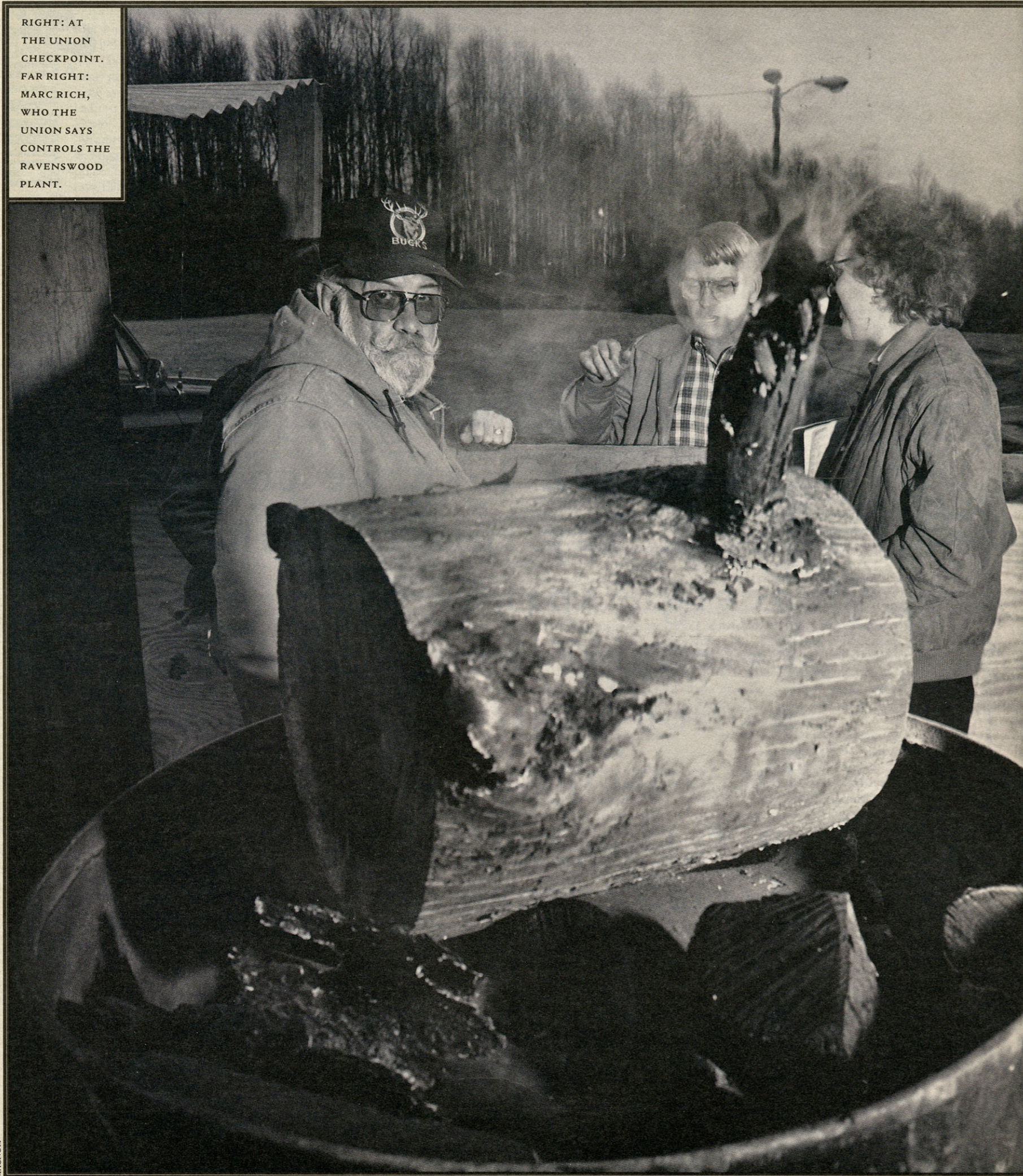


RIGHT: AT THE UNION CHECKPOINT. FAR RIGHT: MARC RICH, WHO THE UNION SAYS CONTROLS THE RAVENSWOOD PLANT.



*For the workers at Ravenswood Aluminum, the struggle to regain their union jobs took them from small-town Appalachia to the glass canyons of international finance*

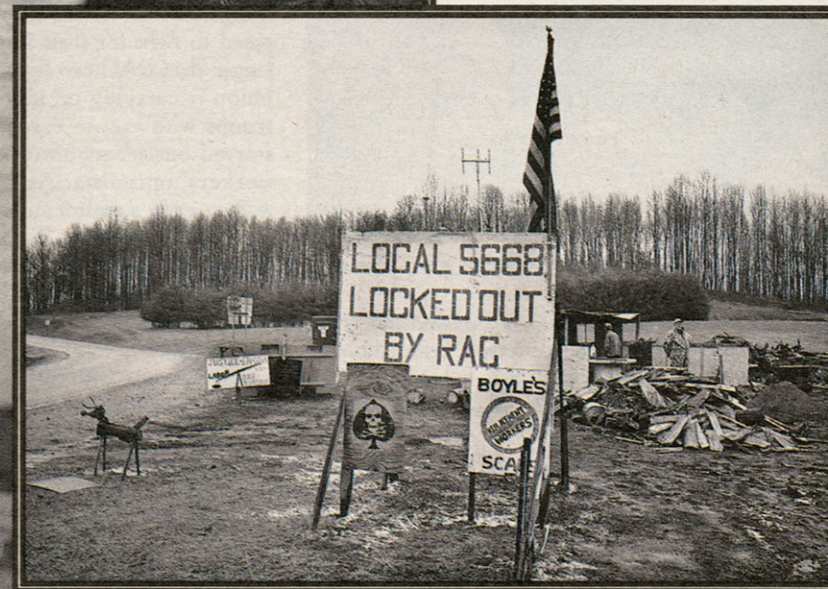


**HOPE & HARD TIMES**

Flying out of National Airport, I look down at Washington, D.C.,

and its familiar, comforting symbols of American power and hopefulness: its secular *duomos*, its phallic monument

to the father of our country. We are heading toward Charleston,  
*By Scott Spencer*



MAGNUM

# A detective was hired to find the factory's owner.

West Virginia, and soon we are over the Appalachians, which today are on fire. The mountains are camouflage-colored anthills; there is a scatter of towns, but for the most part, the land seems unpopulated. The fires have been burning for several days; they have been isolated, but they have a life of their own. The smell of smoke is so powerful that one of the six passengers wakes up from an anxious catnap, frightened: She thinks the plane is on fire.

I am sitting with an old friend, Jim Hougan, a writer and private investigator who is moonlighting these days for the Industrial Union Department at the AFL-CIO and for the United Steelworkers of America (USWA) as part of their effort to get 1700 locked-out West Virginia aluminum workers their jobs back. The unions asked him to help out in their fight down in West Virginia — specifically, to find out who owns Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation (RAC), which illegally locked out the workers on November 1st, 1990. Specifically, the unions needed Hougan to untangle a web of corporate structures to confirm what they already believed — that a fugitive metals trader named Marc Rich was actually controlling the company from his legal haven in Zug, Switzerland. “We can prove that Marc Rich is in a position to control RAC,” Hougan says to me, “and we can prove how he controls it through a series of dummy corporations, using the very same methods he has used throughout his career.”

In all the strikes and labor actions my father took part in when he was a steelworker and member of the USWA, none ever called for the services of a private detective to find the bosses. It used to be abundantly clear: There were the people who lived at the top of the hill and the people who lived at the bottom. When there was a strike — this was before no-strike pledges became routine and before scabs became “replacement workers” — I walked with him and his friends in front of Republic Steel on Chicago’s South Side. We could all sense the lives of those who were refusing our demands — guys in mansions with moose heads on the wall and sons in sailor suits; guys who ate pheasant under glass, while we lived in tiny row houses, breathed sooty air and did all the work.

But that was thirty-five years ago. Now the USWA members down in Ravenswood not only need their jobs back, but they need help in tracking down the man who took them away. If Hougan and a few of the union men are right, then this struggle is a dress rehearsal for labor relations in the twenty-first century.

AFTER A ONE-HOUR FLIGHT, WE LAND AT THE CHARLESTON airport. Here the smoke of the fires is mixed with cigarette smoke. We’re nowhere near the America of Evian water and Nicorettes; here everyone seems to have multipack habits, and most people are either seriously over- or underweight. “Everyone seems to smoke around here,” I say to the woman at the rent-a-car desk.

SCOTT SPENCER profiled Chicago bluesman Buddy Guy in RS 618.

“What else do we got to do?” she says with a rather ravishing smile.

Hougan and I drive the thirty curving, mountainous miles between Charleston and Ravenswood, past signs for such places as Pinch, Big Chimney, Romance and Cottageville. Finally, we pull into Ravenswood, a town with an unmistakable left-behind quality to it. There’s no movie theater, no bookstore, no hotel, one tiny motel. There are auto-supply shops, taverns, a couple of pool halls, a ramshackle video-rental shop, houses, churches — about thirty of them — and public schools.

There is a hush in the town. Some of the stores are already gone, boarded up — the result of a year and a half of labor strife that has not only wrecked the town’s economy but has divided the schools, the churches and even some families. Ever since the unionized workers were locked out of their jobs and replaced by scabs, Ravens-

wood radical changes in the plant’s labor policies. Jobs were combined, safety regulations were ignored, and an atmosphere of hostility began to pervade the workplace. Barbed-wire fencing was thrown up around the factory; security cameras were installed. And then, minutes before the existing union contract expired, every union worker in the plant was effectively fired. A high percentage of these workers were nearing retirement age, and it seems clear that the company’s desire to reduce its pension liability was a major factor in the new management’s strategy.

These days the workers feel that the law is very much on their side. Not only has the Occupational Safety and Health Administration office cited RAC for hundreds of alleged safety infractions, but the National Labor Relations Board ruled last July that the workers have, indeed, been illegally locked out of their jobs and that each of them is owed a full back-pay settlement. That the RAC owners plan to abide by these rulings is far from certain. Obviously, Marc Rich himself has never adhered to government edict, to say the least, and there are those in the union who believe that ignoring safety procedures, locking out workers and reducing pension and medical liability are all a part of the RAC ownership’s overall plan to make as much money from the factory as it can in the short haul and then dump it and run when it’s finished.

From the half-dozen workers at the mall storefront, however, there is hardly a discouraging word. The local has adopted as its slogan One Day Longer, which means they are prepared to fight for their jobs one day longer than RAC can fight. That the union is carrying on its fight with troops who are, in essence, being starved out seems not to deter the workers’ optimism. As one of the women at the storefront tells me, while I buy a SCAB HUNTER T-shirt for my father, “Everything’s on our side.”

And the two genial, older workers who show me around the food bank in back of the office both emphasize the generosity of local businesses that have stocked this ministorehouse with turkeys, canned vegetables, paper towels — leaving unmentioned the more sobering fact that this once self-reliant town has half its families dependent on donated food.

At the local union hall, the atmosphere is a little more tense. We are closer to the RAC plant now, closer to the battle front. Outside the hall, a low-slung brick building built up on a little rise, warming fires burn in open trash cans, and vigilant men monitor the comings and goings of every vehicle. Inside, the bulletin board functions as a kind of classified section of a living newspaper. RANDY HINKLE IS NOT WORKING AT RAC, says one handwritten three by five; LINDA IS NOT WORKING AT RAC, says another — both meant to refute local rumors that they have gone over to the scabs’ side. CINDY EISENHOWER IS TAKING APPOINTMENTS TO CUT HAIR, reads a third announcement, which on a more practical level shows how some of the workers are trying to supplement the relief the union is able to issue them during this long lockout. The atmosphere in the hall is redolent with pent-up energy, that idleness that turns to rage. Most of the people



AT LOCAL 5668: THE WAITING HAS BEEN GOING ON FOR A YEAR AND A HALF.

wood has been on the cusp of an explosion.

On the highways, printed in huge whitewash letters, are slogans such as SCAB HUNTER OF DEATH TO SCABS. At night, jack-rocks — made from welded-together railroad spikes and resembling gladiatorial mace — are sometimes thrown beneath the wheels of the vans and buses that were used to transport the so-called replacement workers. In fact, jack-rocks have become symbolic of the town’s resistance, and miniatures of them are worn as earrings by many of the women of Ravenswood.

Our first stop is the worker-assistance office, which the local union has set up in the town’s shopping center, in a spot where a local business once operated. Eating potato chips, drinking sodas and lighting their cigarettes with little pastel disposable lighters, the locked-out workers from Local 5668 congregate here both to dispense aid to their fellow unionists and to help pass the day. Time goes by slowly for workers away from their jobs.

These men and women did not lose their jobs the day Kaiser Aluminum sold the plant to a group of investors, who then renamed the operation Ravenswood Aluminum Corporation, but very soon after the transaction it became clear that the new management wanted to make

# Rich has owned tankers, refineries, silos, real estate.

hanging out at the local haven't worked in a year.

There are guys with cigarettes dancing at the corners of thin-lipped mouths – rangy guys with potbellies under hunting jackets and cool, watchful pale eyes – talking about conspiracies among European banks, complacent U.S. officials, local power companies and the Swiss government. Some of these men say they've been shot at by angry scabs who are tired of being harassed by union workers, and a couple of them hint darkly that they themselves have stepped over the law's line a few times as well.

We are on our way to Jackson County fairgrounds, where every other Tuesday the locked-out workers and their families get together for a potluck supper and pep rally. The smoke from the forest fires still looms over everything. The fairgrounds is a couple miles out of town; Jim Hougan and I take the long way so we can drive past the Ravenswood plant. On either side of the macadam leading to the plant are little wooden guardhouses in which RAC's private security guards keep track of vehicles approaching the factory. Our snappy little Taurus looks unfamiliar to them, and we are photographed on our way in, our license plate recorded.

The plant itself is immense, perched on the banks of the Ohio like the largest freighter ever built. The last of the day is fading from the thick smoky sky. A dirty orange ribbon of light lies along the horizon. The plant was built on a thousand acres; white-tailed deer graze beneath its shadows. The parking lot is half-empty – since locking out the 1700 unionized workers, the new management is running the plant with about 1100 – and the factory is quiet, cryptic; the windows opaque. It is a vault inside of which is locked the three-shift, twenty-four-hour-a-day labor of the workers – factories like this, of course, never close: The cost of banking and restarting the huge furnaces is considered too costly. For anyone not used to this sort of work environment, RAC seems grim, rather forbidding.

In fact, for those raised outside the culture of factory work, it is difficult to understand why people would fight so hard to get into these massive machines. The union says, as part of its campaign against RAC, that since the new management took over, with its speedups, its disregard for safety regulations, four workers have died as a result of work-related injuries. The smelting of aluminum is hot, exhausting work; temperatures inside the plant regularly exceed 110 degrees. It is an inhospitable environment, and at the end of the day you are beat, cooked – I never heard of an industrial worker getting on the Nordictrack after his shift. Factories are like the masculine principle gone berserk – all thrusts and protrusions, blunt functionality, hot air, fire, noise and danger. When I was a young dog trying to turn my relative lack of social status into an erotic plus, I used to drive my high-school sweethearts out to the mill where my father worked so we could see the incandescent slag, as bright as the core of the sun, being dumped and have the brutal geometry of the mill somehow suggest something fierce about me.

Hougan and I head for the fairgrounds. Other late

arrivals walk with us through the grass parking area, led by the coals of their cigarettes. Inside, several huge tables hold hundreds of pounds of food – chicken, corn, noodles, salads, dozens of different desserts, cut-price sodas, urns of coffee. A couple hundred folding chairs are set up in rows, with a large center aisle. Musicians – two guitarists, a fiddler and a vocalist – are playing at the front of the hall, and several couples are dancing.

Bulky, white and friendly, the people at the rally smile warmly at me, urge me to fill my paper plate. Some of the women steer me toward dishes they made and keep an eye on me as I eat – luckily, I find it all good. In fact, I am almost dizzy from the sudden powerful warmth of my feelings. I spent my childhood with members of the United Steel Workers of America, and here they are again, years later, in an Appalachian incarnation, exhibiting that same jocular, that same evenhanded decency

responsible for the plight of the locked-out Ravenswood workers and their slowly dying town.

Unlike the countless workers whose lives were destroyed in the Eighties, the workers of Ravenswood have been tireless in their pursuit of the men behind their company's takeover. Not only have some of them gone to Connecticut and New York, but some have been sent by the union to a meeting of the London Metal Exchange, where they passed out leaflets informing the traders that in Marc Rich they were doing business with a man with a half-million dollars' reward on his head, courtesy of the U.S. Department of Justice. A few of these Ravenswood workers have presented the union's case to the directors of the Dutch bank that helped finance the Ravenswood deal. And now they are going to Zug, where Rich's company is headquartered, hoping for a confrontation. A trip abroad is no everyday occurrence

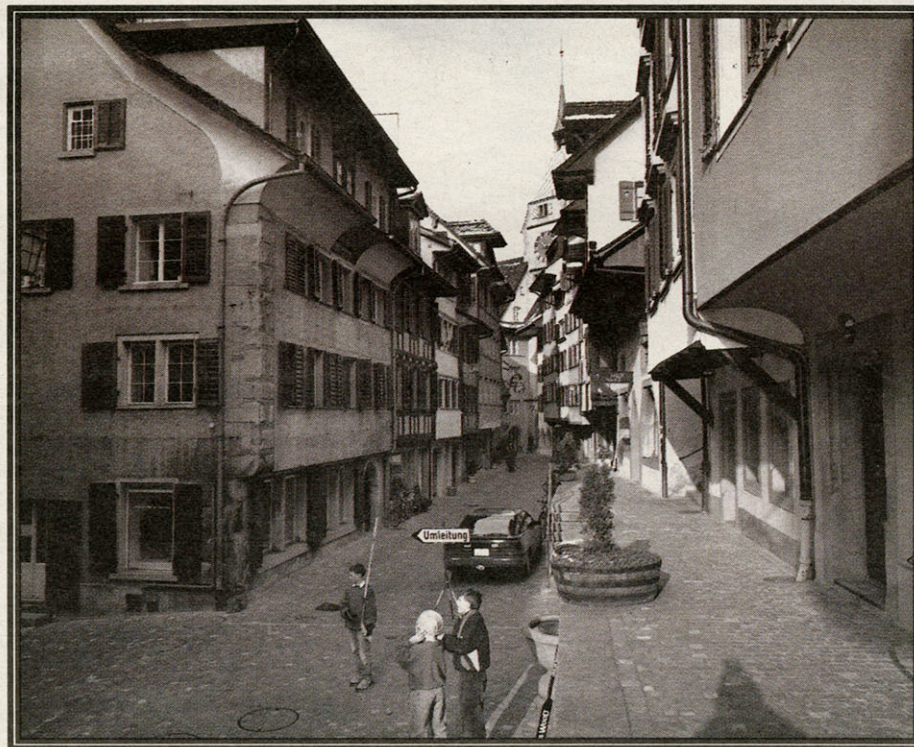
for a factory worker from West Virginia. One of the younger workers appeared at Dulles airport with his clothes on hangers, slung over his back – the TWA ground crew had to give him a box in lieu of a suitcase. A couple of the workers remarked about the lack of washcloths in Swiss hotels, and though these guys would gladly eat raccoon, Wiener schnitzel made them shiver.

Yet putting their struggle with RAC on an international level has clearly given these locked-out workers a sense of purpose. "One day our children will read about what we're doing, right here in the history books," one woman striker said to me. She wore a white sweater and light-blue stretch pants, and her face showed all the uncertainty and struggle of being out of work for over a year. She was certain, however, that her sacrifices were taking place on a scale that far transcended the personal. They were the workers who were tracking down an international scoundrel, and they were beating down a path that workers in the future would be able to follow.

And their union felt just as strongly. With membership in the USWA shrinking as more and more jobs were lost, the battle for Ravenswood Aluminum became a matter not only of morality but survival.

TODAY, MARC RICH IS AMERICA'S MOST SOUGHT-AFTER businessman – though those who seek him are not B-school faculties or chambers of commerce. Accused of everything from tax evasion to trading with the enemy, Rich has been in exile for a decade. He has been accused of trading arms for Iranian oil during the 1979 hostage crisis, and investigators hired by Kuwait have made a strong circumstantial case to the effect that Rich was doing business with Iraqi oil barons during Desert Storm (Rich's counsel denies this charge). Hougan and the USWA have also uncovered vast business dealings between Rich and the South African government, in direct violation of UN sanctions.

As the hills around Ravenswood were clouded by the smoke of the burning forests, the early years of Marc Rich were obscured by the genocidal smoke of the Nazis' war against the Jews. Born in Belgium fifty-eight years ago, the son of a burlap-bag maker, Marc Rich



ZUG, SWITZERLAND: MORE THAN A TAX PARADISE, IT'S HOME TO MARC RICH'S FIRM.

that kept my brilliant, college-educated father fascinated with and bound to them from the moment he began his life as a steelworker. As one of the union officials in Washington, D.C., said to me recently, these are the people who make things; as invisible as they are to many of us, without them we would have . . . nothing. No jets, no phones, no cars, no buildings, no food. Nothing.

Of late, the locked-out employees of Ravenswood Aluminum have been internationalized. A surprising number of them are conversant in the laws and lingo of international finance. They talk about how little was paid for their plant and what, at the time of the buyout, was the worth of the aluminum already fabricated inside the factory. Three years ago their factory was purchased in a leveraged buyout put together by Charles Bradley of Stanwich Partners, headquartered in Stamford, Connecticut, along with Bradley's partners in another aluminum factory: R. Emmett Boyle, who is now CEO of Ravenswood Aluminum, and Willy Strothotte, who is president of a company called Clarendon Ltd., a commodities-trading company headquartered in Zug. Clarendon itself is believed to be controlled by Marc Rich in Zug – the man whom Hougan and the union are holding ultimately

# The union men took home a letter and yellow lilies.

skipped out of Europe on a Vichy passport (reportedly on a luxury liner). Raised in Kansas City, Missouri, Rich went on to college at New York University, where he was an indifferent student. He went to work at Philipp Brothers, an old-line commodities house in New York, where he was so dexterous and diligent that before long he was in the commodities business for himself. By 1974, Rich had set up Marc Rich and Company in Zug, a user-friendly corporate enclave less than an hour from Zurich.

Rich's indictments for tax evasion, fraud, racketeering and trading with the enemy nurtured one of the largest tax-evasion cases in U.S. history. In 1984, having chosen exile over jail, Rich instructed his lawyers to make a \$150 million payment to the U.S. Justice Department, but it was not enough to clear the way for Rich's reentry into the United States. Now he divides his time between Zug and Marbella, on the coast of Spain.

In the meantime, however, Rich's legal troubles have not affected his wealth and influence. The union has compiled a list of the countries where Rich has significant holdings, and the compilation is staggering. As Richard Yeselson, a young, wiry strategist at the Industrial Union Department, told me: "We want to go after Rich everywhere. We can go after him in Switzerland. We're going after him in Prague, in Vancouver, in Russia — where he's involved in nickel — and even in Romania. We're looking at his operations in Australia, Bulgaria, Chile, Finland, India, Peru, Singapore, Turkey and England, too."

Rich's commodities dealings have tapped him into pools of capital everywhere on the planet. He has bought and sold tanker fleets, real estate, refineries, grain silos, weapons and a Coca-Cola distributorship, and for a while had a major interest in 20th Century-Fox film studios, in partnership with Marvin Davis. (Rich sold his stake in Fox to make that \$150 million payment in back taxes.)

A writer who has been tracking Rich for the past decade, A. Craig Copetas, has listed some of Rich's allies, including the oil-rich Marvin Davis, Henry Kissinger, former deputy secretary of state Lawrence Eagleburger, public-relations specialists Harold Burson, Robert Gray and Frank Mankiewicz, opera singer Placido Domingo and, in Copetas's words, "a boxcar full of European princes, American politicians, OPEC sheiks and *Fortune* 500 bosses."

Yet despite all his money, his influential friends and the legal services of attorneys like Leonard Garment, Nixon's old lawyer, Rich still faces decades and decades of time in jail. The Swiss have come under some heat for giving Rich a safe haven to continue his business dealings, but it seems unlikely that they will soon turn away this financial wizard. Rich's company is the fourth largest corporation in Switzerland, trading about \$25 billion worth of commodities each year.

Nevertheless, the steelworkers are hoping that the impending indictments against Rich can be turned to their own advantage. Not only do they have Jim Hougan working day and night, but they have done all they can to keep attention focused on Rich's scandals. The union

guys know that what the billionaire trader wants most — to cut a deal with the U.S. Justice Department that will allow him to reenter the United States — will be impossible as long as they are publicizing the indictments against him.

What do the steelworkers want Marc Rich to do? They want him to acknowledge that he, indeed, controls Ravenswood Aluminum, and they want him to tell Emmett Boyle to sit down with union representatives and negotiate a new contract for the 1700 locked-out workers.

The workers keep a constant watch on the Ohio River, tracking raw materials coming into or shipping out of the plant. The union has initiated a "don't buy" campaign for products that are packaged in aluminum from Ravenswood. Politicians such as Senator Jay Rockefeller and Representative Bob Wise have been more or less recruited to the union cause. Other unions have been made

treated as if the working class were but another special-interest group, the union, in going after Rich, can at least *imagine* that for the time they are allied with the United States Justice Department.

BERN, SWITZERLAND, IS A CITY OF SURPASSING CHARM, A kind of cosmopolitan village where the streets radiate from the city's center and turn into lanes, fading to nothing on their way to the nearby mountains. Hundreds of bicycles are left in public bike racks, unlocked. Dogs trot alongside their owners, unleashed, and there are plastic-bag dispensers on the corners for cleaning up after one's pet. This is the capital of Switzerland, and honesty here, on a personal level, seems to be taken for granted, while the more labyrinthine forms of thievery are quietly worked into the social fabric — dummy corporations, flight capital, numbered accounts.

It is winter, and I will be going to Zug with a couple of the members of Ravenswood Steelworkers Local 5668 and Jim Hougan. The men from Ravenswood are named Dewey Taylor and Michael Bailes. Dewey Taylor, 56, was scouted by the Pittsburgh Pirates thirty-five years ago. He is well built, immaculate, with gray hair, glasses. He looks like the guy who taught wood shop in my high school. Michael Bailes is in his forties, handsome, quiet, with deep, secretive eyes. He looks like a bass player in a country bar band, the least flamboyant guy in the group but the one who gets the girls.

Also in Bern is Joe Uehlein, from the Industrial Union Department at the AFL-CIO. If Hougan is the intellectual architect in the fight against Rich, Uehlein is the field marshal. In his thirties, with full lips and thick glasses and long hair, Uehlein works in Washington in an office decorated with posters of past union heroes, and his conversation, when not obsessing about the Rich campaign, always comes back to labor history. This is not the first international campaign for



JOE UEHLEIN AND DEWEY TAYLOR TESTIFYING IN THE SWISS PARLIAMENT, IN BERN

aware of the Ravenswood lockout, and their verbal and monetary shows of support have bolstered morale. Yet all of these tactics — the "don't buy" campaign, the enlistment of politicians, the passionate letters signed in solidarity — are standard practice in modern labor conflicts, and frankly none of them have done much to turn labor's fortunes around.

But the location of an arch villain may be the fresh approach the union has hoped for. Marc Rich's sullen face, his sweptback hair, his smoldering cigar and his Armani-for-elders insouciance are now well known to workers in Ravenswood. They know where he lives, when he changed passports, who his lawyer is, how much he paid for his winter digs and how much he owes the government. And they are coming after him, partly on the hope that he can offer a shortcut to a solution of their long unemployment and partly, I think, because it feels good to have a villain to point at who even the most antilabor Americans can agree to hate. After years of both economic and psychological retreat, the union can now hold up someone whom the middle class can despise more than they seem to despise workers. After decades of feeling politically marginalized, and being

Uehlein. He worked with Latin American pilots during an Eastern Airlines strike and with BASF workers in Germany. Coincidentally, Joe, like Dewey, was also scouted by the Pittsburgh Pirates.

On the night of our arrival we are taken out by some functionaries from the Swiss Metals Workers Union. Taylor and Bailes are exhausted from the long flight from Dulles, which because of financial considerations was not direct. While a woman from the Swiss union translates the German and French menu, the two of them stare forlornly into their glasses of Coke. "I guess I'd like a cheeseburger," Michael says, which unleashes a good-natured volley of dinner suggestions from the Swiss Metals Workers: "You don't want the calves brains?" "You must try the rabbit pâté."

At the table with us is Tavia LaFollette, great-granddaughter of Robert LaFollette, the Progressive party founder and onetime governor of Wisconsin, a populist, trust-busting hero of the labor movement. She is a sort of Botticelli angel, with extravagant blond curls, a look of pure courage in her eyes. She has been raised at considerable social altitude — attending Little Dalton with Robert Redford's daughter, enjoying floating chamber-music

concerts with her parents on the East River — but has now thrown in her lot with the steelworkers. She is a theater major at Antioch College, in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and as part of her work-study program she has created two giant puppets, one of Marc Rich and the other of legendary labor agitator Mother Jones. The puppets, along with the small band of workers and union functionaries, will be there for the confrontation with the Swiss Parliament the next day and on Rich and Company headquarters the day after.

But tonight, Tavia is chain-smoking and looking very agitated. At the last minute, airline officials back in Ohio told her that the puppets were too large to be transported. She sawed the larger of the two, a twelve-foot Mother Jones, in half and shipped the parts on another airline. But now, just ten hours before the demonstration at the Swiss capital, the puppets have not arrived. She hopes they will be in Zurich tomorrow, hopes they have not been destroyed in transit, hopes she can get them through customs and that she can get them to Bern in time for the demonstration. From Switzerland, Tavia is planning to travel to Paris, Budapest, Prague and Barcelona, on a tour coordinated by the steelworkers union, which has hired someone based in France to facilitate the European anti-Rich campaign.

Has it come to this? I wonder, sitting in the cozy Bern rathskeller. In one corner, one of the richest men in the world, a man with operations in forty-eight countries, who is said to control the economies of twenty-three Third World nations, and in the other corner, a couple of jet-lagged aluminum workers, a union bureaucrat who has brought his mandolin along on the trip and walks around at night looking for street musicians to jam with, a writer-detective and a student creating a little street theater for her senior project. Is this the left? Is the opposition this thin, this vulnerable? What possible chance can this small band have against an adversary as sleek and powerful as Marc Rich? Where is the goddamned dialectic? When the left and the right are so profoundly out of balance, doesn't the world start to hobble and tip?

THE NEXT MORNING, TAVIA DRIVES BACK to Zurich to get her puppets, and Dewey, Mike, Joe and a couple of the people from the Swiss Metals Workers Union stand in front of the gloomy Swiss Parliament building. It is almost eight in the morning, but the sky looks like evening. Dewey is here in jacket, tie and trench coat. Michael wears acid-washed jeans, natty dove gray shoes. They have with them a banner bearing a caricature of Rich's face that Tavia made the night before. The word *fugitive* runs along the top of the banner; Rich's name is on the bottom.

The men and women going into Parliament — politicians, staff, clerical workers — are for the most part mild and polite to the guys from West [Cont. on 68]



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