

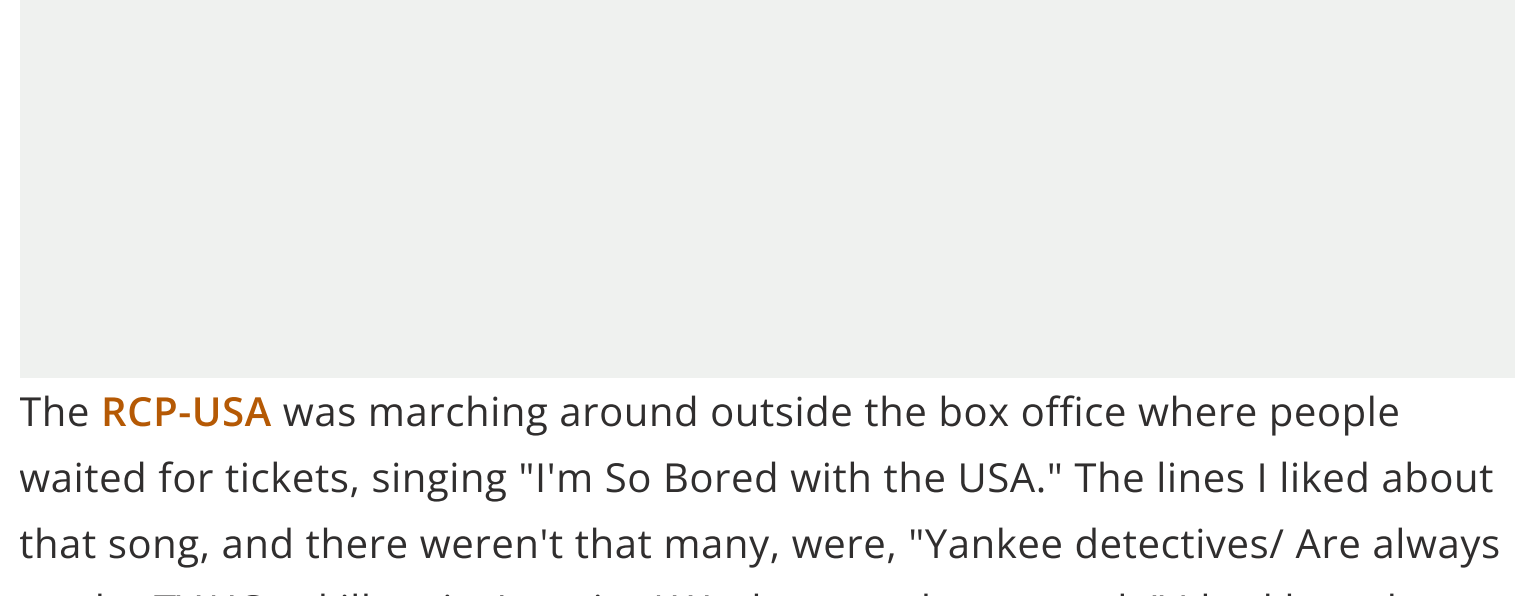
"I'm So Floored with the USA": a story

by The Geogre Community (This content is not subject to review by Daily Kos staff prior to publication.)

Monday, July 04, 2011 at 4:53:54p GMT Recommend Story 4 Share 9 Comments NEW

Some time around 1983 or 1984, I got recruited by... *someone*, but I refused.

In 1983, I think... whenever "Combat Rock" came out, The Clash were touring without their 'real' drummer, as we purists claimed. They toured once right as the record came out and once or twice more after it became a hit. I went to the first tour show, when they played a 2,500 seat theater in Atlanta. At that point, no one in the general public knew about "Rock the Casbah" or "Should I Stay or Should I Go," and most of them had forgotten "Train in Vain" by then.



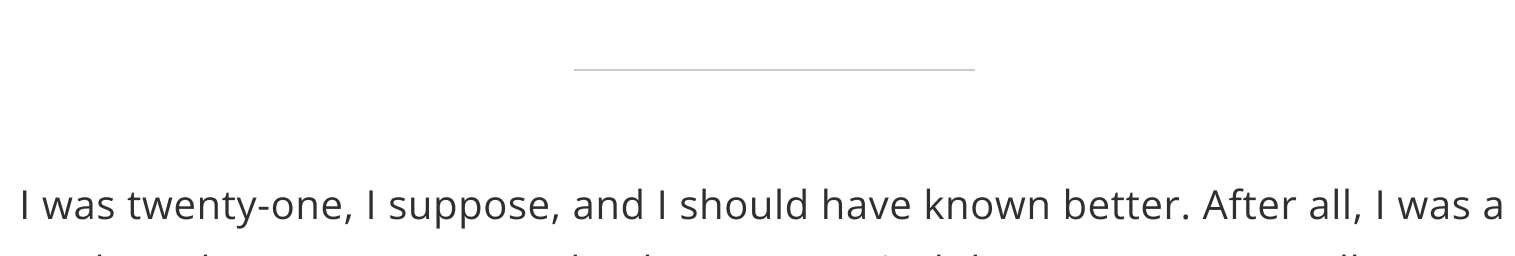
The RCP-USA was marching around outside the box office where people waited for tickets, singing "I'm So Bored with the USA." The lines I liked about that song, and there weren't that many, were, "Yankee detectives/ Are always on the TV/ 'Cos killers in America/ Work seven days a week." I had heard another version with a line about "a murder in America every fifteen minutes." The rest of the song didn't do it much for me. Americans misunderstood the point, I thought, and the Marxism in it was clunky. I preferred Gang of Four for my undiluted Marx.

I used to talk to the RCP-USA people, and one heavy set woman in tiger striped Spandex in particular, quite a bit. I'd argue that yes, we needed socialism, but this was because it is the only **moral economy**. She would talk about the material dialectic, and I would say that material cannot be entirely deterministic, even in Marx or Mao, as there is a moral directive implied before hand, and we'd keep going like that. Good fun.

(The recruiting thing? I can tell you in a few words. She asked if I'd be at X concert (not by X), and I said I would, and she said there was someone I should meet. I did, and *that* young man and I argued vigorously, and then he asked if I would be at Y concert, and I would, and he said there was someone I should talk to. Person #3 was older, well dressed, and did not argue. This person just wanted to know what I thought. He then said, "We're having a meeting at ___ Hotel on ___, and you should come." I said, "I think I know what this is." He said, "Do you?" I said, "Yeah, and I'm not interested." That was it.)

So, as I said, the RCP-USA was active all of a sudden in the early 1980's. The Spartacist Youth League was running around, too, but not in my town. At the same time, alas, the Nazis were enjoying quite a recruiting boom.

Worse yet, the Nazis liked to *find* the Communists, and kismet had a way of putting the two groups on alternating street corners for demonstrations. This is how I got involved in a riot, sort of, and learned some things about the news.



I was twenty-one, I suppose, and I should have known better. After all, I was a punk, and we were supposed to be more cynical than anyone. (Actually, I was in that herky-jerky sort of style rather than the three chords and a cloud of dust sort. My band's sound was closest to The Feelies, although we hadn't heard them and never crossed paths.) (For those who don't have it, The Feelies' "Crazy Rhythms" is **in print again**, and you should own it. Listen to "Raised Eyebrows" all the way through and just **try** to be in a bad mood.)

The Clash were going to play the Fox Theater in Atlanta, and the RCP was marching around, and the local Nazis showed up chanting over them. They were skinheads, also punk rockers, mostly, although they were into bands like Screwdriver (no link, ever). Now, concert security is a low priority gig for the police, and so APD had only assigned a single officer for security. After all, by then they knew that punk rock = college kids, and they're no trouble.

In Ohio, only a few weeks earlier, some Nazis met some Communists, pulled a revolver, and shot one dead (this was not Frank Spisak, so I'm having trouble finding a link to the story... murders vanish from the record after a while, it seems). However, it was around Christmas time, so if others remember it and can link it better, I'd appreciate it, as it was certainly something on the mind of the patrolman running security for the Fox that night.

The Clash put on a fantastic show. It was one of the better concerts I've seen. The entire band had charisma, and what they lacked in subtlety they made up for in blunt force trauma. The show began with "**Know Your Rights**" (<-- hey! a performance from the same tour!), and that alone is enough to make even Willy Loman want to rip up the seats. We got "Magnificent Seven" and other greats from "Sandanista." We got a lot, and the show was propulsive and explosive.

Meanwhile, back in the entrance, everybody's friend K--t W--d and his gang of skinheads began to push at the circle of RCP chanters. The cop saw it, got on the radio and said, "We have a potential riot situation."

Now, Atlanta under Maynard Jackson was fairly peaceful. The economy was booming, we were told, and the Fox Theater is in a moderately alright neighborhood. The city went by the motto, "The city too busy to hate." (It's not too busy to hate. It's just too busy to do anything but host Neil Boorts.) *The city of Atlanta had not had a riot since the death of Martin Luther King*, but it did have a lot of cop stuff.

Fifteen squad cars came onto West Peachtree Street just as the crowd let out. As they arrived, they saw 2,500 disorganized people and concluded that, well, there's the riot we were told about, and so they began *ending the riot* the way police always do... with gentle negotiation and reconciliation. They negotiated with batons and reconciled with handcuffs. For their part, the concert goers had just gotten their tanks topped off with Revolution, and so they decided to engage in negotiations in the same spirit of reconciliation as the police.

This, folks, is how the great cop riot of 1983 or 1984 or whenever it was became a riot. The eight skinheads and twelve Revolutionary Communist Party people were swept to one side and did not end up in jail, but many, many, many hipsters and young business guys did.

Me?

I was backstage, meeting the band. I came out the side door of the Fox, looked at the front, *saw* the riot underway, and weighed my options. I could go punch a cop for the Revolution, or I could go to my car. I emulated my hero, Sir Robin. I did not learn anything new about myself at that moment, as I already knew that I preferred not getting beaten on.

The lesson came the next morning. The newspapers the next day covered... nothing. Really.

A small paragraph appeared saying that there had been a disturbance. When the lawsuits started against the false imprisonment, the newspaper still had no coverage. For some reason, Atlanta's first riot in sixteen years and the fact that it wasn't one just wasn't news.

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The Geogre Author Jul 04, 2011 at 05:53:54 PM Tip Jar 8 Recommendation

ActivistGuy Jul 04, 2011 at 06:07:03 PM For the uninitiated My favorite lines: Yankee dollar talks To the dictators of the world In fact it's giving orders And they can't afford to miss a word.

1 Reply 4 Recommendation The Geogre Author ActivistGuy Jul 04, 2011 at 06:37:34 PM Sandanista! was my favorite Of course I already said I was in the nervous-jerky side of punk, so it would be. "Washington Bullets" is my favorite direct with of the USA, in my opinion. "In Nicaragua/ The people fought the leader/ And off he flew/ With no Washington bullets/ What else could he do?"

Dang, but we need them again. We had an embarrassment of riches at the time. Sandanista! and Solid Gold were out at the same time. 1 Reply 3 Recommendation

ActivistGuy The Geogre Author Jul 04, 2011 at 07:29:20 PM When it came to Go4 I was biggest on Entertainment. Loved "Essence Rare" and "Guns Before Butter". (Though I definitely appreciated "Outside the Trains Don't Run on Time" and "Cheeseburger" off Gold.)

BTW, the lyrics poorly done "online lyrics" you'll ever find are for "Outside the Trains", the online lyrics reduce that very cogent song to garbled nonsense. 1 Reply 1 Recommendation

The Geogre Author ActivistGuy Jul 04, 2011 at 07:38:18 PM A History of the 20th Century Capital It Falls Us Now. Actually, even with Go4, they weren't exactly... subtle. At the time, it was so eye opening, though! "At Home He Feels Like a Tourist," and I remember going, "Oh, wait... so... like, teen sex and anxiety over body image are... are... commodities! Oh, wow!"

It looks obvious now, but only because of then. (On the other hand, the guitar on "To Hell with Poverty" is a thing that will set a rich man's arse on fire.) 0 Replies 0 Recommendation

se portland Jul 04, 2011 at 07:12:36 PM Stay Free For some reason Stay Free came to my mind after read your diary.

1 Reply 2 Recommendation The Geogre Author se portland Jul 04, 2011 at 07:48:39 PM Great song from the tuneful one Mick Jones could make you think you were hearing Beatles, but then you'd realize that the lyrics were working class and genuinely red. New boots and contracts, too.

I have never really been able to reconcile myself with the fact that I was allowed the privilege of class knowledge without the potential of meaningful class action. The reason I didn't throw a punch or a brick is cowardice, of course, but it's also because (as I recall my thought processes at the time) I thought that capitalism would simply eat and imitate any challenge. It would come out with "Justice (TM)" and "The New Harmony Movement Clothing Line." (It was just happening for the first time back then. We're used to it now, but that was the first time that hand crafted rebellion was being mass produced overnight that I had known of.)

[Later, I saw "A Hard Day's Night," and there is that scene where George gets taken in by a designer who is doing the equivalent of what The Gap was doing in 1982.] 0 Replies 1 Recommendation

mookins Jul 04, 2011 at 11:37:01 PM Do not turn, I hate to see! All the things you think were here got/ Do not turn, I hate to see/ What happened to the wife of lot

From "Lose This Skin" on Sandanista. To me it's the essence of revolution. 1 Reply 1 Recommendation

The Geogre Author mookins Jul 05, 2011 at 02:28:43 AM And Hazel O'Connor's (?) voice It's the only voice for it. For the essence, though, I'll take the children singing "Career Opportunities" and then saying, "I'm finished now. I'm tired of singing."

That's quite a statement. Career opportunity's the one that never knocks. Every job they offer you's to keep you off the docks. 0 Replies 0 Recommendation