

## THE DIALECTICS OF THE RAVITZ CAMPAIGN

The process of running a Revolutionary candidate for the position of Recorder's Court Judge embodies within itself a series of contradictions, which if analyzed correctly allow for dynamic growth and development of both cadre and mass form, but if analyzed incorrectly, lead to practise devoid of correct revolutionary long-range affect.

The principle contradictions appear to be the following:

**FIRST CONTRADICTION:** The general issue of electoral politics and the role of revolutionaries within the electoral process.

An incorrect analysis of this contradiction leads to acceptance of the electoral process through the terms of those who define "the rules of the game", who control the game, and who define "win" or "lose". This means that if we accept their definitions we could "win" in their terms but "lose" by our revolutionary terms; or we could accept their definition of "loss" without perceiving what was a revolutionary victory. This means that we could begin to determine our strategy and tactics in terms of what was necessary to "win" by their terms which would involve merely playing the electoral game bigger and better than the other candidates. This means that even if we "won" we would have merely placed one revolutionary in a relatively limited position of power but not have begun the process of altering the institutional structures that a) placed him in power through votes based on concrete understanding in a progressive sense and b) established mass forms that would provide the constituency for Justin to wage struggles on the bench from a position of POWER and not just "legitimacy" (a CRITICAL difference).

What is the correct analysis of the electoral process? The correct analysis, it seems to me, consists of acknowledging the nature of the contradiction. In truth, we are forced into an arena in which the masses of people DO accept "their" rules of the game, that the masses of people WILL interpret our activity in terms of "win" or "lose" in a traditional manner, and that the masses of people will bring to the electoral process an attitude of cynicism, despair, anger, and frustration conditioned by a history of their failure to be able to significantly alter the base and nature of power in their lives through the electoral process. But within that statement of what we do NOT have is also the negation - what we DO have. We have all those things that we don't have. We have a set of "rules" that the masses of people implicitly mistrust, often reject, and know are crooked. Given a serious set of alternative rules, such masses could potentially (and have historically done so) work with and identify new sets of rules. We have a "game" in which the traditional acceptance of "win" or "lose" can be interpreted as a form of emerging self-determination and an independent political force based on concrete power, an example of the possibilities of serious people that CAN achieve victories. And finally, the cynicism, despair and frustration that the masses bring to the polls is, in its negation, the intelligent, objective, realistic response to the nature of a non-responsive system and when confronted with what is clearly a CHOICE, what is clearly a concrete means for exerting an independent statement that can concretely affect their own

*lives, that despair* and cynicism becomes positive motivation. (Premise: people really prefer to think positive.)

SECOND CONTRADICTION: The issue we are running on.

Crime and "law and order" is an arena where, again, the definitions as well as the objective realities could easily force us into non-revolutionary positions (altho' perhaps progressive and reformist). The issue cannot be separated from the electoral arena. In order to "win" votes from folks who have had the definitions of law and order already laid down to them raises the contradiction of defining the issue properly and "losing" the votes OR defining the issue simply better than the next guy, winning the votes, and losing the revolution. It seems to me that the starting point for the proper analysis on this question is to start from the assumption that people basically BUY the "law and order" issue because, concretely, it DOES explain reality to them. Their reality includes fear of rip-off, fear for personal safety, fear for their children and families, fear of categories of people "out there: who perpetrate offenses against innocent people. To tell someone whose kids have been beat on by a neighborhood gang or who was just ripped off that the "real villain" is Henry Ford is merely to provide an academic arguement (incidentally many folks will "agree" but..). In all immediate senses one does not put screen on your windows to keep Henry Ford from climbing in. This is not to deny that the context of issue discussion must be placed within the context of corporate capitalism as rip-off (which most of us can start to do relatively well) but that there must be a series of TRANSLATIONS from those super-structural agruments into concrete statements about the immediate causes and immediate threats that confront people in their everyday lives.

Folks are basically ambivalent about the punitive nature of the judicial system. On the one hand, they see no alternative to their own personal security other than removing and locking up those who threaten their security and see not other means for that removal and isolation than "better and more police" and "strengthening the courts". At the same time, their immediate exposures to cops, courts, judges, and the judicial system in general (including the national) informs them that the system is corrupt, that it does not really serve them, and that it acts to protect the wealthy, the white, the businessman - anybody, really, but them.

The position we must adopt, then, must be based on a strong and clear understanding that focuses on people's security and the desperate need to insure that security. We must agree that those who threaten personal security must be dealt with. BUT we must then move on to address the question as to what "dealing with" offenders really means? (recidivism, cost turkey, unemployment and need, etc.) We must meet them on the grounds that their problem is not at issue - what we question is the solution to their problem that the society is offering to them - i.e. they are being offered a solution that is, by definition (ours) by logic and by data, unworkable as a "solution".. If the courts do not act on criterion of who is "most dangerous to the safety of ordinary citizens" but instead act on criteria based on race, class and sex chauvinism and moralistic concerns, the REAL criminals are not being apprehended. And even when a REAL criminal is apprehended the folks who pass the bill to lock him up for years are not the fuckers who make people unemployed and alienated but the common folk. The taxpayer

faces the dilemma of being ripped off by a recidivist or being ripped off in his tax bill to catch the dude and move him through an expensive judicial system, law enforcement system and prison system.

THIRD CONTRADICTION: Justin isn't going to be able to do a whole lot himself.

Even if we are able to present an analysis based on the above, we are faced with the concrete contradiction that Justin, alone, is not going to be able to seriously alter that system, nor is he going to be able to bring about the fundamental kinds of changes that would re-define criminal justice in this country. Justin will merely be, by this line of thinking, another well-meaning but soon to be incapacitated revolutionary who gets sucked into the system and is a nice guy to have in court but you might get one of the other 13 fuckers or Justin might have to send you off to Jackson anyway because you really are guilty and there's nothing else he can do with you. This has to be admitted squarely and consciously, because folks out there will know. What does, then, have to also be placed out there is the nature of the campaign, the nature of the forces and potential power that Justin represents. JUSTIN CANNOT CHANGE THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM BUT IF THERE IS THE POWER IN THE CITY TO ELECT A MAN WHO BELIEVES WHAT JUSTIN BELIEVES THEN THERE IS THE POWER IN THE CITY TO ALSO BRING ABOUT THOSE CHANGES. The answer is, essentially, dialectical. Justin represents an attempt to gain power through the electoral process which, by the nature of its process, cannot be the basis for revolutionary change and power. The dynamic here, of course, is that people really have little perception of any other concrete means of "getting at" power, other than through legitimized channels such as elections. But people also understand that those channels are "fixed" in such a way as to effectively prevent them from gaining concrete power. Justin must go through legitimate channels and delegitimize those channels as he passes through them. That means that during the campaign he must discuss those reasons why it is NOT possible for him to bring about a system truly serving the needs of the people while, at the same time, he concretely describes what he CAN do. He must explain why elected officials ARE isolated, delegitimized and slurred if they do attempt fundamental change. He must explain why so many well-meaning officials DO get co-opted by the nature of the system and the limited effectiveness they have within that system. He must explain why the campaign to elect him - which is an independent people's movement with its own sources of energy, creativity and resources will enable him to be independent of the rewards and pressures of the legitimate judicial system and why it is only with public movement and understanding that he can possibly hope to creatively function on his own terms. That is, where he is a "successful" revolutionary judge is not HIS problem, solely, but the problem of masses of people being will to STAND UP to a system that they concretely understand does not represent them. (Premise; Wallace basically has a sound technique for certain kinds of mobilization.)

#### FOURTH CONTRADICTION: The concrete functions of racism

Despite the fact that most Americans are socialized into intellectual acceptance of a Bill of Rights, and "equality", it is also true that most white Americans also deny those rights and that equality to large segments of "other" parts of the population. This contradiction is seen most clearly in Detroit in the case of STRESS where 1) there is no clear legal or constitutional grounds of police officers becoming jury, judge, and executioners, and 2) where there is little connection between STRESS' stated function (reducing crime) and its affect (not altering the crime that most folks will be subjected to). The continuing white public support for STRESS, then, is not really illogical, but dialectical. Although the police cannot physcially protect the white community and although the society cannot provide the material basis to the majority of white folks in terms of employment security and fulfillment, the police can and DO protect the psychic safety of the white community by punishing an enemy, by validating the superiority of the white community OVER somebody else, and by providing a sense of power over someone else's life, at least.

The obvious contradiction to racism (and one long known to Radicals) is that such racism is, in its long-range effects, more detrimental to the status and security of the white working class. However, the negation of the process of racism, as outlined in the STRESS example above, has to be more than an intellectual argument that racism "in the long" works against folks' best interests. When folks are immediately insecure, immediatly powerless, and immediatly aliented such academic arguemnts simply do not fill the bill. The concrete negation to STRESS, then, is to provide the framework and opportunity by which the "enemy" is not only identified, bu by which massive mobilization that concretely addresses itself to insecurity in the physical sense (in relation to crime) and in the psychic sense (in terms of self-development and struggle community) can be ACTED upon. In other words, STRESS provides us with a model; we need our own STRESS! Again, what we must say to folks out there is that we understand that THEIR problem is OUR problem. We must say that they are not in error for being afraid, for feeling powerless, or for feeling threatened. Again, we must provide the positive process of the contradiction. We must provide a force that attacks real enemies, that engages people in struggle NOW for what is in both their short-range and long-range interests. We must provide concrete experience that such positive struggle provides more, greater, and longer-lasting ego and psychic satisfaction (not to mention the material satisfactions of not being ripped off) than "their" STRESS does.

The key analytical difference in the example of STRESS and the example of Justin and electoral politics is that the electoral arena is wholly legitimate whereas STRESS, to a large extent, is normatively illegitimate. At the same time, STRESS is not only condoned by supported. Thus, in terms of the electoral process where we enter a legitimate arena, in responding to the contradictions of STRESS and racism, we will have to provide a model that is also normatively illegitimate but one which will also be supported. This is to say, the negation to STRESS cannot be formulated within the electoral arena, but must be a concrete program that pushes folks into motion outside of accepted institutional means for dealing with the problem. The process of providing a sense of real power and struggle to the white community can only come about through that community's willingness and ability to successfully challenge the power structure of their real enemy by moving outside and around it - not through it.