

Shadow of economic debacle looms over Bush presidency

by Marcia Merry

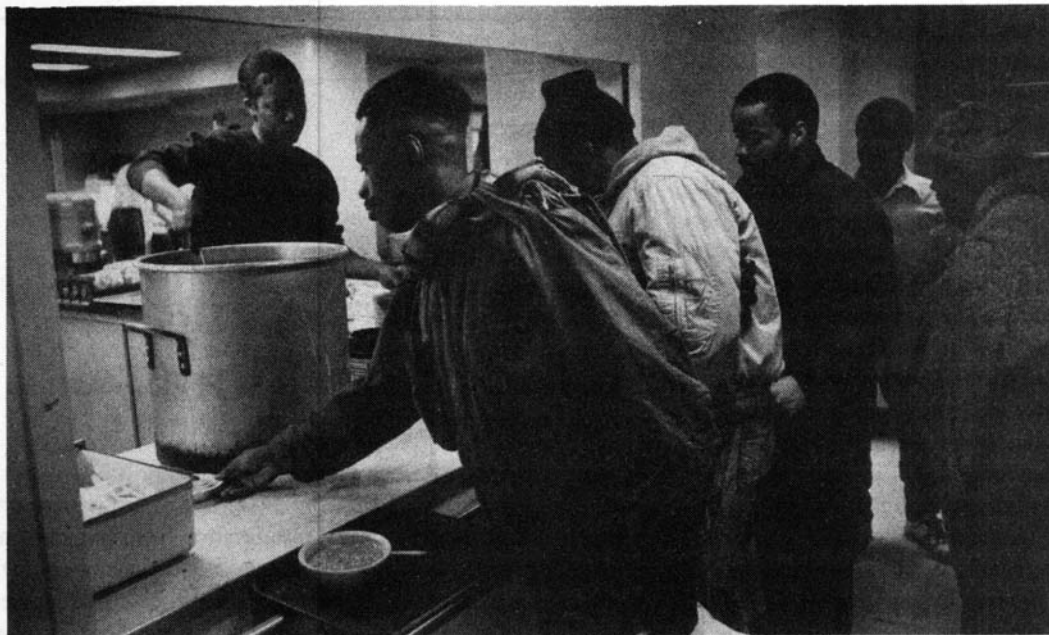
On the weekend of Jan. 13-15, a broad spectrum of activists from the United States and abroad gathered in Washington, D.C. for the Martin Luther King Tribunal, to hear reports on freedom struggles taking place around the world, and to honor the martyred civil rights leader on his birthday, with a commitment to continue his cause. Alongside speakers from China, East Germany, and other points of political revolution, a number of American farmers and urban activists came forward to report on the crisis conditions in their respective home states.

The King Tribunal was originally founded in January 1989 in outrage against the railroad trial and imprisonment of Lyndon LaRouche. Called together by the Commission to Investigate Human Rights Violations, the Tribunal has raised fundamental issues of international human rights before the court of world opinion.

The latest conference took place within a few city blocks of the White House, from whose windows can be seen dozens of homeless huddled over heating grates in the sidewalks around Lafayette Park, to ward off the winter cold. However, President Bush's only action on the domestic crisis this winter has been to strike a pose as being against the scourge of drugs. In this, Bush is no more effective than he was when he invaded Panama in the name of "democracy."

Economist Lyndon LaRouche warned in late January that the Bush presidency was so attached to the so-called "economic recovery" that it would try to cover up any signs of impending economic doom. But, he said, the "Big One"—the crash, could be at hand. "Whenever this crash hits, now, next week, late March, early April, it is the end of every policy, economic policy, monetary policy, to which George Bush and his co-thinkers have been committed for over 25 years. It is those policies which the Bush administration continues to defend with such stubborn commitment, which has caused the collapse of the United States economy, into almost a rustbucket, and the ultimate collapse of the financial system, as a result of the collapse of the economy."

LaRouche stated that while the "Bushmen" could not face economic reality,



Shuart Lewis

January 1990: a scene in Washington's Zacchaeus Community Kitchen. Food relief programs all over the United States are faced with more and more people to feed, and less and less food.

that reality would ultimately assert itself and bring ruin upon them and whoever tried to be the “new Herbert Hoover” of the Great Depression of the 1990s. The failure to face reality, he said, would cause the unnecessary deaths of millions of people around the world and in this country who might otherwise have been saved if a recovery program were organized sooner.

“What we need now is a rapid and fundamental change in policy to organize an economic recovery. Undoubtedly this will have to come from the Democrats, from Democratic leadership, a Democratic leadership which believes in scientific and technological progress, as did Franklin Roosevelt when he organized the recovery from the Great Depression of the 1930s, and as did President John Kennedy, when his space program, his investment tax program, and other programs organized a recovery from the deep recession of 1957-59. I offer such a program, and certain conclusions follow from that.”

A picture of the crisis

In the following pages, four speeches from the Martin Luther King Tribunal are presented in edited form—covering the dispossession of farmers in Oklahoma and the farmbelt, the desperate numbers of homeless in New Jersey and New York, the crisis of AIDS and lack of health care in New Jersey, and a soup kitchen emergency food program in Washington, D.C.

These presentations were made by individuals directly involved in their immediate projects for many years. Their reports do not give a national overview in terms of the statistics of the crisis, but, instead, they provide a dramatic picture of needless suffering and human losses taking place as a result of the continuing “Reagan-Bush Recovery” that is

causing misery everywhere. Each of these reports typifies the situation in thousands of cities and farm counties cross country.

“There are parts of the United States that look worse than the G.D.R.,” was the observation made by Klaus Grasslaub, an East German who visited the West for the first time in January, and participated in the Martin Luther King Tribunal. Grasslaub made the remark after touring Pittsburgh and other formerly industrialized centers.

Mayors discuss emergency situation

On Jan. 24-25, dozens of mayors came to Washington, D.C. for the annual U.S. Conference of Mayors Midwinter conference. Bush used the occasion to announce a request for \$1.2 billion increased federal budget outlays to fight drugs in the U.S. Representing the sentiment of most of the local leaders present, Philadelphia Mayor W. Wilson Goode criticized Bush for misestimating the situation, and said, “We are in the trenches.”

Next to no coverage was given to an earlier session of the conference, where 100 mayors of the Hunger and Homeless Taskforce met. At that meeting, Taskforce chairman Mayor Flynn of Boston reported that the lack of basic necessities for millions in the cities has become an emergency.

Observers have pointed out that Gorbachov may not survive the winter in the East Bloc due to the politics of presiding over deprivation; but they could say the same thing about Bush, if the will to correct economic injustice were to take shape in the United States. In 1990, no matter what happens “officially” or in the media, Bush is not going to be able to sail blithely along on his hoked-up popularity poll ratings.

Even the Bush’s sycophants at the luxury Watergate

apartments—Republican as well as Democrat—are now recognizing the plight of the homeless, though from a nasty point of view. In January, seven trailers were placed near Kennedy Arts Center and the Watergate, on the Potomac River, in order to house some homeless from the winter cold, in compliance with a court order. Many Watergate residents, and their neighbors in Foggy Bottom, home of the State Department, scurried into court in January to get a temporary restraining order to prevent a shelter being located near them; but they were turned down. One Watergate resident called the homeless “opportunists.” But the Watergate upper crusts, and Bush himself, cannot ultimately escape the consequences of a crisis on the scale now unfolding.

Food shortages

One common theme that came through the reports given at the Martin Luther King Tribunal last month is that even as basic a right as freedom from hunger is no longer guaranteed for millions of Americans. An estimated 15 million children nationally are in circumstances where nutrition is questionable.

Over the past year testimony has been repeatedly given to Congress on the food supply crisis. To date, there has been little action. Though already bad in the 1980s, the emergency food supply situation has become more and more acute since the 1988 drought, which hit basic fruit and vegetable crops (for canning), as well as the grain harvests and livestock herds. For farmers, there has been no real recovery since that disaster. Now consumers are paying more and more, and food aid services are overwhelmed.

For localities already short of food prior to 1988, the situation is a catastrophe. New Orleans Mayor Sidney Barthelemy told the Nutrition Subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee in 1988 that, “In New Orleans the problems of hunger continued to grow during 1987. Requests for emergency food assistance increased by 20%. Particularly alarming is the fact that seven out of every 10 people requesting such food assistance were members of families, children and their parents.

“The food assistance provided is generally an emergency box which contains food that is healthy and nutritious, and enough for three days. Persons are limited to one box in a three month period, however. While our food banks can only provide food for three days once every three months, our people get hungry every day.

“We estimate that 20% of the demand for emergency food assistance went unmet in New Orleans last year because we just do not have the money to meet it. We have to turn away people in need who ask for help.

“Chronic poverty, chronic unemployment, under-employment, low wages and low benefit levels in government assistance programs are the main causes of the problems of the hunger in my city. It is because we are a poor city that we are unable to feed the hungry.”

George Gentry

American farmers, back to serfdom

I am a farmer, my father is a farmer, his father was a farmer, and as far as I know, I am from a continuing line of farmers from the time of my family’s immigration from England. In those days of feudal Europe, we were called serfs, or relegated to a class, under a titled nobility or lordship. In other words we were property, chattel, or assets, used for profit or influence for the benefit of the landed aristocracy. We came to America for freedom and a chance to unshackle ourselves from bondage and slavery.

This is still the battle we are fighting today. The constitutional democratic republic of the United States is now under a state of siege. It is being completely destroyed and eliminated. Our enemy wishes to reestablish the slave system. The battle against a strong independent farming sector is one of the targets when you are imposing policies to re-enslave a people.

Food is the ultimate strategic weapon when you are controlling people. For freedom to flourish, a people cannot be living in bondage for the next meal.

The international financial elite, represented by such institutions as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the U.S. Federal Reserve, is now committed to using their financial instruments, their control of credit and interest rates, and other conditionalities, to stifle freedom and human life before it can flourish, and also to destroy it where it does exist. Financial usury—excessive interest rates—is a tool that has been used for centuries, since the Babylonian Empire, to loot and starve and extinguish the light of freedom, sovereignty, and independence.

The destruction of the herds

My particular case can be multiplied thousands of times across America. I used to produce beef cattle. I no longer do. I had to sell them in 1984 to pay interest and principal to the banks. Oklahoma is one of the major beef-producing states; now, the number of beef cattle in Oklahoma has been severely reduced. We have reduced our breeding herds to the numbers we had in the late 1950s and early 1960s. We have seen recent drastic price increases for beef. This is only a fraction of the price gouging that will happen if we do not