

MANNING MARABLE

FROM THE GRASSROOTS

Corporate Political Action Committees are buying Democrats

ONE GENERATION AGO, THE Democratic Party appeared to represent the general interests of common, working people. As Franklin D. Roosevelt stated in campaign addresses, the Republican leadership was allied "with the old enemies of peace—business and financial monopoly, speculation, reckless banking, class antagonism, sectionalism, war profiteering." The Republicans "considered the government of the United States as a mere appendage" to the workings of major corporations.

The distinction between the major political parties was clear cut: Democrats represented labor, ethnic minorities, progressives, small farmers and the South; Republicans were the champions of lais-



sez faire economics and the interests of big business.

The myth of the Democratic Party as being truly representative of working people's interests has been dying a slow and ambiguous death for 40 years. Perhaps the most interesting element contributing to the demise of the Democratic Party's

"pro-labor" image has been business' open financial support for many Democratic candidates. Through the development of the corporate political action committees (PACs), businesses have repeatedly backed Democrats in House and Senate races who advocate traditionally "Republican policies."

Since 1974, the number of PACs has swollen from 89 to 776. The corporate committees have accounted for about 15 percent of all congressional campaign expenditures. By 1980, there will be about 1000 PACs. Corporate leaders have expressed continued confidence in the Republican Party; less openly, however, through the donations of the PACs, corporations roughly split their millions in financial gifts between the two parties.

"The irony here is that although the public perceives us as carrying business' water, much of big business really is supporting our enemy," complained Rep. Guy Vander Jagt, head of the House GOP campaign committee, to the *Wall Street Journal*. "Many of these business groups care much more about buying access to incumbents than any philosophical principles." Significantly, the PACs gave five times more to Democratic incumbents in the House than to their Republican challengers.

Corporations recognize that Democratic Party populist rhetoric and traditional support of labor interests, in the long run, mean absolutely nothing. Louisiana Democrat J. Bennett Johnston, chair of the Senate subcommittee on energy and appropriations, received roughly \$200,000 from PACs, although he had no Republican opponent in the general election. Democratic Rep. John Murphy of New

York, chair of the House Merchant Committee, received approximately \$70,000 from PACs. His Republican opponent, a conservative from Staten Island, received nothing. Nevada Sen. James Santini, a conservative Democrat, received \$60,000 from business PACs; his Republican challenger acquired about \$1,000.

Nevertheless, Republican incumbents in the Senate and House receive about 20 times as much financial support from corporations than their Democratic opponents.

The emergence and growth of the PACs in recent years is indicative of a larger problem—the growing correlation between wealth and electoral success. According to Federal Election Commission statistics on House general elections in 1976, winning candidates raised over \$42 million as against \$23 million for their opponents. Most Democratic candidates are just as eager to court business financial support as are Republicans.

The net result of the proliferation of PACs is ideological confusion, the abandonment of basic political principles and the de facto merger of the greater part of the Democratic Party into the Republican Party. The Democratic Party of Roosevelt advocated a genuine left-of-center social and economic program; the Democratic Party of Carter bares only the slightest resemblance to its pro-working class origins. Today, dollars rather than principles determine the destiny of the Democratic Party.

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BOOKS

Babeuf: from democrat to People's Tribune

By Margaret George

GRACCHUS BABEUF: The First Revolutionary Communist

By R.B. Rose
Stanford University Press, Stanford, Calif. 1978

Prof. Rose's remarkable biography gives us a basic history lesson: If we want to understand an historical person, we must see her/him in proper historical context. So, if we want to understand Gracchus Babeuf we must see him against the whole of the French Revolution (and if we want to understand the French Revolution, we could follow the revolutionary career of Babeuf).

Generations of leftists have venerated Babeuf as a theoretical pioneer of a communist society, have read in anthologies of "modern socialist thought" snippets of his writings, complete with small-print prefaces with thumbnail biographical data. But Rose's Babeuf, so utterly different from the frozen figure of the anthologies, is a man in motion, a man literally created by the Revolution, in turn acting with profound creativity upon it, and in the end grasping, and embodying, its fundamental contradiction.

Respectful petty bourgeois democrat in 1789, advocate of the "agrarian law" in 1791, Jacobin agitator in 1793, Babeuf became "revolutionary communist" in 1796.

Francois-Noel Babeuf (the "Gracchus" was his post-1793 identity, appropriate name for the "Tribune of the People") was at the start of the Revolution a self-educated, provincial *feudiste*, scraping a meager living as a clerk for aristocratic landlords.

But Babeuf's own origins were "plebeian"—"born in the dirt," he said—and his response to the Revolution was immediately personal: for him, its highest promise was equality, the ending of aristocratic privilege, of course, but even more, the swift closing of the ageless gap between rich and poor. By the summer of 1789, as peasant revolts spread in his native Picardy, he was on their side, commissioned clerk for peasant villagers claiming their rights against both aristocratic lords and enclosing capitalist farmers.

In 1790-91, Babeuf was in a whirl of activity, arguing peasants' cases, organizing tax rebellions, publishing fiery pamphlets, addressing petitions to the National Assembly in Paris indicting what he now called the "gothic filth" of feudalism. Direct action plus theory—Babeuf was putting the two together as a leader of agrarian revolt in Northeast France.

His pamphlets offered a principled, practical and simple program: How should this newly enlightened society assure the equality that was the "natural right" of all its citizens? Clearly, by the equal distribution of land, a great sharing-out to be started with the national appropriation of huge landed estates, which in any case had been anciently won by feudal conquest, by "usurpation and fraud."

By 1792 Babeuf had had bruising confrontations with local bourgeois revolutionary authorities. Whatever their hostility to a counterrevolutionary aristocracy, they had not made the Revolution to assault the sacred rights of landed or any other kind of private property. He fled to Paris, where there was some chance of safety from Picard legal prosecution and a democratic movement full of friends and potential followers.

He found in Paris a new revolutionary movement, a new revolutionary reality that permanently altered his program for the construction of social equality. From the middle of the summer, Paris was pounded by the revolutionary fervor of the *sans-culottes*, the Democracy of city artisans, journeymen, wage-earners, day-laborers. Their power base in neighborhood clubs, the "People" had seized control of the Revolution, to save it from its enemies abroad—French emigre aristocrats prancing back with the armies of the Austrian and Prussian monarchs, and its enemies at home—the King, in secret contact with the Austrian invaders, the remaining aristocrats, the bulk of the Catholic clergy, and almost the whole of the big bourgeoisie.

Indeed, *sans-culotte* fury focused most

specifically on the merchants, bankers, speculators, "hoarders and monopolizers," whose economic "liberty" resulted in scarcities of essential goods and ruinously rising prices. From the incredible, brilliant (and brief) experience of the Democracy in power, Babeuf learned the politics of mass revolutionary dictatorship. From it too he decided that the key

"I distinguish two parties... One wants the republic of a million...the other wants the republic of the other 24 million."

to the "common happiness" was, not equal access to land, but popular control of the *distribution* of social wealth.

From 1794 to his end Babeuf was either in prison or in hiding from imprisonment. But he wrote and published steadily. It was his most creative period—these months during which the Revolution lurched convulsively from the Jacobin/*sans-culotte* dictatorship to the political triumph (though a beleaguered one) of the big bourgeoisie.

Babeuf watched the betrayal of the *sans-culotte* Democracy—the arrest of its militants and the closing of its clubs, the forbidding of popular political activity—by its Jacobin, radical but still bourgeois, allies. With the war going well and the economy relatively stabilized, Robespierre and other Jacobin leaders could dispense with the irritant of direct democracy.

To the Tribune of the People this was naked tyranny, the violation of the essential core of the Revolution. He watched the overthrow of Robespierre and the Jacobin government, and the substitution of a different sort of dictatorship—that of the big bourgeoisie. As the rich inherited the Revolution, and proceeded to dismantle the price controls and economic restrictions of the Jacobin/Democracy period, Babeuf understood the real nature of this furious phase of the seminal class warfare which was the French Revolution.

His insight is too important to paraphrase. "I distinguish two parties...both desire the republic, but each wants a republic after its own fashion.... One wants the republic of a million which was always the enemy, the dominator, the ex-

actor, the oppressor, the bloodsucker of the 24 other millions....; the other party wants the republic of those other 24 millions....who are defining it and dying for its safety and its glory."

The final Babeuf is the proto-communist extrapolated and fixed in our socialist anthologies. He continued, still in hiding, to try to revitalize a "plebeian party" out of the demoralized, police-harassed *sans-culotte* Democracy. Its goal was an *egalite parfaite*, a society without private property, in which everyone worked and shared equally the products of the collective labor.

Confused, beaten, tormented by economic hardship, the Democracy did not respond. So Babeuf and committed colleagues, in the "Conspiracy for Equality," organized for an interim seizure of political power in its name, a temporary dictatorship to hold against the "million" and construct the institution proper to a democratic and egalitarian society.

Infiltrated by police agents, informed upon by one member, the Conspiracy was smashed by the bourgeois government. Brought to a show-place jury trial the conspirators were convicted, though on one count only—that of advocating the Constitution of 1793, conveniently made a capital offense by the new government. "Extenuating circumstances" saved most of them (for prison), but Babeuf and one other were sentenced to death and executed by guillotine the following day, May 27, 1797.

It is hard to imagine a better biography than Rose's. It makes simply irrelevant all the old attempts to fit Babeuf into 19th and 20th century working class struggles—including that of Marx, who knew Jacques Roux and the "Enrages" of the 1793 Democracy yet could not resist pushing Babeuf into the future as the "first authentic voice of the proletariat."

Babeuf's genius was directly the product of the first self-conscious modern revolution (not, unqualified, the first—the English was that), in which the structure of the new nation was apparently up for grabs. He tried to shape it for democracy, for equality and social justice. Let us henceforth put *that* into the anthologies.

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PERSPECTIVES

Is class struggle emerging in Iran?

BY LEONARD M. HELFGOTT

THE ARRIVAL OF THE AYA-tollah Khomeini in Tehran promises to usher in a new era in Iranian politics. What has appeared during the past year as a successful moral, religious and nationalist outburst against a corrupt, brutal client of Western imperialism



now threatens to expose the underlying class conflicts in Iranian society. Because the insurrection has succeeded, a revolution now becomes possible. But the struggle will be a long and tortuous one and the outcome is far from predictable.

Make no mistake about it, Iran is still in the hands of the rich and powerful. Despite the removal of the Pahlavi family and some of the leeches that surrounded the Shah, the Bakhtiar government, the leadership of the army and the National Front form a coalition of vested interests committed to continued domination of Iran by foreign capitalism and its domestic allies.

The mass movement supporting Khomeini and the mullahs is more complicated. Its opposition to the Shah and to foreign domination is deeply rooted and sincere, but its anti-capitalism is rooted in precapitalist productive relations. To understand Khomeini and most of his supporters, one must have a grasp on the dynamics of dependency and class formation in modern Iran.

What Western economists call modernization has had a long and twisted path in developing countries and Iran is no exception. Modernization has meant the subordination of the Iranian economy to the needs of the great capitalist states, Great Britain in the 19th and the first half of the 20th centuries, the U.S. since World War II. Therefore, modernization has not resulted in the unfettered development of an indigenous capitalism and its concomitant class relations in Iran.

Rather, when the needs of foreign capital were met by modernizing a sector of the economy or of the political or social structure, these sectors were modernized—for example, the oil industry, the construction industry, the centralized bureaucracy, the secret police. On the other hand, when it has fitted the needs of the capitalist states to perpetuate and extend precapitalist sectors of the economy based on traditional labor intensive relations of production, this was also done.

This "development of underdevelopment" is apparent primarily in agriculture, the handwoven carpet industry (next to oil, Iran's largest export) and in the perpetuation of the bazaar as the center of domestic production and exchange.

Two major sectors.

In vastly oversimplified terms, capitalism created two economic sectors in Iran. The first sector is tied directly to capital through foreign investment in capital goods and through the increasing presence of industrial imports. This sector is represented by a small factory owning bourgeoisie, a comprador bourgeoisie (local agents for foreign capital), a financial bourgeoisie, especially since the oil boom, a service petty bourgeoisie filling the white collar and official, financial, bureaucratic and educational positions, and last but not least a small, modern wage-earning industrial proletariat.

In addition, the military officer class is included in this sector, the upper echelon connected to the industrial, comprador and financial bourgeoisie, the lower echelon to the service petty bourgeoisie. In total, this sector reflects the oil industry and its spinoffs and accounts for between one-fourth and one-third of non-oil related goods and services in Iran.

The second sector of the economy is precapitalist in origin, but its activities have been largely shaped by the needs of foreign capital. An uneven combination of resistance to the incursions of capital and the machinations of capital itself perpetuated traditional economic relations. Handicraft production, rentier agriculture and pastoral nomadic production have persisted throughout the period of so-called modernization and still form the great bulk of daily economic activity.

The bazaar.

The bazaar functions as the heart and soul of the precapitalist sector. Fully 70 percent of all domestic business transactions occur either in the bazaar or in the huge network of production and exchange centered there. Each of Iran's large cities contains one or more bazaars that function as centers of handicraft production and exchange and that fan out to the village and tribal regions integrating rural production into a national exchange network.

On the one hand, the bazaar is linked to the export sector of the economy through its function as a depot for the collection of agricultural and craft goods and their distribution to external markets. On the other hand, the bazaar serves as the center of domestic production and exchange. The bazaar is the central institution in the daily reproduction of the domestic economy and the link between that sector of the economy and the foreign exchange sector.

The bazaar also functions as the center of social, cultural and religious life. It contains guild meeting halls, bathhouses, religious schools and mosques. Social organization loosely follows trade or craft so that each corporate element in the bazaar (rug-sellers, metal workers, leather workers, etc.) is linked to others through a network of mosques, religious schools and other religious organizations. The religious network extends outside the physical structure of the bazaar to urban neighborhoods, shanty towns, agricultural villages, and the centers of Shia learning and piety in Qum and Mashhad. Indeed, events during the past year suggest that it extends to Khomeini's residence.

The precapitalist sector of the economy, centered in the bazaar, is hierarchical. On the top are the wealthy merchants linked to the export trade, and in some cases with investments in the modern sector. The wealthy merchants have one foot inside the bazaar and one foot outside of it.

In the traditional sector they form part of the leadership of the bazaars and are closely linked to the religious leadership.

In the modern sector, they face the corruption of the royal family and the bureaucracy in establishing and maintaining businesses and investments. Although the rich merchants remain deeply religious, their sons are now educated more frequently in Iranian secular universities subsequent to religious primary and secondary education. The politics of the wealthy merchants tend to be anti-monarchic, mildly anti-Western and pro-capitalist.

Merchants, artisans, workers.

The most vocal anti-Western elements in the bazaar are the small merchants and artisans. For the past hundred years, these groups have fought a defensive battle against capitalist domination.

Artisans have been threatened constantly by competition from Western imports, which have weakened the craft guilds and have forced craft production toward an export orientation. Their exports, however, have not been beneficial enough to engender a sense of well-being among the artisans, to whom foreign products remain a direct threat to their economic existence.

Likewise, the small merchants, linked to the artisans and to the village and nomadic economies and unable or unwilling to make the leap outside the bazaar, perceive the growth of the modern sector as potentially, and in many cases actually, ruinous.

The largest group connected to the bazaar is the day workers. Swollen in number by a long-term exodus from the village and nomadic areas, this group has become a poverty-ridden proletariat in constant search for work in all of the large cities. Driven from the countryside by a land reform program that distributed land to half the peasants and reduced the remainder to sharecroppers or agricultural wage laborers, and by the concerted effort of the Pahlavi monarchy to destroy the pastoral nomadic tribes, families migrated to the cities, drawn by the boom in the construction industry.

Rustic in outlook, deeply religious and living in squalor, the men work at menial jobs and the women work as domestics when possible. Their social and cultural focus is toward religion and the

bazaar rather than toward the more privileged industrial proletariat.

Religion and class.

Throughout the 20th century, opposition to capitalism has taken religious form in Iran. To the tradition-bound Muslim, Islam embodies the ethical, spiritual, organic and moral aspects of social existence. Conversely, capitalism embodies the godlessness, degeneracy and fragmentation prevalent in the West and threatening the Islamic world. Thus, the specific economic threat to various fractions of the bourgeoisie has been perceived and expressed primarily in ethical and religious terms, linking disparate and competing elements in the native economy into a unified moral condemnation of foreign influence.

The monarchy, in this view, is perceived as a tool of the West and the embodiment of its worst features. Wealthy merchant, laborer and artisan can unite with the mullahs in universal condemnation of foreign capitalism and its royal lackeys.

The most public aspect of the recent insurrection against the monarchy has been religious. The analysis thrust on the American newspaper-reading and TV-watching audience has been one of a fanatical sect led by ancient, black-robed mullahs inveighing against modernism, feminism and secularism. But the religious dimension of the insurrection masks the class nature of the opposition to the monarchy.

Insofar as religion represents the interests of the wealthy merchants, artisans and shopkeepers of the bazaar, its political program is anti-imperialist and seeks the end of the Pahlavi monarchy and the restoration of the Constitution of 1906, albeit in the form of an Islamic republic.

Khomeini and the mullahs have no economic program precisely because the interests of their constituencies are so divergent. The wealthy merchants seek to control capitalist development, the artisans and shopkeepers reject capitalist development for fear of imminent proletarianization, and the day workers seek a form of economic well-being and social equality only possible under socialism.

As the focus of the struggle moves from politics to economics, from anti-Continued on the next page.

ACROSS

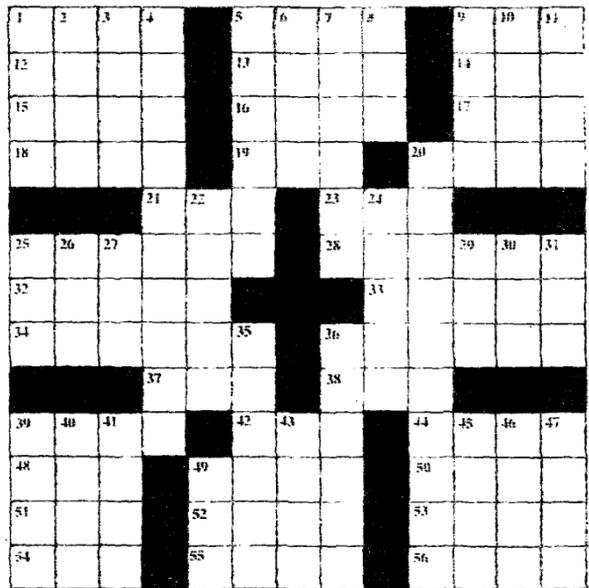
- 1 Sweetheart
- 5 Recipe direction
- 9 Part of Saigon's new name
- 12 Part of the Tien Shan mountains
- 13 Whetstone
- 14 Sought office
- 15 Mournful sound
- 16 Curved lines
- 17 "___ not what your country..."
- 18 Austrian composer, student of Schonberg
- 19 Gazelle
- 20 Exert influence
- 21 Fall behind
- 23 French pronoun
- 25 French abstract poet: Paul ___
- 28 First name of author of "A Farewell to Arms"
- 32 Type of marble
- 33 Be in accord
- 34 Invaders of England
- 36 Prepared or ready
- 37 Forty winks
- 38 Marvin or Cobb
- 39 Kiss
- 42 Move clumsily
- 44 Lose color
- 48 Former Japanese statesman
- 49 Jazz jargon
- 50 Wild goat
- 51 Sandy's beret
- 52 Bakery worker
- 53 ___ majesty
- 54 Kider Haggard heroine
- 55 Inclination
- 56 Moose

DOWN

- 1 Mary's follower
- 2 Medicinal plant
- 3 River to the Moselle
- 4 Certain playing cards
- 5 ___ dog story
- 6 Corrida animal
- 7 If it happens that
- 8 Thing, in law
- 9 Bird's crop
- 10 "The night ___ thousand..."
- 11 Quite dark
- 20 One behind the other
- 22 Sand along the Costa Brava
- 24 Papal vestment
- 25 Organic vessel
- 26 Moslem title
- 27 Not strict
- 29 Bitter vetch
- 30 Understand
- 31 Vietnamese offensive that sealed the fate of American intervention
- 35 Join ropes
- 36 Victoria's consort
- 39 ___ and pieces
- 40 Mountain state
- 41 "___ Enchanted Evening"
- 42 Chef's need
- 45 Biblical victim of fratricide
- 46 Music stand
- 47 Former spouses
- 48 Triangular sail

One by One

By Jay Shepherd



SPAS PAT CUBS
 ZATORIA OLIO
 AGON ARM MUST
 REPAST MAIL
 THE SAD CAFE
 ASSAY END TIM
 ROTS KRY PERI
 AMA BOA LOSER
 MERRY LIVES
 LEES ATTAZA
 AYID LAP MIRE
 WIND TO AREA
 NIAGY PER NEED