

RED-HERRING 2

The ARTISTS' UNION, N.Y....Artists meeting to build socialism...Demonstration against the Shah of Iran...Speech by Langston Hughes at the AMERICAN WRITERS' CONGRESS (1935)...Art in the trade union movement...Petty bourgeoisie meets revolution..."Democratic rights" in capitalist society

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EDITORIAL

In the early 30's, when Communists and the working class were fighting side by side, when blacks and whites were fighting side by side, and the unorganized were being organized, waging strike after strike against capitalism--in the early 30's, class struggle raised "proletarian culture" as an important issue for artists and writers in the U.S. There were constant debates about culture, and about the meaning of proletarian culture in particular. Predictably, a number of artists and writers rejected it out of hand. In their eyes, proletarian culture was mere "propaganda", aesthetically rigid and unimaginative, and artists who produced proletarian culture little more than "artists in uniform". Even those who showed a passing fancy for proletarian culture, James T. Farrell for instance, would generally insist that the criteria of "art" were essentially separate from those of "politics". But people like Mike Gold and Langston Hughes made it clear that *all* art was propaganda, all art political, and that if it wasn't serving the interests of the proletariat, it was only serving the interests of the bourgeoisie. They also showed that, at its best, proletarian culture could embody a vividness and power, a political and aesthetic optimism, that was completely alien to bourgeois culture. Gradually artists and writers were forced to take sides in the class struggle, and as long as the debates raged clear lines of demarcation could be drawn between those who sided with the proletariat and those who sided with the bourgeoisie.

The line on proletarian culture came out of the Soviet Union, and at its heart was the class struggle between the working class and the bourgeoisie. But in 1935 the Soviet Union began to modify its line, calling for a united front against fascism, playing down the class struggle between the U.S. working class and bourgeoisie in favor of the worldwide class struggle against fascism. At the same time, proletarian culture was no longer pushed so strongly, giving way to "anti-Fascist" and "people's" culture. Without this strong political focus on the proletariat, not only artists and writers sympathetic to the Communist movement, but the Communist movement itself, began to lose sight of revolutionary culture. Under the "leadership" of Earl Browder, the Communist Party USA started to use the United Front to liquidate all class struggle against the bourgeoisie--pulling out of the CIO, pulling out of the Sharecroppers' Union in the Deep South, and out of radical cultural groups. In addition, the CPUSA had generally allowed too many petty bourgeois artists and writers to remain "fellow travelers", instead of educating and transforming them into Communists. Because of these incorrect policies the CPUSA didn't involve enough petty bourgeois artists and writers in the day-to-day struggles of the masses, or make them understand the truly *revolutionary* character of both the United Front and the Hitler-Stalin Pact (1939). At the same time, though, there was a lot of "red"-baiting and repression by reactionary forces, the state especially. And when push came to shove--when artists and writers were threatened with losing their federally supported jobs, for instance--they usually sided with the reactionary forces. So as the 30's wore on, many artists and writers began to drift away from mass organizations like the Artists' Union and American Artists' Congress in order to make individual careers for themselves; while a smaller number of artists and writers who still sided with the revolution were actually expelled from these organizations.

Of far more impact, though, was the expansion of U.S. capitalism during WWII and the more or less complete degeneration of the CPUSA under Browder. When the Soviet Union called for the united front against fascism, they recognised it as a temporary alliance between mortal enemies--where "unity" with the bourgeoisie was never intended to liquidate struggle against the bourgeoisie. Yet Browder began to argue that U.S. capitalism was still a young and progressive capitalism, and that the working class could not only form an alliance with the bourgeoisie, but actually begin to collaborate with them. Once the CPUSA consolidated around this line in the early 40's, their so-called struggle for "socialism" began to be reformist instead of an organized struggle for political power. And proletarian culture suffered the same fate, not only in the Communist movement, but in the anti-imperialist and union movements as well. Both socialism and proletarian culture were dropped from the political agenda, except in the form of empty phrases and outright lies.

But now a genuine Communist movement is beginning to fill the void left by the bankrupt CPUSA, and though a single, anti-revisionist Party has not been formed yet, there is a new motion to build this Party. At the same time, genuine Communists are beginning to lead the anti-imperialist and union movements again, lead the struggle against national and sexual oppression and all other forms of class exploitation. All of these developments have begun to make proletarian culture an important issue again, too. Not only is this reflected in the growing number of revolutionary cultural groups, and the rising importance of cultural work in both the Communist and anti-imperialist movements, it is also reflected in recent petty bourgeois publications.

The editors of *Red-Herring* would like to express our solidarity with this motion to build class struggle, and with proletarian culture as a specific weapon of class struggle. Indeed, we are planning to devote most of *Red-Herring* 33 to the subject of proletarian culture, and we would like anyone who is interested to send us theoretical articles on proletarian culture, historical articles, proletarian prose, poetry and visual art. We don't want to limit these contributions to proletarian culture, since all anti-imperialist culture helps to move the revolutionary movement forward; but we want to focus on proletarian culture, and especially on socialist realism, as the highest expression of proletarian culture. Artists and writers need to re-open the debate about proletarian culture, need to find out what proletarian culture means in the U.S. today. Too many anti-imperialist artists and writers are content to mimic the culture of the Soviet Union and China, particularly China, never learning from the working class here, from the rich and often revolutionary culture of the U.S.--Appalachian culture, immigrant culture, the culture of the oppressed nationalities. Even worse, a number of petty bourgeois artists and writers have been taking a very opportunist relationship to socialism and class struggle--and without clear lines of demarcation, they have been getting away with it, unexposed.

Revolutionary cultural work can't afford to be either dogmatic or opportunist--proletarian culture, least of all. When it is correctly understood and practiced, proletarian culture not only arises from the struggle for socialism, but helps to build this struggle as well. Although there is clearly an aesthetic dimension to proletarian culture, it isn't an abstract dimension, but concretely tied to the struggles of the multi-national working class against capitalism.

But we are raising the issue of proletarian culture not simply to express our solidarity with it, or to put out a call for our next issue. Proletarian culture also helps to explain the political direction, and political inadequacies, of this issue. We have gained a lot of practical experience lately, and most of all we've learned how limited it is to make culture "in the interests of the working class" unless we are also organized in the interests of the working class, that is, in working class organizations. As long as petty bourgeois artists and writers remain aloof from the masses, we will never be able to uphold the political line of *learning* from the masses. Ultimately, this will only result in another form of opportunism.

When the first issue of *Red-Herring* was published last year, most of us had just become involved in the anti-imperialist movement in this country. Although we posted numerous warnings about the danger of "made-in-New York" magazines, and chose our name according to this so-called contradiction, we understood very little about the class basis of combatting art world imperialism--or any other features of imperialism, for that matter.

The problem with the first issue wasn't that it came from New York. So does this one. The problem was that our practice was still organized by the New York *art world*--and however much our changing world view demanded that we separate ourselves from it, we ended up talking almost exclusively to the audience of the New York art world. To adventuristically proclaim that we were "openly working for socialism", while remaining a small, isolated petty bourgeois group of artists, was to relegate class struggle to the realm of ideas. We didn't fully grasp, then, that it wasn't enough to talk about "the interests of the working class" if we weren't integrated with the masses and taking up mass issues in both theory and practice.

Although we have decided to keep the name "*Red-Herring*", we have to reject the cynical attitude with which this name was originally chosen. We feel our attitude at that time was characteristic of a phase of petty bourgeois development--oh so fervently rejecting the values of the bourgeois art world on the one hand, but unable to fully commit ourselves to class struggle and the interests of the working class on the other. And while an analysis of state support for the arts helps to reveal the expanding role of the state in class struggle, it is not, strictly speaking, a "burning issue" for the masses at the moment. Unlike the struggle against national and sexual oppression, against the Bakke decision, the Shah of Iran, no-strike clauses.

Since then, we have become much more committed to the anti-imperialist movement. The genuine needs of the working class have gradually begun to replace the narrow art world "militancy" of our work, as we move from being anti-bourgeois to being pro-socialist. Our transformation has really just begun, however. We are still independently organized politically, with a still undefined relationship to the anti-imperialist movement. And the anti-imperialist organizations we are associated with in New York are themselves mostly petty bourgeois at the moment. At best, we have taken only the first step towards fusion with the masses. Without this fusion, our support for the working class remains largely theoretical.

So more than anything else, this issue of *Red-Herring* reflects a number of the struggles we've gone through in the past two years. Its theme, if it can be said to have a single theme, is basically this process of political and personal change--this struggle against the "self", as the Chinese might say. What this means, in part, is that we've taken our contradictions as artists and tried to generalize them into the contradictions of the petty bourgeoisie as a class, and then tried to analyse these general contradictions in relation to the working class and anti-imperialist struggles for liberation.

But if this issue of *Red-Herring* is largely a reflection of the struggles we've gone through in the past two years, it is also an indication of the struggles we are still going through. Beginning to emerge is a disagreement over the political line our work should embody and the way *Red-Herring* is organized. At present, many of the individuals who edit *Red-Herring* are involved in anti-imperialist organizations. Yet we realize that the political base of *Red-Herring*, as a magazine, is both narrow and weak, and that it is not enough for the individuals in *Red-Herring* to be organized by the anti-imperialist movement, if the magazine itself is not. So what we're struggling over is the relationship *Red-Herring* will have to the anti-imperialist movement--recognising that the anti-imperialist movement also has many petty bourgeois contradictions at the moment. Some of the questions which have come up are: What does it mean to "merge with" or become "affiliated with" an anti-imperialist organization? Is it more important to unify anti-imperialist forces at the moment, or to win new forces to the anti-imperialist movement? Is it possible to be an independent organization and not be sectarian, or aloof from the masses? What is the role of culture in the anti-imperialist movement--how does it arise from concrete struggles against imperialism and help to build those struggles? Should our principal audience be petty bourgeois or working class? What is the difference between *Red-Herring* and other "anti-imperialist" publications--that is, is *Red-Herring* a sectarian magazine? At the moment none of us are clear on these questions. But they are crucial questions, not only for ourselves but for the entire anti-imperialist movement. And they are inseparable from the issue of proletarian culture, especially that of socialist realism.

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In the early 30's, sixteen million Americans were unemployed. Among that number were artists, who as surplus careerists were affected no less than the mass of "common" workers. No longer able to rely on the spoils of private patronage, many artists were forced into the ranks of the unemployed, and soon found themselves rubbing elbows with the "masses" in the public soup kitchens. The high profits extracted from these very same "masses" had provided many artists with the illusion that they were producing work in an independent world, with self-contained market relations. But when the bottom dropped out of the economy, it brought on the collapse of many areas of superstructural high-life. And because the Crash didn't coincide with any sudden natural or supernatural disasters, there was no reason to blame anything but the instability of the economy itself.

To be sure of a livelihood, if not their "careers", artists began demanding compensation for the shortcomings of the economy. They demanded that the state come up with employment programs which would reinforce cultural production.

In 1933, a group of artists from the John Reed Club began to respond. The John Reed Club was part of the cultural wing of the Communist Party USA, and it was at the suggestion of the Cultural Committee of the CPUSA that they began to organize artists for "government patronage":

"A small number of artists, about twenty-five, threatened by the discontinuance of the first white collar and professional Emergency Work Bureau and the consequent loss of their employment as artists on a relief basis, met Sept. 24, 1933 at the 'Meeting Place' and organized what was then known as the E. W. B. Artists Group. They were motivated by the realization that only the artist can define the artist's needs and conditions necessary for his maintenance as an artist..." (*Art Front*).

The Emergency Work Bureau later changed its name to the Unemployed Artist Group, and organized to obtain relief work involving teaching, mural painting, easel painting, commercial and applied art jobs for all unemployed artists. But by 1934, most of the Unemployed Artist Group had found jobs, so it no longer seemed appropriate to call themselves an unemployed artist group. Moreover, to focus exclusively on unemployed artists obstructed the means for broader unity. The Unemployed Artist Group therefore became the Artists'

Union--and eventually part of the growing trade union movement.

Throughout much of the 30's, the CPUSA provided strong leadership within the trade union movement. Not only did they lead unions which already existed, they also initiated many, like the Sharecroppers' Union in the Deep South. By providing strong leadership, the CPUSA was able to help organize women, oppressed national minorities, and a number of others who had never been organized before. So when the John Reed Club began building the Artists' Union, it was in hopes of bringing cultural workers into the (then) progressive trade union movement, too. The purpose of the Union was:

"to unite all artists engaged in the practice of graphic and plastic art in their struggle for economic security and to encourage a wider distribution and understanding of art. It recognises that private patronage cannot provide the means to satisfy their needs in this period of grave economic crisis. Therefore as a non-political, non-sectarian mass organization of artists, it demands that the government fulfill its responsibility toward maintenance and furtherance of the cultural standards of this country by the proper use of the artists' talents and to set up the machinery necessary for the widest possible distribution of art to the general public. This recognises the need of linking up the struggle of the artist with that of all cultural, professional and manual workers for a united effort to win economic security and will co-operate with and support any organization of workers for such united action." (*Art Front*).

It also seems likely that the idea for a union of artists was derived largely from prototypes which Mexico and the Soviet Union had been experimenting with, since demands such as a permanent federal project for artists, made more sense in the context of a socialist economy. In many ways the success of the Artists' Union was contingent on a socialist revolution in the U.S.

But out of about 1,800 members, only a fraction were fully committed to developing the revolutionary potential of the Union. Although Communists and a number of artists understood economic struggle as part of the class struggle against the bourgeoisie, many others joined primarily out of self-interest rather than political commitment. For this reason,

the political development of the Artists' Union was unevenly marked by progressive, vacillating and backwards tendencies.

The core was made up of politically advanced artists, intellectuals and "fellow travelers" who held most of the committee and electoral positions, and a small unit from the CPUSA. In order to work out points of strategy, the CPUSA unit held their own meetings outside of regular meetings, which were closed to the rank and file. But in face of strong rank and file opposition, the meetings were eventually broadened to include "sympathizers" and "fellow travelers".

Even though Party membership was restricted largely to the proletariat in the early 30's, artists and writers were admitted as propagandists for proletarian culture. A number of Union artists had close contact with the Party, and were guided by its political line. A few joined the Party—though some of them, holding tight to petty bourgeois individualism, resigned when faced with the kind of discipline necessary to the Party.

But while the most stable and progressive section of the Union considered themselves Marxist or Marxist-Leninist, the majority of artists were of a variety of liberal "persuasions"—many of them were not only undecided about their political commitments, but confused or outright reactionary. Every now and then a Trotskyite or two would show up at a meeting, and on at least one occasion, two Italian fascists. And despite the Union's genuine militancy, a group calling itself the "Oehlerites" came to meetings to heckle the leadership—particularly the CPUSA leadership, which they claimed was "not sufficiently revolutionary". From the other direction, the leadership was baited by a band of right opportunists headed by Harold Rosenberg, who after failing to promote a spirit of elitism among the rank and file, concluded that he must have been addressing a group of only "mediocre" artists who were just plain "stupid". Another one quick to identify himself with the turmoil of the day was Thomas Hart Benton. He too was a conscientious proponent of "social change". Only he was calling for artists to file their grievances within the bounds of the capitalist system, insisting that Communism in the U.S. was only a psychological derangement of the "natural order". The basis of this kind of "red"-baiting was once again petty bourgeois self-interest and the fear that Communism would dwarf their "creativity". For instance, when the Party urged artists to help get out the *Daily Worker* to the longshoremen, many artists construed this as a belittlement of their talents.

But although the CPUSA was skillfully organized, and a persuasive voice in the Union, they recognised the Union as a broad-based mass organization and never expected it to uphold the Party line—unlike the John Reed Clubs, for example. Of course, the Party unit undoubtedly pushed for work consistent with Party directives, but it did not "dictate" either editorial policy or visual production. In the manner of mass organizations, the final approval of all decisions came from the rank and file, not from "above". Nevertheless, the right opportunists within the Union were echoed by arch-reactionaries in the pages of *Art Digest*, *Art News*, etc., calling the Union just another nest for Communists.

In 1934, *Art Front* (named after the John Reed Club publication, *Left Front*) emerged as the "non-political" organ of the Union. It sought to inform the New York community of all its activities, including committee reports on the Federal Arts Project, the Federal Arts Bill, building for the American Artists' Congress, and the activities of the Artists'

Union nationwide (the Artists' Union was organized in 15 other major cities in the U.S.). It also contained an update on leading political and cultural events in Spain, China, the Soviet Union, and Europe, as well as openings for jobs, shows and fund-raisers. Although *Art Front* tried to deal with the role of the artist in capitalist society, the propaganda value of art, and the development of social realism and proletarian culture, these and other theoretical issues were focussed on the economic struggles which were the foundation of the Union's activities. But *Art Front* was only a bi-monthly, and it never provided enough up-to-the-minute information to be a good organizer. Nonetheless, it did provide a lot of useful anti-imperialist propaganda.

By 1935, however, it was evident that fascism was increasing the threat of war and had to be dealt with. Infuriated by the rampant book-burnings and other examples of censorship, artists, writers, individuals and organizations all rose defiantly to their feet. Whether they were simply interested in "freedom of expression" (e.g. the "right" for people to be allowed to "do their own thing", and the salvation of other liberal ideals) or whether they supported the broader aims of the political and cultural movement to unite the international proletariat to annihilate class oppression, the most urgent task facing all cultural workers at the time was opposition to war and fascism. Eventually, all references to armed struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat and revolution, were replaced by the call for a United Front.

Under the slogan "Against War and Fascism and in Defense of Culture", the American Artists' Congress was formed. The call went out to all artists who recognised the need to oppose cultural repression and other symptoms of the worldwide economic crisis. Many of the same forces who initiated the Artists' Union were now strongly in back of the American Artists' Congress. Like the Union, the idea of holding a national conference was first raised at a John Reed Club meeting. And the American Artists' Congress was sponsored by the CPUSA and intended to succeed the John Reed Club as an instrument for building the United Front in culture.

The first American Artists' Congress meeting, in late 1935, was held to discuss fascism and war, racial discrimination, preservation of civil liberties, imprisonment of revolutionary artists and writers, a number of issues dealing with museum policies and federal projects, and questions relating to art criticism and aesthetic direction. Like many other mass organizations gathering force in this period, the American Artists' Congress continued to expand, helping to build



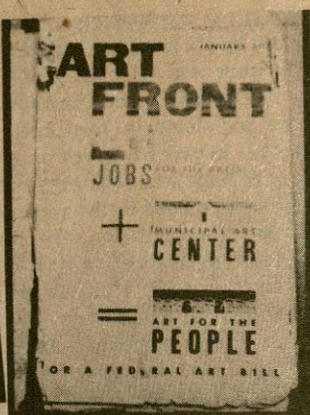
the United Front. In fact, a number of artists quit the Artists' Union to spend more time in the new, more "prestigious" organization. For unlike the Union, the American Artists' Congress explicitly recruited "artists of recognised standing in their profession". In reality this meant having one or two gallery shows somewhere. And given the fact that the early Congress meetings were actually held in a gallery where a number of its founders had already been showing, there was no problem arranging for the wave of group shows necessary to qualify the bulk of its 700 members.

But in 1938, both the Party and the mass organizations it led were weakened by a noticeable change in policy. Under the "leadership" of Earl Browder, the Party began to see the United Front as a call to collaborate with the bourgeoisie, instead of being a temporary alliance. So the small but effective CPUSA, which had become so tightly wedged in the trade union movement—leading over 40% of the CIO—decided to withdraw from the trade unions. At the New York State Convention in 1938, the Party moved to abolish all union factions.

That same year, the Artists' Union decided to join the United Office and Professional Workers of America, to become affiliated with the CIO as Local 60 of the United American Artists. (Earlier the Artists' Union had been turned away by the AFL, which had a lot trouble accepting the "revolutionary role of the fine artist within the trade unions", complaining about its long record of "unorthodox" demonstrations. Members of the Union had been jailed and beaten for helping the women of the United Store Workers to organize Ohrbachs in 1935, Macys in 1936, and H. L. Green and Woolworths in 1937.) The motivation behind this decision was the assumption that it would increase their political leverage for state funds and strengthen their ability to negotiate wages and working conditions. And the United American Artists, with 1,300 former Artists' Union members, made up two-thirds of the UOPWA, so this seemed likely.

It was proposed that the United American Artists set up a co-operative workshop to function as an "art service" for the union movement, but it was turned down in favor of a plan for a permanent project. Even with this jewel in the back of their minds, many were beginning to drop off, retreating to gallery and studio. The consensus seem to be that union work was dull and hard, and in the case of the UAA it wasn't getting them anywhere. Furthermore, the bookkeepers, clerical workers, insurance agents, etc. of the UOPWA were mainly apathetic to all the chatter about "government patronage" and would not join in support. Many more artists stormed out of the UAA in a huff over the Hitler-Stalin Pact in 1939. By this time membership was down to only a few hundred dues-paying members. Indeed, the UAA failed to demonstrate any real organizing ability in private industry or to establish fraternal connections with the CIO or the AFL. Even the CIO had trouble with the question of how artists would function within an industrial union. Without direct ties to industry, they were considered an unstable element. They would eventually merge with the remnants of the American Writers' Congress and American Artists' Congress to form the Artists League of America.

By 1938, it was also evident that the leadership of the American Artists Congress had moved to the right. A small unidentified group was formed as a "red"—baiting agent working covertly to gain control of the Congress. Stuart Davis, the national executive secretary, insisted that the



AAC concern itself solely with cultural affairs to avoid tangling with the Party line. Finally in 1940, the Congress was split when a committee report on the war was submitted for approval. Davis and the rest of the leadership resigned, charging that, in essence, it was inseparable from the line of the CPUSA.

At the time of the split, when mass organizations were steadily being abandoned and forced to merge for survival, all Communists were ordered off WPA projects. While most cultural workers in the anti-fascist movement did not consider themselves Communists, they stood to lose their comfy WPA jobs through guilt by association. This forced many with weak knees to turn state's evidence in helping to expose mass organizations as the foul plaything of the CPUSA. The threat of losing jobs was also an effective deterrent in recruiting new members to mass organizations. As opportunism soared within the remaining organizations, social realism and proletarian culture were gradually replaced by abstraction and metaphysics. Furthermore, Lieut. Col. Brehon Somervell, the new New York administrator of the WPA, led the charge on the "red menace" by issuing full instructions "against the production of any art work in which the main idea was social content rather than artistic value".

At this point it was clear that American artists had more to fear from the political and cultural aggression of their country's own bourgeoisie than from any threats of a hundred year Reich. Without dependable leadership and support from the CPUSA, the struggle for socialism no longer seemed so viable. Those artists remaining loyal to the aims of the proletariat had become disoriented after the state's intervention in their cultural and political life, and alienated by the contradictory and incorrect actions of the Party. Many returned to petty bourgeois anarchy as the means to escape political turmoil.

Once more artists were being encouraged to leave the real world to the bourgeoisie—to do all their organizing in bars and cafes, and to produce art more in keeping with their own personal vision of universality, instead of the proletariat's.

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MEETING

I. "Who cares if you're correct, if only five people are left."

1.

"Didn't you hear about the meeting last night?" Robert asked.

He was sitting in the middle of the loft, in one of the folding wooden chairs which always reminded him of catered weddings. The chairs had been shoved into a circle, and here and there the floor was splattered with grey foam cushions, piled two to a person. About fifty people had shown up. Although several had taken a seat, most of the people were milling around like guests at a cocktail party--picking each other up, tormenting one another with their latest art world exploits. The meeting was supposed to start at 8:00, but it was already 8:30.

Robert had been coming to the meetings for about a year. In fact, he and Stephen and Carl were among the first to join--although the three of them had been working together, on their own, for a long time. They were fed up with the way the art market sliced them into individuals and pitted them against each other; fed up with having to look at each other and wonder who would make the cover of *Artforum* first, feeling that constant tightness in the pit of their stomachs--working more from fear than commitment or so-called inspiration. That's what their work was about--collectivity, the need to organize against art world envy and deceit and greed. At least that's what it was about until they started coming to the meetings.

2.

"Didn't you hear about the meeting last night?" he asked.

"Where was it?" Greg responded, looking at him for only a moment.

"At N.Y.U."

"Oh, N.Y.U."

"You went there for awhile, didn't you?"

"I switched to Visual Arts after my first year."

"So what's the difference?"

"No difference. Visual Arts had better teachers."

Robert had known Greg for several years. They even shared some of the same friends. But they'd never really said much to each other, except when they were in the same show together or invited to the same party, and nothing they said ever amounted to anything. Even so, their work had moved in more or less the same direction, and now they were being *forced* to join hands by the struggle against Thomas and Martha. Neither of them could buy the glorious picture that Thomas and Martha were painting of art world "collectivity" any longer. They knew the art world was contradictory, and that the forces which produced envy and deceit and greed were the same forces which produced spontaneous resistance to it. But it wasn't until they joined the United Art Workers that they understood why spontaneous resistance didn't go far enough. Being in the United Art Workers made that easy to understand; being with Thomas and Martha made it even easier.

3.

"The best thing that ever happened to me was getting out of school," Robert said, vaguely, as if it didn't mean much to him anymore. "Somebody in the group got us a room there. She's in graduate school at N.Y.U.--in philosophy of language, believe it or not."

age, believe it or not."

"Did you ask her out before--or after--you found that out?"

"Both," said Robert, pleased with himself. "It's dialectical."

"Very funny."

"What's really funny is that I used to know her a long time ago. She was the first person I ever slept with."

"That was in California?" Greg asked, showing some interest for the first time.

"No, England. Her father was on sabbatical, too. Too bad we didn't have much to say to each other when I saw her again at the meeting."

"I'm surprised you've got much to say to any of those people," Greg said snidely.

"What do you mean?"

"I heard they're pretty dogmatic."

"What have you heard?"

"That they're really dogmatic. And there's still vestiges of black nationalism in the way they treat whites."

"Well, that second thing is really incorrect," said Robert, defensively. "I don't know who you've been talking to. In fact, sometimes I get the feeling they're bending over backwards to keep whites in the group."

"What about the dogmatism?"

"Yeah, they're a little dogmatic at times," Robert said.

"All I can tell you is, I'm learning a lot there, a fuck of a lot. I don't know about you, but I pretty much dropped out of radical politics when I got serious about art."

"Sure, that's what happened to me, too. It's only been the last couple years that I've been making the connections again."

"So why don't you come to the meetings. At least you won't feel like you're wasting your time all the time--like here. The next one's in the Bronx, I can give you the address. And tell Helen to come, too."

"Maybe I will. But you can tell Helen yourself," he said coldly.

4.

Although they never talked about it, the shadow of Helen was steadily growing darker between them. Robert wanted to talk about it at one point, to tell Greg there was nothing to worry about, but that would have only made things worse. There wouldn't have been any question, then, that he was interested in Helen. It would have only been a question of what he was going to do about it. And since he didn't want to do anything about it at the time, it remained a "secret" between them. But after awhile it became a wedge of dishonesty in their relationship, on Robert's part anyway, since he was the one who was playing it safe. He could no longer deny that he *might* want to do something about it. And he knew that if he did, talking to Greg beforehand would only make it harder--harder to be with Helen, at least. He also knew that the struggle against Thomas and Martha not only forced him closer to Greg, it forced him closer to Helen as well.

5.

Thomas and Martha were standing by the wall, talking about "collectivity" to a couple of unsuspecting victims. "Collectivity" was their stock-in-trade now, the currency of all their work. For aside from financial success, "collectivity" gave them moral credibility, the appearance of being

on the right side in the eyes of history. This was particularly important for Thomas, whose conceptual art career had been sagging for several years. They didn't think of it this way, of course. They never admitted that the crusade for "collectivity" meant that they were looking out for their own interests. As far as they were concerned, they never made alliances—just friends. And both of them felt deeply and personally betrayed if either their friendship or generosity was ever misconstrued as a bribe.

6.

Robert leaned away from Greg, and both of them stared at Thomas and Martha as they began to lead a small procession of people towards the circle of chairs. Everybody began to speak more softly. A few people straggled in the door, and one of them pulled it shut.

Thomas and Martha parted the circle of chairs and sat down next to each other. By this time the talking had stopped almost completely. Glancing around the room, Robert noticed that the people Thomas and Martha had been talking to weren't the only new faces that night. He was a little concerned, because the number of new people had fallen off in the last two or three months. Vaguely, in the back of his mind, he began to wonder if something was going on.

"I'd like to call the meeting to order," said a woman across the room from Robert. The talking died and people turned towards her. "First of all, for those of you who are new, I'll read a brief statement we have prepared as an introduction to the meeting. 'The United Art Workers is striving to be a non-sexist group, and we request that you refrain from using sexist language, particularly sexist pronouns, at all times. This means that 'he/she' should be used instead of just 'he', and that 'him/her' should replace the use of 'him'. The chair should be referred to as 'the chair'.'" There were a few laughs. "'If you are here for the first time, we ask that you introduce yourself with your first name, and that you use only the first name of other members here.'"

She looked up from the paper, pushed her glasses back on her nose, and pulled out another piece of paper. "I will now read the agenda for tonight's meeting. The first item on the agenda is 'the question of organization', and—"

TIRED

I am so tired of waiting,
Aren't you,
For the world to become good
And beautiful and kind?
Let us take a knife
And cut the world in two--
And see what worms are eating
At the rind.

Langston Hughes

New Masses, February 1931

7.

Robert heard the sound of chairs being scraped back, and suddenly three people to his right stood up. Without a moment's hesitation they assembled in a line, one behind the other, and marched quickly to the center of the circle—occupying it like experienced troops. The room was dead silent, except for the sound of marching feet.

There were two men and a woman. One of the men was dressed in a grey business suit; the other man had blue-jeans and a paint-smeared workshirt on, with heavy boots; the woman seemed to be dressed like a T.V. housewife, except that she was wearing a paint-smeared kerchief on her head. As soon as they reached the center of the circle they fanned into a triangle. The well-dressed man pulled out a stopwatch and glared at it intently, angrily. After a moment or two he barked out the word "One!" As though this was supposed to be a command, the other two people began to make very precise, machine-like movements with their arms and legs.

The group started to get restless. Everybody realized by then that it was only an art work, and not something more serious. A lot of people were silent, unsure of what to do; others began to shout.

"Who invited these people, anyway?"

"What about the agenda, this isn't on the agenda!"

"What about the police, maybe we need the police!"

The actors ignored the commotion around them, continuing their movements. By the time they got to the number "Five!" their precision began to break down, becoming more and more spastic. Robert looked across the room at Stephen and Carl, and then to the side at Greg. They all stood up together. At almost exactly the same time, some other people also stood up. There was a quick, eerie silence as the small group of men surrounded the actors. The only thing you could hear were the movements in the center of the circle, nearly out of control now. For an instant, because it was all so silent and surreal, Robert remembered the scene in "Potemkin" where the baby-carriage went silently lurching down the steps of Odessa, out of control. But the image was gone almost as soon as he remembered it.

When the group closed ranks, they began shouting again—telling the actors to leave. His eyes widening, the well-dressed man began to look surprised—and then scared. Robert realized his own face felt tight. He wondered if he looked scared, too. Everybody else's face looked white and pinched, excited, their eyes as hard and shiny as glass. The furious movements left room for violence.

Suddenly one of the actors tripped and fell against Stephen, and the paralyzing tension collapsed. People reached out and grabbed the actors' shoulders, shoving them towards the door. There was a lot of shouting, a lot of jostling. At one point, the actors started to chant: "Down with fascism! Artists of the world, unite! Down with fascism! Artists of the world, unite!" Just as the lunging mass of people reached the door, the well-dressed man ripped himself from Robert's hands and toppled to the floor with Greg. Somebody knocked a plant over and it hit a woman on the head, drawing blood. A couple people screamed.

8.

After all the sweat and blood had been wiped off the floor, and all the plants and chairs put straight again, Robert began to smile nervously. He noticed that Stephen and Carl and Greg were also smiling, and a few others as well. Helen

looked distressed. But most of the people seemed to be in a stupor, milling around and bumping into each other in confusion. And when everybody had finally taken their seat again, the room shrivelled into silence. It was a numb silence—full of exhaustion.

"Well, speaking as the chair, I'm uncertain how to go on. Should be continue with the agenda, or what? It seems to me we can't ignore what just happened."

Martha raised her hand. "I agree. I think we should scrap the agenda and deal with what went on here. I mean, a lot of things just happened that I really object to."

Stephen raised his hand. "I disagree. I think that if we scrap the agenda, especially this agenda, then what those people tried to do—and what they tried to do was disrupt this group—will end up being totally successful. I think we owe it to ourselves to resist this. So I suggest we postpone your discussion, Martha, until the end of the meeting."

"Wait a minute!" cried Martha. "Something just happened here! You're forgetting the fucking violence that just happened here! Greg got into a fight with that guy—"

"What are you talking about!" said Greg. "I didn't start any fights!"

"—and Betsy got hit on the head in that fight. I hate violence, and I think we should talk about why some people in this group felt they had to use violence to get rid of those people. Fuck the agenda!"

"How else were we supposed to get rid of them?" Robert asked. "That doesn't mean anybody here necessarily likes violence."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Martha. "You were smiling when it was over!"

"What I mean, Martha, is that violence isn't the real issue here. What's at stake is why those people came here in the first place. I think they came here because they thought we'd support them. I don't think they were trying to stir up trouble—I disagree with Stephen on that. I think they really thought we'd support them. They looked surprised when we threw them out! So I do agree with Stephen's suggestion that we should postpone your discussion. The only way we're going to stop shit like this from happening again is if we get on with discussing organization."

"Wait a minute!" cried Martha, almost beside herself now. "What's going on!"

"I think what we did was entirely correct," said Greg.

"Of course you did! You were smiling, too! You're all a bunch of fascists!"

"What do you think socialism means," Greg self-righteously shouted, "if it isn't violence, armed struggle—the dictatorship of the proletariat! Violence isn't abstract, it doesn't mean the same things all the time. There's revolutionary violence and bourgeois violence—they don't mean the same thing!"

"Oh, come off it!" Martha said, looking around in disgust.

"This is worse than what happened before!" Thomas exclaimed, looking around for support.

"Only because you don't understand what happened before!" Greg shouted back.

9.

A man raised his hand. "I think we should work out a strategy for removing people who might be more dangerous than those people. What if somebody pulled a knife or a gun? One of us could have gotten killed! I propose we form a committee to deal with provocateurs."

"Where did they dig this guy up?"

"What kind of a group does he think this is, anyway?"

"Frisk him!"

10.

Eleanor raised her hand. "I'd like to remind people of something. The agenda is something *we* made—it's a way to structure the meeting. But that doesn't mean we have to be dogmatic about it. It's not supposed to be a weapon, some sort of bludgeon to be used against us. If we don't like the agenda, we can change it!"

"That's a good point," said Thomas, chiming in. "Why do we have all this bureaucracy? Why can't we just talk to each other like people?"

"Because that's what's wrong with this group," said Carl. "We're always behaving like liberals."

"That's what I mean. You want to run this like an Exxon meeting. I know your role."

"Helen is next," said the chair.

11.

Robert had also known Helen for several years. In fact the first time he met her was at one of Thomas' parties, right after she'd gotten together with Greg. The party was just like the rest of Thomas' parties, with everyone getting drunk and trying to make an impression. At one point Thomas had gotten so drunk that he picked up Robert in one arm and Helen in the other and swung them around like children.

But Robert had never said much to her, either, until recently. At first he wanted to believe that things had changed because of the fight against Thomas and Martha. Yet he knew there was something more, that loneliness had something to do with his change of heart—about Helen, anyway, if not about Greg. His life had been like a deserted house since his girl friend left him for another man. But he hated his loneliness, it raised a barrier between Greg and himself. And because he hated his loneliness, he also tried to deny it—making it harder for him to admit all the reasons he was reaching out for Helen. He was getting more and more confused, and frequently he didn't know if he did things because he believed in them, or because he couldn't help himself.



DRAWING BY STUART DAVIS

SYNTHETIC REVOLUTIONISTS

FIRST INTELLECTUAL: What the radical mooch-ment needah ish Intell'g'nce!
 SECOND INTELLECTUAL: Thash it! But ain't we intell'g'nt? What good's it do?
 SHE INTELLECTUAL: Gimme 'nuther drink!

12.

Helen shook her hair and sat upright, all business. "You know, I can't believe you said that, Eleanor! I don't think anyone here is trying to use the agenda as a weapon. To me, the situation is very clear. Maybe there's a disagreement about the way we threw those people out--and we should probably discuss that. Personally, I think we threw them out the only way we could. But you're right, we do need to discuss that. What I can't understand, though, is that nobody seems to disagree *why* we threw them out. I haven't heard anyone say they liked what those people had to say. Even you didn't say that, Martha. And I think that's why we threw them out--because we didn't like what they were saying. So here we are talking about all our disagreements, when we really agree on the most important issue. Maybe I'm wrong—I'm sure somebody will tell me if I am—but that's why I think we need the agenda. Talking about organization is the only way we're going to clarify what our agreements and disagreements are. What this group needs is some direction. That's what we've needed for a long time, is some direction. Everything happens spontaneously now—even throwing those people out--and all we do is get confused."

"Maybe there should be a Central Committee," Thomas sneered, "and everybody should be issued a card."

"It seems to me," said Carl, his voice cold enough to burn, "it seems to me that Thomas' outburst is a perfect example of what's wrong with this group. I agree with what Helen just said about direction. Some of us have been saying for some time now that the problem with this group isn't the way we're organized, our form, but what the *content* of our organization is."

"If you're so worried about content, then how come we never deal with women's issues?" Martha's smile was so tight it almost snapped.

"And some of us happen to think that the interruption tonight was simply a more obvious example of the way petty bourgeois content constantly interrupts this group. Isn't it obvious why those people expected our support? They didn't take over this group because there weren't enough committees, much less a central committee. They did it because all our activities have been about 'artists rights', instead of socialism. Even when we talk about things like racism and sexism, we treat them as slice-of-the-pie issues--never as class struggle, part of the struggle for socialism."

"Are you serious?" Martha exclaimed.

"This has got to stop! We can no longer confine ourselves to the problems of artists! This may be a group of artists, but more importantly it's a group of petty bourgeois artists. We have to face up to that, and to the problems of the petty bourgeoisie as a class--what *that* means to class struggle. The question of organization is a question of content! We don't need more committees, we need to deepen our study of socialism. The only way to do this is by following tonight's agenda."

"What an incredible distortion of what I was saying!" Thomas exploded. "You'll say anything to get us to follow this agenda!"

"You're talking as if the agenda is a personal vendetta of mine, Thomas."

"But you're talking as if the agenda will save the world," Martha exclaimed.

"No, it's not going to save the world, Martha. But maybe it'll save this group."

"Oh, come off it. This isn't the sermon on the mount, and we're not your fucking flock!"

"Speaking of distortions--"

"Speaking of interruptions," the chair broke in, "were you done speaking, Helen?"

"I guess I am now," said Helen, with obvious irony.

"Then Thomas is next."

"The real disagreement in this group isn't about form and content," said Thomas, "it's about theory and practice. Some of us have been arguing that long, boring discussions about refining the theory of this group are counter-productive. We all know who the enemy is! The point is to do something about it! But ever since we started discussing theory in this group, we stopped doing anything. And as soon as that happened, people began leaving the group. This group used to be twice as large as it is! We're losing people all the time! And that doesn't help anyone but our enemies. What this group needs isn't more theory and less practice, but less theory and more practice!"

13.

"The next person on the list," said the chair, "is Martha."

Martha looked both miserable and angry. "I agree with what Thomas said earlier. Certain people here are calling for more theory, better organization--but all they're really doing is fragmenting this group, undermining our organization. Thomas is right, people are leaving this group all the time, especially women. The only thing different about those people tonight is that they didn't leave on their own--they were thrown out!"

"That's like saying the only thing different about socialism is that the workers own the means of production!" Stephen cried, rising to the bait.

"God damn it! I listened to you fucking long enough!" She ran her hand through her hair like she was crumpling a piece of paper. "This group has been together for almost a year. And I think we got together because we all realized how isolated the art world made us as people. Our salvation was our collectivity. This is what we have always stressed in this group--working collectively against bourgeois culture. I'm not denying that differences have come up. But I think those differences have been personal--not ideological. We agreed a long time ago that everyone here is working for socialism. I don't see that anything has changed that."

"That just *proves* there are ideological differences," Greg said. "What we're disagreeing about is whether or not we really disagree."

"That's not the way I see it," said Thomas.

"That's what I mean," said Greg. "You say we agree and I say we don't. That's ideological."

"Will you fucking let me finish! I'm tired of men doing all the talking in this group!" Martha said, glaring at Thomas. "I agree with Helen. I think we're making a fucking big mistake when we emphasize our differences here. It means we're destroying our collectivity and treating each other as enemies--instead of the bourgeoisie. Everyone here should be free to believe what they want, and we should treat the beliefs of everyone here with equal respect. This isn't a fucking dictatorship! I don't think anyone in this group is my enemy! I'm not saying I liked what those people did tonight. But I don't think they're my enemies, either. That's why I was so pissed off at the way certain people got rid of them."

"That's why we got rid of them," said Robert in disgust, "because we knew they were your friends."

"Will you fucking let me finish! All you're interested in is getting your own way!"

"Well, if you insist on having the floor. I thought you wanted to get rid of bureaucracy, and talk to each other as people."

"Let me finish!"

14.

Robert was getting more and more angry at the way things were going. The same thing happened every week, the same kind of confusion. The longer the discussion about the agenda went on, the longer it would take to get to the agenda itself. The scenario was as familiar as the people who showed up every week, and Thomas and Martha were playing their parts to perfection. Ideological confusion was almost second-nature to them.

But Robert was also angry because it wasn't that long ago that he agreed with Thomas and Martha, and fought for the same kind of collectivity. They were a flawless crystallization of his former ambitions, a glittering emblem of art world success. And their confusion and intractability only reminded him of his own class limitations.

15.

"I'm really upset at the way certain people in this group are totally distorting the question of organization." Stephen paused a moment to light a cigarette and cross his legs. "I don't think anybody here is interested in personal power, 'getting their own way'. And I don't think anybody here wants to see people leave the group. But some of us think that this group should represent something more than the project we're working on now, or the one we just did. We can't always go around like a chicken without a head. When we do a project it should reflect the ideological unity which already exists here—it shouldn't be the thing that determines our unity to begin with. I'm not trying to be dogmatic about this. I don't think any of us understood this until we did a lot of projects spontaneously—and it got us into more and more arguments about the kinds of projects we should be doing. There seem to be some disagreements in this group about the meaning of socialism, and the point is that class struggle isn't something reserved for the factories—it needs to go on right here in this fucking group!" As he paused again, Stephen began to move his hands together, folding them like a Rabbi, the smoke from his cigarette rising majestically to the ceiling. Robert smiled to himself as he watched. "When Martha said earlier that none of us are 'enemies', what she meant was, we're all petty bourgeois artists. What kind of unity is that? That's no unity as far as I'm concerned! The real unity of this group—unity around socialism—is something we need to struggle for! This group has got to stand for something more than the fact that we meet every week. And that means struggling with each other, not looking for false unity."

"I thought we were here to learn from each other," said Martha, "not struggle with each other."

"I thought we were here to support socialism," said Robert, "and that means struggling with each other."

"Well, that's what we're doing, you're getting your way."

"No, that's what we should be doing, that's what's correct."

"Who cares if it's correct if only five people are left!"

"Organization isn't necessarily about masses of people," said Greg, "it's about representing the interests of the masses. This group isn't failing because there aren't

enough people. We just haven't got enough of the right people here. That's the only way we're going to build this organization correctly—if we have the *right* kind of people here. The group isn't multi-national, there aren't various class strata. We hardly even talk about the working class in this group, much less have any contact with them."

II. "It's a really strange kind of paralysis."

1.

As he gripped the phone, listening to the ring at the other end, Robert's heart began to beat faster. Impatiently he stabbed at his coat, trying to get it off the bed so he could lie down. But touching the coat reminded him of the time Helen had touched it, after the meeting. She had suddenly reached her hand out and run it over his sleeve, very lightly, like she wanted to see how soft the leather was. She hardly seemed to be conscious of what she was doing. But for a split second their eyes had met, and for the first time they really looked at each other. Although they had quickly looked away, and Robert remembered the frozen look on Greg's face, the memory made him feel calmer, less afraid. Instead of throwing the coat on the floor, he nestled his head in it.

"Hello?"

Her voice made him feel tense again. "Hi," he said, "it's Robert."

"Oh, Robert. If you're looking for Greg, he's not here." She always sounded pinched over the phone, as though she couldn't squeeze everything she had to say into her voice alone. "He's not here, and I really don't know where he is."

For a moment he didn't say anything. He began to wonder if his mind was playing tricks on him. He could have sworn that she'd said she didn't *care* where Greg was. Maybe it was the tone of her voice. He let it go, though, growing more and more tense with anticipation. "Well, actually," he said, "I was calling to talk to you."

"Oh?" she said. And Robert noticed that her voice became more veiled, defensive.

"Yeah," he said, rushing his words, trying to outflank her defenses. "I wanted to talk to you about— What the fuck are you doing over there, anyway?"

"Washing the dishes," she said, her voice even tighter. The water stopped, and Robert could hear her moving around, banging a few things.

"Now what are you doing?" he asked, trying to make it into a joke.

"Cleaning up a little, so I can sit down. What did you want to talk to me about?"

She didn't seem to catch the warmth in his voice. "Well, two things actually—the meeting the other night and to ask you to come to the next Union for Proletarian Culture meeting."

"Greg mentioned something about that. But he didn't say much," Helen said, her voice even, almost business-like. "He told me I should talk to you."

Since she still wasn't giving anything away, Robert didn't know if she meant it to be an opening or not. He decided to try another tack. "I can tell you the details later. What I really wanted to tell you was that I liked what you said at the last United Art Workers meeting. Thomas and Martha are fucking crazy, aren't they! Sometimes I think they'll say anything. You really nailed them to the wall there a couple of times."

"You'd think it was a cross the way Martha acted. Christ, she has that martyr act down pat! You should have heard what she said to me after the meeting!"

"I'm sure I've heard it all before," said Robert. But he immediately sensed that it was the wrong thing to say. Although he'd finally gotten a response from Helen, it was much more intense than he expected.

"I don't know that you have. Of course, I don't know your history of working with Martha. Maybe you have." She said it like she didn't believe it.

"I didn't work with her that long," he said, backpeddling. "Maybe she's changed her tune, I don't know."

"The thing that bothers me is all the hostility and antagonism."

"Yeah, I know. Sometimes I want to go home and bury my head in the shower."

"But you contribute to it as much as anyone! Do you really think Martha is your enemy?"

"Yeah, I do. I'm sorry, but I really do. Maybe I didn't work with Martha very long, but it was long enough to know she's my enemy. She and Thomas talk a lot about collectivity, but they're really out for their own interests." As soon as he said it, Robert wondered if he sounded glib. He was seeing a side of Helen that he'd never seen before, and he didn't know if it was good or bad. He was confused. Maybe it meant she was opening up to him. But it could also mean that she was pushing him away.

"What about the things she says about practice?"

"What about them?" he asked defensively.

"Well, I know I'm not too clear, either. I know we need to study—but not just to exercise our brains. To my understanding, study is supposed to guide our projects, make them better. And besides, the projects we do don't have to be mindless or trendy."

"Oh, I agree with that. The trouble with the group is, people are really hot to *do* stuff because they don't know what *else* to do. They're artists—they're there because they're artists, that's about it. They don't even realize their enthusiasm is just the flip-side of pessimism. It's a really strange kind of paralysis."

"My you're condescending, aren't you. You're an artist, too. I'm an artist. It doesn't have to be that way, I don't think—it doesn't have to be just pessimistic."

"Maybe not, but it's a real problem at the moment. Fuck, most of those people have been doing the same kind of stuff for years, and it's never gotten them anywhere. It certainly hasn't changed anything. Look at Thomas and Martha. They've made their work into a religious crusade. What else have they got besides self-righteousness!"

"That's funny, they used those exact words to describe you."

"What can I say? They're wrong and I'm right!" Robert knew it was a silly thing to say. Despite his mistrust of Thomas and Martha, he knew they were right sometimes—especially Martha about the sexism in the group. But he couldn't help himself, he felt extremely defensive. It wasn't so easy to justify himself around Helen as it was around Stephen and Carl, or even Greg. He was beginning to feel less sure of himself—much less than before he called.

There was a long pause, and Helen seemed to be deliberating. When she spoke her voice was a monotone. "After the meeting Martha came up to me, pleading sisterly love, telling me how women should be sticking up for each other."

She paused again. "I'll bet you haven't heard all that before!" she said bitterly.

"Well, I've heard her say it," said Robert softly, trying to placate her. "But I've never been subjected to it myself, obviously."

"She wants all the women in the group to get together and discuss the sexism that goes on in the group—and basically how it's the women who have to get the whole group straight."

"She's really good at making people feel sorry for her," he said, just as softly. He was beginning to understand why Helen seemed so raw, like an exposed nerve. He knew that she didn't trust him, and probably wouldn't for a long time. She didn't trust herself, either. But it occurred to him that one of the reasons she was so desperate and angry was that she wanted to trust him, and make him understand her.

"She's such a jerk, such a jerk! She can't really understand what she's doing. She's relying on that myth that women are more sensitive—more emotional—more personal than men, and it's these things that are supposed to save the day. You know, all the things about men talking too much and nobody listening to each other. She says it's the men in the group who are pushing theory and that's why women are leaving. She's such a jerk! She doesn't even know how destructive her reasoning is!"

Robert hesitated to say anything. He decided to play it safe. "Is that what you told her, that she's a jerk?"

"Robert, I didn't even come close. I know what she stands for will only lead to a dead-end. But I don't have enough information to explain how. It's frustrating, I'm very confused."

Her voice had suddenly become more vulnerable, and for the first time it was tinged with warmth. Robert felt his own voice grow warmer, more embracing. "Yeah," he said, "she never really wants to deal with anything unless it affects her personally. And about the only thing that affects her is being an artist and a woman—in that order. That's why she makes sexism such an issue at the meetings. It's less threatening than talking about the kind of art she makes."

"What gets me is her relationship with Thomas. She makes such a big issue out of sexism, and Thomas is just using her to the hilt."

"Maybe. I mean, I agree that he's using her. But she's doing the same thing. She does all the work now, and Thomas' career just gives it credibility. It works both ways, I think. Martha ain't stupid, that's for sure."

"Oh, I know. I'm just overreacting. And besides, I don't think I can talk about this anymore."

Robert immediately saw his chance. "O.K.," he said, "let's talk about going to the movies."

"Huh?" She sounded confused, like she was still thinking about Martha.

"How about 'Harlan County'?"

"Harlan County?"

"Yeah, 'Harlan County'—the movie 'Harlan County'."

"I haven't seen it."

"Neither have I," he said, smiling a little and allowing himself to grow tender. "Why don't we go on Friday?"

"I didn't realize that was one of the things you wanted to call about," she said quickly, a flicker of mistrust in her voice again. But Robert could tell that she was also bantering.

"Plus inviting you to the next Union for Proletarian Culture meeting."

"Is it the same thing to you?"

"Not really--though I can't deny the social aspect of all these meetings. Sometimes I get the feeling that people go to meetings just to meet people. But then I guess it depends on the people you go to meet," he said.

Helen laughed. But after that there was a long pause, and she seemed to be deliberating again. "Well," she said slowly, "Greg talked about going to a movie on Friday. But nothing was settled. And it would be no big deal if I didn't go--for him or for me."

Robert recognized the bitterness in her voice again, but felt that she was no longer hiding behind it. He decided to take a chance. "Why not?" he asked. "I mean, it's fine with me, but what's going on?"

"Lately our relationship has been pretty off. I haven't really seen him for weeks."

"Other than at meetings, you mean?" he asked, trying to get clear about the limits of their separation. The two of them never behaved like a couple at meetings.

"Yes," she said dully. "We seem to get on each other's nerves. And he's incredibly domineering. Or maybe you hadn't noticed?" she asked, her voice changing.

"Sure," he said. "But why are you attracted to domineering men?"

"It's a little early for the psychology, isn't it?" Her voice clouded over again. "I guess I'm as guilty as he is. I never thought I'd admit that. We're both so tangled up in sick behavior." She paused. "But I don't know why I'm telling you all this."

Robert felt torn. "Well, I keep trying to talk about 'Harlan County'," he said gently.

"It would probably make more sense to talk about the Union for Proletarian Culture." As she talked, Robert could hear the sound of running water again.

"What are you doing, Helen--finishing up the dishes?"

"No," she said, "I'm taking a bath. I need to think."

Robert chuckled. "I must admit, Helen, you're a little nuts." He was surprised by the amount of affection his voice betrayed. "So what about the movies?" he asked.

"What about the Union for Proletarian Culture?"

"What if we talk about the Union for Proletarian Culture at the movies?"

"Robert, I'm not *that* nuts."

After they hung up, Robert spent a long time playing back the conversation in his mind. Some of the things he'd said made him want to cringe. He hoped she wouldn't remember them, though he knew she would. He became obsessed with the idea that he seemed arrogant and insensitive--something his old girl friend always accused him of. But then he remembered how the conversation had changed, and the way she said his name. He remembered the warmth in her voice. And gradually he felt reassured. The severed pieces of his life seemed to be moving together again, in new shapes.

III. "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art"

1.

"Chairman Mao says it right here, comrade. 'All the dark forces harming the masses of people must be exposed and all the revolutionary struggles of the masses of the people must be extolled; this is the fundamental task of revolutionary writers and artists.' You don't have no problem with that, do you?"

"I don't disagree with that," Stephen said, "--in theory. But who says workers in this country are going to be interested in a forum on Southern Africa?"

"What workers you talking about? Not black workers," said Muhammed. "Black workers ain't going to have no trouble relating to those struggles at all."

"But most of the working class isn't black," said Robert.

"Look, comrade, we have to check out the *reason* workers in the U.S. ain't hip to what's happening in Southern Africa. It ain't because they can't understand it. They understand oppression--they're under the grip, under the whip every day! But some of them got the same problem you got--they can't relate what's happening there to what's happening right here at home. They don't see that Andy Young don't be no different from Whitney Young. They ain't making the connections between repression abroad and repression at home."

"That's perfectly correct," Stephen said, "that's my point. Do we make the connections by talking about repression in Southern Africa? Or do we make them by talking about conditions in the U.S.?"

"Both, comrade. Both. It's dialectical."



"Right, both. But I'd say we're going to reach a lot more people if we emphasize conditions in the U.S."

"You changing your line, then?" Salim asked. "I don't hear you putting out the line we shouldn't be dealing with Southern Africa now."

"I never said we shouldn't be dealing with Southern Africa!" Stephen exclaimed. "The only fucking thing I've been asking is if we should do a whole forum on Southern Africa. Though I'm not too happy about the idea of a forum, either."

2.

Robert was sitting next to him, and he felt Stephen's feet slap nervously on the floor, like fish out of water. Robert was also nervous; it happened every time he went to the meetings. At first he thought it was because he was afraid to work with blacks again. He'd worked with several black organizations during the 60's, though not very closely, and never had any problem. But when the black movement was transformed by black nationalism, he wasn't politically conscious enough to feel anything except rejection. This feeling of rejection had hardened into prejudice, and while he continued to support the black movement intellectually, he felt more and more detached from it emotionally. He couldn't help it. And he was afraid that coming into the group would merely open an old wound, expose him to the possibility of rejection again.

But the way Salim, Muhammed and Ayl behaved had quickly laid that fear to rest, and soon he began to understand that what really made him nervous was no longer being able to trust his mind as much as before. Time after time he was confronted with the petty bourgeois nature of his mind—not only what he said, and the way he said it, but *why* he said it as well. He felt stranded and dry, cut off from the emotional current of his thinking. Once again, he was supporting something intellectually which he didn't completely believe in emotionally. But this time he wasn't afraid of being rejected by somebody else. Now he was afraid of what he had to reject in himself.

3.

Seven people had shown up that night, though there were usually nine or ten. They were sitting seminar-style around the table, with Helen and Carl facing Robert and Stephen, and Muhammed and Ayl facing Salim.

"I don't get your drift," Muhammed said. "You saying forums ain't revolutionary?"

"They seem really academic to me, all the forums I've been to. I think workers will be really turned off by a forum. I don't think they'll learn anything."

"How do you know that?" Ayl asked. "What kind of experience do you have that tells you workers won't learn from a forum?"

"Well, I don't know for sure," said Stephen. "I'm just going on my own experience. Also the way forums are set up—with some people reading papers, and everybody else having to sit there and fucking listen. I know when I went to your forum on party-building, it was hard sitting there for forty-five minutes while you read that paper. I drifted off a lot—especially after the first fifteen minutes. Maybe it's because the person who read the paper read it so monotonously."

"We do have to make a self-criticism around the way that paper was read," said Ayl. "The comrade who read it definitely should have made more of an effort to practice ahead of time. The masses will refuse to listen if you pre-

sent things in a lifeless way. But that does not mean forums are intrinsically lifeless. That's an idealist argument! How can you make an argument like that?"

"It seems strange to take the form for granted, almost," said Helen. But she said it hesitantly, and she cleared her throat before she continued and licked her lips. Ayl smiled at her encouragingly. "I mean, you can't completely separate form from content—they're dialectical, too, aren't they? What if the workers can't hear what you're saying? I don't mean that literally—obviously they can hear what you're saying. But what if they don't like the way you're saying it, they're not familiar with it. Wouldn't it be better to start with something they're more familiar with?"

4.

"I hear you," Muhammed said, "we're talking about reaching the masses. But what I hear you saying is, you 'think' this ain't going to work, and you 'suspect' that ain't going to work. That don't be scientific, comrades. You got to raise up some concrete arguments to support that. And I ain't heard any suggestions from you—based on some concrete experience—about what this group should be doing instead."

"Well, I'm not sure. Maybe something with music or television—something using popular cultural forms."

"That's fine, comrade. I wholeheartedly unite with that," Ayl said. "But I get the feeling you don't know any more about those popular forms of culture than you do about forums. You're still arguing against this forum based on no concrete practice. What does this pamphlet say? It says, 'Our writers and artists have their literary and art work to do, but their primary task is to understand people and know them well.'"

"But you haven't told us *your* concrete experience," Stephen said. "Why do you think the forum will work? Turning out fifteen people isn't exactly the masses."

"My concrete experience is that workers want the truth. If you give them the truth, and tell them how to put it into practice, they'll listen to you. If you know and love the masses, treat them with respect, they'll listen to you. I've been at plenty of forums and all kinds of workers have come. They didn't just sit there, either! They asked a lot of questions, they wanted to find things out. People don't want to be fed bourgeois lies all their life. They want the truth—they're hungry for the truth, you understand? And if we keep giving them the truth, and put that truth into practice, they'll never stop listening to us."

"But how many people really showed?" Carl asked. "At all the forums I've been at, hardly anybody showed up. Don't you think more people would come if we did a play or something? A real problem on the left at the moment is the low level of fusion between Marxism-Leninism and the working class—you admit that yourselves."

"Sure, we admit that," said Muhammed. "But I hope you ain't taking no Kautsky line. That's an incorrect line. Lenin thoroughly defeated that line when he proved that the proletariat don't lead revolution just on the basis of numbers."

5.

Robert began to think about the night he went to Ayl's house for dinner. The main reason he'd come to the group was to work with members of the "working class". But it wasn't until he went to Ayl's house, and talked to her alone, that he realized how naive he was about the communist movement. Her background was almost as petty bourgeois as his, and so were Muhammed's and Salim's—and they'd all come to

Marxism-Leninism slowly and painfully. In fact, they'd had a long conversation that night about the way Ayl would come home from meetings, crying about her mistakes and how hard it was for her to correct them.

But even when he found out how petty bourgeois they were, Robert didn't feel the same way about Salim and Muhammed and Ayl as he did about Thomas and Martha. Instead of running him aground on his class limitations, leaving him angry and inert, Salim and Muhammed and Ayl showed him a way out. It wasn't that he could escape being petty bourgeois—he knew that was impossible. The three of them were still petty bourgeois, too. But at least they were beginning to work in the interests of the working class, instead of their own interests or those of blacks alone.

But Robert knew that he also felt ambivalent. A part of himself really trusted Salim and Muhammed and Ayl—trusted them too much, in fact, since he knew that it was only by being forced that he would give up his class privileges. Another part of himself, the part that wanted to stay petty bourgeois, didn't trust them at all. So he tended to vacillate in the meetings between total scepticism and taking everything they said at face value.

6.

"But I assume you need more than thirty people to start a revolution," Stephen persisted, a little sarcastically.

"That's how many people showed up at the forum I was at."

"This is a young movement, comrade, a very young movement," Ayl said. "We've hardly gotten off the ground. There's plenty of things we have to do. When the Communist Party U.S.A. went revisionist in 1957, and stopped being the party of the masses, it left the whole movement in disorder. There are a lot of pieces we have to pick up. But that ain't what's keeping this movement down now! What's keeping us down is all the petty bourgeois squabbling and sectarianism within the movement itself—and the low level of fusion which follows from this. We've made a lot of errors on this, and we're going to make a lot more. We have to expect that. That's what struggle is all about—correcting our errors. What I hear you saying is that the movement is weak just because we're holding forums! That's a petty bourgeois line! The petty bourgeoisie is always saying form is primary, instead of content. But as long as we're speaking the language of the masses, and telling them the truth, they're going to listen to us and trust us. And it ain't no problem speaking the language of the masses at a forum."

"Nobody here is saying you can't speak the language of the masses at a forum," Stephen said.

"Well, what are you saying, comrade? We want everything open and above-board here," Salim said. "If you got something to say, say it! Don't hold back your line. Get it out in the open so we can struggle over it in a principled manner."

Robert shifted in his seat, and turned to face Stephen.

"He's right, Stephen. This whole thing might have been a lot less confusing—not to mention more concrete—if we'd started off with what we thought the group should be doing."

"Alright," said Stephen, looking sheepish, "I take that point."

"You should have seen that a long time ago, comrade. You ain't going to keep asking those questions if there ain't something behind it. We got to be open and above-board, comrade, open and above-board. We ain't going to advance the struggle of the proletariat if we don't be struggling open and above-

board with each other. So what do you want us to do, if we ain't going to do something around Southern Africa?"

"That's what you keep saying. But I never said that. I don't care if we do something on Southern Africa. I just think we should emphasize conditions in the U.S."

"What conditions you talking about? You talking about conditions in the factory or ghetto? You talking about the rise of fascism? I ain't heard you say what conditions you talking about."

7.

"This is a cultural group," said Stephen, folding his hands like a Rabbi again. "What I'm talking about is attacking bourgeois culture. I mean, the bourgeoisie aren't fucking stupid. They've been pouring money into culture for the last ten years. They know they're screwing the workers, and that working conditions are really bad. That's why this whole fucking thing about culture and the 'quality of life' has come up lately. The bourgeoisie are trying to use culture to make workers forget how bad their working lives are. That's why culture is all about escapism—stuff like that. Shit, I talked to this bureaucrat in Washington whose big dream was that people could come home from work, turn on their television sets, and watch the Metropolitan Museum."

"You ain't going to see people in no ghetto or poor neighborhood held down by no museum. They got police in there—that's what's holding the people down. You don't think the masses know who's laying the stick on them?"

"Of course they know who's laying the stick on them," Helen said. "I don't think anybody here is saying the masses don't know about the police. And sure, I agree with you that museums aren't very important in the ghetto. But don't you think that television's important, and radio? A lot of people may have really bad food and housing, and still have a television set or a radio. But the things they hear on the radio and see on television aren't any different—the effect isn't any different, at least—from the things they'd see in a museum. To me, it's all part of the same thing. The bourgeoisie still want to keep our 'private' lives private—separate from our working lives, I mean, and from other people—so that everyone will think of themselves as individuals instead of a class."

8.

Robert began to smile to himself as he drew a picture of Helen. The night before, the two of them had slept together for the first time. Afterwards, lying with their legs around each other and leaning on their elbows, she asked him if he thought there would be marriage "after the revolution".

When he asked her what she meant, she turned away and wouldn't answer. He didn't understand that. Then she asked him what they were going to tell Greg. That he understood.

9.

"I can unite with some of the things you're saying, comrade. In bourgeois society, the dominant culture will always express the class interests of the bourgeoisie. Nobody here disagrees with that. That's why we're all here. But what you're saying is that bourgeois culture's a lie. Now how come you know that, and you don't think the masses know that? Do you think the masses are stupid or something? The masses aren't stupid! They know who's forcing them to work overtime, just so they won't lose their job. They know who's buying off the high officials in the labor movement, in order to divide the working class and encourage individualism. And they know ain't no amount of culture going to do anything to

change that understanding!"

"I'm not so sure it's all that simple. But maybe what I'm trying to ask is, if people understand that it's all a lie, how come they don't do anything about it? Maybe the real power of bourgeois culture is that people know it's a lie! They see that everything around them is a lie. And no matter what they do, all they get is more lies. So they give up thinking they can do anything about it."

"Hey, comrade, you're the one getting fooled by all those bourgeois lies. Speed-ups and accidents on the job ain't a lie. Forced overtime don't be no lie, either. That's reality, comrade, reality. That's what capitalism's all about. And workers got something to say about that reality, comrade. They don't show up for work, they sabotage the assembly-line—they go out on strike! You dig what I'm saying? It's up to the Communists to lead this spontaneous struggle and make it scientific."

10.

Somewhere in the back of his mind, Robert began to think he'd made a mistake about Thomas and Martha. It wasn't that they were confused about their beliefs, or that confusion had become almost second-nature to them—that wasn't important. What made them confused was indecision, the fact that they vacillated. The two of them really did believe in a form of socialism, some form anyway. At the same time they couldn't give up their art careers, and everything that that meant. So they ended up supporting the class interests of both the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, constantly wavering between the two, forever confusing which class interests they supported.

What made him go numb was the fear that he might be no different, and that Salim and Muhammed and Ayl might see him in exactly the same light that he saw Thomas and Martha.

11.

"So what are we supposed to do, as a cultural group?"

"It ain't no different the second time around, comrade. We got to expose all the dark forces of the bourgeoisie, and extol all the revolutionary struggles of the masses."

"Yeah, but to you that means doing a forum on Southern Africa."

"Hey, that ain't no subjective decision. What I'm talking about is the *objective* situation, comrade, objective reality. The main contradiction in the world today is imperialism versus the Third World. The two superpowers, U.S. imperialism and Soviet social imperialism, are in a battle to the death over Africa. They need the land and resources of Africa. They need the people of Africa for cheap labor. But they're getting their behinds kicked out of Africa, comrade! Some of the sharpest struggles against imperialism and fascism be happening in Southern Africa—dig what I'm saying? All of Africa is rising up! We got to teach people that a victory in Southern Africa is a victory for the U.S. working class!"

"But a victory in Harlan County, against the coal companies, is also a victory for the U.S. working class. And it strikes a lot closer to home—if you'll excuse the pun. Why can't we use something like that to talk about Southern Africa, instead of using Southern Africa to talk about that. I'm not saying we shouldn't deal with Southern Africa. All I'm saying is, there are various ways of dealing with Southern Africa—and emphasizing the conditions here would make it easier for workers to make the connections between repression at home and repression abroad."

"Now what conditions you raising up? You back to talking about bourgeois culture again?"

"Not at all. I'm talking about strikes, inflation, the election of Jimmy Carter—things like that."

"We can talk about those things. I don't have no problem with that, I can unite with you on that. But I don't even hear you raising up one of the most important things. What about national oppression, comrade—national oppression is what being under the grip of imperialism means! Right here in the U.S., Afro-American people are an oppressed nation in the Black Belt South, and living in the rest of the country as an oppressed nationality. And things don't be no different in Southern Africa. You see, comrade, this forum ain't supposed to be about everything. It ain't but one forum on imperialism. Nobody's saying Southern Africa's the only way to talk about imperialism. But you ain't giving us a chance to get down to it, and that petty bourgeois behavior, comrade. The petty bourgeoisie's always separating theory and practice. You got a lot to say about revolutionary culture, but I don't see you giving us a chance to get down to it."

"What do you mean? The only thing we're disagreeing about is how we emphasize what we're going to talk about."

"I disunite with that, comrade. I think we still ain't seeing eye to eye on just what this forum's about in the first place."

"I don't see it that way. I just don't think there's a major disagreement."

"That's what you say, comrade. But you ain't stopped raising objections, either. Any time something comes up, you raise up an objection. We deal with that and you raise up another objection. I don't see no way around that, comrade. Maybe you say there ain't no disagreement, but I say there is."

IV "We've probably been seeing too much of each other."

1.

The phone rang, and Helen rose to pick it up.

"Hello?" she said. There was a short pause and she began to frown. "I suppose you're looking for Robert." She took the phone from her ear and turned to Robert. "It's Stephen," she said accusingly. As she left the room she slammed the door behind her.

Robert sighed, and slowly lifted the receiver. "Hi," he said.

"What's going on over there?" Stephen asked. "You two having an argument? You want me to call back later?"

"No, it's O.K."

"Did she leave, or something?"

"Just the other room. It's her house, after all."

"What's the argument about?" Stephen asked. There was a tightness in his voice, as if he was making a special effort to control it. But the effect was so slight that Robert hardly noticed it.

"Greg," he answered.

"She's not seeing Greg again, is she?"

"No, nothing like that." Robert suddenly exploded. "But do you want to know what that fucker accused me of? Well, the three of us, really. He said we were 'raiding'—as he put it—'raiding' the UAW meetings to get members for UPC!"

"Well he's right, in a sense. We have been telling people about UPC. But I guess it's his way of dealing with you and Helen being together. He probably wouldn't care if anybody else went to UPC." Robert was too angry to sense the

tightness which pulled at Stephen's voice again.

"But that's fucking ridiculous! He really pisses me off. That's the sort of thing Thomas would say!"

There was a pause, and he heard Stephen lighting a cigarette. "I hate to tell you," Stephen finally responded, almost reluctantly, "but that's exactly what Thomas did say tonight."

"What!" cried Robert, as he began to pace around the room.

"And that's not all he said."

"Oh, wonderful. Thomas and Greg aren't getting together behind our backs, are they?"

"Now, now," said Stephen, reproachfully.

Robert didn't want to listen. "Well, they're doing the same thing, aren't they? Thomas acts like our ideological differences are emotional, and Greg acts like our emotional differences are ideological. What's the difference? Except Thomas is easier to deal with."

"Don't you think you're doing the same thing?"

There was something about Stephen's anger which forced Robert to think twice about his outburst. He stopped pacing and sat down, and when he spoke again he was almost sheepish. "Yeah, you're probably right."

"What I don't understand is how come you and Helen got into an argument. She doesn't believe all that bullshit, does she?"

"No, of course not. I'm sure Greg doesn't either. But one thing led to another—you know."

"Is that why you didn't come to the meeting tonight?"

Robert was calm enough by then to catch the rise in Stephen's voice, but he was still only dimly aware of its meaning.

"No, actually we didn't come because we thought Greg would be there. Neither of us wanted to see him."

"Well, that's a costly argument the three of you had," said Stephen, suddenly very somber. "Greg didn't show up at the meeting, either—probably because he thought you'd be there, both of you together. It wasn't so bad when it was just Thomas going on and on about how we're trying to split the group—Carl and I could deal with that."

"Jesus, he's dangerous," said Robert, trying to head off what he thought was coming.

"Well, everything was fine until Martha and a few other women introduced a totally ridiculous resolution about sexism. Which passed by one vote."

"What do you mean?" Robert asked, disturbed.

"What do you think I mean?" Stephen snapped, more angrily than usual, more self-righteously. "If you'd been there, it wouldn't have passed." He paused, and his voice became friendlier. "That was very poor, boobie. It could have been a lot more serious under different circumstances."

"But what did the resolution say?"

"You want me to read it to you?"

"Can't you just tell me? How long is it?"

"Just the crucial part. Wait a minute, let me get it." Robert heard him shuffling some papers on his desk. "O.K. here it is. 'What does the term sexism mean? Sexism is not only the oppression of women by men. Sexism is the oppression of people through a particular manner of acting, speaking and being that prevents us from relating to one another as equals. Sexism excludes all those who do not want to compete for the sake of competition. It excludes those of us who refuse to take ego-serving authoritarian positions. It turns every discussion in this room into a microcosm of the bourgeois world we attempt to fight.' There you

have it," he sneered, "in a nutshell."

"Let me guess," said Robert, his anger beginning to rise. "Martha isn't just saying that men do all the talking anymore. Now she's telling us that the whole discussion about organization is sexist."

"You got it fella. That's what she's saying. And she's got a lot of people saying it with her."

"What a jerk! What a reactionary jerk!"

"You took the very words out of my mouth."

Robert stopped to think. He began to wonder how justified his anger was. Although Martha was using the issue of sexism to protect herself, not everything she was getting at was false. Still, the important thing was the way she was trying to protect herself. "Well, maybe it's time to make the split in the group more formal," he said, his voice thick with melodrama.

"I've been thinking along the same lines, myself. I talked to Carl and a couple of other people after the meeting—and that's what they think, too."

"What are we going to do, though?"

"What we tried to figure out was the best way to attack Martha's bullshit about authoritarianism. Carl suggested a resolution about the dictatorship of the proletariat, and I think he's right."

Robert was suddenly unsure, hesitant. "But we've had these kinds of disagreements before, and nothing's come of it."

"I don't think so—not like this. Are you kidding me? All we have to do is get a resolution around the dictatorship of the proletariat passed, and everybody's going to know there's a split in the group. How are they going to think there aren't

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ideological differences if that happens?"

"Tell me something, though," said Robert, feeling a little hurt because he hadn't been included in the discussion after the meeting. "How is all this going to look? I mean, Thomas and Martha have been saying for weeks that we're trying to split the group. I don't give a fuck what they think, or the people who support them think. But what about some of the people who support us?"

"What do you think—they're going to feel guilty?"

"Something like that. It's already come up."

"So they feel guilty," said Stephen, getting more and more stubborn. "So what?"

"What do you mean—'so what'? What kind of an attitude is that!"

"What if they do feel guilty? What's going to happen?"

"What's going to happen is, they may not vote for the resolution. Where's that going to leave us?"

"You're crazy. Nobody's going to feel guilty about exposing Thomas and Martha."

"But what if they do?"

"Well, we'll just have to say there's nothing to feel guilty about, because there are objective differences in the group."

"I think we're going to have to say more than that," said Robert, knowing what he said was right, but more concerned with winning the argument. He still felt guilty about not coming to the meeting and Stephen's rebuke still irritated him.

"I don't know what's wrong with me," Stephen said, giving in a little. "I guess I'm getting pretty ruthless about all this. I just want to nail Thomas and Martha, expose their line—that's all. That kind of guilt seems really petty bourgeois to me now."

"But we have to deal with it," said Robert, driving the point home.

"So, look—why don't we talk to the people in UPC?"

"That's an idea," Robert replied. He realized that he was only arguing, not making an effort to solve the problem. "Except there isn't a meeting until next month, and we don't have anybody's phone number. Why don't we just have a meeting ourselves—you know, all the people who don't like Thomas and Martha—before the next general meeting?"

"O.K., I can agree with that."

Robert felt pleased with himself, although he also felt stupid for feeling that way. He tried to push the conversation towards more neutral ground. "By the way, what did you think of the last UPC meeting?"

"I don't know," said Stephen. "You said a few things as we were leaving. But I haven't talked to you since then." Robert could feel how measured Stephen's voice had become again, how controlled it was.

"Yeah, I guess I changed my mind since then," he said.

"What do you mean?" Stephen asked, sounding a little hurt.

"Well, a couple of things. For one thing, I don't think we've been paying enough attention to the masses. That's what Mao is really talking about in that pamphlet. He keeps saying the same thing over and over again—you've got to work for the masses."

"I thought that's what we were doing."

"I think that's what we're trying to do, but I don't think that's what we're doing. Maybe our theoretical level is high, but all our work is pretty much about high culture, isn't it. Even we understand that high culture has only a minimal effect on the masses!" Robert exclaimed, starting to pace

again.

"So what do you suggest?" Stephen asked, his voice laced with sarcasm.

"That's the problem," said Robert, surprised by Stephen's tone. A glimmer of understanding surged through him, and almost without thinking he modulated his voice, trying to include Stephen. "That's the problem, I don't know what to do about it. I mean, I know what to do about it, but I can't do anything yet because I don't have enough experience."

"I'm not sure I know what you're talking about. Could you be less abstract?"

"Well, I've been racking my brains all week, trying to write a story with 'working class' characters, and about a 'working class' situation. But I can't do it, I just don't have the experience to make it work."

Stephen chuckled with delight. "That's funny. I've been having the same problem with this screenplay I've been working on."

"You didn't tell me about that," said Robert, his old feelings of mistrust flaring up.

"You didn't ask me," Stephen replied. And although there was a pull in his voice again, it was tinged with warmth for the first time, more playful.

"What's it about?"

"A strike."

"Mine, too," said Robert, surprised. He sat down again. "But I didn't feel I could be convincing."

"I didn't either. That's why I haven't worked on it for awhile."

"Yeah, it's weird. I'm beginning to think that the heart of our vacillation is this weird kind of paralysis. You know, all the gaps between theory and practice, or form and content, ideology and psychology—all they do is leave us paralysed. Which reminds me—"

"Yeah, of what?"

"Of the second thing I wanted to say about the UPC meeting."

"What's that?"

"Well, after the meeting Helen and I got into this argument..."

"Oh, another one!" Stephen exclaimed, apparently beginning to joke around like he usually did with Robert. "At least it was *after* the meeting this time."

"Yeah, we do argue a lot, I guess."

"Why's that?"

"Probably because we both think we're right."

"Sounds like you and me," said Stephen, emphasizing it.

"Different," said Robert. But when he said it, it sounded like the wrong response. "Anyway, we got into this argument when we got home, and I began to realize, because of some stuff she said—"

"Oh, so she was right."

Robert began to feel that Stephen wasn't simply joking, but, whether he was aware of it or not, using Helen as a weapon. "Very funny," said Robert. "Do you want to hear this or not? O.K. What I began to realize is the weird relationship we take to that group. I mean, I think they were right—I think we were disagreeing about what the forum should be about. It's like we ask questions in a way which weakens the group—really makes it weak, instead of stronger. I still think some of the stuff we were getting at is valid—especially the stuff about emphasizing conditions here in the U.S. But I don't think we made our arguments in a

way which moved the group forward. In fact, I don't think we made very good arguments, really. We're still too much involved in our own history."

"I just don't know if I agree with that, Robert. I'm not sure. I take the point you brought up earlier, the thing about paralysis. We don't want to hold the group back. But I'm still not convinced by their arguments. I don't like the way they always fucking use the 'classics' to prove a point."

"Yeah, maybe that borders on dogmatism at times."

"I'd say--a lot of the time. And they keep throwing the black thing in our faces, too."

"Wait a minute. Are you saying they don't like whites? I hope you're not saying that."

"No, I'm saying they're more concerned with black struggles sometimes than they are with the working class in general."

"Well, that's true. They got problems with their own history."

"You're telling me they do."

"Boy, you've got a bee in your bonnet tonight!"

"Look who's talking! What about Greg?"

"That's different."

"That's what you say."

Robert started to laugh. "Look, all I'm trying to say is, I think their arguments were a lot stronger than ours."

You're not saying our arguments were convincing, are you? I mean, sometimes they sounded a lot like things we've been arguing against in UAW meetings!"

DREADFUL MEMORIES

Dreadful memories, how they linger,
How they ever flood my soul,
How the workers and their children
Died from hunger and from cold.

Hungry fathers, wearied mothers
Living in those dreadful shacks,
Little children cold and hungry
With no clothing on their backs.

Dreadful gun-thugs and stool-pigeons
Always flock around our door.
What's the crime that we've committed?
Nothing only that we're poor.

Oh, those memories, how they haunt me
Makes me want to organize
Makes me want to help the workers
Make them open up their eyes.

When I think of all the heartaches
And all the things that we've been through,
Then I wonder how much longer
And what a working man can do.

Really, friends, it doesn't matter
Whether you are black or white.
The only way you'll ever change things
Is to fight and fight and fight.

We will have to join the union,
They will help you find a way
How to get a better living
And for you work get better pay.

APPALACHIAN MINERS' SONG

"Well, I have to admit they weren't the greatest arguments. But what convinced you?" Stephen suddenly asked, "--their arguments, or the argument with Helen?"

It sounded like an innocent question to Robert, and that's the way he responded. "Well, I hate to say it, but it was probably the argument with Helen--at least at first. I didn't want to look like a fucking reactionary to her. Weird, huh?" A part of him listened for the pull in Stephen's voice, testing it.

"I guess it doesn't seem that weird to me," said Stephen sadly. "I was with Angela that way about sexism. Until she left me for that woman."

"That's one way to become a reactionary," Robert replied sympathetically, remembering his own life. "It's funny how much your feelings determine what you really believe in."

"And how hard it is to change your feelings. Believe me, that brought out a lot of shit in me that I didn't even know was there. I couldn't think clearly about it for a long time." Stephen paused. "But you know all that, we sure talked about it a lot."

"Yeah, I know," said Robert, softly.

"We've probably been seeing too much of each other."

Robert was too absorbed in his own feelings to notice Stephen's irony. "Four years is a long time," he said.

"That isn't what I meant," Stephen said, sounding betrayed.

The way he said it made Robert lean forward in his chair and press the phone closer to his ear. The feelings he'd had all night, but only dimly acknowledged, quickly came into focus. "Hey," he said, "is something the matter?"

"That's what I wanted to ask you."

It dawned on Robert that the conversation had probably been leading up to this all night. "What do you mean?" he asked carefully.

"Are you sure there isn't something wrong between us?" Stephen asked. "I mean, I've been feeling kind of uneasy about our relationship. I've hardly talked to you at all lately."

Robert was quick to reassure him. "I don't think anything is wrong. I don't feel that way at all."

"Maybe it's just because you've been seeing so much of Helen," Stephen said.

Robert couldn't tell if he sounded jealous or not. "Well, that's true," he said, noncommittally.

"But we haven't been working together, either."

"The three of us, you mean?"

"Well, we've been working together at the UAW and UPC meetings, along with everyone else. But we haven't done anything together aside from that--not lately, anyway. We've all gone our separate ways," Stephen said, trailing off.

Robert tried to pick up the pieces. "I guess I've been feeling kind of strange about that, too," he said. "Not that I've done anything about it, either. But I don't know if it's that bad, you know? The reason we got together was to do shows together. But none of us is that interested in doing shows anymore. Shit, you remember the trouble we had trying to do that show for Paris!"

"Yeah, I know. That was funny," Stephen said, his voice brightening. "We couldn't come up with a fucking thing."

"It's like we're stuck in the middle. We've gone too far to do those kinds of shows anymore, but not far enough to write a proletarian story."

"I don't know," said Stephen, his voice failing like a match.

"I don't know," said Stephen, his voice failing like a match going out, "I guess I've just been feeling isolated lately for some reason. We may be getting closer ideologically--some of us, anyway--but a lot of the social relations seem like they're about to explode."

"Yeah, I know what you mean. We're all so interested in what affects us personally."

"I hope things don't fall apart," Stephen said. But after he said it, he laughed at himself--as though he'd given too much away. "I could really use a change of class," he said ironically.

Robert cringed at the implication, and tried to make it into a joke. "Well, that ain't going to happen. But you could try getting a job."

"Thanks a lot, fella."

"Well I love you," said Robert very quickly. It almost sounded glib.

There was a long pause. "I love you, too," Stephen said.

Robert pushed the phone away and stared out the window, motionless. He began to feel depressed. Maybe the reason the two of them had become friends was also making it harder for them to remain friends, now that they were moving away from the art world. Or maybe it was just Helen.

When Helen came back into the room, they looked at each other a long time without saying anything, without moving. Then he slowly raised his hands to her face.

V. Why don't you just stand me up against the wall and shoot me!"

1.

"Look," said the chair, "there isn't much time left, and there's still several people down on the list to speak. Will everyone please shut up, so Eleanor can finish what she was saying and we can get on to the other people, so we can vote."

"I think I've said what I had to say," said Eleanor. "I'm really tired of sitting around here talking all the time, anyway."

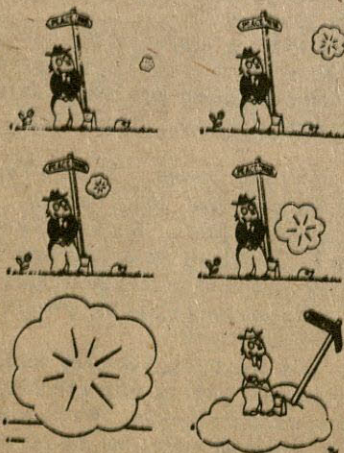
"That's O.K.," said Carl, "we're really tired of hearing you talk all the time."

"Why don't you try waiting your turn," said the chair.

"Why don't you try understanding this isn't a democracy."

"I'm not discriminating against anyone here."

"That's a matter of opinion."



LIBERAL AT THE CROSSROADS

"So take it up with the Central Committee," Thomas said.

2.

The struggle over the dictatorship of the proletariat had been going on for three weeks. As usual, it had taken two weeks just to get it on the agenda. By this time Robert felt that his bitterness and rancor were completely justified, and so did Stephen and Carl--and, reluctantly, Helen. Thomas and Martha and their supporters felt the same way. Each side said the other side was trying to split the group. Rumors multiplied like flies. The low point was when Thomas suggested that Robert had been trying to sleep with Martha for years, but she wouldn't let him.

Only one thing relieved this liturgy of despair. The people who opposed Thomas and Martha no longer felt guilty about it, and they all felt more unified. But even this fragile unity was strained when Greg stopped coming to the meetings. The meetings were too petty bourgeois, he said.

3.

"Well, at the risk of being assassinated," said Thomas, "I'd like to remind certain people in this group that the majority of people here do agree on something. Most of us agree that we are firmly opposed to all forms of domination! We're tired of being harassed, pushed around! We're not here because we have all the answers--what would be the point of getting together if we had all the answers? We're here because we want to inform ourselves and others about the present organization of society. We want to learn from each other, and find out how we can initiate social change--what our role is."

The veins in Stephen's neck swelled like a snake about to strike. "What are you saying--that artists are going to lead the revolution!"

"I don't think anyone here can deny that this is a group of artists, and our immediate concern is culture. But there are a lot of groups in this city--we're not the only one. All of these groups are struggling for social change--some of them for socialism, even. And the thing that unites them--what makes them into a legitimate mass movement--is they all believe real revolution is made by people, not decree!"

"Are you kidding me?" Robert raged. "Most of those people wouldn't go near a real revolution!"

"Neither would I," said Martha, "not if you were leading it."

"That's just it, Martha. I wouldn't be--the proletariat would be leading it!"

"That's what I mean," Thomas broke in. "Obviously there are certain people in this group who do believe revolution is made by decree. They're telling us that if we just adopt what they call the 'correct' theory, we'll all be good revolutionaries. But who says the dictatorship of the proletariat will work in this country, with our present stage of development? The U.S. isn't Russia or China--and personally I'm glad. The dictatorship of the proletariat didn't work there, either. We can't dogmatically apply the same old tired solutions--which were never solutions to begin with--to our situation! We have to be creative! We have to re-think what revolution means, tailor it to the concrete conditions of this country--the reality of our historical development!"

"The proletariat's the only revolutionary class--that's the reality we're talking about!"

"What's all this bullshit about 'creativity'?"

"Pretty soon we'll be going to art school to learn revolution!"



"And he's the most radical thing you ever heard of. Why he's already talking of a Fourth International."

4.

Robert didn't want to be jealous of Greg. For awhile he tried to convince himself that he wasn't—allowing Greg to call him a bastard, making an effort to smooth things over. But one day they got into a terrible fight over an article, and Robert decided that he was tired of feeling guilty. He couldn't help it. He began to hate Greg and avoided him whenever possible. Although they saw each other all the time at forums and film-showings, they hardly said a word.

5.

"The main thing I want to say," said Robert, "is that the only way you can be 'firmly opposed to all forms of domination' is if you totally ignore the class nature of domination. I mean, what do you think socialism's all about! There's no way you can talk about socialism unless you recognize that socialism itself is a form of domination. When the workers overthrow the bourgeois state and transform the factories into revolutionary state property, they're dominating the bourgeoisie. That's exactly what the dictatorship of the proletariat is--domination!"

"That's exactly what the dictatorship of the proletariat is, alright. Some of us have been saying that all along," said Martha. "But that isn't what socialism has to be."

"What do you think--the bourgeoisie is going to give up without a fight! The stronger the resistance, the more the bourgeoisie is going to fight back. Even if the bourgeoisie is overthrown, it's going to fight tooth and nail to get back into power. Look at what happened in the Soviet Union--the capitalists have seized power again. Socialism doesn't just get rid of domination right away. It can't. It gets rid of bourgeois domination, the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie! And that's the only kind of domination that exists--domination

with an historical face. We're not talking about something abstract! Depending on the circumstances, domination can be good or bad. You can't just say it's all bad--that's a petty bourgeois line. What you should say is, domination is good in the interests of the working class, and bad in the interests of the bourgeoisie."

"Maybe that's what you think we should say," said Thomas, "--you and the rest of the dictators in this group. But some of us don't think so," he continued, looking around for support as usual.

"You mean to say you think domination isn't historical?"

"You've been feeding us these dusty old slogans all night. You shouldn't be surprised if some of us start sneezing."

"Hey, all this stuff about 'dusty old slogans' and 'tired old slogans' is really a crock of shit. That's the other thing I wanted to say. The dictatorship of the proletariat isn't a rancid slice of dogma--it's the only thing that faces up to the reality of revolution. We need it just as much now in the U.S. as the Russians did in 1917 and the Chinese in 1949. Maybe it will take a slightly different form here--we don't have a large peasant population, for one thing--but it'll mean the same thing--domination by the proletariat and its allies. All I'm trying to say is, socialism isn't the *end* of revolution, it's only the *beginning*! What the dictatorship of the proletariat does is acknowledge the reality of this struggle. It doesn't only abolish private property--which is the reason there's class domination to begin with--it struggles against all the bourgeois ideas and ideology which have become such a 'natural' part of our emotions. So what Martha and Thomas and a lot of other people tonight have been calling socialism, isn't really socialism at all as far as I'm concerned. It's anarchism! At best, it's Utopian Socialism!"

6.

"I'm going to say what I have to say very quickly," said Martha, looking at the floor. "I want to spare everyone another long tirade. These meetings are never anything but a series of fucking counter-revolutionary monologues, anyway!" She suddenly straightened up, her face swollen with suffering. "We're never able to learn from each other, or work together collectively anymore. The only thing that happens is, we're *told* there are ideological differences, or *told* certain positions are bourgeois. Well I'd like to *tell* everyone something! Certain people in this group are out-and-out sexist! They just about admit it themselves. They're sexist and authoritarian, and trying to destroy this group! Isn't it clear to everyone why they support domination and the dictatorship of the proletariat? It's because they can't tolerate the existence of *this* group! They can't accept the fact that this group doesn't square with the conventional theories of left dogma, or that the majority of people in this group think this group is necessary! They want to dominate this group and destroy it!"

"My god, it's the Red Tide!"

"How come she says the same thing all the time?"

"Well, at least she spared us a tirade!"

7.

Helen raised her hand slowly and deliberately. "It's my turn to speak, isn't it?"

"Yes," said the chair.

"Well," she said, pausing to lick her lips, her eyes wide with distress, "I really don't know what to say, Martha. I guess I should stick to what I was going to say. But I feel like I have to say something, Martha. What I feel like

asking you is why you never link sexual oppression to class oppression. I mean, I don't think you really understand sexism—you're not really committed to fighting sexism. You just want to use it as red-baiting, and that's such a perversion of what fighting sexism is all about." Helen's voice was getting more melodramatic and self-righteous, the harder she fought with herself. She looked to Robert as though she was in agony. "I say that as a woman, Martha, and as somebody who is working for socialism."

"What do you mean?" Martha asked.

cause we 'want' to," Stephen continued, his lower lip jutting forward. "Are you kidding me—we don't have that kind of choice! We're not independent, we're being *forced* to choose which class we support. That's what happens to the petty bourgeoisie. As capitalism gets more and more shaky we're forced to choose sides. And it's not like a Chinese menu, Martha, where you take a dish from column A, one from column B, and another from column C. There's only two choices, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. As long as we vacillate we're only playing into the hands of the bourgeoisie.



DRAWING BY WILLIAM GROPPER

LADIES. IT GIVES ME GREAT PLEASURE TO ANNOUNCE THAT WE HAVE SAVED 5,000 STARVING CHILDREN IN THE PAST YEAR. AND WE HOPE THERE WILL BE MORE NEXT YEAR.

"I wish you did know what I mean, Martha—believe me, I do. All I can say is, I don't think sexism is what's dividing this group. And it isn't any of the other things which have come up, either—from both sides. All those conflicts we had between form and content, and theory versus practice. What's really dividing us is the difference between bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology."

"Oh, bullshit!" cried Martha. "What's dividing this group is that some people want to work for social change and other people want to re-stage the Russian revolution!"

"But Martha!" Stephen broke in, "you can't just reduce everything to dogma! It isn't dogma which is dividing this group!"

"Well, what do you think it is?"

"Helen already told you—the contradiction between bourgeois ideology and proletarian ideology."

"What the fuck is that, if it isn't dogma?"

"There's a *reason* certain people in this group don't get along with other people here, and why some of us support the dictatorship of the proletariat. And it isn't dogma, Martha, or psychology, either. It's ideological. The antagonisms in this group are class antagonisms!"

"Oh come off it!" Martha snapped. "I still say that most people here want a people's revolution, and the rest of you want to re-live the Russian revolution!"

"We don't support the dictatorship of the proletariat be-

It's that simple, and that profound."

"Not to me, it isn't that simple—or that profound, either."

"So all you're doing is playing out the destiny of the petty bourgeoisie."

"What do you mean? I'm playing out my *own* destiny."

"That's what he means," said Helen, looking at Stephen, "—you're being petty bourgeois." Her voice was less strident than before, but Robert wasn't sure if she was feeling sorry for Martha or less threatened by her. "The petty bourgeoisie always thinks that history is made by individuals instead of classes. That's why anarchists are usually petty bourgeois."

"What the fuck does that mean? What's going on here?"

"What do you think individualism is, Martha?" Robert broke in. "It's the ideology of the self-employed, the professional. It's certainly our ideology as artists! But what do you think it's about, then, if it isn't private property and wanting to get rich? Look at all the shit we've done about 'artists rights'! What's that been about, really, except becoming first class citizens and getting our own share of the pie! You may talk a lot about socialism, Martha, but you're really talking about individualism and careerism as much as socialism. You're wavering, Martha, you're wavering just like the petty bourgeoisie always wavers! That's the problem with you and this whole group! We can

never make up our minds which class we support!"

"Because I don't support the dictatorship of the proletariat, I'm wavering? What are you waiting for! Why don't you just stand me up against the wall and shoot me!"

"Oh, don't be ridiculous," said Helen. "Nobody's attacking you personally—we're struggling against your petty bourgeois ideology. I struggle with the same thing in myself all the time."

"Well, I wish you'd keep it to yourself."

"I'd only be helping the bourgeoisie, if I did that."

VI. "But what about the dictatorship of the proletariat?"

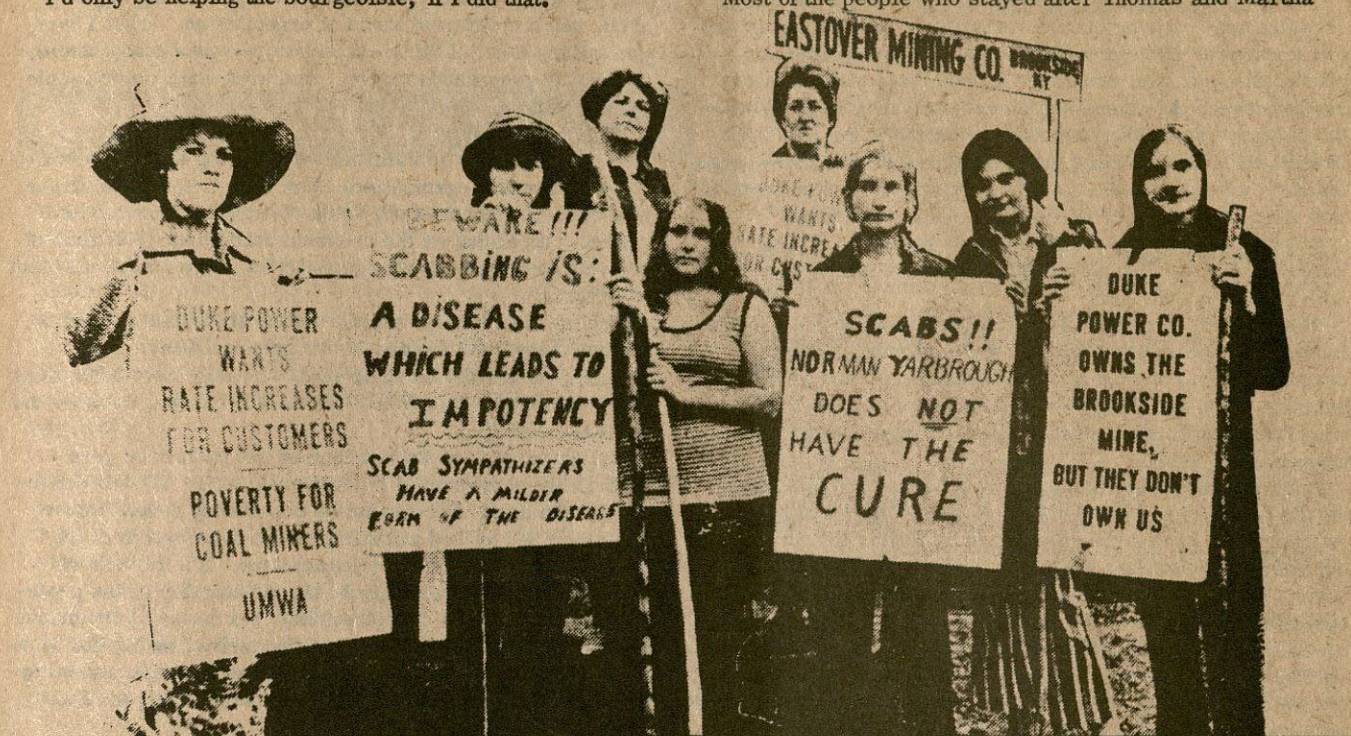
1.

"You mean we were wrong?" Robert asked, his voice taking on an edge. It occurred to him that he hadn't spoken to Ayl before because he didn't want her to interfere.

"It doesn't seem right to me," said Ayl. "Explain it to me again. Maybe I didn't catch your meaning."

2.

Most of the people who stayed after Thomas and Martha



"So what you're telling us is—"

"What we're telling you," shouted Robert, "is that we can't say we're 'organized' unless we know what we're organized for! Think about it, Martha. How can we say we're 'working for socialism' if we don't even agree on the definition of socialism? That's why we've been having this argument for the last three months—because some of us think that socialism means a lot more than simply choosing to call yourself 'socialist'. It means the dictatorship of the proletariat!"

8.

The vote was barely counted before Thomas and Martha and all their supporters walked out. Feeling that they were in the majority, even though they lost the vote, they decided to walk out and take the group with them. They made it quite clear that they were going to be the United Art Workers from that point on. It was all planned beforehand, because they passed out a paper which explained their position and asked others to join them. It was the only way they could make a defeat look like victory.

There was an eerie silence after they left. The room was silent with shock. Without realizing it, Robert began to smile—and so did Stephen and Carl. But everybody else—even Helen—began to look at each other furtively, as if they'd done something wrong. Their guilt was rising to the surface like thick cream.

left, agreed to meet as a faction of the United Art Workers. But a number of people didn't stay, and many of them stopped going to meetings of any kind. Their guilt was too much for them. All they felt was disgust, both with themselves and with the whole situation. In fact, it had taken a long time to convince the people who did stay that the split was inevitable—and that if Thomas and Martha hadn't walked out, something else would have happened to split the group.

After a few meetings everybody seemed to be happy with the split. All the acrimony and sarcasm had disappeared, and people began to feel they were moving ahead, instead of running in place. Robert would occasionally meet people from the other faction, and they seemed to feel the same way. He almost felt friendly towards them again.

3.

"But what about the dictatorship of the proletariat?" Robert asked, a little desperately. "I thought you couldn't really deal with organization unless you knew who you were organized for. That seemed to be the big problem in the group—all these artists kept calling themselves socialists, and calling the United Art Workers socialist, when it wasn't."

"What do you think the group was?"

"What do you mean?" he asked, his fingers tight on the phone.

"That's what I'm not clear on," she said. "You keep talking about the dictatorship of the proletariat, and you say

they kept talking about sexism and authoritarianism, but I don't hear anybody talking about what kind of organization it was supposed to be."

"I still don't understand what you're saying," Robert asked. But he was beginning to, and he didn't like it. He should have talked to her before. "All they wanted to do was projects," he said, knowing it wasn't what she was getting at, but trying to defend himself, "and what we wanted to do was raise the level of theory."

"That's what communists should be striving to do in any organization—raising the theoretical level of the less advanced members. But communists should try to raise their practical level, too, and strive to achieve a unity of theory and practice. And there's different ways they're going to do that, depending on the kind of organization it is. You still haven't told me—was this group supposed to be a mass organization—a study circle—a study-propaganda circle—or what? You got to tell me that before I can tell you anything."

Robert was no longer able to defend himself. "To be honest with you, Ayl, I don't think it ever came up in a consolidated way," he said.

"That never came up!" she exclaimed, and he felt his face flush. But before she could say anything more, Robert heard the sound of yelling in the background, and a lot of banging—like marching feet. "Excuse me," said Ayl, "my daughter is up to some sort of mischief again, and I better find out what it is."

Robert suddenly felt isolated, very alone. All his fears, all the fears he had about his mind, confronted him like an endless wave of recrimination—and he felt as though Ayl's question had shattered the last link of his intellectual autonomy. The United Art Workers had been a refuge lately, the one situation where he felt like he knew what he was doing—or where he felt like a "leader", anyway. But now he couldn't even think of it that way. He began to feel that all of his fervor at the meetings, his self-righteousness, merely reflected the indecision and paralysis he felt in the rest of his work—that it was a way of proving to himself how much he was "doing".

As he sat there brooding, he heard Helen come in the door. He looked up and smiled at her, and she smiled back. She ransacked the packages in her hands, holding up a poster from China. He was about to say something when he heard Ayl pick up the phone.

"Now where was I?" Ayl asked. "Hey, is that something going on over at your place now? Don't tell me you have children?"

Robert smiled. "No," he said, "it's just Helen unwrapping some packages. What was your daughter doing?"

"Oh, lately she's playing she's one of the Little Red Guards," Ayl said fondly. "She likes to 'do guns', and I have to stop her from wrecking up the house. I guess I really spoil her, though." She paused. "But where was I?"

"About the kind of organization the United Art Workers is—or was, at least."

"Now I remember. How come you never consolidated no line around what kind of organization it was? How can you do anything, if you haven't done that?"

"I don't know," said Robert. "I guess we spent so much time arguing about what the group should be doing, that we never talked about what it should be. I think that's what we were— Just a minute," he said, pausing to listen to something Helen was telling him. "What I was going to say is,

I think that's what we were trying to get at when we brought up the dictatorship of the proletariat. But I can see now that we were putting the cart before the horse." He paused again. "What Helen just said is that there were discussions about what the organization should be, but mostly they were about who should be in the group and who shouldn't—not about the character of the organization. Which is true, now that I think about it."

"Well, I'm not completely clear on the whole situation," said Ayl, "but it seems to me that what you were arguing about was two different kinds of organization. What I hear you talking about, I think—objectively—was a study circle, or a study-propaganda circle. And what those other people were talking about—"

"Thomas and Martha?"

"—what Thomas and Martha were talking about—objectively—was a mass organization. Now I ain't saying which one was correct, because both kinds of organizations can be correct, depending on the concrete conditions. But none of you was clear on what was going down, so you made all kinds of errors."

Robert knew she was right. But he still found it hard to believe that all the months of struggle could have been avoided, or that the struggle could so easily have been along more correct lines. "Well," he asked, "do you think we did anything right?"

Ayl chuckled, and Robert figured she must have gone through the same kind of confusion herself. "It's all depending," she said. "You would be committing a 'left' error, I think, if you pushed for a line on the dictatorship of the proletariat in most mass organizations. It's the role of communists, those who uphold the dictatorship of the proletariat, to lead mass organizations. But material conditions dictate against the organizations themselves taking that line, in most cases. Of course, a lot of study circles, and study-propaganda circles, do take that line as a principle of unity. The UPC takes that line."

"Yeah, I know," said Robert, wryly, "that's why we brought it up." But he was grateful for the tidbit of support, and he began to feel more affectionate towards Ayl. "I guess I feel pretty ridiculous," he said, "especially about all the hostility in the group. The group was so petty bourgeois. It's like everybody's art career became a chip on their shoulder." Robert knew that he was over-reacting, but at the moment he didn't care.

"You can't reduce everything to psychology," said Ayl, chuckling again. "I do think there were some objective differences in the group. Most of the people sounded like honest forces, but some of them did sound like straight-out opportunists. Of course, I ain't saying that the only 'left' error you can make is with content. It's also your style of work, the way you raise that content up, which can be a 'left' error. Maybe the biggest error you made was treating everybody who disagreed with you—not just the opportunists in the group, but potential comrades—like they were your enemy. That's no different, in essence, from saying that nobody's your enemy."

"Yeah, you're probably right," said Robert, convinced that she was right.

He put the phone down and reached for Helen. As he wrapped his arms around her, he felt like he was also wrapping his arms around Salim and Muhammed, and especially Ayl.

Courageous Iranian students lead a nationwide protest against the Shah's fascist regime.

Across the U.S., support builds for the just struggle of the Iranian people.

'DOWN WITH SHAH'

ASPEN, Tuesday, July 5, 1977

Approximately 60 Iranian students from groups in Denver and Texas demonstrated against the presence in Aspen Saturday of the Empress of Iran, Farah Pahlavi. The Empress is participating in a three day conference on international affairs at the Aspen Institute. Former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger is also in Aspen for the conference. Institute officials say Kissinger has been appointed as a special advisor for the Institute directors and staff.

The demonstrators, members of the Iranian Students Association, say the visit to Aspen and other U.S. cities by the Empress has a different motive than the one officially described:

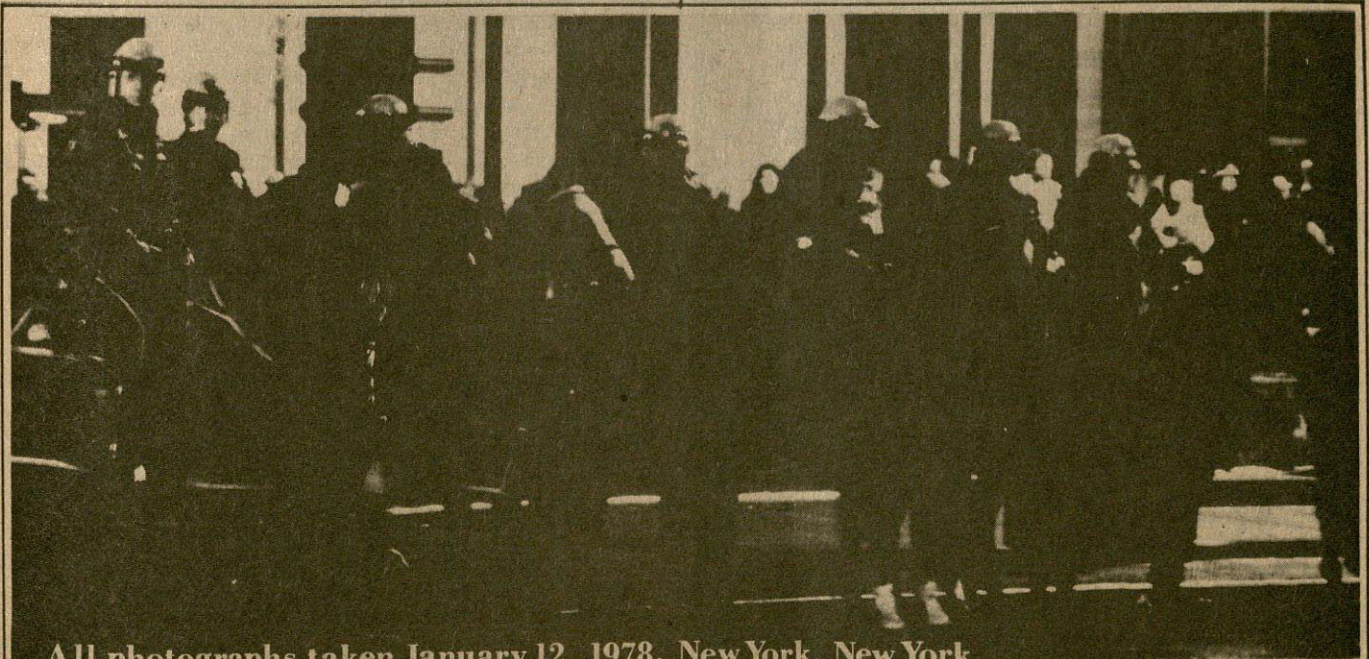
In short, this visit is a public relations effort to prepare for the Shah's upcoming visit (November 15, 1977) and to justify the continuous support for this ongoing brutal regime. Farah Pahlavi is here in the U.S. to deceive the American

people by lying about the real fascism of the Iranian regime, about the real oppression suffered by the Iranian people, and about the real struggle of the people against the Shah's rule.

Farah Pahlavi claims to be concerned about the children of Iran. Yet, she ignores them as they die in the villages and slums of Iran for lack of food and shelter, all victims of the social conditions created and maintained by the Shah's regime.

While the Iranian people are hungry and ill, the Shah's regime spends billions of dollars buying arms to suppress the people's just struggle. Yet, in spite of the Shah's terrorism, the Iranian workers, peasants, students, progressive clergy, writers and intellectuals bravely oppose this savage regime.

The Empress left Aspen early this morning by private jet. Before leaving, she observed the July Fourth celebrations and went dancing at the Paragon (a local disco-club), accompanied by a flock of security guards and federal agents.



All photographs taken January 12, 1978, New York, New York.

LOS ANGELES wed·july 6·1977

Yesterday, at a protest sponsored by the Iranian Students Association, five hundred demonstrators burned two effigies of the Shah of Iran while the Shah's wife was receiving an honorary doctorate of humane letters from the University of Southern California. The protestors demanded the withdrawal of the doctorate, which they termed "an honorary degree for fascism".

In making the presentation, USC President John R. Hubbard said the university was "most pleased to give recognition to your eminence among world leaders for your magnificent service to your country and man and woman-kind." President Hubbard also thanked her for a \$1 million gift from the Shah---an endowment for a chair in petroleum engineering at USC.

A recent report by the American Council on Education cautioned that many American universities, strapped for money, tend to accept petrogrants with gratitude—but without very much forethought. At Georgetown University, which has a five year, \$11 million contract with Ferdowsi University in Masbhad, Iran, some faculty members are sounding serious warnings. Thomas Ricks, a professor of Iranian studies studies, says that most of his colleagues are unaware of the censorship policies that might restrain their teaching techniques in Masbhad. (Newsweek, July 4, 1977. A reprint in U.S. People's Committee on Iran Newsletter No. 1, Spring, 1978)

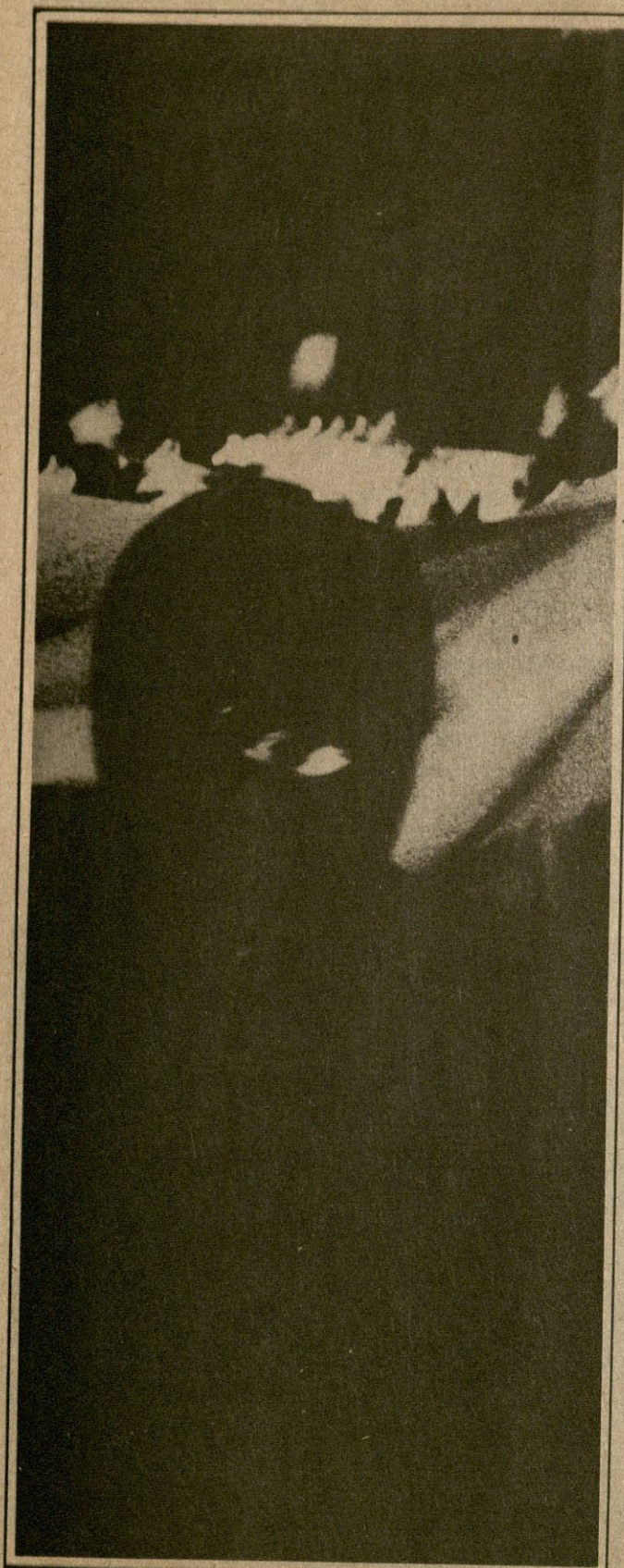
Among the notables attending the presentation were Mayor Tom Bradley; former governor and one-time presidential candidate Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy.

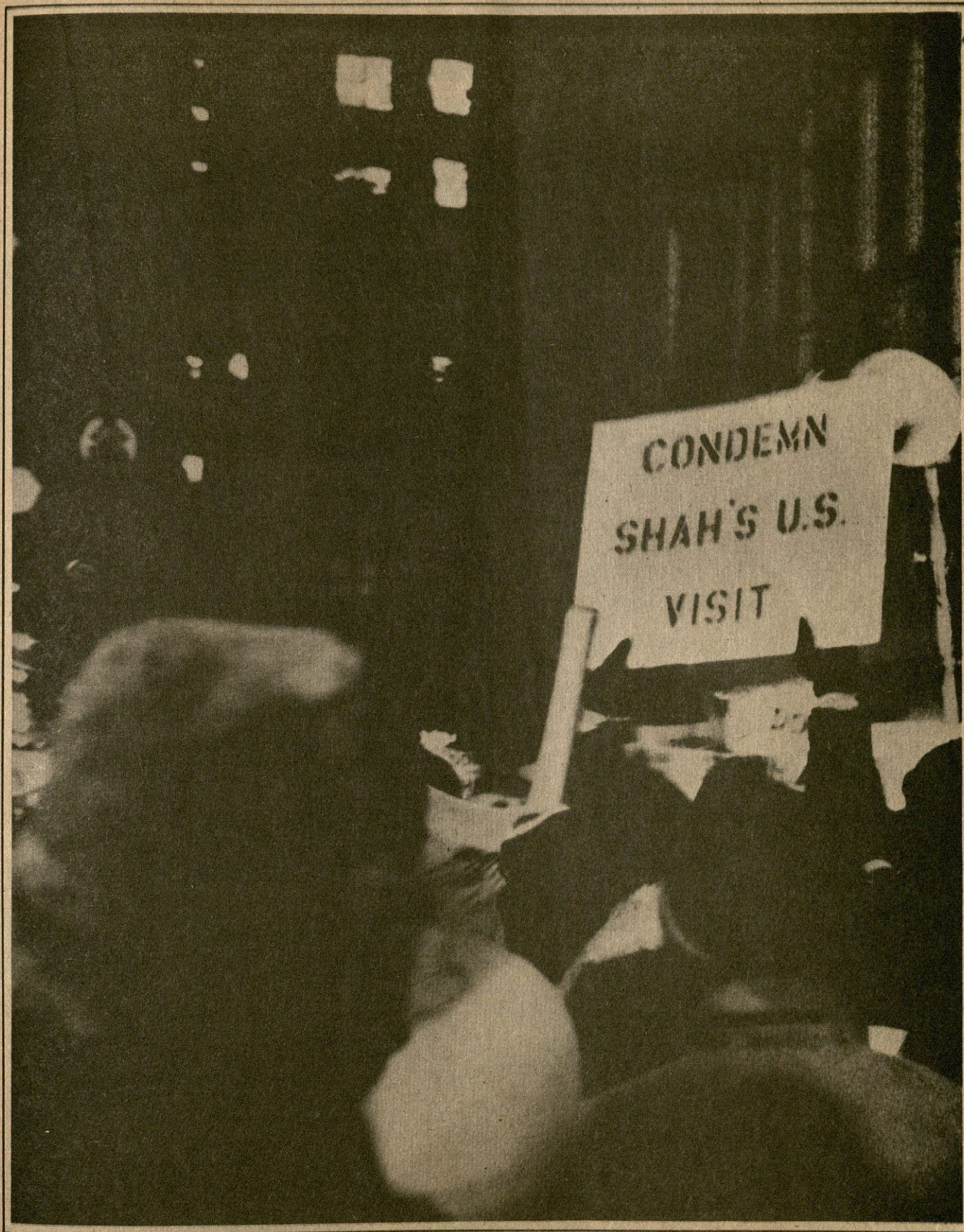
At a garden reception following the presentation, the Empress said, "When they(the demonstrators)are more mature, they will understand our problems." She said her country has changed greatly in the last 15 years. Her husband, she said, does not want to see the Soviet Union gain a foothold in the Persian Gulf.

An estimated 40,000 American military advisers, technicians, and their families are living and working in Iran. Between 1972 and 1976 more than \$10 billion in arms have summed the total of arms sales to Iran, since 1972, to \$18.2 billion.

The situation is of greatest urgency for Americans. Repression in Iran is encouraged, maintained and condoned through American economic interests and military presence in Iran. The government of Iran has become a power representing U.S. "interests" in the Persian Gulf area. President Carter has made this painfully clear with the appointment of America's most notorious counterinsurgency specialist, William H. Sullivan (Ambassador to Laos in the Vietnam era) as his ambassador to Iran. (Press Release, U.S. People's Committee on Iran, December 31, 1977)

Most of the discussion on U.S. arms sales ignores the fact that a large percentage of military sales are for internal use.







against unarmed civilians for the purposes of social control, counterinsurgency against minority groups, surveillance of dissidents, and for brutal repression of popular resistance:

I think the major effort now is to develop that kind of technology for use in cities where it can be used to keep track of people's movements and to detect penetration of say, public buildings, public facilities and for all kinds of personal, individual surveillance. I suspect this kind of technology is being brought into Iran in great quantities for improved control of population. (Michael Klare, Institute for Policy Studies, Washington D.C., interview on WPFW radio, Washington Pacifica, December 7, 1977)

NEW YORK friday·july 8·1977

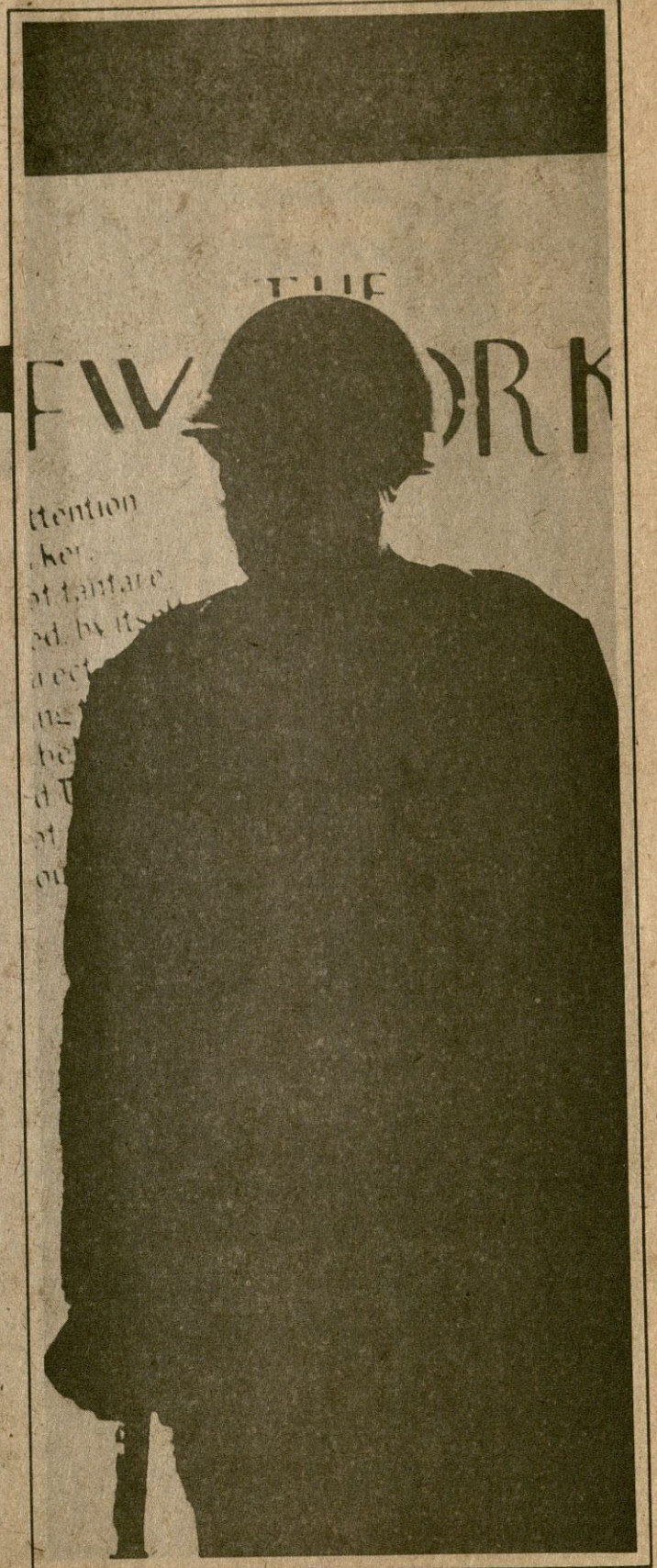
Protestors interrupted a luncheon at the Pierre Hotel honoring Empress Farah of Iran several times yesterday. While outside more than 3,000 demonstrators protested political repression and persecution in Iran. One man interrupted a picture-taking session in the Regency Room with the Empress, Governor Carey and Mayor Beame, shouting, "Down with the Fascist Shah." Inside the banquet room, when the Empress referred in her speech to reforms that "have made women free" a young woman seated at the press table leaped up and shouted, "That's a lie, you are a liar," she yelled at the Empress, as Beame, Carey and 300 elite guests stared in silence. Suddenly a young man burst into the room shouting "Down with the Shah." He was followed by a rush of Secret Service and city police who wrestled him to the ground. In total, six persons were arrested inside the hotel.

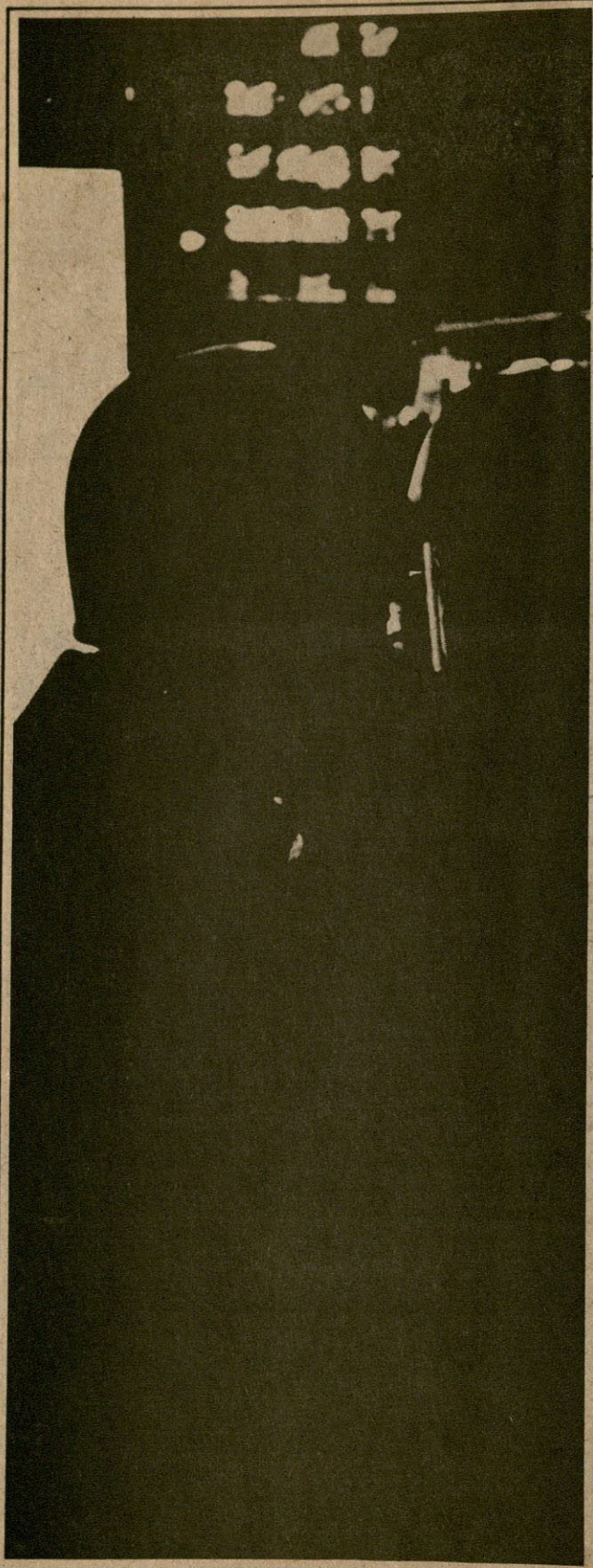
I sense a lot of the same feelings that I knew in the early 60's in Vietnam of anger, of where and how do we direct our anger, and the beginnings of a passive non-violent resistance on the part of the general population (of Iran), as more and more people are put in jail and beaten up. From this point, it will move toward an armed resistance. In other words, what the U.S. and its policies of supplying electronic surveillance equipment, training police . . . is promoting is a new Vietnam. (Don Luce, Clergy and Laity Concerned, at a NYC press conference, January 11, 1978—one day after he had returned from a 3 week stay in Iran)

The Appeal of Conscience Foundation, an interfaith group, sponsored the luncheon and presented the Empress a humanitarian award. Rabbi Arthur Schneier, spiritual leader of Park East Synagogue and president of the foundation, refused to comment on the choice of the Empress to receive the group's award.

The Iranian Army is run by U.S. and Israeli advisors. The selected officers are sent to the USA and Britain for training. The Savak and the Security Branch of the Army are totally run by American advisors. (from the text of the defense speech of S. Paknejad in military tribunal No. 3 of Tebran, December, 1970)

Following her speech Empress Farah ad-libbed a reply to the audience gathered by the sponsoring group. Apologizing for the "noise" occasioned by her presence, she





referred to the demonstrators. "My ambition in life is to be a real human being," she said. "I hope God will guide us--them and me--to walk the right path and to serve our country and humanity." The crowd gave her a standing ovation.

One of the bloodiest incidents during the recent wave of struggles in Iran took place on January 9th in the religious city of QOM, 70 miles south of Tehran. Police opened fire with submachine guns on a 5000-strong peaceful demonstration of mainly theological students and priests. Several hundred demonstrators were killed in the shooting. Hundreds were arrested, many seriously injured. Bodies were loaded into trucks and dumped in a nearby salt lake. (Demonstrators Massacred in QOM, Bulletin No. 3, Winter 1978, Committee Against Repression in Iran)

WASHINGTON tues·july 12·1977

Shouting "Death to the Shah" in their native Farsi language, 1,000 Iranian students and supporters staged a militant but orderly demonstration yesterday at the White House to protest the visit of Empress Farah.

With banners saying "Farah Fascist Queen" and posters depicting her husband, the Shah, as a puppet on strings controlled by the CIA, the protestors jammed both curbs of Pennsylvania Avenue NW on the north side of the White House. Most wore masks, because they fear reprisals if they are identified by SAVAK agents.

The past months have seen an unprecedented series of mass meetings and demonstrations in Iran. The regime's reaction to these events has been a massive reprisal attack.

On November 15, 1977, while the Shah was being welcomed to Washington by President Carter, SAVAK unleashed a massive terror campaign in Iran. That very afternoon police assaulted a gathering of 2000 students at a poetry reading at Aramebr University. 50 were arrested, 30 were injured.

On November 16, students began a silent march towards central Tehran and were joined by other students from Tehran University. About 10,000 were stretched in a long line along the pavement, when several truck-loads of police arrived. According to observers they attacked with truncheons and left scores of students injured and 16 dead.

On November 19th, hours after the Shah's return from Washington, there was a major raid on Tehran University. This was not the first of its kind, as one student says: "Barely two days go by without armed police finding some excuse to enter." The raid resulted in many injuries and arrests. (New Wave of Repression as Opposition Grows, Bulletin No. 3, Winter 1978, Committee Against Repression in Iran)

Meanwhile, Empress Farah lunched inside the White House with the first lady Rosalynn Carter on cold mussel soup, Swiss cheese souffle and peach melba.

Outside, the demonstrators repeatedly shouted. "The



Shah Kills People--The People Take Arms--The Shah Kills People--The People Take Arms. "

"We could hear the demonstrators inside the White House," said Mrs Carter's press secretary, Mary Holt, "But I don't think it was obvious to Empress Farah."

"Long Live the Armed Struggle of the Iranian People," shouted out from the numerous posters along Pennsylvania Avenue. A cardboard figure of the Shah showed him bespangled with medals, dollar signs, a swastika and a Star of David. A flatbed truck drove slowly up and down the avenue with a mock firing squad with wooden rifles "executing" political dissidents.

WASHINGTON thurs. nov 16 1977

The Shah of Iran said today that, as a result of two days' talks with President Carter, Iran would actively work against an increase in oil prices next year. "Now we are willing to show sympathy and comprehension to your views. Iran will work actively at next month's meeting of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) in Caracas, Venezuela, to prevent any price rise," said the Shah in conversation with reporters at Blair House this afternoon.

American commitment to the survival in Iran of a reactionary and repressive regime is based on American economic and geopolitical interests. To be sure, the political leadership in the United States does not, in abstract, prefer repression. But a repressive government for Iran is the only kind that can assure the United States, Europe, and Japan reliable oil supplies and control of the Persian Gulf. An explication of these interests is a necessary part of understanding and exposing the repressive policies in a country like Iran. (Richard Falk, Princeton University, testimony before a recent hearing of the Subcommittee on International Organizations of the Committee on International Relations, House of Representatives, 95th Congress, First Session, Washington D.C., reprint in USPCI Newsletter No. 1, Spring 1978)

In between conferences with the President the Shah joined into numerous private meetings with U.S. business executives. "The encounters were held at Blair House with senior members of the Iran-United States Business Council and of the Iran-American Chamber of Commerce on the first day of the Shah's visit to the nation's capital. These two groups represent the bulk of the American business community's interests in Iran." (Youssef M. Ibrahim in a New York Times article, November 17, 1977.)

The Shah promised these executives that all sectors of Iran's economy would be open to imports of capital goods from industrialized nations, including the United States, "for many years to come."

In a closely related matter, Richard Helms, previous head of the CIA, who was appointed ambassador to Iran by Richard Nixon, surfaced in Washington recently as the head of a new international consulting firm--SAFEER Company.

Safeer means ambassador in the Persian language spoken in Iran. Jack Anderson, in a Philadelphia Sunday Bulletin article of November 27, 1977, entitled "Shah has Friends in High Places", delves into the special relationship between the Shah and Richard Helms:

The strange relationship between the Shah and ex-CIA chief Richard Helms began in Switzerland where the Shah and Helms attended LeRosey preparatory school. The Shah was then a weak, whinnying prince bullied by a cruel, domineering father; Helms was a thin-blooded, elegant-mannered son of aristocrats.

During World War II, the elder Shah demonstrated an unfortunate preference for the Nazis. The Allies deposed him and deposited his 21-year-old son on the throne. Helms, meanwhile, became a top official of the CIA, which in 1953 arranged a coup against Iranian Premier Mohammed Mossadegh and saved the young Shah's throne.

Richard Helms will now be representing Iranian business interests in the United States.

Returning to the White House, a statement issued at the close of the 90-minute meeting this morning said: "President Carter again reaffirmed our support for a strong Iran, noting that Iran's security is a matter of the highest priority for this country. The President informed his majesty that he would wish to work closely with Congress in meeting Iran's security needs."

Before the Shah's visit one official said that the United States would sell Iran an additional 140 F-16 fighter planes this year, but that the formal announcement might not occur until next fall, in time to be approved by Congress but late enough for the \$2 billion in sales to be recorded in fiscal year 1979 instead of the current fiscal year. The Administration is eager to cut this year's total in keeping with Mr. Carter's promise to Congress.

The events in Washington around the recent visit of the Shah of Iran were common knowledge to all Americans. The clash of Iranian students with the paid agents of the Shah demonstrated vividly for Americans the reality of the resistance by the Iranian people against the repression of their government. . . . The Iranian students outside the country were not the only people demonstrating (as the majority of the American press would lead us to believe). For the dam holding back years of frustration and fear of SAVAK broke again during and following the Shah's visit as a wave of anti-government response swept through Iran. In the first days, ten and tens of thousands of people spontaneously took to the streets of Tehran and other major population centers. Forty-seven people are known to have been killed by governmental forces. Thousands of people were arrested. . . . (Expressions of Resistance: by the Iranian people, USPCI News Letter No. 1, 1978)

"TO THE ENEMY! I SAY . . ."

*"To the imperialists and our home-grown
capitalists who sold themselves to foreigners,
To the international plunderers,
To the treacherous Shah . . .
this peddler of the fate of our nation,
To the servants of the system,
To the enemy at large."*

"I know very well that you will read this. Hence I wish to express my innermost feelings towards you, and declare with utmost conviction that: this time I shall fight against you with a deeper sense of revenge – revenge for my martyred comrades; revenge for the blood of the people, whom you kill in the battles and then accuse us for the killings – a stronger sense of love for the toiling masses, with whom I feel an unbreakable solidarity, and with a deeper awareness of my duties and responsibilities.

I do know that you dearly wish to capture me alive, but I assure you that you will take this wish to the grave. But I ask you, even in the unlikely event of capturing me alive, what can you do? Can you strike the tiniest blow to change the course of the revolution? You will torture me? You will shout me dead? Can you offer anything more than death? You know perfectly well that for us, the People's Fedai, there is no greater honour than death and after all your efforts, you can only succeed in fulfilling our wish.

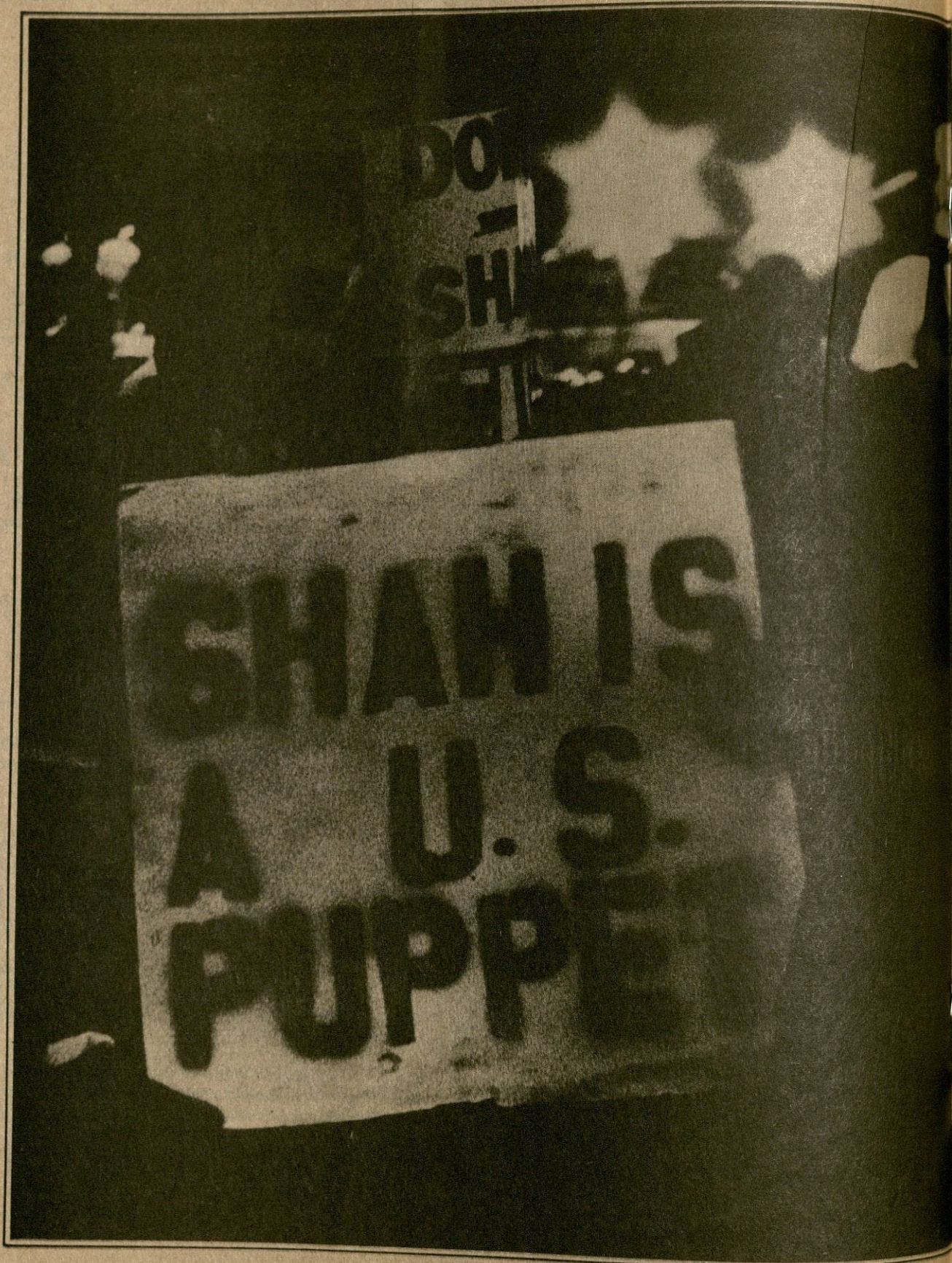
Yes, there is no honour greater than dying for peoples' freedom. Like my other comrades in the Organization of Iranian People's Fedai Guerrillas, I have taken up arms and will fight for the annihilation of the regime that protects you, and will spend the last drop of my blood for the liberation of our people. We do not fear death, whether death in battle or death under torture.

There are many fighting hands now that will pick up a fallen weapon. There are many ears that will hear our battle-cry. Our way has now been recognized as the only way and it is firmly established. It is moving forward with increasing strength and sweeping away all impediments in its onrush.

Your defeat is not only a reality which has been historically proven time and again. It can also be seen in your helplessness and your inability to suppress the movement; in your desperate conduct when faced with our guerrillas and the vanguard of the people.

For a while longer you may be able to carry on with your plunderings and murderous crimes, but you will not escape your ultimate fate. We shall exhaust and then destroy you in a difficult and prolonged battle. When one of us falls, there are tens of others who will rise. Our death is no ordinary death and our life no ordinary life." (Asbraf Peb-quani, Iranian Revolutionary Woman, 1974)







TO NEGRO WRITERS

by Langston Hughes (1935)

(Given at the American Writers' Congress)

There are certain practical things American Negro writers can do through their work.

We can reveal to the Negro masses, from which we come, our potential power to transform the now ugly face of the Southland into a region of peace and plenty.

We can reveal to the white masses those Negro qualities which go beyond the mere ability to laugh and sing and dance and make music, and which are a part of the useful heritage that we place at the disposal of a future free America.

Negro writers can seek to unite blacks and whites in our country, not on the nebulous basis of an inter-racial meeting, or the shifting sands of religious brotherhood, but on the solid ground of the daily working-class struggle to wipe out, now and forever, all the old inequalities of the past.

Furthermore, by way of exposure, Negro writers can reveal in their novels, stories, poems, and articles:

The lovely grinning face of Philanthropy—which gives a million dollars to a Jim Crow school, but not one job to a graduate of that school; which builds a Negro hospital with second-rate equipment, then commands black patients and student-doctors to go there whether they will or no; or which, out of the kindness of its heart, erects yet another separate, segregated, shut-off, Jim Crow Y.M.C.A.

Negro writers can expose those white labor leaders who keep their unions closed against Negro workers and prevent the betterment of all workers.

We can expose, too, the sick-sweet smile of organized religion—which lies about what it doesn't know, and about what it does know. And the half-vooodoo, half-clown, face of revivalism, dulling the mind with the clap of its empty hands.

Expose, also, the false leadership that besets the Negro people—bought and paid for leadership, owned by capital, afraid to open its mouth except in the old conciliatory way so advantageous to the exploiters.

And all the economic roots of race hatred and race fear.

And the Contentment Tradition of the O-lovely-Negroes school of American fiction, which makes an ignorant black face and a Carolina head filled with superstition, appear more desirable than a crown of gold; the jazz-band; and the O-so-gay writers who make of the Negro's poverty and misery a dusky funny paper.

And expose war. And the old My-Country-'Tis-of-Thee lie. And the colored American Legion posts strutting around talking about the privilege of dying for the noble Red, White and Blue, when they aren't even permitted the privilege of living for it. Or voting for it in Texas. Or working for it in the diplomatic service. Or even rising, like every other good little boy, from the log cabin to the White House. White House is right!

Dear colored American Legion, you can swing from a lynching tree, uniform and all, with pleasure—and nobody'll fight for you. Don't you know that? Nobody even salutes you down South, dead or alive, medals or no medals, chevrons or not no matter how many wars you've fought in.

Let Negro writers write about the irony and pathos of the colored American Legion.

"Salute, Mr. White Man!"

"Salute, hell! . . . You're a nigger."

Or would you rather write about the moon?

Sure, the moon still shines over Harlem. Shines over Scottsboro. Shines over Birmingham, too, I reckon. Shines over Cordie Cheek's grave, down South.

Write about the moon if you want to. Go ahead. This is a free country.

But there are certain very practical things American Negro writers can do. And must do. There's a song that says, "the time ain't long." That song is right. Something has got to change in America—and change soon. We must help that change to come.

The moon's still shining as poetically as ever, but all the stars on the flag are dull. (And the stripes, too.)

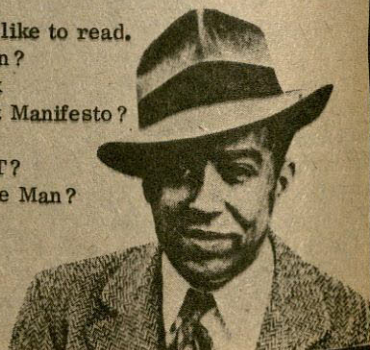
We want a new and better America, where there won't be any poor, where there won't be any more Jim Crow, where there won't be any lynchings, where there won't be any munition makers, where we won't need philanthropy, nor charity, nor the New Deal, nor Home Relief.

We want an America that will be ours, a world that will be ours—we Negro workers and white workers! Black writers and white! We'll make that world!

White Man

Sure, I know you!
You're a White Man.
I'm a Negro,
You take all the best jobs
And leave us the garbage cans to empty and
The halls to clean.
You have a good time in a big house at
Palm Beach
And rent us the back alleys
And the dirty slums.
You enjoy Rome—
And take Ethiopia.
White Man! White Man!
Let Louis Armstrong play it—
And you copyright it
And make the money.
You're the smart guy, White Man!
You got everything!
But now,
I hear your name ain't really White Man.
I hear it's something
Marx wrote down
Fifty years ago—
That rich people don't like to read.
Is that true, White Man?
Is your name in a book
Called The Communist Manifesto?
Is your name spelled
C-A-P-I-T-A-L-I-S-T?
Are you always a White Man?
Huh?

NEW MASSES
December 15, 1936



ART AND UNIONS IN THE U.S.

NOTE: The editors do not endorse everything in this article --notably its unsubstantiated assessments of Marxist-Leninists, its history of unions which almost never mentions the role of culture in that history, and the way in which working outside official, bureaucratic channels is so undervalued. The last point is especially important, since many of the "difficulties" of working in the labor movement disappear if artists work through contacts with rank and file members, instead of through official channels. Nevertheless, this article clearly supports the idea of artists taking a progressive role in the labor movement, and this is something we all need to understand.

It is always easier to write an article if there is a more or less specific audience in mind, and one knows it well. I find that this has been a difficult piece to write, partly because I am not very sure who is on the receiving end. That is, there seem to be several possible audiences, each with its own requirements. The cultural left in this country is a rather diverse population--ranging from Marxist-Leninist artists, in one of several pre-Party or Party formations; to left liberal artists without any organizational commitments at all. In fact, there are a number of problems with the cultural left, aside from its ideological diversity, and I think I can more clearly just list some of the problems I see:

1. Although everyone recognizes that there are contradictions between these ideologies, there is almost no way to discuss the contradictions--much less resolve them. People are either in isolation or too sectarian to talk with "outsiders".
2. Theory and practice are not well united. This is my strongest complaint about Marxist-Leninists, but it is something which we are all equally guilty of. As a consequence, "theory" tends to be academic and "practice" tends to be spontaneous.
3. As long as theory and practice are not united, there will be strategies without tactics and tactics without strategies. For theory and practice determine our strategies and tactics, while the effectiveness of our strategy and tactics helps to inform theory and practice.
4. The relation between political action and cultural action is not very developed. For example, a visual display or a film-showing at a union are often not in tandem with major issues before the union at the time.
5. The role of art in the revolutionary process is not agreed upon. Some of us tend to regard art as something which is liberating in and of itself--the only problem being that the working class needs more exposure to it. Others (and I include myself) tend toward a more didactic art.
6. There is not an adequate analysis of capital and labor in the U.S. today. Successful strategies and tactics depend upon a correct class analysis--upon building the right model of capitalism's strengths and weaknesses, both domestically and internationally.

Of course this list doesn't contain all the things a left cultural movement needs to correct, but these are some of the most significant ones.

I want to make it clear, then, that I am not writing as one of the politically "advanced" or "vanguard" artists, addressing a similarly "advanced" or "vanguard" audience. First

of all, I don't consider myself one of the "advanced". But I am not convinced that those who do consider themselves "advanced" have proven it in words and deeds. In my experience, the M-L groups, and the artists within those groups, do not have any significant base yet in the U.S. working class.

On the otherhand, I think there are quite a few artists who may be less "advanced", but who are nevertheless coming to a critical stand against both the political and economic status quo, and against whatever art community they may belong to (production, consumption, distribution). This is a significant development, I think, because the only way artists are going to move to a higher level of theory and practice is if they transform their present theory and practice--that is, begin from their present position. A high artist and a commercial artist may get to the same political level, but they will get there in somewhat different ways. So, as a high artist and art teacher, it is this nascent process of radicalization which I feel closest to and which, in general, I want to address. More specifically, though, I am writing for those artists who are interested in advancing both their own political level, and the level of class struggle in the U.S., by doing art within or for labor unions.

Progressive artists should work within or for unions for the same reason other progressives should--for without the masses of workers there will never be a left political and cultural revolution. Of course, unions are not the only aspect of a strategy for revolution. But the reason they are attractive, although less than one-fourth of the workforce is unionized and despite the stagnation of unions, is that they are a pre-existing organization of workers and are located at the nationally vital centers of production. If this organization could be expanded and transformed, it could have a decisive political role to play. Leaving it as it is only retards revolution. I see cultural activity, then, as a way to push unions in a more progressive direction--to make them more responsive to the needs of the rank-and-file, instead of the bureaucracy.

So, the introduction to this paper is a call to thought, action and communication among those of us who are honestly moving towards social change. I think in spite of the differences we have, the conditions that limit what we can really do allow for far more unity in action than presently exists. We have to work against our present isolationism and sectarianism. We can't take refuge in being "advanced", and preach anti-sectarianism while practicing the opposite. This only reinforces our separation from each other and the working class. Finally, if you detect a certain restraint and tentativeness in my writing, it is deliberate. I really am not sure what kind of art practice will ultimately prove correct. In fact, for the audience I have in mind, I have more to say about preparation for union work, and questions of affiliation, than I do about actual art-making.

It is not news to anyone that the trade union movement in the U.S. is not in revolutionary opposition to capitalism. It is basically reformist, at best tending something towards the left wing of the Democratic Party on domestic issues and to the right on foreign policy. Most of the unions, and especially the AFL-CIO, are officially and staunchly anti-commu-

managers and workers set the stage for careerism and anti-communist attitudes.

With the merger of the CIO and the AFL, and the expulsion of the socialists and communists during the early Cold War period, the trend toward business unionism that really began with WWII and the unions' commitment to high war productivity, was consolidated. Even in Gompers' time, "enlightened capitalists" and "enlightened labor leaders" understood that they could each offer something to the other, provided revolution was dropped from the agenda. And with this merger (it was more like a take-over by the AFL), and the "reds" out and underground, the basis was laid for labor-management harmony—"partners in production" it was called in the 50's. If it has not always looked like a partnership it is because the leaders of both sides could only maintain credibility with their own constituency by a regular bellicose stance. But if you were to study how often union officers sold out the strikes of their members, you would get some sense of the official compliance of unions with "industrial peace". Capital took advantage of this period to enact crippling laws, like the Taft-Hartley Act and the Smith Act, to further weaken labor.

Now I am not going to even try to describe or account for the success of business unionism beyond this brief sketch. We would have to work deeply through the history of the left and of labor in the U.S. Suffice it to say here that the errors of the left were grave, as was its repression, and the growth of U.S. capital phenomenal. But the result of this was that organized labor became a vast, feudal-like system, by and large, with power jealously guarded by officials at each level and post. There were basically two related bodies which formed the following structures, and which still exist today:

<i>Trade or Industrial Union</i>	<i>Federation</i>
International Union	AFL-CIO
Regional Offices	
State Organization	State Federation
District Council or Lodge	
Local	County Labor Council

If the "international" (a euphemism justified only by the existence of locals in Canada and/or Puerto Rico) was affiliated with the federation, a local had the option of joining (paying per capita) the labor council and/or state federation. Most locals did, in fact, affiliate up the line. On the otherhand, there are now independent unions, such as United Electrical (a CIO union thrown out of the AFL-CIO for failure to join the red purges in the 50's) or the United Auto Workers whose then-President opposed George Meany and left. The function of the federation, however, was more like a confederation in that it didn't really weld the unions into a strong, united political and economic force. Rather, it tended to mediate between the internal affairs of the international unions and the external affairs of their lobbying and public relations efforts.

The most important levels of a union were, and are, the top and bottom. It was in the internationals and the locals

that real resources and control were generally marshalled, and this remains true today. In some cases the locals operated and maintained a high degree of autonomy from the national office, but, also, many were completely controlled from above. The important thing was that the membership was located in the locals. Then, as now, much of what was progressive was happening at the local level.

In the union hall and on the shop floor, most workers knew what was happening and to this day there has been widespread resistance to the control of unions from above by sell-out misleadership. U.S. workers are among the most militant in the world, as measured by the number and length of wild-cat strikes (strikes not sanctioned by the official union). But the odds were too great for an effective resurgence of left or even militant official unionism. Careerism and/or outright corruption were—and remain—cancers in the tissue of most unions, at all levels. The destruction of working class communities and the containment of ethnic communities left unions with two less means of support. The lack of believable social programs narrowed workers' demands, at least the leadership's demands—confining them to a game of financial catch-up. And a halt on organizing again provided gains for the organized at the expense of the unorganized. Also racism and sexism helped to keep a lid on things, as white males headed unions that began to fill with ethnic minorities and women. At work, most of these new members started and stayed at the bottom jobs and pay scales.

But there was a carrot dangled in front of the working class, too. The postwar period was a time of enormous capital expansion for the U.S. Because of the devastation of the rest of the capitalist world during the war, the U.S. had many opportunities to expand its investment in armaments and empire throughout the "free world". Not that the business cycle levelled out, but that it did not dip so deep for so long as before. With the Great Depression and WWII as a backdrop, things for many looked good, and for the rest there was hope. In addition, the mass media stepped up its ideological assault, proclaiming the American Century. Using every possible social institution, middle class values were pumped into every corner of the country and abroad—instilling materialism, individualism and political cynicism. This assault was resisted by many, but without organization and a coherent opposing world view, the official line seemed almost "natural". The pushing of consumerist ideology, of course, went hand in hand with the completely economist (reduction of program to economic items like wages, hours, and benefits) demands of unions, as negotiated by the misleadership.

The turning point came with the Vietnam War. Demand stimulated by the war economy not only brought the U.S. workforce near full employment (either in jobs or the armed services) but stimulated the economies of Europe and Japan, bringing their workers and products into more full competition with ours. These countries helped to keep Americans' morale up for the war by expanding the supply of "butter" (T.V.s, cars, appliances, etc.), while our own industry turned out "guns". But this economic demand was artificial, overheating investment and production which produced not only a balance-of-payments deficit for the first time in this century, but run-away inflation. At the same time certain key sectors, like the oil industry, had been operating too long with marginal profit rates. As soon as the war was

over, two major attacks were made on the standard of living of the workforce. First came rising prices and high interest rates, and then unemployment. In short, a recession was *created* to cool down the economy. The consequences of this were supposed to be reduced inflation, weeding out of weak and small businesses (the expansion of oligopoly and monopoly) and the *disciplining of workers*. Full employment almost always raises collective expectations, demands and struggles for a greater share of an expanding pie. Unemployment lowers expectations and demands, and creates a greater reserve army of potential *scabs*. Union-busting becomes more prevalent and open.

The loss of the Vietnam War, then, along with the loss of international markets in general, produced a crisis for U.S. capitalism. The bosses began an open offensive against its working class. For the first time, recently, a Democratic administration began to follow the lead of the Republicans in making few concessions to labor and in rolling back social services and welfare. The "belt-tightening" forced upon U.S. multi-national corporations and banks by the workers and peasants of the Third World began to come home to us as increased repression.

In the context of this class war, a major weapon of the working class--its unions--are constantly being exposed for their long-term failure to promote the interests of the majority of workers. The contradictions between what is expected of unions and what they can deliver has become much sharper. In fact, along with the civil rights movement, Watergate, feminism and other cracks in the liberal facade, the economic crisis has had a fairly profound effect on the trade unions. The seemingly unmovable obstacles to change are giving a little, and many workers and even a few of the officials and staff of unions are beginning to break the hold of the conservative leadership. One manifestation of this rarely gets press coverage (especially not in the labor press), and that is the rank-and-file challenges at the local level. A growing number of challenges are successful across the country, and sell-out and corrupt misleaders are

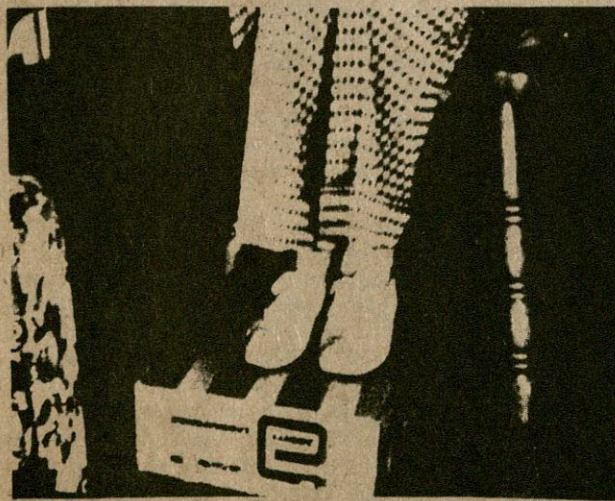
being given the sack. By no means does this mean that a socialist agenda is once more part of the labor movement; but it does mean that union democracy is out of the bag as a major issue. Where, for over three decades, workers have fought for control of their unions and locals, the difference now is that more battles are being won.

It is in this relatively open and changing new period in unions that I see an emerging role for progressive artists and progressive art. That role is to serve the return of culture to the labor movement, to undo its surgical removal by business unionism. And by culture I do not mean elite or high culture, but one that once again comes from the working class community itself. In our socialist past, the union (and the Party) was often the center of a whole range of social and cultural activities which, for the most part, meshed with the political and economic program. Although I do not think we can mechanically go back to those times, I think we can begin to help unions move into a more central place in the lives of workers. An indication of just how serious the problems of non-involvement can become is the extent to which many locals do not encourage any participation by their members in union affairs--except for the paying of dues or, perhaps, during a strike. Too often they are discouraged from even attending union meetings. By not dealing with cultural affairs we are only leaving ourselves to the mass media, which is to say that we are abandoning ourselves to the manipulations of the enemy. The idea is to reverse this trend by working as artists within unions to produce art that:

1. speaks from a working class point of view;
2. brings the rank-and-file membership together;
3. broadens the issues of rank-and-file concern, relating political issues to the economic ones;
4. aids in legitimate struggles for democratic rights.

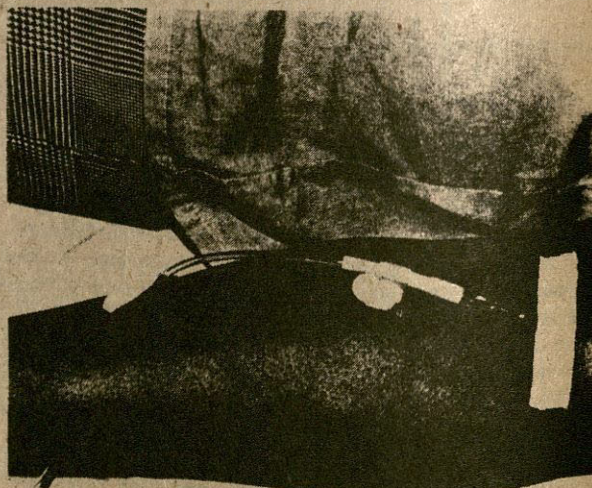
How, then, can an artist or group of artists work within the given union structure? The following are what I think are the major contingencies around which strategies and tactics need to be worked out. Of course, none of these are

WAITRESS'S BACK



"He said he had known other comp. attorneys in the past that would work for the workers and really get in there and get for them what they deserved. Then the first thing you know they'd be becoming more pro-company, pro-company because it's easier."

LEAD WORKER'S BLOOD



"I think they try to fool the people about doing the right thing. Just like if they have the government send out a man to inspect the plant, well they get the information early... so we clean up all the week. We got it made because we don't do nothing because they're coming. We can't make no dust, we can't do this. 'til they leave. Then it goes back to normal."

completely either/or choices. A lot depends on what kind of art is made, where one is located or can travel, who one knows in unions, the level of the union's political development, etc.

The most important question is that of union membership. While it is not absolutely necessary to be in a union, I think one can work best in organized labor if one is organized, too. First of all, rank-and-file members, and especially officers, tend to be suspicious of people on the "outside" who come around with an interest in organization. On the one hand, you could be a company spy prying into the local's strengths, weaknesses and plans; on the otherhand, a "radical agitator" there to subvert the labor movement.¹ If you belong to a union, you belong to the union's business. Also, other unions and union federations will be more open to members.

But just as important as ground-floor acceptance is the experience of union membership. It is an important part of labor education to see for yourself how a union works and what is on the minds of workers. A sense of what is possible to do (or not possible) is gotten from direct participation and conversation. It is a good idea to become involved in the day-to-day affairs of the union, in addition to art-making or art-related activities.

There are, of course, difficulties for many of us to become union, in that artists (especially "high artists") are rarely organized as such. It is as "something else" that we belong to unions. Related to art-making, though, is art teaching—which is the number one support for artists in the U.S., as opposed to sales in the art market or grants. As teachers, we can belong to one of the public employee or teacher unions. I am a member of a small AFT local in my university. But other artists are working at many other jobs such as carpentry, cab-driving, waitressing, office work, etc. that are, or could be, union. Where there is not a union yet, we can help to initiate or join an organizing drive. In the 30's there were unions of the unemployed, and there are attempts to build these anew.

But work can be done, and is being done, without formal

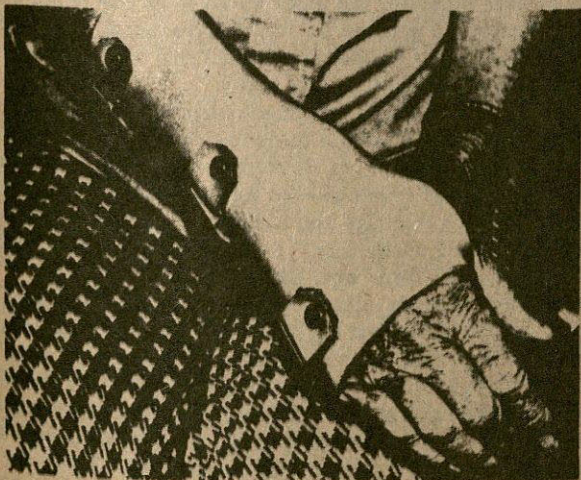
affiliation. This is usually most viable where a fairly active scene already exists which an artist or collective can hook into in some way. The S.F. Bay area provides the contacts and union-requests for a certain amount of work by independent artists, as does New York, and I am sure other cities as well. Often artists work closely with those who belong to a union. Certainly, if and when your work becomes known and valued, requests will come all the time from labor for work.

Finally—with or without membership—it is important to seek contact with progressives inside the labor movement. For it is they who will be close to, and who can help to open up, many of the opportunities to do work. We need a network of people from whom to learn, to get criticism, and to lead us to places to make art.

It is at the level of locals that there are the most opportunities for doing revolutionary cultural work. And I would argue (in spite of my own past practice) that locals are thus the best place to work. The question here is what kind of work to do and how to get it shown to the membership. The first thing is that a reasoned proposal will have to be made by whatever procedures the union has for acceptance or rejection. If this is the first time the form you are using has been proposed (say, a series of photo/text panels), then it should also be explained where and how it will work in the hall or space where it will be shown. That is, the details should be worked out. But this should be the last step, after the work has been discussed with contacts in the local, and some are prepared to endorse the work to the rest of the membership. Sometimes the executive board and president has to be approached and won over first. Some unions have an education committee that certainly should be enlisted for interest and support.

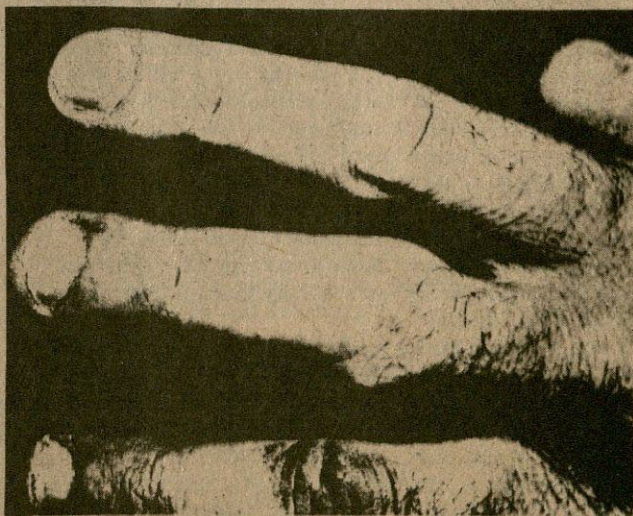
If financial backing, or other uses of union resources are sought, it would probably be best to start out with work that addresses the specific problems of a given union and industry. If it is well-received, it could be shown to other locals of the same union in other towns. With experience gained

EGG PACKER'S ARM



"I told the foreman, 'It's too dangerous. I can't hurry'. So, sure enough, I got real busy and was having to hurry and was running. The next thing I knew I was on the floor. And from that minute on I have had those real dizzy spells. Just any little thing, I get dizzy. I can't walk straight. If I try to go to upstairs, I don't know. I just wobble around. And I was in a cast for over two years off and on. Then they put me in this brace."

SHIPYARD WORKER'S HAND



"I think they ought to change the law—instead of the MINIMUM efforts expended to repair and replace it ought to be the MAXIMUM made mandatory."

from this, work might be done for entirely different unions until the artist or group becomes locally known. Perhaps, then, something could be done that could be shown to several or many unions in the area. This would be valuable in getting their memberships together around some issue or problem. At some point, I would encourage pieces produced with the help of non-artist union members.

Another way of working (which is what I have done) is to produce an art work on your own and then approach various locals or the labor council for space to show. Or if you're able to get local museum or gallery shows, the work could be announced through labor channels. A lot depends on whether union members are really likely to go out of their

OIL WORKER'S BURNS



"When it really comes down to the nitty-gritty it's the employees themselves who won't really make a stand on safety. When it comes down to a bread-and-butter issue, if you make a strike issue over a safety matter, it's going to take a lot more education, in my opinion."

way to conventional art spaces. At any rate, one of the possible advantages to this is that the unions are not as officially accountable for the work as they would be if it were in some way sponsored by a local. The trade-off might be that the work would speak without official authority but, perhaps, with a more advanced political position. Those in the union who support a controversial piece will be able to say that it is the artist who is responsible for the point of view. Of course, this is only possible where labor leaders are not afraid of controversy, and the position is not so far left that it ignores the realities of the situation.

Certainly if a base of interest is built up in one or more unions of an area the central labor council should be approached for support. Sometimes they have halls and space that locals do not and publicity through their paper reaches many locals.

It will be much harder to approach the state or national level of a union with an independently produced art work without the enthusiastic support of one or more locals. There are really only two things you can ask of the higher structures officially. Money can be gotten to produce the work or fund its distribution. And publicity can get it into their locals regionally or nationally. Of course, informally staff or officers may provide contacts with other possible unions or institutions for interest and support.

The above tactics apply to relatively independent art works authored by one or a few people. The virtue of this kind of work is that with careful assessment of audience, conditions, etc., it can broaden the range of issues acceptable within trade unions. But there are other types of work which already have been in existence for some time. There are the films, slide-shows and posters that are more or less commissioned by locals and internationals. Of course the issues are pre-chosen and specific, and formal realization is subject to approval. But for those of us that have the skills it is an already available mode of union work. And the degree to which the artist can improve the political perspective may vary greatly from union to union. Moreover, it is possible that the limited viewpoint of some of this work is as much due to the views of the artists as to the officials who commissioned it. Perhaps the issues could have been given a better context and still have been acceptable in work like the OCAW's slide-show on asbestos or the J.P. Stevens' strike support film, "Testimony".

An important kind of work should also be given consideration by all of us who have the skills, and that is the less "glamorous" tasks of designing leaflets, doing posters, newspaper layouts, etc. at the local level. Such practical work is immediately appreciated and can offer real service in specific struggles.

Another issue of importance is the internal politics of unions. Where there is a more progressive rank-and-file movement to win control of a local or a move by one or more locals against a conservative or corrupt international, there is a need for various kinds of material to explain the issues and rally support. In these cases, backing for work and places to show will not come from official sources, unless at least a local is part of the movement for union democracy. Instead, the resources of the "insurgents" and those of the artists will have to be relied upon. Community spaces, for example, are often used—churches, community centers and schools. Films or slide-works can even be shown in bars. Posters can go many places, leaflets everywhere (especially into the workplace).

So, what kinds of art works will be appropriate for union showing? On the one hand this is a question of what medium will be best suited for the place an art work has to go, and the audience that will see it. On the otherhand, it's a question of what issues an art work should deal with. Let me answer these questions in that order.

There are advantages and disadvantages for every form and medium, and of course there are skills and "talents" which push all of us in one direction or another. My bias is toward media and graphics—for the comparative speed and ease with which language and image can be coordinated, as well as for their portability. Also, they tend to reverberate with less elitism than, say, painting.

Consider the trade-offs between a wall piece—a photo/text work, for example—and a film. The wall piece will require a suitable wall space where workers congregate or pass regularly. A projector, a darkened room, screen and delivered audience are needed for film. The wall piece stays in one place for whatever time it is up, but allows for as many readings as anyone has time and interest for. Films are usually shown and gone, and cannot be really studied. Wall pieces allow for more discussion during viewing than films, while the latter bring a body of people together where the film's impact can be better measured. Many times, though,

unions show slides and films with no discussion. Both of the modes do allow for a relatively full representation of issues and positions—unlike a poster, for example, which is more limited.

But I hope nothing here is taken to imply that I think that only the forms already used in unions can be worked with. Most of the forms now used by union bureaucracies are merely conventions from elite culture or the mass media. An example of this is the Teamster and Garment Workers billboards and magazine ads. Obviously new ground must be broken. New forms are needed to give a fresh and concise shape to contemporary conditions (though the left art of the past and from abroad has much to offer, and should be studied for what it can add to our struggles in the U.S. today). Even new formats, like mixed-media, should be tried, where appropriate to the issues involved and the space to be used.

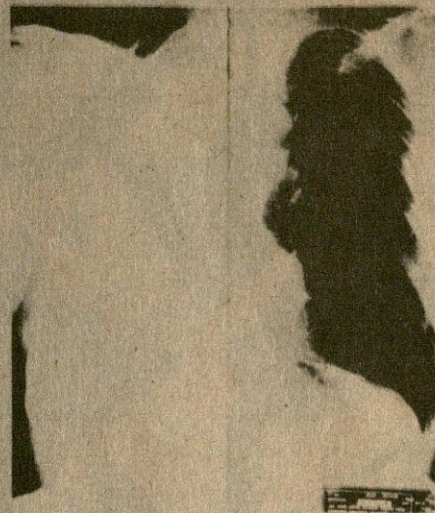
Still, the question of what form an art work should take is secondary to what issues it should be dealing with. Only a complex answer would cover all the possible reasons why art works can play a revolutionary role in organized labor or why a union member will go out of the way to see a "piece". But the main thing is that art works must address issues which need attention and which significantly involve the interests of workers. This does not just mean those issues currently on everyone's minds. It may take convincing to have something raised as a labor issue. Generally, though, there is practically no issue that cannot be treated if given its proper weight in the context of other issues. Below are some possible issues:

1. Fundamental to the debates within labor and the need for change is the question of history. Many of today's workers and labor leaders are only vaguely aware of the specific debates and struggles of the past. Much has been forgotten and much rewritten. Official accounts are usually monuments to certain officials, certain organizations, and certain moments. There is no intention of raising difficult questions which could embarrass the incumbents or grant the rank-and-file membership some independence of thought and, eventually, action. There is an extensive literature to contradict labor myth, and the stories of those who lived through various times can begin to educate us as to *why* things turned out the way they have. The arguments that justify the status quo need to be met with historical rebuttal.
2. One of the major exclusions is the history of the left and its essential presence in the growth of organized labor in the U.S. To be retold is the story of this country's deep roots in radicalism. The successes, failures and ultimate expulsion of the left from the center of the labor movement needs explanation and criticism. If it is ever to have a future that transcends the past, then a viable, believable case has to be made for the rebirth of the left. This is particularly important, now that management and the state are becoming more repressive.
3. Another source of left experience is from abroad. Care must be taken here neither to idealize nor play down foreign struggles. But Cold War-ism has given quite a taint to "foreign" ideas. America's ruling class has expended tremendous resources in bolstering its ideological position at home and abroad. An antidote is to expose and describe the international spread of capitalism and the rising struggles against it. Moreover, attempts could be made to use the experiences of socialist countries in order to inspire and

educate workers here. Until workers here have some contact with the left labor movements and Parties abroad, it will be hard to make the entire tangle of issues meaningful and important. This is also a case where U.S. labor federations have played a big role in mysticizing and distorting history.

4. The history of capitalist development in the U.S. is an even more obscure topic today. The success of the Cold War brought on the near-total ascendancy of bourgeois values, producing new generations who accept as natural and inevitable the relationship between business and labor. They have not been given a real alternative by any authoritative sources. But without this corrected history of business,

MACHINIST'S LUNG



"Well, it's money in their pockets. They don't have to pay the people. They kill 'em but they don't have to pay for it. That's EXACTLY what I think."

the rank-and-file will never be able to comprehend its adversary or clarify its own objectives.

The above are not the only concerns to be addressing, but they are central to the re-creation of a powerful revolutionary left labor movement and left cultural movement in the U.S. There are also other issues that inevitably lead to a broader perspective if reformers will not settle for half a loaf. The demands for change within labor are, in fact, many of the same things being fought for in other political arenas. The labor movement is inseparable from imperialism, and is in part racist, sexist, corrupt, elitist, authoritarian, anti-intellectual and deceitful—with a powerful effect on the rest of society. Even health and safety is as much a battle within the house of labor as that of business. Art works that deal with these matters, but go further and put them into an historical and political perspective can be a powerful tool against the conservative know-nothingness of the Cold War period.

Finally, there is a special role for art in periods of crisis, since art can solidify, encourage and educate people during negotiations and strikes. Times are tough, and business after business has been balking at the close and easy rapport with unions that the post WWII "partners in production" saw for three decades. Whatever position workers and leaders take within unions, a unified stand must be made against



DRAWING BY WILLIAM GROPPER

THE GREAT AMERICAN MELODRAMA

CAPITALIST: I love you, sweetheart. Your lips are sweet as an injunction; your beautiful blue eyes remind me of arbitration.

LABOR FAKER: And I love you, my wonderful one. You are as strong and handsome as a set of brass knuckles. You'll always be good to me, won't you, darling?

AMERICAN LABOR (underneath): My God, it sounds like we've won another strike!

no-strike clauses, lay-offs, speed-ups, cut-backs, wage-freezes that are the normal state of affairs today. Beaten unions are not good places to start social change from.

I hope I have not given the impression that I think anyone is on top of all the above in the U.S. Nor do I hope to intimidate anyone with the enormity of the job. Each of us will have to begin where we are and do what we can to get an art practice going in U.S. unions. Obviously, a correct theory and practice, and thus a correct strategy and tactics, will not be the property of any one of us, but will evolve out of the collective successes and failures of us all. But I hope I have demonstrated the need for deliberate study of our situation, as well as practice. Study is very important now, it is something we must all engage in. Although being part of political and economic struggles of workers is where we most profoundly learn the lessons of class struggle, we must also bring to these struggles the history and theory to be found in revolutionary literature. What I suggest is that artists either join study groups which already exist, or start their own. I have been in several of these groups and they have been crucial to my own development. Moreover, while I do not feel committed to any of the existing political formations myself, I would recommend that artists begin to check out these groups for themselves. The point is, political perspective is primary to art practice and political affiliation and organization are necessary to successful struggle. Bear in mind that the way things are going, it may take a long time to reach our revolutionary goals. But one of the biggest problems we have to contend with, and must make a high priority to overcome, is the wall of anti-communism in this country--built with the help of labor's misleadership.

Footnotes:

¹A big question to decide is whether, or rather when, to be completely open with socialist views. There are strong arguments on both sides. To be open is to face the red-baiting of the right and almost automatic disassociation by union officers (even the "leftists"!)). Needless to say, one hopes to turn this scorn of conservatism to advantage in the long run, when the mettle of oneself and the movement are proven. In the short run, anyone advocating socialism or communism is denied almost all the channels of communication within the union's control at the local and upper levels. Though still a member, this leaves the artist communicating from the outside into the union. It is not necessarily all that ironclad, as mentioned before, since many a member has only nominal contact with the local, anyway--leaving other ground (bars, clubs, churches, schools, etc.). But if there is a move toward political repression by the government, all leftists could be red-baited, driven out, or hurt. Working more discreetly generally will earn a more discreet repudiation of one's possible political persuasion. The problem here is the deception forced on oneself and others. It is awkward to couch arguments in liberal terms or drop the conclusion from a thorough critique. Reformism will never get past the threshold to more fundamental change. So which way to go should not be a matter of what is comfortable or preferable. To be open or closed can be decided only by a thorough assessment of the conditions, both locally and nationally and internationally.

Bibliography:

Most political formations that publish a journal will have articles on U.S. labor and its history. But for a few basic texts I suggest the following: Stanley Aronowitz, *False Promises*; United Electrical, *Them and Us*; Ronald Radosh, *U.S. Foreign Policy and American Labor*; Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the U.S.* (Vols. 2, 3, 4).

JUMP CUT

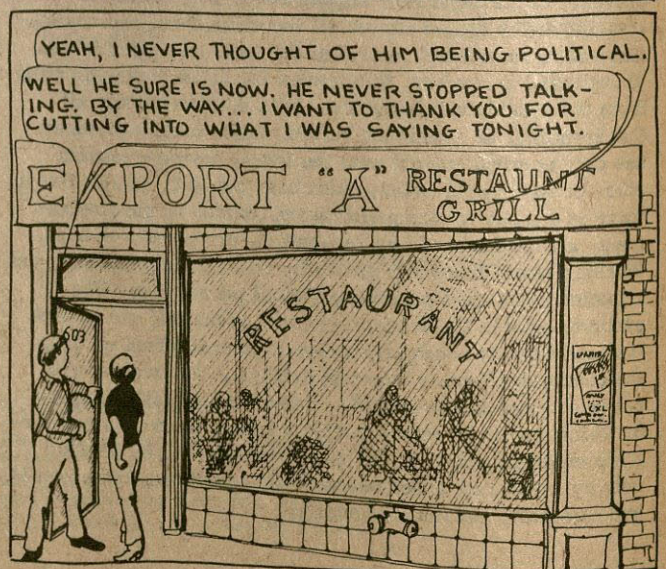
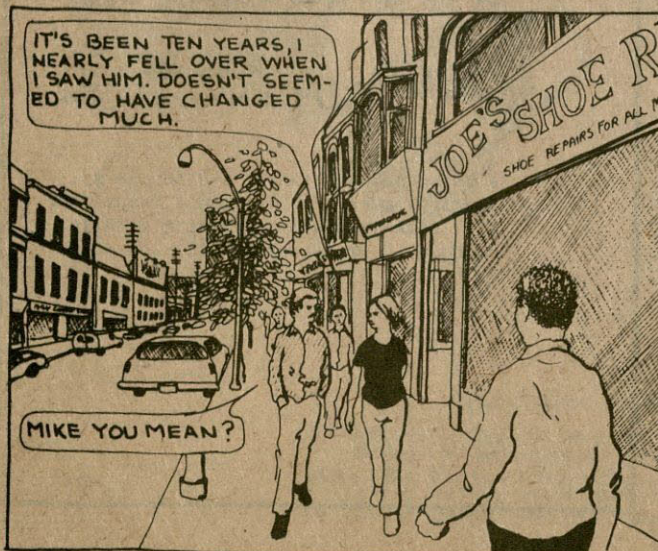
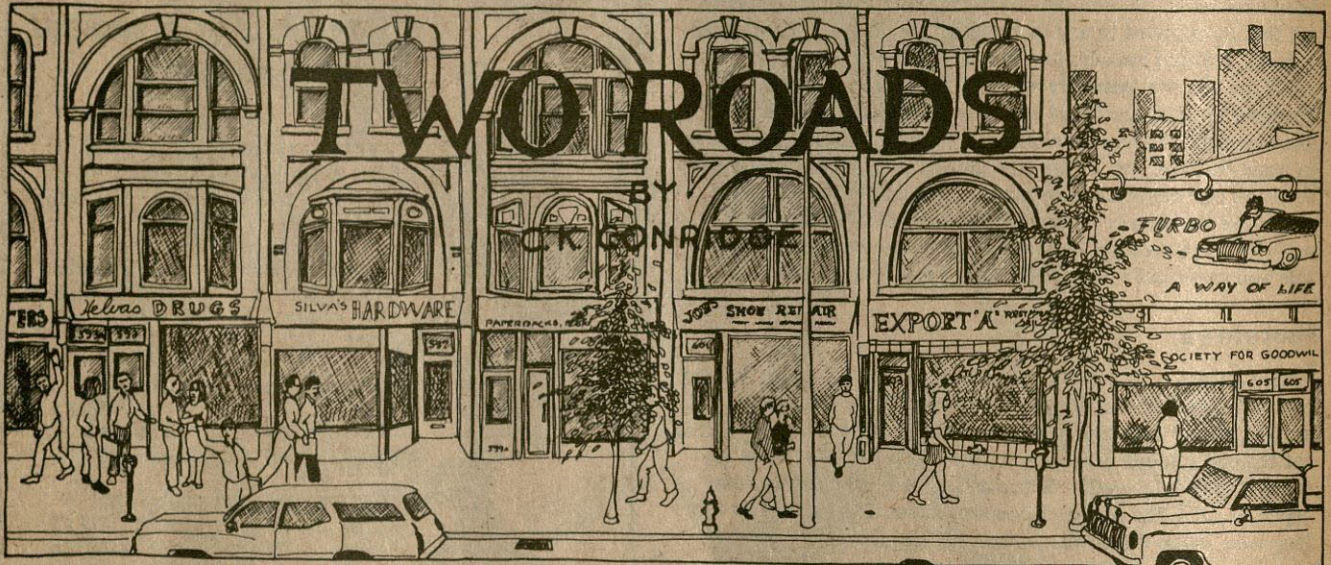
developing a radical
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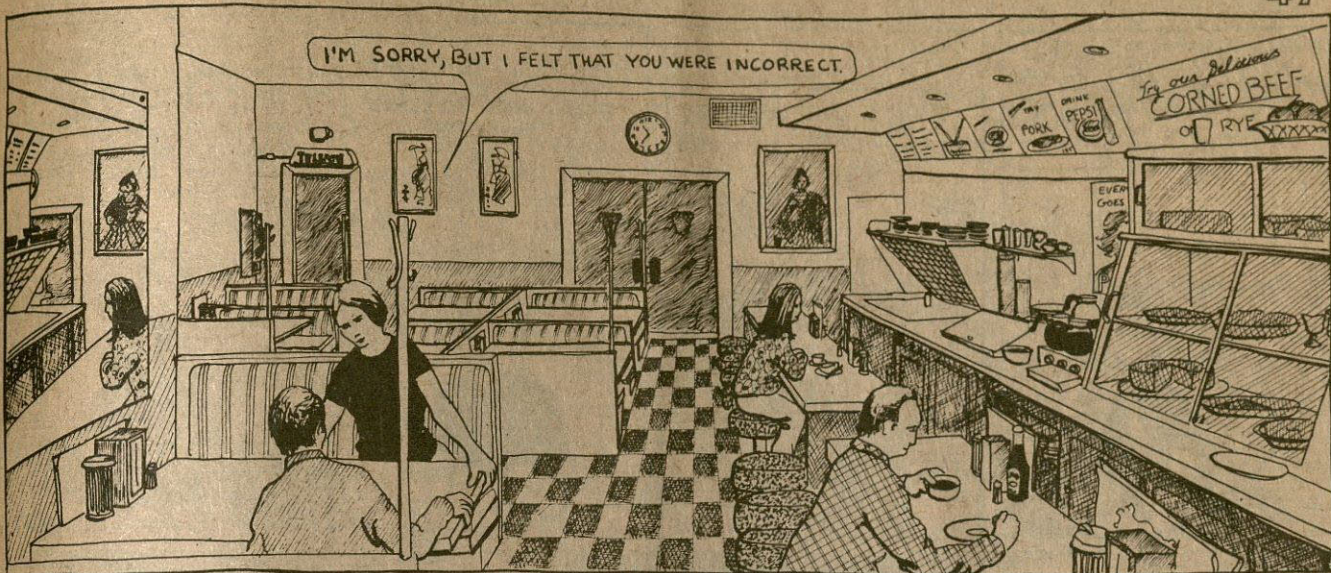
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THE FOLLOWING IS AN EDITED EXCERPT FROM A WORK IN PROGRESS, WHICH MAY ACCOUNT FOR SOME LOOSE ENDS THAT EXIST. THE STORY CENTERS ON FRED AND ALICE, A COUPLE IN THEIR MID-THIRTIES WHO HAVE TWO CHILDREN. ALICE IS A SCHOOL TEACHER AND FRED WRITES COPY FOR A LIVING. FROM ALL OUTWARD APPEARANCES THEY ARE A TYPICAL PROFESSIONAL COUPLE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO ACCOUNT FOR THEIR PARTICULAR POLITICIZATION FOR IT DOES NOT ARISE DIRECTLY FROM ANY ONE CIRCUMSTANCE, BUT FROM A COMBINATION OF PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS, INVOLVEMENT IN PROTEST MOVEMENTS, POLITICAL ANALYSIS AND SO ON. MIKE IS AN OLD FRIEND OF ALICE'S WHO JUST ARRIVED FROM VANCOUVER. DAVE AND LAURIE HAVE BEEN FRIENDS SINCE COLLEGE. A.I.A.C. IS A MASS ORGANIZATION INVOLVED WITH ANTI-IMPERIALIST WORK IN WHICH FRED AND ALICE HAVE PARTICIPATED FOR ABOUT A YEAR. OUR STORY BEGINS AT THE END OF AN A.I.A.C. WEEKLY MEETING.





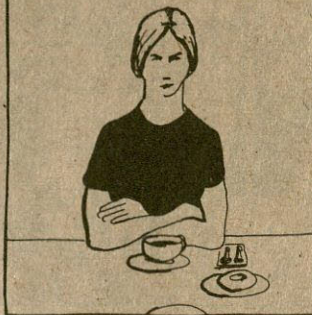
YOU KNOW IT'S AMAZING, WITH ONE OTHER PERSON YOU DOMINATE CONVERSATIONS, LIKE WITH ME, BUT IN A GROUP YOU HARDLY PARTICIPATE.



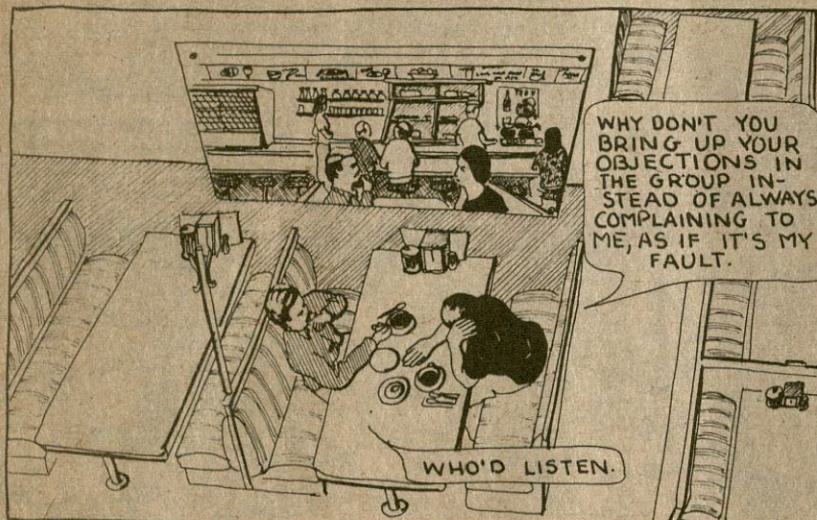
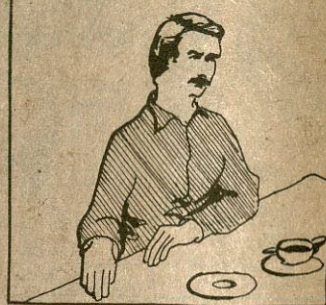
WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?



I'M TRYING TO FIGURE OUT WHY YOU SUDDENLY WANT TO LEAVE THE GROUP.

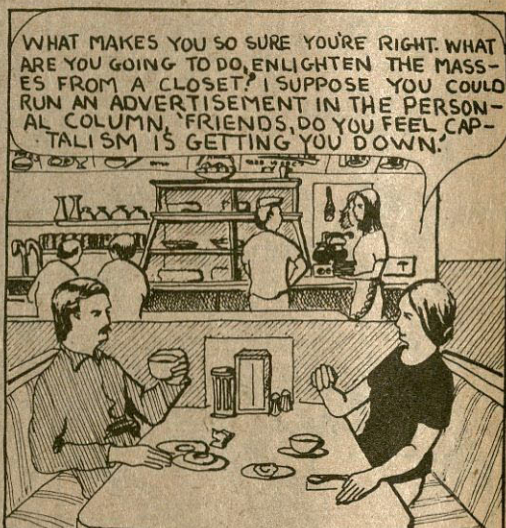


NOW THAT MIKE'S COMING IN, YOU MEAN... TO PUT IT BLUNTLY, I'M JUST SICK OF WASTING MY TIME, WE GET NOTHING DONE IT'S THAT SIMPLE.



WHY DON'T YOU BRING UP YOUR OBJECTIONS IN THE GROUP INSTEAD OF ALWAYS COMPLAINING TO ME, AS IF IT'S MY FAULT.

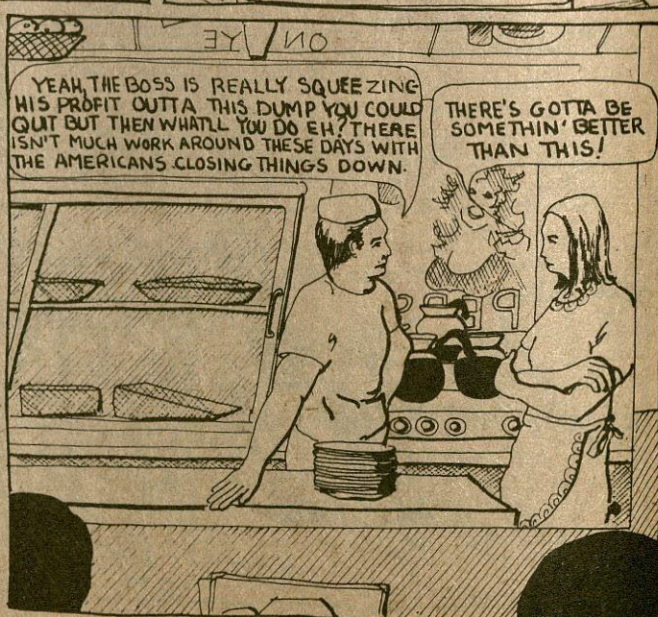
WHO'D LISTEN.



WHAT MAKES YOU SO SURE YOU'RE RIGHT. WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO, ENLIGHTEN THE MASSES FROM A CLOSET? I SUPPOSE YOU COULD RUN AN ADVERTISEMENT IN THE PERSONAL COLUMN, 'FRIENDS, DO YOU FEEL CAPITALISM IS GETTING YOU DOWN.'

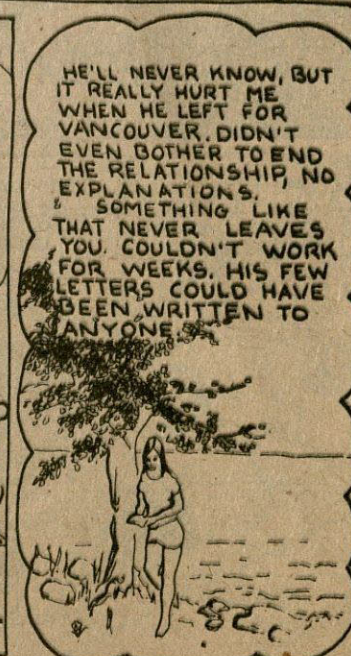
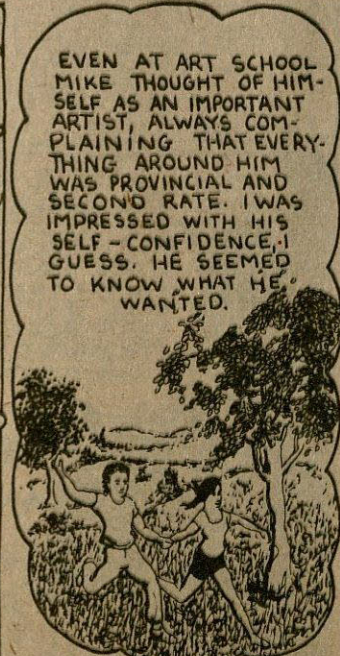
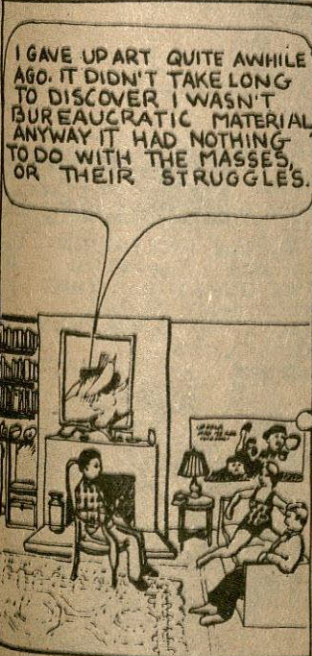
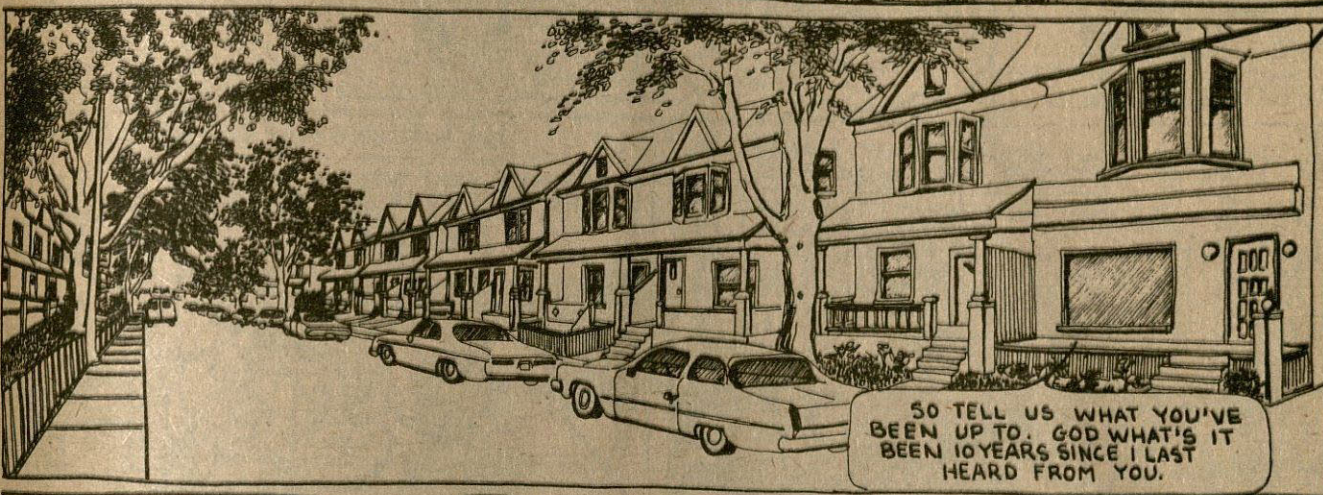
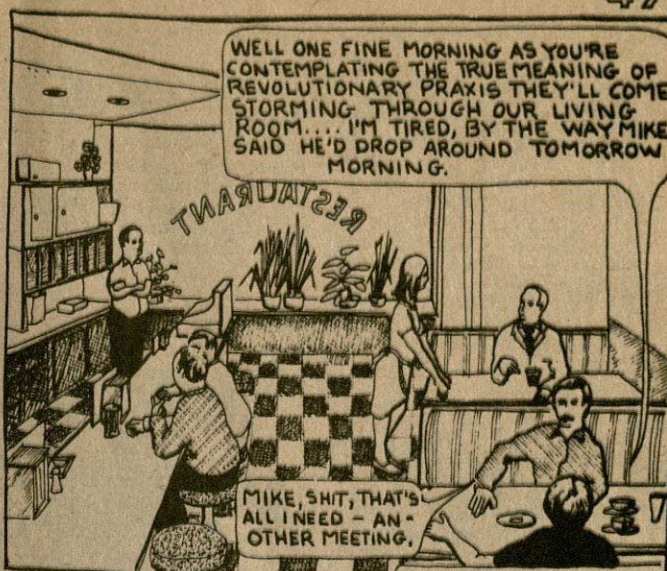
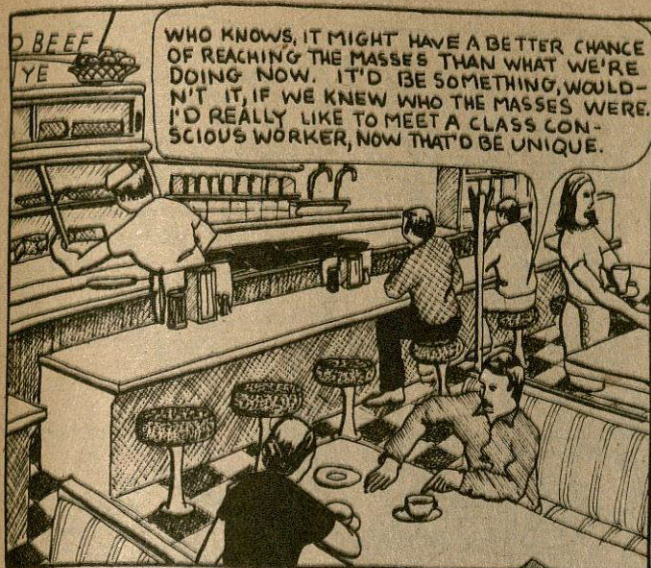


I PROBABLY BLEW MY TIP ON THAT ONE. CHRIST CAN'T KEEP THIS UP ANOTHER DAY...



YEAH, THE BOSS IS REALLY SQUEEZING HIS PROFIT OUTTA THIS DUMP YOU COULD QUIT BUT THEN WHATLL YOU DO EH? THERE ISN'T MUCH WORK AROUND THESE DAYS WITH THE AMERICANS CLOSING THINGS DOWN.

THERE'S GOTTA BE SOMETHIN' BETTER THAN THIS!



THE STRUGGLES WITHIN THE GROUP INTENSIFIED AND A NUMBER OF COMRADES LEFT. THERE WAS A LOT OF OPPORTUNISM ON THE QUESTIONS OF UNITY AND PARTY BUILDING. BUT THE ANGOLAN QUESTION REALLY ADDED FUEL TO THE DEBATE.



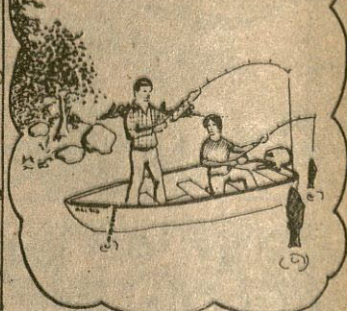
FRED REMINDS ME OF MIKE. FRED KNEW WHAT HE WANTED TO DO WHEN I MET HIM. NOW HIS CONSTANT COMPLAINING MAKES ME NERVOUS. EVEN WHEN IT ISN'T ABOUT ME, I THINK IT IS.



THE STUDY CIRCLE FINALLY SPLIT OVER THE ISSUE OF THE THREE WORLDS THESIS. OUR FACTION SOON RALLIED TO CXL. NOW I'M ORGANIZING FACTORY CELLS. THE WORKERS ARE AMAZING. THEY KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON. ANYWAY I WAS SENT HERE BECAUSE I KNOW THE CITY WELL.



I WONDER IF FRED WILL EVER COME TO TERMS WITH HIS AMBITION. HE COMPETES FOR EVERYTHING, EVEN AROUND THE HOUSE. IT CONSTANTLY PUTS ME ON THE DEFENSIVE. IT TAKES ALL I HAVE TO SURVIVE, LET ALONE DETERMINE WHAT I WANT.



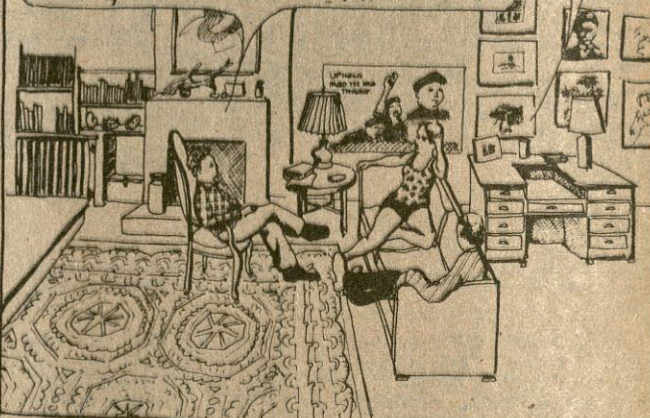
WHAT I'M CURIOUS ABOUT IS WHAT CHANGED YOU, I MEAN WHAT STOPPED YOU MAKING ART?

I REALIZED THAT WHAT I WAS SUPPOSEDLY CREATING WAS NOT ONLY MEANINGLESS TO THE MASSES OF PEOPLE, BUT IT WAS AN INSTRUMENT USED BY THE BOURGEOISIE TO STIFLE THEM, TO TELL THE MASSES THEY HAVE NO CREATIVE ABILITIES. AS ONE WORKER PUT IT, 'IT'S MADE BY PEOPLE WITH NOTHING TO SAY'.



BUT SOMETHING MUST HAVE HAPPENED TO YOU?

CERTAINLY, I WENT THROUGH SOME ROUGH TIMES, BUT THEY'RE NOT IMPORTANT.



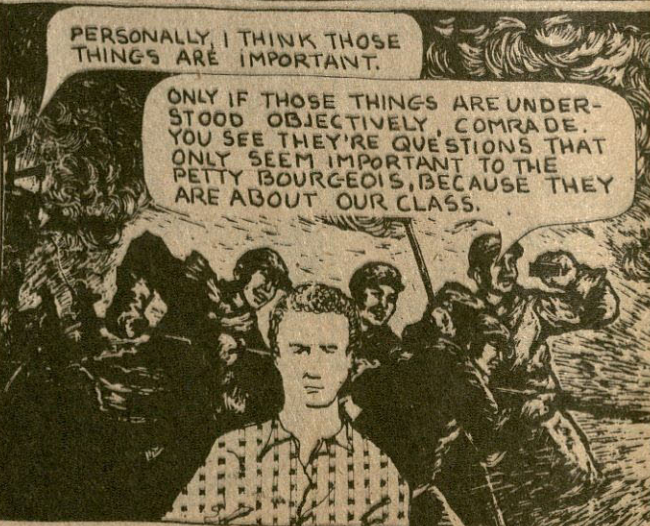
WHY'S THAT?

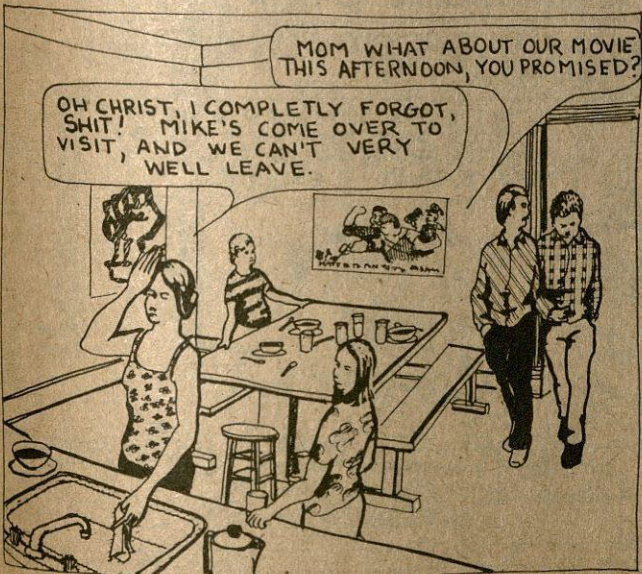
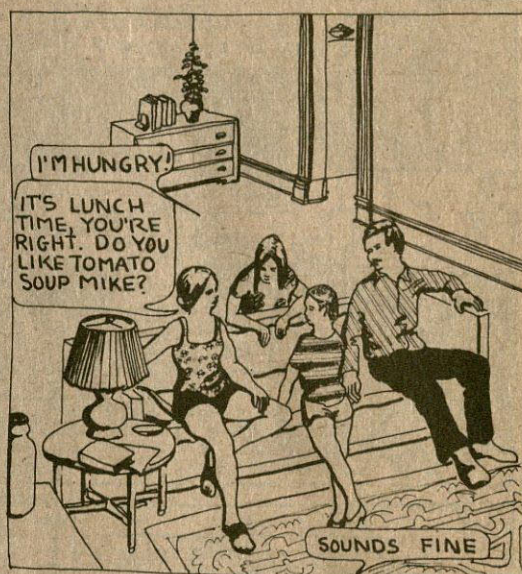
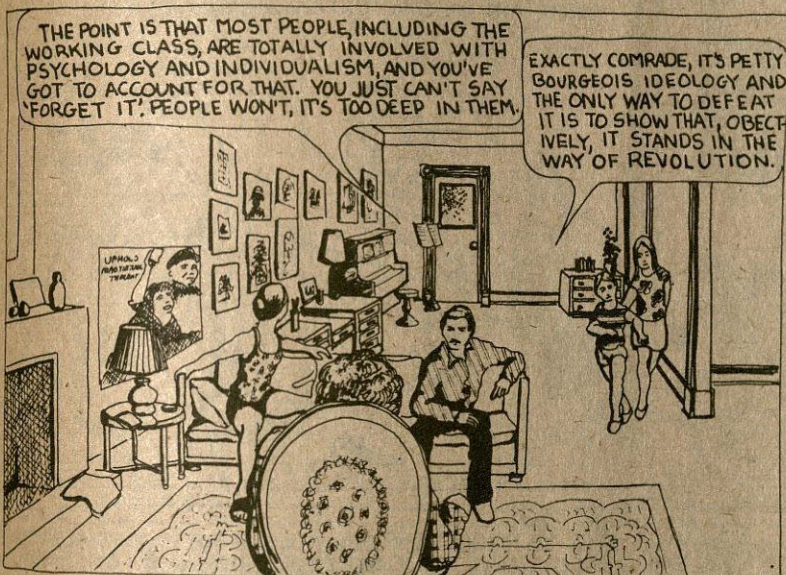
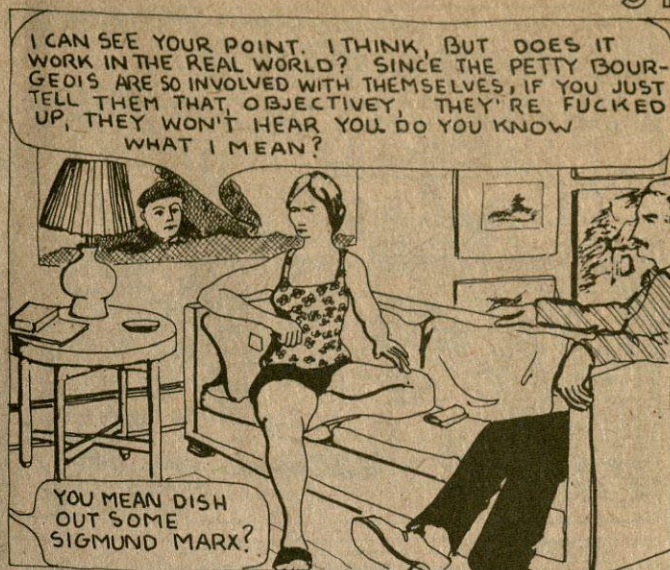
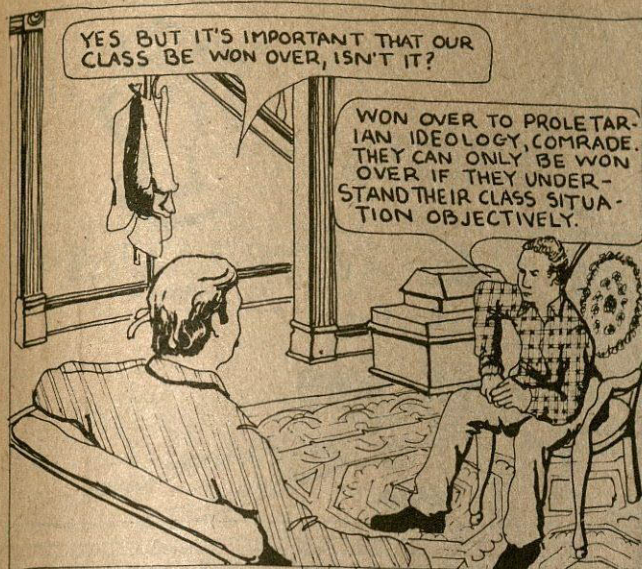
THEY WERE SUBJECTIVE STRUGGLES, MY OWN STRUGGLES WITH PETTY BOURGEOIS IDEOLOGY, OF NO REAL CONSEQUENCE TO ANYONE.

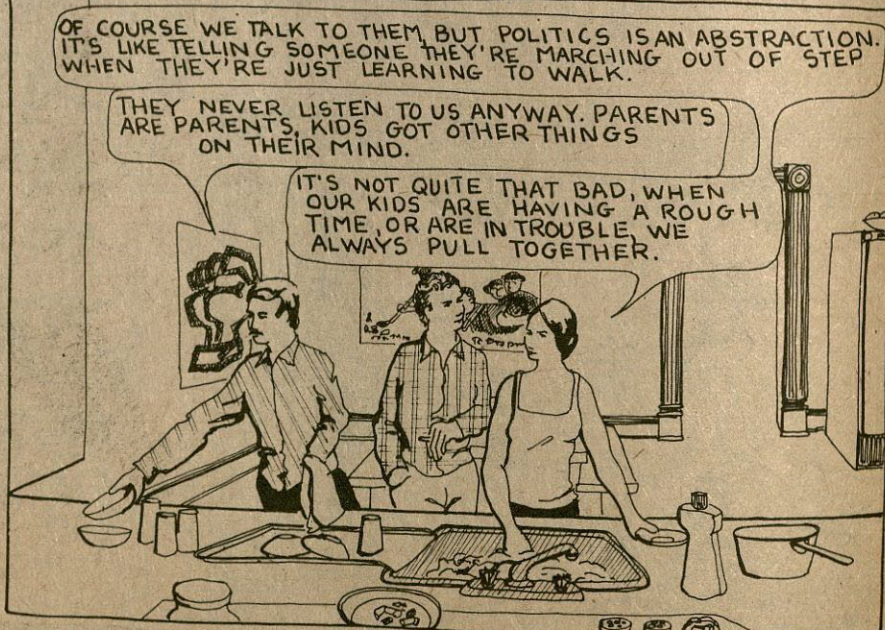
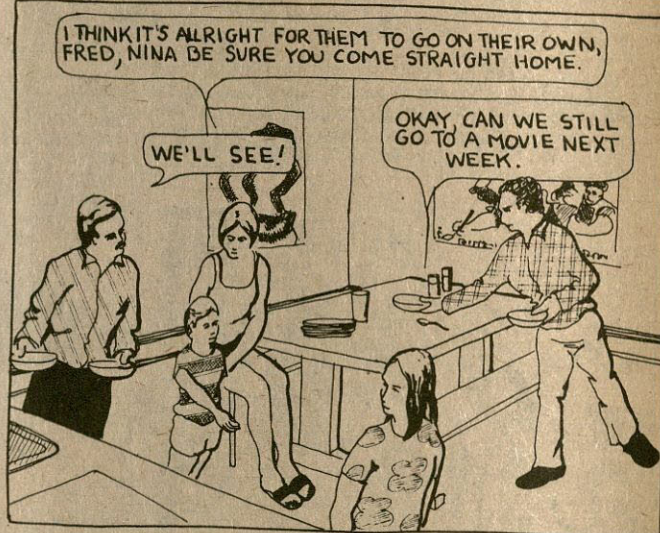
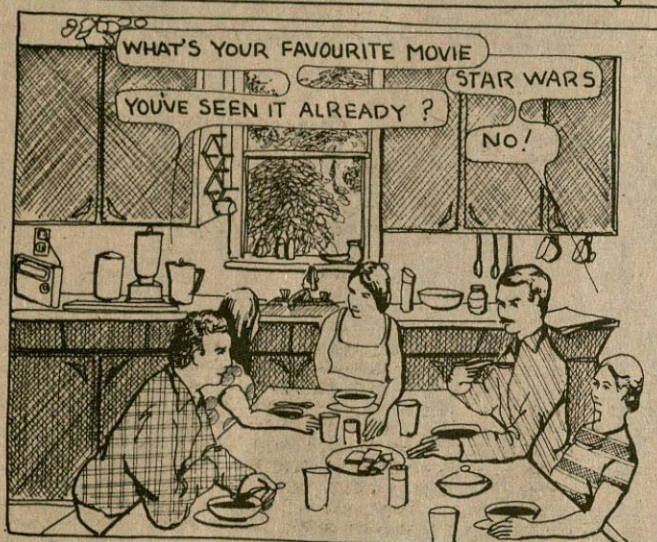
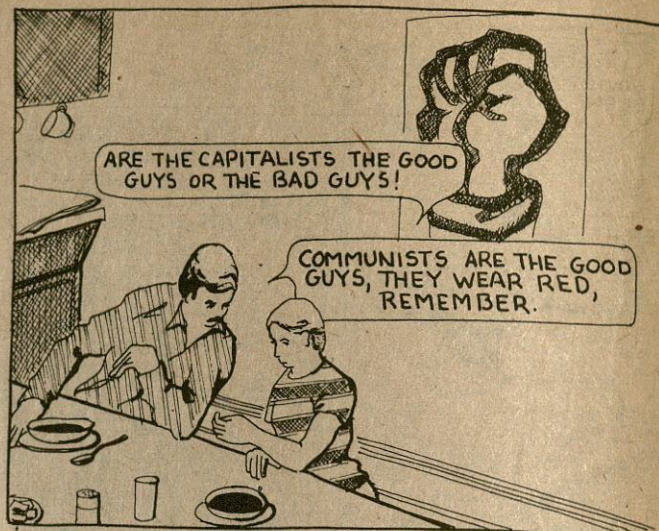
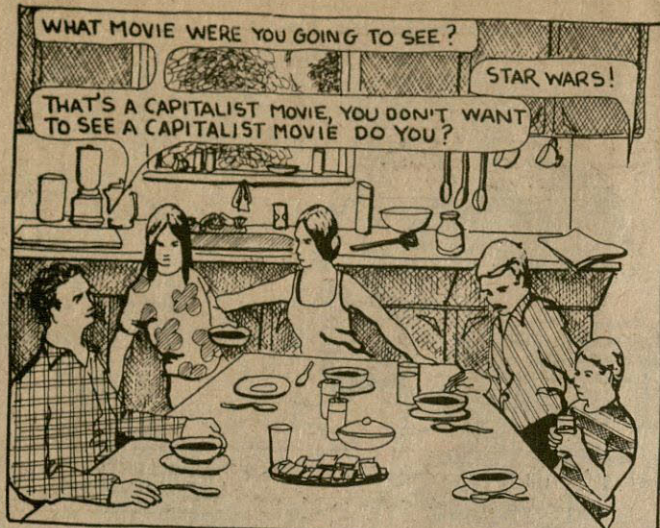


PERSONALLY, I THINK THOSE THINGS ARE IMPORTANT.

ONLY IF THOSE THINGS ARE UNDERSTOOD OBJECTIVELY, COMRADE. YOU SEE THEY'RE QUESTIONS THAT ONLY SEEM IMPORTANT TO THE PETTY BOURGEOIS, BECAUSE THEY ARE ABOUT OUR CLASS.







I UNDERSTAND THAT THE QUESTION OF SOVIET SOCIAL IMPERIALISM HASN'T BEEN RESOLVED IN A.I.A.C.

IT'S NOT SO MUCH A QUESTION OF SOVIET SOCIAL IMPERIALISM, BUT WHETHER A MASS ORGANIZATION SHOULD HAVE A LINE ON IT.

RIGHT, THAT'S THE LINE I COULDN'T FOLLOW. HOW CAN A.I.A.C. DO ANTI-IMPERIALIST WORK WITHOUT A CLEAR LINE ON SOVIET SOCIAL IMPERIALISM.

BECAUSE THERE'S A LOT OF PEOPLE WHO DO VALUABLE WORK AND DON'T ACCEPT THAT IDEA.

BUT IF WE DON'T TAKE A CORRECT LINE WE'LL MISLEAD THE PEOPLE. IT'S MORE IMPORTANT THAT A.I.A.C. PUT OUT THE CORRECT WORK AND WIN COMRADES OVER, THAN HAVE LOTS OF VALUABLE MEMBERS.

THAT COULD LEAD TO A NARROW NATIONALIST VIEWPOINT, OF COURSE THE U.S. DOMINATES CANADA, BUT YOU HAVE TO KEEP AN INTERNATIONALIST VIEW POINT, AND INTERNATIONALLY THE SOVIETS ARE THE MAIN THREAT TO WAR. IT'S NOT AN IDLE THEORY COMRADE, IT'S STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT.

LOOK WE HAVE TO BE CLEAR, COMRADE, SURE IT'S DIFF-CULT. IN THE SECOND WORLD WAR, THE UNITED FRONT INCLUDED ENGLAND RUSSIA FRANCE AND THE U.S.. OF COURSE THE DAY TO DAY STRUGGLE IS AGAINST U.S. IMPERIALISM ONLY AN OPPORTUNIST WOULD CLAIM THAT SOVIET SOCIAL IMPERIALISM DOMINATES CANADA, BUT IN TERMS OF INTERNATIONALISM, AND THE WORLD UNITED FRONT, WE HAVE TO RECOGNIZE THE SOVIET THREAT.

LOOK COMRADE, THE SOVIETS ARE MORE AGGRESSIVE BECAUSE IT'S A FASCIST STATE, HUNGRY FOR COLONIES, RAW MATERIALS...

WAIT A MINUTE COMRADE I WAS SPEAKING....

HOLD ON... FRED... WHAT I THINK YOU'RE TRYING TO SAY IS THAT YOU AGREE IN THEORY, BUT NOT IN THE WAY IT'S PRACTICED. DOES THAT MAKE SENSE?

I CAN UNITE WITH THAT, IN PRINCIPLE ANYWAY IT WOULD BE DOGMATIC TO CLAIM THAT WE DON'T MAKE MISTAKES.

I THINK IT'S MORE THAT WE WANT TO DO A CERTAIN KIND OF WORK. AS I SEE IT, THE U.S. IS OUR MAIN ENEMY.

WAIT A MINUTE I DON'T DISAGREE, WELL-I DON'T KNOW, BUT I'M TALKING ABOUT OUR WORK. HOW ARE YOU GOING TO CONVINCE PEOPLE OF THAT WITH THE U.S. STARING THEM IN THE FACE, UNLESS YOU CAN CONVINCE THEM THAT A FEW FISHING BOATS OFF THE COAST OF NOVA SCOTIA ARE A THREAT.

WHAT I OBJECT TO IS THE BLOODY EMPHASIS, SURE YOU ADMIT THAT THE U.S. DOMINATES CANADA, BUT YOU GO ON ABOUT THE SOVIETS. YOU'RE SAYING THAT IN THE EVENT OF WAR, YOU MIGHT FORM A UNITED FRONT WITH THE U.S. AGAINST THE SOVIETS. IT SEEMS THE CHINESE ARE THINKING THAT WAY. WELL I THINK THAT'S NUTS. REMEMBER BOTH SUPERPOWERS ARE THE MAIN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD. SURE THE U.S. MIGHT BE IN DECLINE AND ALL THAT, BUT IT'S STILL BLOODY POWERFUL AND IT'S PROVED RIGHT HERE, THAT'S WHAT GETS ME.

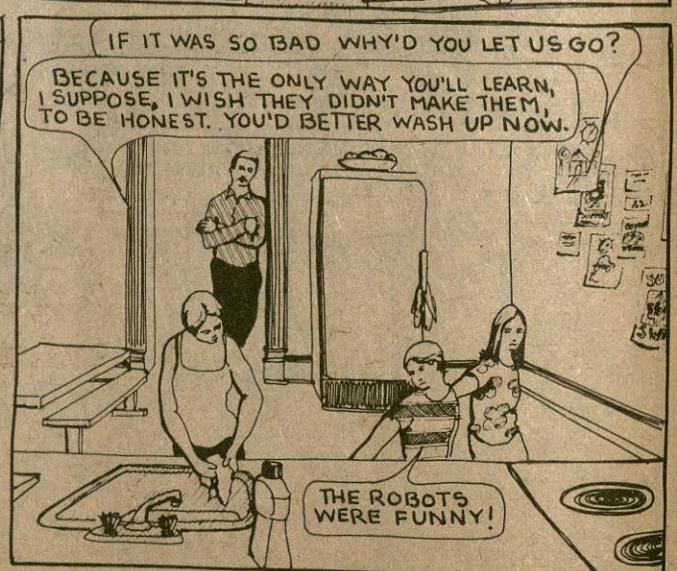
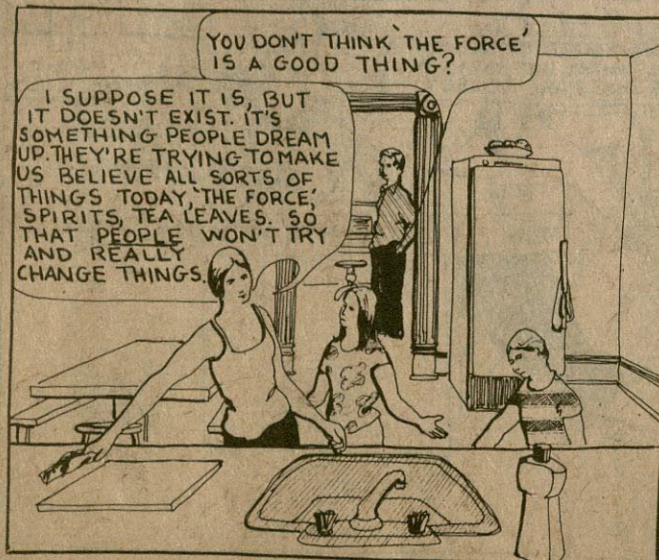
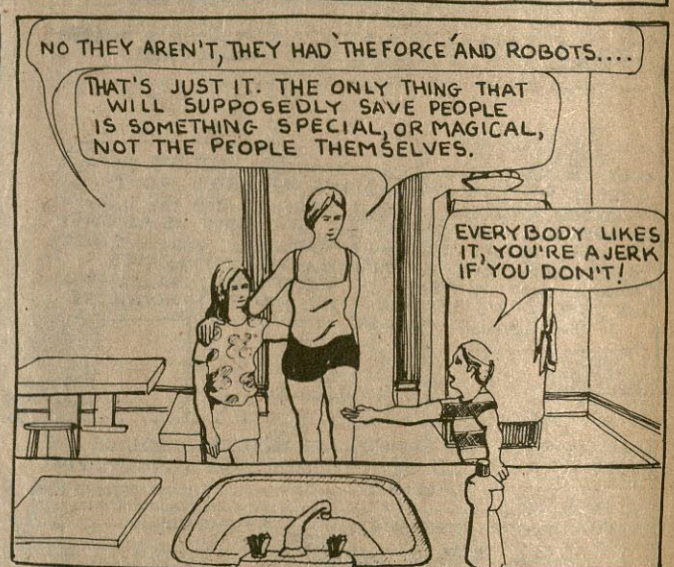
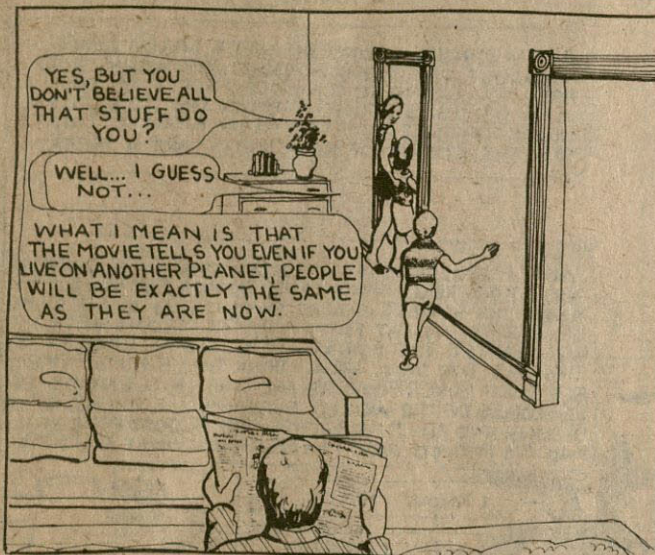
I KNOW THAT...

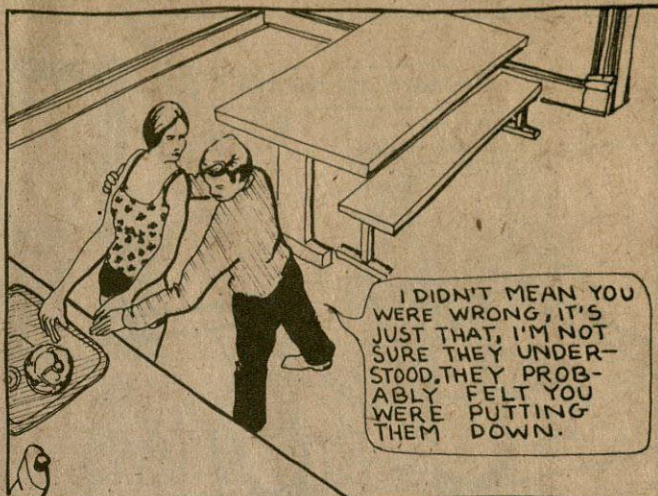
I DON'T DISAGREE... IT'S THE...

YEAH... I CAN UNITE WITH THAT.

UPHOLD
MAO TSE
THOUGHT

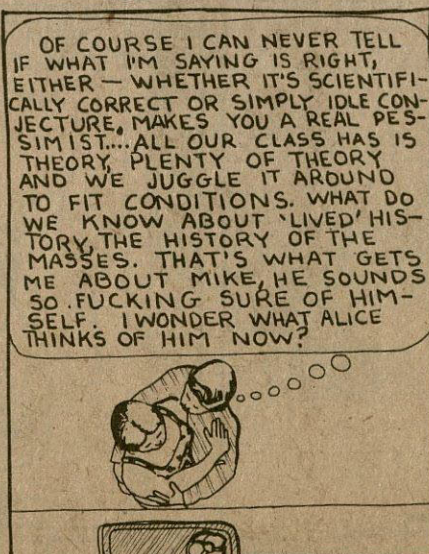
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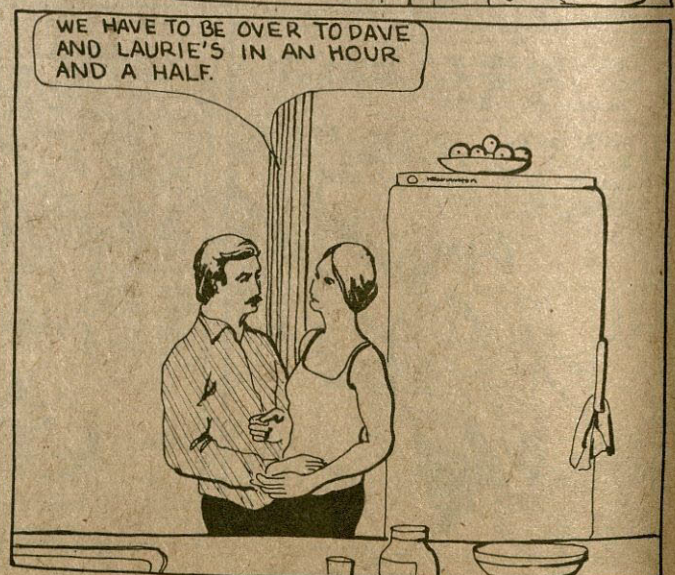
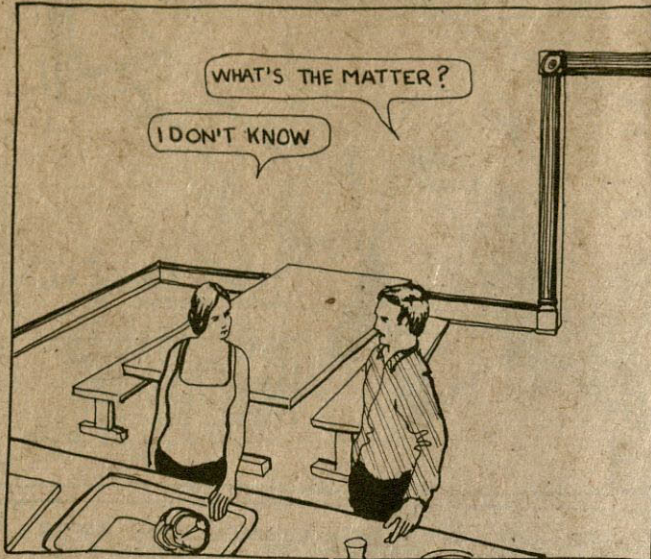


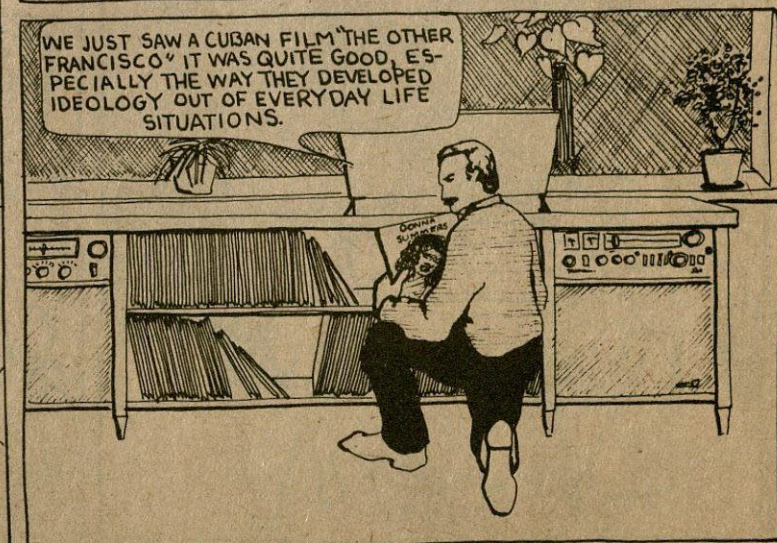
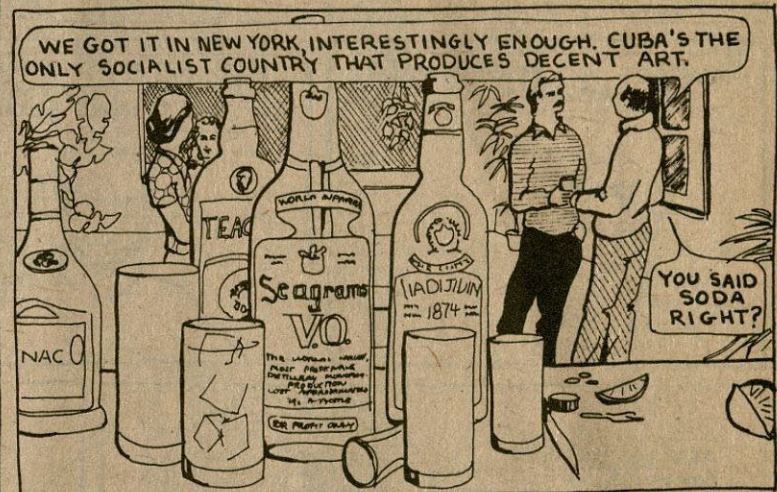
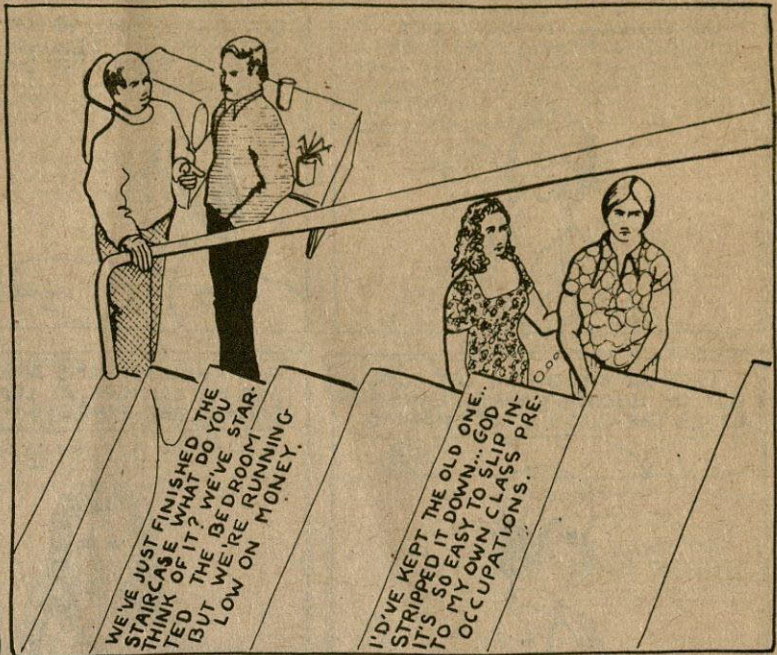
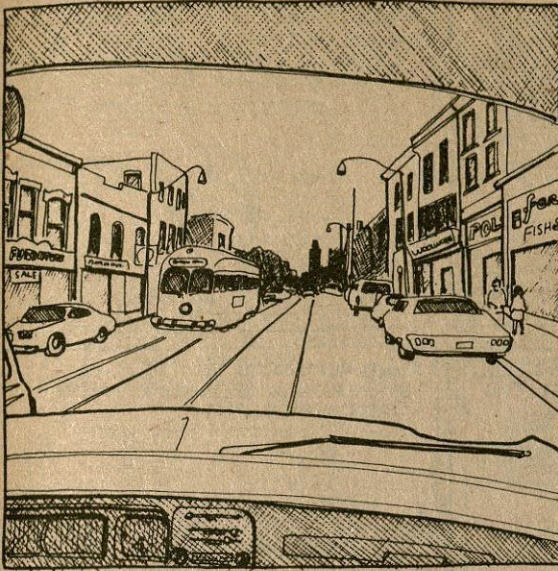


SURE I CAN HEAR IT NOW. COMRADE KIDS. IMPERIALISTS DON'T HESITATE TO LEACH OFF THE BLOOD AND SWEAT OF THE WORKERS. THE BOURGEOIS LACKEYS OF THE PRESS, THE MEDIA, THE MOVIES WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO FEED US LIES. 'STAR WARS' IS ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF DEGENERATE BOURGEOIS SPECTACLE. WHAT IS IT BUT A REHEARSAL FOR THE GREAT IMPERIALIST WAR IN WHICH THOUSANDS OF WORKERS WILL GET SLAUGHTERED. BUT THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE BOURGEOISIE DOESN'T STOP THERE. NO, THEY ENLIST REVISIONIST SCUM, WRITERS, ACTORS, UNION MISLEADERS, TRAITORS, PHONIES TO DO THEIR DIRTY WORK, TO SELL OUT THE WORKERS. IT IS OUR TASK, THE TASK OF AN ANTI-REVISIONIST COMMUNIST PARTY, WHICH WE MUST BUILD TO EXPOSE THE BOURGEOIS BEASTS AND BUILD A NEW SOCIETY, THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT, ON THE SMOULDERING RUINS OF CAPITALISM.

DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM!
WORKERS UNITE!
DOWN WITH STAR WARS!
HOW'D YOU LIKE IT?







I DON'T KNOW, I'M SUSPICIOUS OF CUBAN FILMS. I LIKE THEM...



BUT, THEY'VE BEEN SO INFLUENCED BY THE FRENCH 'NEW WAVE' THAT I DON'T TRUST MY OWN CLASS...



BACKGROUND IN JUDGING THEM. ACTUALLY I PREFER THE CHINESE FILMS FOR EXACTLY THE OPPOSITE REASON.



...THEY HAVE EVERYDAY LIFE COME OUT OF IDEOLOGY, WHICH CRYSTALLIZES THE CLASS RELATIONSHIPS.



BUT CHINESE FILMS ARE SO DULL AND MECHANICAL, AT LEAST THE CUBANS ARE EXPRESSIVE...



AND HUMAN. TO ME IT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN PROPAGANDA AND ART.



BUT ART IS A FORM OF PROPAGANDA....



YEAH, BUT MOST PROPAGANDA ISN'T ART. CHINESE ARTISTS ARE TOLD TO MAKE SOCIALIST ART.



AND BOURGEOIS ARTISTS ARE 'FREE' TO MAKE BOURGEOIS ART. WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE, IDEOLOGICALLY?



ART IS STILL A FORM OF IDEOLOGY IN SOCIALIST SOCIETY AND BOURGEOIS SOCIETY.



AT LEAST THE CUBANS ARE 'FREE' TO MAKE SOCIALIST ART. I THOUGHT THAT'S WHAT SOCIALISM WAS ABOUT, NOT LIKE RUSSIA AND CHINA.

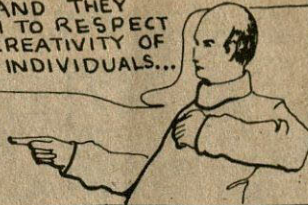
WAIT A MINUTE, RUSSIA'S SOCIAL FASCIST, WHERE THE BUREAUCRACY SERVES ITSELF, CHINA'S A PEOPLE'S DEMOCRACY. YOU COULDN'T HAVE A CULTURAL REVOLUTION IN THE SOVIET UNION.



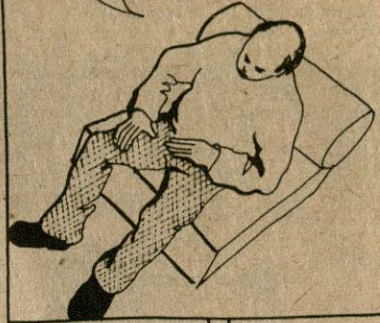
WHAT HAPPENED IN RUSSIA WILL HAPPEN IN CHINA. AUTHORITARIANISM INEVITABLY LEADS TO TOTALITARIANISM.

SURE AND SELF-INTEREST LEADS TO AUTHORITY AND SO ON. THE POINT IS, IS CHINA AUTHORITARIAN? IT'S LIKE ALICE SAID, IN WHOSE INTERESTS IS LEADERSHIP EXERCISED, RIGHT? ANYWAY WHAT GETS ME IS YOUR INTEREST IN CUBA. BY YOUR DEFINITION IT'S CERTAINLY AUTHORITARIAN. I MEAN, OLD FIDEL...

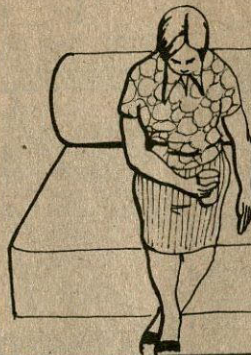
IT'S BETTER THAN ANYWHERE ELSE. THEY HAVE PROBLEMS, OF COURSE, BUT THEY HAVE FREEDOM, EQUALITY AND THEY SEEM TO RESPECT THE CREATIVITY OF INDIVIDUALS...



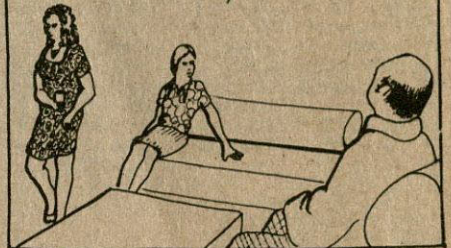
I REALLY CAN'T DEAL WITH THAT ANYMORE. I HATE TO REMIND YOU, BUT YOU SUPPORTED THE M.P.L.A. YOURSELVES NOT TOO LONG AGO. I STILL SUPPORT THEM, SO WHAT CAN WE SAY.



AND FRONT FOR THE SOVIET UNION IN ANGOLA AND THE REST OF AFRICA.



WELL THEN, TELL ME WHAT THE SOVIETS ARE DOING THERE?



ALICE YOU SOUND LIKE JOHN FOSTER DULLES. WHAT WOULD YOU HAVE DONE?



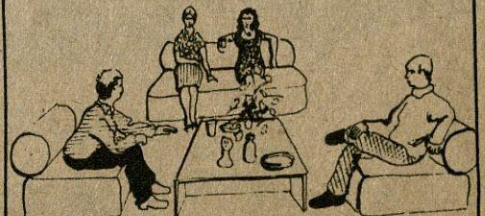
ALL THE LIBERATION FORCES SHOULD HAVE BEEN SUPPORTED TO KEEP THE SOVIETS OUT.



EVEN IF SOUTH AFRICA SUPPORTS ONE OF THEM?

LOOK, IF THERE HAD BEEN A UNITED FRONT AGAINST BOTH SUPERPOWERS. THE THREE LIBERATION GROUPS WOULD HAVE HAD TO SETTLE THEIR DIFFERENCES AMONG THEIR OWN PEOPLE TO CARRY ON THE STRUGGLE. AS IT IS NOW, PEOPLE STILL HAVE TO FIGHT AGAINST IMPERIALISM AND NEO-COLONIALISM. WHAT'S EVEN MORE DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND IS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE A MUCH WORSE ENEMY THAN SOUTH AFRICA. PEOPLE KNOW WHAT SOUTH AFRICA IS, BUT THEY DON'T KNOW ABOUT THE SOVIET UNION. THE SOVIETS PRETEND THEY'RE SOCIALIST TO DECEIVE AND APPROPRIATE LIBERATION MOVEMENTS, LIKE THE M.P.L.A., IN ORDER TO EXPLOIT AND OPPRESS THE PEOPLE.

WELL....



1967

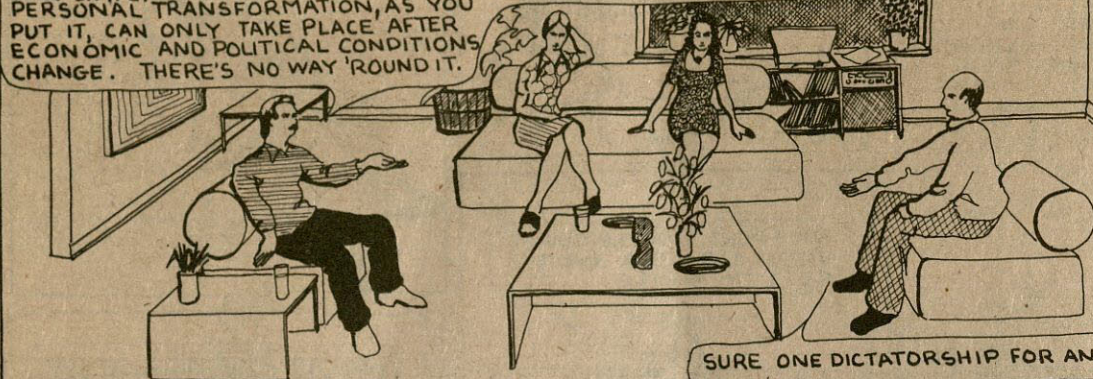
THE LIBERATION GROUPS

THE LIBERATION GROUPS



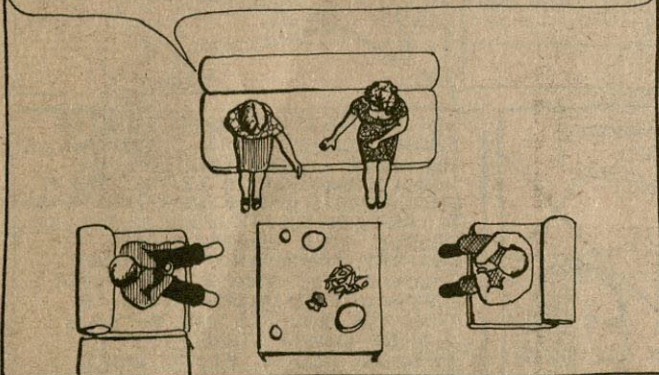
THAT'S JUST CRAP, THE M.P.L.A.... OH CHRIST.... ANYWAY, IT'S MORE THAN JUST THAT. WE DISAGREE ON A LOT OF FUNDAMENTALS, MAYBE WE SHOULDN'T TALK POLITICS. GOD KNOWS WE NEED CHANGE, BUT UNLESS PEOPLE ARE PERSONALLY TRANSFORMED, THAT IS LEARN TO CO-OPERATE INSTEAD OF TELLING EACH OTHER WHAT TO DO AND THINK, YOU CAN'T HAVE ANY REAL SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION.

SURE, TALK TO PEOPLE NICELY AND EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT... COME ON DAVE. I SUPPOSE E.P. TAYLOR WILL SIMPLY GIVE EVERYTHING UP 'HERE FOLKS TAKE MY CORPORATION'S, I'VE SEEN THE LIGHT, FUCKING HELL. PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION, AS YOU PUT IT, CAN ONLY TAKE PLACE AFTER ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONDITIONS CHANGE. THERE'S NO WAY 'ROUND IT.



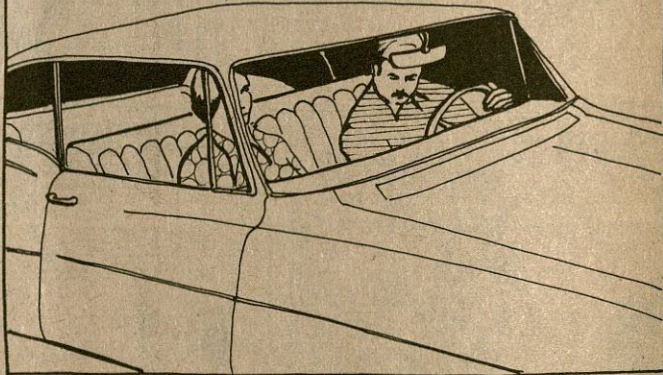
SURE ONE DICTATORSHIP FOR ANOTHER.. GREAT DEAL!

WHAT DO YOU WANT? THROW A REVOLUTION THEN SIT DOWN FOR A DRINK AND CONTEMPLATE HOW WONDERFUL IT ALL IS. ARMED REVOLUTION IS ONLY THE BEGINNING, ACTUALLY IT'S A CRITICAL POINT IN A HISTORICAL PROCESS. IT'S GOING ON NOW AND CONTINUES AFTER. AT DIFFERENT POINTS DIFFERENT ASPECTS OF IT BECOME MORE IMPORTANT. PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION IS AT A LATER STAGE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY PROCESS, THATS ALL.

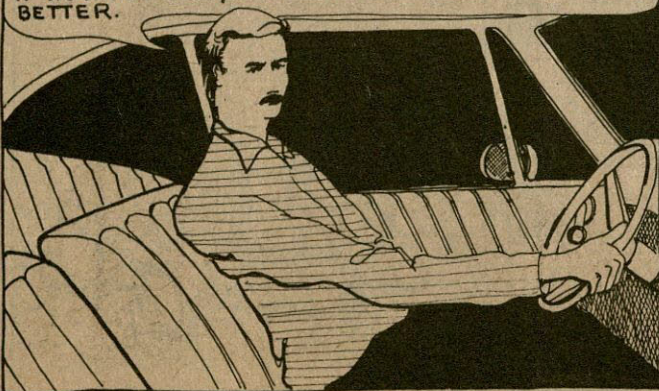


GOD, I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW MUCH WE'VE DRIFTED APART.

I KNOW, LAURIE GETS MORE AND MORE ON MY NERVES. I CAN'T DEAL WITH PEOPLE LIKE THAT ANY MORE.



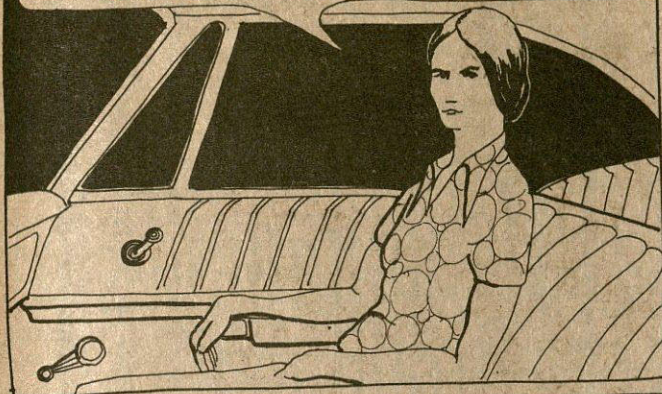
HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH PEOPLE LIKE THAT? DO WE ISOLATE OURSELVES? IT'S REALLY INSANE. I REALLY LIKE DAVE AND WE'VE KNOWN HIM FOR A LONG TIME MUCH MORE THAN, SAY, MIKE, BUT MIKE'S MORE POLITICALLY ADVANCED, WHAT'A YOU DO? IT'S CURIOUS I FOUND MYSELF TALKING LIKE MIKE TONIGHT. WELL, IF NOTHING ELSE, I UNDERSTAND HIS DOGMATISM A LITTLE BETTER.



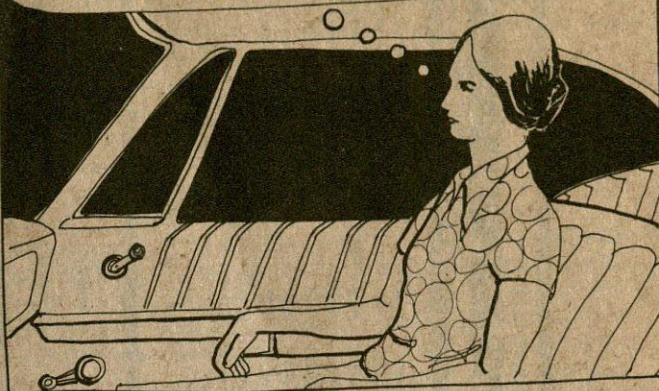
IT'S LIKE I THINK LAURIE'S OFF THE WALL, BUT I GET OFF ON HER. IT'S STUPID, RATHER THAN FACE MY PROBLEMS WITH ALICE, I FANTASIZE ABOUT LAURIE. I KNOW SHE'S JUST THE OBJECT OF MY FRUSTRATION. IT'D BE NICE IF I COULD TELL ALICE THAT. BUT IT GIVES ME A CUSHION AGAINST REALITY.



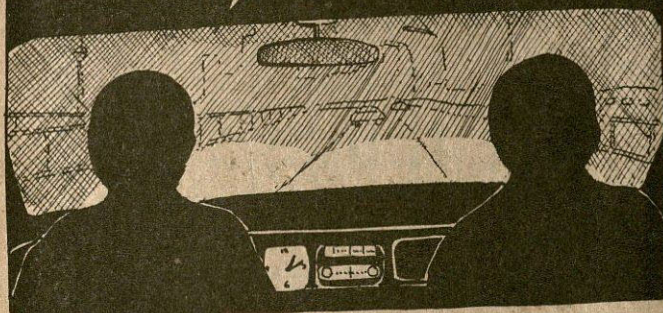
WE'RE ALL SO BLOODY IMPATIENT. IT'S THE PLAGUE OF OUR CLASS - THE INGLOUS PETTY BOURGEOIS IMPATIENCE HIDES OUR INDIVIDUALISM AND LACK OF CONFIDENCE. IDEALISM TURNS US INTO DOGMATISTS. SECRETLY, I WISH WE COULD JUST ERASE OUR CLASS ILLUSIONS AND PETTY CONCERNS WHICH IS PART OF THE PROBLEM, I SUPPOSE.



EVEN THOUGH IT PISSES ME OFF I CAN UNDERSTAND DAVE AND LAURIE. WHY RISK ANYTHING? WE DO IT OURSELVES. FRED AND I HIDE FROM EACH OTHER, OTHERWISE WE'D BE TOO VULNERABLE. HE'S AFRAID TO TELL ME WHAT REALLY BOTHERS HIM; BUT THEN I PROBABLY DON'T WANT TO HEAR IT.



AS THEY SAY, 'LIFE'S A STRUGGLE.'



YES BUT IT HAS TO BE SEEN AS A POSITIVE STRUGGLE. WORKING IN OUR FUTURE INTERESTS, NOT OUR PRESENT ONES.



Social Mobility Found Key to U.S. Views on Class

By STEVEN V. ROBERTS

SPECIAL TO THE NEW YORK TIMES

WASHINGTON, April 23 — George Rohal, the 40-year-old manager of a supermarket in Weirton, W. Va., thinks of himself as a middle-class American. "You make a fairly decent living, an average living," he explained. "You don't get rich."

To Mr. Rohal, middle-class families earn between \$15,000 and \$25,000 a year, and they have to cut their own grass, class, and why. Three-quarters of those and paint their own houses. Upper-class families make at least \$30,000, and hire someone else to tend the yard.

Old New York Times Perception of Class Distinctions

What, in your mind, most determines whether a person would be called working class or middle class?

Income, money or possessions	44%	Occupation, education or values	28%	Don't know	21%	7%
Middle class	35%	Working class	34%	Do not belong to any class	25%	6%

Do you ever think of yourself as belonging in one of these classes? If so, in which one?

Have total family income over \$15,000	40%	Working class	63%
Have total family income over \$25,000	6%	Middle class	21%
Have some college or schooling beyond high school	20%	Working class	40%
Had unemployed adult in household in past year	33%	Middle class	21%
Self described financial situation as unsatisfactory or growing worse	53%	Working class	37%
Say parents on a new car would be a hardship	76%	Middle class	56%
Think they are in a higher social class than their parents	24%	Working class	49%

No difference or no classes

Belong to another class

The New York Times/April 24, 1978

class, and close to half said that the main factor determining class identity is income, but few demonstrated a strong class consciousness.

Only 2 percent identified themselves as members of the upper class, and 8 percent put themselves in the lower class. The rest split evenly between the middle class and the working class, but few Americans mean working class in the classic Marxist sense of an oppressed proletariat.

Father Was a Steelworker

"All classes are really working classes," said Mr. Rohal, whose father was a steelworker. "Very few people sit back and just collect income. Anyone drawing any type of salary or a weekly paycheck is a working-class person."

The poll demonstrates that one reason few Americans seem to have developed a strong class consciousness is that they feel rapid mobility between classes is possible. In most categories, 10 to 12 percent of the respondents said that they belonged to a class higher than the one in which they grew up, but in some groups the mobility was even more dramatic.

Thirty-five percent of the blacks, for example, said they grew up in lower-class homes, but only 17 percent see themselves as belonging to that class today. Only 3 percent of all union members described themselves as being in the poor group now, but 20 percent said they were raised in lower-class families.

Mr. Rohal was one of seven children, and his father worked weekends and evenings to make ends meet. His mother taught a large garden and every year his father, butchered a hog and made home-smoked bacon and sausage. The younger Mr. Rohal also does his own work, but there is a difference. "I don't do it because I like it," he explained. "My father had to, or we'd go without."

Too Much Emphasis on Class

From Americans are clearly uncomfortable with the idea of class, particularly in a implies special privileges or favoritism. "I think there's too much emphasis

on different classes," said Ray Perry, a toolmaker from Westmoreland, Pa. "People in the so-called lower classes are looked down upon, and I don't think that's good."

As a nurse, and one class is as good as another to me in my work," insisted Mary Wilson, the wife of a retired militiaman in Caribou, Me. "I take care of everybody."

Class definitions overlap and vary widely. Twenty-seven percent of those earning less than \$10,000 a year identify themselves with the middle class, and 54 to 66 percent of those earning more than \$25,000. Seventy-three percent of middle-class families own their own homes, and so do 65 percent of the working-class group.

Family and Community

Nevoia Pacheco, the wife of a civil engineer in Sunnyvale, Utah, identified with the working class and explained, "I do have to work for a living, but we're always working for the community, too."

In general, however, the middle class is slightly better off than the working class. To take one example, 76 percent of the self-described working-class people would find it a hardship to buy a car today, while 56 percent in the middle group would feel strapped.

These differences also show up in political attitudes. Among those calling themselves Democrats, 48 percent said they belonged to the working class and 37 percent to the middle class. Among Republicans the working class accounted for 37 percent and the middle group 55 percent.

A number of respondents said that different classes hold different values. Dale H. Harrison, a retired businessman living in Tucson, Ariz., said that the middle class was "better informed, more intelligent, concerned about current events and problems."

For more interested in sports, said Vigie Edwards, a mental health counselor from Tonawanda, N.Y. "The middle class means 'participating in the community, attending church, being responsible and dependable.' Her father, a meatpacker in Omaha, and her mother, a dietitian, felt less obligated to participate in community life and derived less satisfaction from their professional lives," she said.

If the middle-class people tend to feel culturally superior to the lower class, they feel morally superior to the upper income group. The rich, said Mrs. Young, the farmer's wife, "travel and squander their money."

Life Is Better Now

Mr. Harrison, the retired businessman, added, "The upper class is not so concerned about social problems as the middle class. I know some, and they are primarily concerned about their own income. They want to make sure that Government doesn't do something to take away their privileges or income and give them to somebody else."

For many who described themselves as being in the middle and working classes, life is considerably better than it was a generation ago. Mrs. Wilson, the nurse, remembers when her father got up in the middle of the night to shovel frozen coal. Mrs. Pacheco, the miner's wife, milked cows twice a day as a child and her home had no indoor plumbing. Today, her children are concerned with Little League baseball and the junior prom.

Economic mobility has also meant physical mobility. Mr. Perry, the toolmaker, grew up in a Portuguese neighborhood in East Providence, R.I., where his parents still live. He lives in a suburban community of young families where ethnic groups are mixed together.

But mobility also has limits. Fifty-three percent of all college graduates surveyed said they grew up in middle-class homes, and only 32 percent in from the working class, an indication that the family background still influences the future.

And for all the rapid changes in America, there are still people like Mrs. Young, who lives only a mile from where she grew up, and farms the same land that her grandparents did.

THE FREE WORLD THESIS

A cab driver pulled into a hack line in front of a swank mid-town hotel. About ten cabs with their motors idling were poised along the curb in a line which stretched the length of the block. As a general rule, the length of a hack line for a mid-town hotel is proportional to the amount of business there is in the streets. The slower it is in the streets, the more drivers decide to keep the mileage down, save gas and get on a line to wait for the sure thing. But the line in front of this particular hotel was seldom short even when business in the streets was good. It had a reputation among drivers for being one of the best lines in the city to 'luck out' with a trip to the airport. And that's what most of the drivers on this hack line were hoping to get. It was about 11:30 A.M., and guests from the hotel were beginning to check out. A few drivers towards the front of the line were anxiously standing alongside their cab with trunk keys in hand, staring intently at the revolving door of the hotel.

The driver who was now at the back of the line, cut off his engine and slouched down in his seat. He was not expecting to get a lucrative trip to the airport, he was more interested in taking a twenty minute break. Taking too many breaks was a bad habit of his but he could never equal the enthusiasm of a dedicated cabbie. He had been driving a cab on and off for about three years and he seldom stopped thinking about what he would rather be doing. Occasionally he got a 'twinge' to study acting but the 'twinge' came and went and it never lasted long enough for him to take it seriously. If things were going bad he would grudgingly work every day. If things were going good or when he had enough in his savings account, he would have no qualms about working two days a week or taking a couple of weeks off.

No sooner was he slouched down in the seat, than a cab driver behind him was impatiently blasting his horn to let him know that the line was moving up. And it was moving up much faster than expected. Within five minutes, the doorman was slamming shut the cab door for two passengers who were giving the driver gratuitous directions to a West End Avenue address. The passengers, a man and a woman, were in agreement about the address they were going to, but that was about all it seemed they could agree on. A few blocks from the hotel, what sounded like a lovers quarrel erupted into a fierce argument. The driver could only guess what the argument was about because the safety partition in the cab was closed. Unless a passenger spoke with his or her nose pressed up against the bullet-proof partition, all voices from the back seat sounded to the driver like they are coming out of a corked bottle. The fierce argument was becoming a ferocious attack. In spite of the safety partition, the driver could now hear what was being said, for what it was worth. It was not a better than average lovers quarrel, it was a thunderous political rift! Something called the 'free world thesis' was being expounded by the woman as if her well-being depended on it. She was screaming at the top of her lungs, "It's in everyones interest, it's in everyones interest!!", over and over again. The man was screaming back, but his voice was drowned out by the woman who had flown into a rage.

The driver was adept at feigning obliviousness to

what went on in the back seat of his cab but he could not help being intrigued by what he overheard. Perhaps it was while reading an article in a local district union newspaper a long while back, or, perhaps it was another conversation he overheard in a cafeteria for downtrodden cab drivers when he first became aware of the existence of the 'free world thesis'. He knew that he lived in the 'free world' but he also knew that there were neighborhoods in the 'free world' he would never cruise. The driver was convinced that the 'free world thesis' was something which at least some people took very seriously - even if many other people knew absolutely nothing about it. Maybe this meant he was out of touch with current events and foreign affairs of maybe the 'free world thesis' was just a new set of hub caps for the same old worn out tin jalopy. Was a relationship being destroyed because of it? Did someone's well-being really hang in the balance? Would it be necessary to enroll in a class at the New School to learn more about it? These were only some of the questions which were beginning to overtake him.

By the time he dropped the passengers off on West End Avenue, they were no longer speaking to each other. After making a broken U-turn on the avenue, he decided to head for his favorite downtown luncheonette to get something to eat - even if doing that meant losing out on the lunch hour business.

It was very quiet in the cab on the way downtown. It was just before noon, and there were relatively few people on the street. He was secretly hoping that nobody would hail him.

It was a relief to reach the luncheonette without being hailed and with a clear conscience, he parked his cab at an empty hack stand outside the luncheonette. After entering through a series of two glass doors and walking past the cashier, he was scanning the crowded space looking for a seat. There was no place to sit at the long lunch counter which curved like a snake and all of the booths seemed to be filled. Then he noticed an empty seat in a small booth which was directly behind him. Courteously, perhaps too courteously, he asked the woman who was sitting there reading a book if the empty seat was taken. She was about to snarl at him but instead she simply shook her head to indicate that it was not. He sat down.

They did not speak to each other at first but they recognized each other as familiar faces in the afternoon lunch crowd. But she seemed more interested in reading than eating. He was squinting his eyes trying to read the title of her book but the top edge of the table concealed most of it. It was the 'Critique of...' something or other.

After the waiter arrived to take their orders, she put down the book she was reading and reached over to her handbag and pulled out a journal. Her journal was no worse from wear than the cigar box which the driver carried in with him. After making a short entry, she stashed both books away, looked up at the driver and asked him if he owned his own cab.

The worn out cigar box and metal coin changer which he carried in with him were incriminating evidence of his occupation. The driver was surprised and secretly delighted that the woman initiated a conversation, but he was not that

eager to talk about cab driving - it might give the impression that he was a 'typical' cab driver. Involuntarily, he answered her question by saying that he often thought of buying his own cab but for the time being, driving a company cab gave him much more freedom. He noticed that she was giving him an extremely wry look as he said that. It was that look which made him feel the need to be more convincing about his ambivalent feelings towards cab driving. In spite of himself, the driver began to tell her the things he disliked most about cab driving. Then he went on to say that, occasionally, he did meet some very interesting people and, occasionally, very amusing things would occur.

"Two weeks ago when a hand truck accidentally ran over my foot at work", she interrupted, "I desperately needed a cab to take me home, but I couldn't find a cab driver who was willing to take the 'risk' after finding out where I lived.

Listen Close

Hear it?

"Democracy"

Gold toothed publicity smiles

At millions of workless workers.

Hear the "democratic" chime in the death traps of coal mines

Or knee-deep in sweat on factory lines

So many hearing it from tenements

To the tune of rats chewing up their lives.

And when the people rise up and fight

For their real democratic rights

They're gunned down for the sake of

"Humanity".

Oppression has no borders

Greed is not confined

Same bloody money preaches honey

Worldwide.

Dropping pretty C.A.R.E. packs filled with napalm

Grimacing while they bleed the Third World

Dry.

Hear it?

All that moralizing about "Human Rights"

That's just a cover

For one ugly Superpower competing with the other

One monster Imperialism hissing at another.

Real Human Rights--that's what the people struggle for

Fighting these same brutal warmongers

Who sugar-coat their gunpowder

Ready... Aim...

"Democracy" "Humanity".

Through hearing it!

We'll make those bloodsuckers choke

On REALITY

That's what I like about hailing a cab under Capitalism." She said that with enough irony to make the driver squirm in his seat. After an acute throb of guilt, a feeling of defensiveness possessed him. He admitted to her that there were some neighborhoods in the city which he avoided out of an instinct for self-preservation but that was because the danger was very real. He acknowledged that some drivers used this as an excuse for passing up any Black or Latin person no matter what neighborhood they were standing in, or hoping to get a ride to. The driver concluded with some high sounding generalities, saying that people who lived in the inner cities were trapped by conditions outside of their control. Her smile became even more ironic as he said this, and the driver was at a momentary loss for what else to say. Rather than ask her where she lived which might have made matters worse, he asked her where she worked. "In a sweatshop around the corner", she said, testing him with her eyes. She said it very matter-of-factly, like everyone should be working in a sweat shop. But he noticed that she didn't give the exact location. They looked at each other for a few seconds and then he shrugged his shoulders. The conversation lapsed into an awkward silence.

The driver's curiosity about the 'free world thesis' was still smoldering. Only a moment ago he was about to mention his last trip, but then he felt she was making fun of him and the opportunity was lost. Now, the driver was puzzled by the feeling that this woman might know something about the 'free world thesis'. Perhaps it was the way she made fun of him - the poitics that seemed to be behind her irony. But there was no certain basis for his feeling. At the risk of being shot down again, he wrecklessly broke the silence.

"What makes you think I would know something about that?", asked the woman. "Why do you want to know if I've ever heard of the 'free world thesis'?"

The incredulous look which had immediately appeared on her face was beginning to fade. She paused.

"Well, I have heard of it. But I usually don't talk to strangers about it. It's a bit awkward to explain why." She paused again, and then seemed to make up her mind.

"Alright, I'll give you my view on the 'free world thesis', I might as well take advantage of the opportunity to make a 'free speech' while it lasts. That is, before my 'free speech' becomes classified as subversive activity. I'm not sure if you know what I mean by that? Of course there's nothing 'subversive' about anything I've said so far.

"I'll try to be polite for the moment and call the 'free world thesis' a form of 'public relations'. Sometimes you want to kiss the ground you're standing on or you want to bow down and pray because it's talked about in such a sacred way." She mockingly turned her eyes upward as she said this. "One of the funniest things about the way the 'free world thesis' divides the world is how it reminds me of Moses parting the Red Sea. You've got Communism on the left side, with Fascism on the right, while 'democracy' is hurriedly passing in between trying to make its way to the promised land - without getting its feet wet! It's a very inspiring and mythical picture. Unluckily, we haven't made it to the promised land, it's one of the neighborhoods we've all avoided. For the time being, we're not in the promised land, we're stuck in the land of promises. And the 'democracy' we live in likes to make big promises and one of its biggest promises is 'equal rights' - it's also one of its

biggest lies!

"You asked me about the 'free world thesis', well, 'equal rights' is one of the most important premises of the 'free world thesis'. And I want to give you an example of what I think 'equal rights' means to some people.

"I was working in the shop for about a month when the boss decided it was 'time to get to know me better'. That day, I was cutting a collar pattern out of a thick pile of cloth when he sneaked up behind me and slipped his hand under my arm and put it on my breast! I almost cut off my own fingers! That bastard! I could have KILLED him on the spot. Instead, I gave him a sharp elbow to his fat stomach! While he was doubled up in pain, I realized that he was about to exercise his 'LIBERTY' to fire me. The only thing I could think of doing at that moment was to remind him of the sprinkler system which I noticed did not exist. I knew it was a very serious safety violation and a very expensive one to correct. It was a big relief when he didn't fire me and to my pleasure, that cooled off his 'PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS'. It wasn't an isolated pursuit, except that most of the other women in the shop weren't lucky enough to have a missing sprinkler system come to their rescue. That god damn boss always acts like he owns the female workers - along with everything else!"

The driver was flushed with a sense of guilt once again. This time for reasons he would not have been too proud to admit. He did his best to conceal it for the moment but her story had a lasting effect on him. On the otherhand, he still wasn't sure what she was saying about 'equal rights'. It was hard for him to follow her argument.

"A long time ago, there were men working in his shop. When the boss realized he could get women to do the same work for less pay, he fired them one by one and began to cheat the women he hired one after the other. Now, he cheats them all at once. First the men and then the 'girls' put in a fair days work and nobody really got a fair days wage. But the women's wage is definitely a lot less fair. The men received an unfair wage 'equally' and the 'girls' received a very unfair wage 'equally'. He's been getting away with that shit for a long time."

As soon as she said that, the driver began to understand what she was talking about.

"What's wrong? It looks like there is something disturbing you."

The driver told her that he'd just thought of a good example of 'equal rights', the way the cab company took 50% of everything he booked.

"You're catching on... I think. Maybe you should speak to some other drivers about it. The women where I work are slowly losing their fear of speaking together about how the boss exploits and abuses them and they're trying to figure out what to do about it. All they really need is a little guidance. Some of the woman are scared of the boss, others haven't been in this country too long and they are just plain scared. But others are very individualistic. Because of the competition on the job, they think and act like they have nothing in common with the rest of the women in the shop. So, instead of struggling together to resist the boss, they struggle against each other. But some other woman have given me the very clear impression that they simply don't like to 'mix', they prefer to remain separate.

"I hope that none of the 'individualistic' women have swallowed the popular bourgeois 'snowflake theory' of people.

You know, the bourgeois 'snowflake theory' says, no two people are exactly alike - with a lot of emphasis on the EXACTLY. It's bad enough to work with woman who think and act like 'snowflakes', but when some of them treat some of the other women like 'soot', it hurts all of the women including themselves. Only the boss will benefit by it because the women will remain divided as a class. That's why the 'snowflake theory' is bourgeois and that's why racism is bourgeois. Together they work double-overtime in the interests of ownership. The 'snowflake theory' is a very important part of the 'free world thesis' and the 'free world thesis' is just like a snowflake. It holds up very well until you touch it! That's why the 'snowflake theory' is almost impossible to refute!

"But even if, and that's a big 'if', even if all women were receiving a 'fair' wage equally, it wouldn't mean that all of them would be treated equally. The same 'worm' don't go as far if it is brought home to a 'nest' of six as it will if it is brought home to an empty nest - any bird can tell you that!

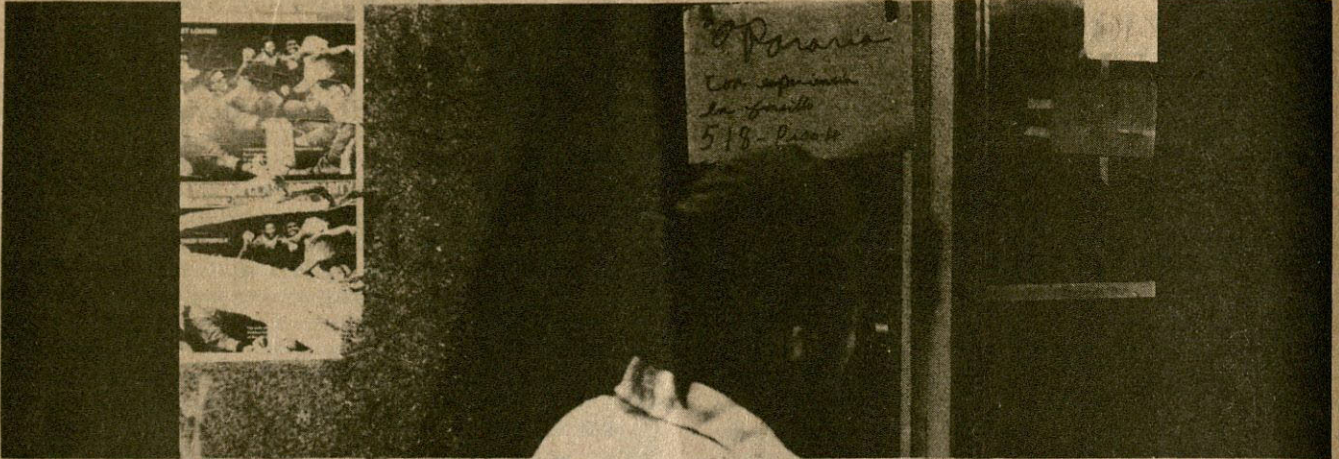
"In the 'free world', when women get short-changed by being denied equal pay for equal work, we are being economically abused not as individuals but as a class. When we get a job, the sickening abuse we suffer as women comes with the job free of charge!

"But the same people who are victims because their equal rights are denied, don't always stop being victims if they get their 'rights'. Getting their so called 'rights' is very often a way of guaranteeing that they will remain victims. If women are given 'equal rights' with men, but employers are not required to give women benefits or job security if they take a maternity leave, they can't be victims because they're being treated 'equal' to men. And if they're not victims, but they're still being victimized for being women, then they must be victimless victims! With the blessing of the 'free world thesis', that's a very easy thing for a woman to be!"

Noise from the lunch hour traffic was seeping into the luncheonette. The crowd in the luncheonette was beginning to thin out and a line was forming by the cashier who was sitting on a stool against a wall which had a multi-national selection of cigars. The cashiers hands were in rapid motion.

The driver was convinced beyond a reasonable doubt that he was sitting opposite a real live 'subversive' who was giving him the impression that the 'free world thesis' was an extremely pernicious doctrine. He thought about the woman in the back seat who was such an ardent supporter of the 'free world thesis' and he wondered if the woman opposite him was leaving something out of her analysis. He suspected that he was not getting a balanced opinion. He began to fidget with the coinchanger, becoming anxious about taking too long a lunch break. She didn't notice that her captured audience was getting ready to leave.

"Women aren't the only ones who are victimless victims. So are blacks and oppressed national minorities. When a law is finally passed, after years of being fought for, which is intended to blast wishful thinkers and affirm reality by allowing 'affirmative action' programs to exist, these gains will always be in danger of disappearing in a political shell game. Because they don't affirm the unreality of 'equal rights' in the 'free world' - they only affirm the reality of unequal rights in the real world. To believe that something like an 'affirmative action' program can be a form of reverse



discrimination - which is what that guy in California, Alan Bakke, is claiming - is a good example of a sickly deformed sense of 'equality'. It's also one of the most sinister interpretations of 'equal rights'!

"Of course women, as well as blacks and oppressed national minorities may be screaming, 'We're being cheated', as loud as they can possibly scream it. But they'll still be at a very big disadvantage because some people don't have an 'equal right' to have their voices heard as loudly as other people. You may have a very loud voice or a sickly weeze, but if you own or have controlling interest in a newspaper, television station or other form of mass media, you will be much better equipped not only to have your voice heard, but to make others listen! Of course, not everyone will be made to listen, or believe what you have to say.

"While 'free speech' may be one of the most sacred things in a bourgeois democracy, some people have a lot more of it - with the additional 'right' of having a much greater effect! And the effect which they want is for you to continue to allow them to have a greater effect. And the way that they will continue to have a greater effect is by keeping the property relations exactly the way they are. And bourgeois property relations are not some biblical or timeless truth. They are only a timeless truth for the duration of a bourgeois democracy. The bourgeois class owneth all of the means of producing wealth in society, the working class giveth their labor to produce the wealth which the bourgeoisie taketh away! So naturally, they will never let out one peep about what it would mean to change them. And don't even bother to ask. Because the unwritten guidelines for 'free speech' say that if you're curious enough to question the existing property relations, you are sure to be labled a "radical" or an "ultra-radical" or a "fanatic" or a communist! But even if you are advocating the revolutionary overthrow of the government and the transformation of existing property relations, you may not be in any immediate danger as long as what you are saying, which is an undeniable exercise of your 'right' to 'free speech', is not having an effect on the masses of people. That's what I meant before about 'subversive activity'. As soon as your 'free speech' is beginning to have an effect, that's when your 'free speech' will be reclassified as 'subversive activity'."

The woman was about to ask the driver a question when he stood up. At first, she wasn't sure if he stood up to leave, or if he stood up for dramatic effect. One of his hands remained palm down on the table top, covering his

check. The other hand was clutching the cigar box - holding it firmly, pressing it against his chest - striking a triumphant, almost Napoleonic pose. This attitude, which she was sure was unintentional, was enough for her to predict what he was about to say. "Another petty bourgeois soul misguided by well-being", she thought to herself.

What he said was not a reflection of the 'progressive tendency' which she thought she had detected earlier. The driver spoke in the misconceived generalities which would be accurately characterized as 'middle class' slogans. He conceded that a small minority were trapped by the weight of a system which really did keep them trapped. But what he went on to say, in so many words, was that he believed the promise of 'mobility' was a promise which had been and would be kept by a bourgeois democracy. For the vast majority of people, the system still worked and is worth preserving.

He finished what he was saying with an air of smug finality. Then, after a few friendly words, he paid his check and walked back to his cab. To her, he finished on a note of irony. She actually agreed with him that the vast majority of people in this country have 'mobility' but she disagreed about the direction in which their 'mobility' was taking them.

A few seconds later, she caught a glimpse of the clock on the rear wall of the luncheonette, and dashed back to work.

That evening, after she finished reading the book which had monopolized her interest for several days, she began to think in a self-critical way about the conversation that afternoon with the cab driver. She thought about what she'd said, and what she shouldn't have said, and she thought about what she wished the driver could have been convinced of. She realized that her argument about 'free speech' becoming 'subversive activity' was essentially incomplete because she hadn't explained the role of the state nor had she explained what real equality consisted of. But she also realized that with the cabbie, it would have been hopeless because there wasn't enough time to convince him - much less a sign of commitment on his part.

She began to write down some of the things which remained unsaid that afternoon and would have made her argument more complete. This had the effect of boosting her morale.

Some people who get a lot of parking tickets and nothing more than that, think that the state is there to 'regulate'. Regulate the speed of cars on highways, regulate the rate of crime, or should I say regulate the number of

crimes that are reported. Some other people believe that the state is there to protect 'equal rights' for all people equally. The state IS there to protect 'equal rights'. But since the right to do almost anything in a bourgeois democracy is given by, interpreted by, or on the premises of the bourgeoisie, there is obviously something grossly unequal between people which 'equal rights' covers up and overlooks. And that is class divisions! The editors of the 'free world thesis' obviously thought it would make a lot more sense if this division was left out!

In a bourgeois democracy, it is claimed that the state exists to protect people - that our 'equal rights' are guaranteed by the police, the legal system and the rest of the bureaucracy. But 'equal rights' are really a means to conceal bourgeois rights - so the state is really there to protect 'bourgeois right'. By protecting all of the 'rights' the bourgeoisie have - like the 'right' to own the factories, the mines, the land and raw materials, as well as the 'right' of the bourgeoisie to take away the wealth which the working-class produces - the state is also the means to protect the unequal distribution of wealth which is an automatic result of 'bourgeois rights' in a capitalist society.

Of course the bourgeoisie would much rather call them 'equal rights'. After all, the 'right' to maintain the unequal distribution of wealth is a 'right' which all of the bourgeoisie have equally! But the unequal distribution of wealth is not a static thing. In a bourgeois democracy, the tug of war between the two classes never stops! And every inch of ground gained by progressive democratic demands has a revolutionary potential! People are becoming better organized and more unified and they are gaining knowledge which only comes out of class struggle. All progressive demands for democratic rights are bound to put a greater and greater strain on the bourgeoisie - because democratic demands in a bourgeois democracy slowly drain the life blood of the bourgeoisie away. This greater demand may force the bourgeoisie to give up a little bit more of their wealth to insure their own survival but it will also force them to take a tighter and tighter grip on what's left - with whatever strength remains. That's when democratic demands will have to be louder and even more effective. As long as it remains a bourgeois democracy, there will always be demands which are more and more desperately needed. Because as long as property relations remain the same, they will continue to have a tourniquette effect and hold back the flow of the life blood of the entire society. Things may improve by a degree or two temporarily, but there will always be the incurable tendency to get worse.

We shouldn't be foolish enough to have faith in bourgeois politicians. A bourgeois politician cannot put an end to bourgeois oppression even if he or she wanted to. No more so than a pear can put an end to the fact that it tastes like a pear. The taste of the pear is in the nature of the pear, just like bourgeois oppression is in the nature of bourgeois property relations. There may be better or worse tasting pears but there are no pears which taste like apples. But you can always close your eyes and hold your nose and pretend that a pear is an apple and that's what the bourgeoisie hope you will do. Close your eyes and pretend that bourgeois oppression and imperialist aggression does not exist. If you believe that, then the transformation of reality into unreality will be complete, and the people who believe it will no longer be people, they will be POD's!

And we can't forget that the bourgeoisie are forced to dig in their heels and tighten their grip at home because they are losing their grip in places all over the world - wherever people are fighting against imperialism and national oppression.

The bourgeoisie 'instinctively' tighten their grip whenever they sense danger. If the pressure is too great for them to give in, and giving in would only put them deeper into crisis, history has proven that they will 'instinctively' plan and prepare for an imperialist war as one possible 'solution' to ease the strain and provide a vital economic transfusion. Another 'solution' is to take a death grip on what's left! 'Order' becomes the catchword of the day for the bourgeoisie. "Democracy is being threatened by undemocratic forces", will be the panic-stricken cry. And while in times of 'health', all the reactionaries who burn crosses, patrol borders and form vigilante groups, are frowned upon by the state, in times of crisis the state is willing to teach them and equip them to do a better job! And that's because ultimately these reactionaries work in the interest of preserving bourgeois property relations. Too many people have been brainwashed by the all time favorite bourgeois ruse which says that fascism and communism are the same! It's perfectly clear why the bourgeoisie can't stand communism. But if the bourgeoisie think that fascism is such a disgusting thing, why aren't they worried about losing some of their favorite clients or insulting some of their best friends?!

Until there's a revolutionary transformation of bourgeois property relations, 'equal rights' will never be more than a dense shadow of real equality. Only a bourgeois democracy gives people 'equal rights' which allow them to remain victims and then pretends that there is no such thing as a victim with 'equal rights'. And if you don't have a job, having your 'equal rights' becomes an even greater mockery of having 'rights'.

Under socialism, where the means of producing wealth are collectively owned by the entire society, not only will people have the 'right' to work, but there will be enough jobs to go along with it! A worker will still be paid according to his or her labor, for some period of time, anyway - which means that 'right' will continue to resemble 'bourgeois right' since equal pay for equal work will remain an unequal right for people with unequal need. But the oppressive weight of bourgeois 'right' under bourgeois property relations will be lifted, because workers will get back from society ALL of the wealth they produce in one form or another - without having to make an involuntary contribution to the bosses' private profit margin.

The distant goal of a socialist society will be to eliminate all 'bourgeois right' to treat people equally - when treating people equally means ignoring unequal need. This will not be fully achieved under socialism until the constraining effect of the division of labor has been melted away by the flow of wealth in a co-operative society. 'From each according to ability - to each according to need' - that's as far away from 'bourgeois right' as you can possibly get. And it's as close to equal rights as you'll ever need to be! This will be the guideline for co-operation and equality in a communist society where there will be no need for 'public relations' about the 'free world thesis' because propaganda for 'private enterprise' will be a thing of the distant past!

URBAN
CLEARWAY
Monday to Friday
8 AM 4.30 PM
9.30

WORKERS KILL SEPT 1968
OCCASIONAL

Belfast, Ireland (1977)