

FROM THE LEFT THE MARXIST SECTION NEWSLETTER of ASA

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T.R. Young, Senior Editor



Mein Gott! Hier ist das Neue Rheinische Zeitung!!

**Cartoon by Crumb

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both as well as SOCGRAD!!!

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Race and Gender in the Armed Forces: A Marxian Analysis, by Steve Rosenthal, Guest Editor.

As I write these lines the U.S. Government is threatening new attacks against Iraq. The headline in this morning's New York Times read "U.S. Policy to Isolate Iraq and Iran Is Failing." Allies of the U.S., who are also imperialist rivals of the U.S., are increasingly willing to make their own oil deals with Iran and Iraq, thus destroying the "dual containment" policy the U.S. has pursued since the last Gulf War. If the U.S. carries out unilateral military action against Iraq, the result will be the further alienation of European and Asian imperialist rivals, as well as most Middle East states. If the U.S. does not act, Saddam Hussein's strategy of exploiting conflicts among imperialists will have worked, and other Third World rulers will seek to become more independent of U.S. imperialism by encouraging overtures from other imperialists. In other words, inter-

imperialist contradictions will sharpen either way, and the likelihood of regional and even global war will increase.

Twothirds of the known oil reserves of the world lie in the Persian Gulf/Middle East region. This oil is also of the highest quality and is the easiest to extract from the earth. Its control largely determines who dominates the capitalist world system. If European and Asian imperialists can free themselves from dependency on the U.S. "protection racket" in the Middle East, they will be able to compete more aggressively against the U.S. on all fronts.

The second largest oil reserve in the world is now known to be in the Caucasus region near the Caspian Sea. As a Washington Post article noted July 6, 1997, "the last great oil rush of the 20th century" has all the major capitalist powers aggressively trying to get drilling concessions and to build pipelines to reap the estimated \$4 trillion treasure located in this region that has recently been detached from the former Soviet Union.

The scramble for oil takes place in the context of a long term global crisis of overproduction. Competition among capitalists forces transnational corporations to seek maximum profits by minimizing their costs of production. They seek out the cheapest and most productive labor, introduce laborsaving machinery, and expand productive capacity to capture greater market share. The result is that workers are too impoverished to buy from the capitalists the commodities they have produced with their labor. The instability in global stock markets this past October was a symptom of this crisis of overproduction. When investors begin to doubt that companies can make the fat profits the overvalued stock market promises, a crash and a depression are on the horizon.

It is thus possible that we are witnessing a process that will lead to global depression, fascism, a third World War, and perhaps, anticapitalist workers' revolutions. William Greider, procapitalist author of *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*, is extremely afraid that such history will repeat itself. In a chapter titled "The Ghost of Marx," he warns that global capitalism is rapidly recreating the conditions that in the past produced worldwide depression, fascism and world war, which in turn gave rise to revolutionary Marxist working class struggle.

Who Wants Women in the Military? Who Doesn't?

In "The Widening Gap Between the Military and Society," (*The Atlantic Monthly*, July, 1997), Thomas Ricks analyzed the ongoing political struggles over the social composition and political orientation of the armed forces. The struggle over women and gays in the military is a struggle over which faction of the capitalist class will control the military and be able to use it to serve its interests. The Old Money "internationalist" Eastern Establishment, centered around Rockefeller and Morgan banks and oil, needs a large diverse military leadership that can lead large deployments of ground forces in future wars to protect U.S. global economic, political, and military interests. They therefore want to recruit more female and male graduates of elite universities in the Northeast.

The New Money "isolationist" forces who are fighting for control of the Republican Party prefer a smaller military led by conservative white males with a political ideology resembling that of Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh. Many conservative white male military officers from the South and West, and from conservative religious oriented colleges, identify more with New Money politicians and ideology. They want women to stay home and nurture traditional patriarchal families, to stop having abortions, to get out and stay out of The Citadel, VMI, and the military academies, and to submit to men who express atonement for their misbehavior and promise to resume their role as head of the family.

The influence of New Money can be seen in Promise Keepers rallies, as well as their Black counterparts, the Million Man/Woman Marches. These events urged a patriarchal and patriotic ideology of submission to god, country, and husband that is recognizable as a core element in the ideologies of religious fundamentalism and fascism. They asserted that men are obligated to toil loyally as workers or soldiers for their god, their fatherland, and their family; while women are obligated to serve god, country, and family as faithful wives and mothers. Sexism and patriarchy were thus harnessed to nationalism and patriotism, enslaving both women and men to being exploited workers for capital and soldiers for imperialist war. Abortion must be denied, so that women can produce workers and soldiers for their fatherland.

Who Wants Racial Reconciliation? Who Doesn't?

Just as the conflict between feminists and religious fundamentalists reflects the battle between different factions of the capitalist class, so does the conflict between neoliberal racists and blatant racists. New Money promotes the "New World Order" conspiracist ideology and militiatype formations. The strategic political alliances between the Nation of Islam on the one hand and Lyndon LaRouche, Posse Comitatus, Christian Identity, and other KKK and NeoNazi groups on the other reflects not only their shared fascist ideology of nationalism, sexism, conspiracism, scapegoating, and religious fundamentalism, but perhaps common sources of funding.

These groups thus stand for strict racist segregation enforced by fascist terror. Neoliberals, on the other hand want and need some level of "racial reconciliation." The President who "ended welfare as we know it" has asked the ASA to help gather social science knowledge on race, racism, and race relations for its "Initiative on Race." The ASA is being offered the opportunity once again to provide cover and legitimacy for racist public policy.

Pres. Clinton and the Democratic Party have put more police in black communities, put more black people in prison, covered up the CIADrug cartel connection that contributed to the drug epidemic that serves as the pretext for transforming black communities into police states, raised hundreds of millions of dollars from racist transnational corporations that exploit Third World workers, sent U.S. troops to occupy Haiti, and imposed structural adjustment programs that have starved, sickened, and impoverished hundreds of millions of people.

The ASA leadership asked us to identify sociological research on race, racism, and race relations. There are different kinds of sociological research on race and racism. On the one hand, ASA leaders such as Jill Quadagno and William J. Wilson blame the working class for racism and advocate reformist alliances with Democratic politicians and capitalists. Robert Sampson, Stephen Raudenbush, and Felton Earls in their \$25 million Chicago study of inner city crime and delinquency blamed Black parents' lack of "collective efficacy" for youth violence.

In contrast to this racist, antiworking class research, there is antiracist, proworking class research. I've been on the Oliver C. Cox award committee of the Section on Racial and Ethnic Minorities of the ASA for the past two years, and we have selected two books each of the past two years for recognition as contributions to anti-racist sociological scholarship.

In 1996 we recognized Jim Loewen's "Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong," and Steve Steinberg's "Turning Back: The Retreat from Racial Justice in American Thought and Policy." In 1997 we recognized Jerome Miller's Search and Destroy: African American Males in the Criminal Justice System and Joe Feagin and Hernan Vera's White Racism.

Loewen shows that history textbooks perpetuate the myth that the U.S. Government is the good guy that has almost never done anything wrong and fixes all social problems. Steinberg demonstrates that social scientists have played a major role in legitimizing the "retreat from racial justice" during the past 25 years. They have peddled the ideologies of black genetic or cultural inferiority or pathology. They have opposed "race specific" social policies and thereby justified the destruction of welfare and affirmative action. They have defended neo-liberal "new Democrats" as progressive alternatives to Republican "extremists. Jerome Miller analyzed the increasing criminalization and incarceration of African Americans and the racist and classbiased ideologies that have legitimized these policies. Feagin and Vera reaffirmed the pervasiveness of racism throughout American society and the need for fundamental and radical transformation of the entire society in order to uproot racism.

Earlier collaborations between social scientists and the Government, such as the Myrdal study, An American Dilemma, provide some clues about what the Clinton Administration is up to. The two sharpest critics of Myrdal were Oliver Cox and Ralph Ellison. Cox wrote that Myrdal was hired to discredit Marxist analysis of racism and to put the problem into a framework that would legitimize gradual reformism under the direction of the ruling class. Ellison, in his review that was reprinted in The Death of White Sociology, pointed out that the approach of World War II had a lot to do with the Myrdal study. U.S. leaders feared that African Americans, mindful that they had returned from World War I to the KKK, Jim Crow, and lynchings, might not be eager to fight in the next imperialist war. The study was in part intended to assure blacks that if they fought again for

"democracy" and "freedom" elsewhere, they might actually obtain some afterwards in the U.S.

Ellison's insight is timely today. Clinton's global business backers expect him to deploy U.S. armed forces from the Persian Gulf to Somalia to the South China Sea in defense of U.S. control of oil and natural gas reserves, markets, and cheap labor. Apologizing for the Tuskegee experiment, opening the door of Central High School in Little Rock, and promoting an initiative on race" reflect U.S. imperialism's need for "diversity" in both military and civilian life.

While different factions in the capitalist class battle over what forms of racism and sexism they will employ to control the working class, Marxists should analyze and oppose all forms of racism, sexism, and imperialist wars. We should also oppose the racist alliance between the Democratic Party and the leadership of the ASA.

The Center for Democratic Values' "Arguing with the Right" conference was a rousing success. Proposed followup projects include a national Left versus Right debate in D.C. or New York, a book, "Arguing with the Right," local Left versus Right debates, and a California CDV conference in 1998. The "Left versus Right" debate with Barbara Ehrenreich, Cornel West, David Frum, and Stuart Butler, on November 6 at Capital University in Columbus (before an SRO crowd of 1000 people) will be aired on CSPAN during the week of Christmas. Check for the exact times for "Does the American Economy Serve Democratic Values" on the [C-SPAN Web Page](#)

We have viewed the debate with students, a DSA local, and a wellknown filmmaker, and have concluded that it is riveting and provokes enthusiastic discussion. We recommend that you watch it and videotape it for future community, and class use. Please send your comments to us at:

Ron Aronson, [Center for Democratic Values](#),
5700 Cass Avenue Room 2426, Detroit, MI 48202
Raronso@Cll.Wayne.Edu

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL FOR PAPERS

The Marxist Section of the American Sociological Association is soliciting submissions for the round-tables to be presented at the ASA meetings in San Francisco this August. We are interested in a broad range of topics from scholars and activists and are open to a variety of presentation formats. We are especially interested in encouraging topics that link traditional Marxist, Progressive discussions to extremely relevant contemporary issues which are not often addressed directly in the section, such as race and gender. Submissions should be sent by February 1st to:

Stephanie Shanks-Meile Indiana University Northwest Department of Sociology
3400 Broadway, Gary, IN 46408
Email: socsteph@aol.com
telephone number: 219-980-6787

Jean Belkir requires papers for his Roundtable: "Rethinking Marxism by Integrating Racism, Sexism and Classism Issues into Marxism"

Carlos Muntaner calls for papers on "Marxism and the Health Care System."

**Mort Wenger, Univ. of Louisville in Louisville, KY, has agreed to be the new editor of CS for a three-year non-renewable term, succeeding Val Burris. Val and Mort will work out the technical details of the transition. By the time that is concluded (my guess is, before the big meetings in August) we will also have made another change, to a "commercial" publisher for production, subs, advertising, etc. Negotiations are under way. Editorial content will continue to be in our hands. Whoever the publisher will be, it will be a simpatico one. In other business, a series of motions basically confirming how we do editorial business was approved. They involve the reviewing process, the structuring of the Board, and a number of miscellaneous suggestions about improving content. If you are interested in receiving a copy of these, please email Marty Oppenheimer before 15 Dec at:

oppfink@compuserve.com

If you have questions about who handles what during the transition from Val to Mort, please write to them directly.

Val's email is: vburris@oregon.uoregon.edu

Mort's address is: mgweng01@ulkyvm.louisville.edu

Travel Seminars in Cuba

The Center for Development Studies is sponsoring two programs in Cuba, a travel and research seminar from July 5 to July 28, 1998 and a six credit undergraduate course, including two weeks at Presbyterian College from May 17 to May 29 and four weeks in Cuba from May 31 to June 27, 1998. Contact Dr. Charles McKelvey, phone: (864) 833-8385 or Email: cemck@cs1.presby.edu.

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PART II: Pam Roby is Editor of the collection and, in her capacity as President of SSSP asked the Chairs of the various sections of SSSP to share:

1. a vision of a Just World in relation to the mission of each Division.
2. one or two examples which embody this vision.
3. a list of difficulties and obstacles in working toward that vision.
4. a list of key references upon which to ground the quest for a just world.

A Brief Summary of the first part appeared in the [last issue](#) of FROM THE LEFT. Below is the remainder:

L. Sexual Behavior, Politics and Communities: Paula Rust and Lloyd Klein, Co-Chairs:

Mission:

1. Civil Liberties for sexual expression and sexual being.
2. Production of responsible scholarship.
3. Provision of forum for both academic and social activism.
4. Mentoring, networking among activists/scholars.

Projects: Denmark is mentioned as a place where same-sex marriages are possible even if adoption of children is not.

M. Social Problems Theory: J. William Spencer, Jim Holstein and Donileen Loseke, Co-Chairs:

Mission:

1. Theoretic understanding of social problems through empirical research.
2. Inter-connections of social problems.
3. Generation of a knowledge base for progressive social policy on all the problems in SSSP.
4. Giving a Voice to those who challenge status quo.

Projects: no special projects were mentioned; importance of daily work in teaching classes of social problems is central to meeting the missions above.

N. Youth, Aging and the Life Course: Timothy Diamond, Chair:

Mission: to use the lens of race, class, gender nationality and sexuality to more clearly see the sources of oppression for both older and younger people.

Thus members of the Section carry on the tradition of critical inquiry into the root causes of such oppression.

And, of late, there is concern about how the very categories of children/elderly, are created and reified and used to generate Inter- generational conflict.

Projects: The Gray Panthers, Sweden is mentioned.

For copies of the booklet, write:

Executive Office, SSSP
906 McClung Tower,
U/Tennessee, Knoxville, Tn

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THE PROMISE KEEPERS: An analysis by Chip Berlet.

Capitalist socioeconomic change is currently rooted in the globalization of the world economy on behalf of multinational corporations, and has resulted in serious economic and social dislocation with resulting grievances prompting mass movement responses.

Around the world, the backlash against globalized capitalism has been largely from the right, and centered on xenophobic nationalism and regressive religious fundamentalism, sometimes in tandem.

In the US, the social liberation movements of the 1960s and 1970s forced changing relations between:

- Whites and Blacks (and other people of color)
- men and women,
- straight and gay

At the same time, we are witnessing in the US another of the periodic religious revitalization movements based in Christian fundamentalism, with elements of apocalyptic millennialism as we approach the year 2000.

This creates political opportunity structures that can be utilized by:

- Revivalist Evangelists
- Rightwing Republicans
- Third Party Rightists
- Theocratic Christian nationalists
- Neofascist organizers

or some coalition of the above. In this context, a fascist outcome for PK is only one of many possibilities, and while it cannot be dismissed, it is not the most likely turn of events. Moving the electoral system further to the right is a much more likely outcome.

So I am arguing for a distinction between a movement that has a fascist potential and a movement that is protofascist. That is the difference between a movement that has elements and echoes of fascism, as opposed to a movement that is actually consolidating its fascist elements into an ideology.

In this regard, the Promise Keepers is more like the middle-class "Burgher" parties of Weimar before their demands were ignored and a substantial section of the Burgher movement moved into open support for the fascist NSDAP. Right now the PK is a right-wing populist movement with a evangelical Christian narrative and a patriarchal vision.

We need to be aware that right-wing populism can act as both a precursor and a building block of fascism, with anti-elitist conspiracism and ethnocentric scapegoating as shared elements. The dynamic of right-wing populism interacting with and facilitating fascism in interwar Germany was chronicled by Peter Fritzsche in "Rehearsals for Fascism: Populism and Political Mobilization in Weimar Germany."

But we are not living in a period congruent with that of Weimar, and predictions of capitalist collapse are a dime a dozen.

The Promise Keepers seek to provide meaning for men in a time of chaos and uncertainty, but implicit in the agenda are some obvious themes that have political effect:

Christian men will solve our society's problems (This is sexist, antisemitic, and anti- all non-Christian belief structures). Men have the final say in marital decision-making. Abortion is a sin and must be banned Gays and lesbians are sinful, and must not act on their identity.

If there was a meaningful left alternative, the legitimate economic grievances felt by many in the Promise Keepers could provide a point of departure to argue against the PK solution which is gender and religious oppression through the scapegoating of women and gays, non-Christians, insufficiently devout Christians, and liberal secular humanists.

Our task thus becomes not a condemnation of promise keeping so much as an effort to teach, to re-direct, to de-limit and to extract the positive moments of such movements and to link them to a much richer, much more complex movement for human rights and human dignity; inclusive of male rights and male dignities along with female rights and female dignities, honors and esteems. **TRY**

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Patti Hamilton, at Texas Woman's University, has created the [Center for Nonlinear Social Science](#) in the Nursing School at TWU.

Hamilton and her associates have broken new ground in applying the new sciences of Chaos and Complexity to sociological data sets.

It is the particular virtue of her work that she has successfully applied non-linear methods of data analysis to sociological data...instead of trying to find tight correlations between variables, nonlinear research tools seek to find hidden attractors in data which are not amenable to linear analysis.

Hamilton and Angela Vicenza have founded a journal, Chaos and Complexity in Nursing which serves a valuable resource to those in sociology of medicine in particular and for those interested in methods for the analysis of nonlinearity in social process generally. To subscribe, write to Dr. Vicenza at SouthConnStUniversity.