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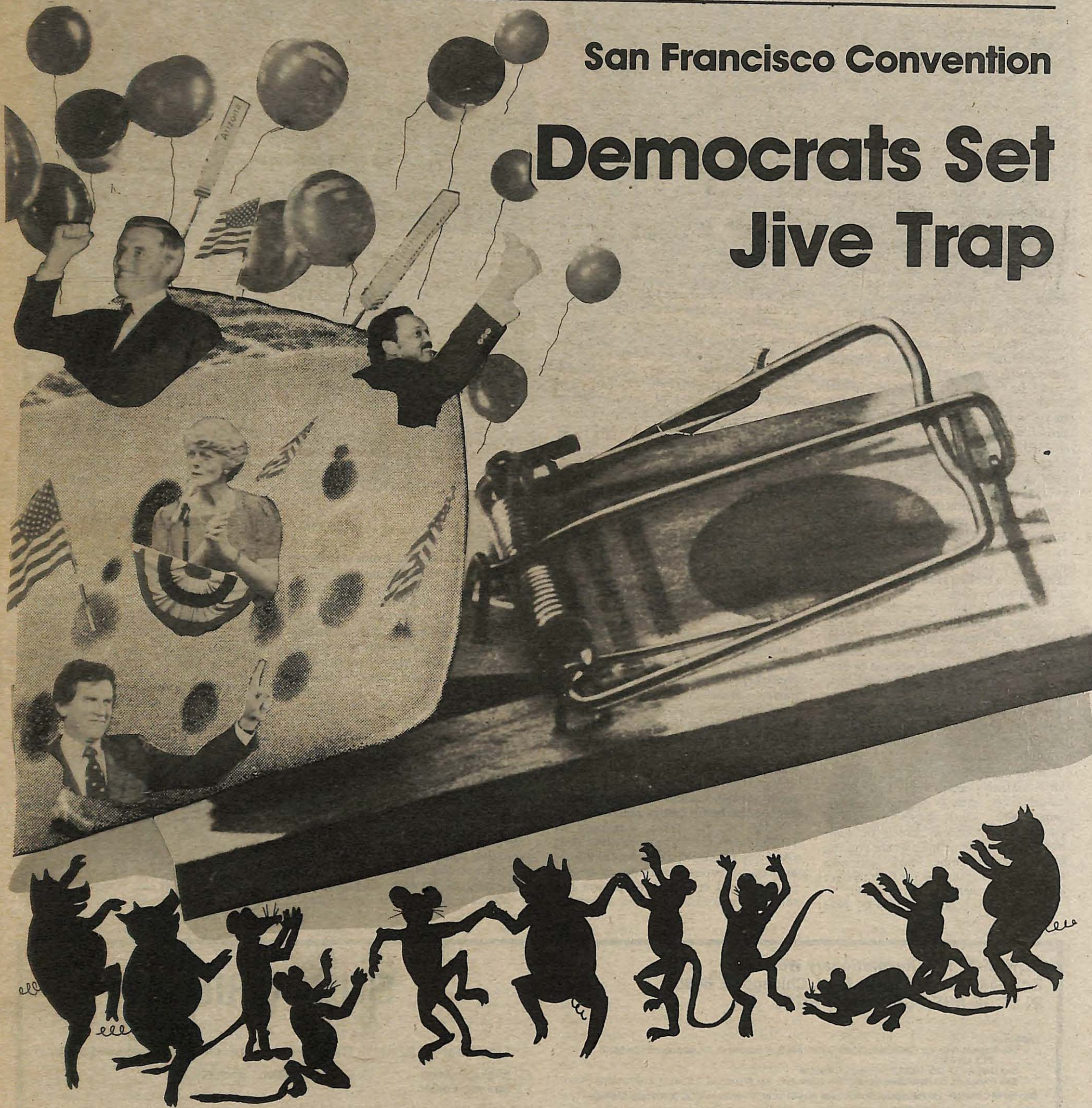
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San Francisco Convention

Democrats Set Jive Trap



A trap has been baited.

Very much a part of the Democrats' show this week are the events to take place out on the San Francisco streets. It promises to be one of the most massive and diverse — yet most controlled — series of demonstrations, counter-demonstrations, conferences, "alternate" conventions, and other "outside" political activities in recent memory. At last count there were thirty-five different actions planned, including: the entire spectrum of the U.S. "left" from the pro-U.S. social democrats to the pro-Soviet revisionists; the Freeze; the anti-nuke movement; the women's movement; the opposition to U.S. aggression in Central America; draft resisters; gays; environmentalists, and others.

A real symbol of the freedom and democracy of the American political

system is the so-called "protest ghetto," a fenced-in area a block or so from Moscone Center, site of the Convention, where legal protests are "allowed." In order to get a permit to demonstrate inside this fence, groups have first of all had to go through investigations and grillings by the San Francisco Police Department and other authorities. And they have been pressured to follow the law as laid down for Convention protest, which includes such democratic niceties as having a high enough ratio of monitors to demonstrators, having the monitors agree to work with the police, and having groups of demonstrators agree to search their own ranks for "potential disrupters and violence-prone elements" and turn them over to the police.

Police presence outside the "protest ghetto" will also be high-profile. Author-

ities have publicized their plan to use, "if needed," a concrete barrier in front of the already fortress-like underground Moscone Center, like the barrier placed in front of the White House; there will be, they say, a cop on every downtown block "to scare off the crazies." Does all this mean that the Democrats and the bourgeoisie as a whole are opposed to all these demonstrations? This is not the case. The scene as a whole is rather welcomed by the authorities.

Indeed, this question was an important part of the terms of debate in the leading circles of the Democrats in April 1983 when the decision was made to come to San Francisco. One side of the debate was characterized sharply by Coleman Young of Detroit: "San Francisco is one of the most volatile cities in the nation. You have all kinds of isms and schisms in the

streets. I think it's an invitation to disaster. There will be blood in the streets." Young and some other Black mayors argued that the Convention should go to a city with a large Black population and especially one with a Black mayor, in order to give a boost to the effort to draw Black people into the electoral arena.

But clearly, in the end, the isms and schisms became an argument *for*, and not against, San Francisco. The atmosphere created has been most appropriate to the pitch for "democracy in action": "pluralism" at its most lively, where every cause has a soapbox, and everybody has their say. Well, not *everybody*. But we'll talk about *that* in a minute. The point here is to get a whiff of the bourgeoisie's positive exuberance at the scene outside the Convention, as in this from *San Fran-*

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Where Nukes + Motherhood Makes "History"

So now we have it. After weeks of "contemplation" and mock suspense, Mondale has chosen his running mate. The Vice-Presidential nominee is the Congressional representative from the 9th District, Queens, New York; in other words, we have a politician from Archie Bunkerland — known as the home of stable ethnics, coarse racism, cherished property values and equally cherished "traditional values."

In political terms, the candidate embodies the conventional white bread of the Democratic Party mainstream: proto-New Deal rhetoric about saving "entitlement programs" in keeping with an urban constituency. A theme of "nonabrasive" competence, the work ethic, and calm family values in keeping with the Democratic attempt to reap fears over the accelerating international dangers of the last "Reagan-led" years. A deeply religious character — "I am a Catholic and I accept the teachings of my faith." And a record as a crusading "pro-victim D.A." and a "tough law-and-order candidate" for Congress.

In the press the operative words describing Mondale's running mate have been "realistic," and above all "a compromiser with no chip on the shoulder," or as *Ms.* magazine reported, "the sort of pragmatic politician that the voting populace — and the men in the back rooms — could find most palatable." In fact, the observation that this candidate is a long-standing protégée of the bulbous House Majority leader from Boston pretty much captures the nature of this political ticket: the "team" will be a tandem of a Hubert Humphrey clone and a Tip O'Neill clone.

Ah, but all this is not the point as everyone knows...because this vice-presidential nominee is a woman, Congresswoman Geraldine Ferraro. And this novelty, apparently, is supposed to electrify the bourgeois political arena. Tip O'Neill himself, the proud mentor, ran down the pluses "for the ticket" — she's Catholic, she's Italian ethnic, she's a mother, she's a crusading anticrime D.A. — and oh yes, she's eminently qualified.

In the crude reactionary symbolism of an American election year, Reagan obviously has already appropriated the small-town, "little guy's" vision of paradise: with orderly streets of white houses and white people, where you can own your own home, know your own neighbors and send your sons off to nuke the disorderly elements of the world.

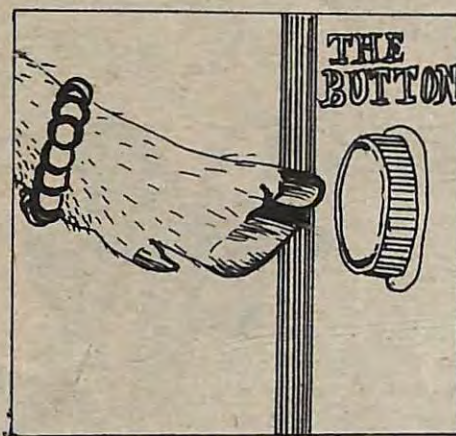
For the Democrats as a whole, 1984

has become, among other things, the year of enfranchisement, where they have taken as their mission trumpeting the "American Dream" of a democracy systematically expanding to include the formerly marginal and disenfranchised. A Black presidential bid, a load of new Black voters, and now — Ferraro. Here you have the classic all-American rags-to-riches story: the poverty-stricken daughter of Italian immigrants, who through scholarships, hard work and a fortuitous marriage to a wealthy man, finagled her way into power.

Yet, the more substantive issues were soon to be delineated. Hardly had the announcement of an "historic first," a woman nominee, hit the airwaves than Republicans answered by flailing away at Ferraro's supposed Achilles' heel: her lack of international experience. Next to George Bush, said one Republican Congresswoman as she was beamed nationwide, Ferraro's experience in international affairs simply cannot compare. By the evening of her nomination announcement, *Nightline* had arranged for the questioning to become explicit. Pat Buchanan, the kind of foam-mouthed reactionary they wheel to microphones for a specific purpose, got down to basics: the question, he said, is does she have the ability to lead the United States, "if necessary in a global conflict against the Soviet Union." Again and again he returned to the point — *this is the crucial "qualification."*

What answer does Geraldine Ferraro herself give to any challenge to her ability to step into the role as commander-in-chief during World War 3. Twofold.

First, anticipating this very question, the newspapers of Thursday morning (the day of Mondale's announcement) were filled with Ferraro's first public statement on foreign policy. As the *New York Times* reported, the candidate, "emphasizing a firm stance toward the Soviets...said, 'We will resolutely oppose the tyranny of the Soviet Union. A state that strangles the people of Poland, carpet bombs villages and mountains of Afghanistan and stifles the religious freedom of its own people must be dealt only with great sureness.... A strong and ready military establishment is certainly key to a successful foreign policy.'" In her criticism of the Reagan approach to foreign policy she zeroes in on the need to wield "economic might" more skillfully as "our greatest advantage over the Soviets" and criticized the present administration for not sustaining arms talks



comes home. To me that is the most wonderful thing." Translated into politics, it means an assertion that her traditional femininity gives her an instinctive, even emotional insight into issues of life and death. Again *Ms.* magazine reports: "Last year when Speaker O'Neill pushed through legislation allowing the Marines to stay in Lebanon for 18 months, Ferraro, his protégée, was not with him. Her son was 19 at the time, and she'd been to Beirut and talked with the young Marines. 'I'm a mother and I saw those kids over there,' Ferraro says intensely. 'When we had the debate...I said, "Mr. Speaker, I just can't."'"

Such is the substance of classic bourgeois demagoguery, simultaneously promoting the most servile worship of the oppressive roles forced onto women by this society, and then twisting that worship into the illusion that a mother's hand, "just a heartbeat from the helm" of an imperialist bloc cruising toward world war, might just make "a real difference"!

This is the kind of drivel we are going to be deluged with — concentrated in Gloria Steinem's immediate endorsement: "This time we have seen it is not business as usual!" Yes, "this time" we might have a truly "historic first," outdoing even the reactionary pinnacles achieved by Golda Meir, Margaret Thatcher and Indira Gandhi... "this time" we might have a woman standing in the wings of the filthiest empire in history as it careens toward the most brutal crimes imaginable. Real progress. □

alongside the swagger of that cherished "military establishment." Ferraro thinks the U.S. should go faster on *both tracks*. Stroking another key touchstone of American foreign policy, the candidate went on to "reaffirm that support for Israel is a moral issue." In short, on the crucial qualification for U.S. leadership in the immediate prewar period — that is, in dealing with the Soviet Union — the candidate insists she suffers from no confusion.

On the second aspect to this same crucial question of these times — whether the new leadership can successfully swing large sections of the American population to the tasks at hand — Ferraro claims a unique qualification (and here the most reactionary worship of the sacred Family and traditional Womanhood bubbles out in all its glory). You see, Geraldine Ferraro is a mother, too. A glowing *Ms.* magazine report quotes Ferraro saying: "I look at my daughters with their father, and I can't tell you what it does to me. I so love to see my son with his father when he

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ANATOMY OF A CRISIS: THE RESCUE OF THE CONTINENTAL BANK

BANK



For a few days in May of this year, the world was witness to — or at least became cognizant of — one of the most extraordinary (and desperate) rescue operations in financial history. Indeed, for a few days in May, the international financial system faced one of its most severe trials to date. The proximate cause of all of this was the near-collapse of the Continental Illinois Bank, the eighth largest bank in the United States. By the end of March it was revealed that the "value" of Continental's nonperforming loans was equal to over 130 percent of its available capital resources. In a few weeks, a crisis of confidence developed with such unexpected ferocity that only the most concerted action by the Federal Reserve Bank could avert what would have been the most massive run ever on a U.S. bank.

As has been customary in the wake of such episodes, government officials and banking spokesmen seized upon the momentary passing of the Continental crisis as proof of the financial system's resilience and durability. Nothing could be further from the truth. Nor, for that matter, are high-level policy planners operating according to such assumptions. Some indication of the real depths of the financial crisis and the actual concern within the bourgeoisie can be found in a special issue of the *International Currency Review*. The *Review* comes out of London and has featured extensive analyses of the global debt crisis. It has also been a receptacle for "leaks" from high-ranking financial figures, both in and out of government, on both sides of the Atlantic. The message of the *Review* in its treatment of the Continental affair is unambiguous: things have deteriorated to the point that a generalized collapse is by no means out of the question.

Below are excerpts from that special issue. They are taken from the account of Continental's downfall and rescue, from the lead editorial, and from an article by a former Financial Secretary to the Treasury in Great Britain.

By way of background and overview, a few important observations should be made: (1) The notion that a sustained U.S. economic recovery would somehow get banks over the hump of "problem" loans has proven to be utterly fanciful. (2) The accumulation of Third World debt, much of which is, for all practical purposes, unpayable, has reached staggering proportions. As is pointed out, the nine largest banks in the U.S. now have over twice their capital lent out in South America alone. One tired refrain from liberals and social democrats is that a Marshall Plan for the Third World is what is needed... to which one was appropriately replied, "That's precisely what's been going on over the last eight years!" (3) The massive (and largely military-related) deficit-financing requirements of the U.S. government are creating incredible strains within the world financial structure. (4) The highly integrated and intertwined character of that structure is at once a source of strength — allowing for bail-outs, renegotiation of debt, and so forth — and an Achilles' heel — pulling all the players and institutions into the vortex of crisis — for world imperialism.

"The most startling feature of the Continental Illinois crisis which, appropriately enough, came to a head as this special banking crisis issue was being

prepared, was the suddenness with which it erupted — and the quite extraordinary steps which had to be taken by the U.S. authorities to head off a generalised financial collapse....

"Continental Bank had, of course, experienced a massive erosion of confidence following the Penn Square fiasco — but had appeared to ride out that particular storm. By the beginning of 1984, the bank was widely considered to be, if not fully recovered, at least convalescent. The revelation that, at the end of March this year, Continental Bank had \$2.3 billion of non-performing loans on its books — equivalent to 7.7% of its total loan portfolio, and well in excess of its stated \$1.8 billion of stockholders' equity — certainly did nothing to enhance the bank's reputation. Nevertheless, the conventional wisdom in the financial markets remained that most of the bank's problem loans would be collectable in the context of a sustained US economic recovery.

"The terminal damage inflicted on Continental Bank occurred during the two weeks ending on 18 May — when a devastating run took place which ruptured the liabilities side of the bank's balance sheet. During this period, the secondary market in Continental's Certificates of Deposit collapsed; and there was a massive run-off of maturing deposits, as money market fund managers, corporate treasurers and other banks decided collectively to eliminate their exposure to an institution which seemed to be the subject of increasingly alarming rumours. In the space of a mere ten days, Continental suffered deposit losses of no less than \$6 billion — \$2.5 billion of which was incurred via its London euromarket operation. The total loss represented more than 20% of the institution's deposit liabilities.

"The devastation of Continental's funding base over a few day's trading would, by itself, have brought about the largest bank failure ever to have occurred in financial history — but for an unprecedented rescue package put together by the US authorities. The hair-raising chronology of official initiatives aimed at staving off what seemed likely to become a generalised financial crash, was as follows:

"• On 10 May, the Comptroller of the Currency, Mr Todd Conover, tried somewhat clumsily to quash rumours of Continental Bank's imminent collapse, which had arisen as a result of reports that a

Japanese institution had been approached with a view to taking over Continental. The Comptroller stated that his agency was 'not aware of any significant change in the bank's operations as reflected in its published financial statement that would serve as a basis for these rumours'. Since the veracity of regulatory officials is, of course, never taken for granted by the financial markets, this statement proved predictably counterproductive. Continental's share price immediately plunged to less than one-third of book value (demonstrating, incidentally, that commercial banks' publicised accounts are viewed as deceitful exercises in public relations), and the deposit losses gathered momentum.

"• By 11 May, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago had been compelled to extend some \$4.0 billion of liquidity assistance to Continental Illinois; yet even this support was hopelessly inadequate to deal with the scale of the crisis. The mere knowledge that the Federal Reserve was prepared to act as lender-of-last resort proved insufficient to stem the collapse of confidence.

"• At the instigation of the US Federal Reserve System, a 16-bank group led by Morgan Guaranty Trust Company announced on 14 May, following frantic meetings and telephone conversations over the preceding weekend, that it had formed a \$4.5 billion safety net for Continental Bank, which would enable the institution to meet its commitments as they fell due....

"Against this background, the *Wall Street Journal* immediately responded with the observation that 'clearly, the \$4.5 billion line of credit has kept Continental afloat for now'; but the market's reaction was so skeptical that the run on Continental Bank accelerated, and the share price declined even further. In other words, the biggest support operation in US financial history was manifestly proving quite insufficient to prevent the country's eighth largest bank from going to the wall. Furthermore, the widening gap between commercial bank Certificates of Deposit and Treasury bill rates, together with plummeting bank share prices, was demonstrating beyond any remaining doubt that the entire US banking system was threatened.

"• Faced with what had clearly become a desperate situation, the US authorities concocted a fresh package of initiatives on 17 May — which amounted, *inter alia*, to an open-ended commitment to support

Continental Bank, ostensibly pending a long-term solution to the crisis. Specifically, the following measures were announced:

"1 The 16-bank group led by Morgan Guaranty Trust Company was expanded to take in a total of 24 banks; while the standby facility was increased from a total value of \$4.5 billion to \$5.3 billion. This figure was subsequently increased to \$5.5 billion, a few hours later.

"2 The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), together with a number of major institutions, provided a \$2 billion capital infusion for the bank, in the form of subordinated note purchases — the FDIC taking the lion's share of \$1.5 billion — the purpose of participation by other (smaller) banks having been to provide a fig leaf, to cover up the extent of the official rescue operation.

"3 The FDIC gave an unprecedented undertaking to the effect that 'in any arrangements that may be necessary to achieve a permanent solution, all depositors and other general creditors of the bank will be fully protected, and service to the bank's customers will not be interrupted'....

"4 The Federal Reserve System undertook to meet any extraordinary liquidity requirements arising at Continental Bank, pending the restoration of normal market funding. Billions of dollars have been injected into the bank."

"It was not Continental Bank which was the object of the Federal Reserve's belatedly coordinated rescue response, but the US domestic banking system and thus, by obvious extension, the entire financial system of the Western world. The values of other vulnerable and over-exposed institutions' shares plummeted; Certificates of Deposit at other major banks were cashed in and exchanged for Treasury Bills, with immediate consequences for the differential between bank paper and US Treasury securities; and it need hardly be said that the heavy reliance of Continental's Chicago institution on funding via footloose euromarket resources at the London institution of the bank, had drawn the Bank of England into the epicentre of the storm. More generally, the bank's huge portfolio of non-performing loans, and its heavy exposure to delinquent sovereign borrowers in Latin America, can hardly have alleviated the anxieties of the financial

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One Swamp, Many Agendas

There is the hard-sell — "...if the Reagan foreign policy is not stopped... we will reach a point of no return, a point where NUCLEAR WAR WILL BECOME INEVITABLE"; so says the Communist Party, USA, and the emphasis is all theirs. There is the soft-sell — praise for the existence of "a distinct realism within the Left on what we can do in American political life"; so says Michael Harrington, co-chair of the Democratic Socialists of America. There are numerous quasi-reluctant pitches as well. Whatever the specific approach, however, the packaging is basically the same — this slightly shopworn, late-model Imperial Bureaucrat is the best deal you can get, folks, so come on down, way down, to Democrat City and pick up on (and march behind) Walter Mondale. But really, would you buy a used warhorse from the Left?

While the primary elections featured all these socialists, Marxists and communists trading on the freedom train of Jesse Jackson, the finals will find them attempting to make use of the gray, plodding image of the Democratic Party's scheduled standard-bearer. In contrast to Ronald Reagan, Mondale's appeal for the U.S. ruling class rests on the *appearance* that nothing too drastic could happen while *this* guy is president. Irwin Silber from Line of March, which plays the role of the CP's left flank, recently wrote that "A Mondale administration might turn out to be somewhat more restrained in the implementation of imperialist policy, certainly much more receptive to the concerns of the most privileged sectors of the working class, and probably more sensitive to the considerations of social peace in trying to deal with the concerns of constituencies the Reagan administration has written off."

Likewise, the Communist Workers Party (CWP), another force that is *quite* active in the go-slow-with-the-Democrats field. CWP guru, Jerry Tung, wrote in their newspaper last March that they would support Mondale against Reagan because "the danger of war, the threat of hunger, or of deprivation, would not be as *extreme*." (Emphasis CWP) This version of Mondale moderation is supposedly based on an "analysis" that Reagan represents one section of the bourgeoisie that goes for quick hit and brute force-type solutions, while Mondale is the candidate of the "permanent establishment" advocating 20-year strategies and so forth.

It is necessary to remind our Marxists that the U.S. imperialist bourgeoisie is choosing a chief executive for the class as a whole, not a section leader. What's more, both Mondale and Reagan have the same basic strategic viewpoint for fighting and winning (they hope) World War 3. And when it comes to both quick hits and brute force, Walter Mondale's performance in the administration of the Delta Blue Light Charlie's Angels Hostage Rescue Mission in Iran, the formation of the Rapid Deployment Force and the agreement to deploy Pershing and cruise missiles in Western Europe, just to name a few items, can rank up there with any cowboy.

Tung seems to have forgotten the quick hit performed on five of his former colleagues in Greensboro, North Carolina, by Nazi-Klan political police-types led by an admitted federal agent. And slow-but-steady Mondale was up to his ears in political police matters for the Carter administration, declaring in an interview in 1977: "The president doesn't have time to sort these issues out. They cut across agency lines. They involve Congressional relations. So I've been working with the intelligence community, with the executive branch, with leaders on the Hill, to see how we can sort this out in a way that's the most responsible. That's something I've assumed on my own, and have taken — and will take — a good deal of time." Only last fall, a CWP Central Committee member stated at a forum in the Bay Area that they could never support Mondale because the Carter/Mondale administration had been responsible for the deaths of their comrades. However, in the twisted logic of the CWP, this rapid turn about in their posi-

tion could perhaps just be added to their "evidence" — things moved just too fast under Reagan.

Implicit in these projected scenarios, and explicitly stated in some quarters, is the view that climbing aboard the Mondale bandwagon will somehow "buy time" for the Left — the missing link between "support the lesser evil" and "build our movement." That is, backing slow-but-steady Mondale will buy some time for the movement to get slowly but steadily larger. As usual, the "realists" are out in that idealist ozone they try to pass off as Marxist analysis. There is no separate timetable for Mondale than for Reagan. World events will compel war activity. The U.S. imperialist ruling class does not have to and indeed *cannot* wait for the "public" to arrive at some mythical level of war consciousness before it goes to war — and the basic weaponry, etc., is already in place. In other words, it is very possible that world war could break out during the next presidential term no matter who is elected — and only revolution can prevent it.

However, the "realistic" plans of the Left are in a very different direction from revolution — revolution which opposes imperialism, that is. Of course, they would be the first to tell you that they are not simply going All The Way With Mister Grey — no siree. They are much more "independent" than that. Let us not forget the continuation of Jesse Jackson's rainbow coalition — a prospect that all these forces deem of the utmost importance. You see, Mondale being the obvious hack that he is, would never be able to *really* expose the *real* problem of Reagan and "Reaganism" — nor would he "build our movement," either. But Jesse's anti-Reaganism is "independent" of that tired, old Democratic Party machine, and thus it also provides a vehicle for movement expansion. And then, some of the Left is even "independently" supporting Jesse, further sharpening up the essence of anti-Reaganism and so forth. What we have here, in other words, is a loyal opposition pressuring the Jesse Jackson forces, who will then be a loyal opposition pressuring the Mondale forces, who, given what at this time appears to be the likely result of the election, will be the loyal opposition pressuring Reagan (but only if all that other pressure makes them do it, of course). It would seem that loyal opposition, like matter, is infinitely divisible.

Of course, it is the "loyal" aspect of

this equation that is quite critical here, and the Left has put lots of emphasis on getting this message across. One important form this has taken in the Bay Area in the period leading up to the convention has involved constant reminders that the theme in San Francisco will be nothing like — horror of horrors — the '68 Democratic convention in Chicago. The "problem" with Chicago, the story goes, was that too many people were against working within the system — and wanted to tear the whole thing up. A quite *disloyal* opposition. What a problem... for the bourgeoisie. And also for the social chauvinists. Or, as Michael Harrington of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) put it in the *New York Times* recently, "...when I criticize American foreign policy, I do that in the name of the national security of the United States... (in the late '60s) it would have been difficult."

Such loyalty is an important feature of not only the social democrats but the Left overall — albeit it for different reasons and in the service of different, and already sharply contending, strategies. For the gradualism of their go-slow-with-Mondale approach today is, in fact, a gathering of bargaining chips in preparation for their plans for power in the heavy times ahead — when they each hope the U.S. ruling class, or a significant section of it, will look to unity with their trend as the only way to maintain the American empire — or cut its losses. And they are all, in one form or another, already making their offers to the imperialists today.

The social democrats are quite explicit about what they see coming, and what they hope their role will be. For example, the above mentioned *New York Times* article titled "Voices From the Left" featured a dialogue between Harrington and Irving Howe, another noted social democrat. Howe characterized the current period as "an interesting stage where the Left has begun to do programmatic work in preparation for what we expect, or hope, will be the next surge forward of American liberalism. That programmatic work... isn't by any means yet complete, but I think we are living through a phase something like that of the intellectual preparation before the New Deal." The social democrats most definitely see severe economic crisis just a shot away, so to speak (Harrington projects 1985 or '86 in this article), and figure that the bourgeoisie may be willing to turn to their ideas — à la FDR — and even themselves

to run the show. In other words, it is the social democrats' historic alliance with the imperialists, or at least sections of them, being dreamed of here — a scenario made even more interesting by the DSA's ties to various imperialist parties in Western Europe. They are also well aware of what the New Deal was itself preparation for. Or, as Howe puts it in another part of the article, the importance of dealing with foreign policy in terms of "the national security (is) because you recognize that there is a totalitarian enemy out there which needed to be met." How committed to "peace" these social democrats are! At any rate, this is the hidden agenda that lurks behind their current efforts to ingratiate themselves with sections of the Democratic Party, and move to gain certain positions within it, all the while contending especially with pro-Soviet revisionism (through participation in peace coalitions, through Soviet-baiting campaigns like the recent effort to "prove" the guilt of the Rosenbergs, etc.) for influence over sections of the petty bourgeoisie and more bourgeoisified workers.

Of course, the pro-Soviet revisionists headed up by the CPUSA are operating like crazy on much the same turf. What is different is that they are pursuing the "historic compromise" strategy, seeking to position themselves for an alliance with a section of the U.S. bourgeoisie, which, in a drastically altered world situation would see it in their own national interest to pursue a course more favorable to the global interests of the Soviet bloc. They, too, are gearing up for heavy times ahead. In particular, they view these "turn around" elections, and their "anti-Reagan front" that goes along with it, as an opportunity to make a significant advance in their angling for influence among the bourgeoisie. Adopting their "three-legged stool" approach, they are already quite actively involved in the official Mondale activity, Jackson's rainbow coalition and in running their own Mondale: Gus Hall (who not only has the same bureaucratic and boring style, but comes out of the same milieu in Minnesota). They are currently making an especially big deal about their own candidates, and intensifying efforts to get on the ballot in a number of states. The CP apparently sees a chance to pick up some chips for the future from among those unable to stay awake with Mondale, for

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"This is a provocative reinterpretation of Marx and Lenin from a viewpoint opposed to capitalism and imperialism and also opposed to what it calls the 'social-imperialism' of the Soviet Union. It is therefore worth reading as an unusual point of view, rigorously presented."

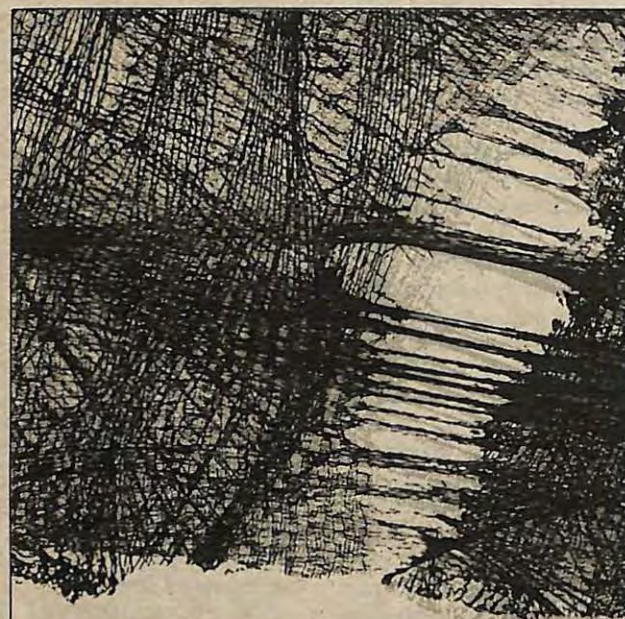
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author of *A People's History of the United States*

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Raymond Lotta with Frank Shannon

Vol. 1

CLASH BREAK-UP POSES IMPORTANT POLITICAL QUESTIONS ON CULTURE AND REVOLUTION

The Clash represented by far the best in practice of the left upsurge that occurred in Britain and the U.S. among artists during the late seventies to the early eighties. They were, first and foremost, a truly great rock band. They also unleashed an advanced audience as no one else, with the exception of Bob Marley, had done for a decade or more. They had a tremendous impact on the struggle among artists, first and foremost the musicians.

Perhaps their greatest contribution was that they allied themselves openly with the "left" and they did so in a truly pathbreaking way. They were revolutionaries, they said.

Around six months ago, Mick Jones, guitar player and co-writer with Joe Strummer of much of the band's material, was fired from the band. Regular *RW* readers in the U.S. are no doubt aware of the fact that all this occurred on a not too friendly basis, to say the least.

Our party wishes Joe Strummer and his "new" Clash well, and we also wish the same for Mick Jones. We reprint the following interview with Joe Strummer only because we believe, given the role of The Clash described above, that there are important political questions involved for all revolutionaries and especially for revolutionary artists.

All revolutionaries, and especially revolutionary artists, are encouraged to correspond with the *RW* concerning their views.

JOE STRUMMER INTERVIEW BY "REVOLUTION ROCK," April 2, 1984*

Interviewer: Miller Francis, DJ, WRFG Atlanta (89.3 FM)

(Aired in its entirety on "Leather Jacket," 5:30-8:00 p.m. & "Revolution Rock," 8:00-10:00 p.m.)

* Copyright 1984 by Miller Francis

Revolution Rock: We're here talking to Joe Strummer with The Clash, and they're back playing Atlanta after about two years. And a lot's happened since The Clash played here two years ago, a lot has changed in the world and a lot has changed with The Clash. Some people would say, and I would agree with them, that the world is two years closer to World War 3; and of course it's 1984. And I wondered if you would like to sort of jump into things from that angle.

Joe Strummer: Yeah, I'm glad to be here talking to you, really. We got a Clash, a different Clash this time, I mean, we've had to in the past two years... we've really gone through it really in the past two years. I'd just like to speak about Mick Jones a bit here, huh? Okay?

Revolution Rock: Sure. I would have asked you.

Joe Strummer: Yeah. The thing is about

Mick is that in the last two years I spent a lot of time arguing with him, trying to convince him that... all I really wanted to convince Mick was that we weren't ripping him off and that he should really work with us. 'Cause we had a bit of a problem, like Mick began to feel that we were doing him over somehow. You see, we wanted to get equal shares in The Clash, you know what I mean, instead of a Jagger/Richards-type syndrome where they get the lion's share of monies because they write the songs. And they get a lion's share of the monies and the other three are sort of reduced to hired hands almost. You know, we wanted to put it in a more socialistic way, like Kosmo is part of this team, Bernie Rhodes is part of this team. We were trying to get it equal around and Mick — I was arguing with Mick a lot about he felt that it was wrong, because me and him, me and him did most of the writing, that we should get more dough for it. And we could never agree on this. Like I started to put this into effect when I changed the by-line from Strummer/Jones as it is on the first two LPs and it changes to Clash at about *London Calling*. And what I was trying to do there was an attempt to make it a freer creative situation. I felt that it would be artistically stronger to have everybody feel that they could throw in their bit, and I didn't want any kind of sordid-like arguing interfering with what I considered was to be a really high part of the process, like writing material or playing music together. And Mick never agreed with this. And we spent the last two years really trying to get him to think along the lines that the rest of us... for some reason the rest of us could all agree on methods, like that we had to do a lot of touring, that we had to prepare more for records rather than make them up in the studio. Just little things like that.

And I think Mick was trying to tell me that he wanted out of the group. I always wanted to be in the situation where you can really tell your buddy what you really thought — let's say, that song is terrible or that guitar line is appalling, you know? And I wanted it to be free communication without being took personally. And that went wrong about two years ago. If I told Mick that I didn't think he could produce, for example, he wouldn't speak to me for six weeks. I mean, he took it personally and I was doing him a favor, I was doing him a favor, I was telling him the truth. And instead of realizing that I was his friend and therefore I wasn't brunting him around, he took it really personally. And once you get to that stage, I could find no way out of that, you know. There was either two choices: there was either knock the whole thing on the head there and then, okay, or restructure and carry on. We felt we wanted to carry on because we want to see it through. It would be very difficult to just abandon

The Clash and say well, we tried and we failed, very difficult. None of us likes to fail, you know. And I would find it hard to really live, I don't know, with that constant thought. So it was either knock it on the head or restructure it, and to that end we got in some enthusiastic young guitar players who just want to get on with it, born in the punk times, and that's what we really do, we're starting all over again.

We want to discover what our culture was and is. I mean, we're white boys with guitars and drums. I feel like we've been culturally imperialistic over a lot of the past few years, like ripping off, imitating Black music rather than influencing, being influenced by it, you know, there's a difference. And I think we knew that difference instinctively at the time of "Police and Thieves." But since then, I think we forgot; we forgot what our sound was, certainly. And that's something I want to touch again — it really is like starting over. And I realize that everyone is confused in Atlanta; they think Mick's coming out with a group called The Clash, and we've got one, and Uncle Tom Cobbley and all are coming with a group called The Clash. But I think he's dumped that idea because he really doesn't want to get... he sees it as a lumber being in The Clash, you know. You're up for criticism, you're up for responsibility, you're up for political consciousness, you're up for doing things the hard way, really. I always felt that he saw being famous and being a pop star as it was in the '60s; I think he's still chasing a dream like that.

But to get back to your original question, which was...?

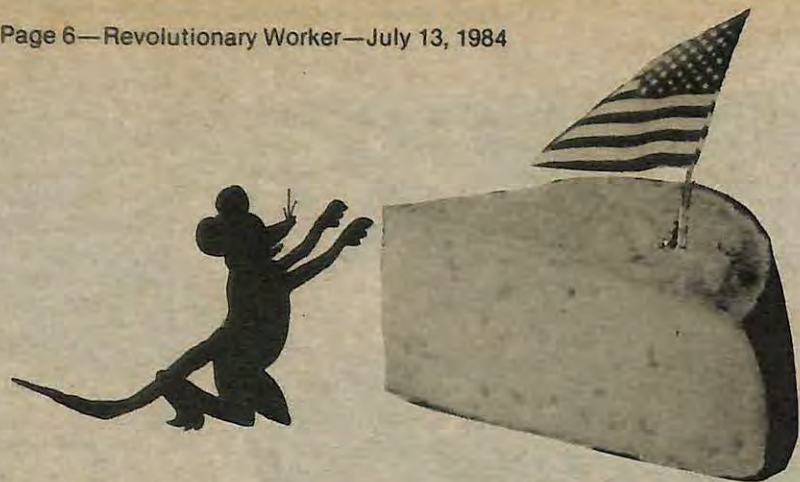
Revolution Rock: Two years closer to World War 3, and 1984. That's, of course, not at all unrelated to developments with The Clash, and that's the main thing that I want to talk about. But I was just trying to put it in a certain context.

Joe Strummer: Okay, yeah. I agree with you that we're two years nearer Armageddon, but perhaps we have to go real close in order to bring the pressure down to bear on the people who are trying to pretend it's not happening. I mean, I kind of know that to really think about nuclear war is almost, it's almost unthinkable. I mean, the average person in

the street, can he really take it on board, the full, the true and full horror of what it will be? Now I think it's very difficult but the nearer he comes, the more of a possibility it is; the pressure is coming down and I think it's helping really because, for example, in Britain we actually have a party that will unilaterally disarm, for the first time in our history — that's an election pledge of the Labor Party, to get rid of all the nuclear weapons in Britain. And that really is something for a right-wing country like Britain... even though they won't have a chance to get in until 1988, even if they get in then at all, it's still one step in some kind of a direction.

And the same vibe I get off the Gary Hart campaign in that, like George McGovern is a whole lot more sensible person than Reagan would ever be but he's treated like a joke. And when I saw that McGovern's campaign was being laughed off, I felt slightly depressed because Mondale, it seemed to be, was still going in the same negative direction; here comes Mondale with his clockwork campaign and all the money and how boring and predictable. Is he really that different from Reagan, you know, it was like, here we go again. And when someone like Gary Hart comes up unnoticed really... unpredictable, that's what... I'm not sure that Gary Hart would be any better than anybody else but just the fact that his popularity was unpredicted by the experts. Which still shows that there is some free will kicking out there. I'd begun to doubt that free will existed because of the way in Britain we just march from one right-wing decision to the next one, and it's all adding up to something really abominable that's destroying the country. I'd forgotten that, and I'd always felt like oh, the majority of the people will always go for the law and order vote and they want security and they don't care about nuclear war. It was always so depressing; I find it even sometimes hard to get enthusiasm or to really believe that anything could ever be any different. But a few things make me think that if we're gonna go down, we might go down fighting.

Revolution Rock: Well, you just raised a number of pretty complicated questions
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Democrats Set Jive Trap

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cisco magazine:

"In 1968 a profound distrust of the American democratic system dominated opposition politics. In 1984, the major movements demonstrating at the DNC are dominated by a belief in, not opposition to, that system. . . . The huge rallies will not be confrontational demonstrations, as in the '60s, so much as entreaties — pleas almost — to the Democratic Party and to America to alter their political views. Organizers have committed themselves to staging peaceful demonstrations, and are cooperating with San Francisco police to assure they remain peaceful."

Here, not only is the Democrats' "come in to the voting booth" pitch to the masses sweetened with the signs of the street demonstrations, but it is also driven home with the message that even those who opposed them in the '60s are coming back to the system on their knees.

Trap

It adds up to an elaborately-set trap. For what the "outsiders" will find when they get "inside" — the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow coalition — is nothing more or less than Walter Mondale. This Democrats' candidate-to-be is hardly even *pretending* to be a peace candidate. In office, Mondale vice-presided over the most drastic turn toward war preparations on the part of the U.S. since the last world conflict. Mondale proved himself as ideologically shrill as your average "Reaganite," responding to the Soviets' invasion of Afghanistan by exhorting: "If the Soviet lunge toward the most strategic oil-rich spot on earth (referring to the Persian Gulf — *ed.*) fails to unite us, what will?" Out of office, it was Walter who complained about Reagan's conduct on the 007 incident: "I think we should have been somewhat stronger in what we did." In substance and as a whole, Mondale's program is a war program, and its theme is patriotism and national unity. (Outside, a group called the "All-Species Coalition" plans to demonstrate "for the species which are not represented in the Convention." Considering the Mondale record and Democrats' likely program, we would assure the Coalition that at least two species will be more than adequately represented: pigs, and dinosaurs).

It may seem a staggering irony that the demonstrations, for the most part, aim to influence, for heaven's sake, *this*. An irony, but nonetheless a necessity for the imperialists. The bourgeoisie very much needs the masses of "outsiders" drawn into the electoral process at this time precisely because they are preparing for war and social upheavals in the near future. Leaders are anointed and the masses, so the imperialists hope, are to be trained for a time when there is certain to be great outrage and turmoil. Most important, and the indispensable bottom line in this training, is to see things through the prism of the "national interest," of "national security," that is, through the glass of American chauvinism.

In this light, the distance between the actions out on the streets and the proceedings inside the cavernous Moscone Center is a bit less staggering. Indeed, what has been created within the "protest ghetto" outside is overwhelmingly a spectrum of loyal opposition, while any group that dares step outside the sacred bounds of "national unity" to challenge both parties, or even more fundamentally the electoral sham itself, is threatened physically and violently by the authori-

ties.

And this should be noted well. For by doing this, the bourgeoisie has made crystal clear what they hate and *don't* want to see anywhere near their precious electoral circus. Above all, this should embolden those who hate their system to do precisely what the imperialists fear most, to go in and expose their sham and their trap.

Demonstrations

Two marches have been billed in the press as likely to have up to 100,000 people, the "We can do it" labor march sponsored by the AFL-CIO and the Teamsters, and the "National March for Lesbian and Gay Rights"; the leadership of both marches is firmly in support of the mainstream of the Democratic Party; they will act as a sort of political anchor to the protests as a whole.

The Peace and Environmental Convention Coalition (PECC), made up of nearly 100 peace and environmental organizations, including the Bay Area branches of the Freeze, Ground Zero, and the Sierra Club, draws in some of the broad middle forces in society, particularly around the question of war; PECC focuses on lobbying and working within "Visions of America at Peace," an exhibition hall set up for peace exhibits and as a center for lobbying and press conferences. PECC and a huge range of political forces, running from the CPUSA and the DSA on the left to church groups and the San Francisco Democratic Club, have joined together for a large rally "to vote peace in '84"; the basic thrust is concentrated in a leaflet calling on people to mobilize for a "large peaceful rally" outside the Democratic Convention: "... we must prepare a major campaign to mobilize the peace community around the electoral process and show the presidential candidates that support for our issues means votes at the polls." The rally will feature George McGovern as a speaker.

All these quite loyal programs have created a kind of political vortex, a wind which has swept in a great many people who are by no means entirely wedded to these politics. Certainly, large numbers of people will turn out for these actions because they are largely "what is happening," but they are people that could also be influenced by another political pole.

Another effort involving the forces of the left is the People's Convention, meeting on the Oakland side of the Bay, which has been widely built in the social movements and on the left, and which draws together the activists to formulate a "people's platform" which will then be presented to the Democrats on the first day of the Convention.

The Disloyal Opposition

Among the forces not buying into the terms of "vote peace in '84," one is the group of youth which has set out to conduct a series of "Democratic War Chest Tours." These tours of the San Francisco Financial District are designed to expose the various corporations and war industries that have financed the Democratic Party. Along with the tours, the group has thrown the stuffy bounds of acceptable Convention protest aside; it has put out a leaflet calling for "guerrilla theater, nonviolent direct action, creative protest and fun as we festively march through the Financial District and reclaim the streets." The group has also called for protests at the "Convention's biggest party," thrown for delegates by Califor-

nia Speaker of the House Willie Brown for "2,000 of his closest friends."

Along with the above protests focused against the Convention, the punk youth have generally been pretty disgusted by the suffocating atmosphere generated by the Convention — and there is talk of squatting in some buildings during the Convention; and various concerts are planned.

The event which has most spotlighted this sort of determined opposition to the Democrats' circus, and which has therefore come under tremendous pressure, is a demonstration called for by the Livermore Action Group (LAG). Along with participating in some of the other Convention activities and demonstrations, LAG has called for an action to oppose the Democratic Party. The statement from the LAG July 17 Working Group put it this way: "LAG's demonstration on July 17th will deliver a special, crucial message. Most progressives plan to lobby the Democrats, offering support in exchange for some superficial favors in the bargaining process that is supposed to represent popular politics. We will instead demonstrate in a mass, nonviolent protest against the Democrats' rule and military escalation: past, present, and promised for the future. We want not to console or cajole this party back into slightly better behavior, we are saying NO! The arms buildup at home, the missile placement in Europe, military interference in Central America and all around the world — these have all been the policies of the 'peace-loving' Democrats. They deserve no sanction from our movement."

"World War 3 looms ahead. Acting on

the principles and the urgency which created LAG as an anti-nuclear, anti-militarist organization takes on even greater importance today. Against the seductive simplicity of electoral logic and 'anything is better than Reagan,' it is especially important that we continue to commit 'political disobedience,' that we focus protest against the Democrats — whose historical record shows a clear commitment to escalating militarism."

LAG is a major and influential force in the antinuke movement in the Bay Area and even nationally. This call represents the potential to rally a sizeable number of people who are sickened at the whole charade the Democrats are running, and it could concentrate a serious political pole that indicates a direction quite different from the current tide.

Distancing

This being the case, LAG has come under a concerted campaign of "distancing" by the media, local authorities, and political police at all levels. For months, the bourgeoisie has attempted to create an atmosphere of intimidation and fear among any people thinking of even slightly "disloyal" action around the Convention. Stories of the massive force of police, stun-grenades, army air-surveillance teams, etc., have been regular features in the press. In the wake of the demonstration against Henry Kissinger in San Francisco in April, when San Francisco police attacked the demonstration that had taken over the streets and arrested 191 people after nearly two hours of San Francisco's "volatile forces" being out of control, this all

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Jesse Jackson: The "Right Stuff" For U.S. Imperialism



by Carl Dix

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The More Recent Legacy of the Democrats in Central America...

With the Democratic Party Convention at hand, the process of corralling the discontent in society into an "anti-Reagan" front is in full swing, with Central America one of the focal points. The only real alternative to escalating U.S. involvement and perhaps even outright war in Central America lies with the Democrats — so goes the pitch. What went on when the Democrats held the executive branch under Carter — the intensification of U.S. maneuvering in the region, the 1979 CIA-coup in El Salvador, the implementation of the various Vietnam-style pacification programs, the mass murders under the Duarte-led reform junta — these and other examples of the "Democratic alternative" are evidently secret chapters of American history. (See "Death to the Tiller: The Legacy of the Democrats in Central America," *RW* No. 261.) At most what is deemed worthy of recalling are the past few years, which are portrayed as a period of continual battle against "Reagan's war" in Central America. The variation of this coming from the social democrats and revisionists is put typically in a recent editorial in *In These Times*: "Despite a popular opinion strong enough to induce the spineless Democratic leadership of the House to deny further funding for Reagan's war against Nicaragua — at least for the moment — the Democratic Party seems to be doing its best to avoid the issue (of Central America)." The follow-up to this is that a sufficiently strong show of public opinion, expressed, of course, in votes for Democrats, can pressure these "spineless Democrats" into taking the sort of reasonable course in Central America which they have only approached in fits and starts in the past few years.

Democrats should rise in arms at this charge of "spineless" — in fact, they have already, so to speak.

For now, we'll pass over World War I, World War 2, Korea, Vietnam, and the multitude of coups, assassinations plots, invasions, etc., without all of which the Democrats would not be Democrats. Consider, simply, what action the Democrats have taken concerning military aid to El Salvador over the past few years. At no time have they moved to end such aid to the Salvadoran government — not once since it was reinstituted in 1979 by that great opponent of "Reagan's war," Jimmy Carter. Instead, large numbers of Democrats have supported every major appropriation bill, as aid escalated from \$2.5 million in 1982 to over \$6.0 million in 1983, and even higher this year. Every one of these aid bills has been projected as the best possible compromise, achieved only by dint of fierce struggle by peace-loving Democrats against Reagan and the Right, who if not restrained would be all the worse warmongers. What actually happens looks more like a division of labor between troops in the same army. Reagan asks for

substantially more than is really the goal, the Democrats cut it down, general approval is obtained, and both sides claim victory. Reagan calls this "a simple negotiating strategy." It is not that there are no real internecine disputes — but these are differences over *how* to secure Central America, and the relation between this and securing the world in general, or more accurately, redividing it. Besides, it's wrong to assume that these disputes break down along partisan lines, as they say.

Much of the military aid to Central America is funneled through means that are out of the public eye — and this, too, is fine with the Democrats, who have helped work out these mechanisms down through the years. Tens of millions of dollars in military aid have gone to Central America by methods such as use of accounting procedures and circuitous arms transfers that conceal both the value and quantity of actual military aid. For example, the Department of Defense has provided the CIA with ships, planes, guns, as well as free transport for all these to *Contra* depots, all of which has come out of routine DOD funds. Similarly, the CIA has provided the Salvadoran military with high-speed boats, supposedly in order to interdict arms shipments from Nicaragua, but whose sole documented activity has been for use in mining Nicaraguan harbors in support of the *Contras*. All of this is quite routine, and is just as routinely concealed by the Democrats (who are quite adept at using these very mechanisms whenever they have the chance).

A similar and equally important mechanism for support of the Central American regimes has been the use of the Israeli connection. In April 1984 *Haaretz*, an Israeli newspaper, announced that the U.S. had proposed plans to finance Israeli aid to South Africa and Central America, including military aid to El Salvador. The U.S. proposal included the establishment of a fund, outside of normal budgetary channels, which would allow for covert aid on an ongoing basis. Israeli diplomatic sources in Washington, D.C. said that "We can provide the manpower and the expertise, but we don't have the money... this is nothing new." Indeed it is not new — use of Israel to provide aid when it was not so politically expedient for the U.S. to openly and directly do so was first done in Central America by Carter, in order to prop up the notoriously ruthless junta in Guatemala in the late '70s. Such mechanisms are an integral and routine

part of the way U.S. covert aid functions, so that, regardless of the "bitter Congressional battles" we're all familiar with, the participants, Republican and Democrat alike, are fully aware that operations are firmly in place to secure U.S.-bloc interests.

But one need not look only to covert operations to see how the Democrats work to support every major plank of U.S. policy in Central America. Their public pronouncements and actions serve equally well. In each of the major military aid appropriations bills passed by Congress, the efforts of the Democrats have been directed obviously not towards ending aid, but toward adding conditions or "strings" such as "certification of progress in the area of human rights."

Attaching these strings has generally been portrayed as a means of holding Reagan and the Salvadoran generals in check, and thus measures which create a climate for peaceful resolution of the Central America conflict. They are instead, in the main, measures for advancing the U.S. clampdown. What, for example, is the actual content of the human rights certification requirement? The sole target of death squads which has met any punishment — and then only of the lowest-ranking soldiers — has been for shooting Americans; knocking off leading Christian Democrats is also off-limits. As for the masses of Salvadorans, they are at this very time being subjected to intensified military repression, with bombing runs at the highest point in the history of the Salvadoran war, artillery shelling intensifying, and with the Salvadoran military being beefed up, and overall aid pouring in from the U.S. — all to support Mr. "human rights" Duarte. Human rights means that some of the random violence, which can after all hit the "wrong people," has shifted over to the streamlined, methodical mass terror of the modern puppet army, complete with its U.S. counterinsurgency warfare. What a difference Democrats do make.

Why, just look at the election of Duarte. El Salvador's new president was groomed and promoted to power in the first place by Carter as part of the CIA-sponsored reform junta in 1979, and it should be no surprise that his election this

year has been hailed by Democrats across the board. Democratic observers of the election returned with glowing reports of the "freest election ever in El Salvador," and a Democratic Party chief labeled Duarte's reascension a "significant first step." Never mind the CIA manipulation of the election, never mind the troops surrounding the citizenry, who were checked and double-checked with inky-pinkied fingers and stamped I.D. cards to insure that they voted — or else. What counted was the right man won. (For more on Duarte, including the land reform program with which he's identified and how his previous tenure oversaw one of the bloodiest periods of repression in recent history, again see *RW* No. 261.) His election was U.S.-engineered with the purpose of unifying the Salvadoran ruling forces and more fundamentally of providing a cover for intensified U.S. involvement in El Salvador: "Arms for the fledgling democracy." What counted was the arms, and they have been flowing in abundance, once again with Democrats' support. In fact, one of Mondale's more substantial and concrete criticisms of Reagan is exactly for not doing *enough* to strengthen Duarte. As Mondale put it: "I will strengthen the hand of Mr. Duarte by channeling aid through him." Mondale has also promised to "continue proper efforts to halt the flow of arms across national borders." Naturally this doesn't mean *American* arms, since both Hart and Mondale have refused to promise a cutoff of military aid to El Salvador.

One key part of the Democratic program to strengthen Duarte lies in firming up the hand of some of the younger, more aggressive and "professional" military men. As the influential liberal Democrat and outspoken critic of "Reagan's war," Senator Paul Tsongas, put it: "It may seem heretical for a liberal Democrat to take sides with anti-Communist colonels, but after many hours with these men I am convinced that only their help can make Mr. Duarte's presidency a success." Heretical? — of course not; rather right in the grand tradition of the Democratic Party. As Mondale stated in reference to his Central American policy: "In a world where the enemies of freedom win power by force and maintain it by terror, a President can never rule without a firm response. Guilt is not a foreign policy, and the world is not a debating society." Win or lose in November, the Democrats, along with their aggressive young colonels, Mr. Duarte, their CIA counterinsurgency and pacification programs, have proven their willingness to do their best to insure U.S. interests in Central America — through any means necessary. □

And In The Gulf

Recent news reports have it that the issue of the Persian Gulf will be addressed at the Democratic Party Convention, possibly by Gary Hart. It's a little hard to imagine, as the reports suggest, a plea from the Senator for "peaceful solutions to the crisis," since no less than the likes of William Buckley has described Hart as "doing some of the best thinking around on the military aspects of national survival."

On the whole, the Democratic "record" on the Gulf is clear: things will be taken to the brink, and if necessary, over it. It was, after all, the Carter/Mondale administration which enunciated the "Carter Doctrine": that "any attempt by an outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an

assault on the vital interests of the United States" and "will be repelled by the use of any means necessary including military force." The Reagan administration's declarations to the effect that the Soviets would be confronted with a "major conflict" should they move into the Gulf, as well as the various and sundry concrete measures they have taken to beef up U.S. ability to actually do battle in the Gulf region, are merely the continuation and development of war preparations begun under the Carter administration.

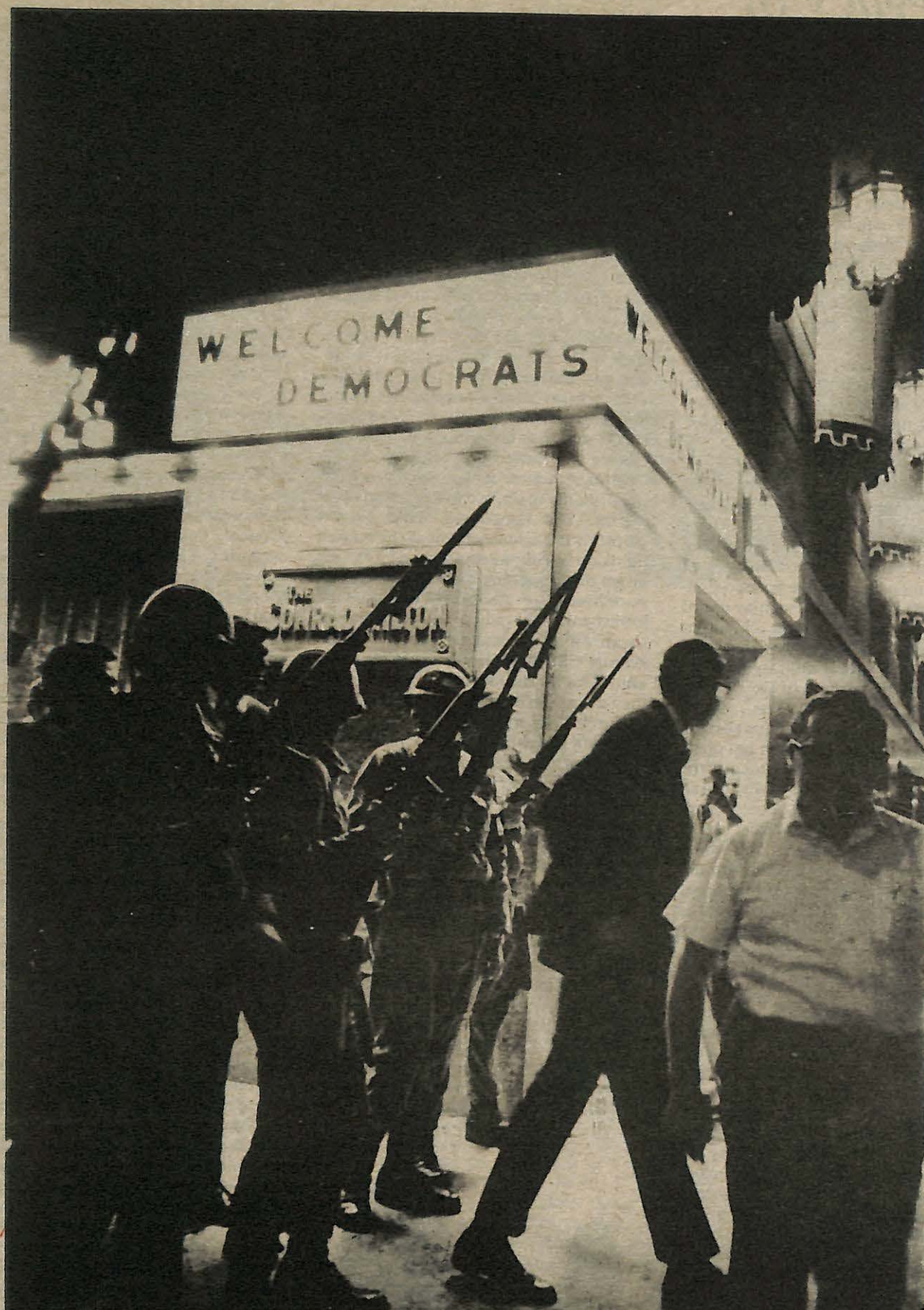
And are the Democrats backing off

this posture now that the situation in the Gulf has become so explosive? Are they railing about Reaganite "brinkmanship" in the Gulf? Hardly. During the primary debates Mondale insisted, with reference to the Gulf, that, "British forces, the French forces, the United States forces and others ought to make it clear that those sea lanes must stay open." And when Gary Hart agreed but added that "not one American life would be put ashore in any Persian Gulf area," Mondale jumped on him as a sellout. "My op-

ponent has said that if the Persian Gulf explodes, our allies cannot count on us." Then, just to make his stance perfectly clear, Hart retorted: "I am totally com-

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Lincoln Park



The Whole World

The author of this article, a well-known '60s activist, was an accredited journalist to the 1968 Democratic Convention and was present at all the major street demonstrations. He was the organizer of the April 27, 1968 antiwar march in Chicago, attended planning meetings for the Convention demonstrations, and testified as a defense witness in the Chicago Eight conspiracy trial.

I.

It was a high point of the antiwar movement during the '60s upsurge of mass struggle. We were marching down Michigan Avenue toward the Conrad Hilton Hotel which was the headquarters for the candidates, their staffs and the press. For most of the afternoon we had been trapped in Chicago's lakefront Grant Park. Even here the police had viciously attacked the crowd gathered to hear Jean Genet, Allen Ginsberg, Dick Gregory, William Burroughs, Norman Mailer, and others speak. Clubs flailing, the cops had waded into the crowd busting the heads of dozens before being driven off by the enraged throng of 10,000 chanting "Pigs, pigs, pigs!"

But when we tried to leave the park area to march on the Amphitheatre, site of the Democratic Party's National Convention on Chicago's southside, we found all the routes of exit blocked. The sunken tracks of the Illinois Central Railroad could only be crossed where roads bridged them. In the middle of each of these cross bridges now sat a .30 caliber machine gun on a tripod, flanked by helmeted soldiers with rifles.

"On orders of the Chicago Police Department, there will be no march today," announced the police commander. Allen Ginsberg sat down and began to chant the sacred syllable "ommmmm." But many of us dispers-

ed in small groups to attempt an end run around the blockade, so that by 6:30 several thousand had infiltrated the line of troops and had massed on Michigan Avenue. Just then a mule-drawn wagon train of the Poor Peoples Campaign, which had been driven all the way from the South, appeared and also began moving down Michigan. The crowd surged around it. Several youths ran to the front carrying the flag of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam and a black anarchist flag. Cheering and shouting, we surged forward. Chants of "Dump the Hump" and "Peace Now" went up.

On lower Michigan Ave., the scene was one of exuberant chaos. The National Guard troops on the bridges had been liberally dispersing tear gas from their CA-3 backpack sprayers, but the prevailing wind was blowing it back through their own ranks and into the downtown area around the Conrad Hilton Convention Headquarters. As the impromptu march came down Michigan, the bulk of the crowd in the park was able to break through one of the cross streets and join the rest of us at the corner of Michigan and Balbo. There were already several thousand demonstrators gathered directly across from the Hotel. They now picked up the chants, while upstairs in the Hilton, campaign workers for Eugene McCarthy who had become sympathetic after three days of police attacks began throwing toilet-paper streamers out of twelfth story windows and blinking hotel room lights in rhythm with the chants. "Hell no, we won't go," "Fuck you, L.B.J.," and "The streets belong to the people" merged in a cacophony of noise.

The police seem to have been caught completely by surprise as a huge crowd—which was supposed to have dispersed—suddenly reassembled right at the Convention Headquarters. A few cops had

rushed into the street swinging wildly, but the crowd swarmed past them. Emergency calls for reinforcements crackled over the radio waves. City buses loaded with cops began to arrive, but the throng now filled the intersection. The scene was brilliantly illuminated by the flood lights of TV mobile camera vans which were also in the intersection.

At 8 p.m. a phalanx of cops charged down Balbo into the intersection. Some demonstrators were sitting down in the intersection, and they got it the worst. The cops began clubbing everyone, beating demonstrators, newsmen, and random pedestrians alike. The air was filled with debris as the larger portion of the crowd looked for anything and everything to throw. At one edge of the intersection the cops cornered a large group of people against the plate-glass window of the Hilton's Haymarket Restaurant ("A place where good guys take good girls to dine in the lusty, rollicking atmosphere of fabulous Chicago," or so their advertising went). People were banging on the windows seeking help from the startled diners. Suddenly the glass pane shattered as dozens of demonstrators fell through onto the dinner tables, cutting themselves on the shards of broken glass. Pandemonium broke loose as crazed cops climbed through the broken window, still clubbing, and pursued people through the hotel lobby.

Hundreds of people above, leaning out of hotel windows, were shocked and outraged. Young campaign workers who had come to Chicago "Clean for Gene" and determined to "open up the democratic process," couldn't believe their eyes. Below them was an orgiastic scene where knots of blue-shirted cops gathered around individual fallen demonstrators to beat them with riot

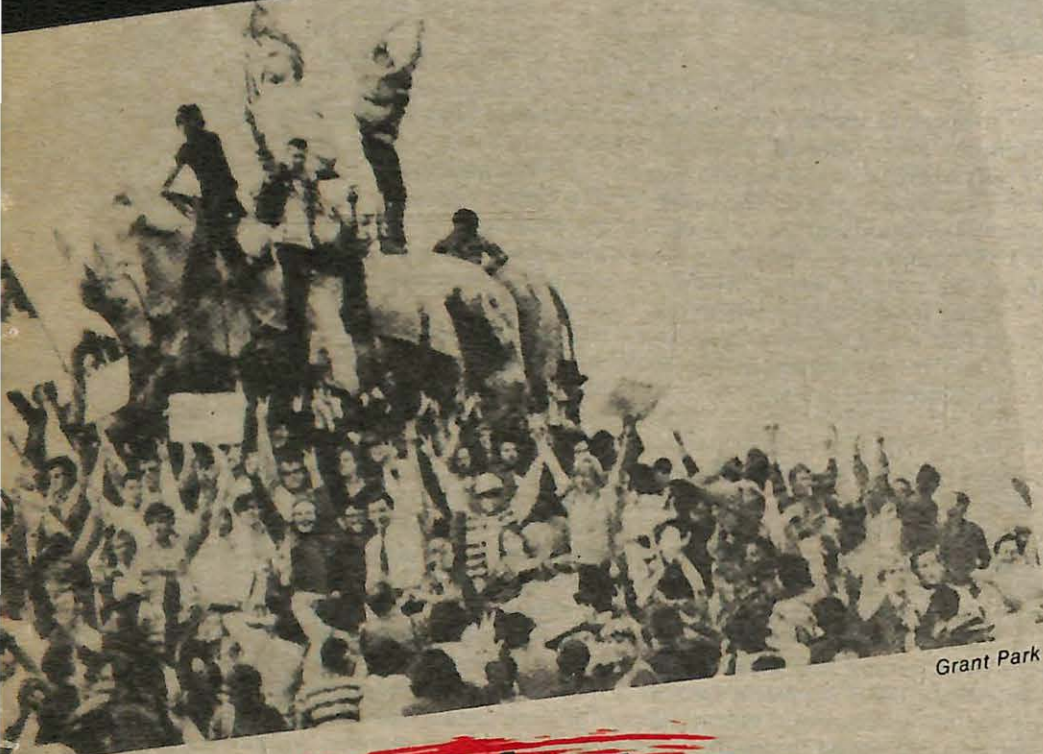
sticks. Suddenly the festive display of toilet paper streamers was replaced with a shower of anything heavy and portable. Pop bottles, glasses, a telephone, and heavy hotel glass ashtrays came raining down from the hotel windows, smashing among the advancing cops.

Unknown to those of us on the scene, the TV networks had switched from live coverage of the Convention in the Amphitheatre on the southside to live coverage of the melee at Michigan and Balbo. At the height of the action the great mass of demonstrators outside the intersection suddenly burst into the now world-famous chant, "The whole world's watching! The whole world's watching!"

And it was. Just a week after Soviet tanks had rolled into Prague, what was to have been the counter-showcase of bourgeois democracy had its velvet glove ripped off to reveal the mailed fist of bourgeois dictatorship. Things were going dreadfully wrong for the bourgeoisie. The political exposure and confrontation which they had attempted to prevent had materialized. By 8:30 the hotel Convention Headquarters of the Democrats was surrounded by soldiers with fixed bayonets. Scenes of naked police violence, which make up the everyday life of the oppressed, were being flashed around the world. In the convention hall itself, Senator Abe Ribicoff had called for the removal of the "storm troopers" from the streets, while the cameras caught Mayor Daley screaming from the front row: "Shut up, you lousy Jew bastard!" Live on network TV, a Convention security guard punched Dan Rather on the Convention floor, and Walter Cronkite, the CBS Convention anchor man, almost had an apoplectic fit.

On the street, despite the wanton police

Convention, 1968



World's Watching

By C. Clark Kissinger

brutality, the mood of most demonstrators was one of unrestrained exhilaration. No one wanted to leave. No one would have missed it for a million bucks. For the first time in our lives, they were no longer in control of events. The political initiative had passed into our hands. We were making history.

II

The events at the 1968 Democratic Convention are impossible to understand outside the context of the global revolutionary upsurge, which shaped both the objective conditions and the consciousness of the political activists of the sixties. In the world at large, the heroic struggle of the Vietnamese people and the Cultural Revolution in China were the salient events which reverberated back into the imperialist countries giving rise to radical youth revolts in West Germany, France and the U.S. It was a year of extraordinary international events which frequently dominated the headlines: The seizure of the U.S. spy ship *Pueblo* by North Korea, the Tet Offensive in Vietnam, the worker-student rebellion in France, and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Mao Tsetung's *Red Book* was selling better than the Bible.

In the U.S., 1968 was a high tide of the Black Liberation Movement which resounded internationally. It was a peak year of activity for the Black Panther Party, that put the question of armed revolution in the U.S. on the political agenda. And after April 4, when Martin Luther King was assassinated, the Black communities in more than 100 cities rose in rebellion. In Chicago, as elsewhere, troops were mobilized to restore control in the Black community. Armed soldiers stood at intersections as columns of smoke drifted skyward. The U.S. Army, already strained by the Vietnam War, was

forced to keep two full-strength divisions in the U.S. to maintain control.

Among intellectuals, students, and youth, the ruling class also saw its grip slipping. Thousands of students and youth were in revolt. The disaffection of this strata was symbolized by the April-May uprising at Columbia University over the issue of university complicity in military research. SDS and a significant section of the antiwar activists were breaking with reformism and were openly calling for victory for the NLF in Vietnam.

The initial response of a frightened ruling class was to offer up their most tired nostrum: an electoral alternative. This took the form of the campaign of Senator Eugene McCarthy for the Democratic presidential nomination as the "peace candidate." McCarthy was the model bourgeois peace candidate: he had voted for the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, for the continuation of the draft, and for every military appropriation for the Vietnam War. Understandably, he did not spark much interest at first. But as later events propelled his campaign into some notoriety, he played his part to a T. The thrust of his campaign was captured in the "Clean for Gene" slogan: in opposition to the strident anti-imperialist calls of the "dirty hippies" in the antiwar movement, youth should engage in "practical politics" by dressing up, making their appearance and their program acceptable to Middle America, and relying on the electoral process. One famous fundraising ad in the *New York Times*, blatantly pitched to worried parents, pictured Eugene McCarthy surrounded by well-dressed, adoring college students. The headline read: "He brought our children home."

But the Tet Offensive, which began on January 20 and lasted through most of

February, changed everything. With a coordinated nationwide insurrection in the cities, the NLF demonstrated military and political strength thought impossible by the imperialists and the antiwar movement alike. The possibility of a U.S. defeat in Vietnam suddenly became thinkable. One unexpected result was that Eugene McCarthy, who was only supposed to siphon off malcontents into the dead-end arena of electoral politics, came within a few votes of defeating Lyndon Johnson, the incumbent president, in the New Hampshire primary of March 12.

A political crisis now set in rather quickly. In the aftermath of Tet, the Joint Chiefs of Staff asked for 206,000 additional troops. The *New York Times* broke this story on March 10, and it obviously meant that the "gallant defense of a little nation" begun by John F. Kennedy was not about to be swiftly and successfully concluded by Lyndon Johnson.

One result was an immediate financial panic. As the champion of the "Great Society" social pacification programs, Lyndon Johnson was locked into preserving domestic social spending and not raising taxes for the sharply increased military expenditures. The result was that the government had been monetizing the deficit — covering the war expenditures by inflating the currency. This could be done for a short time, but not indefinitely. The prospect of unlimited currency inflation sent capitalists of every stripe scrambling to unload dollars and buy gold. On March 16, the London Gold Market had to be closed to curb wild speculation. On the same day, sensing the imminent downfall of Johnson, Robert F. Kennedy announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination.

Into the breach now stepped Clark Clifford, Lyndon Johnson's new Secretary of Defense, corporate attorney for the Du Ponts, and long-time political representative of U.S. imperialism. On March 25, Clifford convened a secret meeting of major imperialist political figures to consider the crisis and what to do. Present were military leaders like Omar Bradley, Matthew Ridgeway, and Maxwell Taylor. Also present were the foreign policy experts of the capitalist class: Dean Acheson, George Ball, McGeorge Bundy, C. Douglas Dillon, Cyrus Vance, John McCloy, and Henry Cabot Lodge. And there were "domestic" politicians like Abe Fortas and

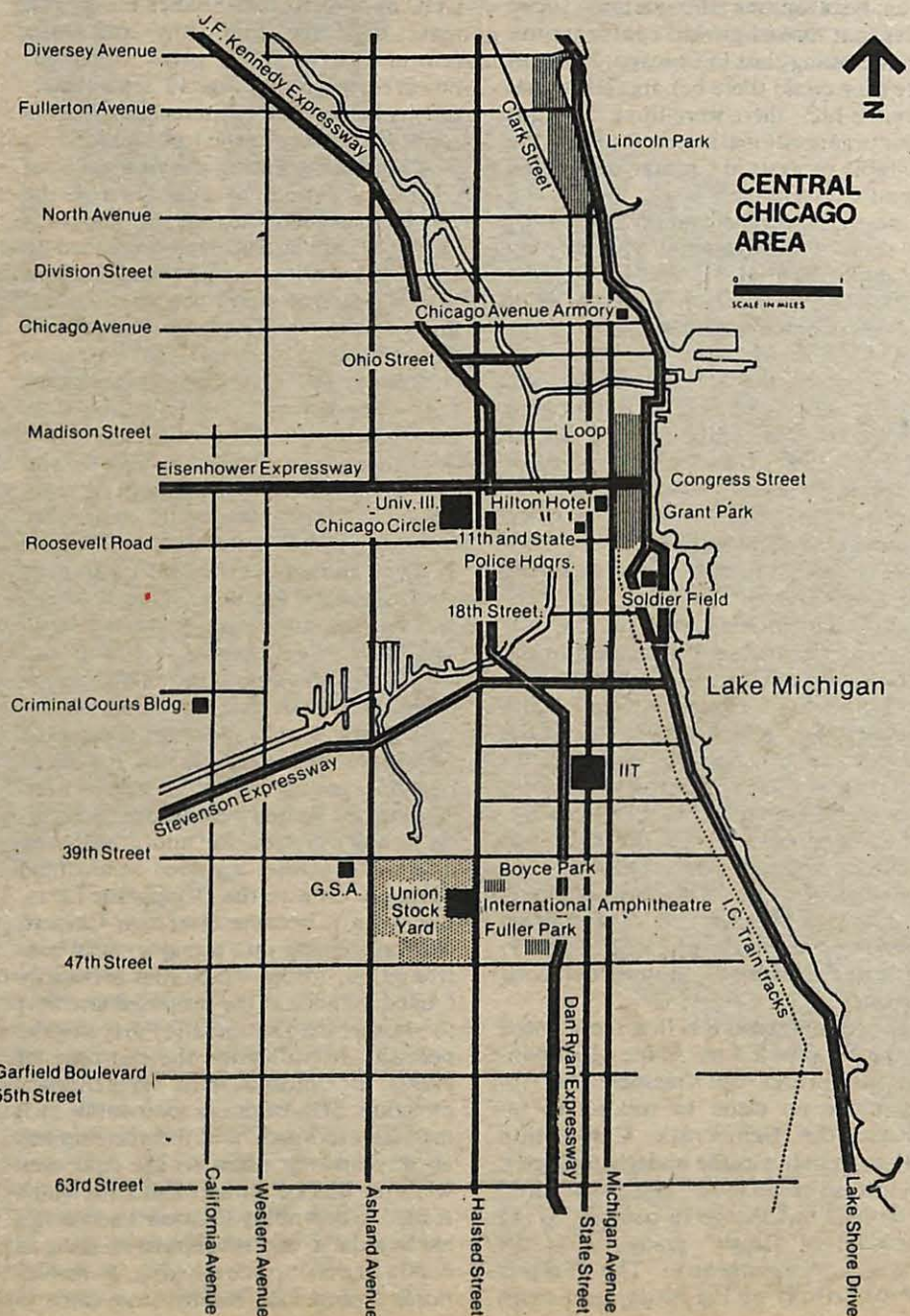
Arthur Goldberg.

Speaking in later years, Cyrus Vance summed up the meeting as follows: "We were weighing not only what was happening in Vietnam, but the social and political effects in the United States, the impact on the U.S. economy, the attitude of other nations. The divisiveness in the country was growing with such acuteness that it was threatening to tear the United States apart." The conclusions of this meeting, which addressed the interests of U.S. imperialism as a whole, were presented to President Johnson. Three days later, Lyndon Johnson went on nationwide television to announce four decisions: First, that there would be only a token increase of U.S. troops in Vietnam. Second, the war would be "Vietnamized" with the massive expansion of the South Vietnamese puppet army. Third, that the U.S. would cease bombing North Vietnam north of the 20th parallel and a vague offer of negotiations was made. And fourth, that he would not seek reelection to the presidency.

Two points should be noted here. First, these major decisions on how to deal with the crisis engendered by the war and by rebellion at home were made in the way such decisions are normally made under bourgeois democracy — behind closed doors by a handful of representatives of the bourgeoisie. The basic decisions made on March 25 were carried out by the next president (Nixon), namely the attempt to win the war with minimal costs at home by Vietnamization and by drawn out pretences at peace negotiations. Given the overall position and the reserves of U.S. imperialism at that time, the U.S. had the ability to cut their losses from the major debacle in Vietnam and avoid the immediate onset of an even deeper international political crisis of seismic proportion which might well have precipitated a revolutionary crisis in the U.S. itself. The elections of 1968 were a sham and a farce as all bourgeois elections are, and played absolutely no role in the actual decision-making process.

Second, the divisions within the bourgeoisie were *not* between factions supporting and opposing the war itself. There was unanimity on the necessity of crushing this prominent war of national liberation as a warning to the oppressed peoples of the world. The only divisions were over how to deal with the other contradictions engendered by this necessary process.

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The Conrad Hilton Convention Headquarters



Whole World's Watching

Continued from page 9

The forced retirement of Lyndon Johnson ("the elections of March 25, 1968") did not mean, however, that the Democratic Party apparatus would be turned over to candidates identified (however incorrectly) with opposition to the war. Following Johnson's forced abdication, Vice-President Hubert Humphrey announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination. Humphrey, the "Happy Warrior," was a scion of anticommunist liberalism. The former Senator from Minnesota, he was the political mentor of Walter Mondale and his program was one of continued support for the war. The candidacy of Humphrey was to create even more contradictions, however. Since the 1968 campaign was before the much vaunted "reforms" in the Democratic Party nomination process, Humphrey arrived at the Chicago Convention with a commanding majority of delegates, while having won only 20% of the popular vote in the primaries against Kennedy, McCarthy and McGovern. But the June 5 assassination of Bobby Kennedy settled the question of the nomination with finality.

III.

There was no uniform understanding or analysis among the various social forces that moved toward confrontation with the ruling class in Chicago. Nor was there (nor could there be) organizational unity. In fact, there were three different major organizational attempts to lead the inevitable protests in Chicago during the August Convention.

One organizational and political thrust was that of the National Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam (the "Mobe"), which projected a series of legal rallies and a protest march on the actual Convention site. The Mobe had grown out of the Spring Mobilization Committee in New York, which had been initiated by figures like Dave Dellinger and A.J. Muste. It had been responsible for calling several important antiwar demonstrations, including the pathbreaking demonstration at the Pentagon in the fall of 1967 where the more radical section of demonstrators confronted the soldiers ringing the imperialists' war palace. The leaders of the Mobe action in Chicago (such as Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden) were relying ultimately on the bourgeoisie to end the war but saw bringing this about by increasingly large demonstrations, threatening ever more social instability, and through alliance with the Black national movement on the basis of economic demands. The antiwar movement was to play the role of a militant pressure group in the pluralistic society, angry in the streets — until its demands were met.

The second trend was that represented by the Yippies led by Abbie Hoffman, Jerry Rubin and Paul Krassner. The Yippies made no claim to seeking to influence the Democratic Convention (although that was the underlying logic), but instead called for a "Festival of Life" to be held in Chicago in contrast to the "Festival of Death" going on at the Chicago Amphitheatre. The Yippies played artfully on the widespread scorn

of the youth for established bourgeois politics. ("Be realistic, demand the impossible!") They showed up with a squealing little pig (named Pigasus) as their candidate for president, running on a platform of garbage ("who knows more about garbage than a pig" and "if our president gets out of line, we'll eat him!"). The Yippie center of activity was Lincoln Park on Chicago's northside, where they promised to sleep in the park and present an all-star cast of rock bands during the day.

The final trend was represented by the Coalition for an Open Convention. The COC was openly and avowedly an attempt to steer potential demonstrators back into the rat hole of the Democratic Party behind Eugene McCarthy. The gray eminence behind the COC was Allard K. Lowenstein, who functioned for many years as the Democratic Party's agent in the mass movements. But this movement had a considerable following among students and a section of the radical petty bourgeoisie who saw the McCarthy campaign as a vehicle for working within the system to end the war, and more broadly to work through the Democratic Party for social change, by "democratizing" the Party through changes in the nominating rules. The COC applied to rent Soldier Field for a mass rally for McCarthy and rules reform. The COC's plans collapsed, however, when on Aug. 12 Senator McCarthy held a press conference to urge his supporters not to come to Chicago!

A key factor among the various social forces who came to Chicago was the revolutionary left. Among the thousands of youth and students who descended on Chicago were legions of young radicals whose reference point was the national liberation movements worldwide, the Cultural Revolution, the Black liberation struggle in the U.S. and opposition to U.S. imperialism. NLF flags, red flags and anarchist flags dotted the crowds of demonstrators in Chicago. People who had even critically supported the candidacy of LBJ in 1964 had shed illusions of reform as LBJ escalated the Vietnam War and carried out the 1965 invasion of the Dominican Republic. They had seen and felt the drawn bayonets of federal marshals at the Pentagon. They had witnessed the rejection of the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party at the '64 Democratic Convention and supported the revolutionary upsurge of the Black people against national oppression. Among the more revolutionary forces there was a hatred for and a profound distrust of getting involved in anything having to do with the Democratic Party. But when it became clear that Chicago '68 was shaping into a major social confrontation, forces which had previously looked askance at the proposed attempts to pressure the Democratic Party saw the necessity to influence the outcome of events in Chicago in a revolutionary direction. SDS began to send out its own material and much of its membership was already making plans to go. And even while the Black Panthers had a line which tended to downplay such mass action (including the urban rebellions) as being in contradiction to developing a revolutionary vanguard, Bobby Seale came to

Chicago to speak in support of the protests. Lincoln Park featured a revolutionary rally where Seale and Jerry Rubin spoke to a significant crowd. The whole international situation and the crisis facing the U.S. bourgeoisie — including the actions of the state at the Convention itself — made for a situation where the left forces had the initiative — and we took it. "Our" ruling class was in trouble and we welcomed their defeat.

IV.

The ruling class also had its own plans for Chicago. In the aftermath there was much criticism of the Democrat's choice of Chicago for a Convention site. But the Democrats had certain necessities relating to their urban social base that made it hard for them to "run away" from the cities to some safe location. In addition, Mayor Daley enjoyed a special relationship to the Kennedys. His artful vote counting had tipped the election in 1960, and the '68 Convention had been promised to him. Daley wouldn't consider moving it, even after Chicago's McCormick Place Convention Center burned down, which forced the Convention to the Amphitheatre on the southside. To control the Convention site was to control a lot of the mechanics of the Convention, and twice before in recent history mayors of Chicago had stacked the galleries with cheerleaders for a particular candidate and affected the outcome.

A certain myth, however, has been created that the police attacks on the demonstrations at the '68 Convention were the peculiar work of Daley or of undisciplined police officers who simply got out of hand. It is quite important to understand that from the beginning the question of how to handle the demonstrations was in the hands of the highest authorities in Washington. Two basic decisions were taken that determined much of what followed: First, there would be no permits granted for any rallies or marches, period. Second, all necessary force would be used to prevent any march to the actual Convention site and the Amphitheatre.

The purpose of refusing permits was to discourage people from participating by the threat of violence, arrest, or denial of facilities. Thus the Yippies found it hard to book bands without a permit to use the park with sound equipment. The Mobe couldn't print literature on where to assemble without agreed upon routes and march permits. Even the COC was flatly refused permission to use Soldier Field. At the same time the city kept stringing groups along with protracted negotiations. They would ask, "Do you intend to march if you are not granted a permit?" If the organizers said "no," the city could then prevent the activity by simply refusing the permit. If the organizers said "yes," they were admitting to planning to break the law. This was then used to feed the press stories on "planned illegal activities" and "violence." Both the Mobe and COC filed law suits, and quickly met up with the nature of the bourgeois courts as their suits were promptly denied. All of this was known and approved of in Washington; it would have taken only one public statement by

Johnson or Humphrey to free up the permits.

On the question of demonstrations at the Convention site, this issue was also dictated from Washington. The ruling class was extremely edgy about any mass activity proceeding through the Black southside of Chicago, which was repeatedly given as the reason for banning marches to the Convention site. But the government was also counting on the Convention site being the focus of media activity, and it was determined not to have antiwar demonstrations at the Convention itself. If demonstrations were unavoidable, let them be somewhere else in another part of town and out of the TV coverage of the Convention.

Planning meetings between the City, the Secret Service, and Military Intelligence began in January. The Chicago police were given the public responsibility for "enforcing the law," i.e., no sleeping in the parks, no marches without a permit, etc. But the ultimate plans were in the hands of the Army and the Secret Service. The major planning meeting was held on Aug. 8 at Fort Sheridan, between the Chicago police, the U.S. 5th Army, the Illinois National Guard, and the Secret Service. Then on Aug. 14, Brigadier General Richard T. Dunn of the Illinois National Guard was flown to Washington for three days to confer with the Undersecretary of the Army in charge of civil disturbances, the Secret Service, and other officials.

On Aug. 19, the governor announced the mobilization of five battalions and three additional companies of the National Guard, with Gen. Dunn in command. On Aug. 26, 6,000 Army troops were airlifted from Ft. Hood, Ft. Sill and Ft. Carson to the Glenview Naval Training Station 37 miles north of Chicago. In the event of a major insurrection the Illinois Guard was to be federalized and overall command would pass to Lt. General Michaelis, 5th Army Chief of Staff. In addition, U.S. Army armored personnel carriers were to be prepositioned in Soldier Field, under the control of the Secret Service. Numerous incidents during the five days of demonstrations illustrated who was in ultimate control and what their orders were. For example, on Thursday, August 29, when dissident delegates to the Convention attempted to lead a final march from the downtown area to the Convention site, they were stopped at 18th and Michigan. General Dunn, who was present on the scene, told the leaders of the march that, acting on instructions from the Secret Service, he could not let anyone past 18th Street. He further stated that anyone who crossed the line, including Convention delegates, would be arrested.

V.

From the beginning the ruling class attempted to make violence and threats of violence both the principal issue and an effective weapon to discourage the planned demonstrations. One aspect of this was the increased and encouraged use of violence by the Chicago police in the months preceding the Convention. For example, following the April insurrection in the Black community, Daley went on television and publicly criticized the

police for not using enough violence. This was Daley's famous call to "shoot to kill arsonists, and shoot to maim looters." At the same time, a march to a National Guard armory was held to protest the continuing military occupation of the Black community. This march was met by advancing troops with fixed bayonets. Tear gas was fired and Chicago cops chased participants for blocks, beating any they could catch. Then on April 27, a major antiwar march was held in downtown Chicago. Permits for a rally were refused and the police attacked the peaceful march, chasing participants through downtown streets. Newspaper reporters, demonstrators, and uninvolved pedestrians were beaten and sprayed with mace. Some of those arrested were told, "This is only a sample of what you'll get if you come back in August."

The increasing tempo of state-sponsored violence was not without its effect. One group of local counterculture activists, called the Free City Survival Committee, which had been working with the Yippies on the preparations for the Festival of Life, now pulled out of the project and issued a statement which read: "Don't come to Chicago if you expect a five-day festival of life, music and love. The word is out. Chicago may host a festival of blood." And as was revealed in his own testimony at the infamous Chicago 8 trial, prior to the Convention, Jesse Jackson, citing Daley's "shoot to kill" order, worked the Chicago Black community to discourage Black participation in the protests.

Inside the Mobe, increasing pressure was being brought to bear on the organizers. According to Sidney Lens, "There were some words in the draft proposal put forth by Rennie Davis and Tom Hayden, 'An Election Year Offensive,' which were ambiguous on the question of nonviolence. Stewart Meacham and I made it clear to Rennie that the ambiguity was not only wrong in principle but aberrant nonsense." But the *political* bottom line for such pressure was: "What if Gene McCarthy, who had all but sunk Lyndon Johnson in the New Hampshire primary, had a chance for the nomination? Most peaceniks would support his candidacy and would resent it if National Mobe hindered his chances with a 'confront the warmakers'-type of demonstration."

And as for Sen. McCarthy, there was no doubt in his mind at all. At his August 12 press conference he said that he had been in contact with Mayor Daley and had learned of potential violent disruptions. Thus he was urging his supporters to stay home lest they get involved in "unscheduled rallies" which might lead to "unintended violence." Telegrams were sent to all McCarthy campaign headquarters around the country, and local organizers were instructed to cancel chartered buses. The battle had now been joined, however, and hundreds of McCarthy supporters defied orders and came to Chicago anyhow.

VI.

In 1968 the political debate over how to approach the Democrat's Convention did not come down in the same form that it does today, because the political conditions were different then, it being a high point of revolutionary struggle both domestically and internationally.

By way of example, consider the two following statements:

First: "What we want to create is a greater consciousness that organizations of protest, resistance, and independent politics, under the control of the actual people with grievances, are more important than casting a vote or working for the 'better' of two conventional candidates. We must be arguing that the Democratic Party and the limits of the electoral system itself are what we oppose. . . ."

Second: "The rallies, marches, and conferences planned for that weekend can place pressure on the Democratic Party to listen to the true needs of the American people. Instead of listening to special interests of the corporations, the People's Convention will pressure the Democratic Party to listen to the voices of the people demanding an end to war preparations and the funding of human needs."

The first statement was written by Tom Hayden in 1968 — the same year he turned out as pallbearer at Bobby Kennedy's funeral! The second by Dr. Michio Kaku

in 1984. Both statements reflect the views of opportunists who rely ultimately on the ruling class (or some faction thereof), but the difference is that in 1968 you just couldn't get over with openly reformist crap. You had to at least *claim* to be knocking the props out from under the system. The Democrats were in office, and anybody with eyes could see who was prosecuting the war. It was a period of revolutionary upsurge and many scoundrels with a program for "saving the American political system from itself," and who were attempting to parlay their influence in the mass movements into political capital by opposing revolution, could not do so openly. The very open and naked reformism now being spouted by these opportunists is actually a sign of the rapid escalation of the world situation and the approach of world war. And it is

quite necessary for the imperialists to promote this sort of politics now.

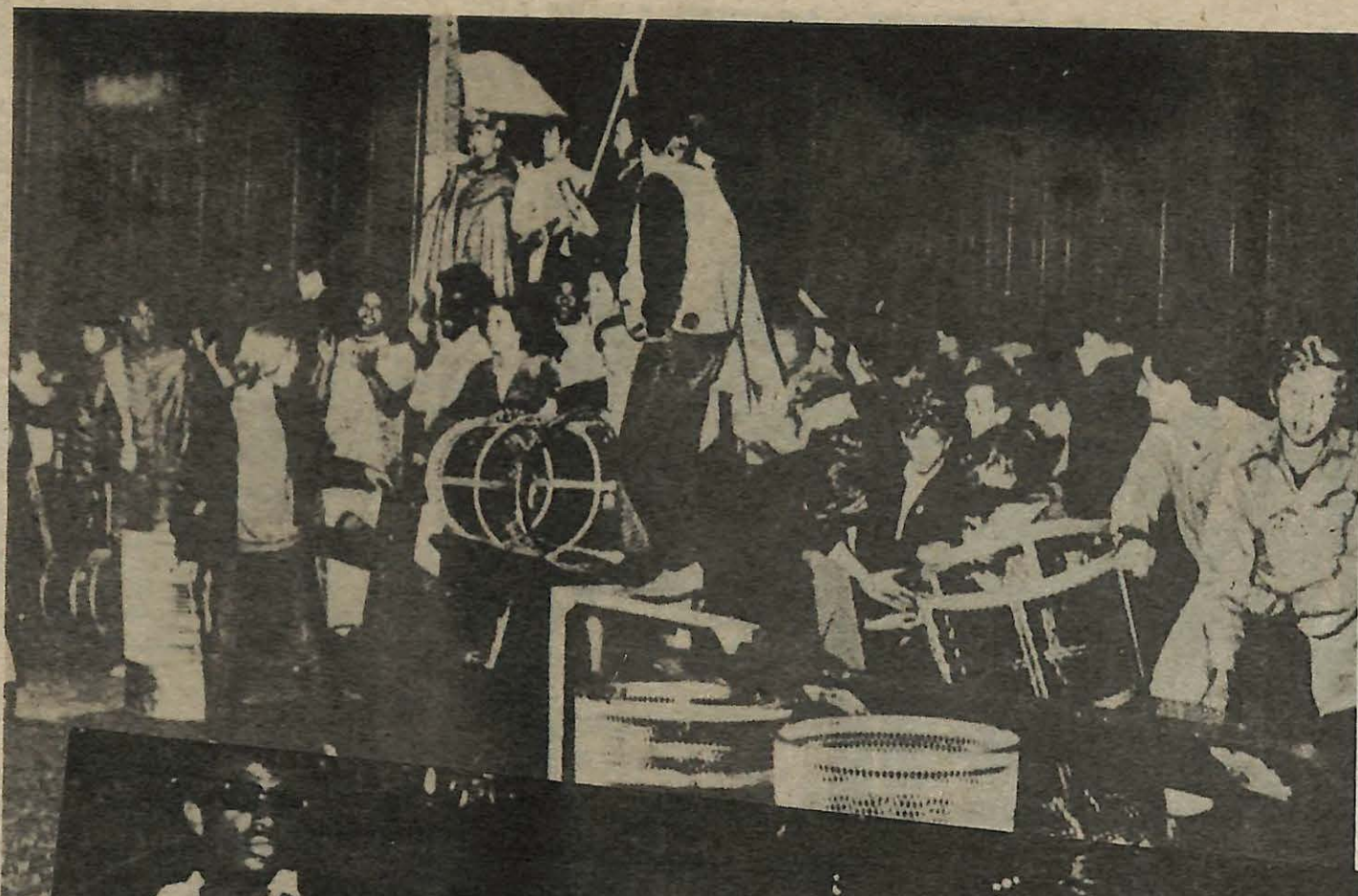
But while the objective situation was a major determinant of the level of consciousness (or, in some cases, the level of the rhetoric), the conscious activism of the determined opponents of the imperialist war also pushed the ruling class further onto the horns of its own dilemma. The effect on the middle forces, particularly the politically inexperienced who had taken up the McCarthy campaign in sweet ignorance of reality, was profound. Kids who had come to Chicago "clean for Gene" learned more in five days about the nature of the state than in all their preceding lives. They went from house to house canvassing, to candlelight marches, to chanting angry slogans while wiping the tear gas from their eyes, in short order.

And it is important to emphasize that demonstrators who hit the streets in Chicago did not receive their sole educa-

tion at the end of a billy club. In a situation where the politics and programs of various class forces were displayed in practice, thousands of copies of the underground press like the *Rat*, the *Ramparts Daily*, *New Left Notes* and the *Black Panther* circulated broadly. Political discussion and arguments were going on everywhere, and lines were being drawn.

That conditions had been changed through struggle was dramatically evident on Thursday, when Senator McCarthy was forced to walk across Michigan Avenue and speak to a crowd of 2,000 still outside the hotel. First, a great cheer went up. It appeared as though the same McCarthy who had denounced the demonstrations was now coming over to join them. In fact, it was a testament to the fact that the reformist fakers had lost one hell of a lot of ground and were now forced to scramble to get it back. McCarthy announced that he would not support Hubert Humphrey for the presidency, but to his shock, cries of "Not enough! Not enough!" rang out. "Work within the political system and you can help seize

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Watching

Continued from page 11

control of the Democratic Party in 1972," McCarthy replied. It was not well received, and half the crowd took off for another attempted march on the Amphitheatre.

If the ruling class suffered badly on the field in Chicago, they suffered even worse in the battle for summation that followed. The National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence rushed into print a report that blamed the violence on a "police riot" by local cops, but which actually exposed the details of the federal planning and control. Then Paul O'Dwyer and a clique of liberal delegates from New York, who were busted for trying to walk to the Convention, tried to vindicate the system by returning to Chicago for an elaborate trial, through which they expected to see their "right to walk on the streets of Chicago" upheld. They were promptly found guilty and fined. At the federal level the government brought indictments against a group of demonstration organizers and Bobby Seale for conspiracy. (Seale was prosecuted primarily for being a Panther.) This ended with the world-famous scenes of Bobby Seale being bound and gagged in his chair in the courtroom.

It was Henry Kissinger, in his own inimitable style, who summed up the effects of the Chicago demonstrations from the viewpoint of the ruling class:

"Throughout the last year of the Johnson Presidency, the style, methods, and rhetoric of opponents of the Vietnam war descended to a level of nastiness from which our public life has yet to recover fully. During the 1968 Presidential campaign, the relentless harassment of so warm and generous a personality as Hubert Humphrey reached a bitterness that he could recall only with tears later on...."

"The ugliness of the domestic battles was a national tragedy. The issue was posed as to who was 'for' or 'against' the war — a phony question.... (Nixon) believed that abject failure would vindicate the neo-isolationist trends at home, demoralize the American people, and make them fearful of foreign responsibilities.... The collapse in 1975 not only led to genocidal horrors in Indochina; from Angola to Ethiopia to Iran to Afghanistan, it ushered in a period of American humiliation, an unprecedented Soviet geopolitical offensive all over the globe, and pervasive insecurity, instability, and crisis."

While Henry Kissinger's backhanded praise for the accomplishments of the antiwar movement may be slightly overstated (by 1975 there were certainly new and formidable contradictions assailing U.S. imperialism), there is certainly an aspect of truth in it.

VII.

On balance, the five days of concerted protest and resistance which characterized the 1968 Democratic Convention protests must be upheld as a major achieve-

ment of the political upsurge of the sixties. It was right to rebel against the imperialist war, and the actions of the thousands who took to the streets in Chicago inspired millions by their stand, ripped thousands out of the dead hand of reformism, and took the stage of history — affecting in no small way the outcome of events.

Thus it is curious today to hear some people say that we should protest at the Democrat's Convention, "but we don't want another Chicago." Looking back at what came down, at the defeats suffered by the ruling class, and at the tremendous leap in conscious political action by the masses, what can it possibly mean to say "we don't want another Chicago"?

There are some who honestly don't want to see a repetition of the violence unleashed by the state, but I think it is important to understand *why* the state responded as it did. At the very time when they were desperately maneuvering to forge a loyal opposition by putting out a "people's candidate" right within the Democratic Party, which was in office and increasingly hated and exposed, the demonstrations in '68 went up against, exposed and actually disrupted their plans. The fact that significant sections of the middle forces were yanked away from the hegemony of the bourgeoisie, and were questioning the American political system itself, was extremely good for the revolutionary forces and bad for the imperialists. And this did not merely or even mainly apply to those forces who were in Chicago, but had tremendous repercussions throughout the U.S. and internationally. This was a big accomplishment in the battle for public opinion. The fact that the state responded with a naked iron fist was an indication of the stakes of this political battle. Such a confrontation could only have been averted at the cost of *not* challenging this loyal opposition, and that would have been a real tragedy.

The first thing this tells us is that we have to take up these political battles; we have to take up the challenge in '84 to oppose the efforts of the bourgeoisie to channel opposition to their crimes into a *loyal* opposition. With this in mind, one cannot set the avoidance of state violence as the absolute criteria, nor is it necessary (given an understanding that the state is going to attack uncompromising political opposition) that people are fated to walk into the end of a billy club. And thirdly, it gives us some understanding of what the imperialists are prepared to do when their system itself is *really* threatened, and what must be ultimately done on our part to bring that system of criminal injustice and violence to its end.

One might wish things were otherwise, but that's the way imperialism is.

But then there are those who, when they say "we don't want another Chicago," *dishonestly* raise the specter of "violence" because they don't want an uncompromising opposition that *targets* the system and *exposes* the hucksters of the Democratic Party for what they are. Like Henry Kissinger, they have an imperialist largeness of mind that foresees in such a course the possible destruction of that very system in which they hope to

rise to power and prominence on the backs of a carefully restrained social movement that confines its activities to what is acceptable to the warmakers.

Again we might wish things were otherwise, but that's the way opportunists are.

VIII.

The situation in the world is quite different than it was in 1968, and a recreation of 1968 is not in the cards, nor should it be. We are living today in a prewar period, a period of intense material and political preparation for an inter-imperialist world war which will undoubtedly employ thermonuclear weapons, and which, if it is not prevented by revolution in large and/or strategic parts of the world, will unleash horrors such as man has never seen nor conceived of.

The divisions within the ruling class are not between those who want such a war and those who oppose it. The divisions are over how, when, and where, and over what material and political preparations will suffice to assure some prospect of victory.

Thus while the level of activism (and consciousness) is not right now like the high tide of the sixties, ironically the dangers and opportunities have never been greater. Never has U.S. imperialism faced the crisis that it faces today, and never has it so desperately needed the support of the masses, which it attempts to garner by holding up the prospects of "making it" within the system and making the system produce for us.

This means the political tasks facing the bourgeois parties are different than those faced in '68. Today, it is not only the defense of all their *existing* crimes, but the *preparation* of the masses of people to accept that which is to come. And this is particularly true in terms of securing the political loyalty of the oppressed

minorities and their identification, insofar as possible, with the system and having a stake in it.

Why *did* the Democrats pick the Bay Area? They know they have to take on these urban areas identified with rebellious politics, and they wanted a big show — a labor march, a gay march, a Vote Peace in '84 march and so on. They wanted a big show of loyal opposition marching in the streets to show that even in an area with a rebellious reputation the going thing is "working within the system." And they really thought they could pull it off, without a hitch, until the demonstration against Henry Kissinger revealed that there were indeed unruly elements who are not going along with the program. Now as the Convention is about to open the terms of the political battle are: will their plans dominate or will the unruly elements break through this suffocating atmosphere with uncompromising political opposition to their war plans and all of their crimes?

As in 1968, all the different social forces are in motion, each with their own program and class outlook. Only now it is in a decidedly different context, and with far greater stakes. But in the near future some other comments made by Henry Kissinger about the '60s will also have great relevance. In *Years of Upheaval* he talks about a "vacuum" which existed for a period of time because of the inner-bourgeois contradictions; and this, he says, allowed a "vocal minority" of radicals to exercise influence far beyond their numbers. This was true in 1968, but consider the possibilities shaping up in this decade and how crucial it is now to prepare for and welcome the opportunity for a resounding defeat for the imperialists.

This is not 1968, but the whole world *will* be watching. □

Agendas

Continued from page 4

while Gus is not exactly Mr. Excitement, some might get excited about voting for a "communist" — and there could be an opportunity here to build their party. The more militantly pro-Soviet Line of March is concentrating its efforts on Jesse's Rainbow, while trying to pick up its chips from among those influenced by the '60s — a group which does not generally find the CP's style particularly appealing. And overall, pro-Soviet revisionism is using its considerable resources and representatives to push what is in fact a global strategy. One stark example: the use of the Sandinistas to convince (or guilt trip) those opposed to U.S. domination of Central America to get behind the "anti-Reagan" activity.

Finally, there is the phenomenon of the Communist Workers Party — a group which was a small, isolated sect until the Greensboro murders, but has managed to parlay this crime into a travesty — their own meteoric rise. Based on their sudden ability to unite with sections of the Democratic Party and the CWP's increasing activity among Black bourgeois forces (including garnering some positions in the Jackson campaign), they have increased their visibility and influence among a number of more or less middle forces as well, and are playing a leading role in the broad coalitions making up the People's Convention in the Bay Area and the Survivalfest scheduled for the Olympics in L.A. The CWP currently gives off the odor of a group that has been anointed by the U.S. ruling class to contend with the CP and counter pro-Soviet influence in the social movements, and since they adopt the mantle of "communists" (albeit extremely submerged in the coalitions they inhabit), they can appeal to forces who find DSA too conservative. Actually, certain DSA leaders are uncomfortable with CWP's rising star as well, fearing them muscling in on their own aspirations. For the CWP is quite open about their aspirations. They envision apocalyptic times ahead, involving crisis and war, and are working and angling for the time when, as they say in their hard-to-find newspaper under the heading "What The Communist Workers Party Stands For," "Only socialism (CWP-style — *RW*) can save America." So far, they are sticking to the

We don't want our fair share...

We want to tear the whole system down!

Elections are the wrong arena...

It's going to come down to REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

Revolutionary Communist Party, USA

center between the pro-Soviets and social democrats, apparently waiting to see which way the international situation develops before coming down fully on one imperialist side or the other. However, this in no way prevents them from quite shamelessly offering their pitch as "Marxists" who know what's best for the ruling class. For example, check out this gem from Jerry Tung: "It's clear that the Reagan administration stands for short-term strategy for U.S. imperialism, and it does great harm to the long-term interests of the bourgeoisie."

The fact that all these opportunists have come out so openly and shamelessly in this election is itself a sign of the times. The imperialists need such Left forces to help build their loyal opposition so necessary for the prosecution of the coming conflict. And as noted, the aspirations of these forces compel them to answer the call. It is a sharp indication that despite all the rhetoric, the world situation is anything but "going slow." □

CONTINENTAL BANK

Continued from page 3

markets, once a generalised unease focused upon the mess in which one major institution — Continental Bank — was alleged to have succumbed."

"So we now have the quite extraordinary situation where the nine largest banks in the United States have over twice their capital lent out in South America alone. Now it can be argued, with some difficulty, that as long as two-thirds of these banks' debts remain performing, then the institutions are not in fact bankrupt. But a bank doesn't have to be bankrupt, in order to collapse. It's quite enough for a bank to lose 25% of its capital in a single year, for it to become suspect. We have just observed what happened — in the space of four short, traumatic days — to a major US bank which became the subject of unsubstantiated rumours fed by an abundance of worrying background information. Deposits were removed wholesale to

other institutions. What happened at Continental Illinois provided us with a glimpse of world financial disorder on the grand scale."

Some Concluding Comments

Most contemporary bourgeois studies of the financial and monetary crisis set up a causal chain whereby monetary "mistakes" and "imprudent" loans lead to crisis. This is certainly implicit in the excerpts printed above. But Marxists have a very different view of the financial realm, and this results in a radically different understanding of crisis. Monetary phenomena are neither autonomous from nor ultimately determinant of the production process. Though by no means passive, finance rests upon and responds to the underlying structure, allocation, and profitability of productive capital. Thus the roots of the financial crisis must be sought in the dynamics of internationalized accumulation.

Now one very crucial component of in-

ternationalized accumulation is the superprofits derived from investments in the Third World. But the political economy of these countries, which is inseparable from these investments and imperialist domination in general, is marked by extreme unevenness, distortion and external dependence. Enormous financial injections are required to facilitate and maintain profitable investment. As expansion begins to run up against its own limits, leading to crisis, ever greater financial infusions become necessary. Thus the structure of the Third World countries and their subordination to imperialist capital emerge as important elements of monetary crisis. On the other hand, because internationalized accumulation takes place in the context of interimperialist rivalry and heightened mass struggles, certain measures must be taken in the monetary sphere to stabilize and fortify strategic regions in the Third World. Which adds yet another dimension to financial crisis.

The point is that the current crisis is not the result of "reckless" lending; nor is it "correctable" within the existing political and economic framework of in-

ternational relations. What, then, is the significance of the monetary and financial realm given these circumstances? The analysis I made several years ago in an article published in the *RW* speaks to this with even greater force today.

"Both the further ballooning of the financial superstructure and the stop-gap measures to prevent its bursting are playing themselves out. But exactly on account of intensifying crisis and sharpening rivalry between the two imperialist blocs, the focus of attention and repair within the U.S.-led bloc has shifted very directly and immediately into the political and, especially, military spheres. Nevertheless, the financial structure that is both a sort of lubricant and glue for the bloc remains a concentration point of economic contradictions and is by no means immune to a major snap, the shockwaves from which would be profoundly felt through the world economy. And the stability — or lack of stability — of this structure interacts with the broader tightening and war preparations that are on the imperialist agenda."

Raymond Lotta

**The right to vote
has been won...**

**Now we need the
political awareness
and sophistication**

**NOT TO USE
IT.
Revolutionary Communist Party, USA**

The Gulf

Continued from page 7

mitted to keeping the Strait of Hormuz open... and that if "Kharg Island was dynamited... and it was imperative to go back in whatever way we could and get it reestablished, I would certainly be prepared to send some American forces to do that."

Lest we think that the main concern here is a few mad Ayatollahs or some power-hungry dictators in the region, Mondale, during a March debate at Columbia University, made it plain that the real problem is the Soviet Union. After taking note of the "dreadful problems" in this "perhaps... most dangerous area in the world," Mondale declared that, while "certainly force ought to be the last resort and not the first resort... we ought not to forego anything and imply to the Soviet Union that there's an area of great importance we are not involved... I believe that we've got to work with our allies, with our friends in the Middle East, Israel and so on, to make certain that the

American interest in stability and keeping that area out of the reach of the Soviet Union is kept in mind by the world." Here is a man who is truly "ready for the job" of leading the U.S. bloc into war.

Jesse Jackson has likewise demonstrated his grasp of these fundamental concerns. In a December 1983 interview with the *New York Times* Jackson declared in his unmatchable style: "America has a vital interest in peace in the Middle East. We have a moral interest because people are there. Economic interests, we get so much of our energy from them. Military interests, because of the geopolitical position. And interest because of the Persian Gulf, because their borders will take us to the Soviet Union."

In short, there is no fundamental debate among either Democrats, or between them and the Republicans, over the strategically vital character of the Persian Gulf, or their willingness to go to war over it. This unity says something about both the Gulf and the Democrats: it underscores the strategic importance and the potential for explosive conflict in the former, and the thoroughly imperialist character of the latter. □

Democrats Set Jive Trap

Continued from page 13

reached an even more intense pitch. San Francisco Police Chief Con Murphy began to talk of policing "with an iron fist and a velvet glove": "The velvet glove aspect is we're going to sit down with you and give you the guidelines, but if you don't live within the guidelines then it's going to be the iron fist."

Most recently, the police announced the formation of "quick-arrest teams" for Convention protest, which will be under orders to jump in and start arresting people at the first hint of any illegal acts. A front-page story in the *San Francisco Chronicle* said: "Officials said local police will be departing from the flexibility with which they have tried to handle organized protests in the past. Minor legal infractions during the Convention will not be permitted...."

On top of the general atmosphere all of this creates for those planning on entering the field in opposition to the system, LAG's name continues to pop up in news stories about Convention security. In part this is clearly aimed at further intimidating those who might think of demonstrating with LAG. It is well known to both the police and the media that LAG was never intending to stage mass civil disobedience at the Convention — the main point of the action was to make the political message quoted above a part of the political turmoil surrounding the Convention. But consistent with its history of nonviolent direct action, LAG had also refused to condemn civil disobedience at its demonstration or to disavow it. By refusing to agree to police their own action against individuals or

smaller groups that might commit the "high crime" of civil disobedience, LAG ran afoul of the limit the authorities have set for Convention protest.

This "distancing" campaign has also been explicitly aimed at the RCP, and a few other organizations. On Wednesday, July 11, an editorial-page writer for the *San Francisco Chronicle* brought this back up to fever pitch with a piece titled, "Kamikaze Pickets Lusting For Arrests." The article named the RCP and two other groups, and claimed that they were "ideological Kamikazes": "They live to get arrested at a national convention. Failure here could be a professional disgrace."

And so the bourgeoisie has given a living lesson in democracy. You can say anything you want in this free country of ours. Anything, that is, within the limits set by the imperialists themselves. And if you insist on violating this and challenging and exposing the imperialists, watch out for the iron fist! Pluralism, you see, has its limits.

Right-Wingers

Also adding to the scene has been the entry of right-wing forces. The Moral Majority, which is going to hold its Family Forum III conference in San Francisco a few days before the Convention, has been targeted by several sets of counter-demonstrations. A series of recent attacks on women, including in the last week vandalism of the San Francisco Women's Building and the firebombing of an abortion center, have brought some feminists onto the field against the Moral Majority, women who had been pre-

viously staying out of the whole scene around the Convention. These women quickly became the targets of public threats by the police when they refused to properly bow and scrape to the terms the police are enforcing. And as we go to press, it appears that some of these women have been singled out for rough treatment by the cops at the anti-Moral Majority action.

Particularly suspicious is the entry of the KKK onto the political field of the Convention. The police, the press, and the KKK all seem to be collaborating in a little "game," with the story changing from week to week over whether the KKK is going to march, when they are going to march, and whether they have a permit. The San Francisco Police Department, good democrats that they are, have announced that they cannot stop the KKK from marching because it would be a violation of their democratic rights. As we went to press, the latest version was that no permit has been requested, but that the police expected the KKK to march at noon on Tuesday, four hours before the start of the LAG action. The police made clear enough that if the KKK did march, any counterdemonstrators who "instigate violence" would be quickly arrested. Since the KKK is widely and openly known to be completely infiltrated and often led by agents of the political police, the whole affair looks a lot like a rather crude police set-up.

But there is more to consider than the tactical uses of right-wing groups in "controlling" and "counterbalancing" the more rebellious forces in the streets. The right-wingers serve as a foil and target of the loyal opportunists of the "left" who can credibly aim some fire at these living Reaganites; imagewise this has got to be a welcome change from the gross servility to the Democrats. The media is then more

than happy to fill out this picture of political debate that the bourgeoisie can most comfortably live with: who — and even better, *which bourgeois party* — represents what's best for America?!

Moreover, there is a useful lesson here in what really concerns the bourgeoisie about LAG and other rebellious forces. The Klan, after all an avowedly terrorist group, is in the eyes of the authorities just another responsible organization with a democratic right to demonstrate. The threat of violence — supposedly the paramount issue of the July 17 LAG action — has magically disappeared as an issue. Plainly, it is the *political* criterion, in this case the Klan's touted red, white and blue All-American character, which determines who is "responsible."

Opportunity

The San Francisco Bay Area will become for a week or so a sharp focal point of contention of a wide range of political forces. The bourgeoisie has set all this into motion to serve its own ends, which has to do with shaping the entire political stage in a way favorable to imperialism in days of turbulence and war to come. That has created a heightened political atmosphere, which has drawn in even more forces, and which will be very carefully watched by many awakening to political life, not just in the Bay Area but across the U.S. and even the world. There is a great opportunity here for proletarians in particular (along with other revolutionary-minded people in society) to enter into the fray and have impact far beyond their numbers; there is at the same time great necessity for this to happen, because in the final analysis, no social force except the proletariat can lead the masses of people out of the madness imperialism is preparing and toward the future of liberation. □

Clash

Continued from page 5

around the political arena. And I want to mainly focus on the cultural arena in this interview. I just would point out, though, around some of what you're raising, I guess people really need to check out these things through newspapers and books and other sources that they rely on for political consciousness. And my own personal opinion about Gary Hart is sort of — you said is Mondale any different from Reagan? I guess my view is: is Hart any different from any of the electoral politicians, and I would say the same about the Labor Party in Britain. I mean, the question to me, that I think a lot of people ask, is: is it more electoral politics altogether? Or is there another alternative, which would be a much more radical and fundamental and basic change? Is *that* necessary to prevent world war as well as change some of the things that need changing all the time?

Again, those are some very big questions that you raised, and I think that's also very typical of The Clash and a very positive thing, while we might disagree on some of the particulars you raised.

One thing I'd like to get into... it's hard for me to understand some of what has happened around Mick Jones. And I realize that as you said, some of these are "little things" which may mean a great deal to The Clash, and are hard to understand for people who are not directly involved in the music. But there also seem to be some philosophical or artistic differences that were involved in the incident with Mick being fired. And I would like to ask a few things around that.

I personally disagree with what you said about cultural imperialism. I know there *are* bands that do that, who rip off Black culture or culture of people of other nations and countries. The thing that I thought was different about The Clash is that you identified with the oppressed worldwide, and to me that makes a big difference when you use forms that are developed by other nationalities. I'll just tell you a story: I was in a record store one day and these two Black youth came in, and one of them was going to the other one, "Get your car outta that gear!" and then was telling the other one about The Clash. And it just sort of blew my mind because that was when that began to actually happen, and it seemed to me you were reaching a new audience. And I love "This Is Radio Clash," "The Magnificent Seven," the thing you did with Futura... I don't know, these are some of the things that I really dug.

So I guess my question is: what is actually going on here in terms of forms? The last thing Paul (Simenon) said when I interviewed him two years ago when you were here in Atlanta was, "Keep playing the reggae." And I did, and it seems that The Clash has decided not to. What's going on there?

Joe Strummer: Well, I feel that I was not aware, really, of how little Black music is played on mainstream radio. I mean, perhaps it's always been the case that they've ghettoized radio stations; at least in the '50s it was Black stations and white stations. Perhaps it's always been the case, but I was under the illusion that in '56 you could hear Jerry Lee Lewis followed by Chuck Berry followed by Little Richard, you know, records, like just great music. I was not aware of how severe the situation is. I got a lot of Top 40 stations, I've been to a few in California in January, and I was amazed at how programmed they were: they wouldn't even play a Black record, and finding out about MTV and things that don't occur to you at first but that you discover. And that led me to thinking like, does a Police record take up the time that a Big Youth record might have been spun, or General Saint and Clint Eastwood. You know, are they occupying the space... that's what made me start thinking.

And I went back to "Police and Thieves" and I realized that what we did there was strongest, really, because to me it's exciting, the punk guitar in the reggae song, it's something else again. It's not punk, it's not reggae, but it's something else. And to me that is stronger than, you know, I feel like on, say, songs like "Armageddon Time," we were definitely, in

our crude way I think, we were definitely trying to imitate a reggae band, even though it probably doesn't sound that reggaefied because just for the way we play. But in all honesty, I'm sure we were trying to play like a reggae band, whereas in "Police and Thieves," we weren't. And that's a lesson that I intend to learn because I feel it's much stronger and more honorable; really, that's what it is, honor. I feel that we did get into a situation of a bit of a flavor of the month: here's a calypso tune, here's a Mose Allison tune, here's a funky tune, here's a Motown tune, here's a bit... and sometimes influences like that are great but if you've got no base to operate from, then you're rootless. It isn't a direction, it's confusion. And I feel like we've got to have a direction because I find if I look at the Top 40s of, say, America and England — well, that's a representation of the youth culture in the Western world today — I find it pretty feeble. And I'm wondering is it because we have no culture, and I know that I used to have one that perhaps I've forgotten about what it is; and that's what we're trying to do, we're trying to go back, touch base, and find *our* sound, *our* culture.

And in order to do that, we sort of decided that since we tour with guitar and drum, why bother to record with anything else? Why use anything else? If guitar and drum is not good enough, why is that the only thing we're gonna have at the Fox? You know, why do we only tour with guitar and drum? And that's taking a decision in an opposite way from the decision that we kind of took in about '78 where I remember we were still thinking about it. Our first album we recorded just like the way we were, guitars and drums, nah, in one go. And then we decided that you should use a recording studio with all its possibilities and endless choices and all that, you should use that to create. But I feel that was a soft option because, you know, really the decision is do you make a record like the way you really sound or do you make a record overdubbing anything that you can think of and then try and recreate it later? I think the decision that we've taken is: let's use what we've got and see if the form is still alive. That's kind of a minimalistic thing but, you know, I still believe in guitar and drum; and the machines are the future — the keyboard, the machines, the rhythm boxes — they are the future but I still feel that I don't wanna be rushed into following that line. I only know my guitar and my drum; I don't know any machine. So I'm still interested in creating something within a limitation.

Revolution Rock: On the question of some of the content, or maybe a better word is lyrics of the songs, I'm sort of picking up something in the interviews, and I wanted to ask you directly about it, that there's more of a tendency on your part to go toward the more direct statements as opposed to the more subtle statements. Now, I don't know which songs you wrote and which songs Mick wrote or who had the bigger share in some of the songs, but are we going to see in The Clash more things like "Know Your Rights" and "Washington Bullets" then we are things like "The Card Cheat"?

Joe Strummer: Yeah, I think so because, you know, you go around and you're singing songs that are dealing with a real thing, they're trying to give some kind of a message or trying to create some debate, bringing up issues, and you go around with these songs and you think you're getting through. And then when you see your audience shouting "You Negro music lover" at Malcolm McLaren, and that's *your* audience doing that, then you begin to realize that you've been deluding yourself as to how much you were getting through. And I think it's really important to really know how much you're getting through, I mean, face reality, really. When I saw our audience bottling off Grandmaster Flash in New York 1980, I realized that I have to really call a low percentage that we are actually getting our message through, like an antiracist message, you know, open-minded kind of; I realized that this wasn't getting through. And to me at the time it was a bit of a revelation. And then I realized that I'd been deluding myself, thinking of course they're getting it. And that's why I've kind of been thinking, how clearer can you put it? I'm not really sure which way to go on that. I would say that my original answer would be yeah,

make it clear, but then again, if it's boring, you ain't gonna get through to anybody; if it's repulsive or if it's preachy, you ain't gonna get through to anybody anyway. So there's always that fine high-wire act of attracting people and yet still having content. And that's really the challenge of a music with a message, getting the balance right between those two factors.

'Cause I feel some groups, like say some parts of the Gang of Four or things like that, it's perhaps a little repelling. I think they wanted to reach a larger audience and they eventually did; but I think they didn't realize that you have to attract people, that nobody has the right to expect an audience... you know, we come into Atlanta this time, and I know there's people out there going, "I can't stand the idea of watching strangers playing Clash songs," like the new guys. And I understand that. But I don't mind going right back down to the bottom of the hill. But I still feel like, you know, I still feel a sense of mission. Sometimes I wonder if I'm going mad. I still feel a sense of mission that The Clash has to get in there and balance things out and stop it being a one-horse race between one lot of nonsense and another lot of nonsense.

I know that the music was so vital to me that it was the only reality; when I was in school and I heard the Rolling Stones play "Not Fade Away," bam, that was it! I must have been twelve or perhaps even eleven. And that was it; I couldn't even concentrate on teaching or lessons or geography or math or anything like that or a career or all this serious stuff they were trying to get you frightened about — that was it, the only reality for me was that strange feeling. And that's vital, and I know that it can be vital and I don't hear it anymore in the modern-day releases. And I know it's coming back; I know that something out there is moving, and I want to do my bit to remind people that they ain't gonna recognize it when it happens; when the new thing happens, it's not gonna be immediately recognizable. Just like the pundits who were sort of in control of the media in '76 in London, like the guy who had an incredible Rhythm & Blues show on a Sunday morning, like, of all people in town, you thought surely he'll recognize the sound and the fury when he hears it. But to him, he couldn't... obviously, now I see how *could* he recognize it; he thought it was a lot of yobs playing garbage — he didn't realize it was the most important thing that had happened in ten years. And I think a lot of people will be caught in the hop when it becomes vital again. Perhaps it will be too extreme to be believed but it won't be recognized.

Revolution Rock: Well, a lot of what you're saying to me sounds like real familiar in terms of the frustration that anybody feels who doesn't like things the way they are, sees some of the real destructive potential in the world, wants to change things, whether you're in the artistic arena or in any other. I really share that frustration. I think everybody anywhere in the world you find yourself does.

But the question I have is in looking at, say, your audience, particularly after you began to reach a very broad audience and not so much the more hardcore people who were with you from the beginning, are the kind of contradictions you're describing in that audience — a low political awareness on the part of some people as opposed to a very advanced understanding on the part of some others — can you take the blame for that? In other words, is that because The Clash is doing something *wrong* or is that because of the state of things in the world? I mean, people overall are in a fairly... this is not exactly the most revolutionary period. Now, we may approach that in the '80s; I think we will but it's not the '60s yet, you know. It's probably going to be a lot better than the '60s ever was; but it's a very contradictory and difficult period right now if you're politically aware or even beginning to wake up. And some of what you're saying sounds like you're trying to take on too much of the burden, you know, that a band can't really play that kind of role, at least it seems to me, of politically educating the audience.

You said in an interview about four years ago, that I meant to bring with me but I don't have it, that you didn't feel a need to educate your audience about how bad America was, etcetera, because they

already understood that somewhat; in fact, that's why you felt they were coming to hear The Clash. Now I really agreed with that and it sounds like you've gone through a change in how you look at that. **Joe Strummer:** Yeah. What caused me to wonder, really, was how can you tell somebody — you know, what we have here is a fast-food culture, okay, a convenience culture. Now, what brought me to thinking about that was how is it possible to communicate what a nonconvenience culture is to people who have never experienced one? Thinking about how our audience has grown, I'm wondering how, *why* has it grown? Like thinking about "Rock The Casbah," for example: to most people, like say the newer, the wider aspects of our audience, the more recent people, they just know "Should I Go" and "Rock the Casbah" and they shout that at you in the street. And that's it for them. And it's led me to think, to tread carefully, to not take it for granted that we mean anything else other than that to them, like a couple of good Top 40 hits. And I don't want to take anything for granted anymore. I feel like, what I'm wondering is, can anything with real content be Top 40? You know, this is our challenge, this is what we're going to attempt to do, but the ones that have made it Top 40 aren't exactly "Washington Bullets" and this is something I'm gonna have to face head on. And that's really why I'm figuring... I'm not going overboard and thinking we've successfully achieved anything as yet because I know that "Should I Go" and "Rock The Casbah" — I've watched people mouthing the lyrics in discoteques and stuff — and I know like, say to "Rock The Casbah," I wrote the lyric on "Rock The Casbah" and even *I'm* not sure what it's about! I know it's a lot of fun... sometimes I know what it's about...

Revolutionary Rock: I was wondering about that!

Joe Strummer: Yeah. But sometimes I don't.

Kosmo Vinyl: I know, I can remember exactly what it's about, actually.

Joe Strummer: Yeah, but I mean in terms of strangers.

Kosmo Vinyl: Yeah, but when you wrote it, first like writing it...

Joe Strummer: Yeah.

Kosmo Vinyl: But just to interject here — Kosmo Vinyl speaking, this is Kosmo Vinyl butting in here for a second to get my penny's worth or cent's worth — on the subject of what Joe was saying about the audience and how you were saying how at one point you felt the audience *were* aware and now you don't. I think for me the first time that I was aware, in fact, was pre-*Combat Rock*, pre our real major increase in audience, when we played Bond's Casino which was June '81 and in fact was not very long after *Sandinista* came out: We put Grandmaster Flash on, and he wasn't very well known and the audience bottled him off, and they were screaming racist abuse at him. And that was well prior to major, major success. And it really hit hard, you know. And I was walking around at the club that we played for a lot of nights — that was the first night when everything was supposedly going very smoothly and before we got shut down — and a big percentage of the audience were shouting out racist stuff: "We don't want this blah-blah-blah disco, blah-blah-blah," do you know what I mean, and all the names that we all know. And I really went, hang on a minute, you know? And then I realized a lot of these people that we had taken for granted, or I had taken understood everything, didn't understand that bit at all. And if they didn't understand that bit, how much of the rest did they understand?

And I sort of came to the conclusion at that point that maybe under ten percent of the audience really clearly understood. And I don't think it's something like where you're trying to get out of something; I think it's the opposite where you're trying to own up. Do you know what I mean? You're obviously very politically aware, and a lot of the people that choose to meet us after the shows are because they're very interested; but don't forget, at X hall in the middle of somewhere, three and a half thousand people, how many of them know or agree? I'm sure some of the people that come and see The Clash have come just because they like the music. I mean, we

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have prompted it, we introduced the slides to try and make the images hit harder, to try and get that, but I think from much earlier than we ever considered, there was a portion of the audience that were not aware exactly what it was.

Revolution Rock: My only point on the Bond's thing, 'cause I did read about it, I wasn't there, is that given how sharp things were at that point — because that was around the time they were trying to shut down the whole thing — and the kind of attention you were attracting, any radical or progressive band that's about to reach a very broad audience, I always feel that the powers that be really sort of zero in at that point. And I mean, you said ten percent; obviously, some of the people in the audience were opposed to that racism; some people maybe went along with it. But my question is, was some of that actually instigated? I mean, I don't think that's out of the question.

Joe Strummer: Yeah, good point.

Revolution Rock: Because of manipulating some backward tendencies in the audience — but to what extent are some of those things staged? And I realize when you say that, people say, "Oh, that's paranoia," but at that time, I know The Clash was going from a band with a relatively small and committed audience to really breaking out into a very influential force in the music world, not just in America but internationally. So, I'm just pointing that out 'cause I think you sort of got to consider the possibility that...

Kosmo Vinyl: Yeah, I wouldn't say ten percent of the audience, you know, is not racist; I meant ten percent if you're going to take the overall viewpoint, is what I meant, not that ninety percent of the people who come to see us don't like Black people.

Revolution Rock: Right.

Kosmo Vinyl: You know what I mean? That's mainly older people that don't like Black people; nowadays, most people are getting on pretty good.

Revolution Rock: Also, the music that Grandmaster Flash was doing at that time was not so known among the white youth and the punk scene. And I know "Revolution Rock," when we started out two years ago, it was mostly punk and reggae; and then in the last year we've been playing more and more rap and funk and it's great, 'cause there's like another form that people associate with rebelliousness, after "The Message" and "New York, New York" and that sort of thing. But at the time that you played Bond's, that was new and a lot of people did think it was just disco, which it really wasn't, even though it used the...

Joe Strummer: Yeah, sure, yeah.

Revolution Rock: But, I'm just pointing out you have to look at a lot of angles at an incident like that. But I guess the main thing that I would disagree with is to what extent can a musical group politically raise the consciousness of their audience? I tend to see it more the way you put it four years ago, you know, that people like The Clash because they express the more advanced ideas and they seek out groups like that; they want to hear it and, of course, when you do something like "Rock The Casbah," you're going to reach an even broader audience — in other words, you're gonna reach people who only know "Should I Stay Or Should I Go" and "Rock The Casbah"; but I don't see anything wrong with that. In other words...

Kosmo Vinyl: Oh, no.

Revolution Rock: You create music for some of them but then you always have the other people who sort of know on another level what you're doing.

Joe Strummer: Yeah.

Revolution Rock: But it seems to me if you try for The Clash to become sort of a tool to politically educate, I don't know, I have real problems with that. And I don't particularly like that song "Washington Bullets."

Joe Strummer: (laughs)

Revolution Rock: I mean I agree with where you're coming from, some of where you're coming from — I would even disagree with some of the politics in it — but really — like "Straight To Hell"

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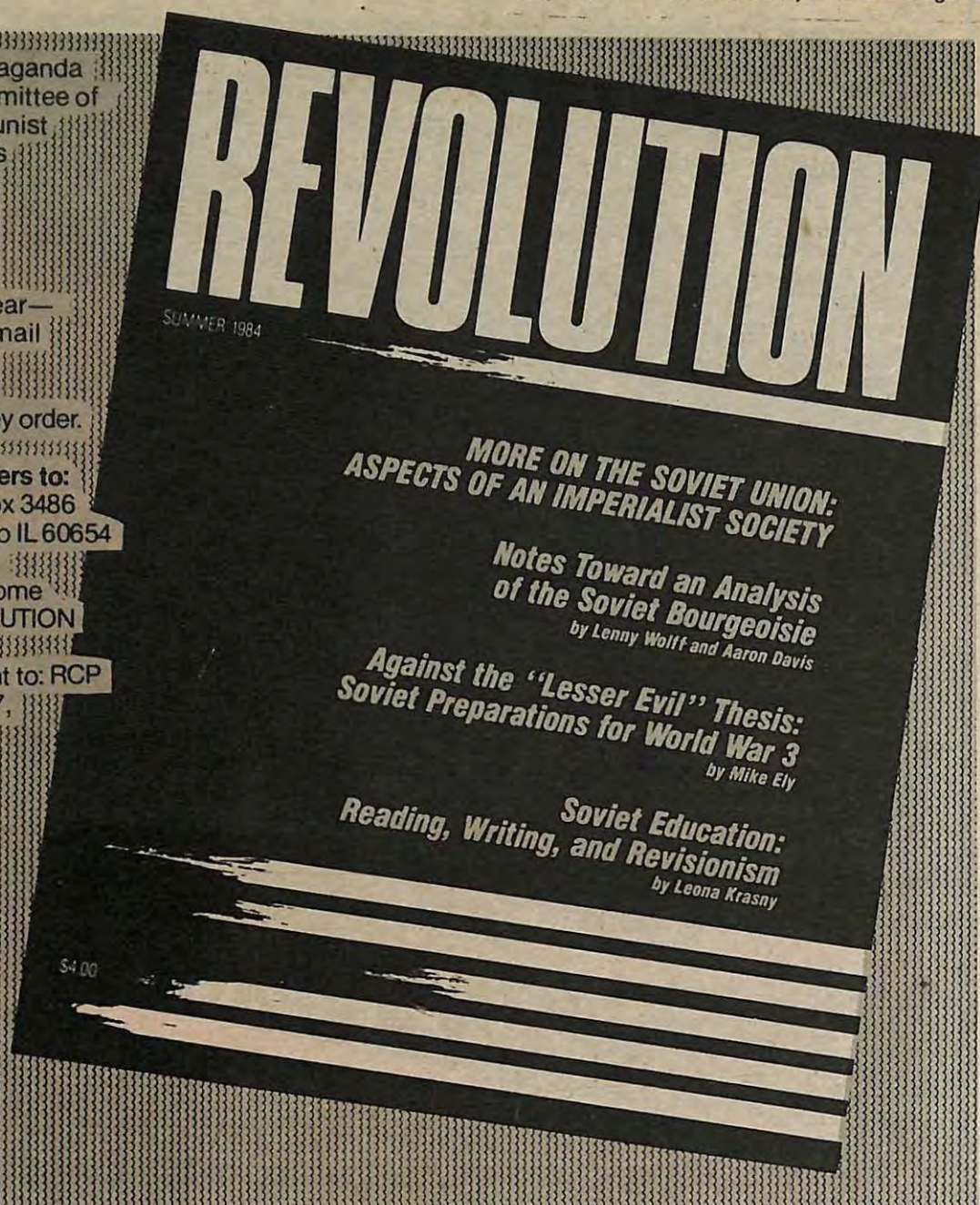
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to me is a great song, 'cause it's art. "Washington Bullets" sounds like more what people call agitprop. And you've been getting that criticism ever since you started out, and you never were that kind of band; you never were an agitprop band except for a few songs here and there. But you got the criticism anyway. I personally would rather see a lot more "Straight To Hell's" and "Card Cheat's" — that's just my personal opinion — than some of the more overt...

Kosmo Vinyl: I think it's the music first, though, I think that's the main thing. I think it's the music first. I think it always has been. And it always...

Revolution Rock: Right. Well, it's music. It's music.

Kosmo Vinyl: It always will be. I think it's people — we're people interested in music and then got interested in trying to make it purposeful. I don't think we were interested in, you know, had some purpose before we were interested in music.

Revolution Rock: Well, the reason I brought it up, though, was because I'm getting from the interviews a shift there, and I was wondering if maybe you were actually reversing that, and more...

Joe Strummer: No, I've always known it's the music first, but what's constantly on your mind is how right-wing everything has become. Like in Britain, every newspaper is just an incredible right-wing chic, you know, it's unbelievable; there's only a couple of newspapers that give you the facts and the rest of it is just incredible propaganda. And the nearer the world goes to nuclear war, the less time — you're just aware of the less time you've got. You know, to me "Straight To Hell" is a great song and also a very political one. You know, I think that's the kind of thing that we can do best. I definitely would agree with you that that's the good scene. But we do like to play the fun songs, too. I always enjoy singing "Brand New Cadillac" and that to me means, let's dance, you know, as well as let's think.

Revolution Rock: Well, there's no contradiction.

Joe Strummer: No.

Revolution Rock: People who dance think and vice versa.

What about this question of love songs? 'Cause some people think that all love songs are no good; I mean, this is more of a trend among people who are more radical politically and like that kind

of music. But we did a whole show on "Revolution Rock" of all "rebel love songs" and I'd like to see The Clash do some more along those lines. You did "Lovers Rock" and a few other things but I don't see why you can't apply, you know, a high political understanding to women's oppression and relations between men and women and the family and that sort of thing, in a love song. I mean, I would mention The English Beat because I think they've done that well when they were together. But I just wondered, I know you've written a song called "Sex Mad War," around pornography, but I would like to see some songs in that direction: love songs, but from the same outlook of challenging the way things are.

Joe Strummer: Yeah, "Sex Mad War" is really about that there is something wrong between men and women, and we got to find out what it is, rather than ignoring it. Because in Britain they repress everything; everything is repressed; it's like a national hobby, and I feel it's creating some sickness, you know, in the national psyche. And, yeah, I would hate to put any subject out of bounds; I think you can write a song about anything, and who knows what we'll come to write about? I would hate to lay down too many limitations or guidelines. But I've never written very many love songs. I don't know why that is; sometimes I wonder about it. I can't think why.

Revolution Rock: Well, I know The Clash have a number of other things that they have to do, and I want to thank you for talking to WRFG and "Revolution Rock" and I'm looking forward to the music — that's the main thing — the music tomorrow night at the Fox. If you have any last words for our listening audience...

Joe Strummer: Yeah, we decided that we should really work with what we got, and what we're trying to do is to see if there is life after drugs. This is our project for the year of '84. We have a lot of fun, okay? And nobody in this group takes any drug at all, and we have a lot of fun; and I'm wondering how is it possible to communicate to a long-time drug culture that there is life beyond drugs. It's very difficult for people who are on drugs to understand that. I've smoked my fair share of pot, and I don't really think that it gets you anywhere in particular. You know, I felt it was quite a waste of time

and I'd like to save people that time and effort of checking out that scene. But at the same time, we don't want to come on like the Pilgrim fathers. But we really believe that drugs have had their day and didn't come to anything, that the drug culture was started by supposedly being revolutionary, like break the law, have a whiff of this. Nowadays we're trying to carry the message that that thinking doesn't work anymore, that they're not revolutionary because, say, up on Capitol Hill, they'll be doing it in the men's room, you know, your grandfather does it. It's no longer youthful or revolutionary, and we'd like some help on this. We'd like to get people to give it a whirl, see if there is life beyond drugs.

Revolution Rock: Thanks again, and hopefully you'll be back in Atlanta before two years. I do want to ask you, though, when will we have some new Clash music on record?

Joe Strummer: Yeah, I'd say we've got quite a long tour of America by embarking on 44 more dates. And so after that, we're gonna think about making a record. But the reason we haven't made it yet is because we're not ready to make a record; we're a new group, really, starting over; I want some common experiences for us to share, to get in the firing line a bit and depend upon each other, become a real unit, you know. We didn't want to rush into anything; we wanted to build something that was worthwhile that would stand the strain and so we're looking at the summer to do some recording and hopefully get it out by the fall.

Revolution Rock: Well, I'm sure we'll be playing it on "Revolution Rock" and WRFG.

Joe Strummer: What do you use for your title music?

Revolution Rock: What do you mean?

Joe Strummer: Your theme tune that you start the show.

Revolution Rock: I use "Revolution Rock" from *London Calling*.

Joe Strummer: Yeah. Good. I hope so. □

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