and a postwar economic boom saw the expulsion of left-wing leader-

ship from the trade unions as the price of a temporary labor-management "detente." In both countries, employers sought to use compliant union leadership to insure labor peace and uninterrupted production, in return for higher wages and job security for an organized minority of the working class. In both countries, these economic gains for the organized minority went hand in hand with the maintenance of a "dual labor market" where unorganized lower strata workers, excluded from the benefits of the labor-management detente, suffered intense exploitation. In Japan, the two-tiered structure of industry, combined with the special exploitation of women, provided such a mechanism. In the United States, national oppression serves the same purpose, the "Sunbelt strategy" being the latest manifestation of U.S. capitalists' attempt to perpetuate a dual economy.

In both countries, too, the entire postwar pattern of labor-management relations is breaking down under pressure of a global capitalist crisis.

Workers in this country have reasons of their own to "learn from Japan." Understanding the experiences of Japanese workers can help demystify the propaganda about "Japan, Inc." and provide a defense against efforts to transplant the worst features of the Japanese labor system to the U.S. But U.S. workers can also see their own experiences mirrored in those of Japanese workers, and so better understand the nature of the system they are up against in this country. Despite the differences in history and culture, the workers of both countries face similar types of struggle ahead. □

Despite differences in history and culture, workers in Japan and the U.S. face similar struggles ahead.

Notes

[1] John Halliday, *A Political History of Japanese Capitalism*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975), p. 67.

[2] Mikiso Hane, *Peasants, Rebels and Outcasts*, (New York: Pantheon, 1982), p. 196.

[3] Andrew Gordon, *The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japan*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 207.

[4] Hane, p. 200.

[5] Ibid., p. 203.

[6] Gordon, p. 345.

[7] Halliday, p. 216.

[8] Ibid, p. 220.

[9] "Japanese Trade Unionism in a Changing Environment," *International Social Science Journal*, #100, 1984; "The Disposable Employee is Becoming a Fact of Corporate Life," *Business Week*, December 15, 1986, p. 52-56.

[10] "Part-timers are the second secret weapon," *Far Eastern Economic Review*, December 19, 1985, p. 60.

[11] Satashi Kamata, *Japan in the Passing Lane*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982), p. 57-59.

[12] "Japanese Trade Unionism in a Changing Environment," *International Social Science Journal* #100, 1984.

[13] "Bitter Days for Japanese Unions," *New York Times*, January 14, 1987; Fujii Shozo, "Labor Movement at the Crossroads," *Japan Quarterly*, July-September 1986.

[14] Kamata, p. 37.

[15] "The intercultural honeymoon ends," *San Jose Mercury News*, February 8, 1987.

Photo: Akira Imai

President Reagan

Japan's Prime Minister Nakasone

First "Star Wars" – Now "Trade Wars"

Some comments on United States trade policy

Peter Shapiro

The U.S. trade deficit — $170 billion in 1986 — is at the top of the news these days and promises to be one of the key issues in the 1988 presidential election. The *Washington Post* recently compared the shock over the mounting deficit to the reaction to the Soviet Union's launching of Sputnik in the late 1950s. Attention to trade will be felt everywhere, from Washington politics to union halls to the school classroom.

In the six years Reagan has been in office, the United States has gone from having a small trade surplus to having the world's biggest trade deficit (value of imports exceeding value of exports). The deficit is a sign of U.S. capitalism in deep trouble, and policy-makers are deeply divided about what to do. They are concerned, not only for preserving their own profits, but for managing the growing domestic political unrest which the economic crisis has spawned. Reagan's sudden imposition of a 100% tax on selected Japanese electronics

Peter Shapiro is a labor writer for *Unity* newspaper.

goods in April indicates the strength of the pressures to do something about trade. Reagan had previously opposed new trade barriers.

Democrats are using imports as a major political weapon against the Republican Party. Leading Democrats, some with presidential aspirations like Arizona Governor Bruce Babbit, Sen. Joseph Biden and Rep. Richard Gephardt, are charging that the flood of imports is responsible for falling living standards, high unemployment, and the steady decline of the U.S. manufacturing base. They point out that between 1979 and 1985, the number of manufacturing jobs in this country fell by 2.3 million as U.S. capitalists abandoned their domestic factories and mills, unable to compete with foreign goods.

Vincent Chin, shown here with his sister and fiancee, was murdered by an unemployed autoworker and his stepson, who thought he was Japanese and blamed him for layoffs in the U.S. auto industry.

The top leaders of the AFL-CIO have portrayed import controls as a life-or-death issue for the labor movement. They blame "cheap foreign labor" and "unfair competition" by other countries for much of the hardship U.S. workers have endured over the last ten years. The AFL-CIO leaders have made it their top political priority to fight for strong protectionist legislation, that is, for laws to keep foreign-made goods off the U.S. market. Their arguments for import controls, appealing directly to workers' desire for economic security, are also frequently chauvinist and racist.

I believe the anti-imports offensive is a dangerous development. Stricter trade barriers will actually hurt the working class far more than it will help. Not only are such barriers unlikely to save jobs, but the growing clamor against "foreign competition" creates a political climate where racist scapegoating is an acceptable substitute for real solutions. The Japan-bashing rhetoric of politicians, union officials and big business has helped fuel the shocking upsurge of anti-Asian violence in this country, the growing attacks on immigrant workers, and the increased discrimination and harassment of minorities.

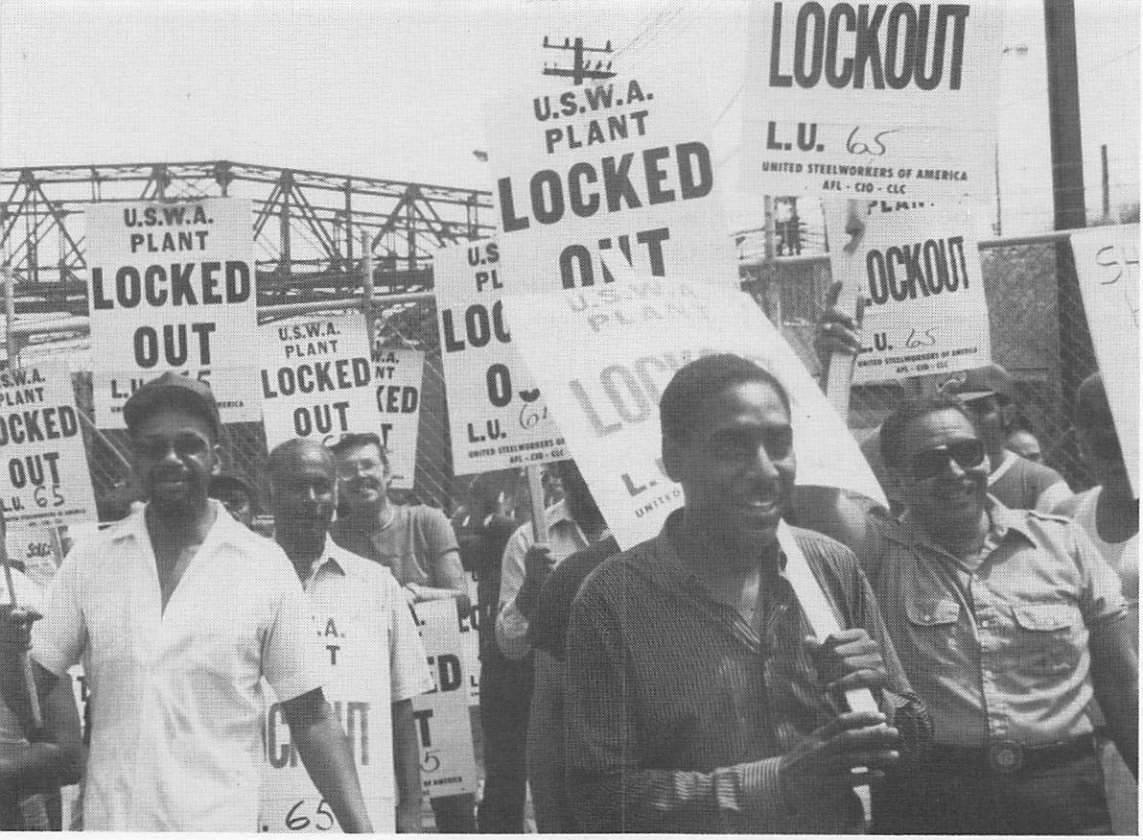
Unfortunately, the left has had a hard time providing leadership on the difficult question of imports. Some on the left support some form of protectionist legisla-

tion, either out of honest confusion or out of a reluctance to buck the prevailing political winds in organized labor. Others have correctly opposed protectionist measures, but their arguments have often been simplistic or too abstract to be convincing.

What we must be clear about is that the issue for working people is *not* imports in themselves or even the trade deficit, but *the continuing high level of unemployment and job insecurity* in the country. Many workers believe that imported goods represent lost U.S. jobs, since work is being done abroad that could be done in our own country. But in reality the two issues can't be linked in that way. Solving the trade imbalance for the capitalists will *not* substantially affect the jobs problem for workers. If we are to make real progress in the fight for job security, we will have to separate the two issues, understand the imports issue for what it is, and make sure it is no longer allowed to divert our struggle for jobs and a decent standard of living.

What follows is a contribution to a continuing discussion, not an attempt to write the last word on the trade question. There is much we still need to learn.

Chauvinist political cartoons in the U.S. press promote an image of an overwhelmingly powerful Japan dominating a "helpless" U.S.



U.S. steel companies have shifted investment away from steel, resulting in the loss of jobs.

But I believe the case against protectionism can be made strongly and, if presented in a clear, concrete way, can win people over even in today's right-wing, chauvinistic political climate. I want to review the causes of the trade deficit, discuss its impact in the political arena, and suggest how we can deal with the uproar over imports in a way that addresses working people's concerns.

Why is the trade deficit so high?

The imports issue really has several separate aspects.

One, perhaps the most important, is the development of the industrial capabilities of other countries — not just Japan and Western Europe, but parts of the third world as well. A second is the increasingly wasteful, unproductive character of U.S. capitalism. A third is the continuing growth of U.S.-based multinational corporations, aided by new technology which makes it relatively easy for them to move their operations overseas. A fourth is the recent wild fluctuations in the value of the dollar, aggravated by Reagan's record budget deficits. A fifth is the deep indebtedness

of third world countries to U.S. banks and third world impoverishment.

1) *Worldwide economic development.* A big reason for the trade crisis is what Marxists call uneven development — the tendency of capitalist countries to develop according to different, and conflicting, timetables. Today, the development of Japan, Western Europe and some third world countries has put an end to unchallenged U.S. domination of the world market. That cannot be restored by trade policies adopted by the U.S. government.

Of all the industrialized nations, only the United States came out of World War II with its industrial capacity intact. The war reduced the mills and factories, railroads and highways of Western Europe and Japan to rubble. This gave U.S. manufacturers a global monopoly which lasted a quarter of a century. But it was only a matter of time before Western Europe and Japan rebuilt their manufacturing base and began to challenge U.S. corporations for shares of the world market. Meanwhile, third world countries such as Brazil and South Korea began building factories of their own. Today Brazil is the capitalist world's fifth-largest steel producer.

Uneven development is a fact of life. By not facing up to it, we risk playing into the hands of our own capitalists. For instance, supporters of stricter import controls often try to explain Japan's emergence as a U.S. trade rival by claiming Japanese capitalists are subsidized by their government, giving them an "unfair advantage" over their U.S. competitors. Friends of the U.S. labor movement should not repeat such arguments. True, Tokyo plays a more active role in the economic planning process than Washington and has hindered some U.S. products from entering the Japanese market. But Pentagon contracts have enabled three U.S. corporations to dominate the world aircraft market, and government subsidies have allowed corporate agribusiness in this country to wield similar control. The U.S. government subsidizes business in countless other ways, too — from tax breaks and handouts to the use of Marines to open up overseas markets. The National Guardsmen who broke up picket lines at Phelps-Dodge and Hormel did as much to bolster the profits of those companies as Japan's economic planners do for Nissan

The issue for working people is not imports themselves, but the continuing high level of unemployment and job insecurity.

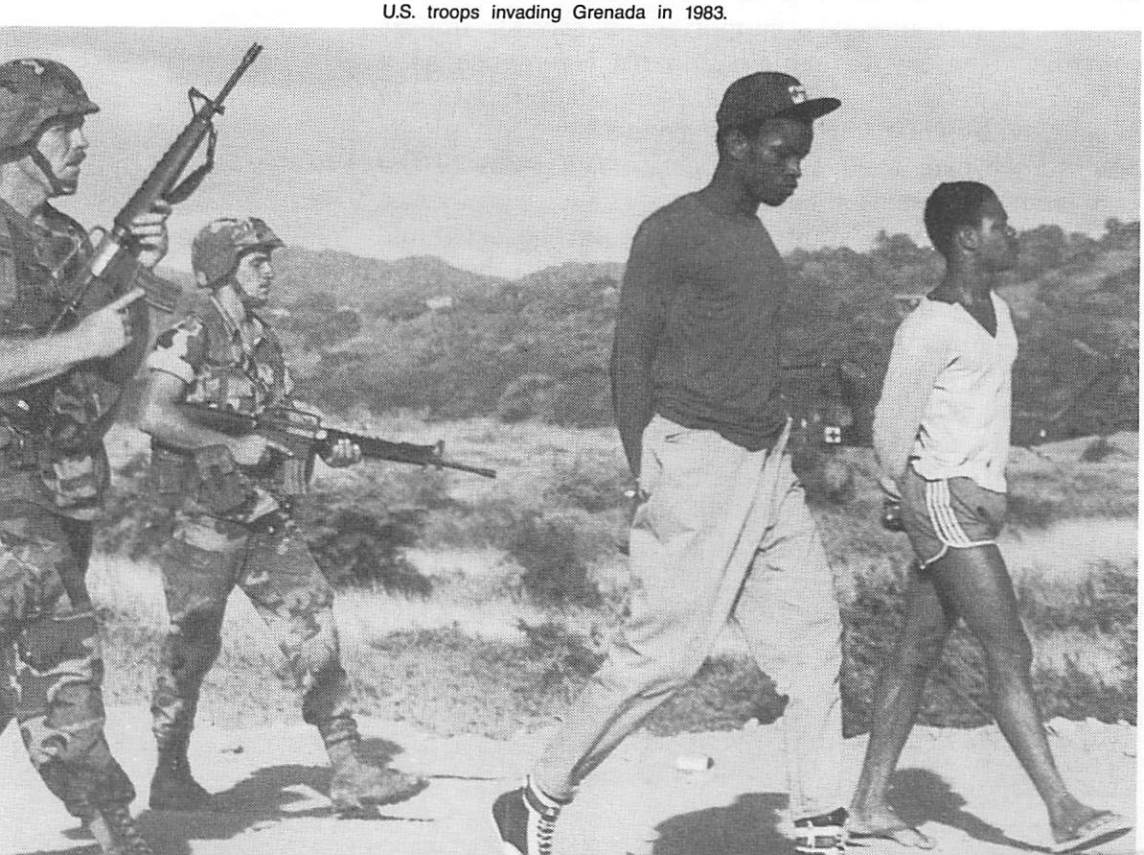
and Mitsubishi. And the U.S. Marines who invaded Grenada in 1983 helped turn the island into a showcase for U.S. corporate investment.

The United States can stop other countries from producing manufactured goods only through military means. Capitalist countries have utilized this extreme measure in the past, and we may see it again someday. The danger is not farfetched considering the burgeoning U.S. military budget and Reagan's militarist foreign policy. Cries for protectionism from foreign competition will directly feed into jingoism, especially against the third world.

2) *An economy built on waste.* Japan's annual trade surplus with the U.S. is now $60 billion, one-third the total U.S. annual trade deficit. Protectionists blame it on "cheap Japanese labor" and "unfair trade practices," which have supposedly closed off the Japanese market to U.S. goods and dumped underpriced Japanese goods on the U.S. market.

But the truth is that labor costs in Japan are not significantly lower than in the U.S. Most business economists admit that even if Japan removed all its

U.S. troops invading Grenada in 1983.



barriers to imports, U.S. exports to Japan would not increase much. And most U.S. consumers have noticed that, if anything, Japanese imports have gotten more expensive in recent years. There must be another reason why our trade deficit with Japan is so big.

In fact, U.S. capitalists aren't giving their Japanese counterparts much competition. Japanese steel mills have state-of-the-art technology, while U.S. mills are run-down and obsolete. Japanese firms dominate world sales of robots and other high-tech products because U.S. corporations never invested much money in them, even though the U.S. first developed robotics. General Motors, hoping to make easy money off government military contracts, sunk half its new investment capital into its electronics and aerospace divisions, while closing down more and more of its auto plants. Its effort to modernize its auto plants was poorly planned and executed. Consumer surveys in the U.S. consistently show that people simply prefer the quality of many imports over U.S.-made goods.

U.S. industry has declined because U.S. capitalists are not using their capital in productive ways. They can make far more money through mergers, buy outs and speculation. LTV Corp., the nation's second largest steel maker, went on a corporate takeover spree, while it drove its steel-making division into bankruptcy. The head of USX, LTV's top domestic competitor, tells reporters, "We're in business to make profits, not steel," as he closes more plants, lays off more workers, and buys more real estate and oil companies.

Reagan's policies substantially contributed to "merger mania" and the decline of the industrial base. His tax law changes favored making the quick buck and speculation. His unbridled expansion of military spending (now $260 billion a year, twice what it was before he took office) has channeled critical resources into unproductive and wasteful defense industries. Funds that could be used to rebuild the economy, create jobs and build useful products are being wasted on nuclear weapons, missiles, tanks and aircraft carriers. The U.S. exports the most sophisticated weapons of destruction but must import basic consumer goods. Anyone concerned with the decline of industry and employment

Demolition of a U.S. steel plant in Youngstown, Ohio.

in the United States must first demand diverting military spending to the civilian economy.

3) *Captive imports and "run-away" capital.* As more and more wealth has become concentrated in their hands, U.S. multinational corporations have intensified their search for new outlets overseas to invest their profits.

The "global reach" of these corporations has been vastly increased by new developments in telecommunications and other information technology. At Ford's River Rouge complex near Detroit, a huge computer terminal controls the speed of the production line in Ford plants all over the world. This kind of advanced technology allows capitalists to set up the most modern manufacturing processes just about anywhere.

U.S. industry has declined because U.S. capitalists do not use their capital in productive ways.

The rise of the "global assembly line" encourages U.S. capitalists to "run away" from their domestic plants and locate their industrial production where labor costs are a fraction of what they are in the U.S. Hence, the growing phenomenon of "captive imports" — goods produced by workers abroad employed by U.S. companies and shipped to the U.S. These imports account for a large share of the U.S. trade deficit. The most blatant

In "run-away" shops just across the border, U.S. corporations pay Mexican workers pennies an hour.

example of this process is the *maquiladoras* along the Mexican border, where U.S. corporations pay pennies an hour to 250,000 Mexican workers, mostly young women, ship finished products across the border, and sell them at a huge gain.

U.S. corporations operate abroad not only through overseas subsidiaries, but through joint venture agreements with foreign capitalists. GM buys Isuzus from Japan and sells them in the U.S. under its own brand name. Caterpillar, which has closed most of its domestic plants, has contracted with Daewoo of South Korea to make the lift trucks it sells here under its own name. Despite what Bob Hope tells us on TV, it's not easy to "buy American" these days. In many cases, neither brand name nor corporate ownership yields a clue to where a product was actually made.

This Toyota-smashing rally helped fan up anti-imports sentiment among U.S. autoworkers.

U.S.-based multinationals are worldwide operations and operate under the legal authority of the U.S. government. However, there are virtually no legal restrictions on their ability to export U.S. jobs or move their capital abroad. In fact, existing tax laws actually encourage them to do so. In contrast, controls on the export of capital are common in other countries. Many of the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe have extensive restrictions on capital to prevent their industries from leaving their countries. Some nations place strict limits on the amount of capital individuals can take out of the country.

Barriers on imports would have little effect on runaways — the capitalists could still close domestic plants, export their capital and market their goods elsewhere in the world.

4) *Unstable currency.* To a large degree, today's huge trade deficit is a direct result of the currency decisions Washington made several years ago. Since 1978, the U.S. government has been tinkering with the money supply in a vain attempt to cure the ills of the economy. With high prices eating into their profits, the monopoly capitalists got both Carter and Reagan to try to curb inflation by limiting the amount of money banks could

Brazil must sell 40% of its steel abroad, much of it to the U.S., to repay its loans from U.S. banks.

loan out. Scarce credit became scarcer still when the federal government started borrowing a record $200 billion a year to pay for Reagan's defense buildup.

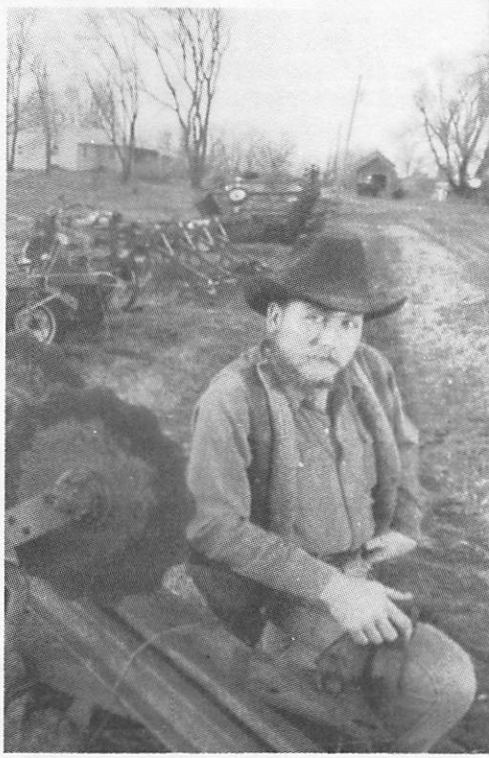
The tight money supply had a dramatic effect on world trade. As dollars became harder to come by, their value relative to other world currencies soared. By 1985, the dollar had risen 40%. This made U.S.-made goods more expensive for overseas customers, and imported goods much cheaper. Labor costs in other countries, already low by U.S. standards, became even lower. More U.S. capitalists "ran away" to set up operations overseas, and more foreign capitalists tried to sell their goods inside the U.S.

Now Washington has reversed itself. Since 1985 it has tried to devalue the dollar to make U.S. exports cheaper. But even though the dollar's value has dropped 40% relative to the Japanese and German currencies in less than two years, the trade balance has not been significantly affected. This is because U.S. corporations, which invested millions in overseas plants while the dollar was strong, are not going to abandon those investments just because its value is falling. "Captive

imports" continue unabated. Also, foreign capitalists who have invested heavily in the U.S. market will not soon abandon their commitments.

Reagan's big business monetary policy of the early 1980s is now coming back to haunt capitalism.

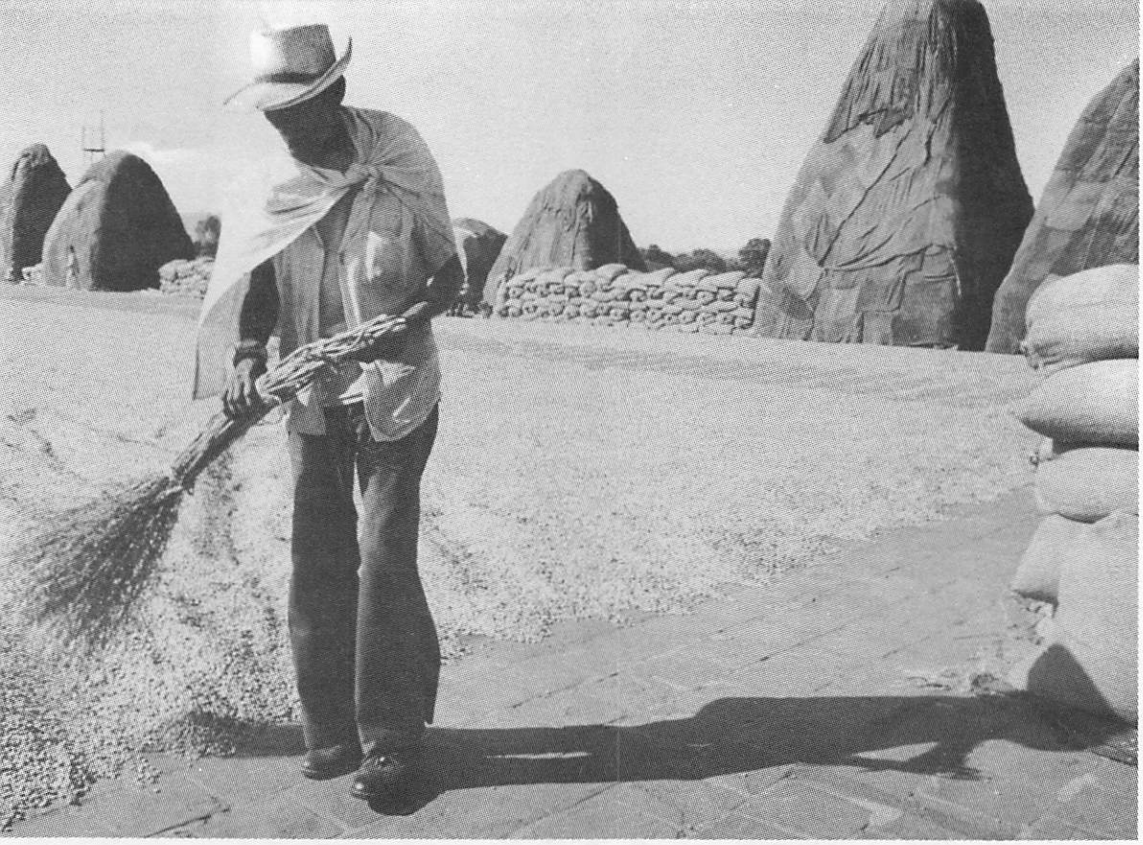
5) *The third world debt crisis.* During the 1970s, Wall Street banks invested heavily in loans to third world countries, which hoped to use the money to develop their own national economies. But in the late 1970s the banks, to protect themselves against inflation, jacked their interest rates up beyond the ability of third world countries to repay them. These countries had to export more and more, just to make enough foreign exchange to pay off the interest on their loans. To keep from defaulting on its debts to Wall Street, Brazil — which desperately needs steel to improve the living standards of its people — must sell 40% of the steel it produces abroad, much of it on a glutted U.S. market.



Kansas farmer shortly before his equipment is auctioned off to pay bills.

If the loan policies of U.S. banks helped create the third world debt crisis, the farm policies of the Reagan administration have made it worse. U.S. farms produce a huge surplus, enough to feed a large percentage of the world's people. This gives the U.S. a decisive influence in the world market, which it has used to drive down prices. When Reagan slashed government price supports for agricultural goods, he ruined thousands of small farmers in this country who could not sell their products at a price which covered their costs. The impact on the third world was even more devastating. Falling farm prices cut deeply into the national income of many third world countries, driving them even further into debt and forcing them to export more to make up for it.

Thus, the exploitation of the third world by U.S. banks and corporations has contributed to the trade imbalance in two ways. On one hand, forced to sell more abroad to pay for their debts, many third world countries have to export more to the U.S. At the same time, their people are too poor to allow them to import much in return.



Many imported goods, such as coffee from the third world, are crucial to the U.S. economy.

The conclusion to be drawn from all this is that the trade crisis is, in reality, *a crisis U.S. capitalism has brought on itself.* It exists not because of insufficient import controls, but is a result of government policies and the character of U.S. big business today. Import controls would not touch the causes of the trade imbalance.

The politics of the trade crisis

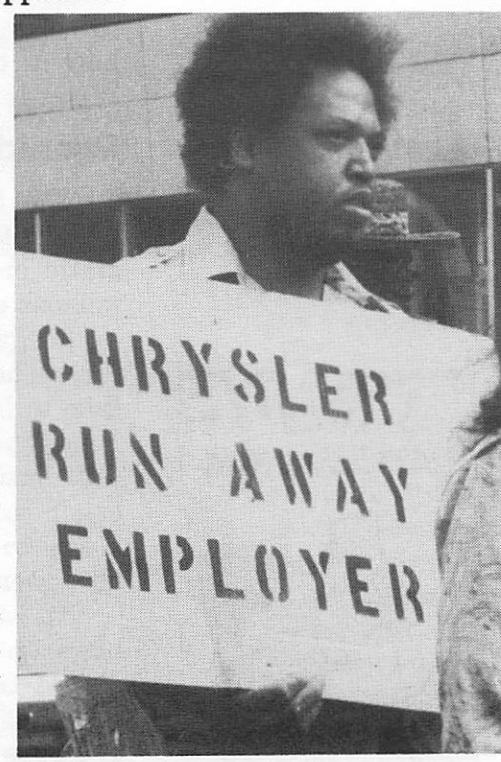
All capitalists try to use government policy to further their own interests, as individuals and as a class. On the issue of trade, however, they are currently having a difficult time deciding just where their collective interests lie.

Most capitalists understand that import controls are risky, because other countries may retaliate and an international trade war could result. This would not be good for business. Capitalists need to be able to sell their goods abroad, and many also depend on imports of raw materials and other goods. If world trade came to a standstill tomorrow, McDonald's would have to stop selling coffee to its customers, the shipping business

would collapse, and defense contractors would not have the strategic metals they need to build their military hardware. And of course, without imported oil, energy costs would go through the roof. For these reasons, most capitalists would be hurt far more than they would be helped by limiting foreign trade.

But trade barriers look very tempting to individual capitalists who are losing business to overseas competitors. With their short-term profits at stake, more of them are breaking ranks. This is why capitalists have such a hard time agreeing on trade policies, and why the issue is being so hotly debated by politicians.

In the auto industry, Chrysler favors restricting imports. GM — whose corporate strategy relies heavily on buying foreign cars and selling them in the U.S. under its own brand name — continues to oppose it. Most garment and textile capitalists favor strict import controls. But designers and retailers, who increasingly dominate the clothing business, oppose them. The staunchest foes of trade barriers are Wall Street financiers, whose stake in many different business concerns increases their chances of getting hurt by a slowdown in world trade.



A few capitalists play both ends against the middle. USX president David Roderick blasts Wall Street and the Reagan administration for financing Brazil's steel industry and allowing it to sell so much steel in the U.S. At the same time, Roderick is cutting deals with overseas steel producers, buying their raw steel for processing in his own domestic finishing mills. In fact, USX has almost stopped making raw steel itself and is trying to force its domestic competitors to stop making it too. That way, the government will eventually have no choice but to let USX buy from abroad. By maintaining a flexible corporate strategy, USX will come out on top no matter how the trade debate is resolved.

But most capitalists don't have the resources to adjust their corporate strategies as easily as USX. Their ranks remain deeply divided, and some strange political alliances have resulted. South Carolina textile

baron Roger Milliken is one of the most violently anti-union employers in the country, a rabid right-winger and staunch Reagan supporter. Yet he has worked closely with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union to oppose Reagan's reluctance to erect new trade barriers.

There is one last factor that has complicated the trade problem. Washington must consider the political ramifications of trade actions against other countries. Reagan has balked at trade sanctions against European nations, for example, since it might encourage even greater resentment against U.S. nuclear weapons and armed forces stationed on the continent. Or take South Korea. The U.S. is allowing Korean imports to flow into the country to keep the pro-U.S. dictatorship afloat. As a consequence, the capitalists, in addition to their respective business interests, are divided over how to define and protect U.S. imperialism's interests overseas.

Presidential politics

The looming 1988 presidential primaries have increased the pressure for stronger import controls. Democratic presidential hopefuls are courting support from millions of workers whose livelihoods have been destroyed by Reaganomics, saying import controls will bring back jobs. There are a host of steps the government could take to help restore workers' living standards and "put America back to work." But most of them would arouse stiff business opposition, something few politicians are eager to risk. The trade issue gives some politicians a way to appeal to workers while retaining the support of powerful elements in the business community.

AFL-CIO cartoons like this incorrectly blame other countries' trade policies for U.S. economic problems.

An obscure congressman named Richard Gephardt hopes to ride the trade issue all the way into the White House. Gephardt's proposal, the most drastic now before Congress, would put mandatory limits on the amount of goods that can be sold in this country by nations which have large trade surpluses with the U.S. The limits would be removed only when the trade surpluses come down.

Some politicians are trying to avoid being dragged onto the anti-imports bandwagon — including not only Reagan, but some Democrats. Their basic outlook is

that the U.S. economy needs a more aggressive U.S. penetration of export markets, not more import controls. They remain confident that U.S. capitalism has enough clout to recover its earlier domination of the world market. Their vision, obviously, is no more progressive than that of Japan-bashers like Gephardt.

AFL-CIO leaders back import controls

The top AFL-CIO leadership is backing Gephardt's measure to the hilt. The AFL-CIO blames the trade deficit for a net loss of 3 million jobs in this country. "The nation's industrial base is being undermined by a flood of imports, while American exports are blocked from foreign countries," says an AFL-CIO pamphlet. But, as shown above, these claims can't stand up under examination. Blame for our declining industrial base, and the loss of jobs that have resulted, lies in Wall Street and the White House, not overseas.

The blame for the decline of industry and the loss of U.S. jobs lies in Wall Street and the White House, not overseas.

The issue has become a critical test of power for AFL-CIO leaders. They have suffered one setback after another in the political arena, beginning with the defeat of the labor law reform bill in 1978 and continuing with the all-out attacks of the Reagan administration. They are hoping to stage a comeback through the anti-imports campaign.

All the AFL-CIO's noise about imports is, in fact, a continuation of their traditional *avoidance* of struggle against the prerogatives of capital. Since the end of World War II, top union officials in this country have operated on the assumption that high living standards for their members depended on unchallenged U.S. domination of the world market. Now that that kind of domination is no longer possible, they see no way to preserve those living standards without keeping foreign-made goods off the U.S. market. The trade crisis provides them with a way to explain the setbacks U.S. workers have suffered in recent years — and their own failure to prevent them at the bargaining table — without challenging capital. Even union leaders who are critical of the AFL-CIO's pro-imperialist foreign policy are fervent supporters of its line on imports.

What unites these top union officials around trade is their longstanding belief in "business unionism," the notion that labor prospers when business prospers.

Applied to the problem of world trade, this philosophy views low-paid workers overseas as the enemy of U.S. workers, rather than fellow victims of exploitation. Instead of looking for constructive solutions to the problem of third world poverty, labor leaders try to cut deals with U.S. capitalists that allow them high profits without having to use "cheap foreign labor." Class-conscious trade unionists, though, have always argued that any labor strategy which depends on cultivating alliances with the capitalists damages the interests of working people.

What should workers do?

For workers, the issue is not so much trade as it is *jobs*. At last count, there were about 9 million unemployed people in this country. High unemployment is undermining the living standards of the entire working class. And while there is a relationship between high trade deficits and some lost jobs in *some* sectors of the economy, we need to be clear about the reasons for job insecurity *generally* in the country. Simply put, would establishing high barriers on imports put many people back to work?

The answer, bluntly, is no. No one can predict what all the consequences would be if stricter import controls are imposed. But the creation of more jobs is one of the most unlikely results.

First of all, the big monopolies that dominate our economy do not generally respond to less competition by hiring more workers to produce more goods. Their goal is simply to make more profits. If import controls are imposed, making imports more expensive, U.S. corporations will simply charge higher prices for their own goods. *The proponents of import controls, in fact, cannot sustain their claim that jobs will be created.*

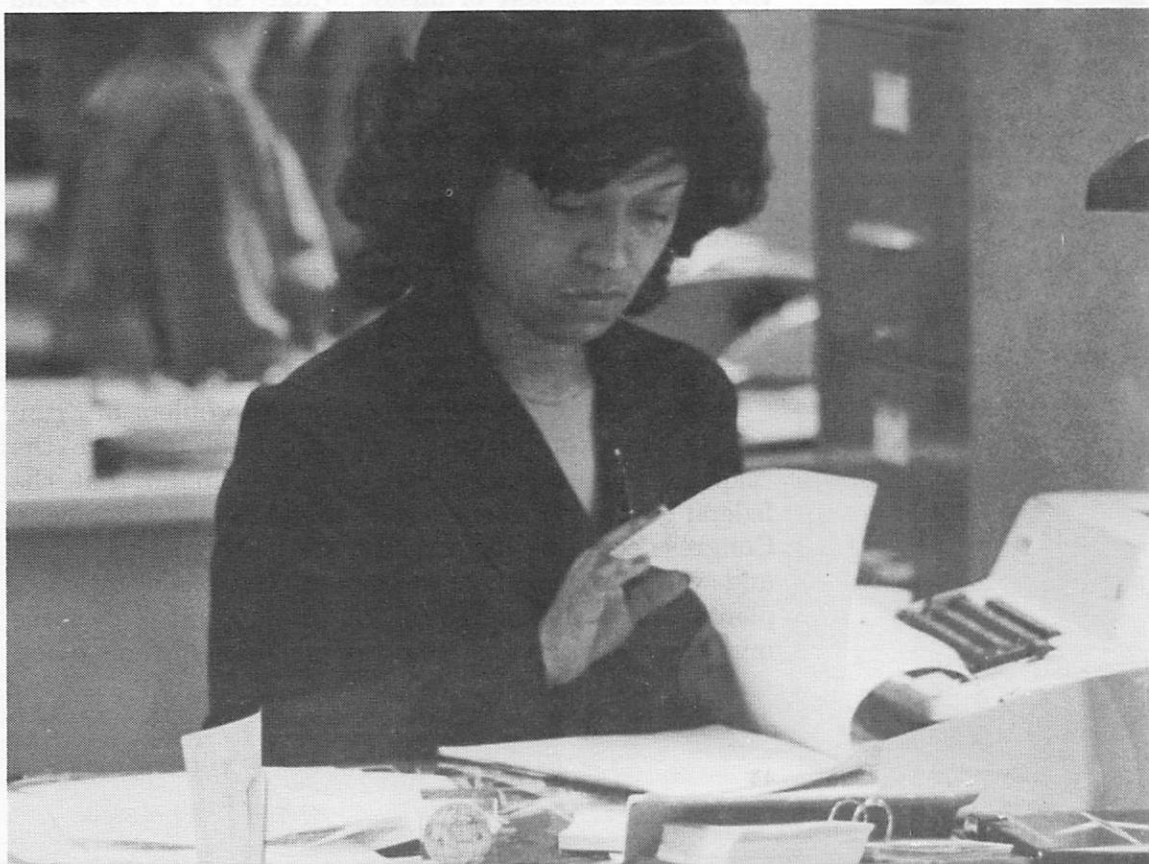
Second, if the U.S. erects trade barriers, other countries may well react with new controls of their own, feeding a process of mutual reprisals which could slow trade to a trickle. This happened in the 1930s, and many people say it was a big factor in touching off the Great Depression. Increased unemployment, not increased jobs, would be the direct result. Too many jobs depend on trade, and all of us use goods which are scarce or unavailable here: oil and rubber, fabrics and

coffee, sugar, a whole range of minerals and metals. *If the U.S. were to just "buy American," the economy would collapse in a day.*

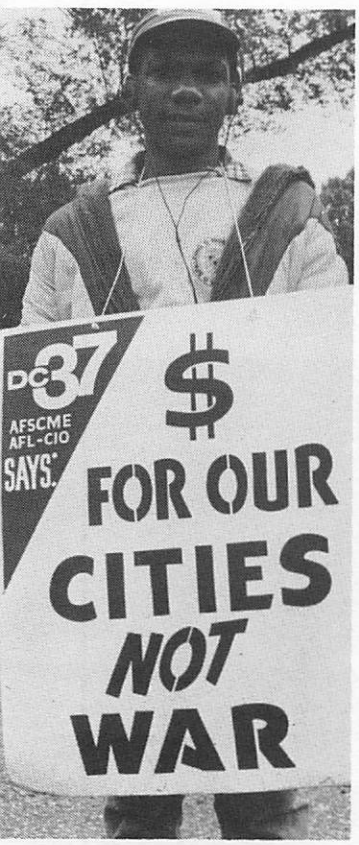
A country like ours, with its highly developed productive resources, ought to be able to provide a decent standard of living for its workers without having to impoverish other countries or engage in mutually destructive trade wars. Reaganomics and the dynamics of capitalism are the reasons why it isn't happening. We need to choose our targets carefully and develop programs and demands that will bring concrete results and not play into the hands of big business.

The trade problem will plague U.S. capitalists for years ahead. But workers have nothing to gain by trying to help them solve it. Our task is to make sure that whatever solution they come up with does not contribute to our own suffering through higher prices, "cost cutting measures," layoffs, speedups and wage cuts. We must keep our attention on the problems of job security, job creation and maintaining our standard of living.

We need to consider the following:

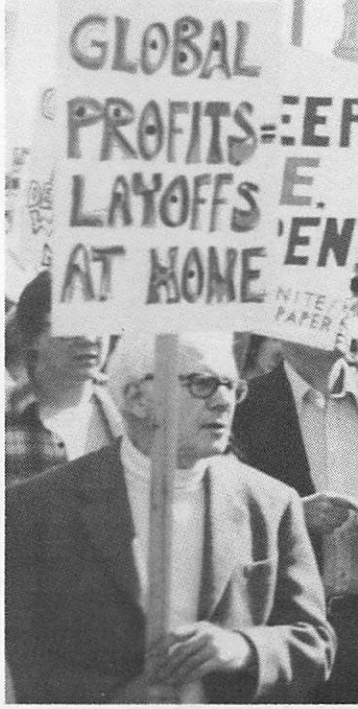


• There are a whole host of measures that could provide workers with secure incomes, stop plant closings, and check the sacrifice of our manufacturing base on the altar of capitalist profits. We need a comprehensive plant closings law. We need restoration of the social safety net that Reagan has slashed to ribbons. We need extended unemployment and health benefits to protect us from the worst effects of joblessness. We need government- and business-funded retraining programs that will help us find new jobs. Many of these demands originated in the mainstream of organized labor, but have been stuck on the back burner while union officials pursue their anti-imports crusade. *Our job is to get them back onto the front burner where they belong.* If enough mass sentiment is mobilized behind them, the union bureaucrats and the politicians will have to take them seriously.



• We need to target and attack the enormous waste of our resources, which has crippled manufacturing in this country. While mills and factories gather rust, their corporate owners blow millions on mergers and unfriendly takeovers. While our highways crumble and bridges collapse, the federal government spends astronomical sums trying to put nuclear weapons in space. Bringing all the nation's obsolete or unsafe bridges up to code would cost about $50 billion. Providing the necessary federal funding would mean more jobs, create a new demand for a flagging steel industry, and prevent accidents like the cave-in that killed six people in New York in early April. The federal government could make a huge dent in the unemployment figures just by slashing the Pentagon budget and spending money to put people to work at socially useful jobs. *We should demand that military spending be diverted to productive activities.* We also need *new tax and regulatory policies that discourage corporate raids, costly buyouts and speculation.*

• We need to deal with the whole problem of "runaway" shops and the export of capital to solve the "captive imports" problem. We can demand that the federal government control U.S. multinational companies. Congress could be forced to pass laws regulating wages and working conditions in the multinationals' overseas plants. It could eliminate the tax breaks on their overseas investments, and substitute tax penalties in their place.



We need to demand the restriction of the flight of capital from the U.S.

• We should demand *debt relief and economic help for the third world.* Third world countries should be able to use their productive resources to develop their own economies, rather than distorting them to pay off their loans to U.S. banks. We should also demand repudiation of Reagan's farm policies, which are not only bankrupting U.S. farmers but also perpetuating poverty in the third world, adding new fuel to the trade crisis. These demands would help raise third world living standards while protecting U.S. jobs.

The above are practical and realizable demands that we can make on our own ruling class. They would be opposed by the capitalists, but they are in the interests of working people. They can unite workers, employed and unemployed, farmers, local businesspeople, tradespeople, international solidarity activists and community activists in a coalition that is potentially much more powerful and enduring than the shaky union official-big business alliance which has formed around import controls.

Lastly, we must emphasize that the anti-imports fanaticism is whipping up national chauvinism against other countries. Reagan's warmongering in the Middle East, the Caribbean and Central America is helped by the anti-imports hysteria. Working people have no interest in helping the drift toward war. Our task is to bring public attention back to *our agenda: peace, jobs and economic justice.* These demands, closely linked, are real alternatives to "Star Wars" as well as "trade wars." □

Gloria Betancourt

This is a very exciting day for us — we have just won a big victory in our 18-month strike. I have to admit I wasn't always sure we'd get this far, but I knew we weren't about to give up. They call us stubborn Mexican women; I guess it's true and it has paid off. We won a great victory, and we had help from many of you here tonight.

On behalf of all the strikers, I would like to extend our gratitude, our thanks for all that everyone has done to help us. Our victory is your victory, too. As we have been saying, *¡Sí Se Puede!* ("It can be done!")

I'd like to tell you briefly about our strike, what it took to win, what we think are some of the main lessons we learned in the course of the 18 months on the picket line, and where we are going from here.

Before our strike, our employer, Mort Console, swore we would come "crawling on our knees, begging for work." Well he's had to *eat his words.* His plan at the beginning of the strike, with an $18 million loan from Wells Fargo, was to break the union. Well, all I can say is that me and my fellow workers are back trimming spinach and cutting broccoli, and Mort Console is out. He tried to break us and he failed.

The lesson to Mort Console and the other local owners is that they better think twice before taking on the cannery workers movement!

People have said that what we have done is heroic. I don't know. We did what we had to do. We fought for our jobs, fair pay and treatment — this is our right. We are fighting for our children and for all Latinos, Chicanos and workers.

In the course of the strike I've learned to look at things in a new way; I've learned how important it is to understand the political situation, how important it is for ourselves as Chicanas, as women, to play a big role. We were the backbone of the strike. This is not to belittle the contribution of the men, but we are the ones who have held the strike together, and our families and homes as well.

I've done things I never thought I could do, and

Watsonville strikers received widespread support from the Chicano-Latino movement and people of all nationalities.

I've met such wonderful people. I've met Black workers, Chinese workers from San Francisco, and white workers from Hormel, students of all nationalities and just all different kinds of people.

On our own

When I look back, at the beginning of the strike we were on our own. We voted to go out on strike and got locked out by the company. We went full force; we covered the entire street. The company barricaded all the gates; they didn't know what we were going to do. But unfortunately for us, the union did not want to do anything. Because we were so militant, the courts threw an injunction on us; around the plant, we could not even stand on our front porches.

At that time I started to travel to spread the word of the strike. We could see that we needed to take the strike into our own hands. The union was out of control; there was no union leadership for us.

We came together and formed the Strikers' Committee — 500 people came to the meeting. I was the only woman elected out of my plant, and as a sign of women

playing more of a role, I received the highest number of votes of anyone and became president of the Strikers' Committee.

When I think back about this time, it was like learning the ABC's. We were all so inexperienced; we had to practice what to say before every meeting. When I walked into that meeting of 500 strikers, I was speechless.

One of our first acts was to call for and organize a march. It was a big success, and after that even the union officials knew they had to come to us to organize the people. Especially in that early period, the Teamsters tried to block us from speaking out, but we continued to tell the strikers the truth, and we kept traveling out of town to tell people as well.

We had many supporters, but we could see the difference between those who told us what to do and those who helped us to think for ourselves and make our own decisions. The ultimate decision was always ours. We also started making links with the Chicano movement, and a better understanding of our strategy and plan took place.

I'd like to explain some of this strategy that we developed.

First, we knew we had to organize ourselves.

To be effective, we had to learn to do things we never did before — how to be organizers, to set agendas, run meetings, put out flyers.

Over time, our Strikers' Committee meetings brought out more people than our local union meetings. It was in these meetings that we talked about the daily fights, as well as broader issues — supporting other struggles, work with politicians, the Teamsters' agenda and our own independent plans as strikers. This is also where we came to struggle out our differences.

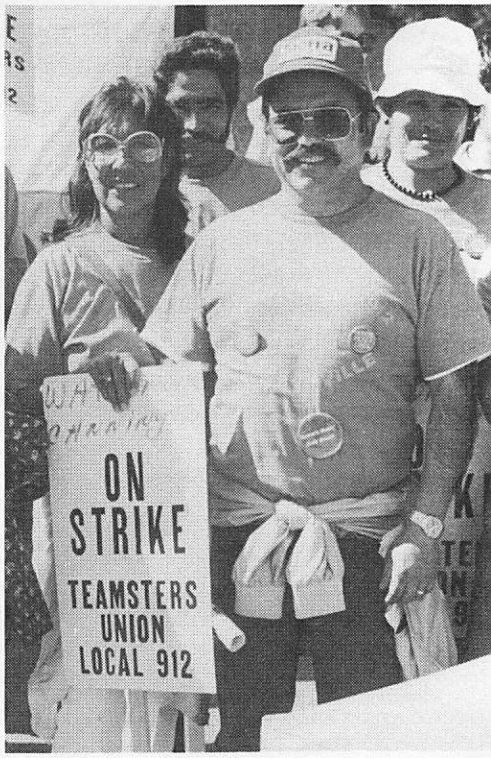
In many ways these people who came together week after week form a very strong core of fighters, which is what we need now as we go back inside the plant.

Second, we knew that we had to have a relationship to the union. When the strike began, workers had lost any respect for the union; our old secretary-treasurer, Richard King, seemed constantly drunk. We, the strikers, were actually running things, while they kept trying to block us and keep us from initiating anything. Many

People have said that what we have done is heroic. I don't know. We did what we had to do. We fought for our jobs, fair pay and treatment — this is our right.

people hated them for being so disrespectful of the members and never fighting for us.

This started to change after the election. Some of the strikers formed a slate and we ran for all the major offices. While we didn't win, we forced the old administration to resign. But this was the beginning of a new relationship with the union. We had proven we had mass support and the local was more open than before, and they understood more our strength. We felt we had to work together; we needed the benefits; we needed the support of the labor movement, and we wanted the power of the union, power based on ourselves the members, to be put behind the strike.



But we knew we had to be more organized, more united and have a lot of allies in order to force the Teamsters to be accountable to us. We made it clear that we were and still are prepared to fight with them if we have to, but where we can we want to work together.

We have been holding the line for the approximately 50,000 unionized cannery workers up and down the coast. If they could break our strike, if they could push our wages down further or kick the union out of the largest food processor, it would have made it hard for everyone else. We made it clear to the Teamsters that if we went down, many others would go, too. We made it clear that the Teamsters' reputation was at stake for holding up their part as well. With fewer members in other industries, we have learned that the Teamsters are starting to put more resources into maintaining their presence in the canning industry overall, and therefore developed a stake in the overall cannery industry and our strike.

Working with them has been hard. But we recognized the need to work with the union *in our own way.* Sometimes we had to pressure them to do things. Sometimes we told them what we wanted to do, and other times we didn't tell them at all.

People tell us that based on the fact that the Teamsters supported us for 18 months, that we have been pretty successful.

The third lesson we learned was that building sup-

port, especially from the Chicano movement, was key.

Prior to our strike, I have always been proud of what I am, and I have always fought for my people. In the course of the strike, I have become aware of the broader Chicano movement.

The canneries and fields in most towns in California are worked by Mexicanos, Chicanos and Latinos. And ever since I was in school, I remember about the great robbery of Mexican land stolen from our people. But the different relationships which individuals or movements had to each other wasn't too clear to me until the strike. With the strike, I began to see and meet the different organizations and political leaders and groups that are all fighting for the same thing.

I've seen students fighting for education and language equality, and community organizations fighting for empowerment. I also know that as a result of our struggle, Watsonville will never be the same. In fact in Watsonville, it is 60% Latino though there is not one Latino rep on the city council. (Subsequent to this speech, a Latino has joined the city council — *ed.*) It's only a matter of time till we will fight for

and win representation in towns like Watsonville.

The conditions that our people face in the fields are terrible. All throughout California and the Southwest, field-workers face harsh living and working conditions, including widescale poisoning through pesticide spraying. In this context, the canneries offer our people a way to stabilize our lives, a way to save up and get a small house and keep our families together.

We are fighting for all *Raza*. Because of this we received the support of every Chicano leader in the state. It is particularly significant because this support has lined up behind regular workers like ourselves who make up the backbone of the Chicano movement.

So I would say that with this strategy we have accomplished a lot.

Opened our eyes

Because of our struggle, Watsonville will never be the same. Around this point we tell a little joke. It's about some little dogs that were born; some kids were selling them for 50¢ each. Then a few weeks later, the same dogs were sold, only now they cost $5.00. "Why such a big jump in price?" some buyers asked. "Well," replied the kids, "They opened their eyes." This is just like us. We will never be the same, anywhere we go, whatever we do we'll see it in a different way.

Hunger strikers demand decent health benefits be guaranteed in contract.

And more important than anything, we are going back more organized, more together than when we went out.

After being back at work a week, we all know that our organizing must continue. Already the harassments are happening at work and we need to be ready to fight to defend ourselves. Right now we are organizing a broader cannery worker alliance. When we fight in the future we should do it as 70,000 strong — united and organized. We have a contract re-opener in February 1988, and we intend to use it to fight for what's ours. In the next period we are determined to make up everything we have lost and more. We built this industry, and we want our share of its wealth.

Can you imagine the power our movement could

have if we had enough unity to have all cannery workers pay an assessment each month into a fund which would be used to back us up, in the event we were forced to go out on strike? Or if we all pledged so many hours on the picket line or the food bank to support our fellow workers? We don't have Wells Fargo behind us; we don't have Safeway behind us; we don't have millionaires behind us. What we have is each other and our union. As a unified movement, this could make us a powerful force for any cannery owners to deal with.

Look at Watsonville: for 30 years we never went out on strike, we never really challenged Richard King, our old union secretary-treasurer. We, the workers, did not run our own union. Now through the strike we are determined not to turn around; we have seen the impact of taking up the initiative ourselves. In the course of the strike our whole union local was revitalized. For those of us at Nor Cal Frozen Foods (Watsonville Canning's new owner — *ed.*), we want to get organized immediately; we have to take care of problems on the shop floor; we have to get our steward system in place; we have to continue to raise support for our fellow workers who haven't been called back to work yet.

Counting the ballots shortly before the victory is announced.

Our future

In many ways the future of the cannery workers movement will be determined by women, who now make up a majority. It will be a big fight. Most of the leaders are men; some have been very supportive. But we have to take bolder moves to stand up for ourselves in constructive ways and show people that those of us who are the majority can lead our own fight.

I have also learned about what a society may look like in the future. Recently in our *teatro* we have a part where we talk about a society with no police, food for everyone and work for everyone. It sounds like a dream, but I believe such things can come about.

One thing I know: the rich cannot get any richer while the poor get poorer. Justice is justice and injustice is injustice.

We've said many times during our strike that this

Victory march through Watsonville after the strike was won.

fight is not just for us, but for our children as well. When we stood up to extend the vote and went on the hunger strike, it showed the determination we had: that after 18 months we couldn't accept a contract which didn't meet our families' basic needs. We took a chance and it paid off — we won.

The cannery bosses are trying to squeeze more out of us. We must not let this happen. We must work together. Take a stand. Rely on each other. Let's understand who the enemy is.

We will continue to reach out for your support; we have to stand shoulder to shoulder and build our communities, build our labor movement, making our unions into fighting organizations. By educating ourselves to be better fighters we can change things. I see a very bright future. Our fight is not just for us but for our children and for all people!

¡SÍ SE PUEDE! □

Eighteen Months

A story in a newspaper:
In the Frozen Food Capital of the US
The broccoli wasn't the coldest thing around
Mr. Watsonville Canning, Frozen Wage Capitalist of the Salinas Valley
Surveyed his empire
Police and City Council his servants
Wells Fargo Bank his treasury
"Workers," he cried, "Come in from the fields to the factory — Good Wages, Opportunities, Education."
They got Wage-Slashing, Union-Busting, Intimidation
And the eleven-hundred said, "Let your vegetables rot!
You've been stuffing greenbacks in your wallet
As fast as we can stuff spinach into plastic bags."

A story from the line:
Eighteen months, eighteen months, eighteen months
Fifty-five dollars a week
We got a Thanksgiving turkey from the Food Bank
He got eighteen-million from the Wells Fargo Bank
Eighteen months
Scabs arriving in trucks
They don't understand!
We've been here for many years!
Many months
Eighteen months
Never a striker crossing the line
Eighteen months — It can be done
Communication — speaking to a roomful of people
Communication — negotiating with Local 912
Communication — reasoning with my husband
Eighteen months — It can be done
Marching in solidarity
Marching on our knees
Marching for $5.85 an hour and health benefits
But more than that — for fifty-thousand other cannery workers
Eighteen months — It can be done
It can be done!

A story for us all:
Mr. Watsonville Canning — Mr. Nor-Cal Foods
A new name, a new face, but the same freezing touch
But our fingers are connected
To hands, arms, bodies, hearts, voices
Warmed by the contact
Strengthened by the numbers
Remembering how they stood the line
The Chicano people
Many women and children
In Justice and Dignity
Until Victory was won
It can be done
It Can Be Done!

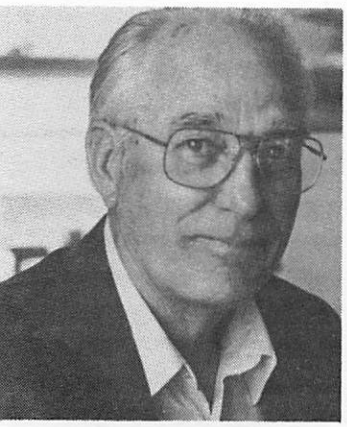
— ***Katherine Hughes***

Katherine Hughes is a free-lance musician in the Chicago area.

The Greening of the Rainbow:

Why farmers are supporting Jesse Jackson

Merle Hansen

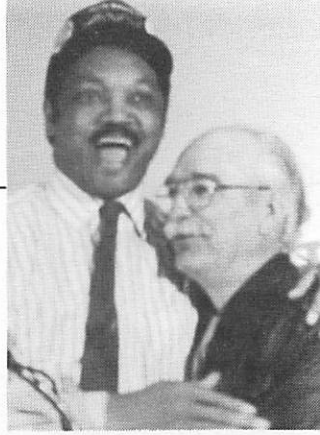


Merle Hansen

There is something really exciting happening among farmers in this country, and that is a growing support for Reverend Jesse Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition. A good barometer was the Rainbow Convention held in Washington, D.C., in spring 1986. There were planeloads and busloads of farmers from Missouri. There were buses from Minnesota and Wisconsin. There were Black and white farmers that came together from North and South Carolina and other Southern states.

That momentum is carrying over into the 1988 presidential campaign. Jackson has a Rainbow office in the rural town of Greenfield, Iowa, where, on Superbowl night in January, 900 people came to a church to hear Rev. Jackson speak. It was a very moving experience for everyone involved. It indicated that a lot of people are very hungry for someone with a sincere message that ties issues together and makes sense out of a topsy-turvy world. Jackson's office in Greenfield is staffed not by outsiders, but by local people from that small town.

Merle Hansen is president of the North American Farm Alliance, headquartered in Ames, Iowa.



Reverend Jesse Jackson and Merle Hansen at the Rainbow Convention, 1986.

In February, Rev. Jackson was out in Lincoln, Nebraska, and spoke to 3,500 young people at a high school convocation. He spoke to farmer audiences, to groups at the University of Nebraska, and to a luncheon with the Grange, the National Farmers Organization, representatives of conservative wheat growers and many individual farmers. He spoke to the Farmer-Rancher Congress in St. Louis earlier this year. He's become one of the most sought-after speakers for farmers.

Rev. Jackson has gone out of his way to come into a lot of farm communities, to come to the rescue of many farmers in difficulty. He's been through the entire Middle West — there probably isn't a state he hasn't been to. Everywhere he has gone he has received a warm reception.

Why is it that farmers are getting interested in Rev. Jackson and the Rainbow Coalition? One reason is the devastating farm crisis. We've lost 650,000 farmers since Ronald Reagan came into office. We've lost 95,000 businesses; 55,000 farm equipment workers have been permanently laid off; 450 banks, most of them rural banks, have gone bust. Farm prices have dropped 100%. And food prices have risen 30%.

Also, farmers are interested in the same things that a lot of other people are interested in. Honest, ordinary working farmers are concerned about corruption in government. They're concerned about fair representation for ordinary people, not just for the rich. Farmers are concerned about what's happening to the environment and about the cost of food. There are 34 million people in this country without health care now. A lot of them are farmers because they started cutting costs and that was one of the first casualties.

So what is happening is that farm people are in an unprecedented crisis, and they are looking around for answers.

Rev. Jackson has developed a good working knowledge of the farm problem and he speaks to that. Like all issues, he gives his own interpretation of it. Jackson talks about economic violence in a new and important way, like where does a corporation get the right to

just close its doors and walk out without any kind of responsibility at all. The economically powerful can close out farmers and get away with it because the law is on their side. They have the right to do anything they want, even if it costs farmers their farm, people their job, the security of a fair and decent paycheck, or a decent price for farm products.

Rev. Jackson talks about mercy and he talks about fairness. He talks about justice and he talks about people's concern for peace in the world. He talks about how we need to address the question of our society decaying, about drugs.

Rev. Jackson is talking about the fact that we need to be concerned about racism — Howard Beach and Forsyth, Georgia, and different racist incidents around the country. This racist violence is against the law.

He's raising a new question that I think could be a national issue, and that is that economic violence is not illegal and is victimizing millions of people and goes its way unchallenged.

So I think he's raising very important and very interesting questions that no one else is raising in this country, and it's some of these challenging ideas I think people are interested in.

I think that farmers respond because they honestly believe that this guy means business about these issues. A lot of farmers are pretty well convinced they've heard the same old song and dance so many times before that they don't believe a lot of the other politicians anymore. But Jackson has a remarkable knack for doing a couple of things differently. He makes the issues simple and understandable and then he ties them together so that they make sense. He's a teacher and he talks about morality and about how we should build a better society. People want to hear that. He's got a vision. People want to hear a vision about what kind of world we can have.

One of the most important and significant things about farmers looking to Jesse Jackson is that a lot of them had not struggled in recent years. They've been deprived of their heritage and the heritage of their parents and grandparents who had to struggle before. And so farmers are looking for somebody that they figure has the knowledge and experience of how to

struggle. Not only are they looking toward Rev. Jackson, but they're looking toward Blacks as people who've gone through a lot of misery, and they probably know how to fight back.

Farmers in the past actually do have a long history of struggling for social justice. In the 1880s, there were over a thousand Farmer Alliance newspapers. They culminated in the Populist Party in the 1890s, which was a pretty radical movement. It advocated women's suffrage, direct election of senators, and a lot of reforms around monopolies, big business and banks. They were called "radicals," "sons of wild jackasses," and "agricultural anarchists." Teddy Roosevelt said they ought to be lined up and shot.

Later on in 1915, the Non-Partisan League was formed, and they elected a lot of state legislators, congressmen, and even governors. In 1924, the Non-Partisan League ran in their paper this comment from a farmer. He said, "When your farm is covered with mortgages, your cattle tied up with a barnyard loan, your machinery attached with a chattel mortgage, your previous year's taxes are unpaid, your coming crop is covered with a seed lien and then you get no crop, you fail to see just what it is you may lose with the collapse of capitalism."

So there's a pretty strong progressive tradition among farmers that goes back many years. Farmers have always been victims. Never in the history of this country have farmers ever received per capita equality of income. Most of the time it's been 50% less and sometimes, like right now, much less. We're in bad trouble and we need some help. Farmers are starting to struggle more, and they're looking for somebody who knows how to struggle. This is why many are looking to Jesse Jackson.

But it's important to understand that farmers as a group have just as many differences as any other group in society. The crisis in the rural communities has also given a lot of right-wing elements the opportunity to get a hearing. There's a polarization going on. There's an open market of ideas. But there is also an open door for the ideas of the political right. So there is a struggle for people's minds taking place.

Rev. Jackson's acceptance in Iowa should spur our efforts to be more active. Even the Des Moines *Register*

recognizes this phenomenon of Jackson's developing base in Iowa. They said that Rev. Jackson in his wildest dreams would probably not have thought that a 69-year-old white retired school teacher would be thinking about voting for Jesse Jackson for president of the United States, but that is happening. The paper said there are some big changes taking place in Iowa and that Rev. Jesse Jackson is a part of it.

While there is a polarization going on, what we need to do is get busy and get to work. We are challenged to do things we have not been challenged to do before. We need to get out there and work like we've never worked before, because we have the opportunity to make major changes in this country that are going to allow us to continue life on earth instead of going down the road of scapegoatism, racism, corruption and war, changes that will go toward making this a country of justice and peace. □

Farms not Arms T-shirts

Show your support for peace and agriculture

Please send me the following quantity and color choices: navy, fuschia, aqua, burgundy, black, purple, lt. blue, and green. Please note second color choices.

Adults	**Children**
____ Small	lt. blue, navy, green
____ Medium	____Small
____ Large	____ Medium
____ Ex. Lg.	____ Large

Rates:1-5, $8; **6-11,** $7.50; **12-20,** $7; **21-50,** $6.50; **51-100,** $6.00; **101-200,** $5.75

Hats also available (black or navy) for $8 each.

$_____is enclosed, including 15% of the total order for shipping and handling.

Name_____Address_____

Send to: North American Farm Alliance, P.O. Box 2502, Ames, Iowa 50010.

The Fight for Equality of the Puerto Rican Worker in New York City

Eddie deJesús

Editor's Note: *This is an edited version of an article written as a report for the New York City Labor Task Force of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights. The original version of this article is available from the N.Y.C. Puerto Rican Labor Task Force, P.O. Box 762, Baychester Station, Bronx, N.Y., 10469.*

Introduction

Three generations after arriving in the U.S. in large numbers, Puerto Ricans are still treated as second-class citizens, subjected to national discrimination, racial violence, and super-exploitation. The two million Puerto Rican minority in the U.S. has not found a "promised-land" in the U.S. Over 42% of Puerto Rican families live in poverty; our unemployment rate of 14.3% is double that of the national unemployment rate; even our ghetto commu-

Puerto Rican Day parade, New York City.

Eddie deJesús is chair of the New York City Labor Task Force of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights. He is an organizer for a New York union.

nities are being dislocated by finance capital to make luxury housing for the rich. Politically, we still lack power, while the government moves to dismantle social services, roll-back civil rights legislation, and seeks to promote such racist, right-wing movements as the "English-Only" movement, which seeks to eliminate bi-lingualism.

Nevertheless, as an overwhelmingly working class people, Puerto Ricans continue to defy difficulties and struggle for equality and democratic rights in the U.S., while seeking to rally support in the U.S. for social justice and self-determination for our native island of Puerto Rico.

The following is a documentation of the status of Puerto Rican workers in the U.S., a brief history of our contributions in American labor, and some ideas and demands that many Puerto Rican workers have expressed, while uniting with the rest of the working class.

The Puerto Rican Worker in New York City: 1950s to the 1980s

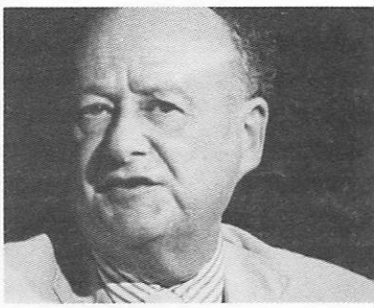
In the 1950s, the Puerto Rican work force was described as follows:

> At least 45% of this labor force are women. (It is concentrated mainly in:) 1. Garment, 2. Maritime, 3. Food and Hotel, 4. Radio and Electrical, 5. Laundry, 6. Meat Packing, 7. Toys and Novelties, 8. Shoes, 9. Domestic, 10. Distributive, 11. Furniture and Mattress, 12. Baking.
>
> If on the housing question, color is the predominant factor in the discrimination of Puerto Ricans; if on the question of education, language is the predominant factor; in industry all three main factors in the discrimination of Puerto Ricans — language, color and skill — are used by the bosses to keep the Puerto Rican worker alongside with the Negro worker in the lowest rung of the ladder. [1]

Illustration by Ernesto Ramos Nieves, from Jesus Colon, A Puerto Rican in New York and Other Sketches

In the 1950s Puerto Ricans were found in the worst and least paid labor sectors in the New York City economy. While 80% of the Puerto Ricans were concentrated

in New York City, we made up approximately 5% of the population. Thirty years later, in the 1980s, Puerto Ricans make up close to 10% of the city's population, yet we still are: 29% operatives (manufacture, garment, etc.) or in transport; 19.1% clerical and kindred; 18.6% in the service sector (hotels, restaurants, health care, etc.); and only 9% professional (often the lowest paid professional sectors!). Over 80% of the Puerto Rican adult population continues to be workers in industry and the service sector. And these figures do not include the 13%-plus unemployed, underemployed, and slaving in the workfare programs in New York City. The median family income for the Puerto Rican is $10,734, compared to $19,917 for the average U.S. family. "In New York City alone, 30% of Puerto Rican families are receiving welfare and 50% of all Puerto Rican families are headed by single parent women." [2]



New York Mayor Ed Koch.

Koch's "I Love New York" campaign and the Puerto Rican worker

Historically, the economy in New York City always absorbed much of the immigrant population that came to the U.S. New York has been the home of the major securities markets in the U.S. and its most powerful banks. It was also the center of retail trade with department stores and smaller establishments down in the streets, where immigrants lived and worked. But one of the most important sectors for immigrant employees has been the industrial sector. In 1914, 68% of New York state factories were located in New York City. By 1914 New York City was producing nearly 10% of all U.S. manufactures, exceeded only by Pennsylvania and New York state.

New York City.

After World War I, there was a rapid expansion of housing and public transportation. Immigrant workers often made up a third if not half of many of the economic sectors in New York City. Immigrant women constituted half of the city's female labor force. European immigrants like the Irish, Jews and Italians were often able to capture various sectors of the city's economy and settle down.

The massive migration of Blacks and Puerto Ricans during World War II and afterwards created apartheid-

like conditions in New York where both Puerto Ricans and Blacks were never able to move forward in the same way that European immigrants were able to in the '20s and '30s. After World War II, the economic trends in New York City were fundamentally different from those that existed in the post-World War I period. New York City was no longer moving in the direction of manufacturing. More and more the city was being organized in the service of finance capital, the retail services, banking, etc. So Black and Puerto Rican workers found themselves in the hardest, worst, unskilled jobs; coupled with a permanently unemployed; and forced to live in Jim Crow-like, ghetto slums.

In the 1970s the world economy entered into a severe crisis, popularly known as the "recession." This capitalist crisis had devastating effects in New York City, which suffered a fiscal crisis in 1975-76. Edward Koch became mayor of the city on a platform of saving New York. But after his election, unions joined in a Municipal Coalition to fight back against wage freezes and wage cuts, cuts in health services, day care, education, health, and sanitation. The construction of public housing came to a standstill. The cost of food, rent, and gasoline skyrocketed while unemployment grew. Social service programs were cut or dismantled altogether. This was the way a recovery was made. It was a recovery of profits for real estate and finance capital. It was not a recovery for the working class, oppressed nationalities and women in New York City.

Since the end of World War II, there has been a flight of capital away from New York City into areas of unorganized labor to make super-profits. These areas include the South where Black people are concentrated; the Southwest where the Chicano and Native American peoples are concentrated; or in Santo Domingo, Haiti, Central America, or in Asia as in South Korea, Hong Kong, etc. The quest for profits has been the principal cause of the flight of capital from New York City and has become a factor in creating a permanent unemployment crisis for oppressed nationalities in New York City.

For example, the manufacturing sector, a principal source of employment for Puerto Ricans, has declined 11% since 1976, a loss of more than 55,000 jobs.[3] Between 1960-1970, apparel manufacturing alone lost

137,000, a decline of 40%.[4] From 1972-83, the apparel industry lost an additional 48,700 jobs.[5] The Koch administration has done nothing to reverse the flight of garment jobs, a principal employer of the Puerto Rican work force, especially of the Puerto Rican women. The garment shops in New York City have developed trends of either closing shops to reopen in the so-called "third world," where labor is largely unorganized and super-exploited, or in New York City as sweatshops, resorting to the super-exploitive practice of sending the work force home with home-work or piece-work. It has been reported that " . . . hourly wages in the New York City garment sweatshop have now dipped below apparel industry levels in San Juan, Puerto Rico."[6]

From 1976-83, the retail and trade employment sector declined by 4%, losing over 22,900 workers. This includes many Puerto Ricans working in department stores which have closed, like Korvettes. In the barrios of New York City there are many small retail shops employing many unorganized Puerto Rican workers for sub-minimum wages, on a part-time basis to 12 hour days, 6 days a week.

But while manufacturing and retail have been on the decline, the service sector has been on the upgrade in New York City. The service sector grew by 22% between 1976-81. However, the increase has been in white collar jobs: banks, real estate, sales, office work, etc. It has not been in the lower service jobs like taxis, maintenance, cleaning, etc., which are still predominantly held by Blacks and Puerto Ricans. Hence, the "new" white collar jobs have not been filled by the thousands of Puerto Rican and Black workers displaced from the manufacturing sector.

Workers on strike against Sunset Hat in New York.
Photo: Eddie DeJesús

Approximately 25% of the employees in the health care sector, both public and private, are Puerto Rican and Latino workers. The hospital administration has demanded wage freezes and cuts, two-tier systems (payment of lower salaries to new workers, which in effect eventually lowers or displaces the wage salaries or jobs of older workers), cuts in benefits, etc. In 1984, the hospital administration provoked a long strike by

Local 1199 health care workers in New York City.

In the transportation sector, which employs many Latino workers, Koch has made clear his anti-labor stance. In the transit strike of 1980, he invoked the union-busting Taylor Law (which denies the public workers the right to strike) to force the transit workers to agree to concessions. In 1985 the Koch administration also stalled negotiations with the public transit workers, forcing binding arbitration as a solution to the demands of the transit sector. Koch is infamous among taxi drivers for the numerous laws and taxes imposed on the semi-slave wages of taxi drivers, who often work more than 12-14 hours a day to make a decent salary.

In the hotel and restaurant sectors, enormous profits by the hotel administration have been reported. After 47 years of non-confrontation and smooth contracts between the Hotel Trades Council (which represents the various hotel and restaurant workers) and the Hotel Association (which represents the owners of luxurious hotels), there is now an attempt to cut the salaries, working hours and benefits of the hotel and restaurant workers. The Hotel Association had demanded over 100 concessions, such as elimination of time and a quarter, increase in probation period from 30 to 90 days with minimum wage paid, Saturday and Sunday work without premium compensation, elimination of sick and personal days, cuts in medical and pension benefits, forced overtime, discipline of delegates, non-unionized workers doing union jobs, elimination of night shift differentials, etc.

These attacks by the hotel administration forced the Hotel Employees Union to organize a militant strike in the summer of 1985. Meanwhile, the Koch administration promised to grant subsidies to the hotel owners for the construction of luxurious hotels. Yet he does nothing in defense of the workers.

An excellent example of the anti-labor and anti-Latino features of the Koch administration is revealed when we examine the actual "report card" of affirmative action progress of the New York state and New York City Municipal Government and the Latino work force. "In 1963 . . . Puerto Ricans were 9% of New York City population, but held less than 3% of the city government's 177,000 jobs. By 1971 more than 10% of

the city population was Puerto Rican. They held only 6% of the 300,000 jobs in city government and have far less access than Blacks or whites to high paying jobs."[7] But by 1982, the Puerto Ricans and Latinos made up 9.5% to 10% of the total population of New York state. Latinos represented only 2.8% of the state's work force, making us the fastest-growing population group in New York, yet the most under-represented minority.

Of the small 2.8% of Latinos employed by New York state, we were over-represented in the lowest jobs categories. 76.4% of Latino state employees have annual salaries below $16,000, making us, along with Blacks, the least paid work force. Between 1976 to 1981 Latino state employees with annual salaries of $25,000 declined from 2.6% to 1.6%. 32.1% of Latinas are concentrated in $9,000 jobs, making them the worst paid New York state employees.

Illustration by Ernesto Ramos Nieves.

The issue of pay equity is indeed on the agenda with the Koch administration. Moreover, Latinos make up only 0.9% of the staff of the Department of Civil Service, the lead agency in affirmative action hiring.[8] Affirmative action for Latinos in all of New York state has completely been a failure. Under the Koch administration there has been no progress whatsoever. If anything there has been regression.

Aside from the above sectors which employ Puerto Ricans, there has been a growth in the past 10 years of what is called an illegal or underground economy. It " . . . is estimated that New York City has an underground economy that ranges from 10 to 15% of local production of goods and services. It is estimated that between 50,000 to 70,000 workers are employed in these illegal shops."[9] Often these are sweatshops in garment, services, taxi and retail sectors. This whole sector is unorganized and subject to severe super-exploitation. It employs not only Puerto Ricans, but many Latin American and Caribbean immigrants, who are often subjected to raids by the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

To make matters worse, it is generally estimated

that those Puerto Ricans who are lucky enough to be working generally make 25% lower wages than the average white worker in New York City. The average weekly earnings of all workers in New York City covered by the unemployment insurance law (UIL) has fallen below the rise in the consumer price index (CPI). From 1976 to 1980 the CPI rose 27.7%, yet all wage earnings of workers covered by the UIL increased only by 26.2%. But for the workers employed in manufacture, clerical work, garment, and specific service sectors where Puerto Ricans are found, the wage increases were way below even the total work force. For example, wage increases in fabricated metal, the food sector, apparel, merchandise retail, food stores, bank tellers and hotels, medical and health services, educational services, and social services, were generally 10-25% lower than the CPI increases.[10] In other words, in the past 10 years under the Koch administration the purchasing power of the Puerto Rican worker has actually decreased.

A sector which has grown in New York City is the clerical sector. Yet, the clerical sector is one of the most unorganized sectors in New York City, with the largely women work force confronting inequitable wages in comparison to men's jobs of comparable skill.

"During the 1950s, 38.9% of Puerto Rican women participated in the work force. (But it) dropped drastically . . . from 39.9% in 1960 to 28.9% in 1970 and . . . in 1980 Puerto Rican women had the lowest labor force participation rate of all women."[11] Yet the Koch administration refuses to recognize the issues of pay equity, VDT/OSHA protective legislation, and fails to promote the organization of the unorganized clerical sector. But *train and organize the Puerto Rican and other women, and see how rapidly labor will turn around and go on the offensive!*

For the Puerto Rican youth, the present situation is quite dismal, never mind the future! Our youth confront a high school drop-out rate of 70%; an unemployment rate of over 50%; communities lacking sports facilities, lacking job-training programs, but with an

over-abundance of drugs; and are victims of decadent, consumer and sexist propaganda promoted by the media in the service of corporate profits. When our youth do work, they are often found in part-time jobs, super-exploited, confronting speed-ups, for sub-minimum wages. Our youth are found in large numbers in the fast food sector, a sector which should be a target of organized labor. *Organize our youth into unions and see how militant the labor movement will become!* To neglect this task is to allow the future of our youth to lead to the following: a life of drugs, crime, or death in our ghettos; to be used as cheap labor at the workplace, at sub-minimum wages which force the depression of salaries of all workers; or to be drafted into the military as cannon fodder for the wars for profits of Corporate America. Meanwhile, Mayor Koch and the police department have become notorious for blaming our youth as the source of problems in New York City.

For unemployed Puerto Rican workers, the federal cuts in welfare, food stamps, Medicare, and child care are causing havoc. The large unemployment rate, coupled with the low salaries that our people make when we are employed, has forced our community to live in slums with deteriorating housing and a growing health crisis. The response by Koch to federal cuts of social services is as follows: "Mayor Edward I. Koch said the city stood to lose $1.2 billion in federal aid under the President's proposed budget and added that the replacement funds would have to come out of the pockets of the people of New York." [12]

On top of this the Koch administration has pursued a gentrification policy, where our communities are destroyed and replaced by big luxury apartments to eventually house high-income families. Police brutality is increasing as our people begin to rebel against illegitimate, racist social rules and practices. What will become of our people? Koch does not know, nor does he care. Our prospects under the Koch administration are many more South Bronx's — it is a policy of social and cultural GENOCIDE!

Today, the American working class is at its weakest in decades. The Reagan administration, in its quest to make "America Great," has embarked on an adventurist path of war in Central America and the Middle East,

militarizing the U.S. economy, subsidizing the rich, and stealing from the poor. The Reagan administration's economic policies have wreaked havoc upon the working class. The National Labor Relations Board has become a tool of the Reagan government and monopoly capital in rolling back labor and civil rights legislation.

But it is important for us to know the attacks on labor did not start with the Republican Party, with Reagan. They have been taking place for the last 10-15 years, under both Republican and Democratic administrations. The Reagan administration only rapidly intensified the attacks.

In contrast to 1945, when close to 38% of U.S. labor was organized into unions, today less than 17% of labor is organized, making the U.S. working class one of the least organized in the industrial countries of the world. Concessions from workers are being forced: wage cuts, cuts in benefits, rollbacks in protective legislation and labor rights, two-tier systems, rollbacks in civil rights legislation, etc., have become the guiding principles of capital and government.

Meeting of the Logia Puertorriqueña of the International Workers' Order in the 1940s.

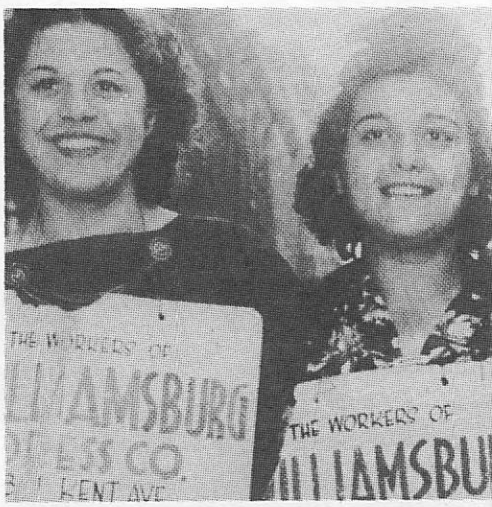
Industry in America has been collapsing. Factories have shut down, many running to areas of unorganized, cheap labor in order for the *patrones* to realize their super-profits. And when labor, especially the public sector work force, dares to fight and strike against these attacks, the Reagan government steps in on the side of capital and invokes the "Taft-Hartley Act" (which denies federal workers the right to strike, secondary support boycotts of labor solidarity, etc.) to bust the unions, as in the case of PATCO. When some federal workers support candidates in opposition to Reagan, the government then pursues the "Hatch Act" in an attempt to indict the labor leaders and throw them into jail for "supporting political candidates." All this in the "Democratic" USA!

Brief History of Struggle of the Puerto Rican Worker in the U.S.

Ever since Puerto Ricans came to the U.S., as early as 1899, we organized into labor caucuses like "La Resistencia" in the International Cigar Workers Union.

The first pioneer Puerto Ricans who came to the U.S. often already had union backgrounds. Puerto Ricans sought out the unions as the most viable organization to protect their rights.

> In the early 1930's Puerto Rican women began to enter the garment industry and were organized into the International Ladies Garment Workers Union. Other organziations, like the National Maritime Union, the Papermakers, and Bakery and Confectionery Workers Union, experienced the first influx of new members from Puerto Rico during World War 2; but for most unions, the post-war period brought the first large-scale in-migration of Puerto Ricans . . . 51% of adult Puerto Ricans in N.Y.C. were members of labor organizations. [13]



Puerto Rican women garment workers.

The Puerto Rican workers who came after World War II were often inexperienced, unorganized workers from the rural sectors of Puerto Rico. Upon coming to New York City they confronted language problems, racism, slum dwellings, and a lack of political rights. Hence, unions were often the only places where the Puerto Rican worker went to acquire assistance. But even there, where "labor solidarity" is supposed to be a principle, we confronted racist abuses and neglect. From our initial immigration, the Puerto Rican worker was forced to caucus separately to discuss issues and strategies on how to fight for our rights in the labor movement.

Some unions, like DC65 (today a UAW affiliate) and the National Maritime Union, established "union contracts which specifically prohibited 'discrimination'" and, hence, contributed to the occupational mobility of Puerto Rican workers. [14] These unions operated:

> hiring halls and vigorously enforce a policy of nondiscrimination, making opportunities for better paying jobs available on a seniority basis. In the latter, this power has been used to introduce Puerto Ricans in shops where they have never been employed before, to open the way for movement to higher skill classifications and even to break patterns of segregation where employers tended to hire only Puerto Ricans, thereby

isolating the newcomer group from other union contacts. [15]

Unions like the ILGWU, Hotel Trades Council, IBEW, etc., offered many educational programs to advance the educational, occupational and organizing skills of the Puerto Rican worker. Some unions, like DC37, offered such services as counseling, while others were active in community-related struggles.

These practices, along with the victory of a union contract as the only guarantee to offer some form of medical coverage, semi-decent salary, and rights at the workplace, were often the cause for Puerto Rican workers seeking out unions. But most important of all, the union was perceived to be the only viable organization at the workplace that provided a measure of protection and struggle against the injustices of the racist boss.

Local 1199 hospital workers' strike in 1984.

The following was reported in 1954 in regards to Puerto Rican workers:

> There are 65,000 organized Puerto Rican workers in New York City . . . There are 138,000 unorganized Puerto Rican workers, or two-thirds of the Puerto Rican labor force! For years, the Puerto Rican workers have participated in the trade union movement . . . The Puerto Rican worker understands that the only real weapon he has to make the bosses pay him a standard wage is to belong to a trade union. The Puerto Rican worker knows that the only possibility he has of attaining a skill rating is by belonging to a trade union . . . For him to join a fighting trade union is not a question of abstract ideal, but a matter of immediate self-interest, more than that, for the Puerto Rican worker it means survival. [16]

In the 1950s and 1960s, many of the AFL-CIO locals which Puerto Ricans and Blacks belonged to in New York City were "racket unions" or "paper unions."

In 1958 AFL-CIO officials estimated that

> 30,000 Puerto Ricans were enrolled in 'racket unions.' Existing with the connivance of employers who seek to avoid unionization by legitimate labor unions, 'racket union' organizations sign contracts which provide for dues collection by the employer often without the consent of the employees and wage scales at the legal minimum. They are known as 'paper unions' because they hold no membership meetings and provide no service to their members. (They are characterized by these features:) workers who protest against these collusive arrangements and are fired and 'blacklisted' among other employers in the same industry; union officials who collect fees on the promise of providing jobs and disappear with the money; Puerto Ricans who receive lower rates of pay than non-Puerto Ricans for the same work . . . [17]

Puerto Rican rank and file workers began to seek out ways to organize against these abuses, both within the labor movement and in the community. The Puerto Rican workers sought assistance in the exposure of "racket unions" from such institutions as the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico Migration Division, community organizations, the Association of Catholic Trade Unionists, etc. Within labor, Puerto Ricans united with Black workers to expose this situation. As well, Puerto Rican workers had to organize themselves into what some call an illegal or non-recognized caucus of Puerto Rican workers.

As a result of much public exposure, the AFL and the CIO were forced to begin to address these problems. In the early 1950s a "Labor Advisory Committee on Puerto Rican Affairs in New York City" was formed to attempt to deal with the problems confronting the Puerto Rican worker. But even such an "advisory committee" was opposed by various labor leaders for being "divisive."

While the phenomenon of racket unions existed with independent unions, it also existed with various locals of AFL and CIO unions. After the AFL-CIO merger, a "Committee to End Exploitation of Puerto Ricans and Other Minority Groups" was formed as an official part of the council structure. The Central Labor Council of New York announced it would raid all unions

deemed guilty of exploitation and threatened strike action against all employers who continued collusive contracts. But later this policy was limited to the independent unions. The AFL-CIO unions guilty of being "racket unions" were then reported to an Ethical Practices Committee which had the power to recommend expulsion. Such actions contributed to the expulsion of locals and eventually the entire Teamsters Union, as well as locals from the International Jewelry Workers Union. But the results were disappointing because these locals often set up independent unions, retaining their old officers, and continuing their control over union treasuries and collective bargaining contracts.

It appears that in the 1980s, while unions are being busted, the AFL-CIO has closed its eyes to racket unions, both independent and within the AFL-CIO. The struggles of Puerto Rican labor activists in the '60s against such issues as racket unions and other issues of union democracy, along with the growth of a militant movement of Puerto Ricans fighting for democratic rights in the communities (Young Lords Party, El Comité, Movimiento Pro-Independencia, Puerto Rican Socialist Party), assisted the process of forcing many issues of concern to the Puerto Rican movement to be addressed.

By the late 1960s and early '70s, aside from activities of the Puerto Rican labor activists mentioned above, there developed also a radical, but dual unionist, tendency in the Puerto Rican sectors of labor in New York City. One such formation was the Health Revolutionary Unity Movement (HRUM) and later the Puerto Rican Workers Federation. These formations developed in reaction to the lack of real union democracy, chauvinism and racism, and lack of militancy in various unions. These groupings were influenced by the Black and Puerto Rican radical movements and did much to link the struggles of Puerto Ricans in the U.S. with the struggles in Puerto Rico, the Black struggle in the U.S. and with struggles of oppressed peoples around the world. These groups fought not only for economic demands, but raised many political issues such as "workers' control of the workplace" and "free quality health care." Such demands were supported by thousands of workers. However, all these formations were short-lived and passed away due to their inability to rally the majority of the Puerto

Rican and Latino workers to many of their tactics and policies. Nevertheless, formations like HRUM did contribute to the growth of militant Puerto Rican and Latino labor activists in New York City.

Other less radical, yet controversial, independent worker formations were formed in the '60s and '70s like the United Tremont Trades, Economic Survival, and others, who sought special campaigns and methods for job creation for Puerto Rican and Black workers. Still other trade unionists, who confronted various problems of racism, lack of democracy, etc., in the AFL-CIO, tried a path of splitting with the AFL-CIO to form independent unions. The combined activities of the rank and file Puerto Rican labor activists battling racket unions, fighting for union democracy and proportional representation in the AFL-CIO, along with the development of the Puerto Rican radical movement in New York City, and its influence in New York City labor via HRUM, the Puerto Rican Workers Federation, and the spread of newspapers (like *Obreros En Marcha*, *Palante*, and *Claridad*), were background conditions when Harry Van Arsdale of the New York City Central Labor Council proposed the creation of the Hispanic Labor Committee in 1969, which would address the particular concerns of the Puerto Rican worker. With the Hispanic Labor Committee, we have the rise of more participation of Puerto Rican/Latino trade unionists in the New York City labor council.

October 1970 demonstration at United Nations in support of Puerto Rican independence.

Hence, the struggles of Puerto Rican workers in New York City have been very rich. We have labor activists who eventually formed the core of what is today known as the Hispanic Labor Committee, labor activists who for various reasons split with the AFL-CIO to form independent Puerto Rican worker formations, and the more radical labor activists who sought to link up economic with political issues and to link our struggles with those of workers and oppressed throughout the world. Largely untouched, however, has been a real plan to organize the unemployed Puerto Rican worker, youth, women, and the development of a united front strategy that could bring all

the *progressive* forces from the above together to insure a united movement of Puerto Rican and Latino labor. This is a task which we in the Puerto Rican Labor Task Force are committed to.

The Puerto Rican Worker in the AFL-CIO

By the 1950s and 1960s, up until the present, Puerto Ricans made up close to 10% of New York City population, yet almost 15% of the membership of New York City unions! Nationwide, it is estimated that about 30% of Latino workers are unionized. However, today only 5.0% of Latino men and 0.9% of Latina women are part of the union leadership. In 1970 it was estimated that a little more than 1,000 Puerto Ricans were "functioning as union officers in positions ranging from shop steward to local union president," but that only "150 Puerto Ricans are now working as full-time union officials in New York City." [18]

Even the little representation that Puerto Rican workers have today in the union has to still be fought for. Unions like the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) in New York City are majority Puerto Rican/Latino, Asian, and Black. ILGWU Local 22 is majority Latino. Reflecting the flight of garment shops away from New York City and the success of union busting tactics, the membership of this local has declined from 25,800 in 1953 to about 7,000 today.

Addressing the issue of proportional representation of the leadership reflecting the rank and file, Geoffry Fox, editor of the *Hispanic Monitor*, recorded the following comment from the Puerto Rican secretary-manager of Local 22:

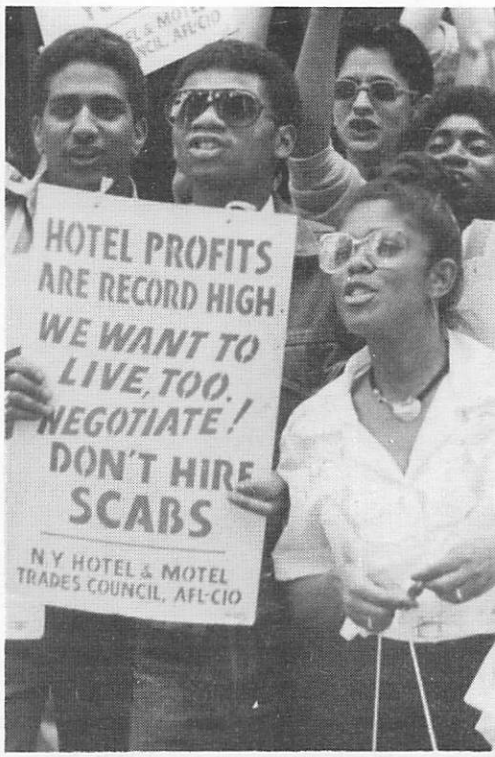
> We do have, I daresay, the highest percentage of Hispanics in the officer ranks of any . . . union in the city of New York. Right now we're down to just two in this local because of the heavy attrition in the industry and membership . . .
>
> . . . the Puerto Rican secretary-manager of Local 22, regardless of his largely honorary title of international vice president, does not control even the health and welfare funds that business

agents of his local collect from employers . . . [19]

In other words, where there is advancement to union leadership positions, there is still the problem of the Puerto Rican trade union official having real power as opposed to just token power. The ACTWU in New York City is over 50% Latino, yet the leadership has yet to reflect the membership. The same is true of the Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees Union (HERE), which is probably more than 50% Latino.

Officials from Local 485 of the International Union of Electrical Workers (IUE) reported in 1978 that 45% of its members are Latino, 45% Black, and 10% other. They noted that the leadership of this local is controlled by Black and Puerto Ricans. However, they are quick to point out that membership has declined 40% in the past years to a low of 3,000, as a result of plant closings and layoffs.

Other unions like the Teamsters, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, SEIU 32B-32J, UAW DC65, and the taxi unions, etc., have a large composition of Puerto Rican and Latino workers. However, actual participation and proportional representation of Latino leaders in these unions are hard to find. Very few of these unions even have Spanish newspapers or publications. The ILGWU and District 65 are a few who make some effort to produce a bilingual or Spanish union newspaper.



NY hotel workers walked out in June 1985 against a wide series of takeaways.

But even if unions have some Latino representation or a Spanish publication, this does not automatically mean union democracy exists. Many rank and file workers will tell you that all this represents is tokenism. While many union officials place the blame for Puerto Rican unemployment, lack of occupational advancement, unskilled labor force, etc., on the problems of language, ignorance, low education, wrong time to migrate to the U.S., lack of initiative, passivity, and other stereotypes, many Puerto Rican workers and activists have expressed differing viewpoints.

In a 1970 report on "Puerto Ricans as Union Members," the following complaints and frustrations about

their union experiences were reported:

> 1. corruption; 2. low wages; 3. poor servicing of shops; 4. discrimination and/or restricted opportunities for advancement to skilled jobs; 5. not enough programs designed to meet their off-the-job problems; 6. limited channels for communication among Puerto Ricans; 7. lack of the ethnic representation at the leadership and policy making levels; 8. under-utilization of Puerto Rican staff. [20]

In our four years of existence thus far, the New York City Puerto Rican Labor Task Force has already encountered numerous cases where union delegates, presidents and business agents refuse to properly defend Puerto Rican workers' grievances and unjust firings. We have been witness to, and have witness of, cases where union officials refer to Puerto Ricans as "spic," "trouble-makers," "lazy," "the source of drugs," etc. While we are very much aware that the times today are one of union-busting, discrediting unions, we cannot and must not stand idly by while such racists within our ranks assist capital by refusing to defend our interests and instead cause racist divisions within the ranks of labor.

Such racist officials must not be allowed to continue within our ranks. We need to combat such conditions by becoming more active in the rank and file, forming caucuses, uniting with other workers in the fight for union democracy, raising our voice at meetings and via newsletters, newspapers, leaflets, creating a network of contacts with workers in all other sectors, having meetings and activities at the workplace, etc. We must insist that our particular concerns are addressed and become part of the general demands of all of labor. As a result of such grass-roots organizing, we will produce real, militant leaders and fighters for our rights, trained not in schools and universities, but in the heat of the class struggle for our rights.

Today, after 90 years of participation in the labor movement in New York City, 16 years after the found-

ing of the Hispanic Labor Committee, after numerous reports and conferences, and the creation of several programs geared toward Puerto Rican/Latino workers, the problems of chauvinism and racism in important sections of the AFL-CIO remain. So do the problems of racket unions, proportional representation for minorities and women in the unions, organizing the unorganized sector, the unemployed, terroristic raids upon Latino American immigrants, bilingual contracts, newspapers, and the right to caucus, etc.

In February 1984, Jackie Presser, president of the Teamsters Union, made a racist proclamation that "illegal aliens," i.e., Haitians, Cubans, Mexicans, and Puerto Ricans, were to blame for the socio-economic crisis in the U.S. We were categorized as "aliens." And all other oppressed nationalities were castigated as a national security problem for Americans! This was the proclamation by the president of the largest industrial union in the U.S., which, coincidently, probably has close to one-third of its membership composed of Latino workers. That the racist Presser made such a statement is no surprise. However, what was incredible was the lack of response by the rest of labor to such a divisive statement. It was mainly Latino trade unionists, the Latino community led by the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, and the Teamsters for a Democratic Union who provided a public rebuke to Presser's racism.

Various Efforts in the Puerto Rican/ Latino Labor Sectors in New York City

While there is much organizing work to be done, there are efforts which attempt to address the issues which concern Puerto Rican and Latino workers. The following is only a brief description of some of the formations and their priorities regarding Latino workers.

1. **Labor Council for Latin American Advancement.** The LCLAA was formed in 1974 on the initiative of the AFL-CIO. LCLAA is composed principally of Latino trade union leaders (Chicanos, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, and other Latin American trade union leaders residing in the U.S.) throughout the AFL-CIO. In the past years, the New York City chapter of LCLAA has mainly been involved in mobilization for voter registration of the Latino community; promoting the contributions of

Latino people and culture within organized labor; supporting Latino politicians; supporting non-Latino politicians who demonstrate concern for Latino people; recruiting more Latino workers to participate in the organized labor movement; and seeking to strengthen the ties of the Latino communities and the utilization of the media for the Latino community.

Many LCLAA members have been known to be supportive of the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), what many progressive labor activists dub as the "AFL-CIA." While AIFLD claims to uphold "free trade unionism" in Latin America, it has often been exposed as a conduit for CIA subversion of progressive, democratic, and revolutionary workers movements in Latin America. It has been claimed by many that 25% of AIFLD's budget has gone to support CIA activities in Latin America. Many rank and file labor activists raise these concerns regarding LCLAA.[21]

2. **Hispanic Labor Committee.** The HLC was created in 1970. It serves as an advisory committee to the New York City Central Labor Council. It is composed of Puerto Rican and Latino trade unionists, often leaders of various locals. It seeks to be a vehicle where Latino workers can seek assistance with the problems we confront daily. The HLC also seeks the involvement of the city's Latino community in the electoral process, fighting for the political empowerment of Latino communities. The HLC particularly seeks to push for organizing the unorganized and, like LCLAA, has particularly campaigned in favor of a general amnesty for undocumented immigrant workers. The HLC also seeks the education and involvement of rank and file Latino workers in the ranks of organized labor. The HLC membership is open to independent unions as well, like the Teamsters, etc. It too seeks to link its ties to the Latino communities. Within the HLC, views differ in regards to the role of AIFLD in Latin America.

3. **Puerto Rican/Latino Leadership Studies Program.** The PRLLSP is a leadership training and educational program provided mainly for Puerto Rican and Latino workers, organized and unorganized. It was developed in the early 1970s largely on the initiative of Lois Gray, director of the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations and a researcher and educator on Puerto

Ricans in the U.S., and Edward Gonzalez, a longtime labor and community organizer, faculty member of the Cornell School of Industrial and Labor Relations, and the first Puerto Rican labor arbitrator. The PRLLSP was started with the understanding that "the workers who needed workers' education the most are getting the least." This program, with the assistance of the HLC, has sponsored annual educational conferences since 1972 addressing various issues of concern to the Puerto Rican and Latino worker in New York City. The PRLLSP provides an opportunity for many rank and file workers to gain an education, assimilate many organizational skills, and share experiences of labor organizing with other labor activists.

4. **Coalition of Latin American Trade Unionists.** The call for a CLATU was made in 1982 by progressive Puerto Rican, Chicano, and Latino American trade unionists residing in the U.S. It sought to include only Latino trade unionists, but sought to promote progressive and anti-imperialist issues which affected Latino workers in the U.S. It made an open demarcation with such institutions as AIFLD, for opposition to the Simpson-Mazzoli Bill, and for progressive labor legislation. While CLATU issued one bulletin, it has yet to actually materialize.

5. **N.Y.C. Labor Task Force of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights (L.T.F.-N.C.P.R.R.).** The Puerto Rican Labor Task Force was created on the initiative of labor activists who attended the 1982 New York State Convention of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights, a new, nationwide Puerto Rican civil rights organization. At the August 27, 1983, March on Washington for "Jobs, Peace and Freedom," the LTF made its public presence known with the initiation of its bimonthly bulletin, *Puerto Rican Worker/Obrero Boricua.* The LTF is open to all Puerto Rican and Latino workers, unionized, non-unionized, unemployed, male, female, young and old. The LTF is committed to the education and organization of the Puerto Rican and Latino worker in New York City. It seeks to publish its newsletter as an educational and organizing tool to rally the rank and file worker in the struggle for rights in the working class. The LTF seeks to create a Puerto Rican Workers Educational Center in our community where various

labor schools and organizing techniques can be taught to the rank and file worker. As well, the LTF has assisted workers in handling grievances in those cases where the unions fail to properly represent the Latino worker. The LTF is committed to joining with other progressive, democratic rank and file workers movements in the rest of the U.S., and has joined in solidarity with the movements in support of self-determination for Puerto Rico, the Central American nations, and other movements fighting for their self-determination.

A Proposal of Tasks for a National Labor Task Force of the National Congress for Puerto Rican Rights

The LTF has committed itself to contribute to the formation of a National Labor Task Force of the N.C.P.R.R. which would seek to bring together Puerto Rican/Latino workers in a dialogue, with the object of convening a Puerto Rican Workers' Conference to address the issues and strategies which Puerto Rican workers must pursue today. (The first and second conventions of the N.C.P.R.R. resolved to work towards the

September 1986 march in the Bronx against racist attacks.

convening of a Puerto Rican Workers' Conference.) With this objective in mind, the LTF, along with representatives of the Puerto Rican Alliance Workers' Committee of Philadelphia, advanced the following proposal to the National Labor Task Force of the N.C.P.R.R. for developing a plan of action that would guide Puerto Rican and Latino labor activists:

1. THE FIGHT FOR JOBS AND JUSTICE. This entails the fight to realize the following issues and/or demands: jobs or income now; for the extension of unemployment benefits and an end to the racism and bureaucracy of the unemployment centers; for the right to use and communicate in the native language of all minority workers in all sectors of labor; the fight for socially productive jobs that benefit the population, e.g., for the economic conversion of the military budget; for equal rights and affirmative action with quotas; for a national health insurance; for rights of welfare recipients and abolition of workfare; for job training; for the abolition of exploitive piece-work and home-work; for legislation against runaway shops; against the sub-minimum wage for youth, etc.; for equal pay for comparable work for women; for 30 hours work for 40 hours pay as a principal means to realize many of the above demands.

2. TO UPGRADE WORKERS' EDUCATION AND TO IDENTIFY THE RECENT TRENDS IN LABOR. This entails the task of educating Puerto Rican workers by various means (newsletters, forums, special classes, public activity, informational pickets, film showings, etc.) of our rights (or lack of rights), and of the need to know and understand the consequences of various trends in labor such as the rise in high technology. This focus aims at the realization of the following goals and areas of education: the establishment of Puerto Rican Workers Education Centers as a means to conduct on-going activities on workers' rights; the importance of understanding the need to adopt a "no concessions" stance in the various contract struggles; training in how to organize unions and how to function in existing unions; importance of being more familiar with legislative laws which affect labor and the role of the National Labor Relations Board; the importance of understanding such trends as runaway shops, hi-tech industry, economic conversion of the military budget, the rollback in affirma-

tive action, etc., and its consequences for Puerto Rican labor and the rest of the working class.

3. FOR THE RIGHTS OF THE MOST OPPRESSED SECTORS IN THE WORKFORCE. Puerto Rican and other Latino and immigrant workers are often found working in such unstable and slave-like conditions as those faced by welfare recipients forced to work in workfare programs, migrant farm workers, and in piece-work and/or home-work. Activities conducted by such forces as the *Comité de Apoyo por Trabajadores Agrícolas* or the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, must be supported. This entails the need to conduct campaigns against such racist legislation as the Simpson-Rodino Act, to support activities by CATA, etc., to address the plight of workfare recipients, and to assist workers to organize against piece-work and home-work.

4. FOR UNIONIZATION AND UNION DEMOCRACY. Due to the large numbers of unorganized Puerto Rican workers and the lack of participation in the union of those who are organized, there is a need for Puerto Rican labor activists to address this area of work. Unions are one of the most important organizations in the life

of workers of all nationalities. Without unions, we would be subjected to an even more deplorable life. The struggle for unionization and union democracy entails rallying support for affirmative action and implementing the right to organize the unorganized, the right to Latino caucuses in the unions, the right to use the Spanish language in union affairs and contracts, the struggle for proportional representation in the unions for Latinos, all minority workers and women.

5. FOR INDEPENDENT POLITICAL ACTION. Too often it has been proven that the two existing political parties, the Republican and Democratic Parties, fail to really represent the interest of labor, and especially minority workers. It is of great importance for Puerto Rican workers to address the need of independent political action to effect the legislation needed by labor and minority workers. Such issues as the presidential elections, local elections, etc., need to be addressed. Other forms of struggles, aside from the electoral struggle, need to be studied and examined as forms of developing the independent action of workers.

6. LATIN AMERICA AND OTHER ISSUES OF U.S. FOREIGN POLICY. Puerto Rican and other Latino workers have come to the U.S. as a result of various serious conditions in their native lands. U.S. foreign policy affects us and labor tremendously. The Caribbean and Puerto Rico are being militarized by the U.S., while poverty increases in these areas. Puerto Rican labor must take a leading role in rallying the rest of labor against U.S. plans for using Puerto Rico as a military stepping stone to the rest of the Caribbean and Latin America. As well, such issues as the deployment of nuclear weapons in Europe, the use of our children as soldiers in the U.S. wars throughout the world, etc., must be opposed. It is vital that we conduct campaigns in this area of work throughout all of labor.[22] It is imperative that Puerto Rican and Latino workers wage a struggle in the U.S. labor movement to uphold the right to self-determination of Puerto Rico and all oppressed nations throughout the world. What we need is not U.S. military intervention and subversion in other countries, but the fraternal unity of workers from Latin America, Canada, Africa, Europe, etc.

In Conclusion

We urge labor activists and organizers to address the above, to form a network of contacts, to bring the various labor groupings together, so that we can move forward. As a beginning, we recommend that we exchange publications and that *all activists* assist us in the development and distribution of our newsletter, *Puerto Rican Worker.*

While real social change will come about via political power, it is false to address it solely as "Puerto Rican Power" or "Latino Power." The greatest source of power is rooted in the *united movement* of the most advanced class that has appeared on the face of the earth, the *working class.* It is our responsibility to insure that Puerto Rican workers, in their fight for democratic and equal rights in the U.S., join with the rest of the downtrodden in the U.S. in the fight for justice and against oppression.

¡Cuando el Obrero Hecha Palanté, No Hay Patroné que lo Aguanté! □

Reference Notes

[1] Puerto Rican Affairs Committee of the Communist Party, U.S.A., "Handbook on Puerto Rican Work, 1954," p. 21.

[2] Women's Task Force - N.C.P.R.R., "First Draft of Report on the Puerto Rican Women."

[3] New York State, Dept. of Labor, "Annual Planning Information for Manpower Planners, Fiscal Year 1982."

[4] Lois Gray, "Institutional Barriers to the Employment and Economic Mobility of Puerto Ricans in New York City," p. 33.

[5] "Annual Planning ... "

[6] Frank Bonilla, "Manos Que Sobran: Work, Migration, and the Puerto Rican in the 1980's."

[7] Miles Galvin, "A Report on the Puerto Rican Manpower and Leadership Training Project. ... " June, 1978, p. 18.

[8] Angelo Falcón, Institute for Puerto Rican Policy, "The Failure of Affirmative Action ... ," 1983.

[9] Geoffry Fox, "Hispanic Monitor," July 1984.

[10] "Annual Planning ... "

[11] W.T.F.-N.C.P.R.R. "First Draft of Report on the Puerto Rican Women."

[12] "The City Sun," April 3-9, 1985.

[13] Lois Gray and Edward Gonzalez, "Puerto Ricans as Union Members," March 13-14, 1970, p. 4.

[14] *ibid.*, p. 16.

[15] *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

[16] "Handbook on Puerto Rican Work ... "

[17] "Puerto Ricans as Union Members," p. 6.

[18] *ibid*, p. 15.

[19] Geoffry Fox, "Hispanic Organizers and Business Agents in the New York Apparel Industries," April, 1984.

[20] "Puerto Ricans as Union Members," p.21.

[21] For more information regarding the controversy on AIFLD, see "Hispanic Organizers ... ," pp. 33-34.

[22] New York City and Philadelphia labor activists of N.C.P.R.R., "Ad Hoc Proposal for a National Labor Task Force."

Returns

Amiri Baraka

In 1984, while I was in Boulder, Colorado, teaching for a week at Naropa Institute, calling home I was told by my wife, Amina, that Nina Simone had suddenly arrived in Newark. In fact she was sitting outside our house in a car driven by a woman named Ja-Neece, who she sent into the house to ask Amina could she use the phone and also could she borrow our car.

Once inside, Nina told Amina she liked our house because it reminded her of Africa. In fact, she ended up staying, telling Amina that she wanted me to do her book.

As surprised as I was by Amina's revelation, it did put me immediately in mind of our last joint encounter with Nina at the West Village's Blue Note cafe. That had been wild enough, but now Amina was asking me what I thought, was it alright for Nina to stay.

As I said, what complicated Nina's appearance somewhat was the way we had gotten together just previously. For quite a few years the "word" on Ms Simone is that she was at least somewhat difficult to deal with.

Nina's series of misadventures with American promoters and club owners were always widely publicized. The fact that many times she was in the right and was trying to do what most of us wd do, defend ourselves, seldom got through.

But then the seemingly relentless negativity of certain critical events and periods in Nina Simone's life, while the subject of usually wildly imprecise rumors as well as the character assassination so popular with members of the "in crowd," to prove they are *in* the know, is notorious. Scandal, for instance, has proven eminently profitable, particularly when it's most bizarre, eg, in the pages of *The Enquirer*, &c.

Amiri Baraka is a well-known revolutionary playwright, poet and cultural worker. He is editor of *The Black Nation* Magazine and a member of the Central Committee of the League of Revolutionary Struggle (M-L).

However, there was some basis for the continuing story of Nina's "difficult" personality and eccentricities. The real story in a general and psychologically essential way is that Nina has been frustrated with failed marriage, isolation from family and finally a career in the US and internationally that once soared to dramatic and historically significant heights, but that career had "trailed off" and become almost non-existent, as she grew more and more unable to cope with the complex negativities of racism, male chauvinism, the rigors of the performer's life, personal and romantic and family frustration.

Amina and I saw Nina one night earlier that summer at NY's Blue Note, a West Village jazz joint in the literally funky tradition of the old "Jazz Corner of the World," Birdland. Nina had already had run-ins with the management about her bread. And she was slapping at the piano every once in awhile, almost as an afterthought, but what she did continuously and finally to both audience and management's distraction was *talk*.

Nina complained about her and our lives. She talked about her loneliness, her fears, her needs, her past, her seemingly endless frustrations. And while the most progressive of us wish performers would talk more, to the extent that they utilize their stage to expose the real "causal connections" of society, Nina seemed to talk almost as a defense against performing.

At the completion of the gig, the frustration rose to an even more intense level, as the owners of the club refused to pay Nina, according to Nina, all the money she expected, because her "excessive talk," according to them, had driven customers away.

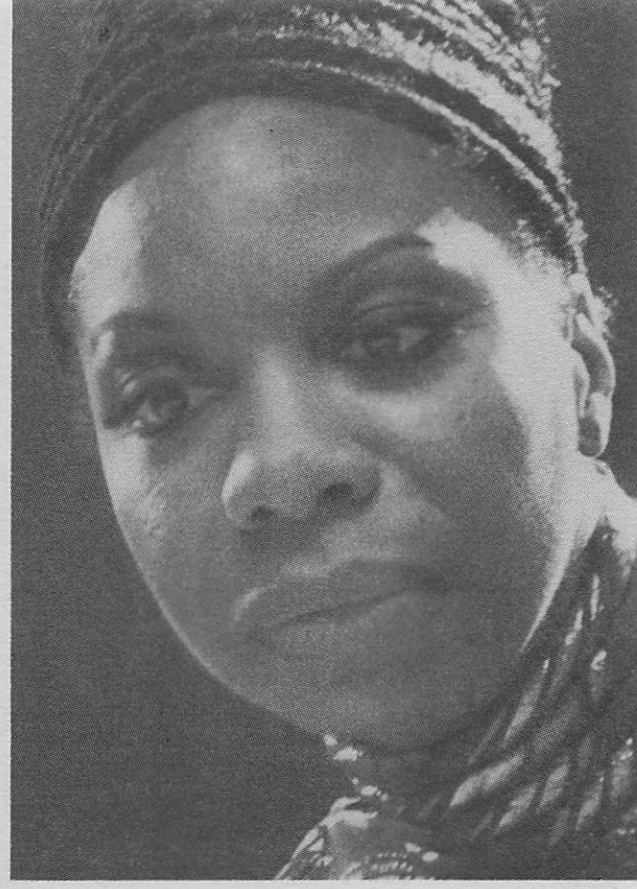
When Amina and I were there, however, the joint was "jammed up," people everywhere. At one point of her talk, Nina was brought the information that my wife and I were in the club. (The last time I had seen her was at Rev. Daughtry's church in Brooklyn, a year or so before, making an appearance during one of the National Black United Front's regular Brooklyn rallies.)

But now she called through the microphone for me to come up to the stage. As I finally moved to go up, it reminded me of the time I heard Jimmy Baldwin went up on the Village Gate stage and sat on the bench with Nina and "steadied her," the tale went (confirmed by Baldwin) through one set, even joining in with her in impromptu "duets" on some of the tunes.

This is essentially what she wanted that night. Someone who would add to her confidence. Who could be a focus for her and the audience's "sounding" (measure, polemic, song). She actually wanted me to sit on the stage with her as she played and sang.

But as her drawn out introduction and its response subsided and she saw that I had no intention of remaining on the stage, she asked me what song I wanted to hear her perform. I said, almost automatically, "Four Women," the 1960's hit which stirred people with its class-caste analysis of black women's lives historically.

"That's a hard piece," she burred, "Why do you want such a difficult piece?" But I was coming off the stage. She sang the piece very simply, and with almost no elaboration. Very much unlike the intense and dramatic 60's version.



* * *

Nina, during this period, did have a tendency to be emotionally demanding even in her slightest relationships. She sometimes attacked people unjustly in conversation, or dismissed them. Because she had been exploited, "Used," so many times, she adopted a "get you before you get me," attitude.

The camp followers, sycophants, would be in-crowders, aging groupies, who tail and complicate performers' lives, Nina demanded be *useful* to her, not just the fluorescent gas of the comet's tail.

A woman, alone, on the road, constantly beset by these characters and a few worse beside, can be made deeply protective, and paranoid. For one thing Nina feels that she has never really received what she deserves in accolades or wealth from her career. Though that career has made her a historically important African American artist, a charismatic institution.

At the same time, the Streisands, Shores, Ronstadts, with less talent, have reaped far more benefits. She knows, as does any person really clear about American life, that such injustice is rooted in the racism and class bias of the society's history and development. But many times knowing something does not kill the attendant pain or frustration.

Her greatest hits, ie those with deepest hooks in the Black and progressive communities, identify, oppose, ridicule these negative constants of American life. Still, singing or writing poems about ugliness need not necessarily assuage its personal effect on the singer.

* * *

Nina Simone lived in Europe almost 15 years. She refused to live in New York, saying it would kill her. It reminded one of Jimmy Baldwin's consistent identification of the US as a multipersonified menace, to one's sanity and actual life. These were a couple of his reasons for becoming an emigre.

Nina had lived in the West Indies, Paris (where she still had an apartment when we hosted her in '84), Switzerland. But now, even though she had come back to the States on tour (which got disrupted) when we talked to her that summer of '84, she was wanting to come home. She was torn between what she knew this infernal society was and her longing to be among even *familiar* evil.

She made phone call after phone call back to Paris, checking on her apartment, making sure the rent was paid, even in her absence. She also called Jamaica, Great Britain, California, North Carolina and bunches of

other people in New York City. Checking on her dog, who was being held in the baggage department of the airline. (The next time she came, it was with another dog, a big blue one, people who bumped into it/us insisted looked like a "pit bull." Nina kept saying, "This is the oldest dog. A royal dog. This dog was bred to kill.")

Nina's presence in Newark early on was related to confrontations of one sort or another, like the blue dog. It was like she had been away and wanted, even she admitted, to come back. But that exile, Europe, and the bitterness it represented made Nina bitter and a bitter experience as well.

Plus, there are aging groupies, constantly auditioning sycophants, who are drawn to celebrities. Some are like deadly weights of unproductive indulgence, to take you out by being excessively at your service. Only, you guessed it, that service is their claim to immortality. And they "charge," in cold ways, as well, though not always coin.

Nina had a comet's tail of these. Odd, slightly deranged "fans," who wanted to live their lives with or even *as*, Nina. They were a shield to the world, at the same time, a substitute for it!

She frequently launched into these poor souls as vent to deeper, more easily definable, frustration.

Nina went through "Out" moments in Newark, alone and abetted by an American spirit that is like Dracula panic stricken at the rumors of daytime!

But the place that this city is as an emotional social connection quickly makes absurd less realistic modes of behavior. (Say What?) The citizens are too advanced for much okiedoke, even the state's!

Nina and Amina have a close emotional relationship. Nina Simone is a great artist. And she needs, more than anything, support and love!

* * *

One great night was a party we gave for Abbey Lincoln, who did a benefit for the Newark Jazz Society and Newark jazz radio station WBGO. Amina had pulled all this together and made it work. At our house at the party, Abbey scintillated in her striking beauty, and the two great artists talked and laughed and Nina's pride finally did give support to Abbey's night. At the Peppermint Lounge in East Orange, Abbey set the place on fire and Nina was announced and stood and was joyfully welcomed by the grooved-to-be-there grooving assembly.

To close friends, there were twin notes of cautious friendly respect with more than a flutter of defensive oaths. But in the end the whole night got up and flew!

This summer I thought Amina and us should go to the Hamptons, somehow. Nina volunteered to accompany us along with our five explosive and bullet-proof children. She was accom-

panied by a magazine writer who was interviewing her and whom she assumed would make a proper escort. But then he got in the wind not long after we "settled" at a cabin in a cut-rate but charming summer tourist site in Quogue.

We all swam, especially Nina, who complete with scuba diving paraphernalia, hit the water daily, and repeatedly, from early morning throughout the day. We also found ourselves racing up and down the Long Island shore, to get to one Hampton or another. We hung out one day with abstract expressionist painter, Ray Parker. Nina went out as passenger with their sons and some young girls, as the boys waterskied. Nina even claimed to have perceived the remote possibility of a fantasy romantic adventure she wanted to talk about.

Or we would be in Larry Rivers' front room in South Hampton, a pop-deco minimalist rehearsal room. Larry's young lady friend is pregnant. In his studio, he shows me some of the murals and detail drawings for his monumental and extravagantly impressive *History of the Jews*. Later, we ate fresh mussels plucked out the bay by Buddy Wirtshafter, an old head from the painter-Village 50's and 60's. With Nina restive in the back, Amina and I sailed up and down the dark Long Island roads discussing the world.

Sometimes in the cabin, or at our house in Newark, upstairs on the 3rd floor, Nina would sing. High and lilting, vulnerable as a worn and gorgeous dream. She sang and sang. Especially, when she was happy or light hearted, she sang and her song still fills the space with warm perception and the sensitive heart.

But Nina would still show up suddenly with newly turned fans, in this case two white women and the cabin's owner, whom she entertained with accounts of her stardom. In trade for whatever favors and ease of mind could be obtained so casually as conversation would allow. She set up dinners and transatlantic phone calls. Made appointments with real estate brokers to go looking at estates while I got a few hundred dollars for her from a magazine I write for for an interview.

Nina appreciates personalities like Rivers, himself a legend-in-the-making as well of very personal lifestyle and tastes. The two of them together would make a terrific tv series, with both playing themselves. From famous personalities Nina gets a sense of her own career, and what its value should have provided. Alas, but how can Art prosper in a society ruled by the dangerously undeveloped?

* * *

One afternoon we went into Bridgehampton to attend a gallery opening. Ray Parker was to meet us there, he had paintings in the show. When we left the tiny gallery we went up the street to a smooth looking supper club restaurant with, apparently, I'm told, a famous name. We went in, and the soft dark wood seemed rich, relaxed enough to have a relaxing shot or two. Except there was a gorgeous great grand piano, behind the bar, center spot. Nina saw it, and we could not resist.

She made the box sing high and tender. Some of the patrons recognized her. Her brother's "Saratoga" took on the weight of a classic. We shuddered and applauded. One woman bolted out of her seat to shake Nina's hand and beg her to come out to some school there on Long Island for pretty

fair money. The bartender told us he recognized her as well. That groovy feeling — the spontaneous grace humans are still capable of.

But then the Day Manager came up and sez he'll have to ask her not to play the piano. It's against club policy!

Everyone told him, but ignorance is very powerful in America. Yes, we were/ all crushed. It was like a television drama.

* * *

We left Nina on Long Island, after a few more days, with a poet named Max Schwartz, himself a practiced Nina watcher. But in a few months Nina was back, to do a program at Newark's Symphony Hall for school children.

Amiri and Amina Baraka.

As preface to this, Amina put together a celebration for Nina and newly installed Executive Superintendent of Newark Schools, an old friend of ours, Eugene Campbell.

This was a wonderful party. Nina singing. Assembled poets calling image Round Robins, singers, hot dancers. There were scores of Newark politicians, education activists, cultural workers and good party folks of all descriptions. We had a fabulous Chinese Sup catered by some very skilled comrades. Several political groups were in evidence. And the talk and laughter rolled around and through Nina. There was an atmosphere of great promise, somehow, and willed accomplishment.

Also, with this set, there was now an obvious trust and closeness between Nina, Amina and I. Though it is Amina, my wife, who I think has provided Nina with the strong, responsible yet compassionate friendship that has quite obviously helped her get adjusted to life in Weimar America.

There was some young guy trying to talk his set of over used adventure propositions. It was funny to practiced observers. We saw her whiz him off protesting that it was he who was the aggressor.

* * *

A few months later, Nina returned. This time a name we thought at times a figment of her imagination had formally become her manager. We hosted him and his aide, a black pleasant school teacher like executive officer with a smooth comforting rap.

What was interesting is that the rigorous and consistent work these two offered was something Nina needed and needs. The soft spoken Italian all business middle aged white haired Manager and his assistant were offering steady work, less hassles and a more stable situation.

Nina was buying his condo in L.A. and a motor home. Her newest secretary, a lank British actor with a skin of steel.

She did a Lincoln Center appearance for the Kool Jazz festival that

observers say was a triumph. There was a cancelled 2nd show at Town Hall, because of management's vagaries. But again, the 1st show was said to be dynamite.

After this program, we went with Nina, her manager, some other friends to The Angry Squire, because someone thought Nina wanted to see Dakota Staton. Nina was dressed in gold that night, with a gold tiara. We talked electoral politics at the table and the twisted path of political power — while Ms Staton's prescient contralto circled in and out.

* * *

When Nina returned on the next trip, she was featured at Hunter College in an Anti-Apartheid program. Time and again the nostalgic and sophisticated crowd rose to salute her. Her songs spoke of stronger more conscious times, when people our age thought it might be possible to smash injustice forever within our life time. But the songs put us in touch once more with the "sweetness" of struggle, the self conscious dignity. Digging Nina, then, was really digging all ourselves at perhaps the top of our acts! The crowd rose again and again, celebrating Nina and ourselves.

When she stayed with us this time, she mentioned that ex-Ebony writer, Phyllis Garland, had agreed to do her biography. Originally, she had said that Jimmy (Baldwin) was to do it. But then she said, he said he was too busy. For the last year or so whenever we'd meet she'd persistently ask me to write the book. But I did not think I had the state of mind nor the obligatory thickness of skin to prevail in such a project and was not so nimbly trying to toe-dance out of any commitment. Now Ms Garland was being considered.

We went to Newark's classic black watering hole, Carl Jones' *Bridge Club*, on Washington St and talked biography writing and writers, while old and young folks flowed by casually and not to pay their homage. One of Nina's deprivations she'd mentioned often, as a result perhaps of living so long in Europe, had been African American cuisine. Amina is a marvelous cook and scholar of dee potz, you can get testimonials from the many grooved palates that have gritted in our digs. And around these parts, next to Amina's and our immediate family's work, The Bridge Club is where it's at as far as top shelf A-A ie soul, food, is concerned. Filmmaker, Bill Greaves holds the one shot eating record here, during a film project in this city — two dinners eaten on the spot, with two desserts, and two dinners to go!

Phyllis did not do the book either.

* * *

Nicaraguan cultural attache, Roberto Vargas called for Amina and I to read in Washington, D.C., as part of a celebration for the anniversary of the Nicaraguan revolution. Amina got Nina to go and Vargas, a long time U.S. resident was ecstatic.

Even though one young Trotskyite, part of an American support coalition, embarrassed us and angered Nina by not recognizing her. It is one of the weaknesses of the American Left that they do not even know the peoples' heroes.

We went to OAS headquarters for a formal banquet and met several

MISSISSIPPI GODDAM

Alabama's got me so upset, Tennessee made me lose my rest,
And everybody knows about Mississippi goddam.
Can't you see it, can't you feel it, it's all in the air;
I can't stand the pressure much longer, someone say a prayer.
Alabama's got me so upset, Tennessee made me lose my rest,
And everybody knows about Mississippi goddam.

Hound dogs on my trail, school children sitting in jail,
Black cat cross my path, I think every day's gonna be my last.
Lord have mercy on this land of mine, we all gonna get it in due time.
Don't belong here, I don't belong there, I even stopped believing in prayer.

Don't tell me, I'll tell you, Me and my people just about due.
I've been there, so I know, they keep on saying 'Go slow.'
That's just the trouble — too slow,
Washing the windows — too slow,
Picking the cotton — too slow,
You're just plain rotten — too slow,
You're too damn lazy — too slow,
You thinkin's crazy — too slow,
Where am I going, what am I doing, I don't know. I don't know.
Just try to do your very best,
Stand up, be counted with all the rest,
'Cause everybody knows about Mississippi goddam.
Picket lines, school boycott, try to say it's a Communist plot.
All I want is equality, for my sister and brother, my people and me.

---

exiles from Reagan harassed Latin America, even Victor Navasky, editor of *The Nation.*

But the "Joint" was later, at an African owned club called Kilimanjaro, where an overflow crowd roared and screamed and Nina hypnotized us with "I Wish I Knew How It Felt To Be Free!" plus her classic version of Gershwin's "Porgy."

Nicaraguan and Chilean singers and dancers and Vargas himself with a powerful necessarily *engaged* poetry held us up as high as Nina had lifted us. Amina and I also read and Amina stood the audience up with her Xhosa singing which prefaces her poem "Soweto" as well as a poem about Nicaragua, which ends chanting "No Pasarán" *They will not pass!* — with echoes of the Spanish civil war, which was the watershed, as a result of the defeat of the Republican government by fascist Franco, of Fascism itself! So the Nicaraguan situation, especially seen in an international context,

You lied to me all these years, you told me to wash & clean my ears.
Talk real fine, just dress like a lady, and you'd stop calling me Sister Sadie.
But this whole country is corrupted with lies,
You all should die and die like flies
I don't trust you any more, you keep on saying, 'Go slow.'
That's just the trouble — too slow
Desegregation — too slow
Mass participation — too slow
Unification — too slow
Do things gradually — too slow
Will bring more tragedy — too slow

Why don't you see it, why can't you feel it?
I don't know, I don't know.
You don't have to live next to me
Just give me Equality.

Everybody knows about Mississippi,
Everybody knows about Alabama,
Everybody knows about Mississippi goddam.

Words and Music — Nina Simone

---

seems like it is being made "an example," in the same way that Republican Spain was, by Reagan's apartheid supporting government!

The inspiring clarifying cultural program raised the spirit of everyone in the place. It was a celebration and the people shouted their love at Nina all night.

* * *

What is encouraging is how much more realistic and functioning Nina has gotten since visiting with us and waltzing around this scene. A smooth and joyous birthday party for playwright, screenwriter, Richard Wesley in Montclair, given by his wife, writer, Valery Wesley. Nina sang shyly and quietly, "Porgy," and people hugged each other, so happy were they to be there.

At another set, this one after the anti-apartheid program, at poet,

Rashidah Ismaili's Harlem spot. And there, among a significant presence by New York's Black and Latino literateurs, again there was a similar kind of leavening and courageousness, coupled with the warmth of straight out appreciation, that even South African poet, Duma Ndlovu, who arranged the program and party is filled up with the realization that yes; it is one struggle and Africa, despite the slave trade and the diaspora, is still "one," in pain, but in motion!

Essence magazine, which had earlier sent poet, Alexis Deveaux to interview Nina, sent a chauffeured limousine to bring her to New York City for photos. They styled her hair African contemporary, which made the photos they took reveal the smoldering sexuality of the singer.

At Hunter, she had finally gathered in the whole audience with her love chants and work songs. Her tearful ballads of love requited and un-.

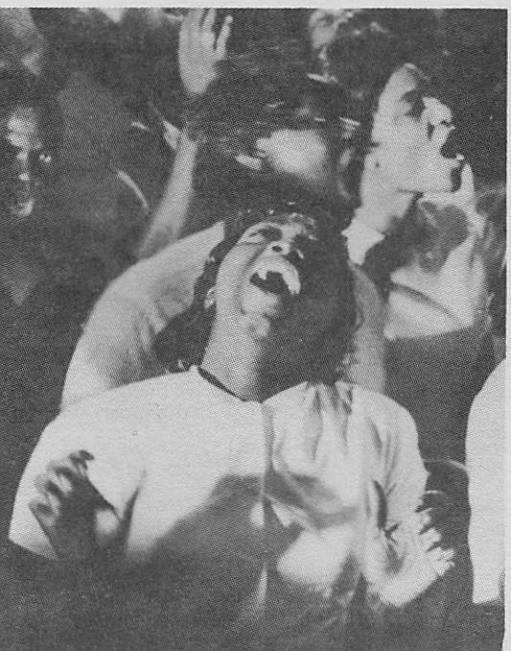
Nina's voice, never overpowering, is an even more fragile instrument. As she works more regularly, which seems now to be the case, she will get stronger and more in control. Still she has a sound and presence that sums up a whole epic of human feeling.

Nina's songs wring feeling from us like the shudder of an authentic tragedy. She digs deeply into her self and so likewise into us. It is as revealing as a biography.

What is it like to be Black and a Woman? A great artist, repressed and *intentionally* obscured by the garbage and venom of the music industry monopolists? Nina gives the impression of wanting to be an artist in the "classic" sense, as related to a vanished mode of production. But the artist is *not* free. The most "successful" artists are co-signers of the social catastrophe. (That is the cost!) As one teacher has written, (the successful artists) are the fortunate whore foot troops of the state!

But Nina, as seemingly exposed as she sometimes seems, is also predictably wise — canny and defensive. She has said she thought "they" wouldn't forgive her for her 1960's consciousness raising songs. "Four Women," "Mississippi Goddam," "Young, Gifted & Black," as a few for instances, among the myriad other celebrations, exhortations and common yet unique personal grief.

Gospel music was an important early influence on Nina Simone.



"But those are the songs the people love you for," Amina was telling her. In opposition, I thought, to the schizophrenia and intimidation of artists by capital. Yet, Nina still sings these "redemption songs" as Bob Marley called them. And she is always writing new songs, e.g., "they have dust in their brains," to fit her continuing experience.

Nina at a party is the stuff of a hipper American musical. The person who is the center of the focus and irritated that that is not happening really enough. Yet someone whose demand for privacy is in her eyes. A round insinuating face, amazed yet passing for cynical. And nervous. Whose constant rap at one party was about various quickly conceived paradises anywhere else in the world, which avoided

manifestation only because certain hard to find elements were missing. And these elements "the stuff of dreams" apparently continue to be missing.

At an interview at the cabins in Long Island, she said straightfacedly that she was born in INCARNATION, North Carolina, then broke up at the reporter's seriousness at writing this INCARNATION down.

She talked about her childhood and early days. How deeply immersed her family was in the church. How her mother, to this day, still would prefer her singing and close to religion.

Nina also painted a striking portrait of her long passed father, who was central to Nina and apparently her relationship to religion and her family. Without her father, the church was less than magnetic to Nina. Yet its embrace is obvious throughout Nina's music. Her father, according to Nina, is still not too far away, and watching over her.


Nina Simone (Eunice Waymon) at age 12.

Nina was raised in and given the dramatic legacy of the Black church. Yet she also was partially molded by the formal musical training she received, piano lessons with concert professionals.

In fact it is perhaps one very critical factor of Nina's life that she began her study of European "classical" music at age 4, a "child prodigy." A white woman piano teacher heard Nina playing for the church and asked to train her. She studied with this benefactor five years. Nina calls her the "founder of my career," characterizing the relationship as that of having "two moms . . . one white and one black."

"The Eunice Waymon Fund" was set up and with contributions from people in Tryon and Ashville, N.C., Nina studied at Juilliard in NYC and the Curtis School of Classical Studies (Phila) for almost 20 years!

After high school Nina left Tryon for Juilliard, then to Curtis. She says she wanted to be a "black classical pianist." She had her 1st recital at 12 (Bach, Beethoven, Prokofiev, Chopin, Poulenc, plus "improvisations on classical and pop tunes"). One feature of her programs was to improvise a song named by members of the audience.

The fact that Nina's father was also an entertainer, keeps his memory close. He was a singer and dancer, before Nina was born. He owned a pressing plant. The depression ended all this, and for awhile he was a gardener and a handy man. Then, according to Nina, "He became a preacher . . . to please Mama, I might add."

Nina was the 10th of 12 children. But four of the children were lost very early. Her mother is an ordained minister in the Methodist church (34 years). At age 3, Nina was playing piano. Her favorite song: "God Be With You Till We Meet Again." "In the key of F," she hastens to add.

"I was too poor to know what notes were. I remember when (the piano) came into our house! It was my favorite toy. I like F sharp (G flat) B and E natural. My favorite keys.

"I wanted to leave Tryon," she smiles, "when I was three or four. I knew

somehow about the racial problem. I knew why my parents wouldn't talk about it. I knew I wanted to get out there.

"In school I had my 1st racial experience. I tried for a scholarship — and got turned down. I went to the other side of town and got a job accompanying students who were studying popular tunes.

"The 1st job I got was playing in Atlantic City. It was a job in a bar, $90.00 a week. I played everything I'd learned — Bach, Beethoven, Spirituals, 'My Funny Valentine,' 'Children, Go Where I Send Thee.'

"On the second night, the owner said, 'You want this job, you gotta sing!' So I began to sing all those tunes I was playing for the kids."

* * *

Nina's 1st big hit, of course, was Gershwin's "Porgy." She was opening by then at One Fifth Ave and the Village Vanguard. It was at this time she also began to release a steady flow of popular albums. She lists *Black Gold, Emergency Ward, Silk & Soul, Nina Simone & Piano,* a solo album (all produced by RCA) and *Fodder In Her Wings* (Carrere, Fr.) as perhaps the most popular.

Nina, during this time she crossed Amina and my paths was at a cross roads in her own life. She had been away from home a very long time. The indignities that had driven her away flowed off her lips like an injured Queen.

* * *

She speaks of her "sister," singer Miriam Makeba. Nina says that close friendship and 12 years of persuasion is what got her out of the U.S. in the first place.

Since she's been back Nina's moved along to a little higher ground emotionally and in terms of being a trifle more "secure" or at least less insecure.

But there is still such an intense sense of having been *had* by the whole of society. Nina will talk bad about both black and white folks at the same time or one at a time or with both in contradiction and beating each other to death. She hates management and those managed.

Fiercely patriotic (in the sense of love for the African American people) she is acid critical, and quite regularly so.

She is clearly a person struggling to come to terms with everything, in no specific order. The wonderful skill coupled with a life time of affront and frustration breeds a hair trigger paranoia, which when we understand American social life and the "madness of crowds" we can see is not just paranoia, but a kind of battle fatigue reserved for those in the public eye or ear.

Even in those earlier days of our friendship, when she had just come back to the States, already she had played the Village Gate, Blue Note, Swing Plaza, was talking with Fat Tuesday, Sweet Basil, The Chestnut in Philadelphia. A few minutes later she was in Town Hall, then Lincoln Center. In those days she was searching for a manager, which apparently she found, and times got obviously better, her temperament as well. But would it last?

There is no doubt that Nina's edgy candor throws some people. Her preemptive strike demeanor from time to time can put still others in flight.

When I talked to her on Long Island she said she'd come back to see her mother Mother's Day and her grandchild who she'd never seen who was 7 months old at the time. Nina has a daughter who's in the WAFS, stationed in Tucson. Part of her description of self frustration has to do with the distance, not just geographically, between she and her daughter.

"I don't like the US," she thrusts, " . . . its racial conflicts . . . its politics . . . the way it's hurt me in the past.

"I like its money. I try to collect money owed me. I haven't lived in the US in 20 years. I come back every five years to give a concert, if I can stand it."

The rain was holding off, just above our heads. Quogue was grey and cool.

"I'm never happy here — there's an extraordinary amount of pressure. Plus all the other things we know.

"Was that a sudden decision (to leave)? It took more than 20 years to get out, to make it clear.

"I come back for the money. And the money from pirated albums. You know my albums are *pirated* all over the world. I saw one a couple of weeks ago selling for $40.

"I guess it would be different, if I had more friends. (In Europe) it's difficult not seeing any more Black persons than I do." Even now, during the interview, she was wrestling with what she wanted to do.

"I'm trying to live here now for a short time — I'm not giving up my Paris residence. There's a peacefulness there. The people are not crazy. Americans are crazy!"

But since she has "returned," she has compromised perhaps in the sense that indeed she has stayed. She did get the manager she wanted. She did get that California condominium she'd talked about. Her life, with certain qualified exceptions, did get a great deal more stable.

For instance, at the end of the LI interview, she gave a list of things she wanted to do — her "in motion" list of life priorities. At the top was her autobiography (or biography). She's tried five or six times, and at this sitting there is no one certain.

She said also she wanted to make a video cassette, find a new manager. She wanted to work Atlantic City and Vegas and come out with a new album*.

(The album*, *Nina's Back* (VideoMusic) is just out, complete with a picture of Nina in only a wreath of gauze and a flower. Her back is turned toward us. But the album itself is *fantastic*! It is the strongest and most rewarding music she's done in years.

Plus this record, even with no coy punches pulled, is obviously looking for listeners. It has a mature, even spicy balance to it.

There are the R&B rooted "It's Cold" and "Another Lover" by asst Mgr Singleton, nice and pop-funky. Nina's biting and indelible originals, eg. "I Sing . . . ," which carries a Makeba like beat and feeling. Or the cold portrait of our entire

Album cover: Nina's Back.

I Sing Just To Know That I'm Alive

I'm alive
1985
Start on, now it's done
I came home — the only one
I'm alive in 1985
I'm alive in 1985

Sing just to know that I'm alive
I play just to feel that I'll survive

On this earth that's taking place
Where I'll need you just in case
Sing just to know that I'm alive

Oh the mountains they don't move no they don't
And the people they don't dance and they won't

I sing, I dance, I pray, I prance
I sing just to know that I'm alive

I sing ...
I sing just to know that I'm alive, Yes. Yes.

Written and Sung by Nina Simone
Nina's Back
Thandewyne Music (ASCAP)
1985 VPI Records

social personal, "Fodder." Her brother, Sam's striking ballad, "Saratoga," which always puts me in mind of something old as human compassion.

"Touching and Caring," is the most jazzical piece on the album. It has a swinging, yet touching quality.

But check the new version of "Porgy," with a sample of Nina "talking." She tells you her recent history and perhaps something about African American women that is as poignant in some ways as the recent wave of Black women writers.

There is literally a little something on this album for everyone with ears. And it is more than a "come back" album, it's a confirmation of Nina's stature as an important artist and I think part of a new blast of positive energy that is swelling perhaps in defense against the radical backwardness of contemporary America.)

The album is a sign of health and determination. That Nina Simone is still a talent and mind to be reckoned with.

The last words on the LI interview were typical of Nina at the time, when she had not long returned to the States. In telling me her plans, she ended by saying, after laying out the new album she planned to make.

"I wanna get married," She was grinning, "and honeymoon in Martinique. Go horseback riding in Galilee. Go on an African safari in Kenya . . . after which we (her proposed new husband and she) will live separately!"

Nina has come some distance since then — Amina and I still see her, whenever she comes near bouts. She insists we are her "family." She has even partially adjusted to our CENSORED children, as she calls them. We are still the listeners and furious talkers whom she screams current events in her cinemascopic expressiveness over the phone. She makes the most demands when she is most agitated.

But then the last time she showed, just before Christmas, the three of us, Amina, Nina and Me, went up to her Brother, Sam's place in Nyack, NY, near the great Toni Morrison (who was supposed to be there along with director, Gil Moses who is doing her *Dreaming Emmett* at SUNY Albany).

Sam and his co-host, playwright, screen dramatist, novelist, actor Bill Gunn (*The Black Picture Show*) presided. Sam Waymon is Bill's musical collaborator. Nina's somewhat younger brother is a singer, pianist, composer, who works frequently in clubs with his own group.

Sam has just received a 2.4 million commitment from backers to make a film, with Bill writing and Sam Waymon's music and topside direction.

Christmas afternoon, 1985, they serve us an exquisite & elegant Afro American American table. Nina, Amina and I, Sam's partner in record production, a black CBS cameraman, his wife and a young woman friend of Bill and Sam's.

An intimate merry occasion in the big wooden elegantly appointed 19th century country house, amidst the beautiful warm functional artifacts Sam & Bill have collected is a perfect setting for a 1st hearing of Nina's new record. We all gather, intensely satisfied by good food and potent spirits. Nina will not come into the room as we listen. The record producers with us say this platter can fly if given some media play. But then we all know the game, and the history that surrounds and animates Nina's name. But this work is so hot maybe maybe . . . we hope.

But Nina seems ecstatic in a quiet even humble way, like an audition sitting outside the room where we listen. In a few minutes she has asked Amina to sit in the other room with her.

On the drive back, my wife supports the idea of me doing Nina's book. And I say, Ok let's see if it can happen.

* * *

A day or so later, Nina intensely agitated because there is not enough happening, perhaps, gets her bags together and says she is going to Barbados. There is an ex-prime minister there who wanted to marry her.

She calls back a few times from Accra Beach, she is talking about her book. Then, a little later, she is back in Los Angeles, we hear from her again. A minute or so later we hear she is in London. But we still think of Nina as having returned! □

Amiri Baraka 2/2/86

POEM 3

Beating my brother a hard rain of sticks
defenseless my brother surrounded by police brutalized
humiliated my brother trampled and spat upon in
the throng stand up my word sharp clean full of
infamy stand up word and chant tell everyone of this
new humiliation this misery stand up word be good for something
stop being sweet or submissive stand up word become a poster
and a banner a protest stand up word and
let them see you everywhere in the sky over the sea stand up word
denounce with valor be combative this word of mine
speak for me tell them that my brother is dying at their hands

— ***Bertalicia Peralta***
From *Silence Zone*
Translation by Zoe Anglesey and Bessy Reyna

***Bertalicia Peralta** is a Panamanian poet who has won several Central American literary prizes.*

Zoe Anglesey, an author living in New York, has traveled extensively to Central America and translated the works of many Central American poets. She is the editor of Ixok Amar-go, *an anthology of Central American women's poetry, to be published in September 1987.*
Bessy Reyna is a Panamanian poet living in Connecticut who is working as an attorney.

The Radio

(for Albert McNeil and David Murray)

All these happily crazy men screamin with their horns,
all the invention
all the ingenuity
in this one little plastic box!

the big men captured with their hearts,
all the power, all the irony,
all the flames
insides their brains
smokin like funk - men (jazz is a neutral subject)
all the love riveting out their heads!
all the crazy love for black people's world

All these happily crazy men screamin liberation
and brotherhood and fraternity with their horns inside a
cloudy day

All the Joy despite anyway (black hands outstretched in freedom)
Even the triumph in a complex, paradoxical world . . . .

— ***Rodney M. McNeil***

***Rodney M. McNeil** is an African American community activist in Newark, New Jersey, and student at Rutgers University.*

This Poem Will Remain Long After the Machine Breaks Down

A machine built New Brunswick like no human could:
ten story corporate office buildings, futuristic
parking decks, and architecturally heartbreak hotels
put up faster (almost) than the human eye
could see old neighborhoods and storefronts
being torn down.
A machine built New Brunswick like no human would:
concrete parks with no swings nor slides,
no supermarket, but a half dozen gourmet
ice cream stores,
dirt cheap loans granted to the soil's
worst polluting enemies,
no movie theater, but a multi-million dollar
cultural center rerunning old plays at futuristic prices,
rents raised beyond even its own mechanical-lip
licking imagination,
and suit and tie nightclubs with disco strobe lights
to simulate New York.
The machine revved up its tank engines to drive out
the homeless and the poor, not homelessness
and poverty.
It gave its cabdrivers an official dress code.
It arrested blacks and puerto ricans
unless they followed the unofficial dress code.
It claimed there were no homeless from its city,
that homeless men were being imported from other cities
by activists looking to make trouble,
that the homeless did not need a roof—
they could walk to another county for a shower
and return just in time to hold a job.
The machine bought TV time to teach other
machines how to rebuild a town.
Its parts cheated on their wives and cheated
ex-wives out of fair divorce settlements.

Its corporate arm asked for pity when
its pain-relief product was tampered with
as it destroyed lives in New Brunswick
and participated in slave systems
that brought slaughter to South Africa.
It was immune to the law and grew very rich.
It won elections by appealing to human heartlessness
and love of machines.
The machine never had a human trait
until an enormous human ego grew
and the machine acted like it would rule forever.

But what car never eventually ceased?
What television built to last into 22nd century?
What farm tractor never became obsolete
after two decades?
What computer not obsolete after 2 years?
What's the future of New Brunswick's machine?
Unless American or Russian bombs
destroy all New Brunswick,
in the end the heartfelt word will triumph!
in the end, a roof at night for all!
in the end, consideration for the kids!
in the end, all races with a say
in the building of buildings!
in the end, the end of New Brunswick business
carrying South African apartheid economic leashes!
in the end, the end of New Brunswick hunger
and death-inducing hypocritical culture!
in the end, this poem already past
the point of erasure!
in the end, every machine breaks down!!!!!!!!!

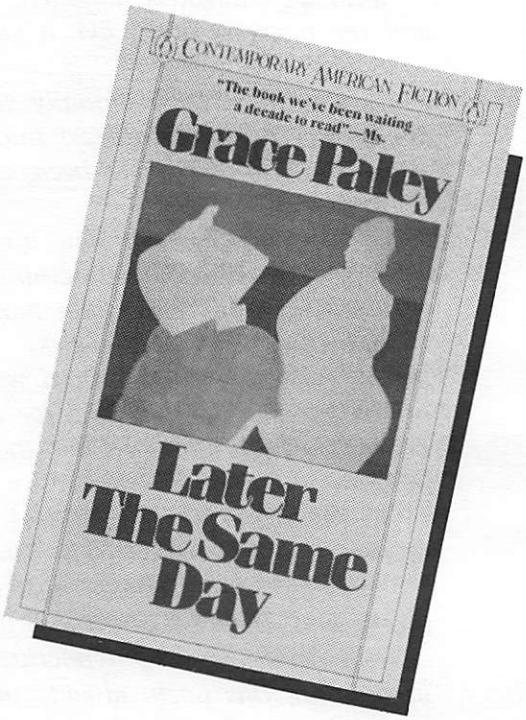
— ***Eliot Katz***

In the poem, the "machine" refers to the general political/ corporate/real estate system, and the "corporate arm" refers to Johnson & Johnson.

Eliot Katz is co-founder of the poetry journal Long Shot. He is a printer in a progressive movement print shop in New Brunswick, N.J.

Growing Gracefully

Review by Mae Dvorak



LATER THE SAME DAY
by Grace Paley
Penguin, 1985
211 pp.
$5.95

Writer of short stories, peace worker, anti-war activist, feminist, State Author of New York, mother of two, Guggenheim Fellow — Grace Paley, a New York Jewish woman in her 60's, plays all these roles. Her wonderful short stories reflect this fact as they quietly bring new people and lessons to us.

Her love of people, ironic and earth-bound, sings out in collections of stories that have received many literary honors since 1959, when her first collection was published. *Later The Same Day* is her newest collection (1985), and it reflects her life as an activist woman in her middle years.

Paley's stories tend to sneak up on you. Through plain words describing ordinary events, she awakens your understanding of the

---

Mae Dvorak is an activist who follows and supports the issues of working women, their lives, their problems and their writings.

courage and strength of people despite the hardships and limitations of their lives.

One story is about a journey by three women to see their friend who is ill: "To put us at our ease, to quiet our hearts as she lay dying, our dear friend Selena said, Life, after all, has not been an unrelieved horror," and she talks about past good times. Selena gives her friends photos as mementos.

One woman holds back her own good news about her children so that Selena's burden will not be increased by comparison. As they leave, "Selena placed into our eyes for long remembrance that useful stubborn face." We are left with Selena's strength, the women's warm ties, and their desire to continue her approach to living.

By sharing an incident common in the lives of older women, Paley identifies a common thread: "They were all, even Edie, ideologically, spiritually, and on puritan principle against despair."

But Paley does not fool herself that hope is so easy to find and hold onto. One woman, Faith, central in several stories, says of herself: "I was once a pure-thinking English major — but alas, I was forced by bad management, the thoughtless begetting of children, and the vengeance of alimony into low practicality."

This simple sentence shows all at once the effects of her position as a low-paid woman, as a mother and as an impoverished divorcee — underlining the limits of our lives defined by class, nationality and sex. Our dreams and ideals become grounded by necessity in day-to-day terms. But we do continue to dream.

One particularly touching story involves a Black woman who talks about her own life and early hopes: "I said, Mama, I see you just defile by leaning on every will and whim of Pa's. Now I aim high. To be a teacher and purchase my own grits and not depend on any man." Then she marries a kind man, has children, and watches him die young from overwork.

Yet she stubbornly thinks her daughter, Lavinia, will do better, "that gal apt to be a lady preacher, a nurse, something great and have a name." After a long time passes, she visits Lavinia, now married with her own children, to find: "Her little baby, Vynetta, is demanding her and Robert Junior follow her off to the cradle squeaking minus a letup."

And so Paley shows how dreams get crushed, reshaped, and renewed, perhaps later the same day as the book's title implies. And to make these dreams come true, we struggle, gaining ground where we can, and maintaining good-humored optimism as we go.

This is to say that Paley is dialectical in her view of life. She sees that things grow and change, and in this way they become new things. And that struggle is required to make progress. We see

one of her people, Faith, weave her way through a Sunday afternoon.

Faith takes her teenage sons to visit her parents in a nursing home in a story called "Dreamer in a Dead Language." Faith's father, the dreamer, scolds her for her "loose" life style. He himself plans to leave his wife behind in the nursing home, so he can write songs of youth. Later this same day, Faith's sons criticize her for leaving her parents in a nursing home.

Torn between her father's unrealistic escapism and her son's unexamined demands, Faith takes her sons to the beach and allows them to bury her in the sand. But she only lets them cover her up to her arms so that she can give them "a good whack every now and then when (they're) too fresh." Taking in and recognizing what she cannot change, she does not give up any more ground than she must, still taking charge if needed with her children.

Paley's tough, tenacious hope for people is based on a very solid understanding of why they behave as they do. Grace Paley's people are real, they sometimes act foolish, they say things that could well be left unspoken, but they keep trying and they are for the most part open to the possibility of a better way. This is the basis for Paley's optimism. She believes that people's better parts will prevail and encourages us to do so as well. And she takes the trouble to explain to us why she sees things this way.

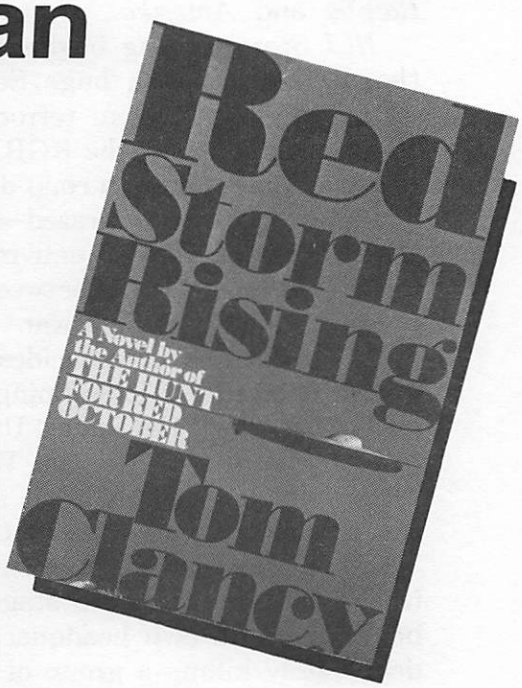
One of Paley's stories concludes with this comment about Faith's son, Anthony, and his understanding of society:

"Meanwhile, Anthony's world — poor, dense, defenseless thing — rolls round and round. Living and dying are fastened to its surface and stuffed into its softer parts.

"He was right to call my attention to its suffering and danger. He was right to harass my responsible nature. But I was right to invent for my friends and our children a report on these private deaths and the condition of our lifelong attachments."

Paley does justice to the complex life she describes between youthful idealism and the potential cynicism of age. She upholds the need to keep on struggling beyond the obstacles that she clearly describes, and she stresses the potential and rewards of winning without glibly promising us easy victory. And best of all, she makes us care more about trying by the examples and warmth of her people. □

World War III Will Be Clean



Review by Michael Lee

RED STORM RISING
by Tom Clancy
Putnam, 1986
652 pp.
$19.95

Most books reviewed in *Forward* are worth reading. *Red Storm Rising* is an exception — there is little redeeming value in this fictional account of World War III. Yet, it is important we know something about this novel.

Red Storm Rising has been on the *New York Times* best sellers list for some 50 straight weeks, longer than any other current novel. Ronald Reagan, one of Tom Clancy's biggest fans, boosted the author to national prominence after the publication of his first work, *The Hunt for Red October*. That book recounted a tale of superpower intrigue over a mutinous Soviet submarine. The President of the United States does not usually invite a writer to sup at the White House, as Reagan did Clancy. (*Red October* is still on the paperback best seller list after one year.) Moreover, the

---

Michael Lee is an editor of *Forward*.

Navy does not often have a civilian visit its nuclear submarines or spend a week on a frigate. The CIA, too, usually doesn't ask fiction writers to its "secret" Langley, Virginia, headquarters to lecture to intelligence officers. But Clancy, an amateur military freak, enjoyed all that and more. The Pentagon has helped make Clancy and his novels the print equivalent of *Rambo* and *Amerika.*

Red Storm Rising begins with the destruction of a huge Soviet oil refinery by Moslem terrorists. The story ends with the KGB and army generals staging a coup d'état against a Politburo crazed with the prospect of defeat and ready to launch its nukes. In between is a comic book story of war.

The Soviet Politburo decides the loss of one-third of its refining capacity has made the Soviet Union mortally vulnerable to the West. Their only alternative is to seize the oil fields of the Persian Gulf. To do so, they must first neutralize NATO. The Politburo stages a bombing of its own headquarters, deliberately killing a group of visiting Russian schoolchildren and blames German extremists for the murderous deed. Russian patriotic sentiments are whipped to a frenzy. But the ruse fails to divide the European powers and the Kremlin opts for war to knock out the Western alliance.

All this takes place in the first 100 pages.

The next *550* pages are high-tech warfare. Stealth bombers evade radar systems, spy satellites angle in the heavens, "smart bombs" demolish their targets, computerized missiles swarm toward nuclear aircraft carriers, laser-guided anti-tank weapons, detection cloaking devices, "passive" sonar buoys, and so on and so on. Each chapter is comprised of snippets of the four-month war from different vantage points: among them, an American submarine commander, a Russian tank crew, a greenhorn Navy meteorologist stuck on Soviet-occupied Iceland, a Japanese-American woman ace pilot. Each episode is sufficiently brief and lively to hold the attention of someone comfortable with using three-by-five index cards to interpret the world.

There are people behind all the gadgetry. Clancy tries to introduce the "human" element into war, but his actors might as well be driven by micro-chips — they have about as much substance. The brutality and cynicism of the Kremlin overlords makes Hitler appear almost a worthy opponent in comparison. The down-home, virtuous American military men (they save women gang raped by Soviet brutes, are faithful to their wives back home, and avoid dirty language) predictably save the day with their heroics and smarts. All in all, if you liked Reagan's invasion of Grenada, you'll flip over *Red Storm Rising.*

Incredibly, the reviews in the commercial press (see *Time* and *Newsweek* as examples) have been uniformly positive (which tells us again about where the media is coming from these days). The smell of battle and the wizardry of mod-

ern weapons seem to overpower their reason. Do the reviewers question Clancy's presumption that World War III will be fought with conventional weapons? That civilian casualties will be miniscule? Or that, aside from several thousand military casualties, the world will be little changed after the war ends in a stalemate? Do they wonder what has happened to the *people* of the United States, Western Europe, the Soviet Union, and for that matter, the rest of the world? These messy questions don't seem to bother Clancy or most reviewers. World War III will be very clean.

(The reviewers even overlook the strained "internal" logic of *Red Storm Rising*. The Soviets lose their premier oil field to Moslem fundamentalists, yet they assume they can take over Iran's petroleum resources without disruption. The Soviets worry about their oil shortage, but they launch a far-flung military offensive extravagantly depleting their remaining supplies. Europe bristles with nuclear weapons, but they make little impact on the war.)

For Reagan and the Pentagon, *Red Storm Rising* is a comforting book. Electronic warfare will work as well as a video game; the good guys will prevail with a minimum of suffering; World War III will be conventional; and the territory of the United States will go through another war unscathed. Germany will be wasted again, but such is the price of anti-communism. *Red Storm Rising* tells us not so much about World War III but the extreme to which popular thinking has been militarized in the United States. Reagan has made credible a fantastic fiction: World War III will be winnable. □

Poems of Struggle

Review by Karega Hart

SOMEHOW WE SURVIVE — AN ANTHOLOGY OF SOUTH AFRICAN WRITING
edited by Sterling Plumpp
illustrations by Dumile Feni
Thunder's Mouth Press
New York, 1982
160 pp., $6.95

Somehow We Survive — An Anthology of South African Writing, edited by Chicago poet and Black Studies professor Sterling Plumpp, is a moving collection of poems, short stories and writings that touches many aspects of Black South African life. As Plumpp states in his introduction: "The writers chose to deal with a variety of themes including loneliness, love, celebration, job, despair, determination, tenderness and longing. Their tones range from anger to irony, from humor to pain." As a whole, it conveys a

Karega Hart is an activist in the anti-apartheid movement in the San Francisco Bay Area.

message of survival, resistance and determination.

Plumpp's dedication of the book to Nelson Mandela sets an appropriate tone:

> Dedicated to
> Nelson Mandela
> confined to imprisonment on
> Robben Island for his
> activities against Apartheid.
> And to all those who
> fought in the past,
> are fighting today, and
> will continue fighting
> in the future
> until their victory is won,
> AMANDLA!

A stirring sense of purpose unites various poems. Black South African poet Keorapetse Kgositsile writes in the preface: "The poems in this anthology, drawn from this body of revolutionary song, are not muffled; they do not come on like low whispers or whimpers from some corner of national decay; they are not perverse word games. These poets want to be heard very clearly from the frontlines of the revolutionary movement."

"Somehow we survive" by Dennis Brutus captures the daily terror and a determination to resist:

> *Somehow we survive*
> *and tenderness, frustrated,*
> *does not wither.*
>
> *Investigating searchlights*
> *rake*
> *our naked unprotected*
> *contours;*
>
> *over our heads the*
> *monolithic decalogue*
> *of fascist prohibition*
> *glowers*
> *and teeters for a*
> *catastrophic fall;*
>
> *boots club the peeling door.*
>
> *But somehow we survive*
> *severance, deprivation, loss*
>
> *Patrols uncoil along the*
> *asphalt dark*
> *hissing their menace to our*
> *lives.*
>
> *most cruel, all our land is*
> *scarred with terror,*
> *rendered unlovely and*
> *unlovable;*
> *sundered are we and all*
> *our passionate surrender*
>
> *but somehow tenderness*
> *survives.*

Zindzi Mandela's poem, "I waited for you last night," shows that tenderness:

> *I waited for you last night*
> *I lay there in my bed*
> *like a plucked rose*
> *its falling petals my tears*
>
> *the sound that my room*
> *inhaled*
> *drew in softly*
> *swallowed*
> *in my ears*
> *was the tapping on the*
> *window*

getting up
I opened it
and a moth flew in
powdering my neck
shrugging
I caught its tiny wings
and kissed it
I climbed back into bed
with it
and left it to flutter
around my head
I waited for you last night

The struggle for freedom is like a persistent cry that demands to be heard. Mongane Serote writes in this excerpt from his poem, "No More Strangers":

it is us, it is us
the children of soweto
langa, kagiso, alexandra,
gugulethu and nyanga
us
who dare the mighty
for it is freedom, only
freedom which can quench
our thirst-
we did learn from terror
that it is us who will
seize history
our freedom

And Keorapetse Kgositsile urges the people towards armed resistance in "June 16 Year of the Spear":

I am June 16
I am Solomon Mahlangu
I am the new chapter
I am the way forward
from Soweto 1976
I am poetry flowering with
an AK47
All over this land of mine

Somehow We Survive contains 160 pages of poetry which resonate with clarity, purpose and beauty. Go buy this book. Read it and revel in its celebration of struggle and the new world that will emerge from the ashes of apartheid.

Somehow We Survive is published by Thunder's Mouth Press and can be obtained at bookstores in paperback for $6.95. If it is not available in your area, order it from Thunder's Mouth Press, 93 Greene Street, New York, NY 10012. □