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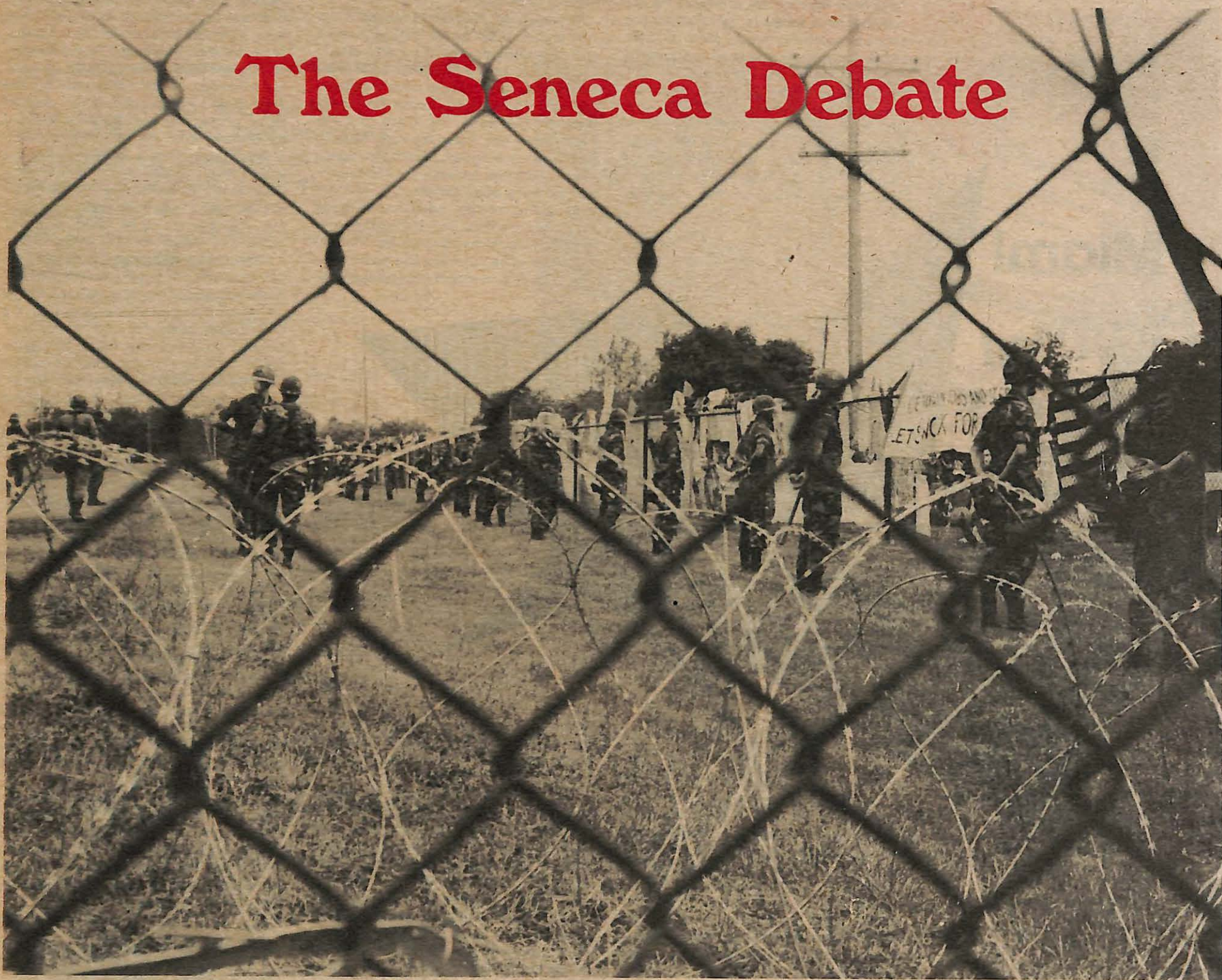
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## The Seneca Debate



August 1, 1983. Shouts of fury and triumph from hundreds of women rose and ripped the air of death and destruction around the Seneca Army Depot. The ugly taunts of local defenders of the American Way stopped, their mouths dropped open. The state troopers with police dogs and various local county police stood ready; the MPs on the inside of the chainlink fence with face protectors and rifles drawn tensed. And then the first group of women moved through to the gate area, pulled themselves up to the top of the fence and went over. The MPs grabbed them. More women moved forward, some with painted peace signs, feminist symbols, tears painted on their faces; some carried flowers; one group, including a 90-year-old blind woman, sat down and began reading from the bible. More women went over the fence, including one group who had woven themselves together with a web of brightly colored yarn and went over together, pausing at the top to give a triumphant clenched-fist salute. All in all, over 200 women went over the fence.

—RW reporter's notes

Scenes like these brought the Seneca, New York, Women's Encampment for a Future of Peace and Justice to national and international attention. One of many

such camps, stretching from Comiso, Italy, to West Germany, to California, and inspired generally by the two-year-old camp outside the U.S. Air Force Base near Greenham Commons, England, Seneca has become a touchstone for many in the movement against nuclear war and against the oppression of women.

From the beginning, the camp brought together a fresh and lively cacophony of people, views, credos, morals, and politics; it "was not one peace camp, but many camps," as one participant so well described it. Largely committed to nonviolence, widely influenced by feminism (of many forms and versions), the camp managed to coalesce around a certain stand of defiance, "rising to the emergency" as its handbook put it, "and accepting responsibility for their own lives, the lives of their children, and all life on earth." It wasn't simply a matter of tactics which were focused on the Seneca Army Depot, a transshipment point for U.S. nukes; civil disobedience is nothing new. More that the tactics were accompanied by a determination to do what was needed to stop this war machine, and a view of speaking to the world: "the camp required a kind of leap of imagination," someone said. People arrived from England, Italy, Japan; from Vermont and Minneapolis. But by autumn a full-fledged debate spread in the movement as the camp came under a regular avalanche of criticism. How and why did this courageous and significant protest come under such sharp attack? What is at stake

in the summing up?

July 28, 1983. "When they came into Waterloo, they saw a huge sign stretched between two houses. It greeted them: 'Nuke Them Till They Glow, Then Shoot Them in the Dark.' They turned the corner to cross the Waterloo Bridge, and were met by several hundred Waterloo citizens, nearly all holding up large and little flags, nearly all screaming foul cries and words they hoped would insult the women. 'Commies,' 'Lezzies,' 'Kill Them,' 'Nuke Them.' Many carried flagpoles with pointed tips, and their enraged screams and jabbing terrified our women, who after brief discussion decided to sit down. . . . The sheriff. . . offered a detour which made sense to some women. But for the women sitting under the barrage of hatred, it seemed foolish to turn their backs."

—Grace Paley, "The Seneca Stories," Ms. magazine, December 1983

A man with a 12-gauge shotgun and a pocketful of ammunition rushed towards the women. He was detained, given a ticket for menacing the public, and released. . . . One sign read "Traitors to America and Womanhood Go Home." Shouts of "Go home," were meant quite literally, go back to the kitchen, the

nursery, the bedroom. . . .

—RW reporter's notes on Waterloo confrontation

The confrontation at Waterloo, which came during a march to honor historic figures in the women's movement, occurred only a few days before the mass action at the Depot gates. It did not halt the momentum of the camp. But it did become the rallying point for all those who were, or had been already, disturbed, critical, or in outright opposition to the "in your face" character of the camp and the determination of the women to go up against the war machine.

By the fall, a major feminist monthly paper in New York, *WomaNews*, carried an article which typified the growing criticism, stating: "I think Waterloo raises serious issues about the goals and strategies of the women's peace movement. To me, the very concept of the Seneca Falls Peace Camp deserves to be questioned. Not so much the peace camp itself, but the politics of establishing an encampment of feminists, lesbians, and anti-nuclear activists in a conservative community where there are few roots to the peace movement. . . ." The author called for "a politics committed to reaching, educating, and being educated by diverse people. It is only this massive empowerment and the struggle it entails, that is worthy of the name feminism." Others were a bit more blunt. Antiwar activist Norma Becker complained at an important public dialogue in New York that

Continued on page 8

The trial of Miami cop Luis Alvarez is coming to a close. Alvarez is charged with manslaughter for shooting 20-year-old Black youth Nevell Johnson in a crowded video arcade on December 28, 1982: the incident which sparked the Overtown rebellion. As expected, the Alvarez defense team has spent the past two weeks conducting a vicious courtroom attack on Nevell Johnson. Alvarez himself was quoted on national TV news, from the witness stand, as saying "I deliberately shot him." Another "justifiable homicide," pig-style.

Ridiculous and undocumented stories have been filtering out of Miami via the national news media to try to bolster the twisted courtroom scene, most of these stories completely unrelated to the evening of December 28. The world now has been told that Nevell Johnson pawned a shotgun two weeks before he was murdered, and that Nevell Johnson's father has some, unspecified of course, criminal record, and that Nevell Johnson, Sr., was also shot by police in 1967. More outrageous than even that

personal interest stories that have nothing to do with the trial, we suppose. All the public opinion creating has left little room to doubt what the verdict will be.

Also, as has been expected, the mood in both Overtown and Liberty City is one of *deep anger*, anger which deepens as the news from the trial spreads. The local Community Relations Board is holding prayer meetings, breakfast meetings, and radio talk shows, with its men spending hours walking out among especially the youth, begging for calm. A somewhat frantic effort is underway to pull off what was not accomplished in either December 1982 or May 1980.

Miami City Manager Howard Gary (the highest Black public official, who is still embroiled in some of the aftereffects of firing the police chief) has been more than a little candid about what should be expected, though, just in case the present methods fail again. As Gary told the press after one mass meeting held in Overtown on Monday, March 5th, with a heated exchange between the 150 masses and the army of politicians, "I saw more anger in that meeting today than I've seen in this city in a long time. It disturbed me. We're always prepared to protect the city. There are different ways you protect the city. The first is a preventive approach,

around these new streets that they were having to try to bring back into line.

As the trial nears a close in Miami, the political work of proletarian internationalists has been further unleashed. In one instance, a group of Haitian revolutionaries wrote the following statement which has been circulating for signature:

To the Black people of Miami:

Today, as the trial of Luis Alvarez is nearing an end, we Haitian refugees salute you in the spirit of proletarian internationalism. The brutal murder of Nevell Johnson filled us with anger and disgust; your powerful rebellion at that time was an inspiration to all oppressed who have suffered under this system. Now the state is engaged in yet another crime — this so-called trial, which is really a whitewash of the police murder, and an attempt to blame the victim, and all Black people, for the brutality inflicted upon them.

We share much in common. Like you, we are mostly proletarians, propertyless wage slaves, forced to beg the capitalists for the right to slave for them, and if we are lucky enough to be hired, receiving barely the means to survive in return. Like you, we are also oppressed as a people, as a nation, discriminated against, hounded, openly mocked and treated like an inferior species. Most recently, the U.S. courts came out and openly proclaimed that Haitians have no rights under the Constitution, that we can be held in concentration camps like Krome, or deported back to death or prison at the hands of the U.S.-owned Duvalier dictatorship in Haiti — all without any legal recourse at all.

There are two lessons in this decision, and in the Alvarez trial. One is that the imperialist rulers desperately fear the millions they hold in chains — this is why they seek ever new ways to terrorize us into submission. The other is that the oppressed have no rights the oppressor is bound to respect — in defense of their unholy empire, the imperialists will commit every crime, from robbery to nuclear war, and find a law or a court to sanctify it with the holy water of "democracy."

Let us take these lessons to heart. We do not want — and they won't let us anyway — to participate in their criminal system. We do not ask their mercy, which we have never received. We seek only to participate in the growing struggle of people like ourselves throughout the world, people of every color and nationality, who are fighting to end this madness through revolution. We take their latest attacks only as a sign of their weakness and vulnerability, and pledge to redouble our efforts to defeat them, and to support all others in this cause.

**DOWN WITH THE OPPRESSION OF BLACK PEOPLE!  
DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM THROUGHOUT THE WORLD!  
LONG LIVE REVOLUTION!**

Haitian refugees,  
political activists  
and revolutionaries

# Miami Pig Trial Nears Conclusion

type of testimony was the widely touted lie that Nevell Johnson was "a crook who deserved to be shot," according to a woman who claims she reported to the police, some four months after it allegedly happened, that Johnson had robbed her. She says she reported it just so that people would know "Alvarez shot a crook." And this is only a bit of the garbage that has been brought up and spewed out in this case. Other major stories and editorials in Miami have been lauding the great work of Miami police, moaning about how many people get shot in the line of duty, and around this case praising both Judge David Gersten and Alvarez defense attorney Roy Black. Just

which is what we are trying to do here today. Obviously, there is the approach we don't like to use and that's the one of force."

To emphasize this point the police presence in Black neighborhoods has been escalated. A special caravan of cops with about 20 vehicles, including paddy wagons, has caravaned through Overtown several times in the past week. In one Black neighborhood, Richmond Heights, Black youth rocked and bottled police for four hours last Thursday afternoon, after a 30-year-old Black man died mysteriously while in police custody. The man had been arrested for "resisting arrest" and was dead within hours. The Community Relations Board, which had put all its people into Overtown and Liberty City, spent several days scurrying

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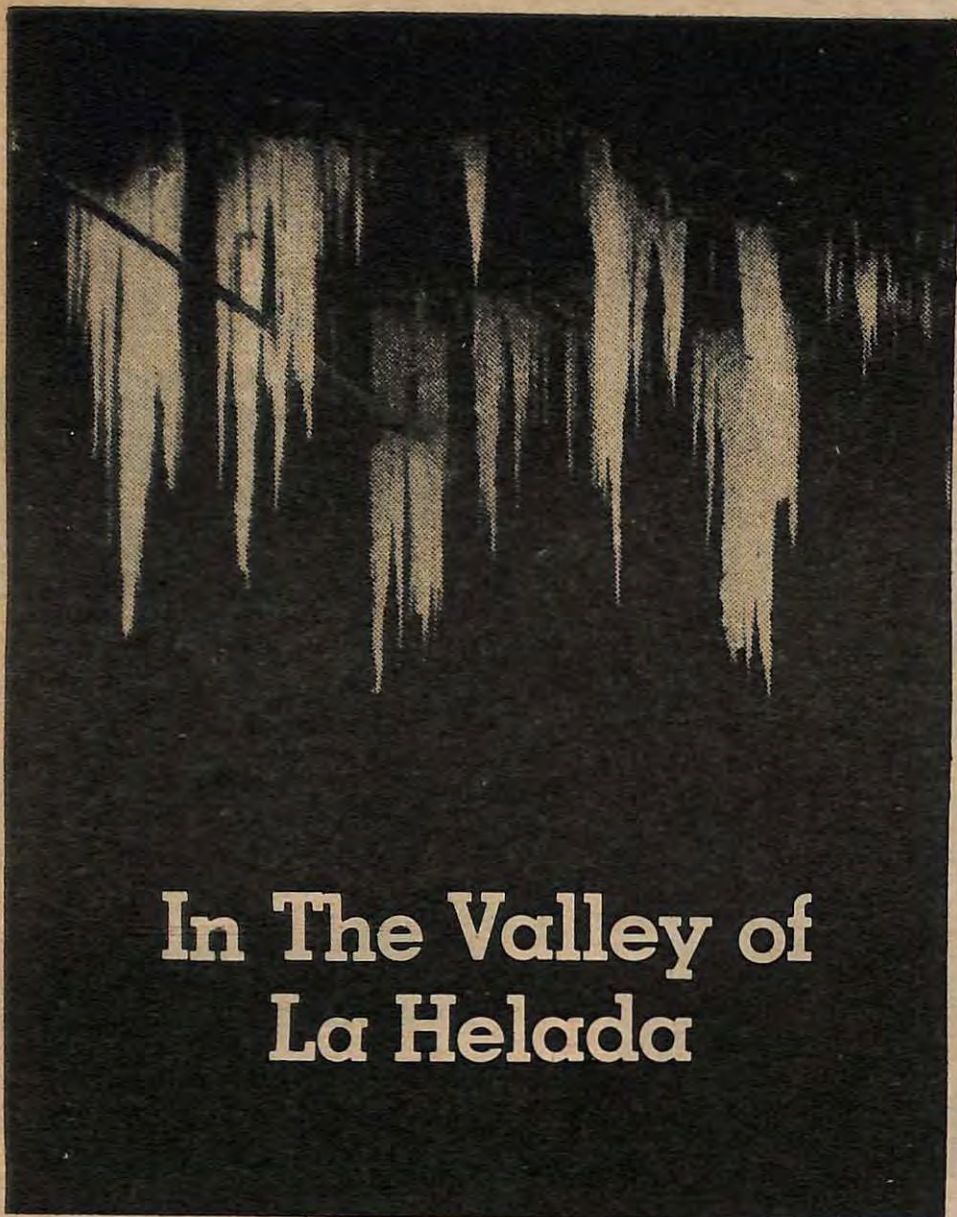
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## In The Valley of La Helada

During the winter months, the Lower Rio Grande Valley area of Texas is usually teeming with activity as tens of thousands of farmworkers do the back-breaking work of harvesting the citrus fruits that form a cornerstone of the economy in this richly fertile agricultural area. But the cold winds that blew across the Central Plains of the U.S. around Christmas last year devastated the delicate trees, and now the enormous orange and grapefruit groves are filled with leafless, barren trees, and the ground around them is blanketed with the rotting fruit.

In the larger towns of the valley, such as McAllen and Harlingen, the cold weather may not seem, at first glance, to have had too much effect. New shopping malls are filled with well-fed customers, most of them vacationers who cruise down in their Winnebagos from midwestern states like Iowa, Kansas, and Minnesota to spend the winter months in the warmth of southern Texas's semitropical climate. ("Visit Pharr," one typical ad blares, "the RV park capital of Texas.") But away from the sight of the Sears Roebucks and Wendy's, and out of view of the highways, the situation is quite different. Down dirt roads and paths scattered throughout the groves and fields are the *colonias* — rural ghettos where those who work the fields live in the winter months, and it is here that the effects of the four freezing days in December — called by farmworkers *la helada* (the ice) — is being felt with devastating force.

It is not as if the Chicano and Mexican proletarians in south Texas had been prospering any before the cold weather. The official unemployment rate in the valley as a whole was about 20%, and Laredo, at its northern end, had for some time had the highest unemployment rate of any city in the U.S. A "good job" meant something that lasted for a couple of months picking fruits or vegetables on the same farm, with typical pay being 60 cents for each crate of good oranges picked. The citrus crop has for years been central to thousands of people for getting through each year on a barely subsistence level; the harvest had put virtually everyone, man, woman, and child, to work for a few intense months, enabling them to make it through the winter months and the bad harvests in other crops before they begin their yearly journey northward, harvesting vegetables and fruits in locations from Idaho to Ohio.

Most estimates now place unemployment in the Rio Grande Valley at around 40%, and it is probably higher. With the exception of small gangs working an occasional onion or cabbage field, the once lush fields and groves in the valley are

now empty of proletarians. Official, and no doubt very conservative, estimates say that 30-40,000 farmworkers have no work, and there is not the slightest prospect that they will gain any before they travel north in the spring, if they are able to pay for the gas for the trip. A Texas Employment Commission official estimated that another 5,000 workers will lose their jobs in the next few weeks when canneries and processing plants exhaust their inventories. A Catholic nun who has worked in the area for ten years on social programs for farmworkers said, "People have always lived on the edge, but now the edge is crumbling."

While as many as two thousand people in one night have come to a Catholic church in rural San Juan, Texas (which has a total population of only 7,600) for the nightly free meals made from government surplus food, countless others are unable to go there or to any of the few locations with free food because of the distances involved. Every night, thousands of families weigh whether to drive to town for a plate of burritos and beans or go hungry and save their gas for a trip in the morning when the slim hope remains that some employer will hire them for a few days.

The cold weather, and still less the devastation of imperialist disarticulation, did not of course stop at the U.S./Mexican border. Added to the already impoverished conditions in the valley, and the large number of Mexican people who are continually paying *coyotes* and trying to evade the police for the "opportunity" of picking grapefruit in the U.S., is that there has been a huge rise in the number of people trying to get into the U.S. from Mexico, and a correspondingly more intense presence of the U.S. Border Patrol. U.S. Border Patrol offices in McAllen and Laredo seized and deported almost 40,000 people in the three months from October to December 1983, about 40% more people than the same period a year ago. And in the week of February 21 through 28 alone the McAllen Border Patrol in the heart of the valley arrested 817 so-called "undocumented" workers, approximately eight times the number of people in busts in an "average" week.

### Political Poison

As pressure from numerous contradictions mount in the area, an array of forces and agencies are at work to subdue and contain them, and others are at work just as feverishly to allow some of the accumulated outrage an outlet into the mainstream of political life, generally meaning the Democratic Party. Following *la helada*, Ronald Reagan declared four valley counties a disaster area, making them eligible for doling out a pittance

of federal assistance to farmworkers and their families, generally just enough to keep those receiving it from going into a state of imminent starvation. Democratic Party big-guns have been working the valley heavily, calling Reagan "muy loco" and "heartless," and plying the theme of registering hundreds of thousands of farmworkers to vote against Reagan and realize "the American Dream" — a politics which can only be called a disgusting and cynical slap in the face of these proletarians whose conditions of life so vividly illustrate the concluding words of the *Communist Manifesto*: "The proletarians have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win."

Democratic Party demagogues, along with the United Farmworkers (UFW) leadership, have been busy in a cynical manipulation of the intensified suffering in the valley to further their own political interests. The UFW, which has not negotiated a single contract in Texas,

Continued on page 14



## Youth Deportation S.O.P. For The I.N.S.



The corner of Fifth and Euclid is probably little different from a dozen other intersections in southern California where immigrants, largely from Mexico and Central America, gather in the mornings hoping to find work as day laborers. Such places are also favorite targets for La Migra, the U.S. Immigration agents who strive to turn the practice of random terror into a science. On the morning of February 15 the agents of the Immigration & Naturalization Service (INS) seized 30 victims. By that night, according to the INS, they had all been deported to Tijuana, Mexico.

Among those arrested and deported was Mario Moreño López. Mario is 14 and a legal resident of the U.S. When the INS began their sweep of the Santa Ana, California streetcorner he did not try to run away. "I thought I'd explain it to them and I'd have no problem," he later explained. Instead he found himself in an INS detention center. Three times he tried to explain that he was a legal resident, he even told them when and where he had received permanent residency status. The INS wasn't interested. What they were interested in was making people sign "voluntary" deportation forms, meaning that those signing waive their right to a deportation hearing and the INS can go ahead and send them to the border. While Mario was being held he saw one immigration agent grab someone who refused to sign the deportation form and throw him to the ground. It was then, Mario said later, that he decided to sign the deportation form. On February 17, two days after Mario's arrest, his father, having finally learned what happened to his son, was combing the streets of Tijuana looking for him.

By then the story of the boy who had been deported by "mistake" was becoming news throughout southern California. Eventually Mario managed to get across the border and into San Diego — where he was promptly seized by the INS and deported again! Only after getting across the border and into San Diego a second time was Mario finally spotted by a passerby and eventually returned home.

Nothing that happened to Mario López is particularly unusual. Youth his age are routinely arrested and summarily deported without so much as a chance to make a phone call to their family. These youth are bussed to Mexico, or perhaps flown to Central America, and left to fend for themselves, often leaving parents who could do little but desperately wonder what happened and if and when they might see their children again. In the nearby town of Corona, INS agents regularly stop children on their way to school. Nor is it unusual for those with legal residency papers or those who are U.S. citizens to be deported. Mario's father was keeping his son's "green card," fearing that his son might lose it, but stories of people with papers or with proof of U.S. citizenship being deported

are not uncommon. What sets this case apart from countless others who quietly, routinely fall victim to the INS is simply the widespread publicity it attracted. But while this was a product of a combination of factors, the result was to shine a little light on the methods of the immigration police.

In the face of this public exposure the authorities set out to demonstrate clearly to one and all that not only were the methods used against Mario López used routinely against immigrants that fell into their clutches, but they would most certainly continue to be the methods they would use. Ironically, less than a month earlier a federal court in Los Angeles issued an injunction requiring the INS to give all minors they arrested written notice of their rights, to give them a list of legal services attorneys they could contact and to not coerce minors into signing the "voluntary" deportation forms. Apparently feeling, in the wake of this recent case, that the INS was making a little too much mockery out of the "restraints" the courts had supposedly placed on the INS, a federal judge on February 22 placed a temporary ban on all deportations of minors who were not accompanied by a parent or legal guardian. "But I can say one thing for certain," said an immigration official in Washington in reply to the federal judge's order, "that none of those detained will be allowed to leave detention. We want to send a very clear signal that we will not allow this to be a license for them to break the law. We will continue to apprehend and detain as usual."

In the five days the order banning deportations was in effect, nearly 1,000 youth piled up in INS detention centers from Texas to California. Attorneys who had brought the class action suit concerning the deportation of minors offered to negotiate a compromise to allow some of the youth in INS detention centers to be released. They proposed that some of the youth be released to relatives or that legal services representatives be allowed to counsel the youth, after which the INS could deport them if they waived their right to a deportation hearing. The INS refused to compromise, knowing full well that they were losing nothing by keeping the youth locked up and that the court would soon lift its order. The court did indeed lift the order banning deportations of youth, and the judge also refused to grant what attorneys who had brought the suit had requested: the opportunity for youth who were arrested to call their families shortly after their arrest and before signing "voluntary" deportation forms, outside monitoring of INS processing of minors, and that legal advice be

automatically provided to minors arrested by the INS. The net result — following all the fine words from the federal judiciary about being "appalled" at the INS and the "irreparable damage" done to immigrant youth — was that the INS was free to proceed just as they had before.

Meanwhile, the INS launched into a campaign of outrageous lies concerning the deportation of Mario López. First, while Mario was still missing, INS officials claim that Mario told them he was in the country illegally. Why would Mario, who was a legal resident, tell the INS he was in the country illegally? Well, theorized one INS official, maybe he wanted to go back to Mexico. According to this little fairytale, Mario was standing on a Santa Ana streetcorner wanting to go to Mexico, when up comes the helpful immigration agent and offers him a lift to the border. The INS also suggested — again without bothering to offer even a shred of proof to back up their speculation — that perhaps Mario and his father were not really legal residents of the U.S. anyway. Perhaps, suggested an INS official, they'd been out of the country over a year, in which case their permanent residency papers would not be valid. This invention, too, was soon shown to be untrue. Later the INS continued to repeat, despite Mario's denial, that he had told

INS agents that he was in the country illegally, and one official threatened that Mario might be prosecuted on the felony charge of lying to a federal officer — the supposed lie being their invention of Mario telling INS agents that he was in the country illegally. Several days later the INS claimed to have completed an investigation of the incident (though nobody outside the INS has apparently seen this so-called investigation, and the INS never contacted Mario, his father or their attorney in connection with this so-called investigation) which came to the predictable conclusion that all INS personnel involved had acted in a perfectly proper manner. Later when one of the immigration cops "exonerated" by the INS was questioned in a deposition taken by attorneys involved in the suit against the INS, the same agent took the Fifth Amendment and refused to answer every question asked of him.

But the official conclusion that all the agents involved in this case did no wrong is really the point. The kind of terror manifested in the raid on the Santa Ana streetcorner which scooped up Mario López and then spit him out onto the streets of Tijuana is indeed the official standard operating procedure, and those who rule over this vicious apparatus are determined that nothing and nobody will get in their way.

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# The Story of Esma

During his stay in West Germany last fall, the RW's correspondent covering the antimissile demonstrations had many opportunities to meet and talk with a wide range of Turkish and Kurdish proletarians. The following correspondence highlights the challenges being met and overcome by women proletarians:

I was traveling in West Germany's Ruhr region. If you would take every smelly, smoky, industrial city in the U.S. and cram them all into New Jersey, you would get the Ruhr. It's mile after mile of steel mills, coal mines, factories and workers' neighborhoods, all tied up with Autobahns, the German expressways which have no speed limits.

It was Sunday and the old storefront on a side street was crammed with people. Right there in the sooty bowels of imperialism they were meeting. Dozens of proletarians from Turkey. It was a young crowd, men, women, few teenagers, but lots of little kids running around in the back. A furious political debate was going on over the Kurdish national question.

When the meeting was over, we were sitting around in the back room, which is when I met Esma. Over a period of weeks I had talked to a broad cross section of Turkish and Kurdish proletarians. Each story I heard was different, but together they wove a fabric of imperialist and feudal oppression. The oppression of women which Esma had endured in her young life mirrored the lives of millions of rebellious gravediggers of imperialism.

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"I came here (to West Germany—RW) when I was 11 years old. I came from a small village in Anatolia, where I had to work in the fields since I was seven. I have two brothers, and with my mother we worked on land which we rented. My father had gone to Germany after he divorced my mother.

"I went to school in the winter and worked in the fields in the summer after school. Of course, I couldn't do my homework because I worked in the fields, so I was beaten by the teacher who used to grab me by the hair.

"Both boys and girls could go to school in our village, but outside of school the general oppression of women came down very hard on the girls. I was very strictly brought up. For example, my brothers could go outside and play, but girls couldn't and had to sit home. If I didn't, I was beaten by my mother. My village and my family were strictly Islamic. From the age of eight I had to wear a head covering and read religious books in Arabic. There was no political resistance in our village. It was totally forbidden.

"It was only after I had been in Germany for a few years that I even learned of resistance. I had relatives in Turkey who were members of the fascist party whose symbol was a dog. When I saw these symbols at their house and asked what they meant, I was told that I was a girl and to shut up.

"I came to Germany alone; my mother and brothers remained in Turkey. My father brought me and we came by car. He is also a fascist and he brought me here to work for him. I started working at 14 because my father forged papers to say that I was 16. I have worked continuously since then as a cleaning lady.

"I found Germany to be a whole different world. I couldn't speak the

language, didn't like it, and couldn't go to school. My father denies that he came here for economic reasons. He says it was just because he divorced my mother. He denies that there is any national oppression of Turks in Germany and says the bosses at work help us.

"Until I was 16, when I married, I thought just like he did. When I first met my husband I liked him so much, but then I found out that he was both Kurdish

and a communist! I was completely freaked out, but he said give it a few months, and we had many long talks and he finally won me over. No way was my father going to approve my marrying a Kurdish communist, so we had to elope. He won't speak to me to this day."

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Having taken such a daring and

rebellious step, Esma and her husband found no peace as they were confronted by the deepening crisis of the imperialist system and the rabid attempts of the West German bourgeoisie to whip up anti-Turkish reaction, blaming West Germany's troubles on "foreign workers" while backing and arming the military junta in Turkey.

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"Between Turkish and German workers there is a great difference. For example, at the hotel where I work, I have to clean eight rooms and the German women have to clean only six. There is no union. On the job, there is no particular difference between how Turkish men and women are treated (bourgeois equality... of commodities — RW). But on the street a man can walk alone, but not a woman. Women who wear veils get harassment on the street. For example, I once saw two Germans pour a bottle of beer over the head of a Turkish woman wearing a head covering, right on the streetcar.

"On the other hand, there have been demonstrations by young Germans against the antiforeigner campaign. And when busts come down, often Germans will put themselves between the cops and the Turks to protect them from arrests.

"It has gotten a lot worse in Germany, particularly in the work places. But I have no desire to go back to Turkey. I don't like anything about Turkey. My husband came here in 1979 on a student visa and then applied for asylum. He was finally refused and deported from Germany. Now I am here alone with my baby. This has become more and more common in the last six months, and there are long lines at the asylum office. I would like to be back with my husband but that's impossible. But if he were here, I would still be torn between the two countries because both are so bad.

"In this workers' center there are three or four women who speak up, and many others who do a lot of practical work. I'm not an activist here, but I would like to be. I'm alone, I work full time, I'm new and still don't know German and I have my baby. When my husband was here I could do more. There is still a big women's problem."

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Late that evening Esma and I left in the same car together, making the rounds of a Turkish proletarian area dropping different people off. In the car a great discussion broke out between Esma and another woman. Esma was looking for answers. She knew it didn't have to be this way. She said she had heard some good things about the Soviet Union; what did the other woman think? The other woman thought the Soviet Union was imperialist too. Esma asked why. And the discussion was still raging when we dropped her and the baby off.

Esma didn't have the answers, but she was determined to get her hands on them.

C. Clark Kissinger

□



Girls from Turkey on a Munich street.

# A Message From Miami to Lebanon

*The following statement was initiated and written by a small group of Black proletarians, regular RW readers, in view of the situation in Lebanon. The statement was signed by 23 people and is currently circulating in Miami with the aim of sending it to Palestinians in Lebanon:*

To the Palestinian people,  
 We support the struggle of the Palestinian people for national liberation, and against U.S. imperialism, Israel, Gemayel, the Phalange and all the hidden enemies, too.  
 The U.S. has tried to fool people with their Marine "peacekeepers" lie and the talk about "protecting democracy." We know what they are really "protecting" is their murderous imperialist interests. We know the history of their "free and democratic Israel," and what they did to Palestine. What the U.S. and its puppets have done, and are doing to the Palestinian people fills us with even more hate for the system.

But the courage and determination of the Palestinians, always fighting back and doing damage to the enemy, has lifted our understanding and brought us joy and strength.  
 We feel what you feel. We understand what it's like for imperialism to try to force you to live like animals just to survive. We have seen the police kill, and kill, and kill people. We are Black proletarians from Miami. But the people here have shook up the imperialists. We have rebelled, fought the police and national guard in the streets. We are proud of that. But some of us want more than just more rebellions. WE WANT REVOLUTION! We want to hook up with our class brothers and sisters everywhere and make revolution to get this dog-eat-dog imperialist system off the backs of the oppressed people everywhere.  
 So don't think for a minute that there are not class-conscious people right in the belly of this beast, people like us. We are

getting ready for revolution, trying to do our part to bring international freedom, world communism. So we are making this internationalist message, and we hope you all get some strength from knowing that we are here and preparing, just like we have gained inspiration from your courageous struggle.  
 The future belongs to the oppressed people all over this world. And we are going to fight the kind of fight together with you all and our whole proletarian class that can bury imperialism and bring that future closer.  
**LIBERATION FOR THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE!  
 DEATH TO U.S. IMPERIALISM, ISRAEL, AND ALL OPPRESSORS!  
 BUILD PROLETARIAN INTERNATIONALISM, SPREAD REVOLUTION!**  
 Your class-conscious proletarian brothers and sisters, from the rebellious streets of Miami, USA



From Miami... to the West Bank... Girls just want to have fun.

## From Guatemala to Washington, D.C.: The Killing Thing About "Free Choice"

The Alvarez family left Guatemala because they couldn't live on the \$3 a day that Transito Alvarez was earning. Joining thousands of others, the Alvarez family fled from the Guatemalan death squads and all the other daily horrors of daily life in a nation enslaved by U.S. imperialism. After scrimping for years, Transito and his wife Dora managed to pull together enough money to get themselves and the two youngest of their four children to the U.S. — where they hoped for a better life and a chance to help the rest of the family they were forced to leave behind in Guatemala.  
 Within a few months after their arrival in the U.S., the Alvarez family became a part of the stunning and sickening statistics: since October of 1983, 29 people have been killed in Washington, D.C. as the result of fires in their homes; since January 1984 alone, 16 people, almost half of them children, have been killed in these fires — more than the total number of such deaths in all of 1983. For the most

part the fires have been concentrated in the "poverty pockets" of the northwest section of the city, that is, the Black and Latino, poor and proletarian neighborhoods that still remain in this part of the city. Much of the housing and buildings in these neighborhoods have been purposely allowed to deteriorate — sometimes purposely torched — in an effort to drive out the people living in them so that they can then be "rehabilitated" and the whole area transformed into a more profitable high-rent district for government employees and professionals, which would become a "showcase" neighborhood in Washington, D.C. The officially listed causes of the fires have varied from malfunctioning space heaters — the only source of heat in many homes — to houses so tinderbox-dry and rotten that they can be turned into raging infernos in a matter of minutes when even a minor accident occurs, to fires of "suspicious origins," that is, intentionally started. The circumstances

surrounding this "rash of fire-related deaths," as the *Washington Post* euphemistically puts it, provides a horrid glimpse into the real conditions of life for the proletarian masses in D.C.  
 When they arrived in the U.S. the Alvarez family borrowed \$1,000 from a friend to help them settle in Washington. Arriving in Washington they settled in the midst of the Latino community, a rapidly expanding community primarily made up of Central American refugees. Their new home was one room in a boardinghouse on top of a store — one room shared by Transito and Dora Alvarez, their two children and Transito's brother. Transito, a mason, landed a job in construction while Dora became a domestic worker for a Georgetown (a very wealthy part of the city) family. Shortly after finding work, Transito developed "stomach trouble," a condition which required surgery and hospitalization and meant an extended period of unemployment. Transito had only returned to work on

February 21 and was now saddled with a hospital bill of almost \$6,000.  
 In order for Dora to work during her husband's sickness and afterwards, the two children, Ervin Alejandro, five, and Selvin Rolando, four, were placed in the local elementary school where, on February 21, Ervin was sent home from school with a note informing his parents that he had been suspended because of "adjustment problems." The school refused to enroll Selvin because he "didn't turn four until after December 31, 1983." Two days later Ervin and Selvin, left alone for 15 to 45 minutes in their boardinghouse room, died of smoke inhalation from a fire.  
 No sooner had the fire been put out and the children pronounced dead than the finger of blame began to be pointed. Not surprisingly, the press, city officials and even sections of the community blamed Dora — "She should have never left the children alone." The *Washington*  
 Continued on page 13



# Anti-Nuke Protestors Face "20 Questions"

Since last October the federal government has launched a major legal offensive against the Natural Guard, a South Carolina-based anti-nuke group that has loosely organized networks of supporters throughout the region. The Natural Guard held a successful blockade of two entrances to the U.S. Department of Energy's (DOE) key nuclear weapons manufacturing plant, the Savannah River Plant (SRP) on October 22, to coincide with actions in Western Europe against U.S. deployment of Pershing and cruise missiles there. The huge SRP, located on the border between South Carolina and Georgia, has been a target for antinuclear-war forces for over five years. It is the only nuke of its type in the USA, the only site where plutonium and tritium are made, the materials that do the exploding in nuclear bombs.

The October blockade (at which 76 people were arrested) and the weekend encampment outside the SRP represented a growing militancy against the threat of nuclear war. "Blockade the Bomb Plant" posters were plastered in a number of cities and several states, and hundreds of people participated in some of the series of activities that weekend.

The feds went wild over these developments. The week before the blockade, the Department of Energy got a temporary injunction against it and went so far as to send FBI agents disguised as reporters to deliver the subpoenas issued against the spokespeople for the Natural Guard. That injunction was overturned by the Federal Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals only hours before the October anti-nuke activities began. But another level of federal legal maneuvers was in the works as well — a vicious game of "20 questions."

In December 1983 the federal courts in

Columbia, South Carolina issued a list of 20 questions, as part of the "discovery process" by the government, in a new attempt to get a permanent injunction against any future actions at the SRP by any group. The federal interrogatory (as the questions are called) was issued against two individual spokespeople from the South Carolina Natural Guard. The two activists face up to ten years in jail for contempt of federal court if they refuse to answer this interrogatory, which both have stated they will refuse to do.

So far the federal government has only one other such injunction in operation, a permanent injunction against blocking the railroad tracks outside the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Colorado. No one has ever been arrested for violation of that injunction. It is interesting to note that the recent "white train" from Amarillo, Texas to Bangor, Washington bypassed the state of Colorado altogether. The U.S. Attorneys are using the Colorado injunction as the legal basis for the one they seek in South Carolina.

Part of the government's attack on the

two people from the Natural Guard is the legal ploy that holds them responsible as "class representatives for all persons physically interfering with or threatening physical interference with the operation of the Savannah River Plant..." The Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals heard the Natural Guard's appeal late last week on this outrageous "class action" federal argument. If the Natural Guard loses at that level of appeal, the federal court in Columbia, South Carolina will then bring the two activists up on the government's motion to compel them to answer the interrogatory, a motion which has been put on hold pending their appeal. At that point the two can be sent to jail immediately for contempt, by a judicial order, and could be forced to stay in jail indefinitely.

The 20 questions listed on the contested interrogatory are themselves an indication of just how serious a threat the U.S. government considers the anti-nuke movement. And how serious it takes the operations of the SRP in particular. Starting with question No. 1: "Please state in detail the plans which you are making to conduct, at, on, or near the SRP, any future rallies"; the series of questions runs through the whole gamut of the government witch-hunt investigation of Natural Guard supporters, including the names and addresses of all officers, directors, chairpersons, and members, all financial contributors, the places of employment, organizational affiliations, and arrest records of the Natural Guard spokespeople, etc., etc.

Question No. 16 begins to get to the high-level political issues at stake: "Have you ever advocated or taught that the government of the U.S., or of any state or political subdivision thereof, should be overthrown or overturned by force, violence, or any unlawful means?" This question is an almost verbatim statement of the federal felony law against advocating the overthrow of the government, a law which carries a 20-year sentence.

Question No. 17 raises up these stakes even higher: "Have you ever communicated verbally or in writing, with persons who were not lawful citizens of the United States of America, regarding any nuclear weapon or nuclear weapons program of the United States of America?" That, of course, implies the threat of charges of treason. The "simple" list of 20 questions has had a quite heavy effect on the anti-nuke movement

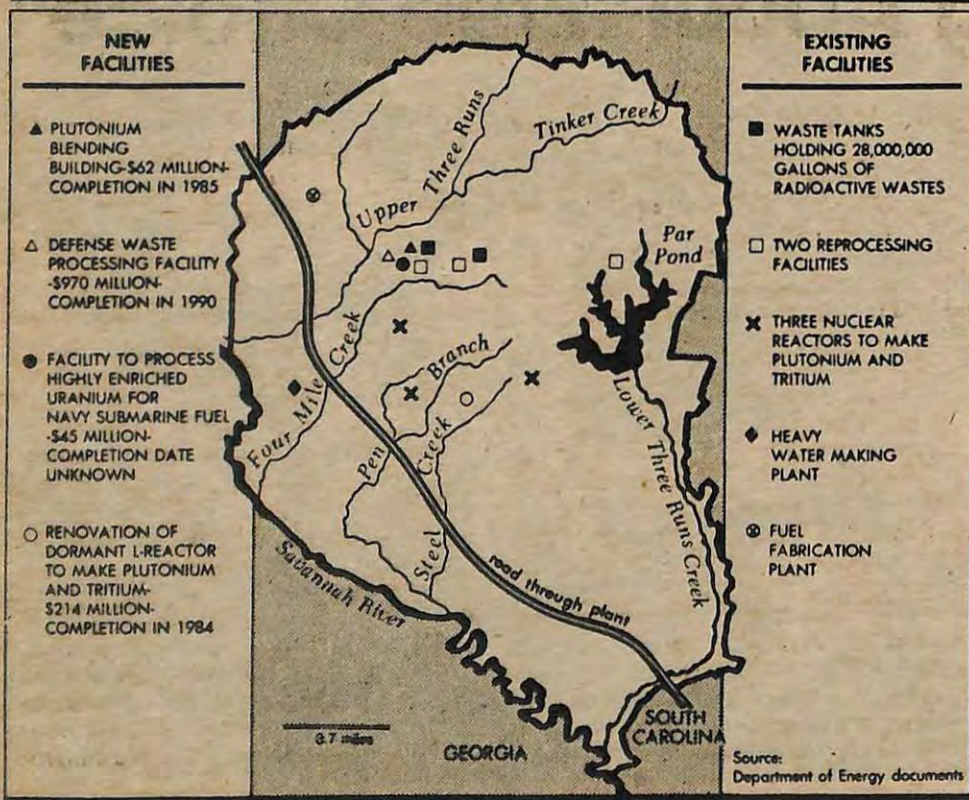
in the area, prompting some people to dig more deeply into the political ramifications of this attack.

This major, federal-level attack coming down against the Natural Guard has come at somewhat of a bad time for the authorities. The Department of Energy is attempting to gear up the SRP to greater productivity, which has also unleashed further dissent. In the face of government moves to squeeze more and more plutonium out of the 30-year-old reactors, a barrage of exposure has come out about the virtual death trap that the SRP has created through massive radiation leaks over the years. The grounds of the 300-square-mile facility are the largest single repository of nuclear waste in the U.S., not to mention the fact that SRP reactors have leaked more radioactive waste into the environment than any other reactors in the world.

The same month that the USA filed the interrogatories against the Natural Guard, one of the Department of Energy's top management officials, William Lawless, quit his job at the SRP, revealing "gross patterns of negligence" in radioactive waste storage. The information that the former SRP official gave to the press had been classified by the DOE as top secret in order to ram through the reopening of one SRP reactor that has been dormant for 15 years. Lawless testified for the defense in the trial of 50 of the SRP blockaders, testimony that created intense controversy in the circles of respectable environmentalists whose concern is that somehow the SRP should make its bombs clean. That has sharpened up one contradiction for the U.S. bloc's urgent nuclear war-related needs, since many of the local citizens of rural South Carolina and Georgia who are being poisoned to death by the SRP are quite unhappy about it all. Several suits are pending against the restart of the L-reactor.

But it has served to sharpen up the key question as well in all the various federal-level maneuverings around the SRP and the Natural Guard — the question of nuclear war, of world war. It is in the context of these questions that future actions are being planned at the SRP. And it is in this context that the battle to defeat both the permanent federal injunction and the possible federal contempt jailings of the Natural Guard spokespeople is being waged.

## SAVANNAH RIVER PLANT



Continued from page 1

she was "a little overwhelmed when I walked into that peace encampment...no place in the U.S., especially Smalltown, USA, could you expect this invasion of weirdo, freako people, who don't look like anything people have ever seen before." Becker explained that in part she was exaggerating for effect, but her message was clear, and as the fall wore on it merged with a barrage of criticism and objections which came from various quarters and with varying motives, but contained a common theme: *this stuff might be all right for New York, or for organizing on "women's issues," but now you've gone and done it, you've pissed off middle-America.*

Important issues are raised by this debate. But one central point needs restating: the "organizing" of small, backward army towns in Upstate New York was never the purpose of the camp. The encampment was intended to make a statement to the world, to challenge in a strong way the growing specter of nuclear war, especially the deployment of U.S. missiles in Europe. This calls for support. Even if the camp had garnered *no* support whatsoever in Romulus or Waterloo, its actions would still deserve to be upheld. As one woman who sat down at Waterloo told us: "(some people) say we don't want to alienate the people who work there (at the Depot—RW). Yes you do! You want to make these people stop and think about what they are doing! Some people are going to be offended no matter what you do. If you water down your politics to the lowest common denominator, where no one is offended, then what's the good of it? I think there's something wrong with an action that offends *everybody*. But if I offend a Bircher or a Klansman I'm not going to worry about it."

However, as a matter of fact, the actions did create in the local area significant doubts about nuclear war, questions and differences about the resistance to war, and even pockets of support, and this among a local populace literally enwrapped in the American flag and saturated with its chauvinist ideology. This phenomenon is quite interesting and says something about the soil, which is fertile indeed, for the planting and spreading of opposition to war preparations, even in

an area breeding raving groups of the most patriotic neanderthals.

Frankly, the Seneca debate at this point requires some perspective. It simply will not do to assess the impact of Seneca — much less to tailor a whole political strategy! — on the basis of the actions of the screaming cavemen of Waterloo. To these types it is outrageous that anyone should be opposed to the nukes that make the Home of the Brave number one in the world. It is doubly outrageous that it is *women* that should be standing up to the war machine so fiercely, without men "to protect them" (or better yet, we suppose, to drag them back home). And, of course, there was that shocked part of town which complained, as did one woman, that the Seneca people "walk around town with shorts and clothes cut low right where our children can see them" (in the middle of July!). It's *not* outrageous in this grotesque worldview that millions of children will be fried in a nuclear incinerator by America and its vital interests ("I'd rather have my daughter nuked than turn out to be a lesbian or a lawbreaker!"), one person from town yelled out), nor are the daily rapes and attacks on women worth a mention... From any objective viewpoint, all this is as ridiculous as it is disgusting; it should not, however, be surprising. What is remarkable is the notion that the movement should cater to these offended American sensibilities, yet this is precisely the politics underlying a vast overemphasis on the Waterloo incident, and the resulting criticism of the Seneca camp.

October 22, 1983. "It could have

# The Seneca De

*been the Fourth of July at Sampson State Park except that everyone was bundled in coats and mittens. Families picnicked, hundreds of small flags waved in the wind, helium-filled balloons soared over the crowd, and cameras swung around most necks...unlike the summer there were no angry confrontations between pronuclear townspeople and the protestors."*

—Ithaca Journal, October 23

*"Bill Benet, Monroe County legislator and chairman of the newly-formed Center for Democratic Values grinned as he handed out some 3,600 small American flags. A Vietnam-era veteran and later a protestor against the war, Benet recalled familiar scenes of flag-burning during demonstrations of a decade ago. It was different Saturday, he noted."*

Rochester Times-Union, October 24

The October 22 action here described, called by a coalition of groups in which Mobilization for Survival played an important role, was consciously aimed at negating the effect of the earlier Seneca actions. References to July 4th were pointed. On that date the peace camp had opened, and in a clear setup, a local man had approached the camp, demanding that it fly an American flag. After much debate the women declined to fly the flag, electing instead to create their own flags (including a few red, white and blue) and post these on the gates. The local man

then had the camp's refusal published in the local newspaper, and the local media and others began a concerted campaign to whip up patriotic fury against the encampment. But that was in the past, the local papers assured their readers, Saturday was "different."

It was. Thousands of flags flew, and not anywhere near the Depot gates, either, but at the state park a couple of miles away; the dreaded name of the peace camp wasn't even mentioned. The flags advertised a definite politics, a pitch geared to those many people in the middle strata of society who do not all like the specter of nuclear war, and who are aware, too, of "injustices" against women. But it beckoned toward a path very different than that of the direct Seneca actions. Bella Abzug, a key speaker from the platform, well represented this: if people were concerned about war and injustice, she cried, they can be heard in the Halls of Congress. Abzug pointed to the "town meetings" which have occurred widely in New England and elsewhere on the issue of the Nuclear Freeze as an example of democracy in action; Reagan and his ilk would hear from the people if enough activists helped to get out the vote. More women, especially, should hold positions of power, Abzug said (she didn't mention any names).

The rally was in one sense a spit in the eye of the encampment. But more, it was a recognition of the influence of the actions of the camp, an attempt to win back those people that had been drawn to the issues raised by the camp, even perhaps in spite of their feelings about "lifestyle" or

## Seneca: Real Life



bate

in New York City a major forum on "Feminist Organizing in the Peace Movement" turned its attention to the Seneca actions, featuring Becker with a critical view, and Grace Paley supporting the camp. A photo exhibit and slide show opened in October, while the feminist art journal *IKON* presented a speaker from Seneca at a public program. Speakers from Seneca on both sides of the issues toured as far as California; forums and debates have continued until the present.

In general, the criticism has focused on Waterloo and the charge that the encampment didn't reach out enough. Becker, for instance, pictured the "lifestyle" of the camp as interfering with the effort to make the peace movement "a mass movement, embracing women with differing viewpoints on every conceivable issue, from abortion to the Middle East, from fashion to food." She added, "I'm one who takes the position that we should get dressed up for demonstrations the way some people get dressed up for church. That, too, is an exaggeration, but it is based on the principle that we are trying to communicate with the American public, which is the only public we have..." Becker also hit the women-only policy of the camp (men were allowed only in a restricted area).

The article carried in *WomaNews*, cited earlier, took it from a slightly different angle: it held that the camp lacked "community outreach," suggesting instead such issues as the "hardship taxes" suffered by local farmers and the links that could be drawn from these to military expenditures. "Such efforts were not implemented," the author admonishes.

Intertwined with these issues has been the flag controversy and the question of patriotism. One woman at the Becker/Paley forum said she thought refusing the flag on the Fourth had been a mistake, and that the encampment should have been more "conciliatory rather than exclusive." Another woman agreed that the flag should have been accepted; "it's our flag and we should be patriotic in our dissent... we could have accepted it as one of our symbols." ("But it's not our symbol," one woman called out from the audience.)

Many of these criticisms have been echoed by some opportunist "left"

groups, such as the social-democratic *In These Times*, which covered the Waterloo incident in an article entitled, "Peace Camp Draws Wrath of Locals." The revisionist CP, on the other hand, has made its comment mainly by default (or in whispers). Even though some groups influenced by the CP played a role in the initial stages of the camp, the CP paper *Daily World* kept a careful arms length from the camp, covering the summer's events with a solitary photograph of arrests at Waterloo (which were miscaptioned).

#### Community Support?

The peace encampment at its beginning actually made a rather conscious decision concerning "community organizing": it never was the point. The official handbook stated: "It is important to remember that the Depot is the focal point in terms of the Women's Peace Camp. Community support and sympathy is desirable and certainly makes working on the Depot easier. But ultimately, they don't have the power to make the Depot go away." The camp was determined to challenge the war machine in a clear, loud, and direct manner — not register a polite protest, nor organize a local constituency to do so.

What was its effect on the town in the end? There was, in fact, positive influence, indicated by small signs. There was the wife of a local banker, who sat down with the women at Waterloo and was arrested with them because she felt that the women's "rights" were being violated. There was the father and son who drove up to the camp to apologize. The son leaned out the window, saying, "We wanted to ask you women how you do it? Those people were really rotten to you. I heard them. They insult you and they call you names and you're so calm. My father and me — we honor you. We don't understand, but we honor you." And there was a restaurant outside Romulus which offered its facilities as a place where women could meet. That these things could occur in a backwater stronghold of imperialist ideology is of no small import. Paley's comment is to the point: "...we had troubled them. Wouldn't it have been wonderful if hundreds, thousands, of Germans had sat down before the gates of Krupp gas-oven

plants and troubled the contented hearts and minds of the good German people?"

But of course, virulent local opposition greatly outweighed sympathy and support. As others have said, how could this not be? How could America, feeding parasitically on much of the rest of the world and capable of distributing some of the loot to large sections of its home population, *not* have a great many people in its ideological grasp? It is this sort of social base and reactionary climate, indeed, on which the imperialists will count in the future to support a war, and to oppose and silence any opposition to it. Waterloo, like a miniature of an imperialist nation at war, served up its ultimatum as one vile package of "traditional values," misogyny and national chauvinism, and demanded: *swallow this!* As the article in *WomaNews* recognized, "We were face to face with the American Family." One woman told us "it was the first time in my life that I was forced to physically confront what I most hated."

#### Public Opinion Battle

According to the critics of Seneca, the confrontation at Waterloo showed, in an exaggerated way perhaps, that the encampment was "isolated," and its politics as a whole not capable of building a serious, and above all, *mass* peace movement. We beg to differ. There are in fact, quite large sections of the people at this time who do not react at all like Waterloo to actions such as those at Seneca, and there is fertile ground for support among large sections even of the mainstream peace movement, such as those influenced by the Freeze. And Seneca did broadly reach such forces.

In the movement, and generally in society, on TV, and in "Day After" debates, a battle for public opinion rages around the issue of nuclear war and how to oppose it. Perhaps this is forgotten or not fully seen by the very people, like many at Seneca, who are determined to put their own bodies on the line, or as one woman expressed it "live your whole life as a protest," but who do not see the effect of this on literally millions of people, or do not see the significance of this impact. The bourgeoisie, however, is well aware of the stakes in the realm of public opinion.

From the time of the Waterloo confrontation, an intensive "surround and suppress" campaign was waged against the women. On the one hand there was the orchestrated campaign of flagwaving, vigilantism, brutal threats and actions by the base military, and arrests stretching right through the current treatment of Kim Blacklock, Carol McKenzie, and

direct-action tactics.

There was no Waterloo in October. The rally proved once again that with a crowd drowning in red, white, and blue, with an ex-congressperson on the podium, with mouths shut and carefully clear of any trouble, the police and town yahoos would act nice. In this, the rally organizers seemed to find profound meaning: "The Seneca actions (the October 22 rally—*RW*) are a model which other areas may want to follow," crowed a leaflet.

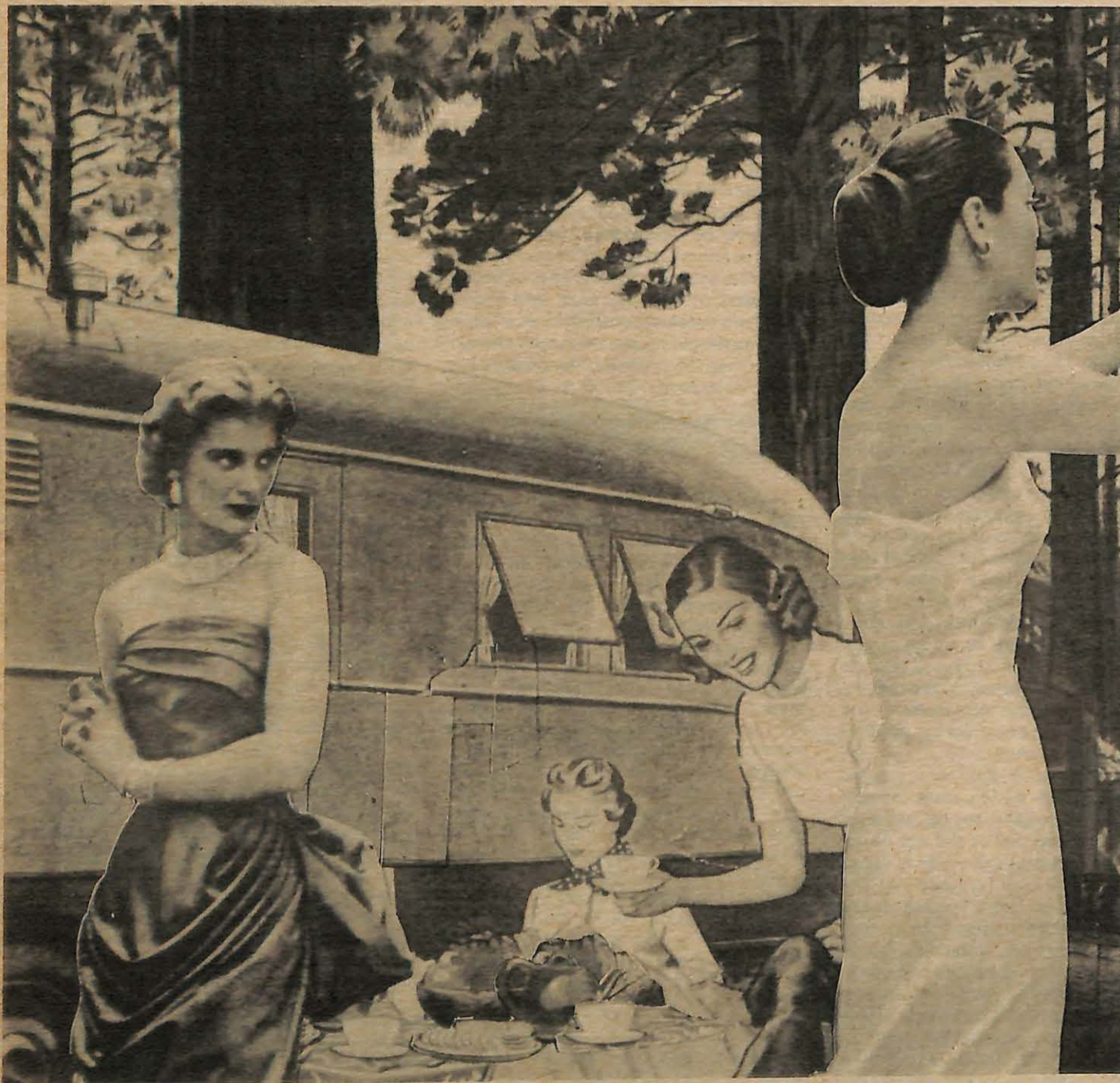
Some in the crowd undoubtedly took this advice, but others decidedly did not. Two days later, hundreds of people blocked the gates to the Depot, while small affinity groups spread out and began scaling the fence and moving onto the base. MPs in jeeps and helicopters charged down at them, but 40-60 people made it to the airstrip where they sat down while choppers moved low over them, scattering clothing and belongings in the wake of their blades. Three hundred and eighty were detained.

But it was a photo of the Saturday rally which made it into the *New York Times Magazine*, and this rally became the opening chorus in the crescendo of criticisms aimed at the encampment.

#### Debate Breaks Open

New York became awash with debate. Already, during September, the group which had sponsored the march which was confronted at Waterloo, Women's Pentagon Action, had held a series of meetings to discuss the camp. In October, the encampment organizers held a regional meeting to sum things up, while

### .. and if the critics had their way



Johanna Benschop (see *RW* No. 245). And right in tandem with and utilizing this atmosphere of intimidation and repression, appeared "important" figures promising safety if only the camp would act more "responsibly": After Waterloo, Bella Abzug appeared suddenly, as well as members of the state's Women's Division. The governor himself declared a state of emergency and cancelled a trip to the National Governors Conference in order to oversee all this. These efforts were nothing less than an attempt to transform the politics of Seneca. And this was necessary precisely because of the wide-ranging impact of Seneca.

For the bourgeoisie, the terms of the confrontation at Waterloo were sharply unfavorable, with a strong potential of drawing wider sympathy yet for the camp. Here were the peace camp women, unrepentant, unconventional, and deliberately lacking in American flags; over there were those representing the USA, a mob of types you could easily

Continued on page 10



## The Seneca Debate

Continued from page 9

find at Big Dan's Bar in New Bedford, Mass. It was as if someone had put up a poster of Uncle Sam wearing a "Nuke the Bitches" t-shirt. Understanding this, Governor Cuomo and others moved quite rapidly to cast the state as one which would "protect the interests" of the marchers, a "reasonable" force that was "listening" to the women (and all the while continuing to target the more advanced with intimidation and arrests). This is a most important face for Uncle Sam, and it attests not to the "isolation" of the more advanced forces at Seneca, but to their impact and potential to vitally affect the way people think about, and ultimately what they will do to prevent, nuclear war.

Thus, in faulting the camp for supposed lack of outreach, the critics of Seneca raise a basically bogus issue. They do tap into a widespread feeling at this time in the antinuclear movement, that the movement must change, broaden, step things up in some way. After a year of massive protests in the U.S. and especially Europe, when both imperialist blocs continue nonetheless to hurtle ever more rapidly toward a global showdown, there is a justifiable sense of urgency and need for re-evaluation. But at bottom, what is at issue is not that Seneca failed to reach out broadly, but that in the eyes of its detractors, it did so with the wrong message, the wrong politics. "Lifestyle preference," says Norma Becker, should not be injected into "political projects aimed at broad constituencies." So saying, the enormous rage against women's oppression, which the peace camp channeled up against imperialism's preparations for its greatest atrocity yet, is dissolved into the neutral-sounding phrase "lifestyle preference," and, as such, read out of the peace movement. The rowdy and disrespectful character of the camp would be replaced with something more "acceptable and responsible"; thus the very qualities that had given the camp its impact are opposed.

(A comment by one Seneca woman, who was also at Greenham Commons, crystallizes the spirit which must make the camp's critics so uncomfortable: "We're worried about upsetting the townsfolk," she said, "and there's warships going into El Salvador and Nicaragua. There are women being tortured daily, they're being raped and we are worried about upsetting the townspeople here." Some people just refuse to get it into their heads that "the American public is the only public we have!").

### Women-Only Policy

Also (misleadingly) labeled as a question of "lifestyle" has been the women-only policy of the camp, a central and controversial topic in many circles right now. To Seneca's critics, not only is this

policy said to interfere with reaching the American public, but some sympathetic male activists were affronted by their exclusion. (Actually, men were not entirely shut out of the workings of the camp, but given certain forms of support assignments.) Now, as is well-known, the RCP is not a feminist organization, nor can we agree that certain "peaceful traits" are inherent in women or are part of a women's culture. But our disagreements have nothing to do with what is respectable and who is affronted. From a revolutionary point of view the question of what form of organization has to do with how to eradicate women's oppression, how to resolve the contradictions between men and women in society, how, in short, one sees the source of women's oppression. There will certainly be continuing debate and struggle within the movement on this, a debate we welcome. As for the critics' charge that the all-women policy "interfered" with its outreach, we can only note that the Seneca camp probably did more to awaken and galvanize the "public" than a whole army of respectable precinct workers for Bella Abzug. And frankly, any male that is affronted by an all-women's organization ought to get a better understanding of the oppression which gives rise to such organizations and take a more sweeping and strategic view of how such contradictions will be resolved.

### "Classism"

It is interesting to look at the charge of so-called "classism" leveled against the encampment. The author in *WomaNews*, for example, held that "there is an inherent promotion of middle-class, and white values to create an encampment which could only be organized by those who could afford to spend substantial time away from the exigencies of making a living." This was taken several steps further, into the realm of the ridiculous, by a speaker at the Marxist School who criticized the chant "take the toys away from the boys" because "it seemed to be aimed at the young Black and other minority soldiers who otherwise cannot find jobs." All this makes a bizarre counterpoint to the other charge that the encampment women were seen as too "freaky." Really, our critics need to make up their minds here. Either the camp was too middle-class, or it was too marginal and not middle-class enough! What actually ought to be asked is whether the camp did or did not objectively strike a blow at imperialism and its war preparations — it certainly did! The real point of these "class" points of view is, again, to call back these bold actions.

There is, however, something to be said about the class character of Seneca. There are those with nothing to lose, proletarians, both around the world and in this country, who like nothing better than seeing the monster that is imperialism challenged in this way — but who are not

generally much in evidence at actions such as this. The point is: it is incumbent upon class-conscious proletarians to be much more taking the political stage, supporting outbreaks among different class forces such as those at Seneca. As we wrote just before May First last year: "It brings no honor to the proletariat to stand aside from this, but far more than honor is at stake. For it is only the international proletariat, its forces and its revolutionary programme, that offers a way forward to prevent war through revolution." (As for minority—and other—GIs at the Depot, it is even more irrelevant to speak of "affronting" them. These may have been unemployed proletarians but they are now soldiers in an imperialist army who must be, and can be, awakened to the role they are being made to play, just as occurred with many GIs during the Vietnam War who played a leading role in exposing and struggling against the imperialists and their war.)

### Breaking the Social Compact

In our view, what underlies all the complaints about the camp is the fact that the peace camp had broken the social compact which allows a polite and loyal dissent, one that challenges none of the essentials of imperialism, and one on which rides the existence of not a few organizations and careers. Whether consciously (for some) or out of naïveté (in the case of others), this is an opposition which declares that the imperialists can somehow be "convinced" that nuclear war is irrational. It ignores or opposes the truth that systemic forces are compelling the rulers of both the U.S. and Soviet blocs into a violent confrontation over redividing the globe, and that this is true no matter what the ruling classes may want or see as rational. For such a loyal op-

position, actions like those at Seneca break the holy covenant of "democratic and responsible protest." It must be reinforced in. *If you want to be taken seriously, if you want to be effective, the Seneca women are told, you must take your principles and your deepest feelings of rage against the system and stow 'em.* . . .

What this means objectively (and quite consciously on the part of some) is that the social compact of loyal dissent has been made more important than actually doing what is required to prevent nuclear war.

*ROMULUS. Mythical founder and first king of Rome, said to have been founded (by him) in the year 753 B.C. The small number of friends who had followed Romulus was insufficient to people the city. Men enough were gained by making the city a refuge for exiles; but the Roman citizens soon wanted women. Romulus then instituted a religious festival, to which he invited the Sabines, with their wives and daughters. In the midst of the festival, the unarmed strangers were suddenly attacked, and the Sabine women borne away as captives. The two states thus became engaged in war; but the entreaties of the ravished females who threw themselves between the contending parties, at length effected a peace, and Rome gained by her union with the Sabines. . . .*

—Encyclopedia Americana (1963), Vol. 23, p. 677.

In the Roman myth, the Sabine women who had been attacked and raped, put aside the painful memory of this treatment, and begged for peace. Certainly the bourgeoisie today, confronting the growing phenomena of women struggling against their war preparations, hope and work to make their ancient myth a reality. To the imperialists, the old image of the Sabine women putting aside their rage at their brutal treatment, pleading with the governments to make peace, must be a pleasing one indeed — from their side, the loyal opposition is an important development. But for those who despise the nuclear holocaust they are preparing, why should we not welcome the unleashing of the fury of women in the direction of these madmen? Why should we not welcome their rowdy and awakening spirit?

Naturally, this hardly exhausts the scope of the current debate. Important questions of strategy and tactics are up for re-examination right now. Within this, our party has something to say about the source of war and of women's oppression, and will of course continue to struggle for the line and programme of the international proletariat, for revolution as the way to prevent nuclear war. But we believe that these must be struggled out in the context of upholding actions like those of the camp, and only on that basis moving on with the debate over what, fundamentally, it will take to prevent the worldwide nuclear conflict which both imperialist blocs now cold-bloodedly plan. □

## CORRECTIONS

Regarding *RW* No. 244 (February 24, 1984), the article on page 4 about the Nazi/Klan trial entitled, "Whitewashing the State's Dirty Work," some further information has been received. In that light, the first half of the first full paragraph in column 4 should read:

In the current trial the government was supposed to produce a "surprise witness," none other than Klansman Mark Sherer, who fired the first, signal shot from a black powder pistol, who is seen on the videotape brandishing that weapon, and who later fired a round into a car. The government said that Sherer had now turned state's witness in return for a plea agreement, and implied that he would now take credit for one or two additional shots earlier "thought" to be coming from the demonstrators.

The paragraph picks up with the sentence: When he actually appeared in court . . . and continues on as is.

.....

In *RW* No. 245, March 2, 1984, in the article "Mr. Halperin Makes A Clarification

on 'Warmongers For Peace'" on page 13, the date of the meeting of Physicians for Social Responsibility in Washington, D.C. should read January 27, 1984.

.....

In *RW* No. 241, February 3, 1984, in the article "Elections in Peru: Revolutionary Advances Amidst Inter-Bloc Rivalry" on page 6, column 2, there is a correction in the paragraph which begins:

Sympathizers' reports abroad indicate that during this period the PCP was able to significantly expand its zones of guerrilla operations and to open up new ones — and that the PCP has now succeeded, in some places in the three central provinces, in establishing revolutionary base areas where the reactionary authorities have been driven out (or in a few cases executed) and replaced by a people's committee based especially on the poor peasants as well as others.

This should read: "in the three central departments." (A province in Peru is a subdivision of a larger area called a department which is analogous to one of the states in the U.S.)



The armed attack on the Center and the church.

## State's Mission Accomplished Miracle Valley Charges Dropped

American democracy has triumphed once again — this time in Miracle Valley, Arizona! On February 22, Judge Thomas Meehan dropped riot and assault charges against 19 Black members of the Christ Miracle Healing Center and Church. Although prosecutors announced they are appealing this decision, it now appears that the case will not be tried.

Of course the judge and other authorities made clear they are not dropping these charges because they think these people are *not* guilty of riot and assault. Rather, no one is willing to pay for the trial at this time. Cochise County, where the church members were shot down in October 1982, refuses to pay for the indigent defense of these Black people, and the Arizona state legislature refuses to loan Cochise County the money to do so.

But who cares about such minor details? Justice has prevailed. So states *The Arizona Daily Star* in a February 24 editorial entitled "The price of justice." "Meehan made a just decision," they proclaim. "Democracy is not cheap. And a justice system that dictates a presumption of innocence until proven guilty and that the accused is entitled to competent representation is both inefficient and expensive. The aim in such a system is to ensure the rights of the individual against the power of the state."

Surely the chest of every true-blooded American will swell with pride in contemplating such lofty principles of Americana. As for the immediate recipients of this benevolence:

— In 1979 and 1980 the all-Black church of 300 moved from Chicago's South Side ghetto to Miracle Valley seeking religious sanctuary. On October 23, 1982, they were attacked by a posse of 40 riot-clad police armed with M-16 assault weapons who unleashed several hundred rounds, shooting two church members in the back and killing them, permanently paralyzing a third and wounding six others. The police said they were trying to deliver a traffic warrant. Following this, nine surviving members were rounded up and charged with riot and assault, most held for several weeks on \$68,500 ransom. Soon afterwards ten additional secret indictments carrying similar outrageous bails were issued while church members were attending the funeral in Chicago, making it clear that anyone returning to Cochise County was subject to arrest.

— Shot up, terrorized and subject to imprisonment in Arizona, this entire Black community was uprooted, never again to return to Miracle Valley, leaving boarded-up homes, belongings and jobs. As a final attempt to rub salt in the wound, Cochise County placed a lien on their property and is attempting to sell it to defray court expenses.

— Prior to this pogrom, these people were subject to all kinds of racial insults, vigilante attacks and other police attacks. In April 1982, police staged a riot, attacking and arresting 15 Black people over an incident at the local high school. Later, three of these youth were convicted by an all-white jury of the bogus charges of

armed robbery and assault. Soon afterwards the police used a force of 50 officers and 30 patrol cars to serve a traffic summons. At one point about 40 people (of a church with 100 adult members) were either dead, disabled, in jail, or with serious charges against them.

During this entire time, up until the present, no disciplinary action or charges have been taken against any Cochise County sheriff's deputies or any other authority in connection with these incidents. The pig who fired the shots that killed the two church members remains on the force, in full standing. Sheriff Jimmy Judd, who led the assault, remains the sheriff and in appropriate high standing in the community. Nor has any attempt been made to prosecute the white vigilantes who defaced church property, rode through Miracle Valley streets at night firing weapons, and assaulted some of the Black youth in broad daylight. Frankly, they don't need this trial. The Black church has been driven totally out of Arizona. Its main spokesman and acting leader, Rev. William Thompson, son of the church founder, is dead with seven bullets in his body. Even his corpse was taken back to Chicago. The "problem" has been dealt with. At the same time, there is a risk of further exposure, should the case go to trial.

But even without this case going to trial evidence has accumulated which further reveals that what flowered in Miracle Valley has roots which extend much deeper into the state and federal institutions. The FBI, for example, has been involved from the very beginning. The day after the shootout they sent a small army of 30-40 armed agents to reinforce the Cochise County sheriffs. The FBI said they were there to investigate whether the "civil rights" of any church members had been violated. It is not unusual for the feds, under this stated intention, to come to the aid of local pigs in such a situation and advise local and state authorities on how best to handle the situation. Their first act was to allow the sheriff's deputies time to sweep the area clean of all evidence. Since then they have continued an "exhaustive" investigation which has yet to file a single charge against anyone after one and a half years (although a mild slap on the wrist of one or two cops is not totally out of the picture).

Other intelligence agencies have also been active in the case it turns out. During pretrial testimony it came out that the church and its members were under physical surveillance by the Arizona Criminal Intelligence System Agency (ACISA) from 1980 or even earlier. This agency, known as the Arizona CIA, was supposedly formed to investigate organized crime and narcotics dealings along the Arizona-Mexico border. Obviously its intelligence gathering concerning the border region encompasses a much broader scope. Its agents amassed a large volume of material on the church, often by picking through their garbage, gathering, among other things, personal documents such as letters and poems. A lawyer for the church told the *RW* he is sure ACISA was even at the scene of the

shooting on October 23, 1982, posing as a fake Channel 12 television cameraman in order to film the massacre (there is no Channel 12 in the area, although several eyewitnesses report seeing a cameraman from this station). It would certainly not be surprising if this were linked in one way or another to the fact that this Black enclave was only three miles from the Mexican border and only 15 miles from Ft. Huachuca, a very large military base which includes a sensitive Army intelligence school.

Contrary to the theory that this assault was the work of a single crazed sheriff, it has also come to light that Governor Babbitt, at the very least, was well informed of the plan several days before it was launched. In the days prior to October 23, Sheriff Judd conferred at least three times with the governor. According to Sergeant Norval Fogle of the state highway patrol, Judd told Babbitt on one occasion: "Governor, I need a tank down there to protect my troops." "He wanted a tank to go down and annihilate those people," continued Sgt. Fogle. "He used the term 'niggers.'" Judd got no tank — at least on this occasion — but he did use military rifles and was, at the very least, not stopped, and more likely aided, in planning and executing this "annihilation" which, besides Cochise

County sheriff's deputies backed up by the 30-40 FBI agents, included a SWAT team and state police as reinforcements and involved a two-day blockade of all roads into and out of Miracle Valley. If this wasn't enough, the governor said he was going to call out the National Guard.

In this context, since it is the year of the Black presidential candidate, it should be mentioned that Jesse Jackson played no small role in "stroking" the Black community following this massacre and legitimizing the role of the FBI and the governor. He visited Miracle Valley in the days following the shootout at the personal request of Governor Babbitt and immediately announced he was pleased the governor had been "civil and humane" around these events. He then went on to counsel complete reliance on the FBI and Justice Department investigation and played an important role in convincing church members not to return to their homes, saying, "The climate is such that the Justice Department will have to assume the responsibility of resettlement (back to Arizona)." The church members, he continued, would cause an "uncontrollable situation" by returning. Apparently this was the content of the "lasting peace" which was the stated purpose of his mission.

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# FOR A HARVEST OF DRAGONS

“We, in our turn, must also understand the specific features and tasks of the new era. Let us not imitate those sorry Marxists of whom Marx said: ‘I have sown dragon’s teeth and harvested fleas.’”

V.I. Lenin

An Essay Marking the 100th Anniversary of Marx’s Death

## On the “Crisis of Marxism” and the Power of Marxism —Now More than Ever

By Bob Avakian

1983 marked the one hundredth anniversary of the death of Karl Marx. Over this past century and more, Marxism has animated and aroused millions. Few can deny that the political landscape of the world today has been profoundly shaped by the struggles and revolutions Marxism has inspired. On the occasion of this anniversary, Bob Avakian has written a landmark essay, *For A Harvest Of Dragons*. Avakian’s previous books include a major study of the thought of Mao Tsetung and an analysis of the events leading up to and the significance of the 1976 coup in China. Here he guides the reader through a synoptic history of Marxism.

Avakian begins by summarizing the theoretical revolution ushered in by Marx’s investigations — in the realms of philosophy, history, economic theory, and politics. He then proceeds to examine some of the controversies that have swirled around the course and development of Marx’s thought, in particular the relation of Marx’s early writings to his mature work and the possible divergences between Marx and Engels. Turning next to the work of Lenin and Mao, Avakian argues that their theoretical innovations represent the most important enrichment of Marxism of the twentieth century. Finally, in one of the most provocative sections of his survey, Avakian subjects Soviet Marxism to withering criticism. He analyzes several representative works by Soviet scholars and shows that their method, content, and outlook cut against and suffocate the revolutionary essence of Marxism.

This essay appears at a time of a widely proclaimed “crisis of Marxism” — when the labor theory of value is under attack, when the applicability of Leninist forms of organization is subject to deep questioning, when the whole revolutionary experience of the 1960s is being reassessed, and when even the feasibility of socialism has been called into doubt. But Avakian’s defense of Marxism is no mere liturgical reaffirmation. He stresses that Marxism is a dynamic system, that it advances precisely in connection with the new problems posed by developments in the world, and that there is both an invigorating Marxist tradition to uphold as well as a deadening “conventional wisdom” to renounce. Avakian argues powerfully for the contemporary relevance of Marxism. Indeed, *For A Harvest Of Dragons* is itself striking testimony to Marxism’s continuing vitality.

“In the final analysis, as Engels once expressed it, the proletariat must win its emancipation on the battlefield. But there is not only the question of winning in this sense but of how we win in the largest sense. One of the significant if perhaps subtle and often little-noticed ways in which the enemy, even in defeat, seeks to exact revenge on the revolution and sow the seed of its future undoing is in what he would force the revolutionaries to become in order to defeat him. It will come to this: we will have to face him in the trenches and defeat him amidst terrible destruction but we must not in the process annihilate the fundamental difference between the enemy and ourselves. Here the example of Marx is illuminating: he repeatedly fought at close quarters with the ideologists and apologists of the bourgeoisie but he never fought them on their terms or with their outlook; with Marx his method is as exhilarating as his goal is inspiring. We must be able to maintain our firmness of principles but at the same time our flexibility, our materialism and our dialectics, our realism and our romanticism, our solemn sense of purpose and our sense of humor.”



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# Another Wonder Of Modern Medicine

Los Angeles officials like to brag that their city is a world leader in just about every field — from entertainment to the arts, to commerce and finance. Medicine is no exception as L.A. boasts dozens of medical schools and hospitals featuring the most up-to-date technology. Under imperialism, however, the accumulation of wealth inevitably proceeds side by side with the accumulation of misery and oppression. A rare glimpse of what this means for the hundreds of thousands of immigrants forced from their native lands into the bowels of the U.S. was recently given by a series of articles in the *L.A. Herald-Examiner* on the "Hispanic Health Crisis."

According to figures printed in this series, East Los Angeles has one doctor for every 7,500 residents, as compared with Nicaragua which has one doctor for every 2,778 residents, Honduras with a doctor for every 3,125 people and El Salvador with a doctor for every 3,446 people. In other words, East Los Angeles has *less than half* as many doctors per person as Nicaragua, Honduras or El Salvador. And this is to say nothing of places like Beverly Hills, where there is one doctor for every 200 people. It is further revealing to see the number of doctors in East L.A. compared to the conditions in the countryside in these Central American countries, as opposed to in the cities where most of the doctors, health care facilities, etc., are concentrated. For example, a U.S. government study lists the number of persons per doctor in the urban areas of Honduras in 1968 as 1,190, or about six times as many doctors per person as are available in East L.A. In the rural areas of Honduras there were about 7,143 people per doctor. This means that in 1968 there were slightly more doctors for each person in the countryside of Honduras than there are doctors available in East L.A. in 1984. Of course there are other factors influencing the availability — or more accurately, the lack — of health care in countries like



Honduras. For example, there is a severe shortage of nurses in Honduras, hospitals are concentrated in the cities while medical facilities available to those living in rural areas are of much poorer quality, and there are undoubtedly regions where there is virtually no health care available at all. Still these figures serve to illustrate that health care available for immigrant workers in L.A. is comparable to the conditions which many of these same people faced when they were in Central America.

Other figures paint no less vivid a picture of the vicious conditions perpetrated upon those living in the Pico-Union area, west of downtown L.A., and in East L.A. A death rate from diabetes which is twice as high for Spanish-speaking people as for whites, an incidence of typhoid which is so high that, according to the *Herald-Examiner*, "Authorities likened the rate to that in third world countries," and an

infant mortality rate in the Boyle Heights area of East L.A. which is 30% higher than the rate in L.A. County as a whole. One medical clinic in the Pico-Union area serving mainly Central American immigrants found that eight of every ten children they examined have intestinal parasites.

This systematic denial of health care is official policy in California, where applications for Medi-Cal coverage are automatically sent to immigration officials for screening. The *Herald-Examiner* quotes one county health official who makes no bones about the fact that the utter lack of health care for immigrants is perfectly acceptable to the rulers. This official, in fact, considers immigrants themselves to be the problem: "With illegal immigrants we just have to accept this as a reality of life." With chauvinism that staggers the mind this same official goes on to say that there is

not really too much worry as far as the "public health" (as opposed to the health of immigrants, who apparently don't qualify as part of the "public") is concerned. While there are problems like typhoid and tuberculosis, which are communicable diseases and which might spread to other sections of the population, this same health official notes that "Most of the parasites found in people's guts are really not transmissible."

Such is the logic of the country that never tires of boasting about "the highest standard of living in the world." Here, immigrants forced into this country by the rapacious appetite of U.S. imperialism are plagued by health and sanitary conditions as abysmal as in the oppressed and dominated countries they were forced out of, and health officials blandly remark on the need to accept this as a fact of life. Why don't they just rename them "disease officials"?

## Marchais

# How to Offend the PCF

"We protest with indignation against these ridiculous and odious assertions," declared Georges Marchais, leader of the Communist Party of France, in a letter dated February 17 and published some days later in *L'Humanité*. Was this a timely retort to ongoing allegations of economic sabotage from the Mitterrand bunch? A slap at the common sniping of the far right?

As it happens, no. What has fired up Marchais on this occasion has origins *étranger*. This fiery denunciation is

directed at none other than the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, the recipient of Marchais' letter, and was compelled by the appearance in French of a seemingly innocuous Soviet ethnographic study called "The Population of the World." According to the *New York Times*, Marchais attacked the book because it said "the population of France broke down ethnically into the French proper and into minorities, such as Alsacians, Basques, Bretons, Catalans, and Corsicans."

months, kept leaving his classroom — sometimes attempting to go home and other times simply moving from his classroom to another one where the teacher spoke Spanish. The school's investigation also declared that, while the letter of suspension "could have been worded better," no rule had been broken in suspending Ervin. To back this up one school official even stated that Mrs. Alvarez didn't appeal the suspension notice so it went through without a hitch. Never mind the fact that Dora Alvarez didn't speak English and couldn't read at all. Nor is the fact that she personally visited school officials and pleaded with them to revoke the suspension of any import since it wasn't an official appeal — "I told them my husband and I had to work to feed our children and to send money to the other two who are still in Guatemala. I begged them not to do this."

And of course, the system and the life it

Woe be to the simple ethnographer — comrade or otherwise — who would cast doubt on the homogeneity of the French Nation! Them's fightin' words. "For us," wrote Marchais, "and for every citizen of our country, any man or woman who has a French citizenship is French. France is not a multiethnic country. It is one country, one nation, one people, the product of a long history. . . . To describe any member of the French community as not 'purely' French is an offense against our national conscience. No one here can accept it and our party less than anyone."

Of course, by now the PCF needs "less than anyone" to prove its own odious assertions of nationalism and chau-

vinism, having done so, in a particularly offensive fashion, for decades. And by the same token, the PCF would be expected "less than anyone" to point out that the large *non-European* population in France is the product of history — namely the history of French (and other) imperialist domination and international plunder. When Marchais gets to musing on ethnographics, *these* people don't even merit discussion! Marchais apparently considers this a practical question — evidenced by a PCF mayor's bulldozing of immigrant housing a couple years ago and even uglier examples since.

## Guatemala to D.C.

Continued from page 6

*Post* even obligingly reported that after the fire Dora had been hospitalized for "hysteria," implying that even she agreed with this assessment and was overwhelmingly wracked with guilt.

Yes, we are told, it had to be Dora's fault — certainly no one else was to blame. District school authorities even investigated themselves and quickly reported that they were guiltless, even though the fire did take place at a time when the kids could have been in school. According to school authorities, Ervin had "adjustment problems." What was his problem? Apparently Ervin, a five-year-old boy who didn't speak English and had only been in the U.S. a few

imposes on the proletariat is also supposedly guiltless. After all, Dora Alvarez *freely chose* to leave her children alone. Similarly, the Alvarez family "freely chose" to flee from Guatemala in order to survive and "freely chose" to live five people to a shabby single room inside the U.S. And Dora Alvarez just as "freely chose" to have to work as a domestic in order to keep her family alive — a job which necessitated leaving her own children alone in order to pick up her employer's child for babysitting on the day of the fire. It is also quite interesting to note that while the official cause of the fire was pinned on the children "playing with a cigarette lighter," no one has paid any special attention to the Alvarez's statement that most of the damage in the room was to the ceiling immediately above the lamp which had faulty wiring.

In any instance such an attempt to

blame the mother for the accidental death of her children reeks of the oppression of women — "If a woman is a good mother and a real housewife she wouldn't let herself get into a situation like this. If she really knew her place she would never have left the kids alone — no matter what — after all the home, the kids and whatever happens to them are her life and her responsibility." In the Alvarez story, this "blaming the mother" has an especially disgusting and enraging stench, and to accept it as fact means nothing less than embracing the realities of imperialism and the life it imposes on the proletariat as "just the way things are." In truth, the Alvarez story is, more than anything else, an indictment of U.S. imperialism and an indisputable statement on its nature and the oppression it breeds for the international proletariat from countries like Guatemala straight to the streets of Washington, D.C. □

# La Helada

Continued from page 3

nonetheless maintains a developed infrastructure of officials operating various programs and agencies. Also, virtually all the *colonias* have various officials who in turn are tied in to central offices of the *colonias*; both these and the UFW networks are intrinsically connected with the local Democratic Party. The result is a pervasive atmosphere of suffocating, official reformism, where running afoul of various "charitable" agencies is a dangerous proposition, and a scene in which the arrival of any visitor is immediately noticed by all, and often quickly relayed to various authorities.

The demagoguery reached some new heights at a recent statewide UFW convention in the valley. Most of the prominent speakers (who included virtually every top Democratic Party elected official in Texas and numerous candidates) glowingly praised themselves for "how far we've come since the days when the Texas Rangers busted up our office, beat up people on our picket lines, and tried to run us out of town. Those days, thank God, are over." No doubt there are some farmworkers who are comforted by the fact that, in the Rio Grande Valley, most of the mayors, state representatives, congressmen, not to mention the sheriff, police, and even many INS agents, are today Chicano; however, praises for such "people's politicians" were noticeably absent in our interviews with the farmworkers themselves.

The UFW was not content to rest on its laurels, though, as they put forward a "fighting program" of inundating "candidate Ronald Reagan" with letters demanding jobs programs and benefit extensions. In a shameless performance of the ideology of trade-unionism, Cesar Chavez also stated that the UFW leadership was primed and ready to launch a big battle to finally organize the Texas fields, until the December freeze forced them to alter their strategy. However, he did promise that "as soon as the industry gets back on its feet, we'll be there, knocking on their door, boycotting their products, and striking in their fields." The Democratic governor of Texas, Mark White, has also seized on conditions in the valley. At his church in Austin, he initiated a well-publicized drive to collect canned food for shipment to the valley, urging other "compassionate congregations" to do the same, since, he said, the "heartless Reagan administration" will not send enough assistance. Later, at a speech described as a "stinging attack on Reagan" that White delivered before the National Press Club in Washington, D.C., he too revealed a program for the valley. "As good a deal as they've given Grenada in post-invasion aid, maybe we should invite a Marine assault on south Texas." This may reveal some unexpected imperialist farsightedness on White's part. The last major positioning of U.S. troops along the Texas/Mexico border, when more than 100,000 American soldiers were stationed there, is described this way in an article by Texas historian Mike Kingston. "Service in the border is put to good use as many of the American soldiers were given basic military training there before departing to Europe when the United States entered the First World War in 1917."

Meanwhile, the Border Patrol says they are going to increase their "efficiency" through the use of newer, better, and more numerous infrared lights and helicopters. Low-flying planes continually lay down blankets of pesticides in the remaining fields. And in McAllen, which a few years ago achieved national notoriety for the beatings of Chicano and Mexican prisoners videotaped by police in the city jail, over half the town is virtually off-limits 24 hours a day to anyone not white.

## Life in the Colonias

The roads leading out of McAllen appear to be going through a typically bland slice of Americana — except that here there is an unmistakable edge to it. Barbed wire and coiled-wire fences surround all the numerous golf courses and the new subdivisions (which are given names like "Plantation South"), and in many areas the sprawling brick houses take on the look of fortresses in an occupied territory.

The homes in the *colonias* are quite different. The sewage drains open into the unpaved streets and in the rainy periods the dirt roads turn into an impassable sea of mud. This winter many children in the *colonias* didn't go to school for over a week at a time because the school buses couldn't drive into some *colonias* when it rained for five days. Homes are constructed of almost anything available, and many are without utilities of any type. People often put rocks on top of their tar-paper roofs for some meager protection against the wind and rain, or tap into a neighbor's electrical outlet with an extension cord for some light at night. One man, who lives in a *colonia* himself, commented that he had worked around chicken coops in better shape and better constructed than many of the houses in the *colonias*.

One woman, who along with her husband has worked in the fields for years, described the effects of the freeze like this: "When the freeze came, what happened was I almost started to cry. It was like they had taken a plate of food from the table, taken it away from us. What little we worked up we used to pay our bills; just water, rent, and food, and no more. When the freeze came around the 22nd or 23rd, we were picking fruit. We weren't making too much money, but we were more or less meeting our bills, paying our rent, and the rest. Also we were getting food stamps; other than that we'd never make it. Then the hard freeze came and everything dried up. And all these people, the gas company, the light company, the water company — they all have to be paid, and they all want their money now."

Her husband continues, "We also went to see the judge Santo Saldaña in Edinburg. There were about 6,000 cans of food — fruit, honey, and meat. But they had it in a warehouse in McAllen and didn't want to turn it loose. And the people were in need of food, but they didn't want to turn it loose. There were people who didn't have gas to cook with, but the company wouldn't give credit. How are people supposed to cook and eat when they have nothing? There were a lot of people making fires outside and trying to cook there, because they have nothing else. That is why they ordered the church in San Juan to pass out warm meals from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. But we could not go so far for such a small plate of food. We just wasted more gas and got more problems."

"For a lot of people, this is their only food to eat. We all agreed to talk to the judge and let him pass out the food for us to cook. The judge got on the radio and said there was no need for people to be acting that way, what would all the tourists from up north think when they came to the Rio Grande Valley. It would be discredited. Now we are receiving a little check every 15 days, \$29. They say it is once a week but that is not true because I count the days and it's every 15 days, a \$29 unemployment check. And my wife gets a \$3 disaster check. She's got three checks totaling \$9. There are others who get one for \$1. And now, of course, these unemployment checks are all gone. At the most, people got four checks."

"I went to the Texsun Company here in Weslaco and I asked for an application for me, my wife, and my two grown daughters, but they said no, they didn't have any. They had 200 people working but now they only have 100. Everywhere it's the same thing. There are some companies working, a little fruit here and there, but it's just a few hours."

"If you take a look around San Juan you will see big machines taking out all the trees and burning them. Big piles of orange trees as big as this house. Everything is gone. Everything is dead. And the trees that are still planted, it will be at least three years for them to bear fruit. The people are going to be like ants, some going this way, some going that way; I'm thinking of going to Houston or San Antonio, or some other big large city to see if I can find any kind of work, even just a sweeper's job or something. Because right here in agriculture, it's all dead."

"And everywhere else it's about the same, too. I have a couple of sons who are in Florida and they tell me it's about the same thing there. They only work part time, sometimes a day or two and that's all. Right now we are making it, we are eating beans and tortillas, because they (the sons — RW) are helping us. But when they can't help us any more what

are we going to do? Are we going to steal? If we steal we will be killed, but we have to find a way to eat somehow.

"The foodstamp people say, 'No, you have enough to eat now. Go look for a job and if you don't find one come back over here.' We have to travel all the way to Edinburg, or Weslaco. We waste gas, \$8 or even \$10. But they don't look at it that way. How long can we stand this? And then they say it's only their orders. If you take them a bill showing that you had to repair your car or had to get a tire or something, just so you could go look for a job or go to the foodstamp office, they won't accept it as a bill. They say, 'No, you can hitchhike.' They say, 'How did you get over here? Did you spend money fixing your car? Yes? Well then, you don't qualify.'"

"Around here the farmers have law on their side. If two or three people ask for a raise or something they run you off. That's the same whether you're working or not. They say that you're no good and if you don't leave they call the police to take you away and arrest you. Around here you can't speak for your rights, someone always has their foot on your neck, and if you say anything then you're no good."

The explosion of tourism in the valley in recent years has given rise to some unusual, but revealing, juxtapositions — for example, a small group of farmworkers harvesting onions in a field bordered on one side by a large drive-in bank and on the other a string of fast-food franchises. These remaining fields near the towns and malls are about the only ones not a target of constant pesticide spray. This spraying has been going on, as an elderly farmworker said, "as long as anyone alive here remembers." It has been poisoning the people in the valleys for decades. Recently a hearing was held at Texas A & M University's southernmost campus in Weslaco, sponsored by the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA), purportedly to look into the effects of pesticide use on farmworkers. The tenor of the meetings, not to mention the state's intentions regarding pesticide usage, was probably best captured in a closing comment earnestly interjected by a doctor on the panel. He reminded the farmworkers present of the two basic health precautions that everyone should know to take when working in the fields — always wash your hands before using the latrine, and never eat the food you are picking!

Even to those not in the fields, the effects of the spraying are disastrous and long lasting. The *colonias* are invariably in the middle of cultivated fields and it is unusual for the swooping, low-flying planes not to spray at least some of them daily. Even when the planes stop before they get over people's homes, the clouds and fumes of course continue to drift and settle over the *colonias*, and quite often there is direct spraying of people's homes, and even of schools, or vacant lots passing for playgrounds where kids are hanging out. A junior high school teacher explained that the kids in his class quite often come in very sick, with vomiting and headaches, on Monday and Tuesday and then tell him they had to spend the weekend working in the fields.

A woman testifying before the TDA hearing told of how she had suffered from a fungus on her hands and feet for nine years, and this was something she had never had before working in the fields. "I still can use only two fingers on my right hand because of this. My eyes are always red and watery and I forget what it feels like to not have a headache. Now the poison they spray is usually stronger than it used to be. Last week my *colonia* was sprayed and people suffered dizziness and headaches for two days, children and adults alike. As far as I know, not a single person saw a doctor. They have to stop spraying our homes, and especially the schools where all the kids are."

One farmworker in a *colonia* said this, as a plane flew directly overhead twice, emitting a thick, foul-smelling vapor. "I'm going to talk to you very frankly. Every time these farmers have plants, they are going to have pesticides. That pesticide that they are spraying now harms a lot of families. Every morning when you wake up, you breathe all the pesticides into your lungs. It makes your head dizzy, and it makes you want to vomit. I myself have dizziness, rashes all the time; I have all kinds of things due to

the pesticides. If our clothes are on the line and a plane goes over, we have to wash them again because if we don't everyone will break out in rash. The children are getting a sickness of the blood, and also a lot of people's kidneys get bad and a lot of people get cancer.

"I'm so sick that even if I'm far, far away from the spraying I can still smell it and I get sick. Once in Michigan we were all picking tomatoes when all of a sudden this airplane came low, so low that it sprayed all over us and we ran over to the side. I had to take my wife to the hospital because she scratched her finger with a piece of wire and that pesticide got in her finger. I took her to a clinic but they said they couldn't do anything about it. By now, I think that we have more pesticide in our bodies than they have in their warehouses."

Back in town, the streets of McAllen are clogged with police cars, INS (Immigration & Naturalization Service) vehicles and RVs, and a reign of terror directed against the Mexican and Chicano proletarians of the area is an ever-present fact of life. One farmworker, a Chicano, described the scene like this. "They don't want you speaking up for anybody. If you're caught even just riding in the same truck with someone from Mexico, they (the Border Patrol — RW) take your own papers, tear them up, and throw you back to Mexico along with the Mexican guys. They don't want you to say anything, even if you see La Migra beating up somebody. Around here in the *colonia* someone can stay all night long, and no one will say anything. But if you go downtown and the police see you they'll investigate you, and probably haul you in. Why? Because some tourist called the police on you."

In Reynosa, Mexico, just eight miles across the river from McAllen, street fighting has broken out twice in the past several months, and soldiers with automatic weapons have been called on to patrol the streets. Newsmen standing on the Texas side, with flames leaping in the city behind them, nervously warned the "winter Texans" it may be best to stick to the golf courses for the next couple of days, until things cool out in Reynosa. Exactly how the rapidly sharpening contradictions on both sides of the river will interact with and influence each other in the coming months and years remains to be seen. Clearly, however, the situation along this U.S.-created border has good potential for the international proletariat.

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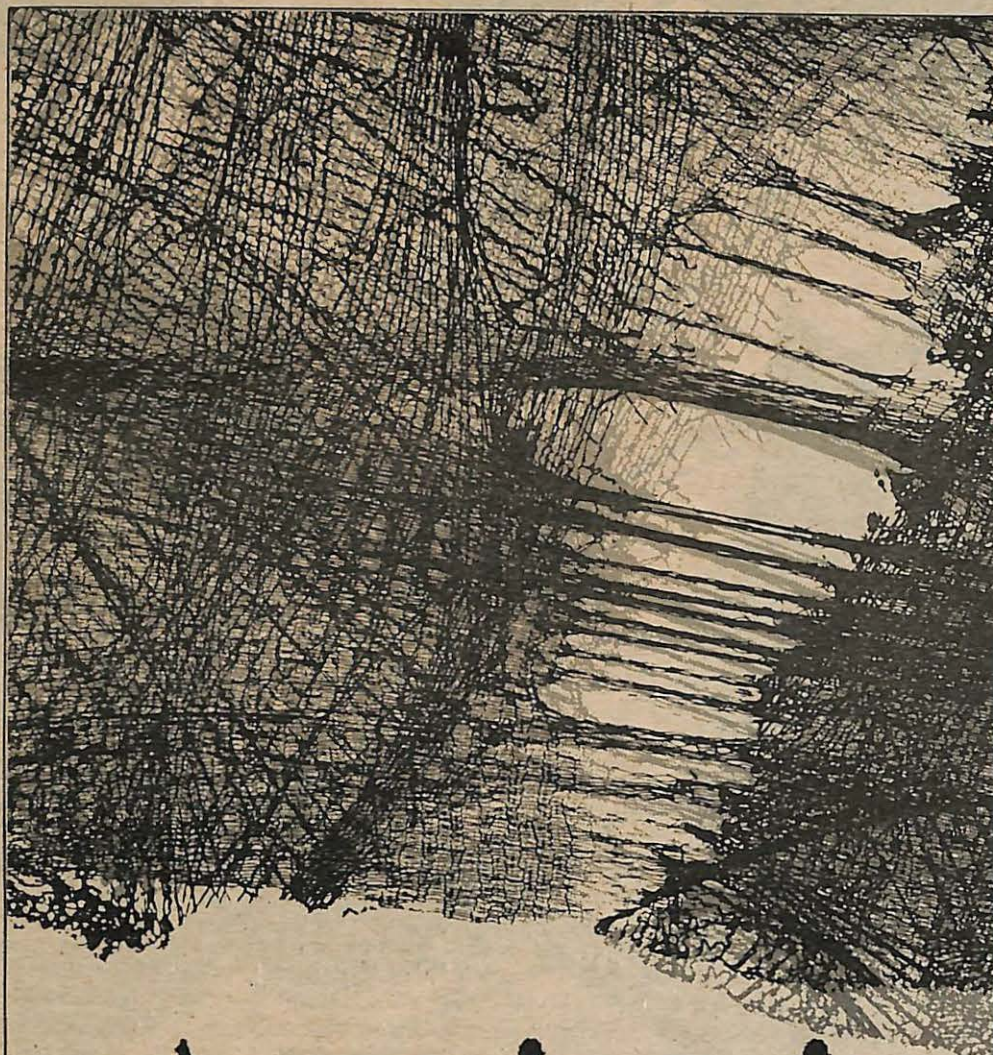
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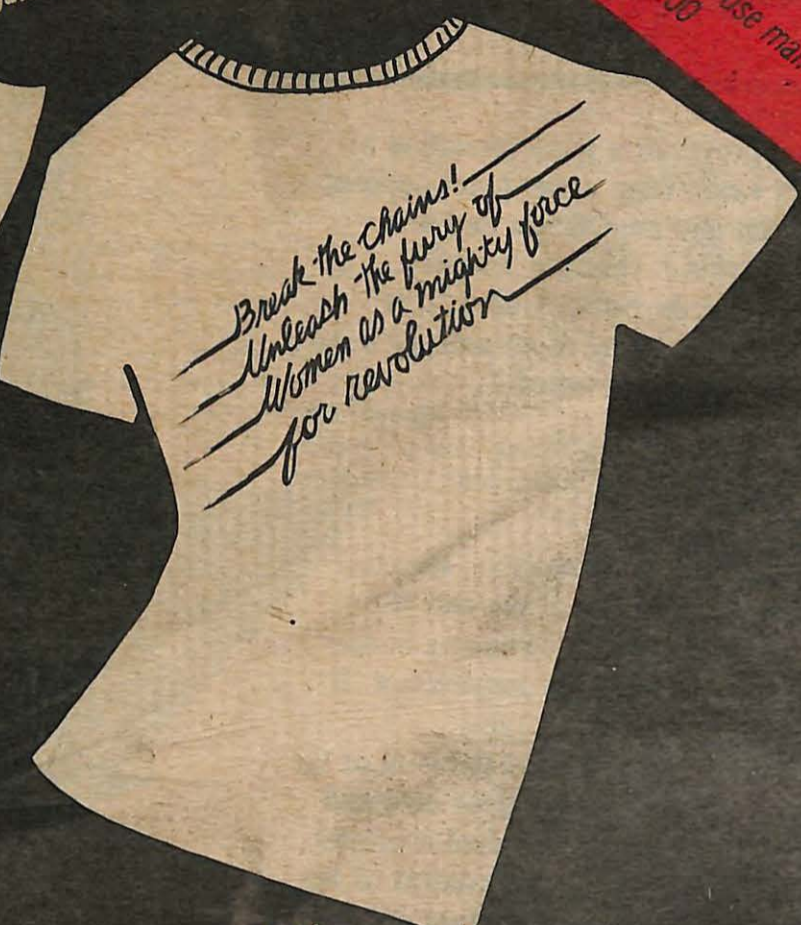
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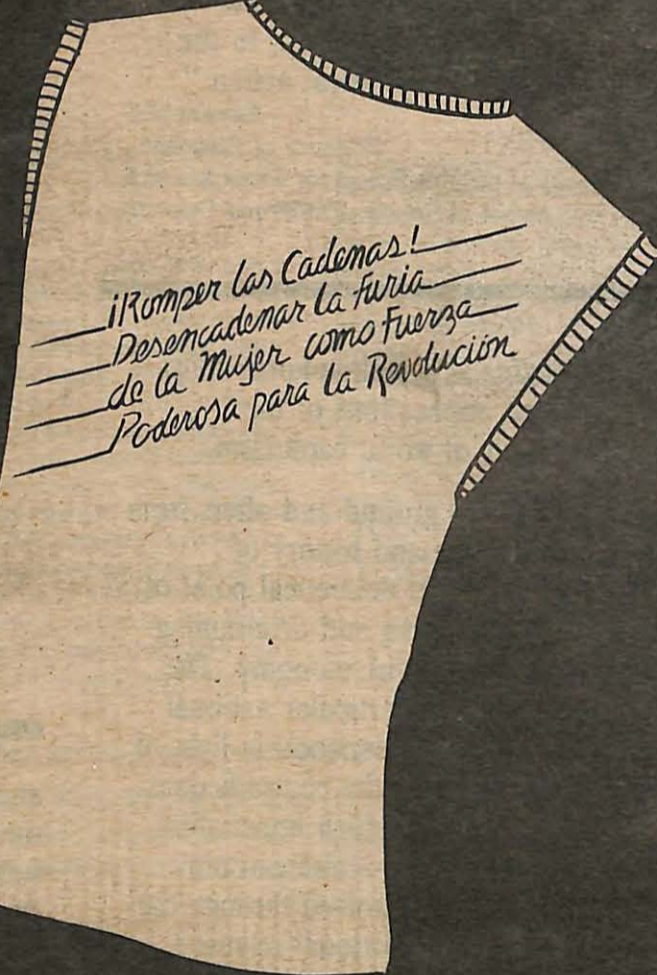
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