

# Letters

## The worm turns

**A**FTER BLITZKRIEG WHAT, OH Israel? A "final solution" perhaps to die *Palestinenfrage*?

—Paul Tarsus  
Washington, D.C.

## Punk, Schmunk

**I**F MANIFEST DESTINY IS THE Dictators' "debut album" (*ITT*, Mar. 22), then what do you call the album they released three years ago? This would be a quibble if it weren't symptomatic of the problems with Michael Kimmel's review of the Dictators and the Stranglers.

What does either band have to do with punk rock? The Dictators play a kind of heavy metal rock that is hardly "new wave." And the Stranglers sound like warmed-over Doors to me, and to most critics with ears. Putting every new, mildly outrageous rock band under the punk rubric simply will not do.

Surely we need more rigorous critical standards than Kimmel's. If punk in Great Britain is an angry, minimal, fast-moving music played by working-class youth, then why lump the Stranglers—whose leaders, Hugh Cornwell and Jean Jacques Burnel, are both college graduates from upper-middle-class families, around 30 years old, and long-time rock musicians—with the new music?

Kimmel's main point—that there's a difference between British and U.S. punk—is no doubt true, but hardly novel.

—Dan Devine  
San Francisco

## The Nazis are not the real menace

**I**N REPLY TO DAN ROTHBART'S letter (*ITT*, Mar. 22), I was there at the St. Louis Nazi march and what I saw I didn't like. Not the Nazis. I didn't hear a word from them. It was the football helmeted mob behind them yelling "Death to the Nazis" that repulsed me.

Ten years ago I watched the left get the shit beat out of them to stop a war and now I see the left demanding that a few (I emphasize few) nuts be lynched because of their ideas!

What has happened?! Ever since 1925 the Nazis have been using the socialist/Trotskyite left to get them power. Yes, the single most powerful tool the Nazis had in Germany was the fear of further communist revolutions like the one in 1919-21. Now, the left is playing right into the Nazis' hands again. I suspect this is because leaders of the left (like Rothbart) are simply either too ignorant of history or too stupid in general to realize this. The best way to stop the Nazis is to leave them alone! (At least, physically.) There are so few of them they'd have a hard time beating some of the smaller socialist parties in an election.

With 99 percent of the country hating their very sight, why worry? Now the KKK and other right-wing parties, maybe, but the Nazis are a joke. However, I do see a very great danger: Rothbart. If we let such thinking dominate the socialist left, we no longer would need to fear the Nazis. It would be the opposite part of the political spectrum that would be the threat to freedom.

—George Heth  
Granite City, Ill.

## Boxed in

**E**LISSA CLARKE (*ITT*, MAR. 22) correctly points out that the union shop steward system in auto plants has deteriorated. During the 25 years that I

conducted union education at UAW locals I witnessed this deterioration. In my book, *The UAW from Crusade to One Party Union*, I record the conversation I had with a young worker in the Chrysler Plymouth plant. He told me:

"You old guys always brag about your victories. No one will deny that they were great victories. Fringe benefits are fine, paid vacations, pensions, holiday pay—all are fine.

"But how about what goes on in the shop? You old birds should work in the shop on some of those unsafe machines, slip on oily floors, stumble over castings and stock boxes that clutter aisles, breathe in the fumes and chemicals, work your ass off to keep up on the assembly line, shiver in winter when there's not enough heat and swelter in summer when there's no ventilation."

I told him that in the early days of the CIO workers could settle grievances on the job. Stewards had power to call workers off the job until pressing grievances got settled. But later labor-management relations took power away from stewards. A no-strike pledge was added to contracts, which gave management the right to fire workers and stewards involved in work stoppages.

In time the auto workers not only lost control over their work, but also over their union. The UAW's democratic factionalism evolved into a one-party state and the union hierarchy worked hand-in-hand with management to discipline workers.

Today the union-management framework has the workers boxed in. The union's constitution is stacked against them. So is the union contract; so are the International officers and representatives. And if the workers rebel against this formidable combination they will soon learn that government boards, the courts and the forces of law and order are also stacked against them.

—Frank Marquart  
Albuquerque, N.M.

## Information please

**A**T CORNELL UNIVERSITY WE are attempting to reconstruct the historical conditions under which producer cooperative enterprises started in the U.S. From our study of the last 180 years of American history, we hope to derive conclusions relevant to the cooperative movement today. A major problem facing us is the lack of primary sources.

The definition of producer cooperatives we are using excludes agricultural and consumer cooperatives. By producers' cooperatives we mean producing organizations in which members attempt to gain control over the use of their own labor. Examples are the boot and shoe cooperatives in New England, the Coopers' cooperative in Minneapolis, and plywood cooperatives on the West Coast.

Any information readers could send would be appreciated. Please send information to: Prof. Howard Aldrich, NYSSILR, Cornell University, 387 Ives Hall, Ithaca, NY 14853.

—Howard Aldrich  
Ithaca, N.Y.

## In praise of Gornick

**I**T IS HARDLY SURPRISING THAT a book portraying American communists as ordinary, even attractive human beings—even as ordinary human beings—would elicit all sorts of reviews, ranging from *Commentary* spleen to admiration. The subject, even all these years later, often triggers visceral responses. I happen to admire greatly Vivian Gornick's *The Romance of American Communism* and said so in my review in the *Chicago Tribune*.

Incidentally, that such a review should appear routinely in that paper is no little commentary on how much the times have changed. I can see, however, how reasonable people at various points along the political spectrum could have a different view.

But the negative portions of Maurice Isserman's review seem to depend on a critical tool denied all but him. He says that "Unfortunately, she does not often let her subjects speak for themselves..." and "ends up developing a set of stereotypes of the Communist experience as flat and unconvincing as those churned out by the sectarian and witch-hunting schools of communist historiography."

How does Isserman know what took place at those interviews? Or does he have a unique capacity to know—because the interviews didn't turn out the way he thinks they should have—that they were improperly conducted, whether consciously or unconsciously, to document the thesis that Gornick brought to them?

I wasn't there either and I don't know whether Gornick had a thesis before she began her project or whether the thesis emerged from the interviews. In a case like that (which is to say with almost all books), the reader can only depend on the writer's reputation (splendid) and on the evidence of the book itself. To me that evidence is both moving and convincing. And in any case it hardly seems remarkable to assert that the Communists were motivated by passion and that that passion in most cases caused them to "do terrible things to themselves and to one another."

Finally, if caring deeply made the Communists a stereotype, although in Gornick's superbly-written profiles they appeared to be a richly varied lot, I wish the mainstream parties would also qualify.

—Richard J. Walton

Richard J. Walton is the author of *Henry Wallace, Harry Truman and the Cold War*, among other books.

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—R. Simmons  
San Francisco

## Throw away those crutches

**T**HROUGH THE EYES OF A Socialist, I suppose capitalism does resemble "ruins going to seed, overrun by weeds of inflation, unemployment, cynicism and exhausted possibilities beyond the repair of all the king's wizards and their technological magic" (*ITT* editorial, Mar. 22). Likewise, the capitalist views socialism as a political and economic philosophy inherently destructive, obstructing individual liberty and preventing a society from reaching its fullest potential in terms of economic growth and development—a system that reeks of inefficiency and produces individuals lacking incentive.

However, to the realist, the preceding description of capitalism would seem not to necessarily apply; while the definition of socialism would probably, like it or not, be on target.

Capitalism is constantly being knocked by the left, but the true capitalist philosophy has yet to be embraced by any country, so the criticisms of a nonexistent system becomes meaningless. It is true that inflation, poverty and unemployment abound in America—one of the most capitalistic nations on this planet—but this does not necessarily mean capitalism is the culprit.

Perpetual deficit spending, crowding out in the financial markets, increased taxes, and government moving perilously closer to the left (none of which are true capitalistic traits) are the real causes of the economic degradation of this

country. Of course businesses will not perform in such an atmosphere—and, of course, inflation and unemployment will worsen under such conditions.

I often hear that a true socialist system would be ideal—if only it could be accomplished—Total Equality! However, men were not meant to be equal. The harder workers, those who possess the attributes of perseverance, determination and drive should be rewarded. Government should only enter the scene as the "great equalizer" to assure equality of opportunity. Each of us should be given the same chance to advance ourselves. Upgrading educational facilities and providing easier access to these facilities by all is the answer. Beyond that, the individual should be left on his/her own to reach his/her fullest potential—without the crutch of socialism.

—James W. Kirkpatrick  
Kansas City, Mo.

## The right appeal to the wrong people

**W**HEN MARTIN CHANCEY ASKS the left parties to unite (*ITT*, Mar. 22), he is making the right appeal to the wrong people. Why trust the future of American socialism to a few thousand sectarians who care more about their own organizations than about building a popular socialist movement?

Let us, instead, look at the two million un-affiliated leftists, and the millions of issue-oriented activists in the health, environmental, labor, education, etc. movements. These people are not waiting for the "left" to "come to its senses." If many of their efforts are weak and isolated, it is because none of us have developed a compelling vision of a new society.

This vision is more likely to come from people with left ideas immersed in the mass movement, than from one of the left parties. The vision must be understandable to all, even its opponents. It should be as appealing as fundamentalism, as true as "science," exciting, hopeful, responsible, moral and possible. It will show a new world, already in the belly of the old. Community, equality, sacrifice—values already held by the majority of people, can be the basis of this movement.

**I**N THESE TIMES seems to be trying to reach the two million unaffiliated leftists. But *ITT* and the two million seem to suffer much the same problem: Isolation. Many leftists reach into the mass movement on single issues, and *ITT* reaches these with analysis of some issues and some socialist perspective. But nobody yet reaches into the bulk of the blue and white collar working class population with socialist ideas.

We must destroy any notion of the left as "future managers." From the people, the left should learn humility and working equality. To the people, the left can bring its understanding and vision.

How? First a national network of interested people. Then, fliers on specific issues (nuclear power, Israel, miners, etc.) that develop our common goals. Distributed at plant gates, shopping centers, regularly—the feed-back brought to the pages of *ITT* or a new national co-ordinating publication. What do you think?

—Frank Kashner  
Lynn, Mass.

## Making a Big Move?

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Staughton Lynd

## Labor and the Law

# Issues raised by the coal strike



The miners' right to strike is under attack from three directions: 1. In contract negotiations; 2. In Congress; 3. In the courts.

The contract agreed to by UMW negotiators on Feb. 6 contained a new "job stability" article permitting an employer to discharge all or some employees who have "picketed, threatened, coerced, fomented or otherwise been involved in the cause of an unauthorized work stoppage." (*Coal Patrol*, Feb. 15, 1977.) This contract was rejected by the Bargaining Council. The Pittsburgh & Midway contract agreed to after the Carter administration's intervention still provided for discipline of employees who cause an "unauthorized work stoppage or sympathy strike." (*New York Times*, Feb. 25, 1977.) This contract was rejected by the rank and file. So was the national contract presented for ratification on March 4-5, which contained a similar clause stating:

"Where it is determined that an employee has picketed or otherwise been actively involved in causing an unauthorized work stoppage or sympathy strike at the operation of any signatory employer, he shall be subject to discipline, including discharge." (Michael Yarrow, in *New York Times*, Mar. 15.)

The fourth contract, being voted on as this is written, reportedly withdraws the above article but substitutes "an even harsher anti-wildcat plan." (*New York Times*, Mar. 15.)

In Congress, as I pointed out last month, an amendment to the Labor Reform Act was adopted in the House of Representatives that states as follows:

"Where there exists an agreement between an employer and a labor organization, whether express or implied, not to strike, picket or lockout, the Board, if it finds that the public interest would be served thereby, shall have the power to

petition any district court of the United States within any district where either or both of the parties reside or transact business, for such temporary injunctive relief or restraining order as is necessary to prevent any person not authorized by a repre-

tract language and the Thompson amendment is not so much the wildcat strike as the sympathy strike.

The law already prohibits to the extent any law can prohibit something a strike by coal miners over an arbitrable grievance.

### Even without a no-strike clause in the new UMW contract, the law can imply such a restriction from the agreement to arbitrate disputes.

sentative of employees of the employer being struck or picketed from engaging in, or inducing or encouraging any employee of the employer to engage in conduct in breach of such agreement, irrespective of the nature of the dispute underlying such strike, picket or lockout, and such court shall have jurisdiction to grant to such party or the Board such temporary injunctive relief or restraining order as it deems just and proper."

This amendment was introduced by Frank Thompson of New Jersey, a liberal, and appears to be supported by the AFL-CIO. Thompson's amendment was offered as a substitute to an amendment by Rep. Ellenborn which would have permitted either the NLRB or "a party," i.e., the employer, to seek an injunction. It is unclear whether the Thompson substitute retains this element.

The amendment goes far beyond the Supreme Court decisions authorizing a federal court to enjoin an employee who strikes in violation of a no-strike clause. It authorizes a federal court to enjoin any one who induces or encourages an employee to strike in violation of a no-strike clause. It blatantly violates the First Amendment.

The real target of both the quoted con-

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As one might expect, the Third Circuit Court of Appeals, which hears appeals from district court cases in Pennsylvania, is leading the way. On Feb. 2, it handed down a frightening decision, *Republic Steel Corp. vs. Mine Workers*, 97 LRRM 2836.

In *Republic Steel* employees of the Nemacon Mine owned by the Buckeye Coal Company set up picket lines at the Clyde and Banning Mines owned by Republic Steel. The court held that Republic could have been issued an injunction restraining its own employees from honoring the Nemacon picket line if the dispute between the Nemacon miners and Buckeye was itself arbitrable under the Nemacon-Buckeye contract. Worse yet, it combined this holding with its holding in *Eazor Express vs. Teamsters*, 520 F. 2d 951 (3d Cir. 1975), according to which a union is liable in damages if it fails to do everything in its power, including the use of internal union discipline against strikers, to end an unauthorized strike. Accordingly, it held that the UMW international union could be liable in damages (money) to Republic for not stopping the Nemacon strike because of "the crucial communication link which exists between the international union and both sets of strikers."

This country needs a constitutional amendment protecting the right to strike—and a socialist government to pass the amendment.

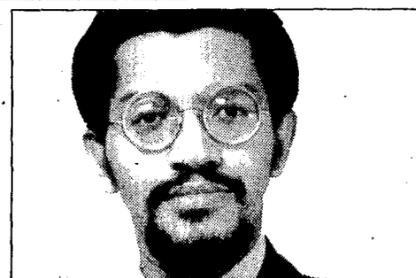
P.S. My little book, *Labor Law for the Rank and Filer*, is now available from Singlejack Books, Box 1906, San Pedro, CA 90733. It costs \$1.50.

Staughton Lynd, a longtime civil rights and antiwar activist, practices law in Youngstown, Ohio. He and Alice Lynd edited *Rank and File, Personal Histories by Working-Class Organizers*. His address is 1694 Timber Court, Niles, OH 44446.

Manning Marable

## From the grassroots

# The politics of disco



It is hard to argue with success in capitalist America. The era of the '70s brought an end, at least temporarily, to the black music of commitment, soul and inspiration. Otis Redding and Carla Thomas are being replaced by the mindlessness of Barry White (or is it barely white?). Black teenagers began dancing to "Disco Duck" and "Saturday Night Fever." Leo Sayer and David Bowie became standard features on R&B charts. Mellow Marvin Gaye's message of "ain't nothing like the real thing" was transmuted into the bluntly exploitative "give it up." Black popular music replaced the Beatles and the Beach Boys; the Rolling Stones and Mick Jagger began to play reggae.

Now disco reigns supreme in the world of black music. The process is not hard to understand from a grassroots perspective. Commercial success and profits breed instant artistic imitators; creativity is buried along with the longstanding cultural traditions of the blues.

For every Stevie Wonder there is a George Benson, a skillful jazz musician-turned-vocalist. Even before his latest album, *Weekend in L.A.*, Benson had made several million album sales via his "Wonderesque" imitation of a Leon Russell song, "This Masquerade." For every James Brown we now have John Travolta of *Saturday Night Fever*, white America's response to "Please, please, please" on the disco dance floor. Disco itself can only be described as a shallow vein of "velvet-

ized" popular music, plastic and processed, 20 miles wide and two inches deep, cutting across the aesthetic plains of popular culture. The driving, overtly sensual sound of disco influences everything else on the music frontiers, driving the last remnants of creative soul underground.

### Disco now reigns supreme in the world of black music. The process is not hard to understand: Commercial success and profits breeds instant imitators; creativity gets buried with the blues.

No one would openly accuse the premier black instrumental group Earth, Wind and Fire of capitulating to the disco movement. The black group's true roots are found within jazz. EWF's leaders and creator, Maurice White, is a veteran of the Ramsey Lewis Trio. Recording for Warner Brothers in the early '70s, EWF was thought of as a jazz group rather than within the Barry White/Donna Summer school of popular music. EWF developed a small but loyal elite of followers during those hungry years, but its records were far from being commercially successful.

In 1972 the music world experienced a major transition. Jazz was becoming more and more synonymous with commercially popular R&B. There was an emphasis on black artists like Herbie Han-

cock to move from the Miles Davis-type renditions to a more popular form of musical entertainment, oriented for a younger, integrated audience. Political content and cultural anecdotes in black jazz were no longer considered chic. Thus Herbie Hancock used his considerable tal-

ents to write the title score for Charles Bronson's thriller *Death Wish*, an anti-black, quasi-fascist law and order film.

Earth, Wind and Fire eventually followed the lead of Hancock and others. Although its roots in jazz remain evident, EWF emphasizes a hard rock'n'roll delivery. It began to appeal consciously to white suburban audiences at some concerts. Most importantly, its political content during this age of rampant individualism and esoteric aesthetics became "sweetness and light."

In its last four albums, each of which has sold two million copies or more, the message is a healthy serving of existential nothingness, topped with a musical cherry. Recording for Columbia, EWF purports a basic theme of quasi-Buddhism, extreme individualism and a sort

of "keep your head to the sky" pseudo-philosophy with which whites can readily relate. True, Phil Bailey's falsetto solos are reminiscent of Smokey Robinson at times. But nothing of the simple delivery in Robinson's "Tracks of My Tears" is apparent in the ornamental, embellished sound that EWF so often generates.

If there is a left tendency within the disco generation, it is found within the Parliament/Funkadelics. George Clinton and company's latest effort, *Funkentel-echy vs. the Placebo Syndrome*, on Casablanca records is P-Funk at its vintage best. For all of its emphasis on dancing and body language, disco has been from the start sexually repressive and otherworldly. P-Funk turns the energy of disco inside out to generate a deliberately excessive, unrestrained beat. On the album's finest cut, "Flash Light," the disco score becomes a passion play that reminds me of Jimi Hendrix. Still, like EWF, there is little political relevance here; funk is collective individualism or maybe gritty sensuality, but it remains a singularly alienated form of musical creativity.

In the end, black music and black culture have become more and more imitative of the dominant, capitalist culture. For every Al Green, singing within the genres of the black church and the Memphis blues tradition, there are a dozen other creative black artists who would rather imitate KC and the Sunshine Band. ■